### Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The Tunic was without Seam’</td>
<td>Fr. R. Cantalamessa CAP.Ofm</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the Local and the Universal: Search for New Paradigms in Ecclesiology.</td>
<td>Revd Dr K. M. George.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Logos of our Advaitic Ekklesia.</td>
<td>R. Brad Bannon</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Maronite Catholic Church: History and Identity.</td>
<td>Emma Loosely</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ethiopian Catholic Church: A Tale of Two Rites.</td>
<td>Fr. Kevin Robinson</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Official Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church: 1973-1992.</td>
<td>Fr. Frans Bouwen MAfr.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenna and Beyond. The Question of the Roman Papacy and the Orthodox Churches in the Literature 1962-2006.</td>
<td>Adam DeVille</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evolving Face of Ecumenism.</td>
<td>Fr. Thomas Ryan CSP.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifty Years and Running: Oberlin 57, Back and Beyond.</td>
<td>Jeffrey Gros FSC.</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reports & Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Journey of Reconciliation with the Tantur Ecumenical Institute.</td>
<td></td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt. Revd Dr Michael Jackson launches book on Irish School of Ecumenics.</td>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul D. Murray on Recent Developments in Receptive Ecumenism at Durham University.</td>
<td></td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Through Divine Love: the Church in each place and all places.’</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Book Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE FROM THE NEW EDITORIAL BOARD

Such has been the response to our appeal for editorial help made in the October, 2006 issue that we have been able to resume publication of ONE IN CHRIST in a revised and enlarged format. We are particularly grateful for the support of the Benedictine monks of the Holy Cross Monastery, Rostrevor, Northern Ireland, a sister monastery to that of Turvey, and also to the staff of PROCHE-ORIENT CHRÉTIEN in Jerusalem.

We have also used this opportunity to revise our statement of intent (reproduced inside the front cover) to accord more with current ecumenical trends. We hope this is reflected in the variety of contributions contained in this issue. Our goal, as ever, remains one of promoting the ‘movement towards full communion among Christians’ or, as the rule of St. Benedict states, ‘to prefer nothing to the love of Christ’ - That they all may be One.

Dom John Mayhead OSB
Superior of Turvey Monastery
‘THE TUNIC WAS WITHOUT SEAM’

Good Friday Sermon of Fr. Cantalamessa*

When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was without seam, woven in one piece from top to bottom; so they said to one another: ‘Instead of tearing it, let’s throw dice to decide who is to have it’. In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: ‘They shared out my clothing among them, they cast lots for my clothes.’ (John 19: 23-24)

It has always been asked what the evangelist John wanted to say with the importance that he gives to this particular detail of the Passion. One relatively recent explanation is that the tunic alludes to the vestment of the high priest and that with this, John wanted to affirm that Jesus died not only as king but also as priest.

It is not said in the Bible, however, that the tunic of the high priest had to be seamless (see Exod. 28: 4; Lev. 16: 4). For this reason the most authoritative of the exegetes prefer to stick to the traditional explanation, according to which the seamless tunic symbolized the unity of the disciples.¹ It is the interpretation that St. Cyprian already gave: ‘The unity of the Church,’ he writes, ‘is expressed in the Gospel when it is said that the tunic of Christ was not divided or cut.’²

Whatever be the explanation that one gives to the text, one thing is certain: the unity of the disciples is, for John, the purpose for which


² St. Cyprian, De unitate Ecclesiae, 7 (CSEL 3, p. 215).
Christ dies. ‘Jesus had to die for the nation, and not only for the
nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God’
(John 11: 51-52). At the Last Supper he himself said: ‘I pray not only for
them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so
that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that
they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me’
(John 17: 20-21).

The glad tidings to proclaim on Good Friday are that unity, before it
is a goal to be sought, is a gift to be received. That the tunic is woven
‘from the top down,’ St. Cyprian continues, means that ‘the unity
brought by Christ comes from above, from the heavenly Father, and
because of this it cannot be broken apart by those who receive it, but
must be received in its integrity.’

The soldiers divided ‘the clothes,’ or ‘the cloak,’ τὰ ἱµάτια, into four
pieces, that is, Jesus' outer garments, not the tunic, the χιτὼν which
was the undergarment, in direct contact with his body. This is also a
symbol. We men can divide the human and visible element of the
Church, but not its deeper unity, which is identified with the Holy
Spirit. Christ’s tunic was not and can never be divided. It too is of a
single piece. ‘Can Christ be divided?’ Paul cried out (see 1Cor. 1: 13). It
is the faith we profess in the Creed: ‘I believe in the Church, one, holy,
catholic and apostolic.’

* * *

But if unity must serve as a sign ‘so that the world may believe,’ it
must also be a visible, communitarian unity. This is the unity that has
been lost and must be rediscovered. It is much more than maintaining
neighbourly relations; it is the mystical interior unity itself - ‘one
body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God
and Father of all’ (Eph. 4: 4-6) - insofar as this objective unity is in fact
received, lived and manifested by believers. A unity that is not
endangered by diversity, but enriched by it.

After Easter the apostles asked Jesus: ‘Lord, are you at this time
going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ Today we often address the
same question to God: Is this the time in which you will restore the
visible unity of the Church? God’s answer is also the same as the one
Jesus gave to the disciples: ‘It is not for you to know the times or
seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you
will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will
be my witnesses’. (Acts 1: 6-8)

The Holy Father recalled this in a homily he gave on 25 January in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls at the end of Christian Unity Week:

Unity with God and our brothers and sisters is a gift that comes from on high, which flows from the communion of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in which it is increased and perfected. It is not in our power to decide when or how this unity will be fully achieved. Only God can do it! Like St Paul, let us also place our hope and trust in the grace of God which is with us.

Today as well, the Holy Spirit will be the one to lead us into unity, if we let him guide us. How was it that the Holy Spirit brought about the first fundamental unity of the Church, that between Jews and pagans? The Holy Spirit descends upon Cornelius and his whole household in the same way in which he descended upon the apostles at Pentecost. So, Peter only needed to draw the conclusion: ‘I realised then that God was giving them the identical thing he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and who was I to stand in God’s way?’ (Acts 11: 17)

For a century now, we have seen the same thing repeat itself before our eyes on a global scale. God has poured out the Holy Spirit in a new and unusual way upon millions of believers from every Christian denomination and, so that there would be no doubts about his intentions, he poured out the Spirit with the same manifestations. Is this not a sign that the Spirit moves us to recognize each other as disciples of Christ and work toward unity?

It is true that this spiritual and charismatic unity is not enough by itself. We see this already at the beginning of the Church. The newly formed unity between Jews and Gentiles was immediately threatened by schism. In the so-called Council of Jerusalem there was a ‘long discussion’ and at the end an agreement was reached and announced to the Church with the formula: ‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of ourselves...’ (Acts 15: 28). The Holy Spirit works, therefore, also through another way, which is that of patient exchange, dialogue and even compromise between the different sides, when the essentials of the faith are not in play. He works through human ‘structures’ and the ‘offices’ put in action by Jesus, above all the apostolic and Petrine office. It is that which today we call doctrinal and institutional ecumenism.
However, experience is convincing us that even this doctrinal ecumenism is not sufficient and does not advance matters if it is not also accompanied by a foundational spiritual ecumenism. This is repeated with ever greater insistence by the major promoters of institutional ecumenism. In this centenary of the institution of the week of prayer for Christian unity (1908-2008), at the foot of the cross we would like to meditate on this spiritual ecumenism, on what this spiritual ecumenism is and how we can make progress in it.

Spiritual ecumenism is born through repentance and forgiveness and is nourished by prayer. In 1977, I participated in a charismatic ecumenical congress in the U.S., in Kansas City, Missouri. There were 40,000 participants, half of them Catholic - Cardinal Suenens among them - and half from other Christian denominations. One evening, one of the leaders of the meeting began speaking at the microphone in a way that, to me, at that time, was strange: ‘You priests and pastors, weep and mourn, because the body of my Son is broken.... You laypeople, men and women, weep and mourn, because the body of my Son is broken.’

I began to see people around me fall to their knees, one after another, and weep with repentance for the divisions in the body of Christ. And all of this went on while a sign reading ‘Jesus is Lord’ went up from one part of the stadium to the other. I was there as an observer who was still rather critical and detached, but I remember thinking to myself: if one day all believers shall be reunited in one single body, it will happen like this, when we are all on our knees with a contrite and humiliated heart, under the great lordship of Christ.

If the unity of the disciples must be a reflection of the unity between Father and Son, it must above all be a unity of love, because such is the unity that reigns in the Trinity. Scripture exhorts us to ‘do the truth in love’ - veritatem facientes in caritate (Eph. 4: 15). And Augustine affirms that ‘one does not enter into the truth if not through charity’ - non intratur in veritatem nisi per caritatem.3

The extraordinary thing about this way to unity based on love is that it is already now wide open before us. We cannot be hasty in regard to doctrine because differences exist and must be resolved with patience in the appropriate contexts. We can instead ‘be hasty’ in charity and

---

3 St. Augustine, Contra Faustum, 32,18 (CCL 321, p. 779).
already be united in that sense now. The true, certain sign of the coming of the Spirit, St. Augustine writes, is not speaking in tongues, but it is the love of unity: ‘Know that you have the Holy Spirit when you allow your heart to adhere to unity through sincere charity.’

Let us reflect on St. Paul’s hymn to charity (1 Cor. 13: 4ff). Each verse acquires a contemporary and new meaning if it is applied to the love of members of different Christian denominations in ecumenical relations:

Love is patient...
Love is not jealous...
It does not seek its own interests...
It does not brood over injury... (including the injury done to others!)
It does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth (it doesn’t rejoice over the difficulties of other Churches, but delights in their successes)
It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This week we have accompanied a woman to her eternal rest - Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement - who was a pioneer and model of the spiritual ecumenism of love. She showed that the pursuit of unity among Christians does not lead to a closing to the rest of the world; it is rather the first step and the condition for a broader dialogue with believers of other religions and with all men and women who are concerned about the fate of humanity and about peace.

* * *

‘Loving,’ it has been said, ‘does not mean looking at each other but looking together in the same direction.’ Even among Christians loving means looking in the same direction, which is Christ. ‘He is our peace’ (Eph. 2: 14). It is like the spokes of a wheel. Consider what happens to the spokes of a wheel when they move from the centre outward: as they distance themselves from the centre they also become more distant from each other. On the contrary when they move from the periphery toward the centre, as they come closer to the centre, they also come nearer to each other, until they form a single point. To the

---

4 St. Augustine, Sermons, 269,3-4 (PL38, 1236 s).
extent that we move together toward Christ, we draw nearer to each other, until we are truly, as Jesus desired, ‘one with him and with the Father.’

That which will reunite divided Christianity will only be a new wave of love for Christ that spreads among Christians. This is what is happening through the work of the Holy Spirit and it fills us with wonder and hope. ‘The love of Christ moves us, because we are convinced that one has died for all’ (2 Cor. 5:14). The brother who belongs to another Church - indeed every human being - is ‘a person for whom Christ died’ (Rom. 14:16), as he has died for me.

* * *

One thing must move us forward on this journey. What is in play at the beginning of the third millennium, is not the same as what was in play at the beginning of the second millennium, when there was the separation of East and West; nor is it the same as what was in play in the middle of the same millennium when there was the separation of Catholics and Protestants. Can we say that the way the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or how justification of the sinner comes about are the problems that impassion the men of today and by which the Christian faith stands or falls? The world has moved beyond us and we remain fixated by problems and formulas that the world does not even know the meaning of.

In battles in the Middle Ages there was a moment in which, after the infantry, archers and cavalry had been overwhelmed, the mêlée began to circle around the king. There the final outcome of the fight was decided. Today the battle for us also takes place around the king. There are buildings and structures made of metal in such a way that if a certain neuralgic point is touched or a certain stone is removed, everything falls apart. In the edifice of the Christian faith this cornerstone is the divinity of Christ. If this is removed, everything falls apart and faith in the Trinity is the first to go.

From this we see that today there are two possible ecumenisms, an ecumenism of faith and an ecumenism of incredulity: one that unites all those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that Christ died to save all humankind: and another that unites all those who, in deference to the Nicene Creed, continue to proclaim these formulas but empty them of their content. It is an ecumenism in which, in its extreme form, everyone believes
the same things because no one any longer believes anything, in the sense that ‘believing’ has in the New Testament.

‘Who is it that overcomes the world,’ John writes in his first letter, ‘if not those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God?’ (1 John 5: 5). Sticking with this criterion, the fundamental distinction among Christians is not between Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, but between those who believe that Christ is the Son of God and those who do not believe this.

* * *

On the first day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak... : ‘Is this a time for you to live in your own panelled houses, while this House lies in ruins?’ (Hag. 1: 1-4).

This word of the prophet Haggai is addressed to us today. Is this the time to concern ourselves with that which only regards our religious order, our movement, or our Church? Is this not precisely the reason why we too ‘sow much but harvest little’? (Hag. 1: 6) We preach and we are active in many ways, but we convert few people and the world moves away from Christ instead of drawing near to him.

The people of Israel heard the prophet’s reproof; everyone stopped embellishing his own house and began to work together on God's temple. God then sent his prophet again with a message of consolation and encouragement, which is also addressed to us:

‘But now take courage, Zerubbabel, says the Lord, and take courage, Joshua, high priest, son of Jehozadak, And take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work! For I am with you, says the Lord of hosts.’ (Hag. 2: 4) Take courage, all of you who have at heart the unity of Christians, and go to work, because I am with you, says the Lord!
BEYOND THE LOCAL AND THE UNIVERSAL:
SEARCH FOR NEW PARADIGMS IN ECCLESIOLOGY

Revd Dr K. M. George*

Introduction

In traditional ecclesiology the local and the universal are often perceived to be in mutual tension if not totally polarized or dichotomous. The concepts of the local and the universal as we understand them today in relation to the Church do not appear in New Testament times or in the very early patristic period. Obviously they emerged as a result of the developing authority structure and the continuing geographical and organisational expansion of the Church.¹

The Pauline ecclesiological images of the Church as the body of Christ and as the bride of Christ have underscored the patristic theological reflection on the unity of the Church. These and other images like the seamless tunic of Christ as interpreted by Cyprian of Carthage for instance have strengthened the notion of the oneness of the Church as a fundamental ecclesiological assumption.

Towards AD 381, by the time of the completion of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the One Church is qualified as Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. While there can probably be some possible convergence on what was meant by holy and apostolic, there is far less agreement on the attributes one and catholic in contemporary Christianity in spite of the arduous ecumenical attempts in the twentieth century. One could simply repeat the creedal formula today and state tautologically that the one church is the catholic church and the catholic church is the one church. But in our situation of division it is almost impossible to envisage and conceive the future oneness

* Dr George is Principal of the Malankara Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala, India. This article was given as a paper at the Second International Conference on Ecclesiology held at Kottayam in January 2008.

and catholicity of the Church with the confidence and simplicity of
the Nicene-Constantinopolitan formula. There is fundamental
disagreement as to the nature of unity that people in different church
traditions seek and the character of catholicity they envisage.

Some measure of clarity regarding the local and the universal with
an attempt to go beyond the perceived tension between them might
help us see more clearly the nature of the Church that is qualified as
one and catholic in classical ecclesiology.

*Universality of the Local*

The word ‘local’ is derived from Latin *locus* meaning ‘place’. It is used
both literally and figuratively in modern European languages. Its
application in geographical, political, economic and cultural contexts
always assumes the particularity of a certain place. The ecclesiastical
usage also clearly designates a particular place like *Roman* Catholic,
*Russian* Orthodox, *Scottish* Presbyterian and so on. In this sense the
local is literally 'down to earth', a very concrete experience-based
reality whether it is a designated geographical area, a local self-
government, a network of local traders, a system of linguistic signs or
an ecclesiastical unit. It is relative to and distinguished from other
local systems or units. Whatever be its usage the earth-connection is
basic, and this earthiness with its particular climate and landscape, its
flora and fauna, its language and social traditions all go into the form
and content of the local. The major difficulty is that one cannot define
the local at any stage since the *sub-local* can continue to arise
indefinitely. India is divided into states on a linguistic basis which is a
certain level of the local. But within one linguistic locality there are
any number of other localities based on other considerations to the
level of a small village or a neighbourhood.

Since *locus* (place) is primarily a geo-spatial reality it implies
territory. In Sanskrit and related modern Indian languages *sthala*
stands for the place, and *sthana* stands for the particular position in it
like Hindust(h)an, Pakist(h)an and Afghanist(h)an, denoting a people
or a nation, with all its ethnic, linguistic and cultural aspects, located
in a territory. The total experience of a people across the ages is rooted
in a place (*locus, sthala*). Hence culture is inalienable from place, and
a place becomes the sacred *sthan* or position of all that is enduring
and valuable in the life of a people.

This runs the risk of becoming exclusivistically parochial, as for
instance in the *Hindutva* principle of emerging Hindu nationalism by which the sub-continental territory lying between the Indus river and the Indian Ocean is exclusively identified with the Hindu religion and culture and vice versa.\(^2\) In some Christian traditions there is a somewhat similar notion of ‘canonical territory’ in which one local church may claim exclusive privileges in a territory over against other local churches.\(^3\)

**Locality of the Universal**

The dictionary meaning of the word does not indicate anything directly geographical. But in ecclesiastical language since the word *local*, obviously referring to *place*, is correlated to *universal*, the latter seems to have assumed an enlarged geographical sense. In the Roman Catholic Church the notions of *ecclesia localis* and *ecclesia universalis* have been used according to the part-whole logic. Thus the local church was understood as part of the universal church. However, in light of the development of communion ecclesiology and the evolution of the concept of ‘individual churches’ this logic is no longer valid. The debate between Cardinal Kasper and Cardinal Ratzinger about the local and the universal also shows that it is far from a settled issue.

In the famous definition of the Catholicity of the Church by Cyril of Jerusalem, the geographical element comes first:

The Church is called Catholic because it is spread throughout the world, from end to end of the earth; also because it teaches universally and completely all the doctrines which man should know concerning things visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and also because it subjects to right worship all mankind, rulers and ruled, lettered and unlettered; further because it treats and heals universally every sort of sin committed by soul and body and possesses in itself every conceivable virtue, whether in deeds, words or in spiritual gifts of every kind.\(^4\)

---

\(^2\) Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999) 77ff. Territory and culture are the two main coordinates of the Hindu Nation according to V.D. Savarkar.

\(^3\) In the immediate post-Soviet period the Russian Orthodox Church evoked the principle of ‘canonical territory’ to stop the encroachment of other Christian Churches on Russian soil.

'The world' for Cyril was certainly the *oikoumene*, the whole inhabited world, that is, the ‘civilized’ world within the Roman imperial borders. Geographical extension of the Church in the post-Constantinian era was a new factor. Since then the universalistic interpretation of the expansion of the Church continued to identify the borders of the Church with the borders of the empire. It simply continued into the colonial period. Genuine missionary activities like the Roman mission of St Augustine to the Anglo-Saxon tribes and mission of Sts Cyril and Methodius to the Slavs in the first Christian millennium were subsumed by Crusades and colonial missions of the Western Church in the second millennium. The geographical aspect of the catholicity which Cyril of Jerusalem mentions as simply one of the attributes of the Church is pushed to the extreme. Universal Church began to be identified with the Church that is reaching out to the ends of the earth. One should not lose sight of the fact that the Church was called 'Catholic' even in the early second century by Ignatius of Antioch when the Christian Church was still a collection of a few scattered urban communities. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* calls the Church 'catholic' in its connection to the Roman empire.

*Towards a cultural hermeneutics of the Universal*

The theory of Copernicus in 1543 on the ‘Revolutions of the Celestial Bodies’ is generally considered to have marked a revolution or a paradigm shift in scientific thinking. However, this never seems to have affected the ecclesiastical mindset. The church of 'Christendom' continued to believe in a geocentric and flat earth universe. The old Euclidean geometry with its notions of centre and circumference/periphery was quite convenient for the colonial Christian understanding of the world. There was a centre (say Rome) for the Oikoumene or the known, inhabited world. Knowledge of the unknown expanded from the centre to the periphery. The centre decided the nature and method of knowledge and the limits of the known. Universality was defined by geography and geometry. They produced all the scientific-technological apparatus to measure the world in terms of the centre. So, it was quite natural and easy for a Roman Pontiff to divide the 'whole' world into two and grant the *padroado* (patronage) of one half to the Spanish and of the other half
to the Portuguese. At this stage there was no problem of any pluralism of cultural hermeneutics.

The Greek adjective *katholike* applied to the church (adverb *kath'holou*) referring to 'whole', 'fullness', was sometimes translated *universalis* in Latin. In the Latin concept of 'universal', the centre and the unity are the normative elements. (*Universalis: unum versus alia* i.e. one against many/others.) In the prevailing climate of territorial expansion, both imperial and ecclesiastical, 'universal' became increasingly associated with the geographical. The word 'universe', (*universitas*) which previously was understood in a holistic sense ('By universe, I mean God and creation' - John Scotus Erigena), gradually assumed a purely physical sense as simply the material cosmos. When the European Christian world confronted the rest of the (pagan) world in the context of the colonial expansion, the word 'universal' assumed an overwhelmingly geographical - political - cultural baggage of meaning. What was qualified 'universal' in any domain was simply determined by a centre from which the expansion (territorial, economic, intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic) started.

The lasting factor which has extended its triumphalist influence into the post-colonial period has been the cultural meaning of the word universal. So whatever we now smugly call 'universal', 'global' or 'ecumenical' is in fact a euphemism for the parochial in its expanded and enlightened form. At the cultural core of the notion of the universal, there is really no space for an open hermeneutical process. With its strong parochial/cultural component, 'the universal' is naturally self-defensive and self-advertising and rejects all alien cultural elements. But, in its geographically expanded and enlightened form, it will apparently include all 'particulars' and propose an open intercultural hermeneutic. However, as *unum versus alia* 'the universal' will jealously keep the normative and decisive role of the original *centrum* over and against all peripheral particulars. As it stands, there is not much room for a genuine inter-cultural hermeneutic.

Although the word 'Catholic' is not a New Testament term (except the adverbal form in Acts 4:18 meaning 'thoroughly, totally') it became very soon an essential adjective of the 'Church' in Christian tradition. Early writers like Ignatius of Antioch (c.110), Polycarp (c.156) Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria (3rd century), Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century), all have used the word. Hans Küng
argues that none of these writers provides any clear indication of the idea of catholicity in the sense of 'fullness', 'perfection' or 'pleroma'. He thinks that attempts to derive such meanings from the word are artificial since there is no such meaning for the word in the secular literature of the time. So he cannot find any historical bridge between the uses of pleroma in Eph. 1: 23 and in the ecclesia catholica of the early Christian centuries. It should, however, be pointed out that in the small Christian communities which survived outside the Roman imperial borders, catholicity as a mark of the church had no chance of being interpreted in terms of geographical universality. Rather, the reference in Ephesians to the 'pleroma' of the church was understood seriously within the limited territorial contexts. So, one may have to further investigate whether this was really an artificial meaning or a meaning which the Christian community developed from its own self-understanding independently of its secular environment.

Confronted with the problem of heresy (hairesis: different opinion) the catholicity of the church assumed a strict doctrinal character by the time of Constantine and Theodocius, the fourth century Byzantine emperors. Heretical opinion and pagan beliefs in religion became political crimes. The codes of law of Justinian, and later of the Holy Roman empire legalized and institutionalized the catholicity of the church as doctrinal orthodoxy over and against dissenting opinions. There was, of course, the imperial politicization of ecclesiastical catholicity since the unity of the empire and the unity of the church were correlative and the latter was the effective means for achieving political unity.

This became an 'ecumenical' problem since the oikoumene, the whole inhabited world, was simply the Roman Empire. Down the centuries this political oikoumene assumed different cultural, ideological and economic universalisms while masking its essential provincialism. In the seventh century, John the Faster of Constantinople took the title 'Ecumenical Patriarch', for Constantinople was the New Rome and hence the capital of the Oikoumene, and the archbishop of that city had every reason so to do. Pope Gregory in Old Rome was however very unhappy. While advising his younger brother in the East not to appropriate for himself such pompous titles, the elder brother assumed the humblest of all titles -

---

Servus Servorum Dei - Servant of the Servants of God. However, many of his successors on the seat of Peter must have thought that ‘pastor universalis’ (ecumenical shepherd) or ‘Vicarius Christi’ would express a wider Christian concern for the whole of humanity that goes beyond the faithful of the local church of Rome.

All the five well-known patriarchates (or pentarchy) emerged within the Roman/Byzantine empire. In that sense they may all appropriate the adjective ecumenical for themselves! Ecumenical councils were imperial councils, convened by Roman emperors. They defined the catholicity and the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Church. But what about those ancient Christian communities which lived at the same time outside the borders of the Roman ‘oikoumene’? And what about all those Christian churches which flourished in later centuries without any obvious connection with the church in the ‘oikoumene’?

**Secular and ecclesiastical Globalization**

It is obviously the evolution of the authority structure and the geographical extension of the Church that began to deflect the notions of the local and the universal from their essentially qualitative character. The local certainly implies the face to face nature of the personal relationship between members of the community. The immediacy of the experience within the local community with its shared values and goals, its pain and joy is rooted in the physical proximity of the members and the sense of togetherness created by a particular place. A place becomes a home to those who are born and brought up there or for those who are long-term residents there. One can experience nostalgia for such a place; returning to that place is always homecoming, and meeting persons from the place is meeting members of the family with the possibility of total identification with the soil, the smells and flavours of that place. The liturgy of the local Church is assumed to have this experience of the one household and one body-ness provided by a particular place.

The universal does not offer us this immediacy and this physical concreteness of experience. It is rather an idea that we create by enlarging on the local experience. A head or a centre is created as the source and norm of authority in a universalist structure. The idea of the universal Church with its quantitative dimension that moved away from the notion of the ‘catholicity’ or qualitative wholeness of the Church is not different from this. As in the Roman imperial system,
the patriarchates and their protocol, the never-ending disputes, anathemas and divisions arising from the ecclesiastical patriarchal system witness to the effort of each local patriarchate attempting to assert itself as the universal norm whether in primacy, doctrine or territorial jurisdiction. All the major divisions in the Church from the fifth to the sixteenth century and beyond can be shown to be the disastrous consequence of the domineering policy and universalizing tendency of one or other local patriarchate originating in the Roman/Byzantine imperial Church.

This ecclesiastical phenomenon has a striking parallel in the geopolitical and economic order of our contemporary world. What is called universal or global is simply the extension and enlargement of one local economy, culture or system of values. The ‘universal’ notions of human rights or peace or justice or community are not necessarily shared universally by all; rather, they are euphemisms for the particular interest of a particular geographical-cultural-economic system. Its neoliberal facade successfully masks the imperial or totalitarian system. It is the secular counterpart of ecclesiastical globalism.

**Virtual Christianity**

The idea of ‘virtual Christianity’ may be mentioned as one of the current attempts to search for a new model that can go beyond the traditional notions of the local and the universal. While both the local and the universal have to do with earthly spatial reality, virtual Christianity occurs in cyberspace. It is estimated that with the World Wide Web a civilizational shift is happening. The Internet is radically transforming our sense of space and time. Some people compare the discovery of the internet to the discovery of the new world at the beginning of the colonial period.\(^6\) In a similar way mission-minded churches have begun to occupy the media landscape of the Net.

Cyber Churches are possible because the Web connects people who are scattered and separated by geographical distance. Enthusiasts of an 'internet ecclesiology' would point out that the web facilitates what is essential and constitutive in Christianity, namely community. It brings to focus the local and the universal dimensions of the Church

in a new way, without the provincialism of the local that refuses to connect to the non-local and the totalitarianism of the universal that suppresses all local identities. ‘The Internet offers a novel mix of the local and the universal. It thus creates a new kind of community, where two contradictory dimensions blend together harmoniously.’

This newly emerging ‘global’ sociability is accepted by many as a new form of Church that expresses simultaneously the globalization of our experience as well as our local reality. Manuel Castells calls the on-line sense of community the ‘networked individualism’ that corresponds to the evolution of modern society with its increased power given to individual feelings and attitudes.

Philosopher Pierre Levy emphasizes the reality of ‘virtual’ communities with its real sense of communion and belonging. The social bond created by the Web, according to Levy, is based not on territorial affiliation, or institutions, or power relationships, but on realities, such as an open process of collaboration, a sharing of power, and common interests.

While many new generation Christians, uprooted from their local identities and detached from the authority structures of the traditional Church, find solace and solidarity on the Web, it is not yet time to assess the sustainability and implications of virtual Christianity. However, it brings us to a sharper awareness of the inadequacies of the conventional notions of the local and the universal.

It is more or less obvious that most forms of religious fundamentalism are essentially efforts to reassert a people's identity that is threatened by factors like the breathtaking pace of scientific-technological progress, waves of secularization and modernization, overarching global ambitions of certain economic and political interests and the intimidating predominance of some religio-cultural agenda. All these may be considered as dimensions of a civilizational world-view that some people call ‘universal civilization’. The fundamentalist reaction to this universalizing tendency ranges from self-isolation to aggressivity and violence. While the ‘universal

---

7 Ibid. 70.
9 See Bazin and Cottin, op.cit. 71.
civilization’ assumes the ‘world as a single place’, the many places with their differences are ignored or even suppressed as of no real value. Hence the negative and hostile reaction. It is interesting that both local and universal assumes a place, and no concept of culture or civilization can do without a place. The globalizing tendency today, whether in economy or culture, might eventually reverse and return to the local. Even the expression 'glocal', coined at the height of the trans-national corporate culture, indicates the essential rootedness of human socio-economic and religio-cultural activity in a place as suggested by the word local.

Return to the Local: an Indian case

In conventional ecclesiology one finds different phases of both globalizing and localizing tendencies alternating in various periods. While it began with the local and the global mutually correlated in a healthy and balanced way, the imperial phase began to sidetrack the local. While the Western tradition in general maintained the 'universalist' interpretation of the gospel outreach to the ends of the earth and prevailed over the local, the Eastern tradition, in spite of the long centuries of the Byzantine empire, maintained the local church principle. Even today, notwithstanding all the tensions and occasional schisms and universalizing tendencies within their family, the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches hold fast to the 'local Church' as authentic expression of the Church Catholic.

In India the ecclesiology of the ancient Church of Apostle Thomas underwent an evolution and is still evolving. The apostolic Indian Church was one until the arrival of the Portuguese and the Roman Catholic Mission beginning with 1498. The one Church was eventually divided. Although almost the whole Indian Christian community rose in protest against foreign domination in the celebrated event of the Coonan Cross Oath in 1653, a section of the Indian Christian community eventually sided with the Roman Catholic position as represented by the colonisers while the other side declared its independence from Rome and turned to Oriental Christian Centres in the face of Portuguese persecution of the revolting Indian Christians.

Today the attempts to return to the original pre-Portuguese Indian Christian tradition are very strong. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church for instance is developing an ecclesiology of the 'individual Church' and ecclesia sui juris. This is in fact a return to the ancient idea of the
Local Church. All forms of inculturation and indigenization now being experimented in India are integral to this return. The earlier Roman Catholic application of the part/whole logic to the local-church/universal-Church relationship is giving way to the Communion ecclesiology based on the communion of the local/individual Churches constituting the Catholic Church.

The other section of the Indian Church community which declared its independence from fifty-three years of Portuguese Roman Catholic occupation of the Indian Church (from the Synod of Diamper 1599 to the Coonan Cross Oath 1653), restored Indian ecclesiastical autonomy by establishing the autocephalous Catholicosate in 1912. However a section of this community remained faithful to the jurisdiction of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch after some twelve years of united life under the Catholicos, and recently set up its own structure directly under the Patriarch.

A Bio-Ecclesial Model

The biblical and patristic understanding of the Local Church or the Church of God / Christ in a place was grounded in the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ following the Pauline image. The holistic nature of the life of the body does not isolate or negate the identity of its members. Instead the profound and subtle interconnectedness within the body manifests its fullness (catholicity) in every part of the body. In the normal, healthy body of a living organism, the integration of all its parts is so perfect that there is no awareness of division or separation. On the contrary awareness or experience of dislocation and disintegration arises in a diseased body.

The conflict between the local and the universal arose because of the geographical model underscored by the ideas of quantitative growth, territorial expansion, possession and superstructure of universal authority. As John Zizioulas says: ‘Any structural universalization of the Church to the point of creating an ecclesial entity called “universal church” as something parallel to or above that of the local Church would inevitably introduce into the concept of the Church cultural and other dimensions which are foreign to a particular local context.’

Metaphor of an organic web or vital network is now predominant in all disciplines of human knowledge from particle physics to ecology. This is essentially taken from the body experience of living organisms. The holistic integrity and interconnectedness of life incarnate in a multitude of forms provide a model that is both ancient and contemporary for the Church.

Ecclesiology of the future may draw from the twin dimensions of the local rootedness of a genuine human community with all the particularities of its culture and identity as well as from the organic wholeness of a living and discerning body that defies any domineering, hierarchical, centrally administrative and juridical structure.

The freedom and creativity of the Church are drawn from the Holy Spirit who continually constitutes the Church of Christ. The Spirit helps us to incarnate and transcend at the same time the multitude of our contexts.
THE LOGOS OF OUR ADVAITIC EKKLÊSIA

R. Brad Bannon*

Colossians 1:24 and Ephesians 1:22-23 assert that the church (ἐκκλησία) is the body of Christ. If Christ is divine and God is infinite, then how are we to circumscribe this body? Can there exist anything at all that is extra ecclesiam? Is the church bounded within a pluralistic global village or, rather, must we reconceive the ἐκκλησία, recognizing that the body of Christ is already religiously plural? This article offers an investigation of the notion of ἐκκλησία through the lens of the Indian philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, suggesting that the church has no substantial existence at all, but rather indicates pluralistic relationality and dialogue. Christ is the in-finite Word (λόγος) which cannot be defined and whose body only becomes manifest by our calling one another out (ἐκ καλέω), coming together (συν ἀγω), and piercing the Logos in di-a-logue.

Introduction

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language.¹

If all philosophy after Wittgenstein is philosophy of language, perhaps the same can be said of theology. ‘In the beginning was the Word (λόγος).’ (John 1: 1) This brief paper investigates ‘ecclesiology’ from etymological, ontological, and decidedly Indian perspectives. How might we reconcile the Evangelist’s identification of Christ with λόγος

* Brad Bannon is a doctoral student of comparative religion at Harvard Divinity School. He obtained a Licentiate in Philosophy with an emphasis in the ethics of contemporary Advaita Vedānta from Dharmaram Vidyā Kshetram in Bangalore, India. He also holds a Masters of Divinity from Drew Theological School and a degree in Music from Furman University. His research interests include the reconception of Christology in dialogue with Advaita Vedānta, particularly the ecclesiological and eco-ethical implications of such a reconception.

and (Deutero-)Paul’s identification of ‘the body of Christ’ with the ἐκκλησία? (Eph 1:22-23, Col 1:24)² Does the Indian philosophy of nondual ontology (advaita) offer useful resources for this investigation?

Originally conceived for a colloquium entitled ‘Investigating Ecclesiology: The Church in Pluralistic Context,’ (Kottayam, Jan. 2008) this article begins by literally investigating the word ἐκκλησία. Building upon this foundational designation, it explores the (im)possibility of conceiving of the church ‘in’ a pluralistic context precisely because the ἐκκλησία is a pluralistic context. The third section explores advaitic anthropology in response to the question, ‘if the ἐκκλησία signifies “those who have (been) gathered together”, then who are gathered together?’ This will lead us to an advaitic ecclesiology understood dynamically and dialogically. Finally, we shall conclude by graphing the ἐκκλησία through the means of a new (ancient) metaphor.

**Investigating ἐκκλησία**

‘The ἐκκλησία was in confusion and most of them did not know why they had come together.’ (Acts 19: 32)

Tasked with the challenge of ‘investigating ecclesiology’ for the colloquium mentioned above, I first turned to scripture and lexicons. Ἐκκλησία derives from the Greek prefix ἐκ (out) and verb καλέω (to call). Thus, it could either signify ‘those who are called out’ or ‘those who call one another out’. The former definition would seem congruent with the Hebrew understanding of ‘the chosen people’, the exclusivist Calvinist theology of ‘the elect’, and perhaps even the inclusivist fulfillment theories of the last century. However, it poses considerable theological challenges. For example: *Called out from whom? Who is excluded from the call? Why does God exclude part of God’s Creation from the call?* In addition to these theological pitfalls, a literal, etymological definition of ἐκκλησία seems contrary to the ways in which the ancient communities tended to use and understand the term. Perhaps, therefore, ἐκκλησία does not signify God’s ‘calling out’ one group in exclusion of others, but, rather, it refers to our own

---

² I wish to avoid any debate over the authorship of these later epistles and will, henceforth, refer to the writer simply as Paul, without implication.
‘calling out’ to one another from our divisiveness and into assembly.

Perhaps ἐκκλησία was adopted to name the Christian community in order to indicate both a sense of continuity and distinction from the Hellenistic Jewish term συναγωγή (synagogue). Συναγωγή derives from συν (together) and ἀγω (to lead, bring). Hence, it is not a designation of exclusion, but of unity. The συναγωγή is not an edifice; it is manifest by the action of bringing ourselves together. Similarly, the ἐκκλησία is not a church building; it is manifest by the action of calling one another out from our divisiveness. In fact, Paul is critical of the ἐκκλησία in Corinth because they have not abandoned their divisiveness: ‘When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse, because, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.’ (1 Cor 11: 17-18)

In fact, outside of the epistles and certainly in the Septuagint, ἐκκλησία is perhaps most often translated simply as ‘assembly.’ It is not a ‘place’ of assemblage. Neither is it a ‘quality’ of commonality, obviating diversity in an appeal to the lowest common denominator (i.e., fundamental Christian dogma). Rather, it is an active indication of calling one another out (ἐκ-καλέω) from our divisiveness and bringing ourselves together (συν-ἀγω). ‘For where two or three are gathered (συνηγένοι) in my name, I am there among them.’ (Matt. 18:20)

Ἐκκλησία: Contextualized or Context?

The specified topic of our colloquium in Kottayam was ‘the church in pluralistic context.’ However, as a student of Heidegger’s writing, I question how we are to interpret ‘context’. Are we Being-in-the-World or do we remain beings-in-the-world? Should we not, rather, understand ἐκκλησία as a uniquely Christian description of mit-Dasein-im-Welt, or Being-with-Others-in-the-World? Ἐκκλησία is not ‘beings’ who are ‘with other beings’ who happen to be located ‘in the world,’ nor is it ‘beings’ who have gathered together to form a colloquium or church community, nor is it the process of gathering together. In Luke 13: 34, Christ says, ‘How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, yet you were not willing!’ Thus, the ἐκκλησία is the continuous gathering together of those who have (been) willingly gathered together.
The ἐκκλησία is, therefore, a natural compatriot of the λόγος, for in our discourse, we gather together in our gatheredness. True mit-Dasein is ecclesiology; it is Being-with-Others-in-discourse. The ‘in’ is not a spatial, contextualizing designator, but a temporal one. Our context, therefore, is a temporal context of discourse, of λόγος, and our ἐκκλησία is defined by that very willingness to and performance of discourse. But, in fact, ‘discourse’ is insufficient. ἐκκλησία demands dia-logue: a piercing or ‘going through’ (διά) the λόγος. Only by piercing The Word (διά ὁ λόγος) can we truly come to encounter the radical alterity that gathers with us to constitute this ἐκκλησία. Ecclesiology, therefore, is both crucifixion and resurrection: It is a piercing of the Word (dia-logue) but also a bodily resurrection in and through the constitution of the ἐκκλησία, which Paul calls the body of Christ. (Eph 1: 23)

My point here is that we cannot speak of a ‘church in a pluralistic context’ because the church, the ἐκκλησία, already is the context and this context is defined by two conditions. The first condition is a willingness to come together; or, in keeping with Luke’s Gospel, a willingness to be gathered together. (Luke 13:34) The second condition is a continuation of this coming together through the act of dialogue. Hence, ecclesiology is ‘the coming-together through dialogue of those who have (been) willingly gathered together.’

Thus, having (re)defined ekklēsiology, we must now turn our attention to philosophical anthropology. In other words, who is gathered together?

Advaitic Anthropology:
Panikkar’s Experience of ‘My Me as the You of the I’

For some years now, I have been an admirer and student of the writings of Raimon Panikkar. Like Panikkar, and largely because of him, I Self-identify as a Christian advaitin. This affords certain non-dualistic perspectives on ἐκκλησία, not only regarding the ontology of assembly, but also with respect to those who are assembled.

In Advaita Vedānta, there are several māhāvākyāṇi, or ‘great sayings’ which succinctly encompass the core of non-dualistic ontology. Among these, four are traditionally principle and among these four, one is said to be supreme. As the Chāndogya Upaniṣad reads: tat satyam, sa ātmā, tat tvam asi, ‘That is the true. That is the Self. Thou
Within each of us, indelible is the question, ‘who am I?’ But to whom is the question posed? If ‘I’ ask ‘you’, ‘Who am I?’, then have I not prematurely evaded the question of ‘who are you?’ Here we find the tact of Levinas. It is precisely the other, the face of the other, that precedes and constitutes ‘me’ qua ‘thou’. As an advaitin, I applaud the shift away from the cogito and primacy of the ‘I’, but, as Panikkar shows, Levinas has swung the pendulum too far. Here, I take the liberty of quoting Panikkar at length:

Strictly speaking, the alius does not exist. The other does not exist as ‘other’ but as itself... The other is not other for itself. It is our egocentric perspective that calls it an other... Reality is not formed by I and non-I... The thou is neither I nor non-I. Relation is advaitic... There is no I without a you, and vice versa. But neither is the relation monistic; in that case it would not be real. I and you are neither identical nor reducible to I (alone) or you (alone) nor to a higher individual (of a higher unity). To discover myself as a thou is to discover the deepest identity in myself, neither in the face of ‘an other’ nor within a narcissistic mirror. It is rather equivalent to discovering my dynamic ipse, as being myself – tat tvam asi! The tvam belongs inseparably to the tat.3

Will not the true cogito (‘I think’) be a cogitamus (‘we think’) and the sum (‘I am’) a sumus (‘we are’)... Is not Being rather an activity, an act?4

Here, we come once again to the definition of ecclesiology that I offered earlier. Ecclesiology is ‘the coming-together through dialogue of those who have willingly (been) gathered together.’ In fact, our very existence, our response to the ‘who am I?’, is ecclesiology. Cogitamus ergo sumus; ‘we think, therefore, we are.’ This is precisely, once again, why I argue that we cannot discuss the ‘church in a pluralistic context’ because the church, the ἐκκλησία, is a pluralistic context. The other, the alius, is not an alter-ego, but a ‘thou’. Contrary to Descartes, ‘I’ do not constitute the thou, because the ‘thou’ is not an object. Contrary to Levinas, the ‘thou’ does not constitute ‘me’ because ‘I’ am not an object, either. Whatever ‘I am’, I am not autonomous, nor am I heteronomous. Rather, ‘I’ am constituted by ontonomy, the law of

4 Panikkar, Christophany, 61.
Being. Being is non-dual. The ‘I’ and the ‘me’ are simultaneous and consubstantial. They are different but not different (bheda-bheda).

Panikkar explains this philosophical shift not in terms of logical syllogism, but in terms of a mystical experience. We must experience the ‘me’ as the ‘you’ of the ‘I’. We have here a break in the fundamental Western dichotomy of subject/object dualism. This is precisely the problematic articulated by Heidegger. In his Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning), Heidegger redefines Da-sein as das Zwischen, the ‘in-between’. In essence, the experience of the ‘me’ as the ‘you’ of the ‘I’ is an experience of every ‘me’ as the ‘you’ of THE I. In other words, I do not experience you as an alter-ego, another ‘I’, but as another ‘me’. Conversely, I experience ‘me’ in my tatva, my ‘thatness’.

Only after we have experienced the me as the you of the I, the one and only I, One without a Second, YHWH, can we understand that second all-important mahāvākyā: ahambrahmāsmi. Panikkar explains, ‘Thou discoverest the I by being thyself, by being thy self, by being the thou of the I. It is the I and the I alone that can say ahambrahmāsmi (I am brahman), Yahweh (‘I am who I am’)…The ahambrahmāsmi must be seen in the light of the tat tvam asī!  

Advaitic Ekklêsiology

In Ephesians 1: 22-23, Paul explains, ‘[God, the Father] has put all things under [Christ’s] feet and has made him the head over all things for the church (ἐκκλησία) which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.’ And, again, in Colossians 1: 24, he writes, ‘... in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church (ἐκκλησία).’

As philosophers and theologians, how are we to understand these passages? Do we dismiss Paul’s identifying of the church and the body of Christ as artistic metaphor and poetic license, or should we interpret it literally, as the passages seem to support? If the ἐκκλησία is the body of Christ, then how do we de-fine this body? Is Christ not in-finite? Wouldn’t any exclusive de-fining make finite that which we believe to be in-finite? Again, if the church, the ἐκκλησία, is the body of Christ, then how can we say that it is ‘in’ a context? Reasonably speaking, can we place that which is infinite ‘in’ something which is

---

5 Panikkar, Christophany, 35, 119.
finite? Christ simply does not ‘fit’ ‘in’ a context and the church, as the body of Christ, also does not ‘fit’ ‘in’ a context.

One possible solution to this aporia is an advaitic understanding of the human person and, more broadly, an advaitic understanding of Reality. Regarding the Trinity, this would lead us to interpret the Father as the ‘I’, as YHWH, as the aham of ahambrahmāsmi. The Son is the ‘you’, the ‘thou’, the necessary correlate to the ‘I’, the body, the ἐκκλησία, the Cosmos. The Spirit is the dynamic principle of unfolding, swaying, Being, sat. When we experience the ‘me’ as the ‘you’ of the ‘I’, we experience Christ in what Panikkar describes as a christophany, a manifesting of Christ. It is not an experience of ‘I am Christ’, but an experience of ‘Christ is me’ or, more accurately, ‘Christ is US.’

To whatever extent we de-fine the church over and against alterity (be it Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc.), then to that extent we limit the body of Christ, which is limitless. Conversely, to whatever extent we gather together (συν-ἀγω) and pierce the Word (διά ὁ λόγος) in pluralistic dialogue, to that extent the body of Christ (ἐκκλησία) is manifest. Again, the ἐκκλησία is not substantially existent; rather it is relationally manifested in and through our calling out (ἐκ-καλέω) one another from our divisiveness (1 Cor 11: 17-18) and allowing ourselves to be gathered together (Lk 13: 34), not ‘in’ a pluralistic context, but as a pluralistic context.

Graphing the Ἐκκλησία

For this final section, I would like to shift away from ethereal, speculative philosophy and direct our investigation of ekklēsiology towards more concrete examples in contemporary dialogue. Systematic theology certainly has its place and I hope I have given it its due, but there is also a need for useful imagery and metaphors in order to package what I have written thus far such that it is both palatable and portable.

At the World Council of Churches Assembly in February 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, offered an inspiring and provocative speech examining the notion of Christian Identity.⁶ He

---

⁶ The full speech is available from the World Council of Churches website: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/portoalegre-2006/2-plenary-presentations/christian-identity-religious-plurality/rowan-
described identity as a ‘map of relationships.’ Here, we find a metaphorical representation of the principle of ontonomy. It is not that ‘I’ constitute the other, nor does the Other constitute ‘me’, but we constitute one another according to the law of Being. Hence, my self-identity (a problematic term for an advaitin), is defined by my relationships. Coming to understand my ‘self’ means coming to understand my place on this relational map. The Archbishop’s map breaks down the traditional socio-religious and cultural taxonomies such that ‘I’ am not a ‘white Christian USAmerican’, but ‘I’ am a ‘me’ to you, him, and her. Thus, identity is ἐκκλησία. ‘I am’ inasmuch as I come together with others. Understanding this map of relationships is tantamount to a willingness to be gathered together under the wing of Christ, the mother hen of Luke 13: 34.

After the Archbishop presented his paper, our host in Kottayam and fellow contributor to the current issue, Fr. K. M. George, questioned whether or not this map of relationships might be or become a ‘spider-web of entrapment’. I do not wish to misrepresent Fr. George, but I believe I take his point. The metaphor of the map of relationships is dangerous because it threatens to be misinterpreted as yet another taxonomy such that ‘I’ am de-fined (or worse, constituted) by my relationship with others. Perhaps there are parallels here between Fr. George’s web and Heidegger’s das Man, or the hegemony of ‘the they’.

I believe the problem, once again, stems from the false dichotomy of subject/object dualism. If we understand ‘I’ as ‘subject’, then the map of relationships is, indeed, a web of entrapment. In fact, the more this ‘I’ understands itself over-and-against the alter-ego of alterity, the more it becomes entrapped in this stifling web. As such, the ‘Christian’ is ever more de-fined (i.e., made increasingly finite) as non-Hindu, non-Muslim, non-Jew, etc. From this vantage, the church in pluralistic context is narrowed, closed-off, and de-fined to the extent that it bears no resemblance at all to the boundless body of Christ which Paul describes.

I wish to conclude this investigation of ekklêsiology by offering a new (ancient) metaphor. The image of Indra’s Net derives from the Avataṃsaka Sūtra of the Third Century. The text describes Reality as a network of crystals, each reflecting the entire universe in microcosm.
without rendering the macrocosm superfluous. As a crystal in Indra’s Net, I reflect thou such that you are able to see yourself in our relation, yet ‘I’ do not constitute you. The metaphor describes an in-finite ekklêsia which recognizes the ontological value of relation in a way similar to the Archbishop’s map of relationships, but avoids Fr. George’s spider-web of entrapment because subject and object are not de-fined in opposition to one another, but are mutually enriching and thoroughly advaitic.

From our Christian perspective, we can understand Indra’s Net as the body of Christ. It is at once, the church (ἐκκλησία) and also the context. In obedience to Christ’s request in Luke 13:34, what is required of us is that we become willing to be gathered together. Our ἐκκλησία is in-finite. It cannot be de-fined by the walls of our churches, nor is it limited to the synthetic category we label ‘Christian’. Ekklêsiology is ‘the coming-together through dialogue of those who have (been) willingly gathered together.’ The only requirement is that we are willing to recognize that the ἐκκλησία is always already a pluralistic context.
THE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH: HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Emma Loosley*

The Maronite Church in Lebanon is widely known to be the earliest Catholic Church in the Middle East, but what is less well known are the disputed origins of the Maronites. This article appraises the historical evidence and tries to reconcile this evidence with the historiography of the Maronite Church.

Origins of the Maronite Church

After him I shall recall Maron, for he too adorned the godly choir of the saints. Embracing the open-air life, he repaired to a hill-top formerly honoured by the impious. Consecrating to God the precinct of demons on it, he lived there, pitching a small tent which he seldom used. He practised not only the usual labors, but devised others as well, heaping up the wealth of philosophy.¹

This is how Theodoret of Cyrrhus introduces the holy man Maron in his Ecclesiastical History. The entry is extremely brief and, although Maron is also mentioned in the Lives of Symeon the Elder, James, Limnaeus et al, Zebinas and Domnina² as an extremely influential figure in Syrian asceticism, we actually know remarkably little about this fifth-century monk who is revered as the inspiration for an Oriental Catholic Church. There is a belief held by many of the faithful that Maron was resident at Kafar Nabo, on the Syrian limestone Massif and that he was buried nearby in the town of Brad,

* Emma Loosley, University of Manchester, teaches Middle Eastern Art and Architecture whilst having an expertise in Eastern Christianity in the Middle East. Between 2001 and September 2003 she lived in the monastery of Deir Mar Musa in the mountains of Syria, which has become a major centre for Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle East. Her research interests include the evolution of Christian Art, the Architecture of monasticism, pilgrimage, cross-currents at the fringes of the Roman and Persian empires and the transition from Christian to Islamic Art.

² Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the monks of Syria, 119.
then the provincial capital of the region:

Theodoret mentions that when St. Maroun decided to lead a life of isolation, he went to a rugged mountain halfway between Cyrrhus and Aleppo. There was a huge pagan temple for [the] god Nabo of which was derived the name of the mountain and the neighboring village Kfarnabo...St Maroun died around 410 AD and willed to be buried in St. Zabina’s tomb in Kita in the region of Cyrrhus. However, his will was not executed because people from different villages wanted to have him buried in their towns. Theodoret’s description of St. Maroun’s burial place points to the populous town of Barad [Brad] in the proximity of Kfarnabo. A huge church was built in that town around the beginning of the fifth century AD.3

In fact there is no literary or archaeological information to support this view as there is no contemporary information on Maron other than Theodoret’s account. Frazee points out that in his Philotheos, Theodoret says that Bet Maroun was the shrine of Maron’s relics and that it was located on the Orontes in the vicinity of Apamea. The major significance of this is that in 445 Theodoret states that the house already has 400 monks.4 Obviously this directly contradicts the legends that have grown up around Maron, but whereas there is a dearth of information on St. Maron himself, the ecclesiastical chronicles do allow us glimpses of Bet Maroun as it evolved into a highly influential centre of monasticism.

Our next documentary reference to Maron himself comes almost a thousand years later in the writings of the Arab historian Abu al-Fida (1273-1331). This also mentions that the followers of St. Maron or Maroun had founded a monastery named Bet Maroun in the Diocese of Syria Secunda in the vicinity of Apamea, echoing the writings of Theodoret. However it is slightly easier to trace the evolution of this monastery than it is the founder. In 517 a letter to Pope Hormisdas appealing for help against the monophysite Christians, who were at that time in the ascendant, mentions the monastery of St. Matronis which Frazee interprets as being Bet Maroun.5 It is shortly after this period that another great divergence appears between the belief of the

5 Charles Frazee, ‘The Maronite Middle Ages’, 91.
Maronite faithful and the documented historical events and this time the controversy centres on a figure named St. Jean Maron.

The First Patriarch: St. Jean Maron

Today travellers to the monastery of St. Jean Maron Kafarhayye in the district of Batroun, northern Lebanon, are shown an elaborate reliquary shaped as the bust of a haloed young man. This reliquary holds the head of St. Jean Maron whom the monks at the monastery proudly proclaim as first patriarch of the Maronite Church and a nephew of Charlemagne. The official Maronite view is:

Near the end of the fifth century of the Christian era, the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon had been converted by the disciples of St. Maron and had become Maronites themselves. These now welcomed their brethren arriving from Antioch and the two groups, now mingled, pursued their mission together. When the Arabs finally dominated the area, and any regular contact with the patriarchate of Constantinople became impossible, the Maronites had to appoint in 687 their own Patriarch, who was Saint John-Maron.

The Emperor of Byzantium acted as if his royal authority extended over the Church. He appointed Patriarchs and in many ways interfered in ecclesiastical matters. The Christians for their part got into a habit of turning to him to solve their problems. When the Maronites chose a Patriarch for themselves, the authorities at Byzantium withheld their consent. While invading the region, the imperial army attacked the Maronites, and a battle was fought at Amioun, which resulted in a victory for the latter. The Patriarch established himself at Kfarhay, where he made the Episcopal palace his seat.6

6 <www.opuslibani.org.lb>. It is worth mentioning here that whereas internet sources are, rightly, regarded with suspicion in most academic sources, in Lebanon they are more widely consulted by students and academics alike. This is for two reasons. Firstly, and most significantly, many libraries were destroyed during the Lebanese civil war and even those that survived are now struggling to catch up with the years of publications that they have missed. Secondly, perhaps as a consequence of the above, most Lebanese are far more computer-literate and adept at using internet resources than the majority of many other countries meaning that more information is made available locally in this format. See for example <www.mari.org> the internet journal of the Maronite Research Institute. Finally the Maronite diaspora means that many more Maronites now live outside Lebanon than remain at home in their traditional mountain heartlands and therefore the internet is a valuable resource for disseminating information and fostering a common identity.
On the other hand there are some in academic circles who claim that Jean Maron is a complete invention and that there is no evidence to suggest such a figure ever existed. As most people will probably realise, the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes but it seems likely that a figure of this name did have a significant effect on the formation of the Maronite Church. Frazee points out that Eutychius of Alexandria (d. 939) writes of him and three Syriac treatises still extant claim Jean Maron as their author.\(^7\) The fact that he does not mention any patriarch after Severus of Antioch also firmly places the treatises in the sixth century. It seems prudent therefore to accept that Jean Maron was a significant figure in this evolving religious movement in the sixth century, but as with the case of Maron himself, we must accept a considerable divergence between the perceptions of the faithful and the historical documents.

These differing perceptions of origins must be continually underlined because they are an issue peculiar to the Maronite Church. No other Christian denomination has such mysterious, and often contentious, origins. Suermann observes: ‘We do not know much about Maronite historiography before the fifteenth century. We have to presume that Maronites recorded their history during and before the time of the Crusades, but nearly nothing has come down to us. Many scholars think that the Maronite Church has destroyed older literature after the union with Rome.’\(^8\)

**Heraclius and Theological Unorthodoxy**

This ambiguity about Maronite origins is largely due to the fact that the early Maronite community was the only denomination to subscribe to the *Ekthesis* of Emperor Heraclius in 638 and espouse his new doctrine of monothelitism, which asserted that Christ has one will and is both man and God. At first this view was upheld in both Constantinople and Rome, but this changed in 680 when a Constantinopolitan council condemned the *Ekthesis* and the monothelite party as heretical. Thereafter only the Maronites continued to follow the doctrine and it was during this period that Jean Maron came to the fore and the Maronite monastic tradition was first recognised as a Church. With the increasing instability in the

---

\(^{7}\) Charles Frazee, ‘The Maronite Middle Ages’, 91.

region caused by both religious conflicts and the military campaigns of the Byzantine, Persian and Arab forces, the Maronites retreated to Mount Lebanon. It was at this point that the monasteries and hermitages of the Maronites proliferated in and around the Wadi Qadisha and the foundations were laid for this region to become the spiritual heartland of the Maronite Church.

As with many elements of Maronite history the details are vague, but at some point in the twelfth century this Church of mountain-dwelling monks entered into a formal union with Rome. This contact came about through the presence of Latin Crusaders in the region and the Maronites were singled out by becoming the only Eastern Christians to enter the Roman fold. The Crusader chronicler William of Tyre wrote in 1182 that 40,000 Maronites renounced monothelitism and joined with the Crusaders, although the mountain-dwellers remained hostile to the invaders. Nevertheless in 1213 the Maronite Patriarch Jeremiah al-Amshiti visited Rome and in 1215 received the pallium as a sign of the Maronite acceptance into the Roman fold.9 Although dissent remained within the Maronite ranks at this union with the Franks and their Latin Church, the eventual conquest of the Crusading states by the Mamluks healed these divisions as they were persecuted as collaborators for their support of the Crusaders. Once again the Maronites were forced to retreat to the mountains to protect their community. From 1440 until 1823 the Patriarchate was based in Wadi Kannoubine after the Maronites retreated from Jbeil (Byblos) to escape the depredations of the Mamluks in the aftermath of the Crusades. This has been interpreted as a retreat into the wilderness for the Church and described by one commentator in the following terms:

They mourned but took stock of themselves, and entered on a new life. As Jbeil was the Maronites’ Garden of Olives, so Wadi Kannoubine was their road to Golgotha, and there remained to them only the triumph of the Resurrection.10

What is not in any doubt is the fact that the Maronite Church remained loyal to its roots as a Church firmly wedded to its early monastic identity. Maronite monasteries remained the powerhouses of the intellectual life of the Church and all events centred on the

---

10 Taken from History of the Maronite Patriarchate <www.opuslibani.org.lb>.
Patriarchate. Whatever the truth behind this retreat, whether or not the Mamluk depredations were as organised and methodical as the Maronites feared, this perception of persecution and struggle, wedded to a self-image of a self-sufficient and spiritual mountain people, has left an indelible mark on the Maronite psyche and this period is seen as having forged a strong identity for the Church.

Closer links with Rome

The next evolutionary step for the Maronite Church was increasing Latinization, as Rome sought to bring her easternmost Catholics more strongly into the fold. This was achieved towards the end of the sixteenth century when the Papal legate, a Jesuit named John Baptist Eliano, destroyed many Maronite manuscripts that were deemed unsuitable for Catholic worship. In 1584 Pope Gregory XIII founded the Maronite College in Rome and by controlling the education of many Maronite priests he was able to further tighten Vatican authority over this remote, mountain-dwelling congregation.

With recurring accusations that the Maronite Church was deliberately obscuring its supposedly heretical origins, the Church refuted this in the seventeenth century with a scholarly campaign led by Patriarch Stephan Duwaihi (1670-1704) who later became known as ‘the Father of Maronite Historiography’. The flourishing of scholarship in this period also included Joseph-Simon Assemani (1687-1768) who is well known by western scholars, as well as in his native Lebanon, for his work cataloguing the Oriental Christian manuscripts owned by the Vatican. With this strong desire to create an official Maronite history tied strongly to a national Lebanese identity, the writers of this era – especially Patriarch Duwaihi – were hailed as the definitive chroniclers of the Maronite Church. Whilst historians now debate the accuracy of Duwaihi’s work and do not credit him with an accurate historical account, his work still resonates today as the contemporary ecclesiastical hierarchy make extensive use of his work and declare it their authorised view of history. Whilst modern scholars such as Paul Rouhana have successfully demonstrated the weaknesses of Duwaihi, there is still a reluctance to bow to the inevitable and many scholars have found publishing their work difficult in the Lebanon if they

---

refute Duwaihi. Many Maronites privately acknowledge nowadays that Maronite history did exist before Duwaihi and that there are other interpretations of the facts, but this view is by no means current in the centre of Maronite learning, the Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK), where the older, more conservative scholars still teach their students that Duwaihi is the staple source of Maronite history.

What is clear is that, leaving the issue of the veracity of Patriarch Duwaihi’s historical works aside, it was during this period that a strong consciousness of what it meant to be ‘Maronite’ evolved and the Church became a political force to be reckoned with in Lebanon. In part this political strength was facilitated by the support of Rome. By 1610 a printing press was in operation in the Monastery of St. Anthony in Qozhaya. This press was brought by missionaries from Rome and was in use almost two hundred years before Napoleon introduced the first press to Egypt. It was also around this period that the Maronites began to ally themselves with the Druze authorities of southern Lebanon in order to institute a federal government of the region. This was to the advantage of both parties who each wanted a degree of autonomy from the ruling Ottoman Empire, and the alliance continued until 1842.

The Origins of Diaspora: The Nineteenth Century

It was with growing confidence in the nineteenth century that the Maronite Patriarchate moved out of its self-imposed wilderness in Deir Qannoubine, Wadi Qadisha, and took up residence in two new official residences. From 1823 the Patriarch spent summer in Dimane and winter in Bkerke. This coincided with major political changes when from 1842 until 1861 the Maronites became practically autonomous when the Ottomans and the European powers divided Mount Lebanon into two caïmacamiat (regions), a Maronite district in the north and a Druze district in the south. This was criticised by Patriarch Youssef Hobeiche (1823-1845) on the grounds that each region had a significant minority of the other faith and that this would

---

12 Paul Rouhana, personal communication regarding the supremacy of Duwaihi in Maronite historiography
cause religious divisions. The violence escalated with atrocities on both sides until it erupted into full-scale massacres in 1860. A Maronite website sums up the cost of 1860 as follows:

It is not known exactly how many Christians were slaughtered in Lebanon but most sources put the figure between 7,000 to 11,000 and some well over 20,000. A letter in the English Daily News in July 1860 states that between 7,000 and 8,000 had been murdered, 5,000 widowed and 16,000 orphaned. Mr Farley, in a letter, speaks of 326 villages, 560 churches, 28 colleges, 42 convents, and 9 other religious establishments, had been totally destroyed. Churchill puts the figures as 11,000 murdered, 100,000 refugees, 20,000 widows and orphans, 3,000 habitations burned to the ground, and 4,000 perished of destitution. 

The Opuslibani website put the death toll at ten thousand and Robert Fisk at twelve thousand, and the events of 1860 sowed a division with the Druze that persists to the present day. After the French stepped in to restore peace, the Ottomans and Europeans initiated the Mutassarrifiat system whereby a Protocol of 1864 signed by the Ottoman Empire, England, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia agreed a federation of the Maronites and other religious groups in Lebanon. In reality real power remained with the Ottomans as they maintained control of Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and the regions of Rashaya, Hasbaya and Bekaa. The remaining Christian district was ruled by a Christian, but non-native, governor – obviously this new system was bitterly opposed by the Maronites from the Patriarch downwards.

War and Division

The Mutassarrifiat came to an end with the outbreak of the First World War. During this period the Maronites, along with many other Eastern Christians, and in particular the Armenians, were persecuted by the Turks, who perceived all Christians as potential traitors who would side with the Allies. At the end of the war the Lebanese decided not to let others decide the fate of their country without consulting the

16 <www.cedarland.org>.
Lebanese people. To this end the Maronite Patriarch Elias Hoayek (1898-1931) led a Lebanese delegation to the Versailles Conference in 1919. The representations of the Patriarch and other members of the council of the Mutasarrifiat were successful and on 1 September 1920 Lebanon was proclaimed a state. The country had all its historical territories returned. In 1926 the Republic of Greater Lebanon was established and its first constitution ratified but Lebanon’s true independence was not achieved until 22 November 1943 when the French Mandate was finally ended – in reality it was not until 1946 that all foreign troops left the country.\(^{19}\) It is interesting to note that, although to outsiders the Maronite Patriarchate seems to have been a central element in Lebanese politics up to and including the present day, the Maronites themselves do not accept this. Abbot Paul Naaman, a respected historian in the traditional Maronite manner, writes:

> The Maronite Church did not practice politics directly. Nor is the Maronite Church a national Church in the strict historic meaning of the word. It also did not attach itself to any political system, nor did it work for any specific country. However, its search for freedom attached it to Lebanon, thus Lebanon became the spiritual land of the Maronites and nothing is more precious than protecting it. The only continued concern of the Maronite Church throughout its history was and still is the freedom of its people to live and worship in dignity.\(^{20}\)

As a nation of traders and accomplished linguists, the Lebanese began to travel and the Maronite diaspora began much earlier than that of any of the other Eastern Churches, with the exception of the Armenian Church. The aftermath of the First World War and continued financial instability led to a wave of Lebanese following earlier emigrants and leaving for the USA and elsewhere – perhaps the most notable of these emigrants being Gibran Khalil Gibran. It is interesting that some Lebanese commentators claim that this process was accelerated by problems within the Maronite community itself:

> After the war, there was a return to the traditional pattern of life. Now that the Maronites had a more normal existence, there were two tendencies dividing them. Conflict was renewed, and the enemy

---


\(^{20}\) Ibid.
outside entered the house. Coming to the most recent part of the
contemporary history of our community, we find selfishness as the
dominating force driving the hearts of the faithful. Division reached
the point where members were finally at each other’s throats and
carrying out massacres.

This egoism had inevitable repercussions on the lives of the faithful.
There was a moral collapse, and many people went abroad, as their
predecessors had done after the events of 1860.\(^{21}\)

This process continued throughout the twentieth century and was
obviously significantly exacerbated by the outbreak of the Lebanese
civil war in 1975. In the confusion of the war alliances were constantly
shifting as the different factions sought to gain the upper hand and in
the morass of accusations and counter-accusations that have
characterised the civil war it is often forgotten that the Syrian army
was originally invited into the country by the Maronite faction.\(^{22}\) This
is especially significant when we consider that it was the Maronites
who were amongst the vociferous opponents of the Syrians until their
withdrawal from Lebanon in 2004, and many of whom continue to
campaign against pro-Syrian politicians in the Lebanese Parliament. It
is also important to remember that many Maronites still prefer to deal
with educated middle-class Sunni Muslims than to mix with the
Orthodox Christians who have instinctive links with the Shi’a
population and even with Hezbollah.\(^{23}\) Often these divisions are based
more on commercial and social factors than religious considerations;
whilst the Maronites have for centuries been pro-European,
particularly pro-French and modelled their businesses, fashions and
aspirations on a European model, the Sunni middle classes have
begun to aspire to the same lifestyle and outlook. By marked contrast
the Shi’a and, to a certain extent, the Orthodox Christians,
Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, espouse a more traditional

\(^{22}\) Robert Fisk, Pity the Nation (Oxford University Press, 1992) 83.
\(^{23}\) During periods of time spent in Lebanon teaching at the Université Saint-
Esprit up until and including 2004, I encountered a number of wealthy Sunni
students, mostly female, who I was told were encouraged to attend the
Maronite institution as somewhere they would be well educated in a safe and
morally upright environment. On the other hand a Rum (i.e. Greek) Orthodox
monk has told me of his travels around Iran on a cultural trip paid for by his
Hezbollah friends and, although currently resident in the UK, he still
socialises with Shi’ite Lebanese from the south of the country.
lifestyle and, whilst aspiring to the material goods of the West, are less enthusiastic about taking the western way of life on board wholesale. Whilst many young Lebanese are part of the MTV generation and live for clubbing, designer clothes and the latest mobile phone, the Orthodox leaders in particular are quick to warn that Satan lies behind such temptations.\(^{24}\)

Today the Maronite diaspora population is put at more than eight million people worldwide\(^{25}\) and as the events of summer 2006 demonstrated, with Lebanon remaining politically unstable and at risk of military attack across its borders, the emigration of Maronites to Europe, the USA, and Canada in particular, is set to continue for the foreseeable future. When Beirut was attacked in July 2006 some 30,000 Canadian citizens were reported in the British press as being stranded in the city; this is a clear indication of the size of the diaspora as the majority of these were Maronites visiting friends and family, or people living their lives between these two countries.

*The Quest for a United Identity: Politics and Spirituality*

The events of 1860 up until the present day mean that questions of Maronite identity have become even more important and emotive as the Church struggles to keep this global community together. The World Maronite Union declares that:

\(^{24}\) In 1997 as a young student in Aleppo I was dragged to a public lecture in the church hall of my local Syrian Orthodox Church. The guest lecturer was a Rum Orthodox priest from Lebanon on a tour of Syria to warn Christians of the Satanism inherent in pop music. The lecture was packed with teenagers, young twenty-somethings like myself and concerned parents (my escort was an English teacher the same age as my parents). The priest showed us slowed-down Michael Jackson videos and various other video clips to convince us that Satan lurked in popular culture before discussing a series of witchcraft trials in Lebanon to illustrate his point. The next day I tried to laugh this off with a Lebanese (Maronite) friend resident in Aleppo, but she stunned me by saying that she was upset at missing the lecture as the rise of ‘Satanism’ was a growing threat to Lebanese Christian society. Much of the ‘Satanism’ appeared to me to consist of listening to Death Metal and being sexually promiscuous and I shuddered to think what my Syrian and Lebanese friends would make of contemporary UK teenagers.

\(^{25}\) Figure from a statement by Prof. Walid Phares, Secretary General of the World Maronite Union, published <www.aramaic-dem.org>.
As related by main historians and experts, particularly past Maronite historians, including the Church’s chronicles, the historic identity of the Maronite people is Aramaic, Syriac and Eastern. This identity, as a national community was born in Mount Lebanon as of the seventh century AD. It has since survived, flourished and never abdicated. From Ibn al Qalai, to Patriarch Estefan al Duaihi, Paul Noujaim, Fuad Afram al Bustani, and Father Butros Daw, the overwhelming majority of Maronite intellectuals and historians have underlined this reality.26

From this statement it can be seen that Maronite laypeople are perhaps more prepared to make political statements about their Church than clergymen, who choose to play down the intervention of the patriarch in temporal matters. It is also necessary to underline the fact that many contemporary Maronites are increasingly hostile to the Arabic component of their heritage. Some youths will refer to themselves as speaking ‘Lebanese’ rather than ‘Arabic’, and where possible employ a mixture of French and Arabic. This is explained as a wish to distance themselves from the Palestinians and, in many cases more emphatically, the Syrians. As the political situation with Syria worsens this insistence on an ‘Aramaic’ and ‘Phoenician’ heritage will only increase and the traditional view of Maronite history will be espoused in an attempt to distance the Maronites from the other warring factions in contemporary Lebanon. A tendency of the Maronites in the late 1990’s and the first years of the twenty-first century to see Israel as the natural ally in the region was dealt a strong blow by the Lebanese-Israeli war of 2006, and leaves the Maronite-backed government in a particularly precarious position.27

So with this history of sporadic persecution, political upheaval, war and diaspora, how has the Maronite Church managed to guard the spiritual life of the community? The answer to this goes back to the very origins of the Church and the fact of its unique monastic origins. By remaining a Church firmly ruled by monks resident largely in isolated monasteries and hermitages, the spiritual heart of the Maronite Church has managed to resist most of the vagaries of the outside world. It is perhaps interesting to note that just as the twenty-first century diaspora raises questions about how a unified Maronite

26 Ibid.
27 In 2007 the Christians of Lebanon, in particular the Maronites, were politically divided by the alliance of the respected Maronite general and politician, Michel Aoun, with Hezbollah their traditional political adversary.
identity can survive, we find a renewal of the monastic tradition in Mount Lebanon, the traditional heartlands of the Church. Both the Lebanese Maronite Order and Mariamite Order have continued to find vocations and the Lebanese Maronite Order has accommodated the diaspora by opening missions across the world.  

Within the last twenty years there has also been a renewal in the Maronite eremitical tradition that was so successful at Qozhaya and other locations in the Wadi Qadisha in the Middle Ages, and the Church now has four hermits: three monks and a nun. One of the monks, Dario Escobar Montanya Sanchez was born in Columbia and entered the Maronite Lebanese Order in 1990, having encountered the Maronite Church in Mexico. This is one illustration of the vibrancy of the Maronite diaspora communities. This desire to return to the earliest monastic origins of the Maronite tradition is also demonstrated by the growing number of young people who regularly attend retreats in the mountains in an effort to deepen the spiritual dimension of their lives. The Antonine Sisters regularly organise 'Eremitical Days' in Wadi Qannoubine where groups of young people are assigned two to a hermitage for twenty-four hours for prayer and silent contemplation. The Maronite character of this retreat is demonstrated by the stated aim of the exercise:

For the nuns, the first objective was that the participants, through their eremitical engagement, would undertake a path in which they personally met God and would make an effort to support the Church and its believers.

---


30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.
These activities are of course supported by a well-established framework of church youth groups and by the Scouting movement, which is popular amongst all Middle Eastern Christians. Church camps form a central part of the summer vacation for all Christian children in the region and consist of a mixture of adventure activities and games, interspersed with catechism classes and hymn singing.

The spirituality of the Church is also disseminated by the highly successful printing house run by the Maronite University, Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik in Jounieh, an attractive seaside town north of Beirut. The press publishes books on all aspects of Syriac heritage, with the emphasis naturally heavily on the Maronite tradition. It specialises in history, theology, hymnology and canon law but also provides a wide variety of devotional literature, in particular a number of booklets on Maronite saints. In addition to these pamphlets the University has now established a travel bureau, and pilgrimages to the Maronite shrines of Mount Lebanon are seen as an integral and important part of contemporary worship. It is important to note that this literature is produced in both Arabic and a variety of European languages. This means that not only is it accessible to those still resident in Lebanon, but the Maronites of the diaspora can have access to these materials even if second- or third-generation Maronites have lost their ability to understand the language of their forefathers. This ability to function in a variety of languages also means that returning families can find pilgrimages and historical tours available in such a manner that the parents can be guided in Arabic, whilst their children are able to follow in English, French or Spanish. This is unlike other Christian diaspora communities, where each summer bored teenagers can be seen trailing the region unable to follow the conversation of their parents with a variety of distant relatives. This multi-lingual dimension is peculiar to the Maronites and perhaps stems from their long history of Catholicism, which necessitated regular contacts with Western Europe. It also gives the impression that Maronites find it somewhat easier to move between ‘home’ (i.e. Lebanon) and their new adopted countries than many other Christian emigrants, who often remain isolated by their inability to swiftly adopt another language.
Mount Lebanon and the Maronite Saints

The presence of local, specifically Maronite Saints is intrinsically linked to the religious and national identity of Maronites. It is a source of national pride that Saint Sharbel Makhlouf was canonised in 1977 and the Blessed Rafqa Rayess was beatified in 1985. Naturally there was great rejoicing in 2004 when the Blessed Nimatullah Hardini was canonised by Pope John Paul II. These holy people are a source of pride to all Maronites who display their images in their homes and cars as protective talismans and symbols of Maronite faith. They are also three figures strongly linked to the Maronite landscape of northern Lebanon and help to crystallise the commonly held view of this region as a Maronite Holy Land, sanctified by centuries of prayer. At the same time this also strengthens the official identity of the Church as a monastic, mountain-dwelling entity, strongly rooted in a tradition of prayer and spirituality. The fact that these are all nineteenth century figures is also used to point to the continuing vibrancy of Maronite piety. It is left unspoken, but the implication is that the Maronites have been especially blessed over other denominations to have been given three saints within a century, a feat that no other Oriental Catholic denomination can boast.

Maronites in the Twenty-first Century

Today we can see several currents of belief circulating about Maronite identity and history. There are those who fiercely defend a view of the Church as an ethnic group and political identity, whilst there are others who are re-evaluating their history and revising it in the light of new historical discoveries and changing political perceptions. As scholarship evolves there is more of a blurring of boundaries and the beliefs of the clergy and laypeople are becoming closer. For example the Secretary General of the World Maronite Union (a layperson) points out that:

the statement of political affiliation with the Arab League didn’t mean that the Maronites negated their historical ethnic identity. Regardless of the political choices of many of their political forces, the Maronites stayed attached to their historical identity.32

While this is an essentially conservative statement, there is also

32 Prof. Walid Phares, Secretary General of the World Maronite Union, published <wwwaramaic-dem.org>.
evidence that Maronite scholarship is beginning to take account of others’ perceptions of the Church and to reassess their own identity. It is with this forward-looking policy that the Church will continue to evolve and meet the demands of the twenty-first century search for a new spirituality, as Harald Suermann observes: ‘Maybe one day Maronite history will be a part of our common Church history, without polemics and apologetics.’

However Suermann wrote this essentially optimistic statement in 2004 when Lebanon was enjoying a booming economy and a relatively stable political period. With the events of 2006 still so clear in the minds of all Lebanese and the repercussions still shaking the frail edifice of Lebanese democracy it is perhaps to be expected that each minority group will fall back into entrenched positions and the Maronites will return to their comforting perceptions of the past to enhance their sense of ‘them and us’. That this is a possibility is acknowledged by the Maronites themselves. Thus, on 26 January 2007 the Maronite League issued a statement declaring that all Lebanese must accept some responsibility for the most recent violence to sweep Beirut.

Where next?

On one level the challenges facing the contemporary Maronite Church are those that face all the Oriental Churches. Fundamental instability in the region means that the diaspora continues apace and radical new strategies are needed to preserve the common sense of Maronite identity. In some ways the Maronites are particularly well equipped to deal with these challenges; they are gifted linguists and tradespeople and their love of new technology means that Lebanese society in general is peculiarly advanced in all manner of communications and multimedia networks. Mobile phones, high-speed internet connections and web-based dissemination of information were the norm in Lebanon long before the surrounding Middle Eastern countries, or even most of Europe, had fully grasped the potential of these new technologies. In this manner a proliferation of Lebanese, US and Canadian funded Maronite websites enable the diaspora

---


community to gain news of their community wherever they may be—in the world.

On the other hand the Maronites are particularly rooted in Mount Lebanon. Their links to their chosen spiritual heartland are unique in the region today. The Syrian Orthodox lost Edessa and the Tur ‘Abdin in the twentieth century and they are losing their monasteries around Mosul at this moment. By holding on to Wadi Qadisha the Maronites are securely anchoring their identity to the Lebanese mountains, a process aided by the presence of the recently canonised and beatified monks and nuns. As long as the monasteries and hermitages of Wadi Qadisha endure, the Maronite Church will remain secure in its identity and this is an inestimable advantage in the fractured world of the twenty-first century.
THE ETHIOPIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: A TALE OF TWO RITES

Fr Kevin Robinson*

The genesis of the Ethiopian Catholic Church is traced, from pre-Christian times, through its double-edged relationship with the Latin Church in the face of Arab threats, emerging finally as a Church that is ‘authentically Ethiopian and genuinely Christian’, fully engaged with the harsh realities of life in the Horn of Africa.

For most British people mention of Ethiopia conjures images of Live Aid, Bob Geldof, HIV/AIDS victims, ‘Red-Nose Day’ and starvation. To others it will bring difficult memories of the vicious communist regime that seized power from the last celebrated Emperor, Haile Selassie. He was deposed and murdered in 1974 and remains a uniquely venerated icon for Rastafarians. From 1975 to 1978 under the Derg¹ regime, the period known as the ‘Red Terror’ witnessed the seventh worst genocide in human history, when 1,500,000 people are estimated to have died. Colonel Mengistu’s so called ‘land reforms’ saw major deprivations for all the churches, and also the ruthless suppression of the higher education system which the Catholic Church (particularly the Jesuits in their second advent) had helped to establish in 1945. With the communist revolution church and state were disestablished signalling a campaign against all religious groups.² After three years in prison without trial, the Orthodox Patriarch Theophilus was martyred in 1979. Following the collapse of the

* Fr Kevin Robinson is a Catholic Prison Chaplain in the Archdiocese of Southwark.

¹ ‘Derg’, means committee or council in Ge’ez, and is the short name of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army, a committee of military officers which ruled the country from 1974 until 1987.

Communist Regime in 1991, older nationalistic tensions erupted in civil war culminating in the formal separation of Eritrea on 24 May 1993, and so the combined kingdom once known as Abyssinia slipped into history. Subsequent border wars have damaged the economy and infrastructure of the nation: homes, farms, churches and entire villages need to be rebuilt. The ensuing poverty is a risk to Christianity. Catholic leaders warn that with the advantages of Arabic petro-dollars the Muslim presence is aggressively expanding. The country that constitutes Ethiopia is today an entirely landlocked region of some 435,071 square miles. Occupying the largest part of the Horn of Africa it remains the twenty-seventh largest country in the world comparable to a landmass roughly twice the size of France. But Ethiopia’s most serious difficulties are not just the product of internal conflicts, political corruption and the displacement of foreign peoples. Together with its geographical neighbours, the nation stands first in line for greater crises not of its own making: the effects of global warming, deforestation, soil erosion, climate change and soaring food prices. While the world remains determinedly oblivious, through every trauma Ethiopian life remains sustained by a universal faith in God, untouched by popular secularism so challenging to religious life elsewhere.

Such is the history of Ethiopia in the last quarter of the twentieth century. But the spirit of such people is not so easily broken. It rests on an extraordinary Judaeo-Christian legacy which stretches back more than 1,650 years. Notwithstanding the influx of Islam and the atheistic agenda of communism, this unique spiritual inheritance remains written in the landscape especially of northern Ethiopia. It is embellished not only by the unique character of the numerous and well-used Orthodox Churches - they are said to have ‘more churches in any given area than any other country in the world’3 - but by additional features such as the astonishing 800 year old rock-hewn churches at Lalibella (tokens of the spiritual devotion of the King) or the enchanting island monasteries on Lake Tana such as Debra Mariame. These are the most famous but there are rock-hewn churches throughout northern Ethiopia. Here twelfth century biblical manuscripts will be found in daily use. Stored respectfully in a broken

---

cupboard by the priest/monk who uses them each day, these wonderful illuminated texts still supply the sacred services for which they were intended. That kind of western obsession that spiritually sanitises sacred symbols in sterile museums has not yet deconsecrated holy things in Ethiopia. If manuscripts like these have served for the last 800 years, why shouldn’t they go on as they are? All this remarkable inheritance is subtly interwoven with older pre-Christian traditions. Semitic influences dating from times before Christ embrace stories that include the Queen of Sheba, a ‘Solomonic’ dynasty believed to have issued from her son Menelik and an ongoing claim even to this day to be in possession of the very Ark of the Covenant! Such traditions should only be described advisedly as ‘legends’ in Ethiopia. They fuse with ancient remains, mysterious artefacts surviving from antiquity that are as real as the stones from which they were first fashioned. At Axum great obelisks (‘steles’) erected in the fourth century by King Ezana, stand 70 feet high and stare in dignified defiance. Polished and unfractured, though the largest has fallen, they are like doorways into eternity for use in either direction. The massive fallen stele (it is said to have toppled and broken on the very day it was erected 1650 years ago) adds something of its own poignancy. It speaks of centuries of success and failure, of civilisation, the pride and heartache of great kings and the unabrogated trust of a people ever in union with their all-powerful creator.

Since 1974, American Benedictines have undertaken a project with the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota digitizing ancient manuscripts throughout the world. The steady cataloguing of Ethiopian manuscripts has revealed the oldest known copies of many biblical books and theological texts, as well as historical information recorded in the margins and covers. This careful analysis has dramatically changed scholars’ understanding of Ethiopian Christianity. The ongoing co-operation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not only witness to a new spirit of ecumenism but also builds on the longstanding manuscript tradition that is integral to the Benedictine tradition. See ‘Twenty-first Century Scribes’ <http://www.cnewa.org>.

King Ezana’s Stele stands 70 feet (21 m) tall and is decorated with a false door at the base, and apertures resembling windows on all sides. It is smaller than the fallen 108-foot (33 m) Great Stele and the better-known 79-foot (24 m) Obelisk of Axum; the latter is still awaiting re-erection after spending over 50 years in Rome.
Ethiopia today and the Catholic Church

Our task here is to understand the role and character of the Catholic Church in the context of what is now an emerging multi-cultural and fragile ‘Democratic Republic’. How does the modern Catholic Church endeavour to serve as witness for the Gospel, building up the Kingdom of God in an integrated way alongside all those people of good will seeking the ‘common good’ of a nation? It is notoriously difficult to gain an accurate demographic estimate of the social constitution of Ethiopia today. The national census planned for 2004 was postponed, and the figures available from 1984 and 1994 were never static. In 1984 the rapidly increasing population was estimated at 37 million, in 1994 53 million and in 2004 perhaps even 70 million. The picture that emerges indicates that Ethiopia is a largely Christian, culturally diverse and regionally balanced ‘nation of ethnic minorities’. Most of its people speak a Semitic or Cushitic language. The Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray make up more than three-quarters of the population, but there are more than eighty different ethnic groups within Ethiopia. Some of these have as few as 10,000 members. It is as one small component of that mosaic, less than 1 per cent, and interwoven with all these different needs and cultures that the Catholic Church finds its function, in a spirit of friendship with all her neighbours. The combined 1984 and 1994 censuses show a remarkably stable Christian/Muslim ratio of 61 per cent to 33 per cent respectively but this may now be shifting. What is new is the rapidly changing composition of the Christian population. Insurgent Evangelical Protestantism has reduced the share of the Orthodox Church. Whereas Orthodoxy claimed perhaps half of the population in 1994 it has probably seen its share decline below that level in the past decade. The Ethiopia of 2008 is, in all probability, no longer a majority Orthodox nation.\(^6\)

With a population of nearly 3.5 million, at least half of which are children, a visit to modern day Addis Ababa and the surrounding districts of the city will bring an experience of the capital and some insight into the vital and fully integrated role of the Catholic Church in the principle urban centre. This is the third world where, according to a recent United Nations survey, half the population lives below the

poverty line. More than 50 percent of school-age children do not attend school. Average life expectancy is between thirty and forty years. AIDS accounts for 30 per cent of all adult deaths, (4.5 million children nationally are currently orphaned because of the disease). Drive through the back streets of the city, the outer suburbs and further on towards the outlying regions. The system of broken roads is evidence of the remaining infrastructure abandoned and largely unrepaired since the period of Italian occupation in 1942. Soon the buildings become little more than huts, shacks, ‘shops’ and sheds all thronging with people and served by a manic transport system of battered minibuses and old Fiat taxis (‘blue donkeys’). The ‘stream’ that flows through a little valley by St. Matthew’s Anglican Church is really an open sewer that begs for the rainy season to arrive and flush it clean for another year. A ‘scaffolding yard’ (scaffolding being nothing more than poles and sticks of eucalyptus) doubles up at night as a pen for sheep and goats and across the road a twenty-four hour blacksmith serves the never-ending repair of battered vans and taxis. Ethiopia cries out for international investment, trade and commerce, imaginative government, and technology. There are no signs here of McDonalds, or any of the high street banks so familiar throughout the world. You will not find a cash machine anywhere in the city. (There is one cashpoint machine available at the singularly prestigious Sheridan Hotel.) Ethiopia needs a hundred Oprah Winfreys, but celebrity aside it gives thanks for the unsung labours of so many good and holy men and women (not everyone is driven by religious faith) giving their lives throughout the land for the service of a nation. Their names are written in the book of life.

Across the city, side by side with other Christian initiatives and NGOs, are schools, orphanages, feeding stations and many vital health or social welfare projects run by a variety of Catholic institutions and volunteers. After the Government, the Catholic Church is the largest contributor to the national education system. This extraordinary achievement is quite disproportionate to the minority status of the

---

7 Oprah Winfrey, the celebrated TV chat show host and actress is reputed to be among the most successful and influential black women in America. She has plowed vast sums of her estate into many social welfare projects across Sub-Saharan Africa recently setting up a college for specially gifted girls in Addis Ababa who otherwise have no means of securing education.
Church. According to the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, the Church administers 311 programmes, ranging from kindergartens to primary and secondary schools, employs 2,186 teachers and serves 83,686 students – most of whom live in villages scattered throughout the land. The little Anglican Church in Addis provides a valuable supplement to the local system. Arriving at different times throughout the day, perhaps 200 children will process through the gates of the compound from early morning until nightfall. Here, largely unsupervised, they will quietly read books in classrooms where a small library facility has been patiently accumulated. Unlike the government schools where children attend on a shift system, Catholic schools provide a full curriculum where students are in class for most of the day. The Catholic Church of Ethiopia has limited resources, yet it invests much of its annual budget in education with the belief that an investment in the country’s education is an investment in its future. These schools produce young men and women who are becoming leaders, teachers, nurses, doctors and businesspeople. The re-establishment of an open Catholic University is one of the most hopeful features of recent times.  

As an outsider amidst the poverty and desperation, one feels an encouraging sense of the Church’s commitment to the ‘Social Gospel’. The Catholic Church has even begun to establish prison chaplaincy where the first task is to witness for human dignity by the creation of proper living conditions and sanitation (see for example Addis Alum prison which is little more than a human pen forty miles outside the city). ‘The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few.’ Although there is still a character of charitable work imported by the missionary profile of Catholic volunteers and religious from overseas, there is also a strong impression of a church, owned and operated by Ethiopians themselves. Religious orders, both men and women are seeing a

---

8 From *The Ethiopian Herald*, 13 September 2005: ‘Vatican signs accord establishing Catholic University’. In September 2005 the Ethiopian and Vatican governments signed an agreement providing for the establishment of an international standard Catholic University in Addis Ababa. The Archbishop said that the university will belong to all Ethiopians. He recalled the cooperation between the Church and the Ministry of Education. The Church has five colleges in Ethiopia. The establishment of the university should contribute to human resource development in Ethiopia. It will play a significant role in the country’s capacity-building programme.
reliable flow of Ethiopian-born vocations. Clerical seminaries are maintained in Addis Ababa and Adigrat in Ethiopia, and in Asmara and Keren in Eritrea. What is being achieved by the Catholic Church is highly valued and greatly esteemed by the wider community including those of other faiths, and those who have none. But most of all, it is part of a lifeline for so many unfortunate people who exist in great numbers on the margins of society and who are likely to depend for their very survival on these corporal works of mercy. In the words of Pope Benedict, addressed to the bishops of Ethiopia:

Indeed, the united witness, transcending all political and ethnic divisions, has a vital role to play in bringing healing and reconciliation to the troubled region in which you live. When there is genuine commitment to following Christ, ‘the way, the truth and the life’ (John 14:6), difficulties and misunderstandings of whatever kind can be overcome, because in him ‘God has reconciled the world to himself’ (see 2 Cor. 5: 19) and in him all people can find the answer to their deepest aspirations. I encourage you in particular to express solidarity in whatever way you can with your suffering brothers and sisters in Somalia, where political instability makes it almost impossible to live with the dignity that belongs properly to every human person. As authentic teachers of the faith, help your people to understand that there can be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness. In this way you will be true sons of your Father in heaven (see Matt. 5: 45).  

Encouraged by the Holy Father, The Ethiopian Catholic Church (ECC) considers as a priority the coordination of its social welfare projects in an ecumenical partnership. Nowadays this includes a consortium of Ethiopian Orthodox, Ethiopian Evangelical (Mekane Yesus), the Lutheran World federation and Catholic Relief Services. In addition to emergency interventions, attention is now turning from relief to development and rehabilitation programmes in accordance with Government Policy. That the Catholic Church is well placed to bring administrative coordination to these projects is perhaps the most important social aspect of Catholic life in Ethiopia today. The Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission (ECC-SADCO) has signed a general agreement with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) covering the entire

---

Social/Development programmes of the Catholic Church throughout Ethiopia conducted at local levels through the liaison of Diocesan Secretariats. In the words of the Archbishop of Addis Ababa Abune Berhaneyesus:

What distinguishes the presence of the Church in Ethiopia and Eritrea is what we are trying to do in evangelisation by promoting integral human development. By this we mean giving service to human persons in their spiritual and human dimensions, by preaching the gospel in its dual aspect as the gospel of the Good News of salvation and the gospel of compassion for the multitudes, namely development and human well-being. In this two-fold aspect the diocesan clergy and the religious institutes of men and women give devoted service. We acknowledge with gratitude the support and contribution of the Catholic aid organisations.

Yet all this is the product and presence of an institution that represents a tiny minority of the national population and remains a very small minority within the Christian spectrum. Catholicism has only had the most tenuous presence in Ethiopia for less than 150 years. The mid-nineteenth century still saw executions and martyrdom for Catholics and missionaries. Only with the accession of King Menelik II in 1889 were Catholic missionaries afforded welcome and safety. To put matters in perspective, in a total population of some 53 million while the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) may embrace some 30 million members, the total number of Catholics is currently estimated at around just 517,463. Within that number perhaps half belong officially to the ‘Oriental Rite’. Receiving formal recognition as late as 1930 as the ‘Ethiopic Catholic Church’, the ecclesiastical system dates from only 1961. In that year a metropolitan see was finally established at Addis Ababa with suffragan dioceses in Asmara and Adigrat. After Eritrea achieved independence, about half the faithful found themselves within that new country. Two new dioceses were created in Eritrea in 1995, at Keren and Barentu, from territory taken from the

---

10 From the Ethiopian Diocesan Directory 2005.
12 1994 census. According to different sources the current population is estimated anywhere between 55 and 75 million.
diocese of Asmara. The Catholic bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea now compose a single Episcopal Conference headquartered in Addis Ababa. The official language of the conference remains Italian. Even though Eritrea was from 1895 until 1941 an Italian colony, it is notable that there is now no Western/Latin rite usage throughout the Catholic Church in Eritrea. This is the only country where all Catholics belong to a fully Eastern Rite jurisdiction. Today, the Catholic Church in Ethiopia and Eritrea is composed of six Eastern Catholic Eparchies and five Latin Apostolic Vicariates, although in many Latin parishes of the vicariates the traditional Ethiopian liturgy is replacing the Latin! There is a double personality to the Church that some would say remains unresolved. Should Latin/Roman rites be put into the common language and used more widely (Latinisation) or should the ancient Apostolic/Orthodox rites familiar for 1,650 years be universally adopted as the liturgical standard? If the latter, to what extent should other Orthodox customs be appropriated at the expense of traditional Catholic observances?

The Ethiopian Catholic Church is constituted in canon law as a Metropolitan sui juris Eastern Rite particular church, within the Roman Catholic Church: and although much traditional Ethiopian custom has been adopted, the prevailing character is still Roman. Celibacy is assumed although married priests are occasionally received as priests from the Orthodox Church. Clerical dress includes the cassock and garb of western rite clergy. Church architecture remains predominantly Roman in style. Unleavened Latin hosts remain customary in the Eucharist whereas the Orthodox use leavened bread (baked by deacons in an ecclesiastical building called a ‘Bethlehem’) provided fresh for each ceremony. The Roman Crucifix remains the

---

14 The Eastern Catholic Churches are not ‘experimental’ or ‘provisional’ communities: they are sui juris Churches, fully recognized by the universal Catholic Church, with the firm canonical base of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

15 Traditional Orthodox churches are usually octagonal or circular with two liturgical spaces around a central icon-covered sanctuary. The Holy of Holies containing the Altar and Tabot are only accessed by the priest. Orthodox churches evoke profound symbolic continuity with Jewish Temple concepts in the Bible.

16 Permission was given in the time of De Jacobis for the use of leavened bread ‘for the avoidance of scandal’ among the Orthodox who were unable to
most common symbol and not the ornate ‘Blessings Crosses’ used by Orthodox clergy. Likewise the Orthodox practice of removing shoes on entering church (just as Moses removed his sandals in the presence of God and Muslims on entering a mosque) has not become custom for Catholics. Latin rite jurisdictions are found in the South of Ethiopia which only formally became part of the nation in the late nineteenth century. Contrasting historical factors account for the development of Eastern and Latin rite traditions in different regions. This is partly traceable to the period of Italian occupation from 1936 to 1944 concentrated in certain areas and earlier nineteenth century missions especially among the Oromo tribes. These were traditionally pagan people without significant influences of Orthodoxy who had political reasons for maintaining their identity distinct from the Ethiopian mainstream. The live tension between Latin/Western and Oriental/Eastern rites combine with proud and contrasting regional identities and is the legacy of a complex blend of histories.

Visit a Catholic Church for Mass in the capital city and you will discover a sense of eager spiritual vibrancy. Congregations at the major city churches are made up of large numbers of indigenous Ethiopians as well as others forming cross-sections of this cosmopolitan society. Among them are found international visitors and expatriate nationalities of every description. There is a strong impression of people who are deeply committed to their Catholic faith, but for someone who is unprepared, such a visit may bring a perplexing feeling of colourful and inspired spiritual confusion. The largest concentrations of Ethiopian-rite Catholics are in Addis Ababa and Asmara. The familiar Western rites of post-Vatican II liturgy will be encountered in several languages across the city, but just as likely will be the discovery of the Oriental Liturgy celebrated in Ge’ez or Amharic. The Ge’ez Rite as it is commonly known now includes as many as seventeen different anaphoras (Eucharistic prayers).\(^\text{17}\) Four New Testament readings are usual,\(^\text{18}\) with colourful processions, ancient rhythmic chanting accompanied by jangling systrums, drums,

\(^{17}\) See Archbishop Paulos Tzadua, *The Divine Liturgy according to the Rite of the Ethiopian (Ge’ez) Church*, <http://kidane-mehret.org/liturgy.html>.

\(^{18}\) Readings include the Acts of the Apostles, the ‘Catholic’ Epistles, St Paul’s Epistles and the Gospel.
strange vestments and canopies quite unlike anything encountered in the simplified Catholicism of Europe. The ceremonies co-exist with western rites and you will need to check the times if you are looking for one service in preference to another in the same church on any given day. You may also discover that Easter falls at the wrong time as the older Julian calendar will be followed rather than the Gregorian, in solidarity with Orthodox custom. We cannot begin to comprehend the modern Ethiopian Catholic Church until we have reflected on the complex development of Christianity in that land from earliest times. The appropriateness of Catholic ‘missionary’ activities, the unfortunate intrusions and inevitable exclusions of Catholicism in the progress of that story and the lessons learnt along the way have shaped the Catholic Church to be what it is in Ethiopia today. If there is to be any hope of real ecumenical progress, not only in Ethiopia but anywhere in the world where different Apostolic Churches coexist, we must understand more clearly what it means to be called together as ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’ forming the Body of Christ, especially at the beginning of the third millennium. Or, in the words of the then recently elected Pope Benedict XVI:

In your countries, where Catholics are such a small minority, the work of ecumenical dialogue takes on particular urgency. I am glad that your Episcopal Conference has been addressing this challenge. Whatever obstacles you may encounter, do not be deterred from carrying forward this vital task. Among Christians, genuine fraternity is no mere sentiment, nor does it imply indifference to the truth. It is rooted in the sacrament of Baptism which makes us members of the Body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12: 13; Eph. 4: 4-6).  

Christian origins

That Christianity arrived in Ethiopia at an early date is certain. Although the tradition associating the first seed of the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch, Queen Candace’s ambassador of Acts 8: 26 ff. is romantic, by the same token the episode does give pause for thought. At the very least, the writer is illustrating a venerable association between the Ethiopian nobility, Jerusalem and the Jewish faith. This foreign ambassador had gone to Jerusalem ‘to worship’. From antiquity the extraordinary Semitic connections between these lands will never be fully unravelled. Even in the multi-faceted, multi-faith

---

39 Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Ethiopian Bishops. See n.9 above.
nation that we see today, it remains an integral component of the religious and cultural tradition of Ethiopia and found its formal expression in the thirteenth century romance, the Kebra Negast. But perhaps there is something more? If we put a late date on the final composition of the Book of Acts (maybe well into the second century) could it be that by the time that the conclusive edition was received in the biblical canon, it was the editors’ intention to indicate that the gospel had indeed already touched Ethiopia, perhaps even as far as the royal household? In any examination of history, the relation of religion to the fortunes and interests of governing powers, especially royal families can never be underestimated. Where the mind of the king has been touched, the nation is set to follow. This is particularly true for the development of Christianity in Ethiopia.

It is well known that in every age, new religious initiatives and missionary activities follow the commercial trade routes of the world. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, the apocryphal ‘lives of the apostles’ and other early saints narrate romantic accounts of the arrival of Christianity not only in the western world, as will be familiar to most Catholics, but also in lands much further to the east including Armenia, Southern India, central Asia and even China, and major centres like Edessa and Baghdad. More realistically, Christianity in Ethiopia appears to have become established first at Axum. This ancient capital, traditionally believed in Ethiopia to have been the home of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs. 10) was once the centre of a proud and independent kingdom forming a corridor between Africa, Arabia and all the Middle East via the Red Sea. Christianity was probably imported from the dominant Helenistic culture of traders in the Red Sea from where it would have spread to other parts of Ethiopia.

With the conversion of King Ezana, Christianity was formally adopted as the national religion in the fourth century. Athanasius, the great patriarch of Alexandria consecrated Frumentius and commissioned the first official line of clergy to Ethiopia. Later in the fifth and sixth centuries the teaching of the Nine Saints (who appear to have been of Syrian background perhaps in search of a new home after the Chalcedonian problem) cemented the doctrinal position of the Ethiopian Church with Alexandria. Adopting the Alexandrian Rite as the basis of liturgy, obedient thereafter to the Coptic Patriarch, and dependent for the continuing supply of bishops, it was unusual for there to have been more than one Metropolitan Bishop throughout
the whole of Ethiopia. He was rarely assisted by suffragans. As a consequence of this, the major monasteries became centres of ecclesiastical authority and political influence. In times past, the chief abbot or ‘ecage’ had the most influential role second only to the emperor in matters of politics and religion. Being an Egyptian the metropolitan bishop was always a foreigner whose policies might be governed by other interests stemming from Egypt and alienated from the people by difficulties of language. This ecclesiastical constraint disadvantaged the Ethiopian church. In the absence of a bishop the supply of priests and deacons diminished. When Ethiopia was obliged to present Muslim authorities in Egypt with large presents and taxes there were sometimes long periods when the Church was weakened (perhaps deliberately) by the lack of a bishop. It is only as recently as 1959, in need of an indigenous hierarchy, that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became a formally independent Patriarchate (shortly followed by an independent Patriarchate for Eritrea in 1991). At the same time the Catholic Church revised its structure.

Although academics may remonstrate, until the council of Chalcedon in 451, it is still common to speak of the tradition of the ‘Undivided Church’. Although there had always been rivalry, the conflict between the two great schools of Antioch and Alexandria (personified in the teachings of Nestorius and Cyril respectively) came to crisis at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The parting of the ways between the five major Apostolic Patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem) did not happen until late in the fifth century. Previously, as Patriarch of Alexandria (328-373), Athanasius was solidly in communion with Rome. Being sent into exile five times, he sought Rome’s support during the most turbulent periods of his ministry. In 339 he had taken refuge there during the persecution ensuing from the Arian controversies. In that narrow sense, stemming from his apostolic authority, we may speak of the Church in Ethiopia as being fully ‘Catholic’ for the first hundred years.

With the Coptic legacy, and resisting the definitions of Chalcedon, mainstream Ethiopian Christians continued from 451 as ‘Ethiopian Orthodox’. Today they represent the largest group in that family of churches known more correctly as ‘Oriental’ or ‘Miaphysite’. The Ethiopian Church thereafter held firm to the doctrine of ‘One Nature in Christ’ which is both human and divine. Down the ages, it continued to express that doctrine through revised formularies and
doctrinal statements known as ‘Tawahedo’. This term is frequently used to define the Ethiopian Orthodox Church collectively.\textsuperscript{20} In this form, apostolic faith continued to be upheld in a valid sacramental church with its own unique culture and tradition supported and challenged by a strong monastic witness. At the same time it was increasingly isolated from Christianity elsewhere by the strength of Islam in North Africa and Arabia. Only by clinging uncompromisingly to their doctrinal tradition and unique liturgical customs was Christianity able to withstand the intrusions and invasions of other religious traditions. The formidable dignity and cultural inheritance of all this was not always understood by Catholic missionaries and the product of such misunderstanding has in times past proved catastrophic for both Churches.

\textit{Ethiopia: between the Latins and the Arabs}

From the time of the crusades, the western church reawoke to the vibrancy of Christian life in Ethiopia. The remarkable and ongoing presence of Ethiopian monks at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (continuing to this day) was impressive. Likewise, the stream of Ethiopian pilgrims, for whom the journey through Muslim regions especially during times of conflict was tantamount to a quest for martyrdom, witnessed to the same faith. That Rome had had a special regard for the people of Ethiopia and its ancient Church can be demonstrated as far back as the twelfth century. Pope Alexander III commissioned a certain ‘Philip’ as papal legate to the palace of the Ethiopian King. In 1289 we read of intrepid Dominican and Franciscan missionaries whose progress and achievements are unknown. They carried a series of letters extending blessings and greetings from Pope Nicholas IV addressed to the ‘Venerable brother Archbishop of Ethiopia the Emperor and their people’. In 1329 Pope John XXII wrote to the ‘Magnificent King of Ethiopia’ exhorting in friendly terms for a return to full communion with Rome. The popes recognised that any missionary programme to Ethiopia should be for the purpose of ecumenism and not religious conversion. The councils of Lyon (1274)

\textsuperscript{20} In this understanding of the Incarnation, emphasis is placed upon the anointing work or \textit{unction} of the Holy Spirit, so that both the divinity and humanity of Christ are united in a single nature. Because of their specific and developed theology, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are resistant to the blanket term ‘Coptic’.
and Florence (1439) were convened with the specific hope of reconciling the Eastern Churches. All the Oriental Churches were invited to participate. A delegation of Ethiopians was in attendance at Florence, although their participation should be considered unofficial being a group of monks who arrived from Jerusalem without authority of the King. Pope Eugenius IV sent a further letter to the Ethiopian Emperor on August 28 1439, inviting unity with the Catholic Church. Fast-forwarding to 1919, having established the ‘Congregation for Oriental Churches’, Pope Benedict XV founded an Ethiopian College within the Vatican, but this was really a development of the Abyssinian Hospice and Church of St Stephen which already existed and officially celebrated its five-hundredth anniversary in 1997. The first printing of Abyssinian Scripture in Ge’ez had taken place here with the publication of the Psalms as early as 1513 and the New Testament together with an Ethiopian Missal in 1548. More than this, there is documentary evidence to indicate that Ethiopian pilgrims were being welcomed in Rome to visit the tombs of the Apostles in 1351. In the fifteenth century a company of Franciscans headed by one Thomas of Florence entered Ethiopia with a more structured missionary plan, but nothing of further substance is known. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the pioneering ‘discoveries’ of European adventurers opened new trade routes across vast oceans. We read how well-intentioned religious aspirations combined disastrously with political intrigue and conflicting economic interests as Ethiopia encountered a contemporary and determined ‘Roman Rite only’ Catholicism. In the wake of Vasco De Gama and the creation of trading bases in India in 1498, Portuguese commercial interests combined with the religious attention of the Jesuits and turned inevitably towards the East Coast of Africa. Commanding control of the Red Sea and the inland trade routes connecting with the Nile, the Portuguese were to have devastating economic effects elsewhere, causing bankruptcy in older commercial centres like Venice - but that is a separate story. At the same time, Christianity in Ethiopia was about to receive a reluctant lesson in Latin.

21 Abraha, St Justin, 23. See note 3 above.
22 See address of H. G. Souraphiel to Benedict XVI. See note 11 above.
To the Portuguese, Ethiopia, Nubia or the land of Cush as it is referred to in the Old Testament, was a land of uncertain treasures uniquely governed, in such a part of the world, by a Christian King, but isolated from Christianity elsewhere by geography, the difficulties of communication and the forbidding and overwhelming power of Islam all around. Yet for 1,300 years, by contrast with neighbouring regions, Christianity continued to flourish as the predominant religion written into the culture of a nation. Elsewhere across north Africa the Church that had once been home to such great voices as Augustine, Tertullian and Cyprian had all but disappeared. Only in Egypt had the Church survived, but here it now constituted a controlled minority (a dhimmi) in an Islamic landscape. Coptic Christianity was only permitted to survive at the price of severe restrictions and tax penalties. By the sixteenth century, Ethiopia was threatened by what might have been a similar and conclusive Arab invasion.

Since mediaeval times, stories of a mysterious Christian king had circulated in Europe. This was the legend of ‘Prester John’ who ruled in a forgotten land somewhere far away to the east. Much like an English King Arthur, Prester John was believed to be a priestly king who would one day rise up to join forces with other Christian powers, and finally dispel the threat of Islam. Transferring themes originally relating to Christianity in Persia, the tradition became increasingly associated with Ethiopia. Whatever else may lie behind the legend, by the early 1500’s Ethiopia was a vulnerable Christian land desperately in need of Christian allies if it were to defend itself against Arab incursion. It is sad to realise that if Portuguese Catholicism was the only viable source of help it would come at the painful price of surrendering ancient spiritual customs embedded in this ‘Oriental Orthodox’ church, and sacred to the prevailing culture. Catholicism in an ill-conceived Portuguese/Jesuit form was set to impose a presence as potentially damaging as any other religious intruder. A thousand years after the disastrous divisions stemming from the council of Chalcedon, and the whole script was about to be re-enacted on the Ethiopian stage.

From 1527 until 1632 the Ethiopian Church and state were battered by invasion and civil war. The gathering storm erupted in 1527 when Ahmed Ibn Ibraim ‘the left-handed’ launched from Somalia a great jihad into Ethiopian territories. Establishing a presence in the low coastlands of the Red Sea, churches and monasteries were destroyed
as the forces of Islam violently advanced inland. The combined loss of volumes of manuscripts and the inheritance of recorded Abysinian wisdom was something from which Ethiopian Christianity never fully recovered. Anticipating such a disaster, Queen Helena had sent an Armenian\textsuperscript{23} messenger to the king of Portugal appealing for help. The Portuguese at that time were believed to be the most successful and technically advanced power in Europe. In 1514 King Emmanuel agreed to assist but help was late in coming. In 1526 the Ethiopian emperor made the first formal approach towards Rome. In that year Lebna Dengel wrote to Pope Leo X with the intention of ingratiating himself with the Catholic Church and the powers and thrones of Europe. Although he had no intention of breaking faith with the Alexandrian patriarchate his letter was interpreted as indicating a desire to conform to Roman obedience. A plan was conceived which ultimately saw the arrival of the Jesuit Joao Nunes Barreto from Goa in 1557. He was appointed from Rome in the capacity of ‘patriarch’ as part of a missionary campaign to bring the entire Ethiopian Church into full communion and conformity with Rome. None of this was anticipated by the Emperors Lebna Dengel in 1526 or Galawdewos (1540-1559), who succeeded him. What was welcome at that moment was the military help of the Portuguese which arrived on the eve of Lebna Dengel’s death in 1540, and in the nick of time to counter the advancing Islamic campaign. With the help of Portuguese forces, who sustained heavy losses, Ahmed was defeated. His death in battle in 1543 brought some temporary respite from the Islamic threat but the Christian inheritance was significantly weakened. In other areas, the Oromo people were newly arriving African migrants. Bringing animist and pagan religions, their appearance heralded ongoing warfare, and further disruption to the settled order. Many great sixteenth century churches were destroyed in the southern regions during these conflicts. On top of this, there were internal struggles within the Orthodox Church and the national system of government. Rival factions and monasteries in different regions supported different claimants to the throne.

\textsuperscript{23} Armenians, who share a similar non-Chalcedonian doctrine with Ethiopians could travel more safely through Muslim territories.
The Council of Trent and the Jesuits

In the midst of this turmoil the Jesuits introduced a new dimension of ecclesiastical and political confusion. Arriving with an uncompromising determination not simply to reconcile but to correct, suppress and generally overrule Orthodox customs, new conflicts of loyalty were introduced. Traditional relations with the Alexandrian patriarchate and the entire liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church were denigrated. The fortunes and failures of the Jesuit missions served only to undermine Orthodoxy causing alienation and resistance to the introduction of Catholicism and Catholic rites at every level. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Catholicism was outlawed and the Jesuits banished from the Ethiopian heartlands, the last dying in 1590. But while the first impulse for a Catholic mission declined, a limited presence of former Portuguese personnel had remained, intermarrying with Ethiopians. Among Christians who had formerly been Orthodox, pockets of Latin rite Catholicism were established and lingered in different locations separated from and in defiance of Orthodox custom. The Catholic presence was revived again by the arrival of Fr Pedro Paez and a new Jesuit mission in 1603.

When different contenders vied for the Ethiopian throne, a new and dangerous political dynamic was introduced as candidates aligned their hopes either with Catholic or Orthodox powers. The crisis erupted under the emperor Susenyos who seized sovereignty in 1607. With increasing Catholic sympathies he summoned an Ethiopian Church Council in 1620 and forcefully promoted Tridentine ‘norms’. Susenyos declared himself Catholic, and abolished Orthodoxy on penalty of death. Although an ecclesiastical union of sorts had been created, violent Orthodox rebellion ensued rallied by the Coptic Archbishop who was executed together with certain outspoken protesters. The politically diplomatic Paez was succeeded in 1627 by Alfonso Mendes who again held the title of Patriarch and exercised the function with a total lack of discretion towards the Orthodox. Pushing the Emperor to ever more extreme suppressions of Orthodoxy, the backlash he created was too strong, causing retreat and finally the abdication of Susenyos as emperor. His son Emperor Fasildas (1632-1667) had made very reasoned objections to Catholic ‘reforms’ of Orthodox practice and was driven to reverse the policy of his father, re-establishing Orthodoxy as the national religion. Catholicism thereafter was decisively forbidden. A determined
programme of religious persecution ensued throughout the following century. Initially this meant exile, but subsequently martyrdom for those Jesuits who quietly endeavoured to stay serving the pastoral needs of surviving Catholic communities. Between 1637 and 1762 Rome sponsored a further 16 missions. Various brave Franciscans and Capuchins made repeated and courteous attempts to enter Ethiopia. Apart from those who died on the way, seventy-three are known to have been martyred, some publicly executed on arrival. The backcloth was set for a seemingly insoluble anti-Catholicism that was to prevail for another two hundred years. It cannot be said that it was not of the Church’s own making and still requires the patient rebuilding of trust with the Orthodox hierarchy.

The Jesuits had been formed in response to the European Reformation with an unswerving loyalty to Rome. This was a time when the idea of there being ‘no salvation outside the church’ would have driven all their missionary endeavours. The eternal wellbeing of human souls was at stake and the correct application of the Church’s teaching and sacramental customs was the only conceivable guarantee of salvation. We may baulk at the apparently offensive and recalcitrant behaviour of the Jesuits in the face of very reasonable objections to Catholic reforms outlined by Emperor Fasildas:\(^{24}\) forbidding communion in both kinds; rebaptism of Orthodox laity; re-ordination of Orthodox clergy; re-consecration of Orthodox churches (including the great church at Axum); destruction of wooden altars including tabots;\(^ {25}\) the abrogation of fasts and rites appertaining to Lent, Holy Week and funerals; and the imposition of the Gregorian calendar. By the same token, for the Jesuits of the time, male circumcision (as well as baptism), dancing priests at the Eucharist, children ordained to the diaconate, veneration of the Sabbath (on Saturday in addition to Eucharistic worship on Sunday), food laws rooted in the Jewish Torah and the ritual slaughter of animals at the consecration of church buildings would hardly have seemed ‘orthodox’, even to other eastern churches of the period. Far from accepting such features as authentic

---


\(^{25}\) The ‘tabot’ is a consecrated stone or box placed within Ethiopian Orthodox altars and likened in their tradition to the Arc of the Covenant i.e. holding God’s sacred/sacramental Law and Promise. It is also believed somehow to anchor the particular angel or patron saint of a church.
details of an extraordinary apostolic tradition, it is more likely that the Jesuits would have regarded all these practices as dangerous primitive customs bordering on heresy. In addition, a Bible that included unfamiliar texts such as *Jubilees*, *Enoch* and the *Ascension of Isaiah* in the Old Testament, together with *1 Clement*, *Didache* and *Shepherd of Hermas* in the New Testament would have brought challenges very different to the arguments of European biblical protestantism, which the Jesuits were formed to combat. All of these elements survive in contemporary Ethiopian Orthodoxy to say nothing of married parish clergy and marriage practices among the laity which remain at best irregular. Nevertheless it was deliberately ungracious for the Jesuits to introduce pig-farming as a public symbol of Catholicism even though it may have proved lucrative. For those so familiar with Old Testament themes such as the Ethiopians, a comparison with the profane impositions of Antiochus Epiphanes in ¹ Macc. 4: 47 would have been unavoidable... And then there was the unresolved dilemma of the ‘One Nature/Two Nature’ definitions of the Incarnation emanating from Chalcedon which remained at the root of mutual ecclesiastical suspicion.

Such is the unfortunate background to the advent of Catholicism in Ethiopia, and we begin to understand the dual character of the Church as it is seen today. It is sad to lay blame exclusively at the door of ‘misguided’ sixteenth century Jesuits: in many social respects their contribution was monumental, but it is no coincidence that while this disruption was caused in Ethiopia, similar events were to be witnessed among the ‘Thomas’ Christians of the Kerala Coast in South India. Here an equally disastrous policy enforced at the Synod of Diampor 1599 resulted in conflict, division and the breakdown of ecclesiastical trust lasting for generations after the Coonan Cross affair of 1653. The popes as we have seen had counselled for missions to Ethiopia to be undertaken in a spirit of ecumenism rather than conversion. Pope Pius III approved an authentic Ethiopian Rite Missal with a full set of fourteen anaphoras for use by Catholics in 1548. Ignatius Loyola, while convinced of the superiority of (Roman) Catholic rites and traditions had advised a spirit of restraint, tolerating the Jewish

---

complexion of Ethiopian Christian customs and introducing modifications gradually.

Following the exclusion of the Jesuits and the prohibitions imposed by Emperor Fasildas, Ethiopia became a closed book to Catholicism, but two further endeavours should be mentioned. In 1644 Pope Urban VIII commissioned Mgr James Wurmers as Vicar Apostolic to Ethiopia. Although he died en route he was sent with the specific instruction ‘that he should not change anything in the Ethiopian Rite’. More substantially in 1788 George Gabregziaber, an Ethiopian who had studied in Rome was consecrated Titular Bishop of Aduis. ‘Abune Tobia’ is commemorated as the first truly African Ethiopian Catholic bishop. Adopting an ascetic catechetical lifestyle, for seven years he exercised a ministry on the move. Coming close to martyrdom on several occasions, denounced by the Coptic Archbishop and constantly in fear of his life, he finally retreated in destitution back to Rome and died of plague in 1801. His brief had been to teach and evangelise in the poor districts using Ethiopian rites. While his ministry may have appeared to have met with little success he was a witness to a new spirit of Catholic continuity with Orthodox life based on an oath sworn to Pius VI that he would preserve the Ethiopian Rite.

*The Emergence of the Ethiopian Catholic Church: from De Jacobis to Vatican II*

By the time we approach the nineteenth century the world stage had changed dramatically. Napoleon disastrously invaded Egypt in 1798 signalling increasing British interest in the surrounding regions thereafter. The Suez Canal opened in 1869. The advent of railways and telegraphy made the world a smaller place. By 1894 Eritrea had become an Italian colony. While their attempt to advance into Ethiopia suffered a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, by the end of the century the Italians had established a lasting presence on the East African coast. Later fascists under Mussolini would avenge the earlier humiliation. With the advantage of sophisticated weapons they drove back into Ethiopia briefly establishing it as part of an empire from 1935 to 1941. From the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Ethiopia had lacked a sovereign ruler for two hundred of those years. Neighbouring regions were governed by rival princes and warlords. All this changed in 1855. Tewodros II was crowned as an uncompromising emperor and re-established national
unity in conjunction with the Orthodox Church. Catholicism remained a proscribed religion. The martyrdom in 1856 of Blessed Abba Gebremichael (a native Orthodox priest who embraced Catholicism) is recorded in detail in the writing of St Justin De Jacobis\(^{27}\) but it was in this period that the Ethiopian Catholic Church at last found a reliable foundation.

When Alphons Mendes was expelled in 1628 he ruefully reflected that ‘if God allows me to return to Ethiopia I firmly promise that I will change nothing in the rite of these people if I do not find anything contrary to Catholic faith and practice’. Would that he had set out on his mission with that purpose in the beginning. Mgr Justin De Jacobis arrived in Ethiopia in 1839 with precisely this intention. He is revered as a saint and the founding father of modern Ethiopian Catholicism. Arriving as a humble Vincentian Lazarist missionary he settled in northern regions that are now constituted as part of Eritrea. He resolved to live openly as a priest but adopting the liturgy and lifestyle of ordinary Ethiopian Christians, living simply among the people with their own customs. Targetting young men and Orthodox priests he made education and evangelisation his priority. He soon established a ‘seminary’ but even by today’s standard his methods were radical.

Undated correspondence written between 1861 and 1866 speaks of the priests of Mgr De Jacobis exercising their ministry in the Ethiopian Rite. We know, for example, that he did not impose the Latin law of clerical celibacy since he ordained married men; that Latin was not on the curriculum of his seminary; that he taught in Ge’ez and made use of Orthodox churches to celebrate Mass; that he followed the Ethiopian custom in consecrating the church of ‘Evo’ (Hebo?) and that he wore oriental vestments.\(^{28}\)

Although he encountered many difficulties, with a price set on his head by the Orthodox Metropolitan (whom he had escorted personally from Egypt as an act of ecumenical and political charity) it was by a simple ministry of love that he impressed people of every description and won their hearts. By 1845 De Jacobis had constructed his own church and premises and had prepared a group of twenty-four...

\(^{27}\) See <http://www.ecs.org.et/Doc/Mgr_Justin>.

Ethiopian men for ordination to the priesthood. By choosing the formation of secular clergy as their top priority, he and his successors laid the foundations of an autonomous local church. As ‘Apostolic Prefect’ De Jacobis had declined initially to receive episcopal consecration (this was subsequently conferred in 1849) and intended to refer his group to the Episcopal Vicar for the Copts in Egypt. Rome decided differently. Mgr Massaia, OFM Cap., was on his way to begin work as Episcopal Vicar among the Galla people of southern Ethiopia, and was instructed to interrupt his journey for the sake of ordaining the clerics. The Latin rite was used. Massaia subsequently prospered in his own missionary endeavors further south among people largely unacquainted with Christianity. His purpose therefore was different to the mission of De Jacobis and he had no hesitation in using Latin rites and customs. Thus the dual character of the Ethiopian Church was established. With subsequent Italian interests the Latin aspect was strengthened although this would renew old difficulties when the Church was later associated with themes of Italian oppression.

From the time of his episcopal consecration at the hands of Mgr Massaia in 1849, De Jacobis and his missionaries were granted faculties to ‘carry out the sacred functions in the Abyssinian Rite’. This was confirmation of what Pope Pius IX had already granted in correspondence dated 1847. Although this was his intention, it is too simplistic to suggest that from the outset De Jacobis and the whole Catholic community should simply have adopted Orthodox rites and customs across the board. The Orthodox liturgy of the Eucharist anticipates the presence of at least five sacred ministers and makes no allowance for a Low Mass. While Orthodox Christians venerate the sacrament as Christ’s body and blood there is not the same tradition of public devotion to the consecrated elements outside of the liturgy. We should remember that at that time Ethiopian Orthodoxy remained dependent on the ministry of priests, monks and ‘dabtaras’ (lay theologians) in the absence of any truly effective episcopal guidance other than one foreign Metropolitan for the whole nation. Ordination of priests in these circumstances was somewhat uncertain.

---

29 Priest, assistant priest, deacon, sub-deacon, and lector. The Orthodox liturgy may make use of as many as thirteen sacred ministers. This should not be understood as ‘concelebration’ but is intended to add solemn dignity to the liturgy.
For example, while attempting to verify the priestly validity of some of his Orthodox companions, all that De Jacobis could establish was that, with little more than a wave of his hand while seated on his horse, the Abuna had *ordained* whole groups of men as priests, in a language they could not understand with promises and vows that could not be verified, and lacking any certain formation. Validity of ‘form and intention’ by Roman standards had to be interpreted somewhat generously.\(^{30}\) There was no fully systematized liturgical formulary outside of Baptism and the Eucharist. Other sacramental rites were extremely difficult to investigate, apparently being found in different forms contained in various books intended for funeral services. Advancing the work completed in the time of Pope Pius III in 1548, De Jacobis set about the task of revising all fourteen anaphoras (eucharistic prayers) commonly used by the Orthodox Church and creating an authentic Ethiopian Catholic rite. Though his work was incomplete, when he died in 1860 a ritual was established for use among his successors. For the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, as for funerals, they used Orthodox ritual; for penance, marriage and extreme unction they used Roman ritual translated into Ge’ez. For the rest they followed the Ethiopian calendar and used the Ge’ez language and chant for liturgical functions. By 1915 a Ge’ez missal was printed at Asmara with approval of the Apostolic See: it is an Ethiopian rite comparable and parallel with the Catholic Coptic rites as used in Egypt.

In the years after De Jacobis’ death we see the opposite policy of Latinisation being developed elsewhere in Ethiopia by Bishop Massaia and reinforced in 1870 by Mgr Touvier the Episcopal Vicar Apostolic to Abyssinia in. Their policy was to introduce complete Roman rites translated into Ge’ez. While commemorated as noble witnesses for the faith they disdained Orthodox liturgy and at the same time appear to have been poorly informed. Mgr Massaia had written to Rome in May 1882 to the effect that ‘that same Ethiopian mass is only a string of prayers of dubious faith which in no way express the idea of sacrifice’. He further suggested that it was ‘a shapeless monster lacking elegance and beauty or any capacity for perfection’.\(^{31}\)

---

\(^{30}\) Astonishing considering the attitude to Anglican orders that were conclusively decided in Pope Leo’s Bull of 1896.

Commanding a certain prestige and influence in Rome, it appears their command of the Ge’ez language was uncertain. The product of this is some unexpected confusion emanating from Rome. In a letter of 8 May 1850, Pope Pius IX had written to Ras Ailu in Ethiopia about his vision of Catholicism embracing many apostolic rites: ‘There ought to be one faith, just as there is one God and one Christ, but this truth in no way prevents different nations from using different rites, as was certainly used by the Fathers of the Holy Church.’

By the time of his death in 1860 and as a consequence of the spirit of adaptation practiced by Mgr De Jacobis there were already about five thousand Catholics and fifteen Ethiopian Catholic priests, all using the Ethiopian Rite. Pope Leo XIII had Ethiopia in mind when he gave specific instructions on the necessity of not imposing western customs but adapting Catholic faith to local culture. He was uncompromising in his Apostolic Letter Orientalum Dignitas Ecclesiarum of 1894: ‘Any Latin missionary secular, religious or cleric who should induce by council anybody (to abandon) the Oriental rite besides being automatically suspended also incurs the penalties of being deprived and excluded from holding office.’ He goes on to speak of the Oriental liturgy as ‘an outstanding adornment of venerable antiquity... Where new Catholic colleges are founded among Orientals they should cultivate and observe their own rites with greatest reverence’.

Yet in 1895, influenced by Masaia and Tourville the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith ‘abolished’ the Ethiopian rite and translated the Latin rite into Ge’ez with the intention that ‘at the opportune moment the pure and simple Latin Rite should be adopted for Abyssinians... as seems to be desired in the reports of Cardinal Massaia and Mgr. Touvier and not that (desired by) the Vicars Apostolic De Jacobis and Crouzet’.

Goodness knows what plan lay in store for the marred priests. During the first 20 years following the ministry of De Jacobis, of fourty-six ordinations to the priesthood, seventeen were priests married prior to ordination. It will be no surprise to learn that no such ‘opportune moment’ was found by the successors of De Jacobis to implement the instruction. Kevin O’Mahoney makes the significant observation that all these matters were being decided by Europeans.

32 Ibid. p. 154.
for the good of Ethiopians. The situation lingered unresolved until 1913 when Fr. Tecle-Mariam Semharay wrote to Rome as an Ethiopian in favour of retaining the Ethiopian Rite. He argued that there was by now a complete Ethiopian ritual, which had been in use for some time in the Apostolic Vicariate of Abyssinia. He suggested that both for the Mass and the sacraments it would be better simply to adopt the ‘ancient Abyssinian liturgical books... the change of rite would be a matter of grave consequence... and it would cause irreparable harm’. It was impossible to set Latin rites to the chants which were so valued in Ethiopian worship. He therefore advocated ‘the complete practice of the Abyssinian rite, especially in public ceremonies, the observation of fasts and feasts, in fact, unity in all that is not contrary to Catholic faith’.

With the establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches (1917) and the subsequent foundation of the Ethiopian College in Rome (1919) the preservation of the Ethiopian Rite was guaranteed. We should remember in this controversy that by this time Eritrea was an Italian colony in which the Catholic Church had become an independent jurisdiction under an Italian bishop. However, the advent here of a fully Latin Rite Catholic Church only increased suspicion that representatives of the Catholic Church were in collaboration with Italian powers bringing increasing distrust not only from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but also within the Ethiopian Catholic Church itself. The vilification suffered by Ethiopian Catholics actually served to witness in their favour. When the Italians were finally ejected together with all foreign missionaries at the end of the Second World War, Ethiopian Rite clergy had to take responsibility for larger areas than before and so we see how Eritrea became the only universally Eastern Rite Catholic Church. Despite the colonialist association, the process of enculturation implanted during the previous half-century had so endeared the vicariate to the local people that there was never any danger of the Church being identified solely as a colonial imposition.

Having won the esteem of such a large part of the non-Catholic population and the respect of government, any tarnished memories associating Catholicism with the Italian occupation or reluctance about the use of Eastern rites is long since a thing of the past. A new ecumenical spirit is flourishing between the Churches. Following the Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenouda of
Alexandria on 10 May 1973 the Christological dispute emanating from Chalcedon is no longer at stake.\textsuperscript{34} It is recognised to have been a dispute rooted in language difficulties and not doctrinal disagreement. If only that issue had found such a straightforward solution in 451! The documents of Vatican II together with the later encyclicals ‘\textit{Ut Unum Sint}’ and ‘Light of the East’\textsuperscript{35} testify to the determination of the Catholic Church to find a pathway for unity with our Orthodox brothers and sisters and reinforce the Church’s affection and respect for ancient rites. ‘Where they have departed inappropriately from their Eastern Customs... they should endeavour zealously to return to the traditions of their fathers.’\textsuperscript{36} It is an irony that \textit{The Apostolic Tradition}, a book which was cherished and revered in Ethiopia as underlying the first Anaphora of the Apostles, while effectively lost in Europe until the late nineteenth century, should actually be found to preserve the second century Rite of Hippolytus, thus enabling the Western Catholic Church to return to the tradition of one of its own ancient fathers!\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The Ethiopian Catholic Church today}

The function of the Church is to work for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In the modern political Ethiopian arena the Church treads carefully and creatively with respect to the proper processes of social justice and human dignity and in search and support of real democratic progress. In the wake of national elections in May 2005 the voice of the Catholic bishops rang out across the land appealing for honest men and women to offer themselves for political service and encouraging all people to exercise their democratic responsibility: for ‘to abstain oneself from voting is not to fulfil one’s responsibility as citizen’.\textsuperscript{38} After the elections civil unrest and violence erupted with significant loss of life. The voice of the bishops was heard again across

\textsuperscript{34} [Ed.: On the Common Declaration, see Frans Bouwen’s article, below.]
\textsuperscript{35} John Paul II’s encyclical letters of 25 June 1995 and 2 May 1995, respectively.
\textsuperscript{36} Orientalium Ecclesiarum para. 6.
the nation, urging mutual respect for the sake of peace, stability and development, and the common good of all Ethiopians.

Political reservations remain in Ethiopia. The Churches need tremendous wisdom and courage to support honest democratic progress. The world conscience must remain well-informed and alert to the possibility of human rights violations. Freedom of the press remains a live issue. While international broadcasting is available there is only one national Ethiopian television station, owned and operated by the government. In the violence following the election some uncertainty and misinformation concerning police behaviour demands that the international community remain vigilant.

Creative ecumenical projects now see Catholic missionaries working to help the Orthodox Church in the progress of her mission. Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) in Gamo Gofa are testimony to a new spirit: walking together with the Orthodox, they are proud to have been invited to help build the Church. Letting go in humility of their Latin Catholic traditions has given their mission new life. Rather than working alone or apart from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, they continually encourage and support her apostolic mission. In these ways as in other parts of the Eastern world, it is dearly hoped that far from undermining Orthodoxy, Catholicism will only serve to support and strengthen indigenous Christian customs by the solidarity of friendship, common faith and the advantages that can be brought from the infrastructure of a globalised church. Perhaps one day Orthodox and Catholics will enjoy that full communion for which Christ prayed and which embraces a variety of apostolic traditions. Perhaps seen more positively it is this very aspect of the dual character of the Ethiopian Catholic Church which is the most important gift that she brings to the ecumenical table.

In his analysis of social demography Berhanu Abegaz views the future with optimism:

With the emergence of a strong multiethnic state and an economic system that permits high mobility, Ethiopia has a great potential to build an egalitarian democratic society. This potential can be realized only if the intelligentsia shows respect for objective reality. For a nation of minorities, cultivating a tradition of coalition building is paramount for avoiding costly political and economic strategies based
on mythologies or imagined communities. It is long overdue for the real Ethiopia to stand up and be (accurately) counted.  

It is as an intelligent member of such a coalition that the Catholic Church stands up today and looks towards the egalitarian future of Ethiopia, not just with optimism but with faith. To share in that vision Pope Benedict XVI was invited to visit the country during this year’s celebration of the beginning of the third Christian millennium in Ethiopia, according to the Julian calendar.

In the event, Pope Benedict was represented at the Eucharistic Congress held in Addis Abbaba 2 to 4 May by Cardinal Ivan Dias, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. The Cardinal presented the Pope’s greetings to the government and ‘the noble people of this great and ancient civilisation’; and also his ‘special regards to the other Christian denominations, as well as to the Muslim community and to the followers of local religious traditions’. The message continued:

As we complete two millenia of Ethiopia’s rich Christian history... we remember with thankfulness also the Catholic community in this country, noting the diversity of its components, the variety of its rites, the dedication of its bishops, priests and religious co-workers, the devotion of its laity, and its many educational, health and social institutions catering to the well-being of its citizens: all this shows that the Catholic Church here is authentically Ethiopian and genuinely Christian.

---

39 Abegaz, Model Nation. See note 6, above.
40 <www.ecs.org.et>
THE OFFICIAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Frans Bouwen M.Afr*

This article is an exposition of the theological and ecclesiological issues involved in the ecumenical dialogue which took place between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, beginning during the time in office of Patriarch Shenouda III, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, up until 1992. This dialogue is no longer located at the bilateral level of church-to-church, but has been taken up within discussions occurring under the aegis of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. This paper is offered not only as a significant contribution to the historical record, but also as an indicator of future currents and trajectories of Oriental Orthodox- Catholic dialogue.

The official theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church occupies a special place amongst those dialogues which preceded the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and the totality of the Orthodox Oriental Churches. Indeed, it was the first official dialogue with a Church of this family and, in its time, raised great hopes and produced some remarkable documents, before coming up against difficulties which it was unable to overcome.

The historic visit of His Holiness Amba Shenouda III, Coptic

* We are pleased to have the opportunity of publishing this paper which appeared previously in French in Proche-Orient Chrétien 54 (2004) 320-346, of which Fr Bouwen is the director. He is a member of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, as well as of the International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and vice-moderator of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. [Ed.]

1 The meeting preparatory to this dialogue took place in Rome, 27-29 January 2003, and the first session of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches was held in Cairo, 27-30 January 2004.
Orthodox Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, to the Church of Rome and its Bishop, His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in May 1973, marked the official inauguration of a new relationship between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Above all the common declaration signed by the two Heads of Churches on this occasion, stating important points of agreement in faith, theology and sacramental life, and announcing the creation of a joint commission for study and collaboration, became an ongoing source of inspiration for progress in mutual relations.

Therefore, this paper will begin by evoking briefly this visit; next, it will attempt to give a historical survey of the official dialogue that followed, before finally summarizing its main theological themes.


Even if the historic visit of Pope Shenouda III to Rome, between 4 and 10 May 1973, opened a new era in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, it did not constitute an absolute beginning. In their addresses and homilies, both Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III referred to some previous contacts that had prepared this visit, namely: the presence of Coptic Orthodox delegates at the Second Vatican Council; the presence of Roman Catholic delegates at the dedication in 1968 of the new Coptic cathedral, with the return of the relics of Saint Mark; the meeting of Coptic Orthodox pilgrims with Paul VI in Rome in 1969; and the official presence of a Roman Catholic delegation at the patriarchal enthronement of Amba Shenouda in 1971.

Meeting of Shenouda III and Paul VI

The special occasion of the visit in May 1973 was the celebration of the sixteenth centenary of the death of Saint Athanasius and the presentation of a relic of the saint to the Church of Alexandria.

---

3 POC 18 (1968) 185-198.
5 POC 21 (1971) 357-364.
However the general atmosphere of the celebrations that took place during the visit was above all one of joy and gratitude for the blessing of this first meeting between the heads of the churches of Rome and of Alexandria after so many centuries of estrangement. It was like a mutual rediscovering between brothers who had been longing to see each other again. Both Paul VI and Shenouda III expressed this joy repeatedly, being happy to underline all the riches already uniting them.

In his address to Pope Paul at Saint Peter’s Basilica, Pope Shenouda stated: ‘We have to declare that there are between us many points of agreement in the principles of faith,’ adding: ‘As for the points of difference, there is no doubt that after fifteen centuries of study, examination and controversy both on theological and public levels we are much nearer than our ancestors of the fifth and sixth centuries.’

Pope Paul responded:

By the grace of God we share with you faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...; we share the Apostolic traditions handed down by our common fathers; our liturgical, theological, spiritual and devotional life are nourished from the same sources, even though they receive various legitimate expressions... Yet in humility and sorrow we must recognize that in the history of our Churches we have experienced fierce disputes over doctrinal formulae by which our substantial agreement in the reality they were trying to express was overlooked. Methods alien to the Gospel of Christ were at times used by some to try to impose that Gospel. Reasons of a cultural and political order as well as theological ones have been used to justify and even extend a division which should never have taken place.’

Both heads of churches expressed their resolution to work for greater unity, in obedience to the prayer and commandment of their Lord. Pope Shenouda affirmed: ‘We have a responsibility, we believe, to work for the unity of faith, not only between us but all over Christendom.’ And he was even more concrete in his proposals: ‘We are all readier and more intensive to reach solutions for the differences and attain simpler and more practical forms of expression for the conceptions of faith which all would welcome.’ Pope Paul expressed the same determination: ‘Trusting in God’s grace and walking in his Spirit, we will strive to overcome the obstacles which still exist, so that once more our Churches can give a common and more perfect witness to the world which has so much need of him.’
Shenouda III joined Paul VI in affirming the necessity of coming to a greater unity for the sake of mission, by declaring: 'Fully conscious of its duty of witnessing to Christ, the Church is committed to unite so that it may proclaim its spiritual message more effectively. Only through communion in the mystery of the One Christ would it achieve its mission of reconciliation, between God and man, the spirit and the flesh.'

*Common declaration*

The common declaration signed by Paul VI and Shenouda III at the conclusion of their meeting, on 10 May 1973, remains of fundamental importance for the whole process of dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church.  

They first restated the aim of their meeting: ‘We have met in the desire to deepen the relations between our Churches and to find concrete ways to overcome the obstacles in the way of our real cooperation in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us the ministry of reconciliation, to reconcile the world to Himself (2Cor. 5: 18-20).’

There follows the central passage of this common declaration, a common confession of Christological faith:

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our Churches and preserved therein, and in conformity with the early three ecumenical councils, we confess one faith in the One Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance, who for us was incarnate, assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin. We confess that our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

---

This Christological paragraph takes up several of the essential elements of the faith formula worked out in the initial unofficial consultation organised by the Pro Oriente foundation in Vienna in September 1971, at which Pope Shenouda III explicitly referred in his speech to St. Peter and to the formula which he helped to write. It also includes some explicit references to Coptic liturgical texts, as indeed does the Vienna formula.

It should be noted that the points of agreement clearly go beyond the christological domain, to include the divine life given and nourished through the seven sacraments, the veneration of the Virgin Mother, and ‘to a large degree, the same understanding of the Church’.

Paul VI and Shenouda III humbly recognize that their ‘Churches are not able to give more perfect witness to this new life in Christ because of existing divisions which have behind them centuries of difficult history’. The theological differences that have sprung up since the year 451 have been ‘nourished and widened by non-theological factors’. However, in spite of them, they state ‘we are rediscovering ourselves as Churches with a common inheritance and are reaching out with determination and confidence in the Lord to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity which is His gift’.

To assist them in that task, the two Church leaders announce the setting up of a joint commission representing their Churches, with the following function:

- to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems, so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today’s world.

Another paragraph of great importance for the development of the dialogue is the one in which Paul VI and Shenouda III ‘reject all forms of proselytism, in the sense of acts by which persons seek to disturb each other’s communities by recruiting new members from each other through methods, or because of attitudes of mind, which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterize the relationships between Churches’. Their determination is clear: ‘Let it cease, where it may exist. Catholics and Orthodox should strive to
2. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

The International Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, established by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III during their meeting in Rome, held altogether eight sessions between 1974 and 1992. At the same time, the authorities of the two Churches took various initiatives to encourage and support this dialogue and have it bear fruit for church life at the local level. It seems helpful to review briefly the different stages of this dialogue, in order to become better aware of the various dynamics at work.

One dynamic should be noted from the beginning, namely the concern to actively involve the local church. Therefore, among the Catholic members of the Joint Commission, there were three representatives of the Catholic Church in Egypt: one bishop, one priest and one layman.

First meeting of the Commission

The International Joint Commission held its first plenary meeting in Cairo from 26 to 30 March 1974, ten months after Pope Shenouda’s visit to Rome. According to the joint report, it was possible to move a step further in the presentation of faith in Jesus Christ the incarnate Son of God, thanks to a rather long statement on Christology, which it hoped might serve, not only to deepen relations between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Churches, but also as an authentic expression of faith in relations with other churches and communities.

The Commission also recommended a series of theological issues for further study by experts of both Churches: the history and doctrine of the councils of the early Church, in particular those concerning Christology; the sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation; the recognition of saints; and how to get agreements, once achieved, into the liturgy and history books.

Regarding concrete problems, the Commission recognizes that some of the people of our Churches still have a strong feeling of mistrust, when it comes to common cooperation... Certain people, because of a lack of proper understanding both of the Church’s responsibility in the world and of the ecumenical spirit, might use the common declarations of our leaders, and our own proposals, to disturb another’s community by trying to recruit new members from it or by
cultivating attitudes of mind which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterize brotherly relationships between Churches.

It is with these reflections in mind that the Commission recommended the formation of a Local Joint Committee in Egypt, whose function would be ‘to implement the use of resources for the service of Christ and His Church in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities which obstruct this service.’ This Local Joint Committee should maintain regular contact with local Church authorities and report to the International Commission.

The letter which Paul VI addressed to the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, Cardinal Stephanos I Sidarouss on 12 September 1974, demonstrated that the Catholic Church was committed to taking seriously the commitments resulting from the new dialogue.\(^7\) In it the Pope approves the creation and activities of the local committee and expresses the hope that it ‘will be able to contribute effectively to the work of reconciliation and growth in communion which is now undertaken and will sometimes call, on both sides, for a renewal of certain attitudes and certain pastoral practices in order to adapt them to the new situation gradually created.’\(^8\)

Second meeting of the Commission

The second session took place between 27 and 31 October 1975, also in Cairo.\(^9\) In the press communiqué it was said that progress so far made it possible to consider the Christological problem ‘nearly solved from a theological point of view’. The main theme of this second meeting was a vision and understanding of the unity the Churches were seeking. This future unity is described as ‘a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life, and in the harmony of mutual relations between our sister Churches in the one People of God’. The Common Report presents the two different approaches – the Coptic Orthodox and the Roman Catholic – and proposes that ‘two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, come into full communion again on the

\(^{7}\) IS 76 (1991) 10.
\(^{8}\) The review of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, \textit{al-Kirāza} of 19 September 1974, printed the main passages of this letter on its front page, along with a commentary, noting that a copy, along with a personal letter from Paul VI, had been sent to Shenouda III. See \textit{POC} 24 (1974) 351-354.
\(^{9}\) Press Communiqué and Common Report in \textit{IS} 76, 17-19.
basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries. The hope was expressed that it would be possible to complete the study of the main theological points as well as of practical and pastoral questions within a period of six years.

The Local Joint Committee, created after the previous session reported for the first time on its activities, and plans for its continued work were discussed and approved by the International Commission.\footnote{On the local committee’s composition and its first meeting see \textit{POC} 25 (1975) 63-64.}

The Commission notes with satisfaction that meetings have taken place between members of the hierarchies of the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic Churches ‘to discuss questions of common interest and concern’.

\textit{Third meeting of the Commission}

This was held in Vienna, Austria from 26 to 29 August 1976, on the occasion of a new ecumenical consultation organised by the Pro Oriente foundation. The participants agreed a statement on Christology intended to be ‘a definitive presentation of the Christological understanding of the two Churches’, a statement to be submitted to the authorities of both Churches ‘for their definitive judgement and use’. The participants felt that certain working procedures should be revised in order to speed up the process and reach concrete results within five years.

Pastoral questions were a major preoccupation of this meeting. The Coptic Orthodox participants told the Commission that, during the five years of study, they hesitated to inform their people of the work being done, because they felt that ‘this could be used against them, especially among the simple faithful, to foster proselytism or expansion amongst them’. They therefore proposed a series of measures to be taken by the Catholic authorities during the five years, in various areas of religious, pastoral, educational and social work, and also in the use of resources and Church equipment. The aim would be to create an atmosphere in which the envisaged joint projects could achieve significant results.

We note for example two of these proposals. First, that ‘Church buildings of missionaries which are not being used or little used at present should be sold or given to Orthodox rather than to others,
secular or religious.’ Even more significant is the recommendation that ‘the Coptic Catholic Church should refrain from expanding by not establishing new parishes or dioceses or nominating new bishops and by not establishing new monasteries or convents.’ The Commission would submit these proposals to the Catholic authorities. It also recommended that the work of the Committee be strengthened.

Two letters from Rome

This meeting of the Commission was followed by two letters from the Roman authorities, showing the importance they attached to the dialogue as well as their strong desire that it should lead to concrete results. In a letter of 28 January 1987, addressed to Amba Samuel, head of the Coptic Orthodox delegation in the Commission,11 Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, wrote first that ‘the report of the Vienna meeting has been given very careful consideration by the different parties in our Church who are concerned with the relations between our two Churches, including, in a particular way, His Holiness Pope Paul VI.’ He also refers to a letter of 15 November 1976 from Amba Samuel to the Cardinal Secretary of State. He says he is ‘happy to see that the Commission makes concrete proposals about theological studies’, adding: ‘They are not academic exercises but are aimed at pointing the way towards full communion between our two Churches.’

Regarding the pastoral concerns and recommendations, the Cardinal first clarifies certain principles, insisting in particular on the responsibilities of the local Church in this area; Rome can encourage certain initiatives, but it cannot simply impose them. He next restates the Catholic position, ‘that no ecumenical activities between our Churches should be used to create confusion in the minds of the faithful or open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox.’ He also declares that the Catholic Church must not consider the Coptic Orthodox as ‘objects of a “mission”’. That is why all pastoral work among the Orthodox faithful must be known and approved by the Orthodox authorities. The Cardinal reaffirms the possibility of Catholic religious congregations working directly to serve the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church.

However, the recommendation that the Catholic Church should not establish new parishes or dioceses or nominate new bishops could not be accepted, as set out in the Commission’s report. A different formulation could be considered, stating that the Catholic Church is to ‘carry out its pastoral activities within the framework of structures and institutions already existing, and that any changes in these be determined uniquely by the needs of its own faithful’. The Cardinal underlined the importance of the work of the Committee, but he also expressed the conviction that only regular and systematic consultation among the authorities of the two Churches would be able to meet the preoccupations and desires of the International Commission.

Finally, ‘in all frankness’, he drew attention to a practice recently introduced in the Coptic Orthodox Church, namely of ‘refusing to recognize baptism conferred in the Catholic Church and therefore of insisting that this holy sacrament be conferred again on any Catholic who wishes to enter the Orthodox Church.’ The implication of this practice is clearly stated: ‘By questioning the validity of Catholic baptism in these cases, the Coptic Orthodox Church seems to deny the very existence of the Catholic Church with its hierarchy, liturgy, sacraments, etc. which have their foundation in the sacrament of baptism’. He therefore asked that ‘something be worked out to bring this practice to an end’, which is seen as a major obstacle to sincere ecumenical collaboration.

Two months later, a similar letter\textsuperscript{12} was sent to the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, Stephanos I Sidarouss, jointly from Cardinal Willebrands and Cardinal Paul Philippe, prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, in order to share, as they wrote, ‘the thinking of the Holy See on this subject’. They stress the importance of dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church and insist on the particular role of the Coptic Catholic Church. They refer to a letter from Cardinal Jean Villot, Secretary of State, sent to Patriarch Shenouda III regretting, in the name of the Holy Father, that the episcopal appointment of the Catholic patriarchal vicar, Mgr Athanasios Abadir, should have been seen as an obstacle to the search for unity. They then explain the response of the Roman authorities to the proposals of the International Commission, as set out in Cardinal Willebrands’ letter to Amba Samuel.

Fourth meeting of the Commission

In the course of the fourth meeting, held in Cairo from 13 to 18 March 1978, the Commission studied the role of councils in the life of the Church, as well as the relation of the sacraments to the Church, and their place in the economy of salvation. The Commission concluded that ‘the first three Ecumenical Councils are unanimously received as such by both our Churches’; whereas ‘the other councils, received in the Roman Catholic Church as ecumenical or general, should not be considered as an insurmountable obstacle in our search for unity, although the Coptic Orthodox Church does not accept them as ecumenically binding’. Regarding the sacraments, the Commission stated that these issues could not be studied separately from the question of unity. The Commission also examined certain points concerning the nature and form of unity envisaged by the two Churches and identified some general principles for their mutual relations. The Commission also examined the work of the Joint Committee, and made some concrete recommendations for improving and strengthening this work.

Principles guiding the search for unity

On 23 June 1979 Pope John Paul II received in audience a delegation from the Coptic Church, comprising six members of the International Joint Commission and carrying a personal letter from Pope Shenouda III, dated 16 June. In this letter, Shenouda III presented his congratulations ‘on the installation of John Paul II as Pope of the Catholic Church’ and mentioned his visit to Rome as well as recent developments in mutual relations. He added that the two Churches ‘confess and profess in essence almost the same teaching that Christ our Lord is God incarnate’, but noted that in ecclesiology ‘only very little real progress’ had been achieved. He then makes clear the purpose of this visit:

That is why we thought it appropriate to send an official delegation of six members of the official Commission, in order to enhance the negotiations between our two Churches, which seemed to have stopped at a point without reaching further steps of real progress in the achievement of the unity of our two Churches, in Faith, and to see what would be their conception of the future relations between the

---

two Churches and the practical steps to be taken at present and in the near future to fulfil the unity in Faith of the Church of Christ.

In his address to the visitors, Pope John Paul II explicitly made his own the statements of the common declaration of May 1973 and the further encouragements the Holy See had given to the dialogue since that time, while recognizing that one of the fundamental questions concerned the nature of the full communion sought by the Churches, and the role to be played by the Bishop of Rome. He underlined the fundamental importance of recognizing that the richness of unity in faith and spiritual life has to be expressed in diversity of forms: ‘Unity – whether on the universal level or the local level – does not mean uniformity or absorption of one group by another.’

During its stay in Rome from 20 to 24 June, the Coptic Orthodox delegation had several working sessions with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and with several members of the International Commission. This resulted in the joint preparation of a document entitled: ‘Principles for guiding the search for unity between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church’, together with a ‘Protocol’. These documents, dated 23 June 1979, were submitted to Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenouda III, who approved and signed both. They represent a synthesis of the work done previously by the International Joint Commission and, because of the acceptance by both Church authorities, could constitute a precious working document for future dialogue on ecclesiology and on the nature of a future unity between the Catholic Church and the Apostolic Churches of the East. We return to this in the final section of this article.

A slowdown caused by events

After the visit of this Coptic Orthodox delegation to Rome, several meetings took place in Egypt, in the framework of the Local Joint Committee, to put into practice the principles contained in the texts of 23 June 1979. However, it is understandable that during the period

---

15 Ibid. 11-12
16 IS 30-32. See also POC (29 (1979) 109-114.
17 In August 1979, in a meeting at Wadi Natroun between the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch, Shenouda III and the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, Stephanos I, it was proposed to create , in each eparchy, a committee to study questions of working for unity and, at a national level, four committees charged
that Pope Shenouda III was confined to his residence by the Egyptian authorities, in Amba Bishoy Monastery in Wadi Natroun, no new meeting of the Joint International Commission could take place. But even in these circumstances, which were to last more than three years, contact was never entirely lost.

Resumption of the dialogue and a brief Christological formula

On the return of Pope Shenouda III to Cairo at the beginning of January 1985, steps were taken to relaunch the dialogue. In February, Cardinal Jan Willebrands and Fr. Pierre Duprey were able to discuss this with the Coptic bishops present in Cyprus for the general assembly of the Council of Churches of the Middle East. In May of the same year a delegation of the Pontifical Council for Unity, led by Fr. Duprey, went to Egypt to meet the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch and examine with him how to strengthen relations. But in the meantime the approach to dialogue seemed to have changed, on the part of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

At a meeting on 11 February 1986, presided over by Pope Shenouda III, the Coptic Orthodox synodal commission for external relations respectively with: doctrine and liturgy; canon law; religious life and social action; and public relations. Another meeting took place between the two Patriarchs in October 1979. Various meetings between individuals and committees took place in the following months (see POC 32 (1982) 166-169.


For example, on 26 October 1982 Shenouda III received a visit at Amba Bishoy from Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna, accompanied by a delegation from Pro Oriente cf POC 33 (1983) 237. In September 1983, Amba Athanasios, Coptic Orthodox Bishop of Beni Soueif, sent John Paul II, then on his visit to Austria, a copy of the ‘Principles’ of June 1979, bearing the signature of Shenouda III see IS 56, 1984; POC 35 (1985) 92. In September 1984 Shenouda III sent Amba Arsenious, Coptic Orthodox Bishop of Minia, to Rome to make contact, on which occasion he proposed the preparation of a common declaration aimed at ‘purifying memories’ in the spirit of that made by Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I in 1965 see SI 61 (1986); POC 36 (1986) 305. Mgr Andraos Ghattas, appointed apostolic administrator of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate from 20 February 1984, visited Shenouda III on 13 April, to explain in person the significance of this appointment and to look together at how to progress in effective collaboration see POC 24 (1984) 110-111.

POC 35 (1985) 87-93.
decided that the lifting of anathemas between the Catholic and Orthodox Catholic Churches was out of the question without prior agreement on the following seven points: problems of Christology; the procession of the Holy Spirit; belief in purgatory; the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; indulgences; marriage with non-Christians; and various other matters such as divorce, fasting, and priestly celibacy. This decision was bound to cause surprise, since it seemed to ignore all the previous dialogue, and in particular the common declaration on Christology signed in May 1974 by Paul VI and Shenouda III. These preconditions laid down unilaterally caused a certain malaise, especially as some of the topics had never previously been a matter of contention between Orthodox and Catholic Copts.

In the same year, certain difficulties emerged between Orthodox and Catholic Copts in Egypt. For example, the absence of Orthodox Copts at the enthronement of the new Catholic Coptic Patriarch, Stephanos Ghattas II was noted by all. Certain comments appearing in the Coptic Catholic periodical considered this offensive on the part of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch and Church. But in January 1987, the exchange of visits between the Coptic Catholic and Orthodox Patriarchs was resumed and in June the sub-commissions of the local Committee – for theological and pastoral dialogue, respectively – began to meet again.

In the second half of June 1987 Amba Bishoi, secretary of the Coptic Orthodox synod, went to Rome to study the ways in which the work of the International Joint Commission could be restarted, and in August Fr Duprey left for Egypt for discussions with Shenouda III.

A first meeting of several members of the International Commission took place in Amba Bishoy Monastery, on 12 February 1988, with the participation of the Orthodox, Pope Shenouda III, and of the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, Stephanos II. During that meeting a common formula expressing the official agreement on Christology was signed;

21 This absence was apparently justified by the argument that the election of a new Coptic patriarch during the life of his predecessor was contrary to Alexandrian tradition and hence unacceptable. This argument gained weight in the light of more recent events in Egypt: when President Sadat wished to depose and replace Shenouda III, the Copts were opposed to this by virtue of their long-established tradition. Moreover, some wondered whether the Orthodox Copts had not secretly hoped that there would no more new Coptic Catholic patriarchs, following the dialogue in progress. Cf POC 36 (1986) 305.
the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church had already approved that text on 21 June 1986. Pope John Paul II had expressed himself satisfied on the subject in a letter to Shenouda III of 30 May 1988.\(^{22}\)

This brief Christological formula resumes the essential content of the common declaration signed by Paul VI and Shenouda III in May 1973 and was inspired by the Vienna formula of 1971. The formula was adopted at the request of the Coptic Orthodox Church, in order to make the Christological agreement more accessible to the faithful. On this point, it is worth noting that already in 1973, in his address to Pope Paul VI, Shenouda III declared himself in favour of ‘clear and uncomplicated language that all minds understand and consciences approve with comfort’, an expression echoed by John Paul II in his letter of 30 May 1988. The February 1988 meeting marked the end of the first phase of the dialogue and paved the way for the convocation of a new session of the International Joint Commission.

**Fifth meeting of the International Joint Commission**

The Commission held its fifth meeting in Amba Bishoy Monastery, from 3 to 8 October 1988. Here, following the proposal of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the central theme was ‘The Mystery of Redemption and its consequences for the last ends of man’. The final communiqué only notes that the participants ‘identified points of agreement as well as those of disagreement, which require a deeper common study, and in particular regarding the last ends of human beings’.\(^{23}\) According to some sources, discussions focussed on two matters: the procession of the Holy Spirit and purgatory. In fact, all the available time was taken up by discussions about purgatory, and related questions of satisfaction, expiation, temporal punishment and indulgences. The approaches proved very different, but the differences identified seemed to stem more from misunderstandings than from dogmatic contradictions, and were due in large part to the difficulty of distinguishing between official Catholic teaching and popular devotional practices.\(^{24}\)

\(^{22}\) *IS* 61 (1999); *POC* 38 (1988) 130-132.  
\(^{23}\) *IS* 68 (1988).  
\(^{24}\) Just before the meeting Shenouda III had brought out a book in Arabic with the title *Why we reject Purgatory* based solely on Catholic texts published in Arabic, mainly of popular devotion. This makes it easier to understand the severity of his critique see *POC* 39 (1989) 330-33; also A. De Halleux, ‘Le
Sixth meeting of the International Joint Commission

This also took place in Amba Bishoy Monastery, from 23 to 27 April 1990. The main theme was the procession of the Holy Spirit and the controversy over the addition of the *Filioque* in the text of the Nicene Creed. The report limited itself to saying that ‘the work of the commission was primarily concerned with clarifying each other’s positions’. This seems to indicate that no real progress had been possible. According to some commentators, the work of the Commission had been difficult, and there was some justifiable surprise that issues which had never been a matter of contention between the Coptic Orthodox and the Coptic Catholic Churches risked leading the dialogue into an impasse.

Seventh meeting of the International Joint Commission

The Commission held its seventh meeting from 18 to 24 April 1991, likewise in Amba Bishoy Monastery. The communiqué mentions that ‘prolonged discussions were held concerning both Churches’ beliefs about the situation of the departed Christian souls after death’. Although the Coptic Orthodox Church does not accept the doctrine of purgatory, it is said that many important points on other aspects of the subject under discussion were recognised and that the results were being submitted to the authorities of both Churches. A small step forward seemed to have been taken on this subject. On the procession of the Holy Spirit, the communiqué does no more than report that studies were presented from either side and that dialogue continues. This seems to indicate a degree of hesitancy and that a common approach had yet to be found.

More importantly, the Commission was able to consider concrete problems existing between the Churches. A new Joint Local Committee was set up to study those problems that continued to

dialogue théologique avec les Orientaux Orthodoxes’, Revue théologique de Louvain 20 (1989) 118-123, esp. 120-123.


27 In order to help distinguish between Catholic Church teaching and popular devotion, the Coptic Catholic Patriarch had in April 1991 published a four page supplement in Arabic to the patriarchal Catholic journal under the title ‘The teaching of the Catholic Church on what there is after death’. Several thousand copies were distributed. See POC 31 (1991) 363.
cause friction and to propose solutions to the Church authorities. In
fact, some sensibilities remained very raw, especially regarding
suspicions of proselytism, and a calm consideration of these questions
remained very delicate.\footnote{POC 31 (1991) 357-364.}

**Eighth meeting of the International Joint Commission**

At the eighth meeting of the International Joint Commission, held in
Amba Bishoy Monastery from 25 to 29 February 1992, the participants
confessed together their faith in one unique triune God, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit, one in essence, three hypostases, equal in glory, and
to be adored equally.\footnote{IS 80 (1992).} Concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit,
the two delegations had the opportunity to express their positions,
biblically, theologically and historically towards the doctrine and the
insertion of the *Filioque* clause. It was said that the Coptic Orthodox
Church stands firmly against this addition. No mention of any
possible progress was made, which suggests that after three meetings
devoted to the subject, the dialogue was bogged down, without any
idea of how to get out of the impasse.

The Local Joint Committee presented a report on its activities
during the period since its recent reactivation. The Joint International
Commission encouraged the Local Committee to meet regularly and
to confront local problems in all frankness. This suggests that
collaboration was not always easy.\footnote{POC 42 (1992) 408-411.}

At the closing session, it was agreed that the Commission would
hold its next session in April 1993, but this never happened. The
reasons for breaking off the dialogue have never been explained. One
can only observe the fact. On the one hand, the theological exchanges
seemed to be marking time and there seemed no way of renewing the
approach to unblock the process. On the other hand, some personal
sensitivities doubtless played a part, such as a feeling of not being
understood or fully respected. Different interpretations of the
problems which could arise between the priests and the faithful of the
two Churches, with suspicions and accusations of proselytism,
doubtless helped to hold up the dialogue.

No announcement nor explanation was ever made public, to my
knowledge, to explain why the dialogue did not continue its expected
course. The reasons may be varied, and some persons who were more directly involved in this dialogue could perhaps help to reflect on this experience so that it may be taken into consideration when we plan a future dialogue.

3. MAIN THEMES OF THE DIALOGUE

After this historical overview of the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Coptic Church it seems helpful to review its main themes. It will then become apparent what agreements have been reached which might serve as a basis for future work, and which further studies are needed. This experience may also help us to find other approaches and so avoid certain pitfalls or overcome certain difficulties which at present appear insurmountable.

Christology

The first and main emphasis of the International Joint Commission was of course on Christology. Its first three meetings were mostly devoted to finding a more precise and complete formulation of Christological faith, after the common declaration signed by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in 1973. At the close of the Commission’s first meeting, the report noted a new step forward. The second meeting considered the Christological problem nearly solved. At their third meeting, in 1976, the participants prepared a more developed statement, which enabled them to consider the Christological problem as resolved from a theological point of view.

To the surprise of some observers, twelve years later, in 1988, a brief Christological formula, already approved by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church two years earlier, was put forward as ‘a common formula giving official expression to our agreement on Christology’. This formula makes no reference to the common declaration signed by Paul VI and Shenouda III in May 1973, or to the further work of the International Commission. It was formally signed during a meeting at Amba Bishoi monastery on 12 February 1988, a meeting which marked the official resumption of dialogue, following the interruption caused by the compulsory residence of Pope Shenouda III. The latter took part in that meeting and signed the text, while Pope John Paul II expressed his agreement three months later in a letter to Pope Shenouda III.

The Christological agreement thus constitutes a firm foundation and
a concrete starting point for every future dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Pope Shenouda III’s wish for a simpler, more popular expression of this agreement – to make it more accessible to all the faithful in Egypt – could usefully be referred to, should people feel inclined to revamp past Christological common declarations, lest we again get bogged down in purely theoretical speculations about the mystery of the Incarnation, which may sometimes risk losing sight of its soteriological import.

**Ecclesiology**

In the field of ecclesiology, the attention of the International Commission went in the first place to the vision of the union that the two Churches are seeking. The final aim is clearly stated in the report of the second meeting. ‘The union we envisage is a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life, and in the harmony of mutual relations between our sister Churches in the one People of God.’

But at the same time, difficulties and differences are clearly discernible concerning the understanding of the structures through which the unity and integrity of the faith of the Church are to be served. These differences mainly concern relations between the local and the universal Church, as well as the role and the authority of the Ecumenical Councils. In particular, the Coptic Orthodox state that ‘there is no need for a supreme administrative body to govern all Churches of Christendom’ and that ‘the Church is not in need of referring to any other bishop as if this bishop possessed the full power to be the only spokesman of Christ and the universal Church’. On the other hand, Catholics expresses the belief that ‘in accordance with Christ’s will, a ministry of universal unity exists for the communion between local Churches, which ministry the Roman Catholic conceives as realized in the ministry of the bishop of Rome’. The two sides confine themselves to restating their positions, and the question of the need and the form of a primacy or of a ministry serving the universal communion remains untouched.

The study of this vision of unity was further elaborated in the third and fourth meetings, and for the first time found a more systematic expression in the ‘Principles for guiding the search for unity’ of 23 June 1979. Because of the text’s rich content and special status – it was
signed by Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenouda III – it is worth quoting from these principles at somewhat greater length, since their implications extend far beyond the relations between Catholic and Orthodox Copts.

1. The objective of our efforts is full communion of faith expressing itself in communion in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between two sister Churches in the one People of God.

2. We are two Apostolic Churches in which, by virtue of the Apostolic succession we possess the full sacramental life, particularly the Eucharist, even if Eucharistic communion has not yet been achieved between us in so far as we have not completely resolved the divergences among us.

3. The resolution of these divergences is all the more important, therefore, in order that our Churches may give more adequate expression to the communion which already exists in an imperfect way among them. Thus they will be able to give more perfect witness to their faith and their life in Christ than they can in their present state of division, since local Catholic Churches everywhere and the Coptic Church will then fully recognize each other as the realization in their places of one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

4. The unity we envisage in no way means absorption of one by the other or domination by one over the other. It is at the service of each to help each live better the proper gifts it has received from God’s Spirit.

5. The unity presupposes that our Churches continue to have the right and power to govern themselves according to their own traditions and disciplines.

6. This legitimate autonomy does not deny the necessity of mutual relations between our Churches. When the Churches live more closely together in communion of faith and mutual charity, they will develop new contacts and patterns of relations which will indicate how to deal with questions of common interest and concern. This process will also help the Churches to arrive to a better understanding of the meaning and extent of primacy in the Church, a concept which exists in both our Churches but about which there remain canonical and doctrinal differences preventing our full communion.

7. It is in the light of all the foregoing principles that we will seek to resolve the differences which still exist among us concerning our understanding of the structures through which the unity and the integrity of the faith of the Church are to be served.
11. Once unity is achieved, the richness of the various Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression for the enrichment of all within the one Coptic Church under the leadership of the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.

We may hope that these principles will be taken into account in future dialogues, especially in tackling questions about recognizing legitimate diversities and structures of communion at the local and the universal level.

**Proselytism**

The rejection of all forms of proselytism is closely related to ecclesiology and to mutual recognition as Apostolic Churches with full sacramental life. This rejection is already affirmed in unambiguous terms in the common declaration of Paul VI and Shenouda III in 1973. This declaration also offers a first definition of what is meant by proselytism: ‘Acts by which persons seek to disturb each other’s communities by recruiting new members from each other through methods, or because of attitudes of mind, which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterize the relationships between Churches’.

This rejection has been repeated, in one way or another, in almost all the reports of the Joint International Commission and letters exchanged between the authorities of both Churches. This fact in itself already shows the critical importance of this point. The successive reports of the International Commission tried to distil, little by little, the perception and description of the problem; to devise effective means to combat it; and to eliminate negative repercussions on the dialogue and on mutual relations of respect and collaboration.

As far as principles were concerned, there was general agreement between the representatives of the Catholic Church and of the Coptic Orthodox Church. However, the differences in interpretation of the complex phenomena related to proselytism as well as the extreme sensitivity to it in certain contexts, made an open and fraternal discussion at times very difficult, if not impossible. When will it be possible to get beyond generalities and to study together the particular cases of people passing from one Church to the other? Are they really numerous? Who is involved? In what circumstances do they occur? What are the stated or underlying causes? Can the Churches involved together find a remedy?
In one way, attitudes regarding proselytism could be considered as a test, a touchstone of the truth and courage of the dialogue. However, at the same time, one should be careful not to concentrate too much on this sensitive issue, for this could endanger the future of any dialogue by maintaining a climate of suspicion instead of growing together in mutual love and trust. The experience of the Catholic – Coptic Orthodox dialogue can help in this, in particular when it is completed by similar experiences from other contexts.

**Involvement of the local Church**

Another important factor for the truth and fruitfulness of dialogue is the actual involvement of the local Church. From the beginning of the official Catholic–Coptic Orthodox dialogue, three Coptic Catholics from Egypt were appointed members of the Joint International Commission: a bishop, a priest and a layperson. At its first meeting in 1974, this Commission recommended the creation of a Joint Local Committee in Egypt, whose function would be ‘to implement the use of resources for the service of the Church of Christ in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities which obstruct this service’. Promoting encounter and collaboration, and overcoming estrangement and mistrust in daily life were its two main objectives. The Local Committee was also asked to maintain regular contact with local Church authorities and to report back to the International Commission, as part and parcel of the same endeavour. Its activities were regularly encouraged by the International Commission, as well as in the letters of the Church authorities, and ways of strengthening it were discussed. At times it needed to be reactivated. All this seems to indicate that its task was a delicate one, as well as an absolute necessity. The slow speed of the Local Committee sometimes endangered the progress of the International Commission, but this clearly was the price of an authentic dialogue. The necessity of the local Church’s involvement in the international dialogue is clearly stated in the ‘Protocol’ which accompanied the ‘Principles’ of June 1979:

What is of particular importance is that a programme be planned and implemented as soon as possible for bringing to the attention of the clergy and laity of both Churches the principles which have been determined and the progressive action which can be taken to implement them. No serious search for unity between our Churches can be carried forward without an informed and sympathetic participation of the whole Church.
This concrete and persistent attempt to involve the local Christian community in the dialogue deserves recognition.

Other themes

In addition to Christology and ecclesiology, the Joint International Commission also recommended, at its first meeting in 1974, a study of the sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation. However at the fourth meeting in 1978, the members of the Commission recognized that issues concerning sacraments could not be studied separately from the question of unity and so there is no further mention of them in subsequent meetings.

In the report of the second meeting of the International Commission, other theological differences are recommended for further study: e.g. councils, canons, saints, anathemas, dogmas concerning the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin, and life after death. At the request of the Coptic Orthodox Church, some of these themes were studied directly in the second phase of the dialogue, i.e. after Pope Shenouda III’s return from confinement.

The question of the last ends of human beings or life after death, and more precisely the concept of purgatory, with its related notions of satisfaction, expiation, temporal suffering and indulgences, was the subject of studies and discussions at the fifth, sixth and seventh meetings of the International Commission. The topic of the procession of the Holy Spirit and the addition of the Filioque to the Nicene Creed were studied at the sixth, seventh and eighth meetings. However, the communiqués published after these meetings limit themselves to stating that both sides had the opportunity of clarifying their respective positions, and no mention is made of any concrete progress.

Would it not be opportune to ask us why these studies did not yield concrete results? Was it because the dogmatic differences were too big, or was it down to the different ways in which representatives of the two Churches looked at their history and traditions? More or less critically? Or was it, at least in part, because of a difficulty in distinguishing between what is original and what is later development? Between what is essential and what is secondary? Or between official theological teaching and popular devotions? Some of these questions will have to be considered, whenever a new dialogue is initiated on these matters, if we want to avoid the same impasses.
A DIALOGUE BOTH NEW AND OLD

The dialogue which began in 2004 between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, under the aegis of the Joint International Commission, was both new and old. New, in that from then on all the Oriental Orthodox Churches would be engaged in it together, as a single family. The dynamics of the various relationships and the priorities of the various participants will doubtless vary. At the same time, each Church will maintain its own personality and will have to make its own way. And all the Churches involved will be called to offer each other mutual support along the way, learning from each other’s experience, and respecting the other’s particular context and rhythm. In this process, the experience of the official dialogue between Catholics and Coptic Orthodox may act as a guiding light; yet it may also find fresh light shed upon it by the common approach.

What matters, is to promote a dialogue which stays close to ecclesial life, in which joint witness, and joint service of the human community are constant concerns, along the lines laid down by Pope John Paul II in the address delivered on 25 February 2000 during the ecumenical meeting which marked his visit to Cairo:\footnote{See POC 50 (2000) 182-192.}

We do not know each other sufficiently: let us find ways to meet! Let us seek viable forms of spiritual communion, such as joint prayer and fasting, or mutual exchanges or hospitality between monasteries. Let us find forms of practical cooperation, especially in response to the spiritual thirst of so many people today, for the relief of their distress, in the education of the young, in securing humane conditions of life, in promoting mutual respect, justice and peace, and in advancing religious freedom as a fundamental human right.
RAVENNA AND BEYOND.

Adam A.J. DeVille*

_The papacy has emerged as the most fundamental and most difficult of the issues still dividing the Orthodox and Catholic Churches as the official international dialogue between them, meeting in Ravenna in 2007, has confirmed. That Ravenna statement is first briefly examined to see how it understands papal primacy, what progress has been made on this issue, and what remains to be done. The article then reviews twenty-four Orthodox authors on the Roman papacy from the Second Vatican Council onwards, noting similarities and differences among them and synthetically drawing three ‘positive’ and three ‘negative’ conclusions about Orthodoxy and the papacy._

‘Hail East and West, for whom both we fight and from both we are fought!’ (St. Gregory the Theologian)

INTRODUCTION

In October 2007, the official international dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches issued a very significant statement from Ravenna after their meeting. With the rather unwieldy title of ‘Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority,’ the statement is a landmark for at least two reasons. First, it signals in a new way that the dialogue, which fell apart in 2000 over recriminations about ‘uniatism’ and ‘proselytism’ has finally resumed

---

* Assistant professor of theology, University of St. Francis, 2701 Spring Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana; and editor, Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies. He has published widely in popular, professional, and juried periodicals in Canada, the United States, and Europe, including Ecumenical Trends, The Jurist, The Canadian Journal of Orthodox Christianity, New Horizons in Faith and Order, Studia Canonica, Anglican Theological Review and elsewhere.

1 As Robert Taft notes, the last scheduled session of the joint Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue in Maryland in 2000 ‘is known to have ended in a
the task it had appointed for itself before its gradual dissolution throughout the 1990s came to a head after the Maryland meeting. The dialogue notes this in its first section, where the participants write ‘we are conscious that our dialogue is restarting in a world that has changed profoundly in recent times’ (no.1).

Second, the dialogue is significant in that it is finally coming to grapple with the one issue acknowledged by both sides as being the major issue between the two Churches, viz., authority in general and papal authority in particular. The dialogue, moreover, felt it necessary to examine ‘authority and conciliarity’ together (no.4) within the overarching framework of the eucharistic and Trinitarian nature of the Church (no.3). The dialogue makes a point of insisting that authority is not simply or exclusively papal, patriarchal, or even episcopal: ‘each member of the Church exercises a form of authority in the Body of Christ. In this sense, all the faithful (and not just the bishops) are responsible for the faith professed at their Baptism’ (no.7). Only when authority is thus seen as emanating from baptism, and shared by the whole Church, does the dialogue begin to examine more closely the nature of authority, insisting that its most concentrated forms are to be found in councils ‘at the three levels of ecclesial communion, the local, the regional, and the universal’ (no.10). This latter claim, about authority at the universal level, is extremely significant in a common statement of all the Orthodox Churches. It is an important first step in building an Orthodox consensus on this question when Orthodoxy has been (and to some extent remains) internally divided on this very question.

It is, in fact, the question of universal primacy that is the real gravamen of the Ravenna document, and in it we find the real significance of the document. The section on universal primacy begins with some relatively uncontroversial remarks about the mutually recognized role of ‘the bishop of Rome...[as] the protos among the patriarchs’ (no.41). In the very next sentence, the statement again acknowledges something that is commonplace to those who have followed these debates over the years: Orthodox and Catholics do not stalemate or worse; some have privately branded it a complete fiasco.’ See Robert Taft, ‘The Problem of “Uniatism” and the “Healing of Memories”: Anamnesis, not Amnesia,’ Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies, vol. 41-42 (2000-2001): 155-196; citation at 156.
agree on ‘the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome as protos, a matter that was already understood in different ways in the first millennium’ (no.41). Nonetheless, as subsection 2 of paragraph 43 makes clear, ‘the fact of primacy at the universal level is accepted by both East and West.’

The context within which the document’s discussion about universal primacy takes place is crucial. The Ravenna document makes it repeatedly and abundantly clear that primacy can only be understood within the context of conciliarity (otherwise referred to as synodality), each in tension with the other, and never without the other. Here, as we shall see later, it is not hard to detect the clear and steadying influence of Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, the Orthodox co-chair of the dialogue and indisputably one of the greatest theologians of our time. The Ravenna statement argues that ‘primacy and conciliarity are mutually interdependent’ (no.43). Conciliarity, we read a paragraph earlier, ‘implies an active role of the bishop of Rome as protos of the bishops of the major sees’ (no.42) though, again, there is not yet a consensus as to what that role means. Indeed, the statement’s penultimate paragraph argues that it remains for the question of the role of the bishop of Rome in the communion of all the Churches to be studied in greater depth. What is the specific function of the bishop of the ‘first see’ in an ecclesiology of koinônia and in view of what we have said on conciliarity and authority in the present text? How should the teaching of the first and second Vatican councils on the universal primacy be understood and lived in the light of the ecclesial practice of the first millennium? These are crucial questions for our dialogue and for our hopes of restoring full communion between us. (no.45)

There is, then, not yet a consensus about universal or papal primacy. Not only is the dialogue faced with the task of coming up with a joint consensus, but the Orthodox partner to the dialogue needs itself to attempt to come to a common mind about the papacy. In the rest of this paper, I review the relevant literature of the last half-century to see, first, what the various Orthodox positions on papal and universal primacy are, and then to attempt a brief synthesis of that literature, drawing out six areas of agreement on the part of the twenty-four Orthodox theologians whom I review.
ORTHODOXY AND THE PAPACY SINCE 1962

The papacy had been front and centre on the ecumenical agenda for more than forty years. Even though, historically speaking, this is a short time, nonetheless enough time has passed for the beginnings of contemporary Orthodox thinking on the papacy to emerge. Enough time has, moreover, passed since the landmark encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, issued in 1995, with its landmark call for a reconsideration of the configuration of the papacy in such a way that it would again be an acceptable instrument of unity for the whole Church.

Hitherto, Orthodox writings on this subject have been published in a variety of places, some of them relatively obscure, and they have not been gathered into one place and analyzed as a whole. Such, then, is our task here. In order to discern the ecumenical progress made thus far, and to determine the areas which still require work, it is important to gather into one place and to consider carefully and systematically everything that has been written so far in English on the papacy by various Orthodox theologians and hierarchs. What follows, then, is a chronologically ordered attempt to summarize and systematically analyze in one place the major Orthodox works from 1962 to 2006.

As we examine each of these, we will bear in mind the caution of one among their number, John Erickson: ‘any attempt to pick out a single and altogether consistent and clearly defined ‘position’ must be held suspect.’ Nonetheless, as we shall see, certain similarities clearly emerge, certain problems are repeatedly highlighted, and certain solutions are frequently mentioned: on the basis of these, we may put together something of a mosaic—still incomplete, to be sure, but nonetheless an ecumenically useful portrait—of the papacy as it is found in Orthodox theology of the last forty years. Taken together,

---


3 ‘First Among Equals: Papal Primacy in an Orthodox Perspective,’ *Ecumenical Trends* 27 no.2 (February 1998): 1-9; citation at 4. We review Erickson below in the text.
each of these theologians gives us some understanding of the current state of the question, highlighting both problems and possibilities and enabling us to see how far we have come and where we must go next.

Rather than review everything that has been written on this topic, which would make this article unduly lengthy and take us too far afield, we have chosen to deal with only those Orthodox scholars who treat the papal office as such—rather than attendant issues like the role of Peter, exegesis of texts such as Matthew 16, or the role of the bishop of Rome among the Fathers and later theologians. A summary of each major work will be presented before we attempt to offer a highly tentative synthetic portrait of what a papacy—remodeled to take account of these Orthodox concerns—might look like.

a) John Meyendorff

The first attempt by Orthodox scholars to deal with the papacy comes—not surprisingly—in the 1960s as the relationship between Catholicism and Orthodoxy is first beginning to thaw. 4 In this period, several scholars in both Paris and New York published a series of essays on Petrine primacy which were edited by John Meyendorff, the Orthodox historian, and published in English in 1963 as *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church.* 5

Meyendorff’s own contribution was to provide historical links between the role of the bishop of Rome in the early Church and later developments in that office at the start of the second millennium. 6 Meyendorff argues—in terms that will rapidly become very familiar to us in this review—that ‘the Byzantines unanimously recognized the great authority of the old Rome, but never understood this authority in the sense of an absolute power.’ 7 Meyendorff does not develop his

---

4 For much of the documentation surrounding these meetings and their fruits, see E.J. Stormon, ed., Towards the Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople: Public Statements & Correspondence Between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate 1958-84 (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).
7 John Meyendorff, ‘St. Peter in Byzantine Theology’ in *The Primacy of Peter,*
reflection on the office much beyond this—save to note that papal primacy would develop in new and increasingly unacceptable ways in the second millennium, particularly after the Gregorian reforms.

Later, in other places, Meyendorff would turn to ecclesiological questions again and again, noting, inter alia, that ‘I see no way in which the Orthodox Church can fulfill its mission in the world today without the ministry of a “first bishop”... based upon that “privilege of honour” of which the Second Ecumenical council spoke. We should all think and search how to redefine that “privilege” in a way which would be practical and efficient today.’\(^8\)

Meyendorff himself would think and search for how the Orthodox would define such a ministry of a ‘first bishop,’ noting that a ‘first bishop...would not be a pope with administrative powers over his peers but would possess sufficient authority to organize, channel and, in a sense, represent the conciliarity of the Church.’\(^9\)

More clearly still, Meyendorff, after stressing the ‘pragmatic and political origin of all the primacies’\(^10\) in the early Church nonetheless goes on to argue that ‘universal primacy’ is ‘not simply a historical accident reflecting “pragmatic requirements”... but a sign that the Holy Spirit did not abandon the Church.’ Universal primacy, he stresses ‘does possess a scriptural and ecclesiological basis.’\(^11\) The Spirit provides no ‘ultimate guarantee, no ultimate security’ to the one exercising that primacy, but enables its incumbent to exercise ‘a special ministry, a special *diakonia* of universal primacy and that such a *diakonia* implies a particular *charisma*.’\(^12\)

---


9 John Meyendorff, ‘The Ecumenical Patriarchate Yesterday and Today,’ in *idem, The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 254. (This is a reprint of an article under the same name published in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 24 [1979]: 227-44.)

10 Ibid., 244.

11 Ibid., 243.

12 Ibid., 245.
b) Nicholas Afanassieff

Afanassieff’s essay in the Meyendorff volume ranks among the most famous of his works, and one of the most influential pieces of Orthodox ecclesiology in the twentieth-century revival of what is now commonly called ‘eucharistic ecclesiology.’ Afanassieff argues that before we can look at the primacy of Rome we must take two steps back: first to the position of Rome, and then to the whole question of primacy, which means a further step back to the question of ecclesiology. Immediately we must ask: which ecclesiology? Catholic ecclesiology has been understood traditionally as universalist while the ecclesiology of Orthodoxy is ostensibly eucharistic, but, Afanassieff acknowledges, more often also universalist in practice. Catholics may claim this universalist ecclesiology—and its logical consequent, universal primacy—is ancient, but Afanassieff argues that a eucharistic ecclesiology is in fact older.

For Afanassieff, eucharistic ecclesiology does not exclude a primate, i.e., a head who presides over the Eucharist. In this light, ‘priority’ (the term Afanassieff prefers to ‘primacy,’ which he calls ‘a legalistic expression, whereas priority is founded on authority of witness, and that is a gift God grants’) is based not on power or honour but only love: ‘the church that came first among the local churches won its place by services rendered, and not by prestige.’ Nonetheless, such service did not confer ‘power’ or ‘special rights’ as the Churches were ‘not joined by law, but by love and concord. That is why a single church surrounded by many concordant churches only increases in authority by a corresponding increase in love.’

This single Church, Afanassieff acknowledges, was originally the Church of Jerusalem, but after the fall of Jerusalem, we ‘know that the Church of Rome took over the position of “church-with-priority” at the end of the first century,’ a movement that happened without ‘a formal transmission of priority.’ Some of the earliest documents, including those of Clement of Rome, do not support the thesis that Rome had anything more than this ‘priority.’ Ignatius of Antioch is the next to recognize the role of Rome as the Church “which presides in

---

13 ‘The Church Which Presides in Love’ in *The Primacy of Peter*, 91-143.
14 Ibid., 115.
15 Ibid., 113.
16 Ibid., 124.
love” while saying nothing about her bishop or power over other Churches. While today we may find this ‘puzzling,’ it simply ‘proves that Ignatius had absolutely no idea of Roman primacy.’\(^{17}\) In the end, both Orthodox and Catholics must abandon their falsely universalist notions of papal primacy because ‘the mind of the Church has become unaware that the Church of God should be directed by a local church, one church among all others,’ except that Church “which presides in love.”\(^{18}\) Papal primacy, then, is an outrunning of one disciple in love rather than an overruling of all the disciples by one.

c) Alexander Schmemann

Until his early death in 1983, Alexander Schmemann remained one of the few consistently self-critical Orthodox theologians to avoid the siren song of triumphalism and to speak frankly on topics to which he addressed himself. In his article ‘The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology,’\(^ {19}\) we have a forthright acknowledgement of the numerous ‘canonical and jurisdictional troubles and divisions’ of recent Orthodoxy, in which the ‘absence of a clearly defined doctrine of...primacy’ has been a ‘major handicap for...unity.’\(^ {20}\)

Schmemann proceeds, therefore, to attempt a definition of primacy by first acknowledging that in dealing with primacy what we are really dealing with is power.\(^ {21}\) Such power, however, must be carefully defined. If the Church is defined in terms of the Eucharist—if, indeed, the Church is constituted by the Eucharist—then ‘the essential corollary of this “eucharistic” ecclesiology is that it excludes the idea of a suprême power, understood as power over the local church and her bishop.’\(^ {22}\) Such power is thus excluded because it ‘would mean power over Christ himself,’ present in the Eucharist. Power in the Church, then, ‘can be defined and understood only within the indivisible unity of the Church, the eucharist and the bishop.’\(^ {23}\) All of which does not mean that Orthodoxy rejects primacy: it rejects, rather, a primacy defined as power over the bishop and local Church, hence over the

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 127.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 143.

\(^{19}\) ‘The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology’ in Meyendorff, The Primacy of Peter, 145-71.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 146-47.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 147.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 153.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 154.
Eucharist. Primacy that is reconcilable with a eucharistic ecclesiology (as seen, for example, in the famous sixth canon of Nicaea, which speaks of power [exousia] ‘understood as “priority” or “privilege”..., a primacy of authority’\(^{24}\)) is much more acceptable for Orthodoxy, not least because such authority ‘cannot be defined in juridical terms.’\(^\text{25}\)

Schmemann argues vigorously that the early Church knew a form of non-juridical universal primacy, pace whatever modern Orthodox polemicists may say about this. This primacy exercised by Rome, evidence of which is ‘unanimously’\(^{26}\) to be found among the Fathers and early councils, has been interpreted incorrectly by both Catholics (the ‘ecclesiological error of Rome lies...in her identification of this primacy with ‘supreme power,’ which transforms Rome into the principium radix et origo of the unity of the Church and of the Church herself’\(^{27}\)) and Orthodox, who ‘systematically belittled the evidence itself.’ Roman theology tends to interpret the ‘evidence in juridical terms’ while Orthodoxy, when not simply dismissing it, ‘is still awaiting a truly Orthodox evaluation of universal primacy in the first millennium of church history.’\(^{28}\)

In the meantime, this much is known: primacy is neither ‘supreme power’ nor mere ‘chairmanship’ but is exercised by a bishop who can and ‘must’ speak for one Church, representing her unity precisely as a regular bishop and ‘not a “bishop at large.”’\(^{29}\) In conclusion, Schmemann argues that such a role existed and was historically exercised by Rome: the ‘early tradition clearly indicates the primacy of the Church of Rome’ as exercised without ‘jurisdictional power.’\(^{30}\)

d) Kallistos Ware

Few theologians are as well known inside and outside the Orthodox world as Bishop Kallistos Ware. Bishop Kallistos has treated the question of the papacy—more in passing than systematically—in a variety of places, including a 1969 lecture, ‘Primacy, Collegiality, and the People of God.’\(^{31}\) He begins with the observation that when

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 162-63.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 163.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 163.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 164.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 165.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) This lecture in 1969 was reprinted in a variety of places. We cite it here as
Catholics and Orthodox last met together in council, at Ferrara-Florence in 1438/9, ‘they devoted about nine months (with some interruptions) to the question of the Filioque, and over two months to the question of purgatory; but on the problem of the papal claims they spent no more than two weeks.’

Bishop Kallistos goes on to note a familiar refrain among Orthodox theologians on the question of the papacy: ‘what Orthodoxy rejects is not the Roman primacy as such, but simply a particular way of understanding that primacy.’ The problematic understanding is one that sees the papacy as possessing ‘a universal “power of jurisdiction” from which ‘the Orthodox feel compelled to dissent.’ If, rather, the pope is understood as ‘the elder brother within the family of Christ...[who] enjoys a position of leadership and initiative, but not of coercion: for the other bishops are his brothers, not his subjects or his servants,’ then the papacy presents no problems to the Orthodox.

In his most famous book, *The Orthodox Church*, originally published in 1963 and reprinted many times after that, most recently in 1993, Bishop Kallistos continues and amplifies this argument: ‘Orthodox believe that among the five Patriarchs a special place belongs to the Pope. The Orthodox Church does not accept the doctrine of Papal authority set forth in...the Vatican Council of 1870.’ However, if Orthodoxy rejects that particular Roman definition of primacy, nonetheless Orthodoxy does not deny to ‘Rome a primacy of honour, together with the right (under certain conditions) to hear appeals from all parts of Christendom.’ This primacy assigned to the pope ‘does not overthrow the essential equality of all bishops. The Pope is the first bishop of the Church—but he is the first among equals.’

---


32 Ibid.,

33 Ibid., ‘3’.

34 Ibid., ‘4’.

35 Ibid.,


37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 28.
the first, ‘Orthodoxy recognizes that, in the early centuries of the
Church, Rome was pre-eminent in its steadfast witness to the true
faith.’ From here, Ware proceeds by way of affirmation rather than
negation:

instead of saying what Orthodox will not accept, let us ask in positive
terms what the nature of Papal primacy is from an Orthodox
viewpoint. Surely we Orthodox should be willing to assign to the Pope,
in a reunited Christendom, not just an honorary seniority but an all-
embracing apostolic care. We should be willing to assign to him the
right, not only to accept appeals from the whole Christian world but
even to take the initiative in seeking ways of healing when crises and
conflict arise anywhere among Christians. We envisage that on such
occasions the Pope would act, not in isolation, but always in close co-
operation with his brother bishops. We would wish to see his ministry
spelt out in pastoral rather than juridical terms. He would encourage
rather than compel, consult rather than coerce.40

e) Stylianos Harkianakis
Stylianos Harkianakis, an archbishop in the Greek Orthodox Church
in Australia, authored an essay that first appeared in a collection
edited by Hans Küng in 1971 entitled Papal Ministry in the Church. 41
This collection, which solicited contributions from Christians of a
variety of confessions, contains two Orthodox pieces. The first, by
Harkianakis, argues that in evaluating the papacy, the Orthodox
theologian actually has two tasks: the ‘idea of primacy as such’ and the
‘primacy of Rome’ must both be assessed ‘theologically.’ The former
idea ‘of primacy as such has never been alien to Orthodox thought
and is still acceptable today, whereas the primacy of Rome is still...a
real obstacle on the way to Christian unity.’ 42 Roman primacy,
properly exercised, is not an obstacle to Orthodoxy, whereas Roman
primacy as conceived and executed, especially since the First Vatican
Council, is an obstacle because of a ‘fundamental ecclesiological
misunderstanding.’ 43 That misunderstanding, according to

39 Ibid., 316.
40 Ibid.
41 Hans Küng, ed., Papal Ministry in the Church (New York: Herder and
Herder, 1971).
42 ‘Can a Petrine Office Be Meaningful in the Church? A Greek Orthodox
Reply’ in Ibid., 115.
43 Ibid., 116.
Harkianakis, can be clarified by asking the most important question about the structure of the Church: is it ‘monarchical or collegial’?\footnote{Ibid., 116-17.} That question, in turn, leads on to one of basic dogmatic theology about the nature of the Trinity, which provides an analogical model by which we may understand the relationship between the one and the many in the very nature of the Church. If, as the ecumenical councils worked out, the three Persons of the Trinity are all equal, then there is no room for any ‘idea of a subordinatio’ among them.\footnote{Ibid., 118-19.} Only when seen in this light can we proceed to the question of whether there is a ‘first bishop’ and, if so, what his relationship to all other bishops is like.

Just as the fundamental equality of the members of the Godhead does not detract from the monarchia of the Father, so too the fundamental equality of the episcopate—and, with it, the synodical nature of the Church—does not detract from ‘acknowledgement of one bishop as the first among the bishops’ who exercises ‘primacy...not...in the sense of a pontifex maximus but rather in the sense of primus inter pares.’\footnote{Ibid., 120.} When understood thus, a primate ‘cannot do anything without the opinion of all the others, and the others cannot do anything without the opinion of the first.’ This method and model of primacy excludes ‘matters of jurisdiction and...the question of infallibility’ and is, Harkianakis concludes, the only acceptable way for Roman primacy to be exercised without objection from the Orthodox. Indeed, such a primate performs ‘an essential service in the Church as a whole.’\footnote{Ibid., 121.}

\textit{f) Paul Evdokimov}\footnote{Paul Evdokimov, ‘Can a Petrine Office Be Meaningful in the Church? A Russian Orthodox Reply’ in Kung, \textit{Papal Ministry in the Church}, 122-26.}

In one of the last scholarly pieces he wrote shortly before his death in September 1970, Paul Evdokimov, a French lay theologian and author of many prominent works in Orthodox anthropology in particular, struck a note similar to Harkianakis: the primacy of the bishop of Rome must be situated in Trinitarian theology, and, when done so, will be understood not juridically but pastorally, with the bishop of
Rome seen as equal to all other bishops and not above them as a ‘super-bishop.’\(^ {49}\) Quoting Nil Cabasilas, Evdokimov notes that “the Pope is bishop of Rome and the first among the bishops” but that ‘this does not imply a juridical power of domination over the others, but a care exercised for the common good.’\(^ {50}\) Any power over another bishop would ipso facto be power over Christ Himself given that ‘each Church’ is ‘the totus Christus’\(^ {51}\) and this possibility Orthodoxy categorically rejects. A universalist ecclesiology with such a super-bishop must therefore give way to a eucharistic ecclesiology and to the fundamental equality of all bishops expressed sacramentally and synodically. Only in this way can primacy be understood because only in this way is it really a reflection of the life of the Trinity. Insofar as a universal primate is like God the Father, ‘who presides in the love of the Trinity,’ and insofar as such a primate exercises ‘a charism of love in the image of the heavenly Father...devoid of all jurisdictional power over the others,’ he will be acceptable as an instrument of unity in both East and West.\(^ {52}\)

\(g\) Robert Stephanopoulos

In a short paper published in 1974\(^ {53}\), Robert Stephanopoulos, now a Greek Orthodox priest and member of the North American Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, argued that ‘primacy as seen from an Orthodox perspective is not best explained as a juridical term, but rather as a “moral authority” which is best exercised in the context of “conciliarity” so as to safeguard the authority of the local bishop and the autocephaly of the local Church.’\(^ {54}\) When understood thus, ‘the Petrine ministry...is a gift from God\(^ {55}\) to be lived for the ‘good order’ of the Church.’\(^ {56}\) Stephanopoulos concludes even more strongly by arguing that the pope is the elder brother among his fellow bishops and by mutual consent, as primus inter pares, exercises the Petrine ministry in the universal

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 124.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 124.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 126.


\(^{54}\) Ibid., 311.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 312.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 313.
church. This solicitude is understood in terms of grace and spiritual freedom, of loving ministry and humble service. There is ample historical precedent for this. In the present moment, there is even a special need for it....The Petrine ministry is integral to the mission and unity of all Christians and churches.\textsuperscript{57}

\textit{h) Emmanuel Clapsis} \textsuperscript{58}

Emmanuel Clapsis, a professor of systematic theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, authored a paper on the papacy in 1987, just as almost all the various ecumenical dialogues\textsuperscript{59} in which Orthodoxy\textsuperscript{60} was engaged had come to realize that the question of primacy in general was the most fundamental divide of all; the Orthodox-Catholic International Dialogue saw this perhaps more clearly than any of the others.\textsuperscript{61} It also saw, as Clapsis details, the necessity of treating the papacy not as an isolable issue but in the context of ‘the doctrine of the Trinity and the Eucharist’\textsuperscript{62} for “Trinitarian ecclesiology also develops the insight that there is one Church as there is one nature in God, but the very best way to express the oneness of the Church is the communion of the many local churches.”\textsuperscript{63} In other words, only when the papacy is ‘debated, reinterpreted, and justified from the developing ecclesiology of communion’ among sister Churches will the Orthodox-Catholic

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 314.
\textsuperscript{58} ‘The Papal Primacy,’ \textit{Greek Orthodox Theological Review} 32 (1987), 115-30.
\textsuperscript{59} For studies on the papacy by other ecumenical dialogues and Protestant Christians in general, see, eg., \textit{Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II’s Encyclical Ut Unum Sint.}, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
\textsuperscript{60} For some of the results of these dialogues on this question, see Colin Davey, ‘Statements on Primacy and Universal Primacy by Representatives of the Orthodox Churches,’ \textit{One in Christ} 35 (1999): 378-82. See also Brian E. Daley SJ, ‘Headship and Communion: American Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue on Synodality and Primacy in the Church,’ \textit{Pro Ecclesia} 5 (1996), 55-72.
\textsuperscript{61} The documents of the international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue are helpfully located in one volume: \textit{The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue}, eds. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood: SVS Press, 1996).
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 127.
dialogue be able to make genuine progress on the question of the papacy.\textsuperscript{64}

Some progress has already been made, according to Clapsis’s analysis of the joint International Dialogue. Orthodoxy has no problem in affirming ‘the validity of the claims of universal primacy of the Church of Rome. Orthodox theology, however, objects to the identification of this primacy with ‘supreme power’ which transforms Rome into the \textit{principium radix et origo} of the unity of the Church.’\textsuperscript{65} If Orthodoxy objects to papal primacy on these grounds, it has still not entirely clearly settled the question of how such a primacy would be otherwise exercised. Echoing Schmemann, Clapsis argues that Orthodox theology also must further define for itself ‘an ecclesiologically sound interpretation of primacy.’\textsuperscript{66} Such an interpretation will require examination of models of primacy as they currently exist in Orthodoxy, especially patriarchal primacy: ‘it is imperative from an Orthodox perspective to study the primacy of Rome in the context of the primacies of the patriarchs of the East and their role in the Universal Church.’\textsuperscript{67}

In general, patriarchs (as we will see in chapter three) have very little of the power that the pope of Rome does, and they exercise it only vis-à-vis their synods. Understood in the light of the patriarchal synod, the Church manifests ‘its oneness through a ministry which comprises \textit{simultaneously} a \textit{primus} and a synod of which he is a \textit{primus}. Thus from this perspective, it is possible to accept a universal primacy of a bishop which, however, cannot be conceived apart from the synod or over it.’\textsuperscript{68} In other words:

\begin{itemize}
  \item in a reintegrated Christendom, when the pope takes his place once more as the \textit{primus inter pares} within the Orthodox Catholic communion, the bishop of Rome will have the initiative in summoning a synod of the whole Church. The bishop of Rome, of course, will preside in such a synod...and his office may coordinate the witness of the Orthodox Catholic Church and be its spokesman in times of need.
\end{itemize}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Ibid., 116.
\item[65] Ibid., 128.
\item[66] Ibid., 125.
\item[67] Ibid., 124.
\item[68] Ibid., 127.
\end{footnotes}
i) Vsevolod of Skopelos

Continuing the theme of the bishop of Rome as patriarch, the Ukrainian Orthodox Archbishop Vsevolod (Majdansky) has been perhaps the clearest and most forthright contemporary Orthodox theologian to admit Orthodoxy’s need of a certain form of primacy exercised by Rome. Vsevolod has argued that ‘the Roman Primacy...at its best...is a blessing for the Church.’ In similar but even clearer terms a year later, Vsevolod would argue not only that ‘Roman Primacy is and should be a gift of God to His Church’ but that it performs a ‘service to the Church which we need,’ not least when one considers the ‘ludicrous,’ ‘unbearable’ and ‘unthinkable’ jurisdictional situation of ‘Eastern Orthodoxy in the United States’ (a situation of ‘intolerable chaos’) as well as the ‘great shock’ in 1995 when Moscow and Constantinople broke communion with each other over the question of jurisdiction in Estonia, a situation after which Vsevolod says he saw even more clearly that ‘the Church needs the Roman Primacy.’ ‘Painful though it is,’ Vsevolod admits, ‘we need the primacy.’

Of course, Archbishop Vsevolod immediately qualifies this bold statement by arguing against acceptance of Roman primacy as it is currently constructed. The problem with such primacy, as Vsevolod

---

70 A theme echoed by others, most of whom are reviewed in the text. But see also in this regard Chrysostom Frank, ‘Orthodox-Catholic Relations,’ *Pro Ecclesia* 7 (1998): 72 for another reiteration of the importance of distinguishing Rome’s many roles, including the patriarchal.
71 Archbishop Vsevolod fell asleep in the Lord in December 2007.
72 ‘Response to Bishop Basil (Losten): “Patriarch and Pope,”’ 255.
73 Bishop Vsevolod of Scopelos, *We Are All Brothers* (Fairfax, VA: Eastern Christian Publications, 1999), 177. The original paper was presented in June 1995 in Rome at a meeting of the Kievan Church Study Group held on the occasion of the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch to Pope John Paul II.
74 Ibid., 230.
75 Ibid., 232.
76 Ibid., 230.
77 Ibid., 241.
78 Ibid., 237.
79 Ibid., 241.
argues elsewhere, is that such a primacy is presently an unhelpful amalgam of offices that need to be differentiated; there needs to be a ‘clarification of the distinct roles of the Bishop of Rome as a Local Patriarch, first of the Pentarchy, and the Bishop of Rome as the universal primate.’ Vsevolod argues that the Roman patriarchate as a patriarchate no longer exists: it has engaged in an ‘unending aggrandizement...at everyone else’s expense’ and such a ‘world-wide expansion’ as to become a super-sized monolith with the bishop of Rome acting as ‘the unique holder of a still higher position’ which enables him to ‘ride roughshod over the bishops.’ The remedy for this situation lies in six changes that Vsevolod enumerates: first, a clear, credible set of boundaries to the Roman Patriarchate; second, the ‘restoration of the canonical obligation of the Patriarch of the West, when he assumes office, to send his Profession of Faith to the other Patriarchs’; third, an ‘end to the practice of the Pope commemorating himself at the diptychs, and the restoration of the authentic practice of the commemoration of the Patriarchs when the Pope celebrates the Eucharist’; fourth, the ‘resolution of the discrepancy between the assurances given to the Orthodox in ecumenical dialogue, and the practical situation of the Eastern Catholics within the Roman Communion’; fifth, ‘a recognition that the primatial function of the Bishop of Rome...is not subject to habitual delegation’; and sixth, the erection by the Roman Church of ‘regional patriarchates’ to decentralize the behemoth Latin Church and assist in her better governance, as well as assisting Latin ecclesiology to become better acquainted with the patriarchal model of governance.

Archbishop Vsevolod returned to these theses in a longer article written about a year after their first articulation—and shortly after Ut Unum Sint was published—adding a sixth requisite change, viz. ‘a juridical guarantee that the terms in which Rome has defined the

80 Ibid., 244-45.
81 Bishop Vsevolod, ‘Response to Bishop Basil,’ 244-45.
82 Ibid., 248.
83 Ibid., 250.
84 Ibid., 255.
universal primacy will not be applied to our Churches.\textsuperscript{86} He concludes hopefully that a ‘generous Orthodox response to \textit{Ut Unum Sint},\textsuperscript{87} may be had as Orthodoxy comes to realize that ‘there is no need to fear that we would emerge from such a conversation with the Roman Primacy in tatters’. On the contrary, ‘the Roman Primacy is and should be a gift of God to His Church, a service to the Church which we need.’\textsuperscript{88}

\textit{j) Antonios Kireopoulos}

Antonios Kireopoulos is an Orthodox theologian who served the U.S. Conference of Religions for Peace prior to joining the staff of the National Council of Churches U.S.A. in 2003. In his 1997 article, ‘Papal Authority and the Ministry of Primacy,’\textsuperscript{89} Kireopoulos offers a very brief and incomplete survey of several Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiologies before proceeding to the central feature of his article, ‘a review of the current Roman Catholic debate on papal primacy,’ albeit a review in which he knows he will ‘only be scratching the surface.’\textsuperscript{90} His essay, then, is not so much an original contribution as a review—selective and incomplete—of the positions of others. Nonetheless, he does provide a somewhat helpful summary of some key Orthodox arguments.

For all the Orthodox emphasis on the local church, ‘we still ascribe to a ministry of primacy. And again after all, though our problems

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{86} Bishop Vsevolod, \textit{We Are All Brothers}, 245.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 266.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 267.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{The Greek Orthodox Theological Review} 42 (1997), 45-62. The timing of this article is highly curious: it is, he tells us in a footnote, ‘first presented at the Orthodox Theological Society of America meeting in June 1995,’ that is, only days—at most weeks—after Pope John Paul II promulgated \textit{Ut Unum Sint} on 25 May 1995. While in many respects one cannot expect Kireopoulos to have taken account of the encyclical for the initial presentation of the paper, coming as the two did so nearly coterminous, one would have expected Kireopoulos to expand his original piece and make mention of the encyclical given that the paper did not appear in print until 1997. This does not seem to have been the case given that one scours the text in vain for any references to \textit{UUS}, finding instead only a cramped and misleading summary of the encyclical (p. 61) drawn from an article in the \textit{New York Times}, a paper not exactly noted recently for its accurate and unbiased treatment of the Catholic Church and popes in particular.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 46.
may be of a different nature, we certainly haven’t worked out the solution.”\(^91\) The papacy, for Catholics, is a centre of unity in a practical sense but Orthodoxy does not understand unity to cohere in one person or office: ‘primacy does not constitute the origin of unity; rather it is the manifestation of the unity already inherent in the Church.’\(^92\) While acknowledging that ‘the East has always considered Peter as higher than the other apostles,’ Kireopoulos goes on to argue that nonetheless a universal primacy with ‘jurisdictional authority’\(^93\) is unacceptable for the Orthodox and ‘the only solution to be found...[is] by seeing the Church in terms of *communion.*’\(^94\) A Church lived as communion requires greater collegiality and also remains ‘in particular instances in need of one voice’\(^95\).

Nonetheless, Kireopoulos ends pessimistically: a ‘universal ecclesiology’ quite naturally and logically entails primacy exercised as ‘power’ and into such a context one cannot simply drop a eucharistic ecclesiology of communion and expect the two to work things out. The only solution, he maintains, is for ‘Roman Catholic theologians...[to] re-think their entire ecclesiology’ while Orthodox ‘need to do so as well’ in order to deal with their problem of ‘competing autocephalies’\(^96\).

\(k\) **Mesrob Krikorian**

In 1997, a conference on the papacy was organized in Rome under the auspices of several ecclesiastical institutions, brought together to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the ecumenically minded Society of the Atonement, a Roman Catholic religious order. Theologians from all the major Christian confessions engaged in what Pope John Paul II requested in *Ut Unum Sint*, viz. a ‘patient and fraternal dialogue’ on the papacy. The results of this dialogue were then edited by James Puglisi and published in 1999.\(^97\)

---

\(^91\) Ibid., 50. More frankly still, Kireopoulos admits that ‘despite our objections to universal ecclesiology, the reasons are obvious why Orthodox should take note of this criticism’ (about a powerless ‘primacy of love and service’), viz., because of their own ‘disheartening reality of parallel jurisdictions’ (p. 59).

\(^92\) Ibid.

\(^93\) Ibid., 56.

\(^94\) Ibid., 57.

\(^95\) Ibid., 58.

\(^96\) Ibid., 61-2.

\(^97\) James F. Puglisi, ed., *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*
It is instructive that fully one-third of the articles in this volume are from Orthodox sources: instructive because this can be taken as a measure both of the size and influence of Orthodoxy and also because, as we have seen, there is no complete consensus in Orthodoxy on the issues of papacy, primacy, and related matters. Reflecting this diversity, we therefore have four papers: one from an Oriental Orthodox, the Armenian Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian; and three Byzantine Orthodox theologians: Dumitru Popescu, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, and Nicholas Lossky.

Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian’s contribution is notable here as being the only one from any of the so-called non-Chalcedonian Churches. He begins by debunking the romanticization of the ‘first millennium’ as a time of unity, noting that ‘harmony among Churches prevailed only up to 451.’ Instead of looking back to this period, we must ‘continue the fraternal dialogue and try to formulate anew the Petrine office in such a form which would be acceptable to all.’ In so doing, we need to get away from a primacy of domination and instead move toward ‘primacy as a service of unity whose aim and duty is to admonish and caution,’ a duty thus exercised that ‘hardly can be rejected by anybody, if it is practised in conciliarity and collegiality together with bishops or patriarchs of other Churches.’

Quoting from the 1978 Fourth Ecumenical Consultation of Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians, he notes that, inter alia: all bishops are of equal dignity; primates enjoy only a primacy of honour (whose content has to be decided upon by all concerned) and are on an equal footing with all other primates in the world; unity is manifested not through a person or office but through one faith; when a question is controverted, an ecumenical council is the only means to settle it because the ‘Oriental Orthodox will not be able to accept the sole and highest authority of the Roman pontiff in respect to ecumenical councils.’


98 ‘The Primacy of the Successor of the Apostle St. Peter from the Point of View of the Oriental Orthodox Churches’ in Puglisi, Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church, 83-98.
99 Ibid., 91.
100 Ibid., 93.
101 Ibid., 96.
Krikorian concludes with three affirmations: first, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is a fact ‘which nobody can ignore or neglect.’ Second, the primacy as exercised in the first millennium ‘had neither administrative nor authoritarian character.’ Third, in a united Church, the pope should be able to convene ecumenical councils and to preside over them, either alone or with other patriarchs. The decisions are valid only when a majority of bishops endorse them: the pope has no veto. In sum, the office of bishop of Rome admonishes in the ‘service of unity’ and is ‘exercised in charity’ without any ‘jurisdictional power and authority.’

I) Dumitru Popescu

The Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Popescu argues that the early Church accorded Rome nothing more than ‘a primacy of honour and not a juridical primacy.’ Moreover, such primacy as exists and could exist again must not be modeled on the monarchical model that became prevalent in the Roman Church from the Gregorian reforms onward: ‘the Church is not a monarchy; she is a communion whose life is guided, not by the judgment of a single person, unius arbitrium, but by the common law of the Catholic Church.’ This law, ‘during the first Christian millennium,’ ‘was exercised within an ecclesiology of communion.’ If today the ‘experience of the papacy can be of great importance for Christian unity’ it will be so when ‘exercised in the context of an ecclesiology which situates communion both at the visible level and at the invisible level of the Church.’ As for today, ‘we need unity, but for this unity to be accepted by all, it must be founded on Peter’s confession of faith in the presence of Christ. As long as the Church remained faithful to this

102 Ibid., 97.
104 Another Romanian Orthodox theologian, Dumitru Staniloae, does not—surprisingly—seem to have written much at all about the papacy, a topic that seems to come up only passim in his major ecclesiological works, including Theology and the Church, trans. Robert Barringer (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980).
105 Ibid., 104.
106 Ibid., 111.
107 Ibid.
principle, she kept her unity; as soon as she abstracted from it, her unity was broken.’

Such unity, in sum, ‘is not only a Christological, monarchical unity, but also a pneumatological unity of communion.’

m) John Zizioulas

One of the most astute and important Orthodox theologians writing today, Zizioulas has written a great deal on ecclesiological questions in general. On the papacy in particular, he has authored two important papers, both given at symposia in Rome. In the first paper, in 1997, Zizioulas notes that the topic of the papacy has traditionally been treated in one of two ways. The first is by an ‘historical method’ which, while once used extensively, ‘has led to no fruitful result.’ The second means is ‘the theological one’ used by the official Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. This method can ‘bear fruit if it is followed with consistency by both sides.’ Thus, for Zizioulas, the ‘primacy of the Bishop of Rome has to be theologically justified or else can be ignored altogether.’

Zizioulas undertakes such a theological exploration of the papacy, arguing that ‘a theology of the primacy in the Church can be summed up in the following observations:

- the Church cannot but be a unity of the One and the Many at the same time
- the Church is local and universal at the same time
- the bishop is both a local and a universal ministry
- the synodal system is a ‘sine qua non conditio’ for the catholicity of the Church
- primacy is also a ‘sine qua non conditio’ for the catholicity of the Church.

---

109 ‘Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach’ in Puglisi, Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church, 115-125.
110 For critical discussions of Zizioulas’s thought, especially in ecclesiology, see the many essays gathered in Douglas H. Knight, ed., The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007). For much of the Trinitarian background to Zizioulas’s anthropology and ecclesiology, see the new collection of essays, John Zizioulas, Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006).
111 John Zizioulas, ‘Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach,’ 117.
112 Ibid., 123.
113 Ibid., 118-21.
Primacy, Zizioulas argues, exists on three levels, at least. First, there is a primacy ‘within each local church’ centred in the bishop. Second, there is a ‘regional’ primacy based on the ‘metropolitan system...developed in close connection with the synodical institution.” Finally, there is the patriarchate. Problems arose when Rome was not satisfied with this form of primacy but wanted universal jurisdiction. Most Orthodox, of course, wish to ascribe to the pope only a primacy of honour, but Zizioulas argues that “‘primacy of honour” [is] a misleading term since...it is not an “honourific” primacy but one that involves actual duties and responsibilities.’

If neither Roman universal jurisdiction nor a merely honourific role is satisfactory, what then is? Zizioulas suggests that the traditional approach to the Roman primacy, the Byzantine pentarchy, ‘would seem to satisfy fully the Orthodox’ but this raises other problems, chief among which: ‘there are now parts of the world which are Christian and which were not known at the time of the Byzantine pentarchy. To whom will these belong in terms of primacy?’ Moreover, how can one justify the pentarchy theologically? This solution, then, has considerable ‘weaknesses’ and we are left once more at an impasse.

However, according to Zizioulas, papal primacy can be acceptable to the Orthodox under the following conditions: it cannot be exercised as a universal primacy ‘of jurisdiction’; it ‘should not be the prerogative of an individual but of a local church’; it must be exercised ‘in a synodical context both locally and regionally as well as universally’; and it can only be ‘exercised in communion, not in isolation or directly over the entire Church.’ The Pope ‘would be the President of all heads of churches and the spokesman of the entire

---

114 Ibid., 121.
115 Ibid., 123. After Brian Daly’s landmark article, it is inexcusable to ever again use the phrase ‘primacy of honour’ in the typically careless fashion one so commonly finds it. See ‘Position and Patronage in the Early Church: the Original Meaning of ‘Primacy of Honour,” Journal of Theological Studies 44 (1993): 529-53.
117 This approach—viz., understanding primacy in a context of eucharistic ecclesiology—has also been argued by the sometime Orthodox priest and theologian Chrysostom Frank. See his ‘Orthodox-Catholic Relations,’ Pro Ecclesia 7 (1998): 48-78, especially 72ff.
Church once the decisions announced are the result of consensus.\textsuperscript{118} If Roman primacy is exercised in this way, it will be ‘not only “useful” to the Church but an ecclesiological necessity in a unified Church.’\textsuperscript{119}

These views were reiterated to some degree in a second paper given in Rome in 2003.\textsuperscript{120} After emphasizing once more that the question of papal primacy cannot be decided solely on the basis of Scripture or history, but only ‘as a common answer from theology,’\textsuperscript{121} Zizioulas then went on to argue in favour of papal primacy by means of an analogy to patriarchal Orthodox structures: the ‘many’ (the synod) cannot exist without the ‘one’ (the patriarch) and each has crucial checks on the other.\textsuperscript{122} As he goes on to state, ‘synods without primates never existed in the Orthodox Church, and this indicates clearly that if synodality is an ecclesiological, that is, dogmatic, necessity, so must be primacy....The logic of synodality leads to primacy, and the logic of the ecumenical council to universal primacy.’\textsuperscript{123} For this reason, then, ‘there must...be a way of incorporating primacy into conciliarity if we are to arrive at a theologically sound position on this matter.’\textsuperscript{124} Such a theologically sound position would have to be based upon an ‘ecclesiology of communion’ in which both Catholics and Orthodox recognize that ‘the Church consists of full local churches united into One Church without losing their ecclesial fullness, and that primacy at all levels is a necessary means to realize and guarantee this balance between the many and the one.’\textsuperscript{125}

\textit{n) Nicholas Lossky}\textsuperscript{126}

Echoing Erickson’s warning, which we saw at the outset, Nicholas Lossky, a Russian Orthodox theologian teaching in Paris, argues that ‘it is not possible to speak of one, common attitude towards the

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 124-25.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 244.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 238.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 246.
\textsuperscript{126} ‘Conciliarity-Primacy in a Russian Orthodox Perspective’ in Puglisi, \textit{Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church}, 127-35.
conceptions of conciliarity, of primacy, or of the relation between the two among Russian theologians and Church people. Especially of late, there have been many different, often contradictory conceptions and opinions.\textsuperscript{127} Much of the Orthodox rejection of primacy stems from ‘an excessive anti-romanism [sic], based on a certain distortion of the office in the historical development of the Church of Rome.’\textsuperscript{128} This distortion, when mixed with ecclesiological confusion among the Orthodox, often leads to a ‘simplistic anti-romanism and therefore anti-papism’ which often ‘tends to reappear in the context of the local autocephalous church’ whose members often ‘consider the patriarch to be something of a “super-bishop”’,\textsuperscript{129} a view apparently held by ‘the present patriarch of Moscow, a few bishops and a few theologians.’\textsuperscript{130}

Notwithstanding its prevalence in both Catholic and Orthodox Churches, this is, Lossky says, a faulty view of primacy. No primacy can be exercised without a concomitant conciliarity exercised among the bishops. These two must be held in tension: ‘conciliarity without primacy tends towards either a form of fusion or a form of democracy which amounts to individualism, not personhood. Primacy without conciliarity tends towards a kind of concentration of episcopacy in one super-bishop above the community, a form of domination tantamount to dictatorship.’\textsuperscript{131} If this primacy-conciliarity antinomy were correctly maintained, then ‘many Orthodox theologians’ would be prepared to recognize ‘Rome (on condition of course that full communion is restored) as the court of appeal (excluding intervention before an appeal) in disputes among bishops.’ They would also recognize a ‘primacy of Rome such as it was understood...during the first millennium’ the best expression of which ‘is probably to be found in the Council of Constantinople of 879-880’ for which Lossky pleads to have ‘a common reception as the Eighth Ecumenical Council.’\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 135.
o) Olivier Clément. Clément—a theologian teaching with Lossky at the Institut Saint-Serge in Paris—is a convert to Orthodoxy, not from some supposedly ‘native’ French Catholicism as some imagine, but from atheism. His book, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian’s Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy*, is written in a largely irenic and fraternal manner. For this reason, Avery Cardinal Dulles, in his foreword to the English edition (the French original was published in 1997 under the title *Rome autrement*), argues that this book is probably ‘almost exactly the kind of response for which Pope John Paul II was hoping.’

Unlike the others we have reviewed here, Clément has actually written not an essay but an entire book—albeit a short one—in response to John Paul’s request. Each of the twelve chapters is very short, averaging about 7 pages; the first six chapters are taken up with a very brief historical overview of the first millennium and of the tension between the early ecumenical councils and an inchoate sense of Roman primacy. About this latter, he remarks: ‘the true greatness of the period of the ecumenical councils is precisely that the power of decision rested with no one: neither pope, nor council, nor emperor, nor public feeling.’

Clément argues that this greatness would give way ‘little by little...[as] Roman primacy showed signs of becoming contaminated by the problem of power’ and as ‘apostolic Rome appeared to have taken over from ancient imperial Rome.’

In his next (of two: the second is on reforms necessary in Orthodoxy) chapter on what reforms to the papacy are necessary, he expresses the hope that ‘Rome, when God wills it, and by an operation

---

134 As I note elsewhere, Clément’s book, important and unique though it is, is not without certain flaws, which I discuss in ‘Letter from the East: Olivier Clément’s You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian’s Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy,’ First Things 147 (November 2004): 46-50.
136 Clément, You Are Peter, 59.
of grace unique to her, will return to the authentic conception of primacy as the servant of communion, within a framework of genuine interdependence between her bishop and all other bishops.\(^{137}\)

An authentic exercise of primacy will require at least four structural changes. First, Clément argues that ‘it is in no way essential...that the bishop of Rome should appoint the bishops of the entire world.’\(^{138}\)

Second, it is equally unnecessary that the bishop of Rome’s ‘administrative headquarters should be a sovereign territory...and in consequence maintain a diplomatic corps.’\(^{139}\) (To the suggestion that such an arrangement grants the papacy a necessary independence, Clément offers the rejoinder that ‘none of the great popes of the first eight centuries had at their command such a state. They bore witness to the independence of the Church through martyrdom if necessary. Today everything depends on the political and ideological situation of Italy and western Europe.’\(^{140}\))

Third, there must be some clarification around the question of the councils held in the West since the end of the last truly ecumenical council (Nicea II in 787). They are plainly not ‘ecumenical’ in the way the West continues to insist but were instead—as Pope Paul VI offhandedly remarked in a letter to Cardinal Willebrands in 1974—simply ‘general synods’ of the Latin Church. Their decrees, therefore, carry a significantly different degree of authority and this must be clarified.\(^{141}\)

Fourth, there must be—as Clément quotes John Paul himself as saying—a papal primacy ‘with different gears’ for different parts of the Church so that ultimately the relationship between Catholicism and Orthodoxy is not one of jurisdiction but of the plenitude of communion as sisters.\(^{142}\) Such an approach does not mean a gutting of the papacy: ‘this does not meant that the pope must be merely a spokesman,’ Clément says. Rather, the pope would have significant authority as one to whom a ‘certain right of appeal’ could be made together with his responsibility for the ‘convocation of councils’ over

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 75.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 92.
\(^{139}\) Ibid.
\(^{140}\) Ibid., 95.
\(^{141}\) Ibid., 94.
\(^{142}\) Ibid., 92.
which he would preside and whose decrees he would ratify. In sum, then, Clément argues that ‘the one essential would be to pass from a situation where the hierarchical dovetailing of power structures has legal back-up to one where tensions are held in balance without predetermined juridical solutions.’

p) John Erickson
In a September 1997 address to the North American Academy of Ecumenists, Erickson, who until 2006 was dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary in New York, took grateful note of the ‘tremendous advance’ represented by *Ut Unum Sint* not only in its tone but also in its ecclesiological vision. This changed situation ‘allows us to view the issue of primacy in a new light,’ the light of the Church understood as *koinonia*. However, as we saw at the outset, Erickson is cautious about this process of re-evaluation, arguing that ‘doctrinal agreement between Catholics and Orthodox on the subject of papal primacy...will not be achieved simply by a retrospective ecumenism that looks only to the mythic “undivided Church of the first millennium” because “such appeals to history can be misleading or even dangerous.”

If we bear such caution in mind together with a relativizing of the centrality of the papacy in the life of the whole Church, we will come to realize that papal primacy ‘is but one aspect of communion, and perhaps not the definitive one at that.’ Such primacy requires certain structures ‘if communion in its fullness...is to be maintained.’ Those structures include something that ‘most Christians—Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox—would agree on,’ namely a ‘universal ministry of unity.’ However, any primate—whether regional, metropolitical, or universal—’remains first of all the bishop of a particular see. His prerogatives do not separate him from his brother bishops. How, then, do we speak of primacy and what justification grounds it?

---

143 Ibid., 93.
144 Ibid., 93-4.
146 Ibid., 9
147 Ibid., 8.
148 Ibid., 3.
149 Ibid., 5.
Primacy, according to Erickson, is ‘service in and for the Church,’ herself understood ‘as a communion in faith and love.’\footnote{Ibid., 5, quoting Meyendorff.} However, this does not mean that a primate is merely a titular or a primate ‘of honour.’ No, ‘something more is involved in primacy. That something, I suggest, may be found in the concept of phrontis, sollicitudo—concern.’\footnote{Ibid.} The primate is one who looks out for the welfare of everyone, who embodies an ‘all-embracing pastoral concern’ better understood ‘in terms of leadership or love than in juridical terms.’ Such a concern is typically exercised ‘within a conciliar context’ but a primate’s concern ‘is continuous… It does not come and go with the convening and adjourning of a council. In certain circumstances he may act to correct an abuse or to regulate an anomalous situation through a personal act, but he does so precisely as head of a college of bishops.’\footnote{Ibid., 6-7.}

\textit{q) John Panagopoulos}

John Panagopoulos, a Greek Orthodox layman in the United States, wrote an extremely short response to \textit{UUS}, which he recognizes as being ‘strongly marked by the spirit of openness, responsibility, living hope, humility and self-accusation.’\footnote{John Panagopoulos, ‘Ut Unum Sint: Remarks on the New Papal Encyclical from an Orthodox Perspective,’ in eds. Leonardo Boff, Virgil Elizondo, \textit{Ecology and Poverty} (London: SCM Press, 1995), 137-40.} For Panagopoulos, the papacy can only be acceptable ‘in the sense of primus inter pares, as was the case in the church of the first eight centuries, and not as a dogmatic question of faith.’ If this were so, ‘the way would certainly be open to communion, especially as the Orthodox cannot give up the notion of ecclesial primacy. In the sense of a primacy of honour, the supreme Magisterium would be attributed to the synodal structure of the church and not to a historical church, i.e. the See of Rome.’\footnote{Ibid.}

\textit{r) Vigen Guroian}

The prolific Armenian Orthodox theologian Vigen Guroian, in a paper given at Aberdeen University, Scotland\footnote{A description of the conference’s program is available at \texttt{<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/divinity/news/UtUnumSint.shtml>}.} for the conference
‘Commitment to Ecumenism: An Ecumenical Dialogue on Ut Unam Sint’ in May 2005 has argued that

the dialogue in which John Paul II called upon the churches to engage

cannot simply be about how the Papacy is understood or understands

itself; it must also be about how other churches define themselves as

curch. If we are going to get beyond the present impasse, it seems to

me that this matter must be understood and respected by all parties.\footnote{157}

Guroian goes on to detail the honour and esteem in which Peter has

been held in the Armenian liturgical tradition before detailing the

treatment of the papacy in relatively recent Armenian theology,

including that of Malachia Ormanian of the nineteenth century and

and twentieth-century Catholicos Karekin I. On this basis, Guroian is able

to conclude that

there is no objection, indeed, there would seem to be a strong

consensual affirmation within the Armenian tradition, that the Roman

See ascended to universal primacy of honour at a relatively early date

and that this primus inter pares was widely recognized and may still be

not only desirable for the good of all but ‘necessary’ to the success of

the mission of the church in our time.

Such a claim is qualified by the need for ‘more discussion and

clarification’ about the role of the bishop of Rome as successor of

Peter and whether that role ‘must...include the power of the Bishop of

Rome to speak ex cathedra for not just his own church, but also for all

of the churches?’\footnote{158}

Guroian concludes by arguing that Rome needs to undertake the

first step of kenosis, emptying itself of claims to ‘magisterial authority

as defined by the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council over the

other churches.’\footnote{159} If this is done, then while ‘there is no guarantee

\footnote{156 The papers from this conference are still being reviewed for possible
publication, but Dr. Guroian has graciously sent me a copy of his paper.}

\footnote{157 Vigen Guroian, ‘A Communion of Love and the Primacy of Peter: Reflections from the Armenian Church,’ 13.}

\footnote{158 Ibid., 20.}

\footnote{159 Ibid., 21. This kenotic note is also sounded in an earlier work by Paul
Verghese, who argues that ‘the Papacy itself will regain its true glory only
when it voluntarily relinquishes its special claims to be the Vicar of Christ in a
manner substantially different from that in which all bishops are sacramental
presences of the One Good Shepherd.’ See his ‘Aggiornamento and the Unity
of All: an Eastern Orthodox View of the Vatican Council,’ Ecumenical Review
15 (1963), 381.}
that the Orthodox churches would respond in the same spirit of charity and self-sacrifice’ there is at least a chance that progress might be made.\textsuperscript{160}

\textit{s) David Bentley Hart}

Hart’s paper, ‘The Myth of Schism,’\textsuperscript{161} is a characteristically pungent analysis that gets straight to the fundamental questions and engages in some ‘swamp-clearing’ (to borrow a phrase of Stanley Hauerwas) by bluntly affirming several things that few Orthodox have said. Hart begins by arguing that \textit{UUS} was an ‘extraordinary overture….Indeed, it was so surprising a gesture that neither the Orthodox nor the Catholic Churches seems yet to know how to react to it.’\textsuperscript{162} Hart goes on to make the point that ‘it may be the case that the one singular failure of the early Church was in not convoking a council to deal with the matter of ecclesiology as a properly doctrinal locus. It is here, perhaps, where all other problems come to rest.’

After noting that disagreements over papal primacy ‘remain at the very center of what separates us,’\textsuperscript{163} Hart goes on to raise an important question to which attention will be given in later chapters of this study: ‘What is the unique dignity of the apostolic office of patriarch, and what is its jurisdictional authority, and how does it relate to the pre-eminent patriarchate occupied by the bishop of Rome?’\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{t) Thomas Hopko}

Of all the literature reviewed here, Hopko’s paper is \textit{sui generis} because of its exact specifications detailing all the changes the Orthodox wish to see not just to the papacy but also to the liturgical, canonical, spiritual, and parochial structures and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. He himself seems to note this when he writes that ‘I can hardly speak on behalf of the Eastern Orthodox churches

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{160} Vigen Guroian, ‘A Communion of Love and the Primacy of Peter: Reflections from the Armenian Church,’ 21.
\textsuperscript{161} Like the Guroian paper noted above, Hart’s paper was presented in Aberdeen at a conference on the tenth anniversary of \textit{UUS}. Hart’s paper, like the rest from the conference, is still being considered by the publisher for possible publication, but no commitments have been made. Dr. Hart graciously sent me a copy privately.
\textsuperscript{162} David Bentley Hart, ‘The Myth of Schism,’ 1.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 9.
\end{flushright}
about the exercise of the Roman papacy in our time’ but, ‘encouraged by Pope John Paul’s request for forthright dialogue,’ he goes on to ‘list what I believe must happen if the Orthodox churches would consider recognizing the bishop of Rome as their world leader who exercises presidency among all the churches of Christ.’

In compact fashion at the outset, Hopko argues that

the Roman Church’s current official teachings about papal privilege and power that are unacceptable to the Eastern Orthodox churches are the dogma of the pope’s infallibility when speaking officially ‘from the chair of Peter (ex cathedra Petri)’ on matters of faith and morals ‘from himself and not from the consensus of the church (ex sese et non ex consensu ecclesiae)’; the binding character of the pope’s infallible decrees on all (Catholic) Christians in the world; the pope’s direct episcopal jurisdiction over all (Catholic) Christians in the world; the pope’s authority to appoint, and so also to depose, the bishops of all (Catholic) Christian churches; and the affirmation that the legitimacy and authority of all (Catholic) Christian bishops in the world derive from their union with the Roman see and its bishop, the Supreme Pontiff, the unique Successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ on earth.

From here, Hopko moves directly—almost abruptly—to a long list of further very specific, highly detailed changes that he thinks must be made forthwith. What is especially unique about Hopko’s paper is not only the extremely forthright nature of his proscriptions, but also the fact that they cover aspects of the Catholic Church that are untouched by any other writer reviewed here. Only after having listed these

---


166 Ibid., 3.

167 Hopko lists several doctrinal changes he insists upon (e.g., deleting the filioque; insisting on a Palamite understanding of uncreated divine energies; and denying the existence of ‘Purgatory’ as Catholic theology has traditionally understood it) as well as liturgical reforms (e.g., mandatory baptisms by immersion only; Holy Communion always under both kinds; widespread parochial celebration of ‘Vespers, Compline, Matins and the Hours in the churches’; the restoration of ‘the practice of having the priestly celebrant in the Latin liturgy face the altar with the faithful’; and, finally, the possible
desired changes does Hopko return to the papacy and begin to unpack some of his more condensed requirements noted above. He details the ‘structural and administrative changes [that] must occur if the Pope of Rome will be accepted and recognized as the bishop who exercises presidency among the churches and serves as Christianity’s world leader.’ These changes include the election of the pope by the people and clergy of the Church of Rome and the abolition of the college of cardinals; the local election of all bishops and the consequent abolition of papal authority to make episcopal appointments; the abolition of any congregation in Rome responsible for taking disciplinary measures in matters of doctrine; the dismantling of most of the Roman Curia; and the end of the pope as an ‘official head of state.’

In contrast to his earlier ‘high octane’ rhetoric, Hopko concludes his paper with studied understatement by noting that ‘enormous goodwill, energy and time would be necessary to refashion the papacy’ along his desired lines. To his credit, he goes on to note that ‘the Orthodox churches would surely have to undergo many humbling changes’ as well, being ready to ‘sacrifice everything, excepting only the faith itself, for the sake of building a common future together….Like Roman Catholics and Protestants, they would have to be willing to die with Christ.’

‘enforcing [of] the ancient ascetical and penitential practice of forbidding the celebration of Holy Eucharist…on weekdays of Great Lent’). Ibid., 7. Hopko alone of all recent Orthodox theologians has drawn up such a comprehensive list, and it is hard to know what to make of it, not least because he himself has not hitherto been inclined to be so demanding and inflationary in his rhetoric, and he does not at all seem representative of the rest of ‘mainstream’ Orthodox theologians dealing with Orthodox-Catholic unity, where one finds no such lists. Most disturbing of all is the lack of logic in Hopko’s paper: he demands the pope be stripped of almost all his powers, but equally Hopko demands that the pope use those powers—and others Hopko erroneously claims the pope possesses!—to enforce or forbid certain things that no pope has ever attempted to enforce or forbid. Is the pope to use those powers one last time to enforce and forbid everything Hopko demands and then forswear the use of those powers ever after? Is he to use them one last time and then be stripped of them—and if so, by whom?

Thomas Hopko, ‘Roman Presidency,’ 8.

Ibid., 9.
Stylianopoulos, an emeritus professor at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, has argued more recently, at a symposium in Rome in 2003 organized to solicit Orthodox responses to *Ut Unum Sint*, that ‘the Orthodox Church has long nurtured profound respect for a qualified primacy of the Church of Rome and its revered pontiff.’ Stylianopoulos lists two qualifications on that primacy, noting that the first Orthodox ‘concern is about the nature and extent of that primacy....The other concern is about the nature of the succession of Peter’s dignity and function.’

Stylianopoulos then goes on to argue that the question of papal primacy cannot be adjudicated solely or simply on the basis of the Petrine texts in the New Testament. ‘Rather, the witness of the tradition as a whole must be taken into serious consideration as long as that tradition is judged to be not contradictory to the biblical witness.’ In the end, we can speak biblically and traditionally about a ‘Petrine function, a special mandate and commission to Peter which is distinct in some undefined manner from that of the other disciples.’ That lack of clear definition means that ‘Peter is a preeminent figure in the New Testament but not the only one. No single apostolic figure enjoys universal dominance or exclusive authority in the New Testament. In other words, the ‘primacy’ of Peter is not power over other apostolic figures but an authorized leadership in the context of shared apostolic authority in the common life of the Church.’

Stylianopoulos concludes his research by arguing that ‘the practical challenge of unity, as well as the theological urgency behind it, favour the value of a visible universal leader, just as they favour a visible local leader in the person of the bishop.’ That universal leader, however, must exercise an office ‘fully based on the principles of shared authority, love, and service, rather than on exclusive status, rights, and jurisdiction.’

---

171 Ibid., 44.
172 Ibid., 42.
173 Ibid., 49.
174 Ibid., 61.
175 Ibid., 63.
v) Nicolae Durã
At the same symposium in Rome in 2003, the Romanian Orthodox theologian Nicolae Durã presented a paper on the papacy, a question he did not hesitate to recognize as ‘the most difficult to solve’ of all those facing the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.\(^{176}\) Durã begins by noting that part of that difficulty stems from the complexity of offices which inhere in the papacy, arguing that sorting out papal from patriarchal roles remains ‘an area still open for our common work to find satisfactory answers and solutions!’\(^{177}\) Additional questions to be asked include ‘under what kind of primacy are placed the members of the churches interested in the restoration of full communion with the bishop of Rome. Is it a “primacy” of charity, of service for unity, or a primacy that “is more than government”?\(^{178}\)

After his review of the canonical literature, Durã concludes that in searching for data on the concept and practice of a ‘Petrine ministry,’ ‘it is evident that no canon makes any mention or allusion to it. This legislation speaks neither of the “Petrine ministry” nor of a primatial office of the bishop of Rome as successor of Saint Peter.’\(^{179}\) From this, however, Durã argues that we cannot limit ourselves to concluding that there is not and should not be any such thing as a Petrine ministry. On the contrary, he argues that we must expand our horizons and that ‘the whole tradition of the Church, Orthodox and Catholic—biblical, liturgical, patristic, historical, and so forth—must be taken into account, from the apostolic period up to our own time, in order to better discover the principal role of the bishop of Rome at the service of the unity of the ecumenical Church.’\(^{180}\) In sum, what we are still waiting for, Durã says, is a ‘comparative study that can evaluate—\textit{sine ira et studio}—all Orthodox and Catholic ecclesiological data’ about the Petrine primacy.

w) Vlassios Phidas

\(^{176}\) V. Nicolae Durã, ‘The “Petrine Primacy”: the Role of the Bishop of Rome according to the Canonical Legislation of the Ecumenical Councils of the First Millennium—An Ecclesiological-Canonical Evaluation’ in \textit{The Petrine Ministry}, 159-87.

\(^{177}\) Ibid., 164.

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 167.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 185.

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 186.
Vlassios Phidas of the Greek Orthodox Church, who teaches theology at the University of Athens and in the *Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe d’Etudes Supérieures* at Chambéry in Switzerland, presented a paper in Rome in May 2003 on ‘Papal Primacy and Patriarchal Pentarchy in the Orthodox Tradition.’ After reviewing some of the relevant data, Phidas argues that ‘the Orthodox canonical tradition has always considered the papal primacy’ within the threefold ‘framework’ of ‘eucharistic ecclesiology,’ ‘the extraordinary prerogatives due to the *prima sedes* in the canonical institution of the patriarchal pentarchy,’ and ‘the operation of the conciliar institution, notably of the ecumenical council.’ On this basis, Phidas concludes that only by returning to the practices which obtained in the first millennium will there be a sufficient basis for agreement about the papacy: ‘all that was not attested in the first millennium lacks the ecclesiological and canonical premises that are necessary to serve as a starting point for the dialogue.’

x) Hilarion Alfeyev

The Russian Orthodox bishop of Vienna and noted theologian Hilarion Alfeyev, in a recently published book, frankly acknowledges that Orthodoxy lacks a single centre of coordination and authority and that such a lack has created numerous problems for Orthodoxy, especially in North America. He acknowledges not only that there are ‘serious differences between the East and the West in the understanding of the primacy of the bishop of Rome’ but—perhaps echoing Schmemann—that the question of primacy generally understood is one that has not yet been adequately and satisfactorily resolved by and among the Orthodox: ‘at the pan-Orthodox level the principle of primacy (other than a primacy of honour) has not yet been wholly clarified, while the principle of catholicity exists without any stable mechanisms for its practical realization.’ Alfeyev therefore calls for ‘a serious and responsible discussion of the theme of primacy at an inter-Orthodox level’ in order to enable the

---

181 In ‘The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue’, 65-82.
182 Ibid., 81.
184 Ibid., 53.
185 Ibid., 55.
international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue to be able to come to one
mind on this matter.\textsuperscript{186}

Alfeyev is reluctant to commit to a firm Orthodox position on papal
primacy until such an inter-Orthodox discussion happens, but he does
nonetheless proceed to suggest that, at a minimum, three things
would need to be clarified: first, ‘the recognition of the primacy of the
bishop of Rome must be preceded by the restoration of the unity of
faith, the unity of the dogmatic tradition of the ancient undivided
church.’\textsuperscript{187} Second, the claims of the universal ‘jurisdiction of the
bishop of Rome over the bishops of the Orthodox churches in the case
of the restoration of unity’ must also be considered by the joint
dialogue and a consensus reached. Third and finally, the ‘dogma of the
infallibility of the pope...is unacceptable to Orthodox sensibilities’ and
must be dealt with.\textsuperscript{188}

TOWARD A SYNTHETIC CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, is it possible to arrive at something of an
Orthodox consensus about the papacy? Are there points of
convergence in these many theologians? Notwithstanding the
important cautions of Erickson and Lossky about a diversity of
Orthodox positions, we may say that very clearly there are areas of
consensus and agreement.

First, Orthodoxy clearly endorses a certain primacy of Rome as an
indubitable fact of history from which no one can dissent. In so doing,
of course, Orthodoxy immediately insists that Roman primacy be
sharply qualified and pared down from its current \textit{plenitude potestatis},
but at the very least Orthodoxy is generally prepared to grant Rome
such primacy as was enjoyed in the first millennium and is prepared
to grant to Rome, in a reunited Church, at least that much authority
again.

Second, as we have seen, several Orthodox theologians recognize
not only the historic reality of Roman primacy but the present
necessity of it, not least in view of the jurisdictional chaos of
Orthodoxy, especially in North America. The Roman primacy, then, is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[186] Ibid.
\item[187] Ibid., 53.
\item[188] Ibid., 54.
\end{footnotes}
a clear way to re-establishing the good of canonical order in the Church, a gift much needed by all.

Third, Orthodoxy embraces Roman primacy as having the character of a center of appeal (following the Council of Sardica), of coordination, and especially of pastoral solicitude for all the Churches, particularly those in turmoil or undergoing persecution. The bishop of Rome, for most Orthodox theologians, would not be a toothless titular head of the Church but would have real responsibilities in summoning all the Churches together, cautioning the wayward, building up the bonds of brotherly unity, ensuring proper canonical procedures, witnessing to a unity of doctrine and morals even when unpopular, and promulgating the decisions of the synod of bishops of which he would be collegial (and not monarchical) head according to the model of a patriarch and his synod. He would, in other words, have more authority than the Ecumenical Patriarch but much less of the plenitude potestatis the pope of Rome currently possesses.\(^{189}\)

These three areas of positive consensus are matched by at least as many objections to current aspects of the papacy. Orthodoxy seems to be of one mind in rejecting at least three aspects of the papacy as it is currently constructed.

First, there is widespread agreement that universal jurisdiction is both completely foreign to, and therefore totally rejected by, Orthodox ecclesiology and polity as based in the history of the early Church. There is not, and cannot be, any supreme juridical power or domination by one bishop of the other bishops, who are sacramental equals in their stewardship of the eucharistic mysteries. Bishop Kallistos is perhaps the clearest: it is ‘a universal “power of

\(^{189}\) As Canon 43 of the 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches puts it: ‘the bishop of the Roman Church, in whom continues the office (munus) given by the Lord uniquely to Peter, the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, is the head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and pastor of the entire Church on earth. By virtue of his office (munus) he possesses supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church which he is always able to exercise freely.’ Cf. Canon 331 in the 1983 Latin Code of Canon Law. For an analysis of this and related canons, see Andrew Onufoko, ‘The New Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: Ecclesiological Presuppositions,’ Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies. 35 (1994): 133-72.
jurisdiction’’ from which ‘the Orthodox feel compelled to dissent.’\textsuperscript{190} Such jurisdiction is regarded as both historically and canonically unsupported and theologically unjustifiable. It is unacceptable to the East not only because of its culture and historical practice of local autocephaly, but also because such a claim is irreconcilable with Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine in the light of which Orthodox ecclesiology is to be understood, as Harkianakis and Clapsis make clear: ‘Trinitarian ecclesiology also develops the insight that there is one Church as there is one nature in God, but the very best way to express the oneness of the Church is the communion of the many local churches’\textsuperscript{191} whose eucharistic unity is manifested concretely in a synodical and conciliar manner rather than in the oneness of an omnipotent and universal pope.

This brings us to the second point of wide agreement. From Afanassieff onwards, Orthodox ecclesiology in the twentieth century returned to its roots in the Eucharist, striving to purge any juridicism or universalism from within its midst and replace it with an ecclesiology of communion. Orthodoxy, then, rejects any notion of papal primacy understood in a juridical or extra-sacramental way exercised without a corresponding relationship to a synod of brother bishops whose unity is manifested above all in the celebration of one Eucharist rather than in the functioning of one office. Such a synod would function along the lines of a patriarchal synod, with the two maintaining a tension between the one and the many, each of whose responsibilities would be clearly articulated.

The third point of consensus is that the pope is first and foremost a bishop and, to the extent that he exercises authority he does so sacramentally as a bishop and ecclesiastically as the first bishop and patriarch of the ancient and still venerable first see of Rome. Orthodoxy generally knows no other means for expressing primacy than the episcopal, metropolitical, and patriarchal offices, and to the extent that the current responsibilities and powers of the bishop of Rome are not clearly similar in scope to these three, Orthodoxy rejects them. Roman primacy must be tied to a clear exercise of conciliarity,

\textsuperscript{190} Kallistos Ware, ‘Primacy, Collegiality and the People of God,’ 4. Cf. Bishop Vsevolod, We Are All Brothers, 241-44.

synodality, and collegiality, and never exercised apart from these manifestations of fraternal episcopal relations.

These six areas of agreement—three positive assessments, three negative rejections—among Orthodox theologians on the papacy are not exhaustive of the entire Orthodox tradition; each position is not an official one adopted by the respective Church of the theologian in question. Moreover, there is not complete agreement or consensus. Nonetheless, there is, as we have seen, considerable consensus on the key points, and by presenting them here, I hope to have aided even if only a little the search by the Orthodox for consensus among themselves; and then to have aided however modestly the joint international dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in their laudable and urgent search for consensus and unity on this last and most difficult of ecumenical hurdles.
THE EVOLVING FACE OF ECUMENISM

Father Thomas Ryan CSP*

In the face of the prevailing pessimism about the church’s mission for unity on official levels, one should look at what the Holy Spirit is doing today on the ground among the newer Christian movements and communities both lay and monastic. After providing a brief flavor of their variety and far-flung expansion, the author gives special attention to the ecumenical monastic community of Bose in Italy and the potential for positive witness its founder Enzo Bianchi sees in monasticism. Citing Psalm 87: 7, every monk, Bianchi says, ought to see that ‘Within you (the undivided church) is my true home.’

‘The wind has gone out of the sails of the ecumenical movement,’ one hears from time to time. No one can deny that the ground has shifted due to tensions arising both within and between churches around ethical questions such as abortion, euthanasia, the blessing of gay marriages or the ordaining of active homosexuals. And then there are the persistent, historical questions relating to our understanding of the church, sacraments, ministry and a way of making decisions in the church that would be acceptable to all.

But the Holy Spirit keeps finding a way to move the churches forward. When one looks at the big picture, there is positive energy circulating that is bringing people from different traditions together in exciting ways. This past May, for example, close to 9,000 members of Christian communities and movements from many different churches gathered in Stuttgart, Germany in an event called ‘Together for Europe’. They represented 250 different movements and communities, almost all of which came into being in the second half of the 20th century. In many cases, these movements and communities are not merely coming together in an international event as members of different churches, but they are either ecumenical in their internal

* Fr Ryan directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in Washington, DC.
composition or have a pronounced ecumenical sensitivity in their life and work.

When the newly appointed cardinals were invested last November, the area of church life chosen for their updating day was ecumenism. In his remarks, Cardinal Kasper referred to the event in Stuttgart as one of the encouraging signs for Christian unity efforts today: ‘We can say that ecumenism is returning to its origins in small groups of dialogue, prayer and Bible study. Recently, these groups have also spoken out publicly, for example, in the large gatherings of movements at Stuttgart in 2004 and 2007. Hence, next to the official dialogue which is often more difficult, there emerges new and promising forms of dialogue.’

Who are some of these movements and communities? Space allows for only a brief synopsis of a few of them.

**Focolare**

In the middle of World War II in Trent, Italy, a Catholic laywoman, Chiara Lubich, wrote: ‘While in the air-raid shelter, we came upon that page of the Gospel which speaks of the Testament of Jesus: “May they all be one, Father, as you and I are one.” These words seemed to light up one by one. That “all” expanded our horizon. That project for unity was to be the goal of our life.’

A few friends became her companions in trying to live those words. Initially they believed that they were simply living the Gospel, but the Holy Spirit was at work emphasizing some words of the Gospel which were to become a new spiritual current: the spirituality of unity. Soon afterwards that small group of people became a movement which brought about a spiritual and social renewal. The movement grew and developed through this spirituality which over time has become a lifestyle for people of all ages, backgrounds, vocations and cultures. At its heart are the Focolare Centres, small communities of men or women, single and married.

In this age of dramatic change, in sharing with humanity the painful

---

1 Information and Reflection by Cardinal Walter Kasper, 23 November 2007, at the meeting of the Holy Father with the College of Cardinals at the Vigil of the public Ordinary Consistory.


birth of a new civilization that is globalized, interdependent, multicultural and multifaith, the Focolare Movement is committed, together with many other forces which are moving in this direction, to build the unity of the human family enriched by diversity. In less than 60 years of life, the movement has spread worldwide to 182 countries counting more than two million adherents with an outreach, difficult to quantify, of a few million people.

**Taizé**

Taizé, in the south of Burgundy, France, is the home of an international, ecumenical community, founded there in 1940 by Brother Roger. The brothers are committed for their whole life to material and spiritual sharing, to celibacy, and to a great simplicity of life. Today, the community is made up of over a hundred brothers, Catholics and from various Protestant backgrounds, from more than twenty-five nations.

Since the late 1950s, thousands of young adults from many countries have found their way to Taizé to take part in weekly meetings of prayer and reflection. In addition, Taizé brothers make visits and lead meetings, large and small, in Africa, North and South America, Asia, and in Europe, as part of a ‘pilgrimage of trust on earth’. This year, the Pilgrimage of Trust was held in Geneva, Switzerland, and drew 40,000 young adults.

**The Community of Sant'Egidio**

The Community began in Rome in 1968, in the period following the Second Vatican Council. Today it is a movement of lay people and has more than 50,000 members, dedicated to evangelization and charity, in Rome, Italy, and in more than 70 countries throughout the world.

The Community of Sant'Egidio is a ‘Church public lay association’. The different communities, spread throughout the world, share the same spirituality and principles which characterise the way of Sant'Egidio: Prayer, communicating the Gospel, solidarity with the poor, ecumenism and dialogue lived as friendship, prayer and search for unity among Christians. The Community has been instrumental in organizing several international ecumenical and interreligious events in recent years.
The Sword of the Spirit

It is not surprising that in an age of surf-the-net ‘virtual’ relationships a worldwide movement of Christian communities would thrive and work to strengthen real relationships in communities of faith and family life. The Sword of the Spirit, begun in the 1960s and 1970s, seeks to bring together Christians from different traditions and cultures for common mission, to support parents in raising children with character and a clear sense of identity, and to work in cooperation with the churches to foster Christian renewal and promote unity.

Today, the Sword of the Spirit is an ecumenical association comprised of more than 65 communities in 24 countries—more than 10,000 people using their time, money, and resources to help their fellow human beings. Members belong to Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions.

Syndesmos

A significant development in Orthodoxy over the past fifty years has been the work of Syndesmos - The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth. Syndesmos was founded in 1953 to encourage contacts among Orthodox youth movements in Western Europe, Greece and the Middle East. Today Syndesmos, a parachurch organization, works with the blessing of all the Orthodox hierarchs but is not under any one of them. It has grown into a federation of 121 youth movements and theological schools in 43 different countries around the world. At the heart of the Fellowship is the desire of young Orthodox to work together serving the unity, witness and renewal of the Church.

Founded by young theologians after World War II, Syndesmos’ main aim was to bring Orthodox young people together within Europe. It participated in the Conference of European Churches, sent representatives to World Council of Churches meetings and General Assemblies, was involved with the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe and engaged in a number of joint youth service training programs in Eastern Europe. A particular focus earlier on was dialogue meetings between young adults in the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox (Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Syrian, and Indian) Churches. Since 1992, Oriental Orthodox youth movements have joined Syndesmos as federated members, with their own vice-president. Today Syndesmos programs are oriented more towards
Western Europe and Catholic-Orthodox relations.

The General Secretariat moved in 2000 from Bialystok, Poland, to Athens, and seems to be in a shifting-of-gears, revisioning period. An Assembly slated for 2007 did not happen, and nothing is scheduled for this year. Historically, however, Orthodox young people - through Syndesmos - have supported ecumenical engagement, raised questions concerning Orthodox unity, deepened and strengthened ties between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

**L’Arche**

L’Arche International is a Federation of 131 member communities, established as independent entities in 34 countries. The 131 communities encompass 5000 people with and without an intellectual disability, who share their lives in homes, workshops and day programmes. L'Arche International seeks to promote respect for cultural and religious diversity and a lived international solidarity both within and outside the Federation.

The first l’Arche community in England began at the heart of Anglicanism, in Canterbury. Jean Vanier and his sister Thérese visited Archbishop Michael Ramsey at his home and told him what they were trying to do. The Archbishop, eager to help, put them in touch with the Anglican authorities. ‘We found opening up before us a whole series of friendships with members of the Anglican Communion and the hierarchy of that Church,’ Thérese recalled. ‘Curiously, it did not spell out to us at the time that of course our people would be members of that Church; we discovered that as they came to live with us’.4

To Jean Vanier, it was part of the mystery of l’Arche that somehow, within seven years of its foundation, without even seeking it, l’Arche had become both ecumenical and interreligious. In the struggle to express Christian unity without individuals divorcing themselves from their own churches, many l’Arche communities discovered the importance of a blessing during the Eucharist for those not actually receiving holy communion.5

During the 1980s I served as an ecumenical advisor to l’Arche communities in North America, and was struck by the number of

---

5 Ibid. 144, 148.
long-term members who witnessed to how the suffering and wound of division effected its own kind of communion. The mysterious relationship between the broken bread and body upon the altar and the broken bodies of the poor and suffering members with their various disabilities was not lost upon them. The pain in the division of the mystical body of Christ that is the Church resonated with the pain in their own broken hearts and bodies, creating its own unspoken form of communion. ‘Everyone is in favour of Christian unity,’ Jean once wrote to me. ‘Some are even willing to work a little for it. But few are willing to suffer for it.’

The Monastery of Bose

I will give more development to this last example, a community bringing a particular message to monastic communities today. Last November I had the opportunity to visit the Monastery of Bose in northwestern Italy. The community came into being on 8 December 1965 - the day the Second Vatican council concluded its work. The founder, Enzio Bianchi, a Catholic layman, began living in a rented house near the dairy farms at Bose. Among the first three people to join him was a Protestant pastor and a Catholic laywoman.

One of the community members with whom I spoke referred to it as ‘the gift of our origin’. She admitted that ‘living in an ecumenical monastic community made up of both men and women is at times challenging, but we feel it is important to be faithful to the gift of our origins, and we see the Spirit's work in it.’

Today, the monastic community at Bose numbers about eighty - approximately forty-eight men and thirty-two women. Only six among them are ordained, giving a strong emphasis to the call to holiness among laity. Only three among them are Protestants (best explained perhaps by the history of Italian Protestantism and its harsh struggle for survival in a dominantly Catholic country), but the community self-identifies as ‘a monastic community of men and women belonging to different churches.’

When the community members come into chapel in their white robes for one of their three daily offices, one is first struck by how young they are (median age in the community, one member told me, is about 39). But when they take their places in the choir (men on the left, women on the right), first bowing towards the altar and then coming erect and facing one another, something else emerges. As
they chant the psalms - the men singing the first two verses of each stanza and the women the last two - a powerful image of the complementarity of men and women in the church emerges both visually and audibly.

The community recognizes its roots in the local Catholic church and carries out a typically ecclesiastical ministry both in its own diocese and in other local churches: preaching, spiritual retreats, the publication of studies, books, and articles on spirituality. Bianchi himself, now sixty-four, is an increasingly sought-after commentator on events in the Church and world.

In an effort to listen, to understand and to serve other churches, the community has organized each year since 1993 an international ecumenical conference on Russian spirituality. The conference takes place at Bose every September and offers Orthodox and Christian scholars the chance to meet one another and seek a deeper communion among the churches through an exploration of the spiritual treasures of their respective traditions. In a similar spirit, in 1996, the community began organizing a series of conferences on Protestant spirituality, in collaboration with the Protestant universities of Neuchatel (Switzerland) and Strasbourg (France).

**Monasticism’s Potential for Ecumenical Witness**

In a lecture given in 1999 at a symposium on ‘Monastic Life and Religious Experience from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century,’ Bianchi shared three reasons why monastic life provides a particularly ecumenical terrain.⁶

First, monasticism precedes the divisions in the church. It is a human phenomenon with its own anthropology (celibacy, community life or solitude, asceticism, the search for the absolute) even before it became a Christian phenomenon. It is for this reason that interreligious dialogue (such as the North American Monastic Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue) takes place in monasteries more than elsewhere. And within Christianity, as long as the churches remained united, monasticism remained single and undivided, with its Western expression recognizing the Eastern monasticism of the desert fathers as its source. Citing Psalm 87: 7, every monk, Bianchi says, ought to

---

see that ‘Within you (the undivided church) is my true home.’

Secondly, monasticism came into being as a radical commitment to follow Christ, and therefore as a pathway to holiness. When holiness is pursued in religious life, even in different churches, it is a unifying force. Holiness allows us to realize that confessional walls do not rise as high as heaven. It was the French priest Abbé Paul Couturier - the same one who shaped what we now call the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - who said that at a certain degree of holiness, confessional differences lose their force because holiness looks beyond the division of the churches. If monastics truly respond to their vocation of inner unification, communion lived visibly, and continually renewed reconciliation and mercy, says Bianchi, they will be servants of unity and ministers of ecclesial communion.

A third reason that makes monasticism a natural site for ecumenical dialogue is that it has always sought to be a life of conversion. We usually say *ecclesia semper reformanda* with reference to the church, but in the history of the church concrete expressions of reform have been few, and what reform there is tends to be put into effect so slowly. In monastic life, on the other hand, every century has seen a reform in which there has been an effort to return to the sources and begin again, in a more profound obedience and faithfulness to the gospel.

Because of the centrality of the word of God in monastic life - the office, *lectio divina*, eucharist - and the resulting emphasis on reform, monasticism is capable of speaking the same language as the Reformed churches and of being their authentic dialogue partner.

As far as religious life in the West is concerned, outright opposition to ecumenism is rare today. It is the legacy of a relatively small number who consider post-Tridentine Catholicism an unchangeable norm and who view ecumenism as a threat to the integrity of Catholic dogma.

‘We must confess, though’ says Bianchi, ‘that many monastic and religious communities simply do not investigate the ecumenical pathway toward reconciliation: they consider ecumenical activity optional, or they think of it as a specific charism granted ecumenical communities. As a result, they plan and organize their way of life, their diakonia, and their mission in society among the churches
without taking into consideration the other Christian traditions.\textsuperscript{7}

Bianchi points to a prophetic horizon for forms of religious life wherein Christians of different denominations share life together. He knows from personal experience that this requires a great deal of courage, evangelical boldness, mutual submission, and an ability to leave behind some confessional accoutrements that are not essential to the following of Christ, and a willingness to go the extra mile. ‘Finally,’ he says, ‘it will not happen without an inner fire, a passion for communion that pushes us forward in our search for unity in diversity, and that allows us to look ahead and glimpse the unity toward which we must travel together.’\textsuperscript{8}

The issue of Christian unity is generally thought of as an internal matter for Christian communities. But as Ladislas Orsy SJ pointed out in his ‘Reflection on the Spiritual Mystery of the Ecumenical Movement,’ much more is at stake.

Christ has come, died, and risen for the whole human family. In this immense work of redemption, his church is called to play an indispensable role: it is the keeper of the good news; it is the eminent source of divine energy.... But... the community of Christians... is torn internally, and much of its energy is burned up by dissensions. It is handicapped in announcing God’s saving message; it is hampered in dispensing God’s exhilarating graces. Yet in our day the human family is in extreme need of hearing the life-giving news.... The world needs a church that proclaims with one clear voice the message of peace, God’s peace. We have no time to waste, ‘for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God’ (Rom. 8: 10).\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 20.
This article stresses the very real advances in mutual understanding and rapprochement achieved in the forty years of dialogue between Roman Catholics and Methodists, particularly evidenced in the 2006 report: The Grace Given You in Christ - Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church. It notes the common understanding of Church as communion (connexion) and locates the convergences within the tradition of ecumenical commitment common to both churches. It accompanies this with a note of caution concerning the reception process within a Methodism where there is still some resistance to concepts of priesthood and episcopacy determined by past experiences.

The international Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue, jointly sponsored between the Vatican and the World Methodist Council, began in 1967. It has proceeded in five yearly stages with reports being issued and submitted to the two authorities at the end of each quinquennium. The discussions take place between teams of equal size. Formerly, the Methodist team tended to be dominated by British and American theologians. More recently, there has been an attempt to represent third world Methodism and the present Methodist team includes a theologian from the most rapidly growing Methodist church of all, the Korean church.

Now in its ninth quinquennium, the dialogue enters upon a potentially critical phase. So far, it has promised much. It has

* David Carter is a Methodist local preacher who teaches for the Open University and Wesley College, Bristol. He is a member of the British Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee.

probably exceeded the hopes and expectations entertained by most people at its inception. It has effected major progress in terms of mutual understanding and theological convergence. It now faces some of the most critical and neuralgic issues in theological dialogue.

Nevertheless, important and permanent gains have been made. There is considerable agreement on the fundamental nature and purpose of the Church as communion and instrument of God’s mission.² There is consensus on the essentially pastoral nature of the ordained ministry.³ There is accord on the interdependent and connexional nature the Church.⁴ Outside of the formal activity of the bilateral dialogue per se, there has been the signing of the Joint Statement on Justification by the World Methodist Council.⁵ There is much to be thankful for.

At the same time, there is reason to hope for further advances. Firstly, because of the evidently warm spirit of partnership in the gospel that prevails both within the international Commission and within the national Catholic-Methodist dialogue commissions.⁶ Secondly, because of the warm feeling of mutual respect that has grown up between many ordinary Methodists and Catholics who increasingly realise how much they have in common, especially in their common emphases upon mission, holiness and the interconnectedness of all local churches. Above all, there is a common

---

³ See especially Towards a Statement on the Church and The Grace Given You in Christ, op. cit.
⁴ The Grace Given You in Christ, paras. 60-64.
⁵ For an account of this, see the excellent article by Loyer, Ken in Ecumenical Trends, Oct 2006, ‘Progress and Possibility: Ecumenism at the 2006 World Methodist Conference’.
⁶ Just one example of this may be given, viz. the extremely warm tribute paid by Bishop Michael Putney, current Roman Catholic co-chair of the International Commission to the enrichment brought to his diocesan ministry by his learning from the example of the Wesleys. This was made during the January 2006 conference at Durham on receptive ecumenism.
faith in the unlimited grace of the Holy Spirit, upon His power to save and transform to the uttermost and thus upon His ability to show us the way through even the most intractable of remaining problems even where we are at a loss as yet to guess what the way through might eventually be.

Yet at the same time, one has to sound a note of caution. The problems that remain to be solved, problems that were very clearly identified at various stages in the earlier dialogue reports and most particularly in *The Grace Given You in Christ*, are particularly difficult ones. They relate primarily to authority, to the structure of the ministry, to the precise priestly nature of presbyteral and episcopal ministry and to the nature of the eucharist particularly in respect of its sacrificial nature and the presence of Christ within the consecrated elements. Related to the questions of ministry and eucharist is the related question of the sacramentality of the Church on which substantial, if not absolutely complete progress has been made. These are difficult questions to resolve since they involve the radical rethinking on the part of both churches of positions that, in the past, were defined in rather antagonistically polemical terms. For both sides to redefine their traditional teaching within a broader context that takes full account of the reasons for the reaction of the other and seeks to find a new consensus beyond the partially distorted expressions of separation will demand a profound ecumenical and theological metanoia. Nevertheless, the authentic tradition of both communions calls for such imaginative and humble kenosis. From the Catholic side, there is the call of the Decree on Ecumenism to Catholic scholars to engage in a common search with the separated brethren into the deepest mysteries of the faith. From the Methodist side there is the reminder in the penitential prayers of the 1936 Covenant that failure to make ‘new ventures in fellowship’ is a sin.

As well as the major task in terms of theological reconstruction, there is the question of reception. Two recent events in 2007 point to the limitations of ecumenical reception within the British Methodist Church. The first related to the decision of the Methodist Council not

7 Decree on Ecumenism, section 11.
8 *Book of Offices of the Methodist Church*, 1936, p.129.
9 The Methodist Council is a smaller body that does much of the preparatory work for the Methodist Conference. It makes recommendations but the Conference remains the final governing authority.
to proceed with a debate at the conference on whether Methodism should receive the sign of the Episcopal succession and thus a form of episcopal ministry. This decision was taken because a report *What kind of Bishops?*, making various proposals as to the exact form such an episcopal order should take within British Methodism had aroused scant enthusiasm and a considerable degree of apathy or hostility when presented to the circuits and districts. To a degree this may have been because of the confusion caused by a rather lengthy and complex set of proposals presented but the fact remains that little attention was given in grassroots Methodism to the fact that the Conference had repeatedly indicated its willingness to receive the sign of the episcopal succession within an ecumenical context and that, only four years previously, the Conference had accepted a Covenant with the Church of England in which agreement had been recorded on the principle of episcopacy. All this, however, seemed to count for little in a context where some Methodists continued to cherish outdated prejudices against Anglican prelacy (of a style that has largely disappeared in the contemporary Church of England) and others took the rather isolationist view that Methodism had managed perfectly well without any form of episcopacy.

The second event was the reaction of the British Methodist Faith and Order Committee to the report *The Grace Given You in Christ.* While expressing a degree of appreciation for the Report, it was less encouraging than might have been expected and showed a less firm grasp upon the issues than might have been expected from such a body. It reminded the Methodist people, not without realism and thus a degree of justification, that progress on Catholic-Methodist relationships was not uniform throughout the world. It failed, however, to call upon those Methodists who still held negative attitudes towards Catholics to repent of them in accordance with the true Methodist tradition which is to ‘ever maintain the kind and catholic spirit of primitive Methodism towards all denominations of Christians holding the Head’. It showed a lack of full understanding of the concept of the exchange of gifts. It defined infallibility, rather

---


misleadingly, as being ‘of the institutional church’ (which might lead Methodists to believe that even episcopal appointments were infallible acts of the magisterium!) and, perhaps most surprisingly of all, seemed to fail to recognise that the ecumenical consensus on legitimate and enriching diversity within unity is held even within the Roman Catholic Church.

I mention these things as reasons for caution, though most certainly in no way for despair. There is a lot of work to be done. If, in what follows, I stress points where many Methodists may find difficulty in moving, it is not because I believe my own church, which I love, to be uniquely blind or inept, though I am naturally more aware of its failings than those of others. Roman Catholics will no doubt equally easily see where there would be great problems from the Catholic side. I would not be tackling the issue if I believed the problems insoluble. On the contrary, I believe and hope to show that there are resources available for breakthroughs but both the international Commission and other leaders in Methodist ecumenism will have to work hard if they are to see that they are properly commended and ultimately taken on board by the Methodist people.

Before we look at any of three big issues I have particularly specified, it is worth remembering that, on both sides of the Atlantic, there is a degree of populist Methodist suspicion of hierarchy which it will be difficult to overcome unless Methodists can be shown that there is a vital and essential ministry for bishops and Pope within the Church, a ministry which is about listening as part of leadership and in which bishops and presbyters are serving rulers and ruling servants. This suspicion is deep rooted within the Methodist psyche. In the American context, this relates to the contextual secular republican democratic tradition which so deeply influenced the constitutional development of their Methodism. In Britain, it relates to the disputes over ministerial authority and its manner of exercise within the Wesleyan tradition, disputes that led to the creation of a whole series of separate connexions which kept to the overall Wesleyan theological tradition while, at least in the more extreme reactions, turning the

\[12\] See, for example, the statement about episcopacy in Richey, R. and Frank, T.E. *Episcopacy in the Methodist Tradition*, Nashville, 2004, p. 95: ‘the bishops’ oversight is shared, collective and conciliar, not hierarchical, authoritarian, or individual’. 
ministry into a hired evangelistic agency subject to the authority of primarily lay assemblies. Sociology and politics also played a role in this, many Methodists coming precisely from those social classes that were becoming emancipated in the nineteenth century and were in conflict with traditional forms of authority, secular as well as ecclesiastical. It must be remembered that within all sections of British Methodism, including the Wesleyan tradition within which a higher doctrine and practice of the ministry was partially preserved, lay people played a uniquely large role in the service and governance of the local churches; to this day, the majority of services, particularly in smaller churches, are led by local preachers. All this constitutes a tradition from which the Catholic members of the last international Commission confessed they had much to learn. This will be an important starting point for continued dialogue though the question of lay roles within teaching and doctrinal definition remains thorny as the preceding Commission indicated. As the two churches draw closer, so the handling of their complex heritages of ecclesial culture will become more and more of an issue, a point that has become particularly apparent in the developing covenant relationship between British Methodism and the Church of England.

It should additionally be stressed that, though all the Methodist churches in the world owe their ultimate origins, whether by missionary extension, schism or imitation to either the British Wesleyan Methodist Connexion or the American Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodism is now a varied and complex global

---

13 Kent, J.H.S. *The Age of Disunity*, 1966, remains an excellent introduction to the disputes, issues and ecclesiological positions involved.

14 *The Grace Given You in Christ*, para. 126.

15 *Speaking the Truth in Love*, especially paras. 77-80.

16 A key difference to note is that most of the missionary churches of US origin remain linked with the General Conference of the present United Methodist Church, whereas the churches founded by British missions now have autonomous conferences (or have entered into wider unions, as in India). Examples of imitative churches are the nineteenth century British Bible Christians and the American Evangelical United Brethren, both now part of the British and United Methodist Churches respectively. Examples of churches that split form the parent bodies are the various black American Methodist churches and holiness groups e.g. the Wesleyan Holiness Church and, in Britain, the Wesleyan Reform Union. In Italy, Methodism is in a federation with the ancient Waldensian Church, a link that has considerably
phenomenon, strong in many parts of Africa and particularly in Korea as well as having a significant presence in most of the English-speaking world. Some Methodist churches have entered into wider unions with churches of other traditions, most notably in India, Canada and Australia. Many of the small Methodist churches in continental Europe retain a highly pietistic flavour and considerable wariness in relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The World Methodist Council is a consultative body with no binding authority over its member churches and it is the responsibility of the autonomous Methodist conferences to evaluate and respond to the dialogue for themselves. Many have yet to take much formal account of it. From the above, it will be seen that there is no guarantee that all Methodists will receive it in anything like a uniform way.

I intend in this essay to concentrate on the issues of ministry and sacrament but the question of authority is so interwoven with others that it cannot be altogether ignored. I intend also to make use of two important recent concepts in ecumenical methodology, viz. those of ‘differentiated consensus’, already employed with conspicuous success in the Joint Declaration on Justification and the even more recent concept, advocated by Harding Meyer of ‘differentiated participation’, that is to say the common sharing in a significant office by churches which hold contrasting, though not contradictory, emphases in their understanding of it. Meyer has put this forward in terms of a future common sharing in the historic episcopate and I propose to see how this might be understood in terms of the Roman Catholic-Methodist relationship.

**Priesthood and Ministry**

I will begin with the issue of ministerial priesthood and its relationship to the royal priesthood of all the faithful. Catholics and Methodists have no difficulty in agreeing that the only priesthood of the new Covenant is that of Christ which totally superseded that of the Old Law. Any priesthood which may be exercised by any members of the Church is strictly derivative from and dependent upon that

---

17 In the Indian sub-continent primarily with Anglicans and Reformed, elsewhere with reformed.

priesthood of Christ. Both churches agree that the New Testament teaches that the entire body of the faithful is corporately a royal priesthood. The disagreement begins at the next stage when considering whether there is any sense in which the ordained presbyters and bishops of the Church enjoy a separate and unique participation in the priesthood of Christ which is not derived simply by delegation from the general royal priesthood of all the faithful but belongs, to use the oft-quoted ARCIC formulation, to a separate realm of the gifts of the Spirit.\(^{19}\)

At first sight, there appears, at least within the British Methodist tradition, to be no room for compromise with the Catholic view. Vatican II may say one thing, reaffirming earlier long-standing Catholic teaching. The British Methodist Deed of Union, still binding (though since the Methodist Church Act of 1976 conceivably reformable) states baldly that: ‘The Methodist Church holds to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of men.’\(^{20}\)

This teaching was reiterated as recently as 1999 in the British Methodist ecclesiological statement *Called To Love and Praise* which said that a minister is neither more nor less a priest than any other Christian.\(^{21}\) However, the question is not as closed as it might seem. In an excellent paper recently presented to the British Catholic Methodist Committee, Trevor Hoggard argued that the teaching of *Called To Love and Praise* in this respect was not fully consistent and that there were signs of openings within the Methodist tradition that might facilitate a reassessment of the situation. He contrasted the continuing re-affirmation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with the statement later in the same paragraph that the office of an ordained minister ‘consists in enabling the Church’s whole ministry in such a way that Christ is effectively present in preaching, in the sacraments, in the Church’s discipline and pastoral care’, a point that was taken up in *The Grace given You in Christ* and accompanied by the gloss that it ‘reflects the grounding of priesthood


\(^{21}\) *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, vol 2, 1984-2000*, Peterborough, 2000, p. 49, para. 4.5.11.
in Christ himself that Catholics would wish to be the basis of ecumenical rapprochement.\textsuperscript{22}

There is little doubt that since Methodist Union in 1932 and primarily as a result of the influence of ecumenical contact and dialogue, the Methodist position, particularly amongst theologians has shifted.\textsuperscript{23} It is recognised that the sheer complexity of the totality of Christian tradition, both within Scripture and subsequently, means that the simplicity of earlier formulations has to be revisited. It is important to do three things, firstly to re-examine the context within which the traditional formulations were made, secondly to explore other and perhaps partly forgotten strands within the Methodist tradition that might point in a differing direction and, thirdly, to take account of the witness of ecumenical partners and their struggles to find ways of expressing their essential conviction in a more irenic way.

We should begin then with the context in which nineteenth century Methodism (not, be it especially noted, the Wesleys) formulated its understanding of the priesthood of all believers. It was one of reaction against the exaggerated claims of contemporary Anglo-Catholicism, rather than Roman Catholicism, which had argued for the exclusive mediation of grace through the sacraments administered by episcopally ordained clergy. To Methodists of that era, such teaching contradicted both the broader understanding of the means of grace derived form Wesley’s teaching and the teaching of the New Testament about the immediacy of the relationship between the believer and Christ.\textsuperscript{24} It was particularly for the latter reason that the original New Testament stress on the corporate nature of the royal priesthood of the whole Church became somewhat overshadowed by

\textsuperscript{22} Grace, para. 133.
\textsuperscript{23} Section 1.2 of the most recent British Methodist Statement on ecclesiology, Called To Love and Praise (1999) makes this point. Ecumenical and other advances in understanding mean that ‘Christian self-understanding can hardly remain unchanged and static’ (CLP, para 1.2.6.)
\textsuperscript{24} Wesley’s understanding of the means of grace was a particularly broad one. He distinguished between the \textit{instituted} means, i.e. those directly commanded in Scripture, both sacramental and non-sacramental and the \textit{prudential} means, i.e. those that had developed in later tradition but were of proven spiritual value His definition of the means was wide and included such practical works of mercy as those once defined in the Roman Catholic tradition as the ‘corporal works of mercy’.
an emphasis upon each believer as having access to Christ. To an extent, in their mutual reaction against each others’ emphases, both Wesleyans and Anglo-Catholics had hardened their positions.

In such a situation, we may turn for help to the work of the great Johan Mohler who stressed that within the community of love alternative emphases could always be held in creative tension. The Anglo-Catholics rightly wanted to restore the proper position of the sacraments, above all the eucharist, within the life of the contemporary Church of England where they were celebrated with somewhat less frequency than is the case even in the modern English free churches. The Wesleyans wanted to stress the immediacy of the relationship of the believer with Christ, an immediacy that is emphasised throughout the canon of the New Testament but particularly within the letters of Paul. Properly understood, these emphases are complementary not antagonistic. As the great Wesleyan exegete, George Findlay stressed, every believer has an immediate relationship with ‘the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me’. At the same time, he or she has a duty to the cosmic Christ who is also head of the Body, a duty of ecclesial belonging, a duty to hear the Word read and preached publicly, a duty to participate actively in the anamnesis of the saving events.

A subsidiary reason for the Methodist emphasis, particularly in the smaller non-Wesleyan traditions, was a reaction against the overbearing way in which some ministers had exercised their authority within early Methodism, believing that their special call and office allowed, even at times compelled them to ride roughshod over the rights and feelings of the laity. A good example of this can be found in the writing of Alfred Barrett when he states that ‘occasional preaching does not impart the ministerial office’. Theologically, this is of course, completely correct but it demeaned the local preachers many of whom, in fact, preached extremely frequently at great personal cost. The distinction between their office and that of the ministerial and pastoral office could have been tactfully put without

26 For a summary of Findlay’s teaching on this, see my ‘Faith, the Believer and the Church. A Methodist Reflection’ in *One in Christ*, 1995, no 2, pp. 63-70.
any offence being given. The result was that in the non-Wesleyan connexions, there was a contrary and reactive tendency to devalue the ministerial office, seeing it simply as a hired and disposable agency rather than as a necessary provision of the Spirit for the Church, a fact that had been as much emphasised with classical Protestant teaching as in Catholic.

This leads us to consider the understanding within the earlier Methodist heritage. The Wesleys themselves held to the end of their lives a high doctrine of the priestly nature of the ordained presbyterate as is evidenced both by Charles’ constant and unwavering opposition to any of the un-ordained travelling preachers administering the sacraments and John’s famous sermon on the sons of Korah.28 It is true that John, at the very end of his life, did ordain a superintendent for the Americas and some elders for Scotland and even England. He believed he had the authority to do so but clearly still considered that ordination set one in a special relationship within the Church.29

John Wesley always emphasised the key pastoral responsibilities of the ordained ministry, despairing when he saw them being neglected within contemporary Anglicanism. This emphasis was continued among the early Wesleyans with their doctrine of the pastoral office. This they held to be of divine institution in the Church. The presbyters that they ordained they regarded as under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd himself.30 There can be no doubt that they saw them as representing the authority and care of Christ within his Church. They saw them as pledged to the life-long itinerant service of the flock. They are to be ‘pastors after thine own heart’, their ministry being thus a participation in that of Christ.31

Of course, it could be argued that this is only an extension of the ministry that every Christian has to be ‘Christ to his neighbour’; as such, it would not meet the Catholic criterion of a priesthood differing

---

29 The best overall study of Wesley’s theology of ministry is Lawson, A.B. John Wesley and the Christian Ministry, 1963.
30 See especially, Jackson T. Christian Presbyters, their office, duties and reward, 1850.
31 Methodist Hymn Book, 1933 edn, no. 791.
in kind rather than just degree. However, there can be no doubt that to the early Wesleyans, there was a difference in kind. It involved a particular full-time commitment that entailed being solemnly set aside which was expressed alike in the ceremony of reception into full connexion and in ordination. It involved a particularly apostolic discipline of itinerant availability. It was a particularly focused and necessary ministry of Christ within His Church.

In the late nineteenth century, the stress upon the pastoral office became attenuated even within the Wesleyan tradition. There surfaced a doctrine of the representative nature of the ministry which saw the ministry as arising by selection and delegation from within the Church. It is interesting to note, however, that in 1937, the ecclesiological statement, *Nature of the Christian Church*, maintained a fine balance between an emphasis upon ministry as arising within the Church and ministry as a gift of the Spirit to the Church. The necessary distinctiveness of the ordained ministry as arising from the gracious provision of the Spirit for the Church was being re-emphasised.

Later British Methodist statements on ordained ministry took this further and bore witness to the increasing influence of ecumenical thinking, particularly that of the more ‘catholic’ section of the Church upon Methodist theology. The 1974 statement is particularly significant. Early twentieth century Methodist thinking regarded the ministry very much in functional terms and would have been very wary of any concept of ontological change at ordination. The 1974 statement however, seeks to reconcile the functional and ontological concepts of the presbyterate. It also seeks to relate the calling of presbyters to the general calling of the whole people of God and to stress that the ordained ministry as much as any other ministry is a ministry within the Church, not above it or beneath it. It expresses it thus:

> A man is not called out of the Church to be a minister. What he receives is a special calling within a general calling...They (i.e. all Christians) are called, all of them, ordained and un-ordained, to be the Body of Christ to men. But as a perpetual reminder of this calling and as a means of being obedient to it the church sets aside men and women, specially called, in ordination. In their office the calling of the

---

32 *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, vol 1, London, 1984 p.27.
whole Church is focussed and represented, and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling. In this sense they are the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church, and through the Church to the world.33

This finely nuanced statement preserves a careful balance between the earlier emphasis upon the representative nature of ministry as representative of the general ministry of the whole people of God whilst also stressing the sign nature of their ministry as representative of the ministry of Christ to the Church. The emphasis upon the focal role of the ministry tunes in well with the modern post-Vatican II emphasis upon the role of the bishops in maintaining and expressing communion.

From a consideration of all these complex developments, we can, I think, propose the possibility of a differentiated consensus between Catholics and Methodists on presbyteral ministry and the distinctive nature of its participation in the ministry of Christ in His Church. Catholics stress the sacramental, priestly nature of this participation, Methodists stress the pastoral participation of presbyters as under-shepherds in the ministry of the Great Shepherd. Both traditions agree that this ministry is for the service of the priesthood of the entire body of the faithful. Both agree that the sealing of the candidate for presbyteral ministry in the act of ordination establishes him (in the Methodist case also her!) in a new and permanent relationship with the Church. Methodists may give greater stress to the pastoral and preaching functions of the presbyterate and Catholics to the anamnetic function of eucharistic presidency in the name of Christ, though both agree that these are the three key functions of the ordained presbyter. On the Methodist side there is a strong emphasis upon the fact that, in varying degrees, through the providential development of Methodism, lay people have acted as valued assistants in many pastoral roles and also in preaching even though they have not taken on the fullness of the presbyteral role.34 Such co-operation can perhaps be accepted by Catholics, who are keen to learn more

33 Statements, op. cit. vol. 1, pp 135-6.
34 A point repeatedly asserted within the Wesleyan tradition even in the period of high claims for the prerogatives of the pastoral office. See e.g. Shrewsbury, W.J. A Scriptural Account of the Wesleyan Methodist Economy, 1840, ch 7, pp. 225-248: ‘The Test of Scripture applied to the lay agencies of Methodism’.
about lay ministry form Methodists, as a particular form of the *conspiratio* that should exist within the Church between lay people and the clergy.

The emphasis upon presbyteral and other ordained ministries as being in the Church is vital to Methodists. It stresses the relationship of mutual trust, respect and affirmation that should exist. William Shrewsbury stressed that the greatest disaster that can befall a church is a ‘want of confidence between the ministers and the people’.35

*Bishops*

A related issue is that of the episcopate. Currently, most Methodist churches, though not the British church, have an episcopal order though the understanding of its necessity, form and, to some extent, function differ from those held within the Catholic tradition. Methodists do not believe an episcopate in strict succession, both in ordination and in tenure of historic sees, to be essential to the Church, whereas Catholics believe it to have been willed by Christ and, as an integral part of his legacy to the Church, to be indispensable. Nevertheless, there remain openings for dialogue and further rapprochement. From the Methodist side, these arise out of continued re-evaluation of the particular tradition of episcopacy in the largest of all the churches, the United Methodist Church, and its de facto partial rapprochement within more recent times with aspects congruent with the Catholic model.

The episcopate within American Methodism arose from Wesley’s provision for the American Church in the wake of the consolidation of American political independence. Aware that there were very few Anglican clergy in the new country and aware also that none of the itinerant Methodist preachers there were ordained, Wesley decided to recommend a threefold order of ministry for the new church and then leave it, as he put it ‘to the Scriptures and the Primitive Church’. Accordingly, in 1784, he set aside Thomas Coke as superintendent for the Americas and also provided forms that could be used for the ordination of elders and deacons.36 Coke then met the American

---

35 Shrewsbury, op. cit. p.54.
36 Wesley believed, citing precedents from the Church of Alexandria in the patristic era that presbyters had, in extraordinary circumstances, the right to ordain. He certainly believed that such circumstances existed in America where there was still no sign of the Bishop of London responding to requests
preachers in Conference at which it was decided to adopt the threefold order of ministry based upon the Anglican model. The traditional term ‘bishop’ was substituted for Wesley’s original ‘superintendent’. Coke ordained Francis Asbury who had been elected by the American brethren to act with him as superintendent. Coke did not stay long in America. It thus fell to Asbury, a man of immense energy, to set the pattern of the new church, and in particular that of its form of episcopacy, which he did with great vigour. For some years he superintended the evangelistic work and expansion of the new American connexion, not merely sending the circuit riders out into their frontier missions but accompanying them, sometimes even going on ahead of them. At this stage it was the apostolic labour of evangelisation, of initiating, leading, superintending and setting an example in it that was at the heart of the American Methodist understanding of episcopacy.

Asbury and the early American Methodists were convinced of the superiority of the ‘grand plan’ of an itinerant ministry which they contrasted with what they saw as the rather effete style of the contemporary Anglican episcopate. They gloried in the difficulties they encountered, seeing these as a sign of the truly apostolic scope and nature of their ministry: ‘We have already shown, that Timothy and Titus were travelling bishops. In short every candid person, who is thoroughly acquainted with the New Testament, must allow that, whatever excellencies other plans may have, this is the primitive and apostolic plan. 37

It was, above all, the episcopate that drove the mission, determining its priorities through its key role in stationing the ministers, that is assigning them to the circuits or groups of churches within which they were to minister.

The episcopate in American Methodism subsequently became somewhat more settled and territorial whilst never assuming a ‘diocesan’ form. It retained responsibility for the stationing and

---

which Wesley had repeatedly made over previous decades that he ordain more priests for that country. Ironically in 1784 three bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church did consecrate a bishop for America, thus enabling the future Protestant Episcopal Church to survive and function independently of the Church of England. See Lawson, op. cit. pp. 47-70.

oversight of elders. In more modern times, it has assumed a much greater teaching role, a point at which one may discern ecumenical influence. Its overall constitutional role has been deeply influenced by the tradition of all the preachers meeting in Conference and by the republican tradition of separation of powers; thus, traditionally, though bishops presided within conferences, they did not normally speak within them. They sit in the General Conference which is the overall governing body of the United Methodist Church and a bishop always presides within it but they do not have a vote within it. The General Conference is responsible for the updating of the Discipline, the canon law of the church, which regulates the nature and authority of the episcopal office.

There are thus clearly important differences from the Roman Catholic model, particularly in the fact that much ultimate decision-making is in the hands of the General Conference rather than the bishops. There is some questioning of this in the recent work, already cited, of Richey and Frank. They argue that, in virtue of their office, the bishops, individually and collectively, have a better overview of the overall needs of the Connection and its mission than any other persons or agencies. They also argue for a presidency within the Council of Bishops that would enable a globally itinerant bishop to be ‘a sign of the Church’s concern for the world, a superintendent whose model is Christ’. They call for the bishops to play a more dominant role in setting overall policy for the whole connexion. ‘We propose that the UMC renew its episcopal ecclesiology by giving the bishops constitutional and legislative responsibility for inspiring and proposing missional directions for the denomination as a whole.’

In these proposals, there seems to be, maybe all unconsciously, a greater rapprochement with the Catholic emphasis upon the overall individual and collective concern of the bishops for the Church as a whole.

It certainly seems to me that there is room for a possible differentiated consensus on the nature of the episcopate. Both churches stress the apostolic origins and practice of the episcopate. For the Methodists, apostolicity relates primarily to practice. The bishops reproduced the apostolic practice of constant labour and

---

38 Richey and Frank, op. cit. p. 124.
39 Ibid. p. 129.
travel. Paul’s emphasis upon his labours abundant and their attendant hardships is reflected in Asbury’s statement: ‘If to travel through heat and cold, rain and snow, swamps and rivers... - if these be little difficulties - then our bishops have little to endure.’

He was not however indifferent to continuity, a key concern for Catholic episcopal ecclesiology. He addresses his preachers for the last time: ‘My loving confidential Sons in the Gospel...great grace rest upon you. God’s glory cover your assembly and direct all your actions and deliberations for the apostolic order and the establishment of the Church of God in holy succession until the end of time.’

A point that we might not expect is a contrasting understanding of the sacramentality of the episcopate. For Roman Catholics, this derives of course from their receiving the fullness of order at their consecration. For United Methodists it is implicit in the way in which they enact their episcopate, though the full theology of this remains to be worked out. Richey and Frank in an interesting passage point to the possibilities. While stressing that traditionally, the bishops have not been seen as sacramental figures and, indeed, were seen as being essentially of the same order as presbyters, they add:

The bishop’s role is fulfilled as he or she is simply present in as many times and places as possible... the travel required for this level of omnipresence was for the early bishops a sacramental act. Their itinerancy itself was their witness to the power of God and the saving grace of Christ.

The ‘level of omnipresence’ of the bishops also relates to their role in assuring the fullest possible communion in their episcopal areas.

When United Methodists gather to seek the means of grace in Christian conversation and conference, the figure to whom they look to make this possible is their presiding officer, the bishop. All the

---

40 Ibid. p.66.
41 Ibid. p.82.
42 It should be remembered in this context that it was not only Wesley and the American Methodists who considered that presbyters and bishops were essentially of the same order. Among the early fathers, Jerome certainly held such a view and for a long time, right up indeed till Vatican II, there were those Catholic theologians who considered that the difference was primarily in the extent of jurisdiction. Vatican II, of course, made it clear that bishops were of a different order.
43 Ibid. pp.92-3.
diverse voices of the churches...look to the bishop for order, fair process and a spirit of interaction that will make Christian community possible.'

Finally, we may note the interesting parallels between the function that Richey and Frank advocate for a presiding bishop and the travelling ministry that has characterised pontiffs since the time of Paul VI, most particularly the late John Paul II. The Catholic-Methodist dialogue has, of course, already, touched upon the question of a universal primacy and Geoffrey Wainwright has made suggestions for a possible teaching and missional role for it.

Women and the ordained ministry

One last, and apparently intractable issue concerning ordained ministry should be mentioned, that is the question of the ordination of women. On this, the two communions have previously registered totally contrary convictions and nothing was said in the most recent report to imply any change of mind on either side. It does, however, occur to me that a solution may only be found when, finally, the two churches come to a common understanding of how experience is to be evaluated. Methodists, particularly those in the American tradition, sometimes speak of a quadrilateral of sources of authority: Scripture (normally held throughout Methodism to have primacy); Tradition; Reason (this third owing much to the Anglican background of the Wesleys and Methodism); and Experience. Experience is certainly not regarded as a source that can, as it were ‘trump’ the others, particularly Scripture, but it is regarded as a concurrent source for establishing whether a new development should be ‘received’. Thus, in the Apostolic Tradition we read: ‘Methodists ordain women because they believe that women also receive the call, evidenced by inward conviction and outward manifestation of the gifts and graces and confirmed by the gathering of the faithful.’

From the earliest of times, a question put concerning candidates for the role of travelling preachers was: ‘Has he the gifts and graces for the

44 Ibid, p.92.
45 See e.g. his “The Gift which He on One Bestows, We All Delight to Prove”. A possible Methodist Approach to a ministry of Primacy in the Circulation of Love and Truth’ in Puglisi, J. (ed) Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church, 1999, pp. 59-82.
46 Apostolic Tradition, para. 96.
work? When, in the nineteenth century, a handful of women were received as travelling preachers, it was because they were believed, however unusually, to manifest the gifts and graces for the work. To what extent today can the evident fruitfulness of many Methodist women presbyters and, more recently, a few bishops, be regarded as creating a new context for the discussion of the question at a more universal level? There is an important issue in pneumatology involved and the question of how the Church is to discern and receive the new initiatives of the Spirit within it.

**Eucharist and sacramentality**

In *The Grace Given You in Christ*, both churches call for more work on the sacraments, especially the eucharist and do so in the context of a higher degree of convergence on the overall sacramentality of the Church. The Methodists acknowledge that there is a resonance between Catholic teaching on the eucharist and their own teaching as expressed in the hymns of John and Charles Wesley. They also accept that they ‘would benefit from a more developed theology of the eucharist, such as can be found in Roman Catholic teaching.’ The Roman Catholics stress their conjoint belief in the real presence and in the eucharistic sacrifice while adding that they regret ‘any impression they may have given of a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass’.

The call for such further work is timely in view of the fact that since 1976 little has been said in the dialogue about the eucharist. Even more significant is the ecumenical progress that has been made on the subject since, most particularly in the *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* paper of the Word Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Division. Also highly significant is the progress made within British Methodism in an internal study, resulting in the report *His Presence Makes the Feast* and, even more, the progress made in the American Catholic-Methodist dialogue in its latest phase and consequent report *Through*

---

47 The references to this are marked by less hesitancy from the Methodist side than in previous reports.

48 *Grace*, paras. 109, 111.

49 The two points being intimately linked. ‘The sacramental presence of Christ himself is at once the sacramental presence of his sacrifice also, because the Christ who is present is he who has entered the sanctuary once and for all bearing his own blood to secure an eternal redemption.’ *Grace*, para. 131.
Divine Love, a report which is frequently quoted on both ecclesiological and sacramental matters in The Grace Given You in Christ and clearly deeply influenced the latter.\(^{50}\) In this, the United Methodists state a eucharistic faith which might well be considered adequate for a differentiated consensus document on the eucharist. The United Methodists ‘teach that Jesus Christ is “truly present in Holy Communion”, though it may not be possible to fully explain this presence. While not affirming the doctrine of transubstantiation, United Methodists do believe that the elements are essential tangible means though which God works’. They continue that the elements are ‘for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ so that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood’. Holy Communion is a ‘representation, not a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ’. They assert that, in the eucharist, they ‘commune not only with those standing by us’, but ‘with the saints of the past who join us in the sacrament’, thus becoming ‘partakers of the divine nature’.\(^{51}\) In a later paragraph and most encouragingly, both churches ‘see the eucharist as making present the one, irrepeatable sacrifice of Christ’.\(^{52}\)

All of this preserves the Wesleyan heritage as sung in the relevant hymns of the Wesleys. The stress on not understanding fully the nature of the mystery expresses the doxological awe felt at the eucharist.

Who can tell how bread and wine
God into man convey.
Ask the Father’s wisdom how,
Him that did the means ordain.
Angels around our altars bend
To seek it out in vain.\(^{53}\)

---

\(^{50}\) His Presence Makes the Feast was a report from the Faith and Order Committee of the British Methodist Church to the Conference of 2003. It is commended for study but is not an official declaration of Conference nor was it intended to be; rather, it was intended to stimulate reflection on the nature and practice of the eucharist. It points to the rich diversity of nine key aspects of eucharist, viz thanksgiving, life in unity (koinonia), remembering (anamnesis), sacrifice, presence, epiclesis, anticipation (eschatology), mission and justice, personal devotion.

\(^{51}\) Through Divine Love, para. 139.

\(^{52}\) Ibid. para 144.

\(^{53}\) Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, 1745, no. 57, cited in Rattenbury, J.E. The
Roman Catholics may still wonder whether there is yet the full acceptance of the total objectivity of the sacramental presence of Christ as food as well as host in the eucharist. The Catholics raise again the issue of the objectivity of the sacramental means of grace, saying they ‘would like to share with Methodists the absolute confidence in Christ’s action through the ministry of word and sacrament’.  

It is instructive at this juncture to record the very definite agreement of the American dialogue that the Church is sacramental because it effects and signifies the presence of God in the world. Such an agreement seems to stem from the common and oft-repeated (in both the American and international dialogues) belief in responsible grace and the resultant possibility of true holiness. As with the itinerant ministry, grace is experienced and transmitted through the responsive communion of the Church in mission. A perennially favourite hymn sings:

All praise to our redeeming Lord  
Who joins us by His grace.

And continues in the third verse:

The gift which he on one bestows  
We all delight to prove: 
The grace through every vessel flows  
In purest streams of love.

And, in the fifth verse:

We all partake the joy of one,  
The common peace we feel,  
A peace to sensual minds unknown,  
A joy unspeakable.  

It is, as the great ecclesiologist Mohler stressed so long ago, through
eucharistic hymns of John and Charles Wesley, 1948, p.213.  
54 Grace, para. 134. The issue of confidence in the objectivity of the means of grace was a key theme of the seventh quinquennium of the dialogue, recorded in the report Speaking the Truth in Love where Methodists recorded their question as to whether the Catholic faith took sufficient account of the human inadequacy of the Church. While not retracting their previous position, the Methodist members of the eighth Commission do not seem to have made so much of an issue of this on this occasion.  
55 Hymns and Psalms (the official hymn book of British Methodism), no. 753.
the Church, the communion of love, that the Holy Spirit draws us towards Christ.\textsuperscript{56}

From this brief review, it will be seen that I entertain great hopes of substantial further progress in this dialogue. There will still remain other substantial issues, related especially to authority, discipline and reception. Under the question of authority, there remain huge issues relating to the extent and nature of universal jurisdiction and the conditions under which doctrinal definition may be needed in preference to accepting certain opinions as non-binding theologoumena.

The culture of discipline within the two churches will need consideration. In theory, Methodism is the second most disciplinarian church in the world. In practice, under the enormous influence that liberal Protestantism has had over all the major western non-Roman Catholic churches in the twentieth century, Methodism has come to tolerate a diversity of approaches to many key theological issues that would disturb many Roman Catholics, in some cases rightly so.

Finally, there is the fact that, throughout world Methodism, the dominant ethoses are still those of evangelicalism and liberal Protestantism. While the international Commission and, indeed, other Methodists, recognise that ‘Greater awareness of the communion of saints and the Church’s continuity in time, the sacramental use of material things and the sacramental ministry to the sick and dying are also ecclesial elements and endowments that Methodists might profitable receive from Roman Catholics’,\textsuperscript{57} it will take time and sustained reception for such a need to be really widely felt amongst all the Methodist faithful. The varied reception within world Methodism of the 1982 Baptist, Eucharist, Ministry document, especially on matters relating to eucharistic theology and the theology of ordained ministry indicates that some, especially in the smaller and more pietistic churches of continental Europe, will not be happy with the understanding of Church as sacrament or the alleged resonance between the emphases of the Wesleys’ sacramental hymns and Roman Catholic teaching. For many other Methodists, including those in Britain and America, the sacraments play a more marginal role in spiritual lives and the recommendations of The Grace Given You in

\textsuperscript{56} Mohler, op. cit. ch. 1 on Mystical Unity.
\textsuperscript{57} Grace, para. 111.
Christ may fall on puzzled rather than necessarily antagonistic ears.\textsuperscript{58} There are, as I asserted at the beginning of this paper, grounds for hope but also a need for caution lest our optimism be over-facile and we expect over-rapid results.

\textsuperscript{58} Responses from some Methodist churches to the ‘Lima’ report can be found in Thurian, M. ed. \textit{Churches Respond to BEM}, 1985, vol. 2, pp. 177-254. It will be quickly noted that the response of the United Methodist Church (USA) is the most favourable one, openly avowing that that church needs to recover a fuller sacramental consciousness in accordance with both the Wesleyan tradition and the Great tradition of the Church. By contrast, the response of the Italian Methodist Church, written, significantly, conjointly with that of the Waldensian Church is clearly suspicious of catholicising tendencies in BEM.
FIFTY YEARS AND RUNNING. OBERLIN 57, BACK AND BEYOND

Jeffrey Gros FSC*

The US churches, Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic and more recently including Pentecostal, Holiness and evangelicals, have worked together for fifty years in the theological research of the global Faith and Order movement to serve the unity of the Church. Faith and Order US has a challenge before it of raising up a new generation of scholars who can continue to serve and stimulate church leaders and people in the pews in their responsibility to realize Christ's reconciling prayer for the unity of all Christians. This essay outlines some of the history of the US movement and some of the future possibilities before the scholarly community.

In every culture in which the Gospel finds itself incarnated, the call to reconciliation takes on a different character and a different set of priorities, as the modern ecumenical movement seeks to inculturate Christ’s prayer for the unity of all Christians. Inculturation is as important for the churches and the ecumenical movement in the United States as in any other part of the globe. The historic modern ecumenical movement, especially in its conciliar form, has been characterized by a common witness to important social values in the society, growing out of the understanding of the Gospel in US culture, developed by the historic Protestant churches emerging from the British colonies. Orthodox, Catholic and other immigrant Protestant

* Brother Jeffrey Gros, FSC, served ten years as Director of Faith and Order for the National Council of Churches, and then fourteen years as Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is currently Distinguished Professor of Ecumenical and Historical Theology at Memphis Theological Seminary, and also serves as Dean for the Catholic Institute for Ecumenical leadership, a program for diocesan ecumenical officers. An informal, undocumented version of this article has appeared in Ecumenical Trends (November, 2007). A narrative report is forthcoming in Ecumenical Review (‘Faith and Order in Oberlin: 1957-2007’). See also various papers in Journal of Ecumenical Studies vol.42 no.4 (Fall 2007) cited here as JES 42.
voices have only gradually been incorporated into the conversation.

In the conciliar movement, interest in the ecclesiological issues central to Faith and Order has also been slow to emerge as integral to the US ecumenical movement. Therefore, the commemoration of the 1957 World Council initiated, North American Conference on Faith and Order is an important marker for the US, global and theological development of the one ecumenical movement. Because of the origin of the US National Council of Churches as a ‘cooperative agency’ concerned with service and social witness, it has been a constant struggle to keep the ecclesiological research serving the reconciliation of the Church at the center of Faith and Order US.

There is always a tendency to look to Faith and Order US as a reservoir of theological talent to help legitimate social programs or public witness projects that are current priorities at any particular time in the ecumenical journey. The churches have to be continually reminded that all aspects of their life together in the conciliar movement need to be grounded in the biblical faith that is shared; and that they need to be in dialogue about conscientious differences in social and personal ethics, that continue to divide the churches.

A 2007 Conference at Oberlin was a modest contribution to the commemoration of the 1957 North American Conference on Faith and Order, and an attempt to invite younger scholars into the discussion. It is hoped that some day there may be the resources and ecumenical focus for a second North American Conference on Faith and Order, with the prospect of harvesting the theological work of past decades and charting a course of theological research for the future.¹

This overview of US Faith and Order history is designed to be a brief and introductory sampling; highlighting especially the link to the one worldwide ecumenical movement and the variety of churches in the US. The churches can be grateful for the fifty years of service of this US Commission to the unity of Christians worldwide, and hopeful for the research efforts of a new generation of specialists doing the hard theological work before us, with the next fifty years – and more - of challenges.

In looking at the US from a global perspective, it will be important to realize that, in the Protestant community, about half the Christians

are in churches that relate to the historical ecumenical movement, and about half are evangelical, Pentecostal and Holiness churches whose history has placed them at the margins of the ecumenical movement. Because of the worldwide influence of these churches, the religious diversity in the US, and of the tendency of the religious community to be polarized and even politicized, it is a priority for Faith and Order US to engage these churches in theological dialogue on the core issues of the Christian faith.

In my view, the primary work of Faith and Order USA is the reception of the wider ecumenical work. The Commission does produce texts. The influence of Oberlin I, its contribution to Montreal 1963 and the pioneering work on Scripture and Tradition, the US work on ecclesiology, and the giants present there who influenced three generations of teaching: all are irreversible contributions.

In 1957 Faith and Order was very much a Protestant affair, with even the Orthodox who were members of both World and National Councils needing to write a separate statement. Papanikolaou’s paper in Oberlin demonstrates that the situation has begun to change. As Cardinal Avery Dulles and Msgr John Radano noted, the tentative Catholic presence at Oberlin fifty years ago has begun, gradually to transform the largest worldwide Christian body, and to destabilize and augment the global ecumenical enterprise.

---

3 A. Papanikolaou, ‘Orthodoxy, Postmodernism and Ecumenism: The difference that Divided Human Communities Make,’ in JES 42, 527 – 547.
4 ‘Saving Ecumenism from Itself,’ <http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=6081&var_recherche=oberlin>.
The Commission is mandated to ‘Call the churches to full visible unity, in the one Apostolic Faith, in one Eucharistic fellowship, united in worship and witness that the world might believe.’ This first purpose of the World Council of Churches has never been part of the constitution of the US National Council, which was founded as a John D. Rockefeller, corporate era ‘cooperative agency.’

As former US National Council General Secretary Arie Brouwer was wont to say, this Council is not the bold ecumenical ship leading the churches toward unity, but a flotilla of dinghies, seldom sailing in a coordinated direction.\(^8\) In fact, the secular corporate language of the 1950 constitution was only replaced by theological, ‘community of communions’ language in 1981,\(^9\) a minor but important step toward the reception of the theological, ecumenical vision of Church unity.\(^10\)

This reformulation work was largely done under the influence of the US Faith and Order Commission and its twenty years of ecumenical work, with the leadership of Paul Crow, Jeanne Audrey Powers and others.\(^11\)

During this author’s term as Associate General Secretary for Faith and Order (1981-1991) the churches restructured their Council four times, with little input from the ecumenical partners from the non-NCCUS member churches (like Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod; Church of God, Anderson; Catholic Church, etc.) who had entrusted Faith and Order to them in 1957. Three times the Commission was dissolved in the restructures, but it never missed a meeting! The Council needs a staff and community of ecumenical officers who know

---


the history and theological basis of the ecumenical movement in the 1950 WCC Toronto Statement, and the significance of the ecclesiological discussions.\textsuperscript{12}

For younger theologians, there is much work before the theological community and the churches. While ecumenical scholars leave a rich legacy, as long as the churches are divided there is no dearth of possibilities for service, research and ecumenical reconciliation.

Twenty-five years ago when US Faith and Order celebrated this anniversary, the Commission was the guest of the late John Meyendorff at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, where the late Paul Minear so active in Oberlin I, spoke; and in the Faith and Order file is a picture of the late Letty Russell and William G. Rusch cutting the anniversary cake at Graymoor Ecumenical Institute.

As early as the 1970’s Paul Minear noted that the increasing bureaucratization of the churches and the specialization of academic theology made developing ecumenical leadership more challenging.\textsuperscript{13} The last thirty years have indeed verified his concerns.

Yes, Faith and Order and the US churches have come a long way, but there is a long way to go. When a Protestant student can say ‘when the Catholic Church was over’ in the sixteenth century, or when a Catholic bishop can say that Protestants do not ‘believe in Christ’s real presence in communion,’ one is taken aback. There is much education needed for the work done to date to become a ‘common heritage.’ When one reviews history texts for seminary use: US, sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{14} Latin American, or general introduction; looking for ones adequate to the fifty years of ecumenical research, one is still at a loss. Yes, there is much work to do.

Of course, not all are called to do this very specific theological research task of Faith and Order for the churches. There is one ecumenical movement, and some are called to social advocacy, some


\textsuperscript{14} See, for example, Jeffrey Gros, ‘Building a Common Heritage: Teaching the Reformation in an Ecumenical Perspective,’ \textit{Ecumenical Trends}, May, 2006, 35:5, 11-15.
to ecumenical education, some to common evangelical witness, and some to common witness in service to the community. Few are called to build the agreements from which the unity of the church can emerge. Widely-published Protestant theologians have dropped Faith and Order because mastering Orthodox theology was too much of a stretch. Some Catholics would prefer to talk to Buddhists rather than Pentecostal fellow-Christians. A call to ecumenism does not necessarily mean a vocation to Faith and Order dialogue and research.

It is a complex, specialized, frustrating and exhilarating task, in service to the Church and its Lord. As Reinhold Niebuhr has said, no mission is worth giving one’s life to, if it can be realized in one’s own lifetime. Surely Faith and Order scholars do not expect to see the full, visible unity of Pentecostal, Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic churches in their lifetime; but in reprising the post-Oberlin history, I could not have imagined the changes since my college graduation in 1959, the year of two popes and a Council announcement, in my Church!

If producing texts of international standing is not the gift or calling of the US Commission, how do we speak of Faith and Order US’s role in reception? We have noted its role in reception of the theology of the conciliar movement into the US National Council. There are two other dimensions of ecumenical reception which I see as the calling of the US Commission:

1) The first is the reception of theological work of other dimensions of the one ecumenical movement: church union, bilateral and World Council results; both by evaluating them and communicating them to US Christians; and by providing US voices in these discussions, that might be muted otherwise.

2) The second is the reception and outreach to new voices previously absent from the Christian discussions. Until all Christians are at the table our work is not complete, and until there is one visibly united Church, Christ’s prayer will not reach its full realization.

I see these (1) as a convergent, centripetal dimension of Faith and Order work, and (2) as a centrifugal, outreach dimension.

In this symbolic overview of five decades, I will just note one or another contribution to each of these vocations. A complete retrospective would include more detailed evaluative, historical papers on how the ecumenical movement since Oberlin has transformed each of the US churches; how it has influenced the scholarship on
various themes in various disciplines; and how scholars have reformulated their research. I try to help especially my Methodist, Baptist, Disciples and Catholic students with such an overview; and have written about Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Wesleyan and Pentecostal developments. However, the present generation of scholars and church leaders need to hear and celebrate the texture of this rich and relatively recent history in all its post-modern particularity!

One has only to trace how the convergences of Oberlin and Montreal have shaped the influential scholarship of Raymond E.

---


Brown,\textsuperscript{20} Albert C. Outler\textsuperscript{21} or Jaroslav Pelikan,\textsuperscript{22} for example, to see how the American theological landscape remains in the debt of Faith and Order.

\textit{The Turbulent Sixties}

Of course, it is the Life and Work heritage of US National Council leadership that is most remembered from this period, with the Civil Rights\textsuperscript{23} and Viet Nam War debates being central to the churches struggle together in the Council.

In 1957, the church unity work was relatively new, and marginal for a decade or two, though the careful work on Scripture and Tradition and opening of the ecclesiological question for US Protestantism has had irreversible impact on the US churches who relate to the ecumenical movement.\textsuperscript{24} In the 1970's I introduced a course on Church and Sacrament, for example, at Memphis Theological Seminary. Twenty-five years later on my return, there are full-blown electives on both of these themes – and an amazing array of


\textsuperscript{21} In addition to his magisterial work in the dialogues, being a key initiator of the Methodist Catholic work, much of his work on Wesley, on the quadrilateral and on the catholic roots of Methodism, show an attempt to find in the wider Wesleyan heritage the catholic foundation in the Great Tradition, as articulated in Montreal. Furthermore, his interpretation of Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the Protestant world began to give a new hermeneutical perspective, especially in the United States. See Albert C. Outler, \textit{History as an Ecumenical Resource: The Protestant Discovery of Tradition, 1952-1963}, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973. Bob Parrot, editor, \textit{The Ecumenical Theologian: Essays by Albert Cook Outler}, Bristol House, 2001.


ecumenical theological resources unavailable in 1976.

The churches represented at Oberlin, symbolized by the leadership of Church of God, Anderson’s Gilbert Stafford in the Oberlin II conference, were a much wider range than the US National Council membership. The churches of the Council have generously stewarded the Faith and Order movement in the US for a much larger Christian constituency than its own members.

While convergences on Scripture and Tradition and on the importance of ecclesiological dialogue were the major convergent, centripetal forces to serve the churches; the major outreach, centrifugal force was the engagement of the Catholic Church in the wake of the second Vatican Council.


\textit{The Transitional Seventies}

Many of the discussions that went on in the Commissions of World and US National Council on Scripture and Tradition in the 1950’s and 1960’s, were pursued in the Society for Pentecostal Studies and Wesleyan Theological Society from the US evangelical subculture. These ecumenical, internal debates made the 1980s’ participation of representatives of these theological traditions possible. Within the US commission, outreach in fora around the country contributed to the reception of Faith and Order work. Pioneering ethical contributions on Abortion and Homosexuality remain important resources.\footnote{Faith and Order, NCCUSA, ‘A Call to Responsible Ecumenical Debate on Controversial Issues: Abortion and Homosexuality,’ in Jeffrey Gros and Joseph Burgess, ed., \textit{Building Unity}, New York: Paulist Press, 1989, 451-457.}

The principle outreach was the full incorporation of women into the theological leadership of Faith and Order. This US leadership was a catalyst for international changes in the global movement as the memorial to Letty Russell and the remarks of Dame Mary Tanner...
reminded members of the Oberlin conference.27 A good paper on both the integration of women’s leadership into the work, and the methodological and content changes in Faith and Order style it occasioned, will be an important contribution to preserving the history of Faith and Order.28 This was also a moment for attention to Asian and Latin American/US Hispanic voices as well.

During this period the US Commission produced an important contribution to World Council ecclesiological work on the shape of the unity we seek as a conciliar communion.29

In the US National Council, Faith and Order gave rise first to Christian/Jewish work and then to the Task Force on Christian/Muslim Relations, both of which matured through the 1980s and 1990s to become an independent Commission in the US National Council, capable of its own theology and dialogue possibilities. Having been so successful in generating this work in the Council, Faith and Order will be cautious not to overlap or do the theological work for which a full Commission now exists in the Council, even as staff will be shared by these two Commissions.

The 1970s also mark a moment when the most productive Faith and Order work began to be done in the bilateral and Consolation on Church Union in the US. This success caused inevitable tensions between those churches which preferred the multilateral venue of Faith and Order and those who were able to resolve historical differences only by the particularity of bilateral research. This tension provided the impetus for important studies in the 1980s in the Commission, on reception and the complementarity of multilateral and bilateral methodologies and content.30

---

28 See, for example, Mary Ann Hinsdale, Women Shaping Theology, New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
The Productivity and Outreach of the 1980s

The US Commission was an important servant of the US churches in their contribution to the WCC *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* process and its evaluation and reception in the US community. Study of reception of this text and similar themes in the bilaterals enabled the US churches to see the wholeness of the one ecumenical movement and how convergence in multilateral dialogues served consensus among the churches.  

As many of the presentations at Oberlin II documented so well, the Apostolic Faith study provided an opportunity for both outreach in consultations with the Peace, African American and Pentecostal churches and in publications on the ancient pneumatological, history, and Christological issues still dividing Christians – but with

---


the newer, diverse voices from the US church situation. The 15 US consultations and twenty-four WCC consultations on the historic core of the Christian faith give a lie to anti-ecumenical critiques against conciliar ecumenism.\(^{38}\) The pioneering work on gender and language in the creed was to be a resource for the World Council a decade later when that concern became a pressing global ecumenical issue.\(^{39}\)

Indeed, one can hold up the volume of work of these two commissions and the bilaterals, documented in the three *Growth in Agreement* volumes and, for the US, in the *Building Unity/Growing Consensus* series, in a positive comparison to any witness to the faith published by the theological commissions of the National Association of Evangelicals or the World Evangelical Alliance.

As Donald Dayton\(^{40}\) and others document, this is the decade of filling out the Commission to include the Evangelical, Pentecostal and Holiness voices, present but marginal in earlier decades of Faith and Order.\(^{41}\) The 1970’s had also been a time of separatism among many African American scholars, with significant ecumenical bridges like Gayrud Wilmore.\(^{42}\) The 1980’s enabled several opportunities for staging the African American church voices into World Council discussions. Of course, the leadership women expanded and

---


\(^{39}\) ‘Gender and Language in the Creeds,’ *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 40:3, (August, 1985).

\(^{40}\) ‘The Ecumenical Significance of Oberlin,’ in JES 42, 511 - 526. See also the festschrift that was presented during the Oberlin event: C.T.C. Winn, ed., *From the Margins: A Celebration of the Theological Work of Donald W. Dayton*, Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2007.


deepened.\textsuperscript{43}

The pioneering work on ecclesiology and human sexuality occasioned by the study of the application for membership of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches\textsuperscript{44} remains a resource as the churches continue to face this issue in their own internal quest for unity. This study signaled the early stage of the reception of this question into ecumenical dialogue, and demonstrates some principles of civility, dialogue methodology, and ecclesiology which should be continuing resources for the future, a future which the Anglican Communion demonstrates is already upon us.

\textit{The Harvest of the 1990s}

For many, the number of proposals for full communion before the churches for reflection and action during the 1980s was a surprise, especially in the US. Indeed, the fruits of forty years of bilateral and Faith and Order work were beginning to bear fruit in the lives of the churches themselves.

Reformation issues were also beginning to find resolution, not only within Protestantism but with some of the Reformation churches and the Catholic Church. A \textit{Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification} was signed between Catholics, Lutherans and eventually Methodists. The US Commission has contributed and continues to contribute to widening and deepening this discussion and finding ways of helping its reconciling intent to be integrated into the lives of the US Christian community.\textsuperscript{45}

The full communion agreements challenged Faith and Order to both deepen common understanding of these developments and expand its implications by studies on full communion, authority in the Church, and the authority of the Church in the world.\textsuperscript{46} As Root points out, common structures of decision making, in a post-modern


\textsuperscript{46} <http://www.ncccusa.org/faithandorder/sg2004.html>. 
world, will be continuing challenges even with churches in full communion. The theology behind these agreements has also contributed to the centrifugal moment of reception, by engaging church theologians from traditions who do not have full communion as the goal of their reconciling engagement with other Christians.\footnote{Jeffrey Gros, ‘The Requirements and Challenges of Full Communion: A Multilateral Evaluation?’ \textit{Journal of Ecumenical Studies}, 42:2 (Spring, 2007), 217–242.}

During this period and into the new century Faith and Order US continues to engage in reaching out to the margins to involve an ever-widening circle of Christians in the quest for unity, attending to the contextual theologies emerging in a variety of places within the US and around the world, and taking on new issues that threaten to divide the Church. Work on racism continues.\footnote{Susan Davies, Paul Theresa Hennessee, \textit{Ending Racism in the Church}, Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998. Jeffrey Gros, ‘Eradicating Racism: A Central Agenda for the Faith and Order Movement,’ \textit{The Ecumenical Review}, 47:1, January 1995.}

The willingness of the US Commission to respond to the 1995 invitation to a ‘patient and fraternal dialogue’ on the exercise of the papal ministry by the late John Paul II is a historic and ground-breaking moment in the reception of a new – and very old – issue, into what was once a Protestant and Orthodox movement toward unity.\footnote{<http://www.ncccusa.org/news/petrineresponse.html>}

Theologians from churches that would not yet consider formal responses to this invitation from the Pope have been able to contribute, through Faith and Order, to this discussion. Other discussions of structures of authority and decision-making continue to be a priority, as Root makes clear.\footnote{Michael Root, ‘Faith and Order in a Post-modern World: A Response,’ in JES 42, 560–570.}

As the World Council peruses its drafting of the \textit{Nature and Mission of the Church} text, US Faith and Order has a unique opportunity to provide a platform for voices from the margin to participate, and to help the churches at the center of the ecumenical movement begin to reflect on the implications of this text for their life together.\footnote{Jeffrey Gros, ‘Faith on the Frontier: Apostolicity and the American Born Churches,’ \textit{One in Christ}, April, 2004, 39:2, 28–48. Ted Campbell, Ann Riggs, Gilbert Stafford, eds., \textit{Ancient Faith and American Born Churches}, New York:}
work builds on and feeds into the developments on authority in the Church and the authority of the Church in the world, two studies underway in US Faith and Order.\textsuperscript{52}

So with this somewhat superficial and breathtaking journey through half a century, it is difficult to tell whether we should be most thankful to God for what has been accomplished in this short window of Church history, or intimidated by the vocation of reconciliation laid out before us in the decades to come.

\textit{Conclusion}

Those called to serve the unity of the Church through theological dialogue, research and communication in Faith and Order are a small part of the one ecumenical movement. Theological ecumenists are called to collaborate and support the other dimensions and their contributions to the unity of all Christians. Theologians in the Faith and Order US have their modest, if significant contribution to make. However, a caution is in order in this collaboration on two specific suggestions that arose in the Conference.

The call for the ‘blurring of lines’ between Faith and Order and Life and Work must be realistic and mutual.\textsuperscript{53}

1) The best service Faith and Order can provide to the rest of the US National Council is: a) to help to advise on building an ecumenical constituency from US churches as wide as that in Faith and Order, to supplement NCCCUSA member churches in their common witness; b) to help identify church-dividing issues to which the Life and Work dimensions of the US National Council need to give their theological and dialogical attention; and c) to help Life and Work colleagues design theological consultations that will have the ecumenical breadth and theological depth needed to support the common witness of ecumenical life.

2) Care must be taken not to become a general think-tank for the member churches of the US National Council, or a place where legitimating theology is formulated for public policy decisions already


\textsuperscript{53} For a very important methodological essay on this discussion see John Ford, ‘Oberlin 2007: The Need for an Expanded Methodology?’ \textit{Ecumenical Trends}, 36:8 (September, 2007), 5-7.
made elsewhere in the Council.

Good papers would be helpful documenting the reception of the ecumenical movement and its Faith and Order method, goal and content, in the Life and Work, educational, and social service dimensions of US church life and the US National Council of Churches of Christ.

Papers on the influence of Faith and Order on the churches’ seminaries, educational life, and disciplines/canon laws would also help us to evaluate more accurately the road ahead, the successes of the past, and the concrete blocks to this work of the Spirit in the life of the Christian community together. These studies should disclose some achievements and outline some challenges for the US churches, for other sectors of the global ecumenical movement, and for the collaborative agencies that serve ecumenical life.

This has been an exhilarating and refreshing first fifty years of this US Commission in the long history of Christianity. We can be grateful to God for generations who pioneered this work, and hopeful for those who will be called to this ministry in the decades to come.
A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE: 11 MARCH – 11 APRIL 2008

Dom John Mayhead OSB*

Forty-four Christians, of a wonderful diversity of traditions, had the privilege of being chosen for a study tour of the Holy Land organised and paid for by the British Trust for Tantur – the ecumenical institute for theological studies perched on a hilltop overlooking Bethlehem. It was a trip specifically designed for pastors: clerical, religious and lay, who had never visited the Holy Land before, with the aim of introducing us both to the Holy Sites of Israel and Palestine and to the complexity of the current political and religious situation. We were warned against expecting any easy solutions to the current problems, or indeed any solution at all, and to refrain from making judgements which simply favoured one side over and against another. This has been extremely hard to do.

Two aspects of the trip which I personally found particularly striking were, firstly, the rich engagement which was made possible with other Christians by a focus outside our own immediate concerns and differences, and secondly the plea, heard several times, for a ‘dialogue of common living’, that is, for the establishing of ‘facts on the ground’ rather than, or as well as, the many dialogues which take place at other levels. This accords well with our present hope that ONE IN CHRIST may feature items of a more ‘pastoral’ nature which describe and encourage such ecumenical ventures taking place ‘on the ground’, as well as those of a more academic nature.

We present the following three reflections: from a Catholic, a Congregationalist and an Orthodox Christian, as a witness to the variety of responses which is possible and as an invitation to others for further reflection.

* Dom John Mayhead is Superior of Turvey Monastery and an editor of One in Christ.
Celia Blackden, Executive Officer for Inter-faith Relations, ‘Churches Together in England’, reflects on ‘Seeking Understanding in the Holy Land’. ¹

*Tantur and our group*

Our Study Tour was sponsored by the British Trust for Tantur to give a broad range of Christian clergy and lay leaders a unique experience which they might then share with others. Our group of 44 was described by Revd. Michael McGarry CSP, the Rector of the Ecumenical Institute, as ‘one of the most remarkable groups Tantur has ever hosted. It was not merely the ecumenical breadth that was impressive but the way the group engaged with each other and with the theme of reconciliation’.

*The Holy Sites*

We had been warned in advance not to judge the way ‘the other’ does things, sees things, relates to things or adorns things, because so much was bound to be beyond our own experience, tradition, mode of being or doing.

Regarding the holy places, a question mark arises in one’s mind when one is told that the room of the Last Supper was built in the twelth century, that there are four options on Emmaus, two for the tomb of Jesus, a few sites for Gethsemane and several ‘Shepherds Fields’! But perhaps precision does not matter.... *To be there* is the special experience. There is then an added bonus when one is in a location which is more certain, as in the Synagogue in Capernaum (built directly over the one where Jesus taught) or on the steps going up to Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which, as a person engaged in interfaith relations, I found particularly moving.

Understanding the practices and piety of others was certainly part of our reconciling experience. I felt privileged to have the opportunity as a Roman Catholic to seek to explain to a Salvation Army Officer something about the RC understanding of Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which we witnessed in a secluded part of a very beautiful church complex in Bethlehem. She in turn told me of young Christians’ commitment to pray ‘24/7’. The charity, adaptability and openness of each member of the group to the others and to what we experienced around us was a great blessing.

¹ See <www.churches-together.net> for this and further links.
The Israel/Palestine situation

2008 is the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. For the Israelis it is a national celebration at which world leaders gathered; for the Palestinians the commemoration of the Nakba, the ‘Catastrophe’ which led to the deaths of thousands of Palestinians and where three quarters of a million were driven from their homes and land.

At Yad Vashem, the Jewish Memorial of the Holocaust in which six million Jews were brutally murdered, I understood better the vile and deceitful forms of racism that developed in Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although we say ‘never again’ I believe it is important for each person to recognise in themselves, or others, any trace of racial contempt or disdain and seek every means to eradicate it. Moreover we need to be proactive in identifying ways in which races and cultures can discover the other as gift.

We were given some insight into the political and religious situation in Israel/Palestine by Rabbi David Rosen and what follows are a few extracts from my notes of his most interesting talk:

‘Part of the failure of the political processes in the Holy Land has been the lack of engagement of religious representatives, a lack of engagement with the religious dimension. The negotiations at Oslo, Camp David and so on are secular processes. It is clear that when people see atrocities supposedly done in the name of religion, the politicians seek to ignore religion because it is part of the problem. However this leaves a vacuum for extremism. It is vital to include the moderate majority voice. We must be aware that it is not a religious conflict but a territorial conflict between two liberation nationalist movements.

There is the frustrating and hopeful paradox: the leaders of Israeli and Palestinian politics who want a resolution and who know what they should do; and the tragedy of having a leadership that is too weak to reach the goal. Neither side is strong enough within their own political structures. But surveys in Israel show that 70 per cent support a two state solution for peace. The remaining 30 per cent are not against this but think it is naive. The vast majority of Palestinians too want a peaceful resolution. Most important is the initiative and positive action by third parties outside Israel, overcoming the inertia and immovability of the local situation, for example Lord Carey’s
initiative in the "religious peace process" meeting held in 2000 in Alexandria.'

The good that is being done on the ground
In contrast with news bulletins from Gaza, there is in much of Israel/Palestine a strong sense of 'life goes on': people going to work, tending their farms, getting on with life as best they can. Of course all this is happening within a bizarrely abnormal situation which is one of occupation, checkpoints, soldiers, high security consciousness and real fear of attack on the part of Israelis, while there is real injustice for Palestinians with regard to their freedom of movement, rights and land and so on.

We had a taste of the darker side of this conflict on our visit to Hebron, a place holy to all three religions, where whole areas of the Arab town have been evacuated to allow the settlement of a few Jewish families. Since our return the Sewing Room in the Hebron orphanage that we visited has been destroyed by Israeli soldiers.

But we were also given a profound and uplifting insight into the good that is happening on the ground by people completely dedicated to peace, justice and dialogue. Mitri Raheb is an Arab Palestinian Lutheran clergyman from Bethlehem who refused an invitation to go into politics in order to be truly engaged with his own 'polis', his people in Bethlehem. His preaching, teaching and healing ministry – interfaith dialogue, education for 290 children, a culture and conference centre and a health and wellness centre – all of which are for Christians and Muslims - reveal his philosophy of creating hope and not staying in a mindset of victimhood. His book 'Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble' (Augsburg Fortress: 2004) is an excellent read.

Interreligious dialogue
I was deeply struck by the commitment to dialogue and understanding that we witnessed in those who came to speak to us, and in our highly qualified guides.

Rabbi Rosen and others have worked to develop a Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. Its main purposes are to facilitate and enable communication among religious leaders, a monitoring role, where violence on any side is condemned by all three religions; and to be a voice of support for any political initiative to end conflict and establish two states living peacefully side by side. An
important outcome of this dialogue is the Communique of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land issued in November 2007.²

*The Christian context and Christian ecumenism*

Yusef Daher, Executive Secretary of the new Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, spoke to us about ecumenical efforts. The local churches belong to four church families, Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical and Roman Catholic. We were given a profoundly interesting talk on Orthodoxy by a Lutheran academic, Dr Petra Heldt, which offered a glimpse into a Christian world whose perspectives and depth we in the ‘West’ would do well to reacquire.

A key issue for the churches is preserving a Palestinian Christian presence. Local Christians in Israel/Palestine now form only 2 per cent of the population whereas once they were 20-28 per cent. People are leaving because of the occupation, separation, economic constraints and instability, which give them no hope for the future. The chief engagement of the churches in the Holy Land is in the fields of education, health care and housing. It is these efforts which succeed, to some extent, in keeping the Christians in the Holy Land and also in building bridges with the Muslim majority.

A new development for the church leaders has been their engagement in the Council of Religious Institutions outlined above. It was initiated at a very high level including a visit to Washington and a meeting with Condoleeza Rice. Among the outcomes has been a new educational initiative for peace. In addition they have committed themselves to reflect more together on the final status of Jerusalem, which may in turn offer more light to political leaders.

The involvement of the World Council of Churches, at the request of the local church leaders, has also been significant. It led in 2002 to the establishment of a monitoring programme on the ground (the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel – EAPPI) and a joint mechanism whereby the Council of Churches can respond to events. The presence of these well-trained Christian accompaniers as a protective and international presence in key locations helps calm the level of violence and harassment of Palestinians by settlers or Israeli soldiers.

**Hope for the Future**

The seeds of hope for the future are very evident, not least in the passion and perseverance of the people we met. These included Henry Carse from St George’s College, Jerusalem who has founded ‘Kids 4 Peace’ having witnessed the killing of children in Jerusalem; Robin Twite who works at the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, located in the grounds of Tantur itself; and Sister Carmel, a member of the Roman Catholic Sisters of Sion dedicated to Jewish/Christian relations who has spent over four decades in Jerusalem. I returned home wanting to be, as the Prayer of St. Francis says, an instrument of peace. Peace is the result of unity. When there is unity between ourselves and God there is inner peace. When there is unity among brothers and sisters there is peace in the family. When there is unity among peoples there will be peace in the world.

**Mother Sarah Overton of the Orthodox Convent of St. John of Kronstadt, Bath highlights three themes amongst a multitude of impressions.**

**Holiness**

I was struck by a sense of the holiness of Jerusalem. To me the city spoke powerfully of faith in God. Western agnosticism and atheism do not seem to have a place there. (Israelis who want to live in a city with a less religious atmosphere opt for Tel Aviv.) One striking example of this phenomenon is the huge area on the slopes of the valley between the City and the Mount of Olives which is entirely covered with graves. The hundreds of thousands of people who have chosen to be buried there in anticipation of the general resurrection, Jews, Christians and Muslims, are silent but powerful witnesses to faith in God.

Other, not so silent, witnesses are the flocks of pilgrims who are to be encountered at all the holy places. Russians are coming to the Holy Land in their thousands and among the crowds of pilgrims from all over the world I always heard the familiar sound of Russian hymns – the canon of the Resurrection outside the Holy Sepulchre, the Akathist to the Mother of God in Bethlehem. These days it’s even handy to know a little Russian when buying a candle or asking directions!
Tension
Among the great privileges of the tour were the lectures that we heard from people who are struggling with the political situation in Israel and Palestine on a day to day basis.

I think that our entire group was struck by the history of suffering which has shaped both the Israeli and Palestinian stories. We heard many references to the difficulty of dialogue between two groups both deeply traumatised by their histories. A frequent observation was that an outside mediator was needed to resolve such completely different viewpoints.

Two other problems were recurring themes. The diversity of the Israeli population and parliament makes it extremely difficult for the government to agree on policies and carry them through. There is also an apparently irresolvable tension between a ‘Jewish State’ and a ‘Democratic State’. The population of the state, we were told, will soon have more Arab members than Jewish ones, thus making a true democracy irreconcilable with a single Jewish identity. The high Muslim birth-rate relies on a large number of uneducated women (women with education want to work outside the home and have fewer children). This last point is an example of just one of the many cultural differences between the Jewish and Muslim populations and touches on the delicate issue of racism which I believe is close to the heart of the Arab/Israeli conflict! Assertion leads to counter-assertion, and so the cycle goes on and on.... So as well as the holiness of Jerusalem, one is also immediately struck by a sense of tension, of an uncertain future, and of difficulties which have repercussions for us all.

Strange but Familiar
My third impression was the continuity between the events of the Gospels and our experience in the Church today. As Orthodox Christians we know that in our liturgical experience we live an extension of the events in the Gospels; we participate in the events as they actually happened. I had a strong sense of the truth of this when I visited and prayed in the Holy Places. Although they were totally unfamiliar on one level, at a deeper level they were overwhelmingly like ‘home’. One sensed a spiritual power which one had already encountered elsewhere. Again one was confronted with a paradox: although the particular place is holy, it confirmed the holiness of all
other places where God is encountered. ‘The whole earth is full of Thy glory!’

Richard Cleaves, Minister of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham finds there are more ways than one of looking at a ladder.

One of the things that had always made me hesitant about going to the Holy Land was a clear conviction not only that the ‘holy places’ were of no theological significance but that it was quite wrong for us as Christians to attach importance to them. Such are the tensions between the various church bodies who have responsibility for looking after the church of the Holy Sepulchre that they haven’t even been able to agree about moving a simple wooden ladder perched for many years now above one of the arches of the main south front.

But to enter into Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives and drop down into the Garden of Gethsemane in the company of the Rector of Tantur, Fr. Michael McGarry, as he invited us to re-live the biblical story, had a power I had not anticipated; and by the time I had reached home my views had entirely changed for something happened at Tantur a few days after that visit to Jerusalem that made me see that stepladder in an entirely different light.

At our very first meeting, Fr. Michael McGarry recalled the salutary tale of three scholars who visited the Tantur Institute:

- The first stayed for a week and wrote a book.
- The second stayed for a month and wrote an article.
- The third stayed for three months and wrote nothing at all.

Before the start of our visit we had been presented with a reading list that introduced us to Tantur in Donald Nicholl’s moving journal, The Testing of Hearts: A Pilgrim Journey (DLT, 1989); to the Christian presence in Palestine through Elias Chacour’s Blood Brothers (Kingsway, 1985); and to a reflection on the nature of reconciliation in Miroslav Volf’s Exclusion and Embrace (Abingdon, 1996). Volf is a native Croatian writing out of his experience of the war in former Yugoslavia. He had fascinating insights into the need to see through the eye of ‘the other’.

We enlarge our thinking by letting the voices and perspectives of others, especially those with whom we may be in conflict, resonate within ourselves, by allowing them to help us see
them, as well as ourselves, from their perspective, and if needed readjust our perspective as we take into account their perspectives.

None of us comes to any situation without our own preconceived ideas. If we are to see through the eyes of ‘the other’, Volf suggests that we need to cultivate the art of ‘double vision... [which] presupposes that we can both stand within a given tradition and learn from other traditions’. He is not unrealistic about the possibilities opened up by this way of seeing.

Nothing can guarantee in advance that the perspectives will ultimately merge and agreement be reached. We may find that we must reject the perspective of the other. Yet we should seek to see things from their perspective in the hope that competing justices may become converging justices and eventually issue in agreement.\(^3\)

This was the wonderful thing about our Journey of Reconciliation. The remarkable mix of participants, and of speakers and guides that the Tantur Institute had brought together enabled us to see through very different eyes.

**Through Israeli eyes**
We heard powerful Jewish speakers who spoke of the majority of Jewish people in Israel longing for peace, based on a sharing of land with the Palestinian peoples. They spoke of the significant drop in suicide bombings since the erection of what they described as the security fence. One, Rabbi David Rosen, spoke of a significant breakthrough in 2002 as the religious leaders of the Holy Land came together for the first time. We heard of the way such comings together continue, unreported by the press.

**Through Palestinian eyes**
Having heard it referred to and justified as a ‘security fence’ we heard Muslims and Christian Palestinians speak of it as an ‘apartheid wall’. We saw through other eyes. They told of the way in which their families had been moved from the land they had lived on for generations and placed into refugee camps and are now confined behind a wall that for them is a hostile barrier.

---

\(^3\) Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion*, 213.
A taxi driver spoke movingly of his longing for peace and for a time when his daughters, sitting in the back of the taxi would be able to mix with Israeli friends. The elder daughter told us of the time she had been to a peace camp in Japan and made friends with Israelis. He took us to see Rachel’s Tomb, a beautiful place of pilgrimage inside the municipality of Bethlehem. There it is, he said, fifteen feet away. We couldn’t see it. Ten feet away was the wall.

He showed us how the wall snaked right into the town, encircling on three sides a beautiful Palestinian house that now had the wall only to look out on, giving access to the tomb only from the Israeli side of the wall.

We lost count of the Jewish settlements we saw, deep in the West Bank. We felt uneasy driving along roads forbidden to Palestinians.

Through Christian eyes
And then we shared in Christian worship.

As a nonconformist I appreciated the welcome I had been given to Mass each morning and the Anglican morning prayers we had also shared. I appreciated taking communion with unfermented wine on two occasions in a tradition that is important to me. It was good to stand in the Church of the Pater Noster on the Mount of Olives and light a candle for a member of my own family, and then to have the language of the Rublev Icon that was on the chancel wall explained to me by Fr. Ian, a Greek Orthodox Priest from Oxford. Good again to stand in the Orthodox Church of the Annunciation and hear Fr. Ian explain the layout of an Orthodox church, moving us from the world, through the company of the saints towards the glory of heaven.

We joined the Christian peacemakers in Hebron, and saw the difference Christians can make simply by being present in one of the most volatile trouble spots in the whole of the Holy Land. It was unsettling to be taken to an orphanage under threat. We weren’t sure what to make of it. I looked through the eyes of the Christian peacemakers to discover that one was a retired URC Minister, a good friend and colleague of one of my predecessors in Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham. Was it wrong of me to feel I could look through the eyes of one I could trust?

Through the eyes of geography and history
It was a relief to make our way to Mount Carmel and to re-visit the story of Elijah and the Prophets of Ba’al and the still small voice of
calm (disturbed now by the roar of fighter jets flying overhead) and so on to Nazareth, Galilee and the Lake.

We journeyed now in the company of Henry Carse, an inspirational teacher who based his two-day exploration of Galilee on a wonderfully powerful way of getting us all to engage very closely with the text of the Bible.

Capernaum had only been discovered by archaeologists in the middle of the twentieth century. These excavations disclosed a remarkable town. Far from being the backwater up in the quiet Galilean hills of my imagination, it was a busy place, not far from a border, on the main thoroughfare from the coastal plain through to Caesarea Philippi and Syria. This was a highly strategic place for Jesus to base his ministry. More than that, on the northern shore of the lake, we looked due south across the lake in the sure knowledge that we were looking due south to Jerusalem, only about sixty miles away as the crow flies.

The tradition in John of Jesus going down to Jerusalem via Samaria now made eminent sense. We could see what a deliberate and controversial decision that must have been and how the geography provided a wonderful commentary for the text.

Gathered Together to see through Others’ Eyes
Later we sat in the fourth century synagogue built of limestone imported specially from the mountains, built on the basalt foundations of an earlier first century synagogue. This was the Bet Knesset, the House of Assembly where Jesus had discussed the words of the Scriptures as a 'teacher' and with other teachers, opening up the Scriptures in the Bet Midrashim, the 'house of opening up the Scriptures'.

Looking through my own eyes: Congregational Churches find their roots in the Synagogue
Early on, I shared with the group, why for me this was as moving as it had been to sit on the steps up to the Temple. I spoke of what is most dear to me as the one Congregationalist in the group. I suggested that just as the Orthodox and the Catholics find their roots in the worship of the Temple, and our charismatic friends find their roots in the worship of the cosmopolitan Corinthian church, so we in our Congregational churches and indeed in other free churches that have a focus on preaching, praying and singing, find our roots in the

Seeing through a multiplicity of eyes – Hybridity in God and in the world

I recalled another strand of Miroslav Volf’s book. He had spoken of the ‘hybridity’ of the world of Jesus’ day, both in the Jewish world of the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Gentile world of Rome with its many cultures.

Christians inescapably inhabit two worlds – they are ‘in God’ and ‘in the world’ – the world of the biblical traditions and the world of their own culture. Consequently, Christian ‘tradition’ is never pure, it always represents a merging of streams coming from the Scriptures and from given cultures that a particular Church inhabits.\(^4\)

He suggests the way forward is not to seek ‘a coherent tradition’ but to stand together for justice.

None of us stand nowhere... we all stand within a tradition; most of us stand in more places than one; our traditions are hybrid. A Christian theologian does not want to get rid of hybridity: instead she will affirm basic Christian commitments in culturally situated ways. Hybrid traditions will be more open than coherent traditions not only to be shaped by these commitments but to be enriched by each other.\(^5\)

Seeing that ladder through different eyes

Such a celebration of hybridity is all very well. The picture of that ladder haunts me: yet even that can be seen through different eyes. Dr Petra Heldt, a Lutheran scholar, who has given a lifetime of service to the academic world of Jerusalem, treated us to a fascinating reflection on the Orthodox presence in Jerusalem and the need for us to see through the eyes of the Orthodox too. For her the ladder meant something quite different. It was stuck in the position it had been left in as much as 160 years ago. That was the point when a formal agreement, which has come to be known as ‘the status quo’, was reached regarding the Christian Holy Places in the Holy Land. That agreement prevailed right through the period of the Ottoman Empire. When the British took control of Palestine they thought it unimportant to change ‘the status quo’. Jordan had no interest in

---


\(^5\) Ibid. 211.
changing it in the period it had control. And Israel has had no interest in re-visiting it either. Like it or not, it had become set in stone.

This has meant that the Christian churches of Jerusalem have had no option but to accept the imposition of ‘the status quo’ in the management of the holy places. Nowhere else, Dr Heldt suggested, has the Church been so stuck in a time warp. What is remarkable is not so much the division, but rather the extent to which so many different traditions from the East and the West have succeeded in making their accord work. For so many traditions effectively to share a church building for so long, reaching back through all the Christian centuries is, she suggested, nothing short of a miracle.

What of the fisticuffs from time to time? Her explanation was far removed from the cynicism of the guide and the journalist. Such moments occur at festivals when monks have been fasting, and are inundated with enormous crowds, and very occasionally tempers fray. Minor disturbances are then inflated out of all proportion to their real significance.

Had I only looked at the ladder through the eyes of our guide, or at the fisticuffs through the eyes of the journalists, I would have had a very different way of thinking. How good to have had the opportunity to look at the ladder through the eyes of another.

_The Sound of Sheer Silence_

For most of the time words helped us to see through other people’s eyes. Silence played its part too.

On the day we visited Capernaum and spent time in the Synagogue we also visited the Mount of Beatitudes and the Sea of Galilee. After all the words we had shared we walked in silence down the mount of Beatitudes. The views were magnificent, the cornfields golden, the silence wonderful. After half an hour we sat in the shade of olive trees and Sister Sarah Beatrice read the Beatitudes. I couldn’t help but remember the challenge of Elias Chacour who invited us to think of them, not just as a comfort, but also as a programme for action in the task of justice and peacemaking. The silence was broken by masses of teenagers following the same route. They had their ghetto blasters. At first it seemed an intrusion. But they became part of the walk for all of us as well. They were precisely the ones for whom such peacemaking was so vital.

But silence is not an option.
So complex is the picture, so hard the story, words cannot sum it all up. One unforgettable visit in Jerusalem took us to Yad Vashem, the newly re-built Holocaust Memorial and Museum. Nothing can describe what it was like. On one wall was a quotation from Pastor Niemoller:

They came for the Communists and I did not speak out.
They came for the Socialists and I did not speak out.
They came for the Jews and I did not speak out.
They came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

Silence in the face of the awfulness of what we saw is not possible. I cannot come away from the experiences I have shared and say nothing or do nothing.

On the first morning after my return one thing sticks out in my mind. It is a notice at that checkpoint in the wall separating Jerusalem and Bethlehem that I looked down on in each of my seminars. It simply said: ‘Israeli Citizens are not permitted to go beyond this point.’ Palestinians who live and work in Bethlehem and the West Bank are not permitted to cross in the other direction. Israeli and Palestinian are not permitted to meet. Of all the tiny steps that can be taken towards peace in that Holy Land, enabling people to meet and to get to know each other is a must! Only then can it begin to be possible to see through the eyes of the other. And that is very much the work Tantur is involved in. As we left the Institute a group of Israelis and Palestinians were being brought together to spend a weekend simply in conversation.

I had the feeling that they, like us, would discover something special at Tantur as they too came to see through the eyes of the other and take another step on the long journey of reconciliation towards embrace.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
And security within your towers.
For the sake of my friends
I will say, ‘Peace be with you.’
For the sake of
the house of the Lord our God
I will seek your good. Amen. (Psalm 122)
(DUBLIN: COLUMBA PRESS, 2008), ED. MICHAEL HURLEY SJ.

At the book launch in Belfast in May, the Rt. Revd Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher gave an address, from which we publish the following passages.
The full text may be found at <www.ireland.anglican.org>.

Context
The volume takes an approach which is ambitious. It is at the selfsame time chronological, reflective and analytical. It is important at all times that the reader keep an eye to wider events - social and political - which surround the best efforts of principled people to hold true to the founding expectations of ISE and to seek to be that most unpopular of things in Ireland - intellectual and religious.

The two trinities which from the start have interacted are those, on the one hand, of ecumenism, inter-faith dialogue and dedication to religious, political and cultural reconciliation, and on the other, of faith, intellect and institutional creativity.

Contributions and perspectives of successive directors
The approach taken to chronicling this development is that of giving to each director in turn, Michael Hurley, Robin Boyd, John d'Arcy May, Alan Falconer, Geraldine Smyth, Kenneth Kearon and Linda Hogan the opportunity to speak of their own reign and to offer to a wider audience something of what it was like to be in 'the hot seat' at any given time.

From the early days, the School had the confidence and the vision to make theology flourish where people saw only weeds and thistles of denominational exclusivities and superiority complexes. This was after all the religiously rather immature and institutionally self-satisfied Ireland of the 1970's. The churches generally were rather hard to convince. Mixed Marriages, Inter-faith issues, Human Rights and many more things like them cut through the tangle of these weeds. It is the spirit of living the future in the present which has made the ISE recognized internationally. It is, I regret to say, this same spirit which has left it significantly unacknowledged even to this day by the churches in religious Ireland as we grapple rather reluctantly with post-modernity and whatever will succeed it.

Michael Hurley brings a terrier-like tenacity to his articulation of
the early philosophy of ISE, insistent that its genesis pre-dates Vatican II, not least in making clear that ecumenism is not simply a dimension of church but a discipline of intellectual importance. With brutal factualness he says: 'Mutual ignorance continues to characterize relations in Ireland between North and South, with the additional features of indifference in the South and antipathy in the North.' An essential continuing guiding theme identified early by Michael Hurley is that theology cannot have its own private world called 'religion'. Theology is called to witness, to discourse and to be integrative. The kenotic self-sacrifice of this is manifest in the conviction that 'all the institutions of the ecumenical movement are not only born to die but are born to put themselves to death as soon as the task is completed of reconciling the churches in the unity which is God's will for his people.' To address as its first theological issue for serious study Inter-Church Marriages gave ISE the freedom from the outset to fulfil that adage: 'What you see is what you get.' This puts on the table the practical ecclesiological Irish issue which nobody can avoid even if we would rather sidestep it. One of the other abiding ambitions of this era is the full-frontal recognition that religion and class have an unhealthy alliance in Irish society. ISE sought to address this in working directly with six shop stewards who had links to NI party politics. Such people saw and still see that sectarianism is the common enemy of people who are disadvantaged socially and economically while the conflict is still seen by analysts who ought to know better as existing in the realms of politics and religion. What people kept saying during the Troubles they are still saying as historical retrospect ten years into the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The problem, however, for ISE today is the near-irrelevance of religious affiliation as a socio-economic designation in Ireland today. One of the many statements embedded in the Hurley era which continues to haunt is this: 'Church partition, they knew, must follow political partition and the example of post-World War II Germany seemed to prove the point.' The challenge still stands.

In taking up this vision, Robin Boyd along with Alan Falconer and Gabriel Daly drew out another insight from the earliest days of ISE, namely that it is essential to lay a Biblical and theological foundation for all ecumenical activity.

John d’Arcy May brought with him from Melanesia an important point of reference for the ecumenical agenda and he describes it as
follows: 'the foreignness of mission churches, their unseemly rivalries, their failures to come to grips with their theological differences and the ineffectualness of their social leadership.' Much of this still haunts and impedes the work of mission today. He quotes from his own journal: 'The painful fact remains that Christian faith in one of its heartlands is unable to exercise a decisive influence on the solution of a problem fraught with historical resentments, economic injustices and political complexities.'

Consolidation and structured development fell to Alan Falconer, someone whose assurance with the European aspect of Christianity enabled him to bring something special to bear on Irish Christianity in order to assist it to overcome the pettiness and emotional insularity which John d'Arcy May delineated.

Geraldine Smyth is another 'Northerner' with a tremendous conviction that the academy and the public square must do business together. In this way the church can find and take a place in this debate. 'ISE is itself a testimony to the power of diversity when it is oriented towards reconciliation, justice and an ethics of inclusion.'

The tenure of Kenneth Kearon did not in any sense let go of the radicalism of Geraldine. Ironically the personal academic interest and expertise of one who is now the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion unlocked the next stage.

Linda Hogan has had the distinction of being the last Director *per se*. She has had the job of integrating the School as ISE into the Faculty of Histories and Humanities in Trinity College, Dublin - working currently towards a confederate school linking the ISE and the School of Religions and Theology. Within that labyrinthine context of walking what I might call 'the cobbles of power,' Linda has also carved out four strands of development:

- new local Inter-church Fora
- extension of the 'Women as peace-builders' initiative
- fresh strategy of reconciliation-focused adult-learning
- dissemination of all of this at local level.

All of this is hammered out against the increasingly unexamined ethic of contemporary Irish-style Thatcherism.

My plea is that the School, particularly in its new home, be careful about the seductive call of the pure over against the applied, however unpalatable Irish life and Irish religion may seem in their practical outworkings.
Connecting the work of ISE with future prospects in Ireland

In my own opinion all is still to play for with ISE. A society increasingly post-Christian in its idiom proffers opportunities as well as providing challenges:

1) Policy-makers in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland working in partnership within the terms of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement need to understand that the phenomenon of religion is not going away even if it were better to suit their agenda if it did. There simply is no value-free Utopia.

2) Policy-makers likewise need to understand, as must church-people of all hues, that there is a tremendous potential for coherence in the religious pluralism which is today's Ireland. Religion properly understood and lived still has much to contribute to Ireland for tomorrow.

3) There is an urgent need to re-configure theological engagement with people of World Faiths other than one's own.

My own prediction is that the three-fold clusters of exploration with which ISE began its life are as vital and necessary today as ever they were. A secularism which has a genius to be highly selective will bite deeper in Northern Ireland now that the heat of violence has largely cooled and it will also do so in the Republic of Ireland as a cynical attitude to institutionalized religion strengthens. The challenge, again, is to stem the tide and address the imbalance whereby inequality of wealth and opportunity continue to erode the expectation of an actively shared society. And, by the way, what has happened to that particular Governmental rhetoric of 'a shared future'?

In his Foreword, David Ford argues that christians need continually to think through 'the ways in which God is the ultimate interconnector. Now that religion is returning to the public sphere it cannot have a private theology that is not exposed to the rigours of intellectual standards across other disciplines.' For Ford this issues the challenge to seek and find wisdom rather than settling for knowledge, skills and know-how and to locate it in areas of values, ethics, leadership and professional formation. Ford, of course, speaks with the combined experience and assurance of establishing with considerable success the Cambridge Inter Faith Programme.
Suggestions and challenges in the years ahead

I offer a few suggestions of my own:

1) Globalization: It is a reality with which we live and which, through the range of subject areas and the composition of the student body from many countries, ISE has modelled to good effect. But globalization has brought us in a very real sense away from the wisdom to which Professor Ford aspires, and even from the information of which he speaks, to an ‘infotainment’ of which he does not speak. Virtual information carries no moral framework either on the part of those who ‘put it up’ or on the part of those who subsequently download it. The renewed linkage between ethics and information is vital today.

2) Professionalization: In society generally I see many elements of a new Gnosticism, an esoteric information-based elite with skills which far outweigh life experience or community awareness. One of the realities about life in Ireland at its best and most real in terms of community life is if you organize the meeting you also probably find yourself buying the biscuits, boiling the kettle and doing the washing-up! I am not talking about amateurism for amateurism’s sake but I do hope that those with critical experience at the 'cutting edge of difference' - so-called ordinary people - in the core areas of ISE study will not be excluded in years to come from accessing the riches of what ISE is and has to offer. The fact that potential candidates do not have readily processable access qualifications ought not to blind us to the reality that the new alma mater’s own international standing and reputation is in no way diminished but rather enhanced by their membership. A gift shared, after all, is not a gift halved but a gift doubled.

3) The Inter-faith reality: This has almost become as predictable a cliche as was the phrase, ‘the peace process’. In my own opinion, a divided Christian witness, luxuriating in the minutiae of denominational identity which excludes rather than embraces, will only become more and more a specialism for those who are already convinced or for those who seek tidy, truncated certainty.

4) Ecumenism: It has not yet arrived in any lasting sense in Ireland and yet, in another sense, it is already everywhere. Had it not been for the probing and prompting of ISE, I wonder where we might be. The largely 'hands-off' approach of the churches, each able to justify if not to substantiate its sense of distance in the early days, has left them in
a strange position. So many lay people and clergy have been
tremendous beneficiaries of ISE and its courses and programmes.
Many people across the churches have had an opportunity to grow in
certainty and in expertise through what ISE has given them in terms
of education, debate and development. ISE is now in a sense an eco-
system within these islands and within the wider oikumene.
But ecumenism is, like ecclesiology, provisional. It is circumscribed by
eschatology. As the ISE was honest and theological enough to admit
from its inception: *Flourishing to perish* also requires *Perishing to
flourish*. It is the calling of churches as we know them, love them,
belong to them, neglect them, to cease to exist as we know them -
within the oneness of Christ.

*Who is my neighbour?*

The urgency of the Gospel has now in Ireland pushed us beyond the
limitations of denominational Christianity. The onus is on us to show
that such denominationalism has hidden and tangible strengths - and
I have no doubt that it has. Rowan Williams, discerning and building
afresh from the traditions of the Christian East and West in a slim
volume entitled *Silence and Honey Cakes* (2003), offers a reflection on
St Anthony's saying: 'Our life and our death is with our neighbour. If
we win our brother, we win God. If we cause our brother to stumble,
we have sinned against Christ.' His reflection is as follows:

If we ask how this literature contributes to any kind of contemporary
understanding of Christian life together, the answer must lie in two of
the words at the heart of that saying of St Anthony with which we
started – ‘life’ and ‘win’. To find my own life is a task I cannot
undertake without the neighbour; life itself is what I find in solidarity,
and not only in a sense of togetherness (talking about solidarity can
easily turn into no more than this) but in that willingness to put ‘on
hold’ the perspective I want to own and cling to and possess, so that
the announcing of the gospel may happen through my presence and
my words. And ‘winning’ is a word not about succeeding so that other
people lose, but about succeeding in connecting others with life-giving
reality. Together, these words challenge us to think about common life
in some fairly radical ways.

To myself and to you, I can only say: *Go and do likewise*... as I conclude
some reflections and wish this volume, its contributors and the ISE
God’s blessing in the future.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Paul D. Murray*

In collaboration with ecclesiologists, ecumenists, senior ecclesiastics, social scientists and local practitioners from across the Christian traditions and from academic and ecclesial contexts stretching from Australia, North America, and Europe, the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University – and its recently established Centre for Catholic Studies in particular – has been hosting a series of research projects devoted to developing and modelling a fresh new strategy in Christian ecumenism, referred to as Receptive Ecumenism, which has already been attracting considerable attention.¹

The central aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to take seriously both the reality of the contemporary ecumenical moment – wherein the hope for structural unification in the short-medium term is, in general, now widely recognised as being unrealistic – and the abiding need for the Christian churches precisely in this situation to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity. The aim is to seek after an appropriate ecumenical ethic and strategy for living between the times; for living now orientated upon the promise of and calling to being made one in the Trinitarian life of God.

In service of this aim, Receptive Ecumenism represents a remarkably simple but far reaching strategy which seeks to draw out a value that

---

* Paul Murray, a married lay Roman Catholic, is Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology at Durham University where he is also Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies and of the Receptive Ecumenism projects discussed here. He serves on the British Methodist-Roman Catholic Committee. His first monograph was Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004). In June 2006 he was elected to the Editorial Board of Concilium: International Review for Theology.

¹ See Avery Cardinal Dulles SJ, ‘Saving Ecumenism from Itself’, First Things, (December 2007); Ladislas Orsy SJ, ‘A Time to Ponder: A Reflection on the Spiritual Mystery of the Ecumenical Movement’, America, 196 (5 February 2007), 14-19 (pp. 18-19). In addition, a forthcoming number of Louvain Studies is to be given over to the theme.
has been at work, to some degree at least, in all good ecumenical encounter and to place it centre-stage as the appropriate organising principle for contemporary ecumenism. This is the principle that considerable further progress is indeed possible but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritising the question, ‘What do our various others first need to learn from us?’ to asking instead, ‘What is that we need to learn and can learn, or receive, with integrity from our others?’

The firm conviction is that if all were acting on this principle, even relatively independently of each other, then change would happen on many fronts, albeit somewhat unpredictably. With this, the conviction also is that for all the tremendous gains in increased mutual understanding deriving from the more common bilateral strategies of problem solving and theological mediation, such strategies alone are incapable of delivering the self-critical openness to conversion, growth and development upon which all real ecumenical progress depends.

The desire is to see ecumenism move forward into action and not simply the action of shared mission, or of problem-solving and incremental agreement but the long-term action of a programme of individual, communal and structural conversion driven, like the Gospel that inspires it, by the promise of conversion into greater life and flourishing. The aim is for each of the Christian traditions, singly and jointly, to become more, not less, than they currently are by recognising their own respective sticking points and correlatively learning from and receiving of each other’s particular gifts. The resonance between Receptive Ecumenism and the call for a Spiritual Ecumenism expressed by Cardinal Walter Kasper and Archbishop Rowan Williams will be clear, as will also that Receptive Ecumenism seeks to extend this more explicitly beyond the level of individual growth to the communal, structural, and ecclesial levels.²

The first project in Receptive Ecumenism focussed on an international research colloquium jointly hosted by the Department of Theology and Religion and Ushaw College (the RC seminary for the North of England) in January 2006 to mark the conferral by the

University of an honorary doctorate on Cardinal Walter Kasper. An international team was invited to explore, test and develop the basic thinking at work in *Receptive Ecumenism* and, reflecting both the self-critical principle at the heart of the strategy and the specificity of the host tradition, to apply this thinking to exploring how Roman Catholicism might, with integrity, be fruitfully re-imagined in the light of its ecumenical others. Further, reflecting the concern not just to theorise about the church but to diagnose and address problems in its actual lived structures, systems and practices, alongside the predictable mix of theologians, ecumenists, and ecclesiastics, the colloquium also drew together a critical complement of social scientists, organisational experts and local church practitioners. The revised papers and additional commissioned essays, thirty-two in total, are to be published in August of this year as a major volume by Oxford University Press under the title *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*. Launches are to take place at Ushaw College on Wednesday 10 September during the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain and on Thursday 23 October at the Centro Pro Unione, Rome during the Synod of Bishops. It is possible that there may also be a London-based launch.

Whilst the January 2006 project delivered the fundamental thinking and basic strategy of *Receptive Ecumenism* and tested this out in relation to Roman Catholicism, it also highlighted the need for a subsequent, much more practically focussed, and fully mutually receptive project that would examine the relevance, viability and on-the-ground implications of *Receptive Ecumenism* at the level of local church life – with ‘local church’ understood here as embracing both the regional level of diocese, district or synod and the more immediate level of parish or congregation, together with the intermediate level of deanery or circuit. The idea was accordingly born of a subsequent three-year (October 2007-October 2010) comparative research project involving as many of the churches of the North East of England as possible, in partnership with staff of Durham University’s Department of Theology and Religion (both theologians and sociologists/anthropologists of religion), Durham Business School

---

(organisational, human resource and financial experts), St. John’s College (practical theologians), the North of England Institute for Christian Education (NEICE) and the various regional ecumenical officers and other local church practitioners. The purpose would be to examine how respective specific difficulties in the organisational and ecclesial cultures of each of the participant church traditions might fruitfully be addressed by learning from, or receiving of, examples of ‘best practice’ in the other traditions. That is, continuing with the emphasis placed in the first project on the actual lived structures, systems and practices of the churches, the intention would be to use the practical and the organisational as portals into the theological rather than the other way around.

More specifically, it was envisaged that this Regional Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church, as it came to be called, would unfold along three key trajectories of research, each with its own research team working in a coordinated yet relatively distinct fashion under the leadership of a recognised expert in the field. These trajectories and related research teams have become referred to as: Governance and Finance, Leadership and Ministry, and Learning and Formation. Where the first asks directly after the organisational cultures and systems of authority, accountability, strategic planning and finance operative in each tradition, the second asks after how these are administered, enabled, disabled and shaped by their cultures and practices of leadership. In turn, the third asks how the respective cultures and identities of the churches are nurtured, transmitted and shaped through the habits, practices, structures and strategies operative at various levels. Following an initial mapping, on the basis of documentation and semi-formal conversations, of what is, at least in theory, currently happening in each of the participant traditions against these trajectories (phase 1), the second phase of the project will, as from September of this year, pursue a series of much closer, case-study explorations as to how all of this works out in practice and where the respective points of ability, dysfunction and, therefore, potential receptive learning lie.

The proposal rapidly won the firm support and full participation of: the Diocese of Durham, the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, the Diocese of Newcastle, the Northern Baptist Association, the Northern Division of the Salvation Army, and the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church. Reflecting this, North East Christian Churches
Together (NECCT) hosted the public launch of the project in November 2007. This range and level of church partnership and access, combined with the range and level of expertise involved (three teams of between eight and ten members, each including a mix of theologians, sociologists/anthropologists of religion, organisational, human resource and financial experts, ecumenical officers and local church personnel) make for a project with great potential.

In terms of projected outcomes, academically it is anticipated that the project will contribute fresh knowledge and understanding in the fields of practical ecclesiology, ecumenism, and organisational studies more generally (through conference papers, published essays and at least one major volume deriving from the project). Ecclesially, and perhaps more importantly, it is hoped that the project will identify a range of well thought-through and tested specific practical proposals for real receptive learning within the participant traditions (through a report) and, thereby, model a particular, creative way of living the contemporary ecumenical challenge that can be offered to the wider church (through popular level articles, public talks and church conferences, and a proposed practical handbook for *Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*).

Complementing both the January 2006 project and the current *Regional Project*, planning is well underway in relation to a second international conference in January 2009 at Ushaw College and going under the title, *Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to Be Church Together*. The three key aims of the conference are: 1) to disseminate further the work achieved in the first Receptive Ecumenism project and to discuss, challenge and develop the published fruits of this; 2) to invite a broad range of ecclesial traditions to engage in the exercise of self-critical receptive ecclesial learning from their ‘others’; and 3) to link with the current project by examining in particular the implications of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of the local church. As with the January 2006 colloquium, the intention is to attract a creative mix of ecclesiologists, ecumenists, ecclesiastics, social scientists, and local church practitioners. Should you wish to apply for consideration to participate in this event, please make contact with Marcus Pound within the *Centre for Catholic Studies* on m.j.p.pound@durham.ac.uk. For further information generally on the Receptive Ecumenism projects, visit <www.centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk>
‘THROUGH DIVINE LOVE: THE CHURCH IN EACH PLACE AND ALL PLACES’

We are grateful to Jeffrey Gros FSC for selecting these extracts from the sixth round in the United Methodist Roman Catholic dialogue (2005) taking place in the United States.

They include some of the background argument, but are presented without the notes, glossary, appendices, comparative Methodist and Catholic emphases, or some of the theological bases, in order to encourage exploration of the full text at: <http://www.usccb.org/seia/finalUMC-RC5-13masterintro.pdf>.

In addition, we would refer readers to the work of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, listed at <http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/m-rc/e_mr-c-info.html>.

United Methodists and Roman Catholics have been in conversation for forty years... These dialogues and the relationships of our parishes and congregations across the world have been very fruitful for Christ’s mission in the world and for deepening the communion we share...

We are happy to present to our communities and their leaders this sixth round of our United States dialogue in hopes that the readers will continue to learn as we have about the faith we share as two churches in this country...We share a vision of visible unity in our common pilgrimage outlined in the early days of our work together with other churches in the twentieth century ecumenical movement:

We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people. It is for such a unity that we believe we must pray and work. (World Council of Churches Assembly, New Delhi, 1961)

...The scholars have sought to deepen our understanding of the
Church as it is called to unity in each place and every place... We hope [this text] will be used widely in local theological dialogue groups... It helps us to learn from one another, appreciate one another’s convictions and celebrate the deep unity that binds us together in mission and faith...

Bishop Walter Klaiber, United Methodist Cochair
Bishop Fredrick Campbell, Roman Catholic Cochair

1 Through divine love manifest in Jesus Christ, in each place and all places that Christians gather for worship and service Roman Catholics and United Methodists rejoice in and seek to deepen the communion they already share. Both churches practice Baptism and Eucharist in Christ, preach the Gospel handed down by the apostles, and provide religious education for their people. They both bring the Gospel to the unchurched. They both seek to serve the needs of the poor and marginalized in their neighborhoods and globally...

7... An ecclesiology of communion provides a lens through which we pursue our common and divergent understandings of the nature of the church local and global. This shared vision of the church as a partnership of divine love also calls us to learn from one another, identify issues in need of attention in our own traditions, and seek to identify movement forward toward greater agreement as a result of our dialogue...

10 In this dialogue we address... four pressing tasks. First, we recognize the unity that we now share. Second, we acknowledge the need for ongoing renewal and reform... Third, we seek greater unity in order to be faithful to the will of Christ and the needs of the world today. Fourth, we identify the call to continue the dialogue... These tasks inform all of our discussion...

17 A comparison of our structures revealed a surprising amount of overlap. Our consideration of the theological dimensions of these similarities led us to focus on the significance of the implications of our already existing interconnectedness as expressed in a common Baptism and in a common mission. This led to a discussion of... the church considered as a community of the baptized, as a Eucharistic community, and as a community in mission...

30 This larger vision of the church takes shape through three dimensions: 1) the affirmation that Christian life is grace-filled or has a sacramental quality; 2) that the church itself can be described as a
communion between God and humankind and among the members of the church; and 3) that the church can be described as a communion of communions...

31 The concept of a grace-filled life emerged as a central idea in Catholic and United Methodist ecclesiology...

36 Both Catholics and United Methodists affirm that God’s grace can be communicated through the gathered community of the faithful, encountering the face of Christ among the poor, the reading and proclamation of the Word, and in the celebration of the sacraments through material means, such as bread, wine, and water...

54 Although communion and connection point toward a shared vision, these images also reveal some differences in theological understanding of the relationship between the local and universal church. The distinctive nuances of these images reflect the unique history of each church. Catholicism understands itself to be universal in time and space as a church in which the one true church subsists. United Methodism sees itself as a part of the one true church of Jesus Christ...

58 United Methodists and Catholics understand the church as a communion of communions...

59 Catholics and United Methodists recognize in the New Testament a variety of churches in full visible communion with one another...

70 Even before United Methodists and Catholics have resolved questions of the sacramental nature of the bishops and presbyters, the balance of lay and clerical participation in leadership, and the roles of women in ministry, we dialogue participants see a wide range of shared understanding and practice of the church...

78 Catholics and United Methodists agree that the local church does not exist apart from the universal church. Communion implies that congregations, dioceses/Annual Conferences, and wider areas of responsibility are interdependent...

79 Both United Methodists and Catholics use the term ‘universal/catholic’ to mean that the church is ‘spread throughout the whole’ world in space and time, and embraces the fullness of the apostolic faith. This is what we confess when we say the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic church’ in the creed. ‘Global’ and ‘universal’ are not interchangeable, and have distinct meanings in our different traditions...

94 Catholics and United Methodists found there to be many
significant differences in their structures of authority, in their patterns of how authority is exercised, and in how their patterns and structures are related to Scripture, tradition, and the will of Christ. In the midst of these differences, however, we found also some...complementarity...

104 Both churches operate with a significant number of central structures that have real authority and responsibility. Both churches approach authoritative structures in ways that are different from 'town-hall democracy.' Neither church accepts that a broad-scale 'democratization' of church structures carried out uncritically would represent a sign of growth.

105 Two principles we used in our approach to church structures are participation and subsidiarity...

108 What ties all of these themes together is an understanding of the church's authority that realizes we ourselves are not our own Lord and that listens for the voice of the Holy Spirit in a variety of locations...

109 Communion ecclesiology provides a means for examining various implications of our shared yet distinctive sacramental-ecclesial vision... Whereas the proclamation of the Word is not a divisive issue between us, our respective understandings of Baptism, Eucharist, and mission command our attention. In order to address these differences, we seek to reclaim our shared heritage...

114 As we discussed our respective understandings of the 'local' and 'global' church, we came to realize that we were faced with questions about Baptism. Into what is one baptized? For both United Methodists and Catholics it is clear that one is baptized into 'the church.' But what is this 'church' into which one is baptized? The United Methodist-Catholic differences in understanding the church universal... are reflected in different understandings of the relationship between Baptism and Christian communion...

122 However, the similarities concerning Baptism are also critically important. For both United Methodists and Catholics, Baptism is a means of sanctifying grace... A United Methodist who becomes a Catholic does not need to be re-baptized, nor does a Catholic who becomes a United Methodist...

124 Reflecting on the church leads also to insights concerning some important similarities and differences in... our respective Eucharistic traditions...

144 Although Catholics and United Methodists differ over issues of the relationship between membership in the church and sharing at the
table, they agree on many other points of Eucharistic practice and theology. Some theological differences between United Methodists and Roman Catholics exist in the understanding of the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist; both churches, however, affirm Christ’s real presence...

146 United Methodists have been developing a Eucharistic practice and a more clearly articulated sacramental theology. This development parallels the point made elsewhere that United Methodists acknowledge a need to grow in an appreciation of the sacramental dimensions of their own structures and practices, which are not simply functional. Connectionalism and itinerancy, for example, have ecclesiological and sacramental meanings that go beyond their practical utility.

147 The liturgical renewal has drawn Catholics to a richer understanding of the universal dimension of the church in its celebration of the Eucharist and in the bonds of communion with other Christians...

149 In this dialogue, United Methodists invited Catholics to understand Methodist practices of communion as continuing the faith of the church in Christ’s real presence and in the celebration understood as the memorial of Christ’s once and for all sacrifice. They invited Catholics to recognize the centrality of unity in mission for United Methodist practice as well as an openness to communion and continuity in ordained ministry as integral to communion at the Table.

150 Catholics were invited to appreciate the missionary imperative that moved Wesley to establish an ordained ministry separate from the Anglican episcopacy, and to enable the spread of the Gospel where Eucharistic ministers were not available. They further invited Catholics to recognize that the practice of open communion and open table are grounded in theological convictions, and are not merely pragmatic and cultural accommodations.

151 Catholics invited United Methodists to understand the connection between Catholic views of the church as communion and Eucharist as central symbol of and means through which this communion is realized. For Catholics Eucharistic communion symbolizes ecclesial communion in space and time, with God, with one another, and with the worldwide community,

152 Catholics invited United Methodists to understand Catholic
Eucharistic practices as grounded in an understanding of the church as a universal communion symbolized by global solidarity and the apostolic succession of bishops and not as a practice of exclusion. Catholics invited United Methodists to see how the Eucharistic prayer confessed by those who receive communion in the Catholic Church entails commitments of faith not shared by all United Methodists.

153 These issues in the above paragraphs remain important and unresolved questions...

154 Reflecting deeply on the significance of the communion United Methodists and Catholics share in Baptism and in mission lends urgency to resolving the remaining issues...

155 Though our emphases may differ, both of our traditions agree that the Eucharist... sends forth the people of God in mission to the world...

156 Considering the church in each place and all places through the lens of communion ecclesiology leads to some insights concerning the topic of mission...

170 An issue impacting both churches is the increasing ambiguity of the political and economic process of globalization...

171 To be the church in and for the world requires us to attend to challenges presented by the contemporary context. These challenges may take different shape in each local community... The stakes are high, for the survival and transformation of the world are at stake...

172 Taking seriously a vision of the church as koinonia has led us to identify these four pressing and ongoing tasks. First... affirm and celebrate the unity that now exists. Second... each tradition is called to ongoing reform and renewal. Third... increase our endeavors of common mission... Fourth... to ongoing dialogue...

175 Our clergy... [and] our leadership often collaborate... United Methodists and Catholics together can lead and enhance this expression of our common Baptism and common sense of connectedness...

176 Given this agreement, we recommend that our churches demonstrate this existing communion by:

- Celebrations of shared Baptismal renewal and mutual recognition of Baptism on a regular basis;
- Shared programs of education and spiritual renewal...;
- Lifting up in prayer our concern for one another...;
- Building opportunities for dialogue on every level...;
Inviting one another to participate in local structures of participation and governance;

Creating covenants, coordinating committees and other instruments of joint common mission, ecumenical renewal and spiritual dialogue in local congregations;

Developing ecumenical support groups for ecclesial lay leaders, clergy, and bishops to serve the reform, renewal, and unity of United Methodist and Catholic leaders;

Working together for shared evangelization, as well as for works of mercy and justice;

Exploring together such stark differences in our attitudes such issues as papal ministry, lay participation in governance, and sacramental and missional emphases of our bishops in their service to the unity of the church.

The urgency of the call to a common mission to face the challenges of our contemporary world impels us to continue to attend to that which separates us... How might the vision of communion lead to a renewed theology of ministry that takes seriously the mission of all the baptized? How might a vision of communion challenge us to a greater appreciation and practice of inclusivity while remaining deeply grounded in our Christian identity?

United Methodists are challenged to see more deeply the sacramental implications of their structures. United Methodists are also challenged to reaffirm the connection between sacraments and mission as means of grace and dimensions of personal and social holiness. Roman Catholics need to grow more fully in the direction of subsidiarity and participation... In the full communion we seek, we dare not lose any of the gifts with which the Holy Spirit has endowed our communities in their separation.

Given our learnings about our similar structures, our churches might be challenged in the following ways.

The United Methodist Church should consider its own renewal and repentance by:

- Learning from Roman Catholics about the firm connection between sacraments and mission as means of grace and as dimensions of personal and social holiness;
- Being inspired by the sensitivity of Roman Catholics for the presence of God in worship and in the sacramental action of the church;
• Calling United Methodists to take seriously the results of Methodist dialogues, including those with Catholics, through lay and ministerial education;
• Learning from Roman Catholics that the desire to preserve unity entails holy trust in those who have been charged to guide the church;
• Educating people about the present teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and thereby stripping away old prejudices and breaking down deep rooted caricatures. For example, challenging United Methodists’ misunderstandings of Catholic theology and practice of the Eucharist;
• Appreciating the spiritual formation that informs the devotional practice of Catholic life.

180 The Catholic Church should consider its own renewal and repentance by:
• Learning from the participatory character of the United Methodist governance and ministry structures, including the collaboration of women and men, lay and clergy;
• Benefiting from United Methodists’ experience by inviting them to Catholic universal, national, diocesan and parish synods, conferences, and councils as observers to these assemblies;
• Enhancing the influence of documents intended for the universal church by consultation with ecumenical partners, including United Methodists, and with bishops around the world who are engaged in ecumenical dialogue;
• Dispelling Catholics’ caricatures of United Methodist doctrine and practice. For example, Catholics are often unfamiliar with Methodist Eucharistic piety and their tradition of belief in Christ’s real presence in Holy Communion. In sacramental life, Catholics should apply their guidelines on sacramental sharing on the basis of our dialogues and current United Methodist sacramental teaching;
• Assuring that Catholics seminaries, lay ecclesial ministry and deacon training programs, and catechetical materials consider the results of Catholic dialogues, including those with United Methodists, so they become, as Pope John Paul II says, ‘a common heritage’;
Developing disciplines for putting faith into practice and developing holiness of heart and life, inspired by the life and works of John Wesley. Both should see that their seminaries collaborate and seek genuine ways to teach alongside one another.

The possibilities of common witness in Christian mission are manifold...

Given the imperative for common mission of all, in each place, we encourage initiatives presently underway and new opportunities for deepening common witness by:

- Supporting common mission study and outreach programs...
- Collaborating together in outreach...
- Working together in the renewal of worship...
- Addressing together global challenges, through joint public witness and congregational collaboration in transformative action;
- Providing regional leadership, together... in common witness...

Our exploration... has led us to some learning... about the issues we must resolve as we follow Christ’s pilgrimage toward full communion... The issues that we identified include:

- The meaning of sacramentality and its relationship to the mediating role of the church;
- The shape of the unity we seek, those areas of agreement in faith and structure that are necessary for full communion;
- The understanding of ordained ministry, its transmission and meaning for the universal visible communion of the church, and the roles of women, men, and youth in the church’s ministry;
- The structures of authority, collegial and personal, and how they serve the unity of faith, sacramental life, and witness;
- New ways of being church, beyond old patterns of Catholic and United Methodist behaviors of today;
- The means of preserving communion, establishing limits of communion, and enforcing the discipline of the church while maintaining unity in diversity; and
- The mutual understanding of our common heritage of Christian history of the first millennium...
CONCLUSION

In this dialogue, as we reflected together on our understanding of ourselves in communion through divine love manifest in Jesus Christ, we came to new insights about our own traditions and each other’s tradition. We think that the United Methodists in our dialogue can now grasp with some sympathy why certain structures are sacred to Roman Catholics in a way that they did not grasp before. We think that the Catholics in our dialogue can now grasp with some sympathy why United Methodists have historically preferred practical solutions to ecclesiological debate. Each of us can see with some sympathy historical reasons behind our contemporary differences.

We have chosen to dwell upon the unity that we already share. We believe that recent developments in theology and practice in both of our traditions justify this choice. We have for centuries accepted each other other’s Baptism. We have for centuries shared greatly overlapping missions. We are growing in our appreciation of each other as Eucharistic communities with similar structures facing common challenges. For this we celebrate and give glory to our triune God.

United Methodists and Catholics are united in the conviction that we live by the grace of God and are called to be the Church. At the same time, how we live as church expresses the dynamic character of our mission to share this grace with others in the world. That is our common responsibility. We long for a greater unity in order that we might enjoy more fully the fruits of our communion in Christ and that we might be better instruments of God’s work in the world. Christian unity is both a gift and a task. As a gift given by God, it has already a certain wholeness. As a task given to us, there remains much to be done in each place and in all places.

One of the most remarkable features of ecumenical dialogue across the Twentieth Century has been the increasing use and growing centrality of the notion of koinonia. Yet, this apparent convergence in terminology has not to date been translated into visible unity. Frequent – even shared – use does not automatically translate into systemic change within the Churches. The persistence with which the term is used seems to point to its latent potential not only for describing the inner reality of Church but also for mapping a way (perhaps THE way) towards realization of unity. It is, therefore, refreshing to encounter a book that takes seriously the complexity of the notion koinonia – but also celebrates that complexity and attempts to draw out the inner dynamism of the word. This work aspires to and hints at the visionary, but the practical implementation of its conclusions remains frustratingly elusive.

The book begins with its briefest chapter, exploring how the term is used in the Bible and how those biblical meanings have fed into the ecumenical endeavour. The most useful sections of it are undoubtedly Chapters Two and Three, which map the changing contours of the use of the concept koinonia, with particular regard to the Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. In these chapters Fuchs works with skill and authority, analyzing the use of the term in several contexts and dialogues, and identifying the particular contribution made by a number of key theologians. The chapters are very long, but their internal structure is clear and well indicated by the comprehensive contents section. These chapters, together with the impressively full Bibliography and Appendices, constitute this book as a very useful point of reference – indeed, as virtually an analytical index to the career of the term across the Ecumenical Movement. The book is worth buying for this alone.

With Chapter Four, Fuchs moves towards her own synthesis and the unpacking of the curious phrase ‘Symbolic Competence for Communionality’ found in the book’s subtitle. Of considerable
importance - indeed, fundamental to her argument - is the notion that the lived experience of koinonia is at one and the same time both the goal of the ecumenical endeavour and the process through which that goal will be achieved. This approach has two main advantages. First, it recognizes that the same duality is to be found in the Church – its institutional nature is unavoidable, yet it is also an event; thus the core complexity that she finds in the concept of koinonia mirrors the complex inner reality of the Church. Secondly, Fuchs’ approach honours the role of the lived experience of ordinary Christians in the ecumenical process; it places centre-stage not only the various documents that have emerged from the dialogues, but also ‘the people who wrote them.’ (p. 414) Thus, the way forward is ‘forged as much by relational encounter as by doctrinal agreement.’ (p. 413) In the hands of many other writers this engagement with the human person might risk reducing the entire ecumenical process to a warm subjective glow. Not so Fuchs: she never loses sight of the complexity of her core concept of koinonia, and proposes a conceptual framework that understands the ecumenical process as requiring the engagement of both heart and head, uniting the affective and cognitive, the doxological and the dogmatic, into affective knowledge and doxological dogma.

This is well-researched, creative and – perhaps above all – honest work. Unfortunately, the full potential of the arguments laid out in Fuchs’ final chapter is obscured and undermined by her idiosyncratic use of the English language. Such use is not restricted to Chapter Four, though the historic sections are generally written in a clearer style. Her repeated misuse across the entire length of the book of the term ‘double entendre’ in discussing the complex and multi-layered nature of the term koinonia is singularly inappropriate. Even the neutral English expression - double meaning - would not do anything like justice to the dynamism that Fuchs has identified within the concept. However, the use of ‘double entendre’ in this context is infelicitous in the extreme, given that the normal UK English acceptation of the term relates quite specifically to sexual double meanings, often quite crude in nature. Such infelicity is further compounded by a tendency to favour (indeed, to generate) neologisms that actually obscure the meaning of the text. One sentence sums up the problem: ‘With the will “to ecume” comes the capacity to ecumenate.’ This is unnecessary shorthand – illustrated
not least by the fact that Fuchs has to provide distinct definitions of the terms.

Perhaps the neologistic tendencies point to a deeper problem with the book as text: it is based on the author’s doctoral thesis, and still bears the strong stamp of the academy. A much more rigorous process of rewriting and editing would have helped to make these insights and analysis much more widely available. This is a pity, because the author clearly has a great deal to say, and it would have been good if she had communicated her proposals for a way forward more accessibly.

Peter Mc Grail, Liverpool Hope University


This book is at once insightful and useful but also so dated in some respects as to raise the question of why it was finally translated and published nearly a half-century after it first appeared in Greek as a doctoral dissertation. The author himself attempts, in a new foreword, to answer this question, but his rationale for ignoring a half-century of scholarship is unconvincing: ‘the theme as such would not allow any serious alterations, at least in terms of Orthodox Ecclesiology.’

In any event, Harkianakis, the primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia, has made important contributions to theology and ecumenism over the last several decades, and so attention must be paid to this book. That attention very much rewards the reader with a lucid articulation of Orthodox understandings of the infallibility of the Church, and a compelling case stressing the necessity of synodality in the life of the Church. This part of the book is the most engaging and important, for here the author lays out his definition of infallibility as ‘that attribute of the Church which, by the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, safeguards the faith entrusted to it from all error, and at the same time rightly teaches the word of truth.’ Truth, then, is intimately connected to infallibility, and this stress on truth should be useful to Catholics struggling with the doctrine and trying to see it interpreted in a way that does not place so much emphasis on the question of papal authority, but re-centres
the doctrine on the Holy Spirit in whose power the Church, in the person of the pope, participates.

Infallibility ‘refers only to matters of faith and morality’ (as Catholics would unhesitatingly agree), it only ‘covers these articles of teaching in themselves... but not the concrete form in which they appear’ (as Catholics would agree), and it is ‘first and foremost understood negatively’ (as Catholics would again readily agree), merely keeping doctrinal pronouncements free from error.

Where Catholics and Orthodox differ is in the manner in which infallibility is demonstrated or invoked. Harkianakis argues that it needs to be more clearly seen as an ecclesiological and pneumatological exercise of the episcopate as a whole and not the prerogative of one man. It is at this point that Harkianakis argues forcefully that ‘if at any time the Church were to reject from its life, even for a moment, the idea of the synodal system, it would cease automatically to be a Church.’ The synod, according to the author, ‘constitutes the instrument by which the voice of the Church is declared and is accordingly the instrument of infallibility of the Church.’

These are extremely important arguments, and it would be very useful to have a Catholic ecclesiologist or ecumenist undertake a systematic study of the author’s presentation and set it alongside contemporary Catholic treatments of infallibility and synodality. I very strongly suspect that such a comparative treatment would discover that the two traditions are not nearly as far apart as many have often blithely assumed, especially in the wake of Vatican II, and that, with further work, both traditions can be more closely brought together via a hermeneutics of differentiated consensus.

Of the five chapters in this book, the first three deal with Orthodox ecclesiology in general and infallibility in particular. I grant the author’s point that not much recent work on Orthodox understandings of infallibility has been done, which makes this book very valuable; but so much work has been done on Orthodox ecclesiology (not least by the author’s compatriot, John Zizioulas—to say nothing of Christos Yannaras, and many others) that readers should know that this section of Harkianakis’s book (which, to be fair, is quite short) is outdated.

It is a pity that the author did not end his book after the first three chapters because by the fourth chapter the book has become very
outdated. Here he purports to treat Catholic understandings of infallibility from Vatican I onward. Studies of infallibility and of Vatican I have undergone something of a revolution in the last two or three decades, and it is no longer possible or permissible for an author treating this topic to be ignorant of the pioneering work of such as Margaret O’Gara, Jean-M. Roger Tillard, Peter Chirico, Yves Congar, Richard Gaillardetz, or, more generally, Francis Sullivan, Klaus Schatz, and others.

Harkianakis’s fifth and final chapter does not fit in well with the other four, both in substance and especially in tone. Harkianakis takes on the lay theologian and slavophile A.S. Khomiakov, who is sneeringly dismissed as ignorant of almost every aspect of Orthodoxy (‘One should also ask: did Chomiakov [sic] have any knowledge of the texts of the divine liturgy of the Orthodox?’), and whose theology is damned as Protestant, ‘excessively moralistic’ and ruined by its ‘extreme pneumatocracy (rule of the Spirit), relativism, and especially for its physiocracy (rule of nature).’ This chapter adds almost nothing to the book, and it could - and should - have been deleted, not least because it diminishes Harkianakis to see him engage in such harsh and polemical attacks.

Overall, then, the first three chapters of this book are still very relevant and important nearly fifty years after being written, and an ecumenical engagement with them would be extremely useful for the ongoing search for the unity of the Church. This book, then - with the caveats noted above - has much to commend itself to ecclesiologists and ecumenists alike.

Adam A.J. DeVille, University of Saint Francis, Indiana
BOOKS RECEIVED


_Deep Calls to Deep_, David Foster OSB (London: Continuum, 2007), 153; paperback.


