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Our review of a new on-line journal (Schwanda, ‘Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism’) reflects that ‘while there was indeed doctrinal discontinuity [in the Reformation period] between the Protestants and Roman Catholics there were also some forms of devotional continuity between these divergent traditions’; the particular example is the ‘Protestant retrieval and adaption’ of the Jesuit Herman Hugo’s emblem book. Our opening article traces ‘the resembleances between Ignatian Spirituality and an Anglican ethos, grounded on their common focus on a theology of Incarnation’. So ‘we are reminded that God’s loving Spirit is present far beyond one single spirituality or one denomination’ (Gamberini). Incarnation is furthermore the raison d’être of the icons of the Eastern Churches: ‘the icon transmits visually the realisation of the patristic formula: “God became Man so that man should become god”’ (Browne quoting Ouspensky). Hence our reflection on the icon of Mary Hodegetria, complemented by John F. Deane’s meditation on Rembrandt’s Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt.

This journal’s historic concern for the gifts of the Eastern Churches is further exemplified by an account of the Armenian Orthodox Church’s ecumenical legacy (Nersessian). This is especially appropriate in the year that saw Pope Francis declare St Gregory of Narek a doctor of the universal church. St Gregory was a tenth century Armenian monk: his book of prayers (‘Book of Lamentations’) is a definitive work of Armenian religious thought and spirituality, and a gift awaiting further reception by Western Christians.

Similarly, we rejoice at the canonization in May of four women, including Sister Mariam Baourd: St Mary of Jesus Crucified. An account of this young Palestinian Carmelite’s charismatic life, now recognised as an in-spiration for the universal church, may be found in an earlier issue of this journal.¹

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY AND ANGLICAN ETHOS: A ‘FAMILY RESEMBLANCE’

Paolo Gamberini SJ*

Ignatian Spirituality has inspired through the centuries many individuals and religious communities on their way to conversion and apostolic mission within the Catholic Church and beyond her visible boundaries. The scope of this article is to show the resemblances between Ignatian Spirituality and an Anglican ethos, grounded on their common focus on a theology of Incarnation. The shared attention to this central truth of Christian faith activates some of the traits which an Anglican ethos and Ignatian Spirituality have in common: comprehensiveness and probabilism, indifference and an apophatic sense of mystery.

The ecumenical movement enhanced by the Second Vatican Council has brought churches and Christian traditions to a closer dialogue. The basic assumption is that we all share as Christians a common spirituality, though expressed in a variety of ways. Gifts from one tradition have been and are still given and shared by other Christian traditions.

Speaking of Ignatian Spirituality and Anglicanism, in particular, we may realize how vivid and concrete receptive ecumenism is alive and flourishing between these two major traditions. ‘Receptive Ecumenism is not simply a matter of structural adjustments or doctrinal refinement but is an encounter of people—a “conversation” between two horizons that inevitably changes both. The very process of engagement and conversation is revelatory in that we come to

* Paolo Gamberini is an Italian Jesuit priest, born 1960 in Ravenna. He is Associate professor at the University of San Francisco. His major interests are in systematic theology, ecumenical theology and interreligious dialogue. He has been involved since 1988 in the ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He attended the past three Lambeth Conferences (1988, 1998 and 2008) as a journalist for La Civiltà Cattolica.
realize that God speaks not simply in my tradition but in the very conversation and interaction that we share." One way to develop conversation among Christian denominations is through spiritual acquaintance: to know each other better in order to understand how much we share and participate in the same Christian heritage. By doing this churches may discover that they reflect the same image of the incarnate God.

In three steps I will highlight how we may find consonances, similarities and common traits between Ignatian Spirituality and Anglicanism. Firstly I will highlight the main traits of Ignatius’ way of proceeding; in the second part I will point to the leading characteristics of an Anglican ethos; and in the third part I will show how these two traditions have similarities and consonances, because of their common approach to Christian faith through the lens of the mystery of Incarnation. From this common interest originate those distinctive traits that both traditions share: comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery. Therefore I argue that both traditions have ‘family resemblances,’ according to the terminology of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

**What is Ignatian Spirituality?**

Ignatian Spirituality is rooted in the experiences of Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, and in his book of the Exercises. ‘The world is charged with the grandeur of God.’ This line from a poem by the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins captures a central theme of Ignatian Spirituality: the awareness that God is at work everywhere. Ignatian Spirituality places great emphasis on discerning God’s presence in the everyday activities of ordinary life: work, relationships, culture, the arts, intellectual life and creation itself. This kind of spirituality develops a spiritual ‘radar,’ since it enables us to find God in all things and attunes us to the presence of the Holy everywhere. It sees God as an active God, always at work, inviting us to an ever-deeper exploration. Its focus on God at work here and now

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fosters an active attentiveness to the ineffable and ever greater presence of God (*Deus semper maior*) in reality and history. “The basic element of Ignatian Spirituality is its incarnational character [...] This prompts us to reflect on the relevance and importance of the Incarnation in Ignatian Spirituality as a means of living an authentic and incarnated faith in the world today.” Ignatian Spirituality is firmly based on the concrete incarnation of human history. Ignatius’ conviction was that the Creator can act directly on the loved creature in the most intimate way dealing with his/her interior motions (consolation and desolation).

The subject with his passions, personal characteristics and freedom is the key in order to initiate an experience with God. Ignatian Spirituality focuses more on the heart than the intellect. The use of imagination in prayer, discernment and interpretation of feelings, cultivation of fundamental desires, and generous service, are the major features of the Spiritual Exercises.

Ignatian Spirituality focuses more on the heart than the intellect and leads to a prompt responsiveness to God which is the fruit of discernment and decision making. It emphasizes interior freedom and indifference. Usually, the word ‘indifference’ has two meanings: a negative one suggesting not caring for, not being interested in something. It has also a neutral one: having no inclination either for or against something. Ignatius uses the word indifference (*indifferencia*) in the neutral sense; namely, we have to bring ourselves as far as possible to the point of not having an inclination either for or against any created thing. Ignatian understanding of ‘indifference’ overlaps with ‘equanimity.’ This interior disposition is essential to understand Ignatian mysticism. Indifference is not an end in itself, but it leads to choosing what is better in the world and in reality.

It means recognizing that there is no disjunction between God and the world: God is fully present in the world and it is up to us to make sure that the world is fully in God. We announce the incarnation of God by incarnating ourselves in the lives of other people, through our presence, service, listening and sharing. We announce the incarnation by incarnating ourselves in society, culture, politics, economics, in

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order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 6:13–16).¹

Ignatian mysticism leads a person to be enfleshed in the world and in reality. Instead of a flight from the world (fuga mundi) Ignatian Spirituality enhances a ‘kenotic movement of incarnation in the world and for the world’ and realizes a union with God which empowers every human being ‘in the act and art of choosing in each moment in terms of God’s will.’²

The character of being ‘incarnated’ describes Ignatian Spirituality not only in its ‘object’ (the incarnate Word of God) but in its ‘method.’ It is an outlook, not a program; a set of attitudes and insights, not rules or a scheme. Ignatius’ first advice to spiritual directors is to adapt the Spiritual Exercises to the needs of the person entering the retreat. At the heart of Ignatian Spirituality is a profound sense of humanity and respect for people’s lived experience and opinions.

The principle and foundation of this particular spirituality is a profound focus on the mystery of Incarnation. Contemplation and action, indifference and passionate responsiveness to the ‘now’ moment, attentiveness before the Lord and reverent service towards others, personal discernment and paying attention to guidance (the spiritual director and finally the Church), are the major features of the Spiritual Exercises.

Even during the time of the hostile confrontation between the Church of Rome and the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ignatian method of prayer has been always appreciated among Anglicans.³ The Spiritual Exercises have been given and received by Protestants. Some specific Roman Catholic

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² Javier Melloni, The Exercises of St. Ignatius in the Western Tradition (Gracewing: Leominster, 2000), 50.
doctrinal elements were dropped off and changed into a much more Calvinist approach. The practice of addressing Mary in the meditation on the Two Standards was either put aside or substituted by mentioning the Holy Spirit (instead of Mary); the word ‘confession’ was interpreted in a broader sense and not merely ritual or sacramental; ‘doing penance’ became ‘being repentant’; words like ‘merit’ and ‘Purgatory’ were omitted. The rules of thinking with the Church (sentire cum ecclesia) were mitigated and adapted to an Anglican ethos.

W.H. Longridge, a member of the Anglican religious Society of Saint John, published in 1919 a translation of the Exercises from the Spanish Autograph with commentary which had many editions up to 1950.¹ In 1931 he wrote A month’s retreat for religious (Oxford, 1931), a popular publication used for the revival of spiritual life within the Church of England.² In The elements of the Spiritual Life. A Study in Ascetical Theology, Frederick P. Harton gives a list of different ways of meditation, the first mentioned being the Ignatian method: “The most usual form of this exercise, indeed almost the only form which is at all widely known in the Anglican Communion, is the Ignatian.”³

What is Anglican Ethos?

An Anglican ethos bears witness—with the same emphasis as the Ignatian Spirituality—to the Incarnation as its central doctrine, ‘in particular its search for wholeness and balance, its desire at once to spread itself outwards in a concern for all human life, and at the same time to turn inwards to explore the heights and depths of God’s presence at the heart of human life.’⁴ By ‘Anglican ethos’ is meant the

whole of predominant conditions and assumptions expressed in feelings, beliefs and customs, that constitute a specific way of proceeding. John William Charles Wand in his study on Anglicanism identifies Anglican theology as incarnational.\textsuperscript{1} Whereas Orthodox Christianity emphasized the Paschal mystery and Luther’s Reformation the mystery of Good Friday, Anglican Christianity highlighted the Christmas event. Richard Hooker distanced himself from Calvinist concentration upon the Word spoken, since it missed the importance of the Word made flesh.

Edward Reynolds, bishop of Norwich 1660-1676, perceived in the unfolding mystery of Incarnation God’s love in all things which inspires the human response to love God in all and above all. What is peculiar to Anglican way of prayer and faith is ‘a longing to gather together the fullness of created order in all its diversity, into the unity of the Kingdom.’\textsuperscript{2}

Many Anglican theologians and writers in the nineteenth century have focused as well on the mystery of Incarnation in order to mold Anglican Spirituality: Hugh Scot Holland (1847-1918), Charles Gore (1853-1932), William Temple (1881-1944), William Porcher DuBose (1836-1918).\textsuperscript{3} The Oxford Movement emphasized Incarnation as a reaction in part to an excessive prominence of the doctrine of the Atonement and Cross-centered imagery shown by Evangelicals.\textsuperscript{4}

Since the time of the publication of \textit{Lux Mundi} in 1889 edited by Charles Gore, at that time principal of Pusey House at Oxford, the theme of Incarnation has caught the interest of Anglican theology. Gore himself set out his theology of Incarnation at the Bampton Lectures of 1891 treating the theme: The Incarnation of the Son of God.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Allchin, ‘Anglican Spirituality,’ 324.
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In the theology of Richard Meux Benson, the founder of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, Incarnation was absolutely central.

Fr Benson’s theological vision has a markedly different character from those based on the standard theory that the Incarnation was contingent on the Fall; to put it crudely, a divine afterthought for remedying the catastrophe of man’s alienation from God. He committed himself in the original creative act to the Incarnation, by which the ‘law of the Eternal Generation’ was to be introduced into creation to transform it from within.¹

There is a particular inclination among many modern and contemporary Anglican theologians—Maurice, Westcott, Gore, Thornton, Holland, Temple, Creed, Quick, Mozley, Hodgson, Ramsey, Pittinger, Robinson, Wiles, Hick, Cupitt and Macquarrie—towards the mystery of Incarnation as the key doctrine of Christian faith. Anglicanism gives high priority to the doctrine of Incarnation, believing that God takes on human flesh not just once in Jesus, but chooses to dwell again in each of us if we are open to God’s Spirit.²

The centrality of the theology of Incarnation has shaped four major traits in an Anglican ethos: comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery.

‘Comprehensiveness’ had been a cultural and religious achievement at the time of the Reformation in England in order to blend and reconcile together Catholic elements of medieval Christianity and new insights from Reformed theology.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Anglicans defended their continuity with the pre-Reformation Church, refuted charges of schism and rebutted the claims of the papacy. They thus emphasized the ‘Catholicity’ of the Church of England. At the same time, however, they had to contend with the threat from the Puritans, who maintained that reform had not gone far enough and even that the Church of England was no true Church. In response, Anglican apologists such as Hooker and Whitgift upheld the fully Reformed and Protestant character of the Church of England, to which no essential aspect of a reformed Church was lacking.³

'Comprehensiveness' summarizes the Anglican historical synthesis of being a church which is both Catholic and Reformed. It is not a marker but defines a method in Anglicanism which may be characterized as 'polarity or quality of living tension.' It is not just a compromise or a way of escaping intellectual rigor but a quality, a paradoxical method of thinking imbued of a certain Christian form of advaita or Trinitarian logic. Thinking according to the both/and instead of either/or logic enhances a paradoxical understanding which is mutually illuminating and enriching.

Comprehensiveness is an attitude of mind which Anglicans have learned from the thought-provoking controversies of their history. . . . Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion. In the mind of an Anglican, comprehensiveness is not compromise. Nor is it to bargain one truth for another. It is not a sophisticated term for syncretism. Rather it implies that the apprehension of truth is a growing thing: We only gradually succeed in 'knowing the truth.' It has been the tradition of Anglicanism to contain within one body both Protestant and Catholic elements. But there is a continuing search for the whole truth in which these elements will find complete reconciliation. Comprehensiveness implies a willingness to allow liberty of interpretation, with a certain slowness in arresting or restraining exploratory thinking. We tend to applaud the wisdom of the rabbi Gamaliel’s dictum that if a thing is not of God it will not last very long (Acts 5:38-39). Moreover we are alarmed by the sad experience of too hasty condemnation in the past (as in the case of Galileo). For we believe that in leading us into the truth the Holy Spirit may have some surprises in store for us in the future as he has had in the past.¹

Comprehensiveness requires a consensus on fundamentals, ‘while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion.’² As a result of this major trait of an Anglican ethos we find tolerance: a reasonable approach to Mystery, since God’s transcendent reality can never be definitively grasped or fixed by just one simple glance.

In the summer of 2006 the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams identified three things that, when held together, make Anglicanism distinct from other Christian denominations and contribute to the essential character of Anglicanism: a Reformed commitment to the priority of the Bible for deciding doctrine; a Catholic loyalty to the sacraments and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons; and a habit of cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility that does not seek to close down unexpected questions too quickly. This kind of intellectual flexibility is different from the rigid and ‘abstract reason’ of the Enlightenment Age. It rather leads to deeper and richer understandings of God’s Holy Word and God’s will. What Anglicans hold by ‘reason,’ therefore, ‘can be characterized negatively as a counterpoise to unreasoning Biblicism or traditionalism.’ A similar understanding of reason is present in the Spiritual Exercises in Annotation n°2: ‘for it is not the abundance of knowledge which fills and satisfies the soul, but to feel and taste the matters interiorly.’

Such savoring reason concurs with Bible and Tradition, and all three (reason, scripture and tradition) are connected together in what may be called a ‘three-legged stool.’ Other denominations share one or two of these legs. What makes Anglicanism unique is the balanced presence of all three. In order to receive and rework doctrines in the changing of times, as happened in the opening of the threefold ministry to women, in the remarriage of divorced persons and finally in the issue of homosexuality, the Anglican communion has tried by reason to listen both to Bible and Tradition, and to realize what is ‘now’ the inspiration of the Spirit in the present Church. A deeper understanding of God’s unchanging Word requires such a change and requires discernment and flexibility as well. ‘Roman Catholics have much to learn from the Anglican capacity to engage in dialogue with contemporary culture on complex and controversial issues rather

3 Longridge, The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, 7.
than, as tends to be the case within Roman Catholicism, closing the door to any such discussion.¹

Reformed, Catholic and intellectual heritage together capture the core strength of the Anglican way of believing and living out the Christian Faith. Anglicanism is not dogmatic in its essence. An Anglican ethos lies in its comprehensive method. Henry Robert McAdoo in his study on the Spirit of Anglicanism declares that Anglicans do not believe anything because it is Anglican, but only because they think it is true. ‘What is distinctively Anglican is then not a theology but a theological method.’²

Such a ‘comprehensive’ method does not mean disintegration of the essential identity of Anglicanism. Anglican beliefs tolerate diversity relating to ‘things which do not make a difference, matters regarded as nonessential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church.’³ Stephen Sykes has warned against a feeble and lazy understanding of ‘comprehensiveness’ as an all-embracing melting pot of contradictory theological positions without ‘a standpoint on matters of doctrine which is firmer than seems to be the case on first sight, even if it stands in need of articulation and development.’⁴ ‘Comprehensiveness’ and ‘inclusiveness’ must always seek agreement on fundamentals without which everything turns to be inessential and accidental in belief. The Revd Dr J.I. Packer has articulated two kinds of comprehensiveness: Principled and Unprincipled Comprehensiveness.⁵ Classic Anglicanism is based on Principled Comprehensiveness, which insists on agreement with the biblical fundamentals of the faith and a continuity with classic English Protestant Reformation thought, while allowing liberty in issues of secondary doctrine, preference and practice. These secondary doctrines are what Post-Reformation

theologian Richard Hooker in forging a *via media* between Puritan and Catholic factions in England described as *adiaphora* (things indifferent). German Protestants initially used a similar term in order to describe those areas of doctrine on which a compromise could be found between Catholics and Protestants.

**Ignatian and Anglican Spirituality: ‘family resemblances’**

Such an unfolding process of truth, which is at the core of an understanding of ‘comprehensiveness’ in its true nature, may be compared with what the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius understand as a presupposition for any discernment: being open and respectful towards different positions. The *praesupponendum* describes how the director of the Exercises has to be attuned to what the Spirit is already communicating to the retreatant. ‘In order that he who gives as well as he who receives the spiritual Exercises, may the more help and profit one another, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a good sense to the doubtful proposition of another than to condemn it.’

In a letter to Salmeron, Jay and Canisius, who were sent to teach at the University of Ingolstadt at a time when the Reformation was spreading more and more in Germany, Ignatius of Loyola suggests friendship as a way of approaching Protestants. ‘Make friends with the opponents, as well as with those who are most prominent among the heretics or suspected of heresy. If they seem quite stubborn, try little by little with skill and a lot of love to remove them from their mistakes.’ Ignatius showed love, desire for their salvation, and more than anything else he promoted understanding and conversation as the best way to engage with Protestants. Any form of dogmatic unilateralism undermines the spiritual presupposition. The principle of Incarnation is at work in the Ignatian *praesupponendum*. ‘Because circumstances constantly change and the gospel is a living gospel and not a dead letter, Christian love and truth have constantly to be embodied and expressed in different forms. There is continuity with

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the past of course, but continuity does not mean simply repeating over and over again what has been done before.”

Much of this Ignatian way of proceeding may be found in Anglicanism whose identity is essentially a way of listening to local challenges and needs, and to unexpected questions. Anglicanism has never been afraid of critical examination of its core teachings in matters of faith and morals. Such a basic presupposition and comprehensiveness prevent defensive orthodoxy. It respects scholarship and enhances debate and discussion. The vocation of Anglicanism is not to determine and enunciate the truth, but rather ‘to create the climate of spiritual liberty in which individuals may bear witness to the truth as they see it, submitting themselves to the criticism of their peers without fear of ecclesiastical censorship.’ The Anglican ethos, therefore, is not contained in a specific belief-system like Calvinism or Lutheranism. The typical locus in which to experience such an ethos is not dogmatic or theological definition, but the liturgy: *lex orandi statuat legem credendi*.

Another characteristic of Ignatian Spirituality which we may find realized in Anglicanism is indifference. This core virtue exhibits a spiritual freedom which enables the faithful to choose what helps him/her best to fulfill God’s greater glory. Anglicanism has long held the belief that *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* (in essentials, uniformity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love). Indifference is the consequence of what Ignatius calls ‘consolation without preceding cause.’ ‘It belongs to God our Lord alone to give consolation to the soul without preceding cause.’ Spiritual consolation is some interior movement in the soul caused by the love of its Creator and Lord: ‘every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to its own salvation, rendering it quiet and at peace in its Creator and Lord.’ Such increase is always mediated by objects, events and people, but it is distinguished from God’s acting love which remains

1 David Lonsdale, *Eyes to see, ears to hear. An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1991), 64.
4 Ibid. 186.
transcendent and transcendental, informing and making possible any human responsiveness.

The Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner speaks of this consolation without preceding cause as anathematic experience, whose object is God alone. By ‘God’ is meant not a definition or a concept but the horizon which is beyond any concept and definition.¹ The consolation without preceding cause is a critical and transcendental presupposition which makes everything else relative. Ignatius instructs the retreatant to distinguish carefully with great vigilance and attention the actual consolation without any preceding cause, which has no deception in it, from the consequent reception of this consolation: ‘for in this second period it often happens that by its own thought, in accordance with its habits, and in consequence of its own conceptions and judgments, or by the suggestion of the good or the evil spirit, it forms various resolutions and plans, which are not inspired immediately by God our Lord; and hence it is necessary that they be very carefully examined before they receive entire credit and are carried into effect.’²

There are two levels or moments in the experience of consolation: 1) the transcendent moment, when God is active as first cause; and 2) the categorical moment, when human responsiveness appropriates and translates God’s direct action. Human subjectivity (memory, intellect, will and feelings) is active here as secondary cause, since God enables human understanding to realize and fulfill revelation, and decide what God’s will is. At the first level God is nothing but sheer openness, nameless and indefinite, within which any created reality may speak of Him, relate to Him, but always indirectly. This distinction makes any definition and dogmatic formulation relative, and therefore indifferent. It is an indifference, based upon a fundamental difference between God’s transcendental inspiration and the categorical formulation of God’s very action.

This distinction allows the right understanding of the dynamic transcendence of God, implied in the Ignatian notion of magis. This notion identifies both the ‘object’ that is the never unfolding mystery of God (Deus semper maior and ad maiorem dei gloriam), and the ‘way,’ that is the ongoing process of transcending any grasp of the

² Longridge, The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, 193.
mystery. Truth does not come upon us as a statement, but as someone we experience and who needs to be encountered over and over again. This very dynamic leads to the proper understanding of Ignatian indifference. In such a context Karl Rahner advocates for a sound and appropriate understanding of agnosticism. ‘The unconditional surrender of oneself to the incomprehensibility of God is radical agnosticism, and actually this is the only true agnosticism because every other view of agnosticism is innocuous.’

Such a connection between apophaticism and agnosticism is at the core of an Anglican ethos. The Anglican priest and theologian R.M. Benson insisted on the apophatic nature of all formulations about God (Deus semper maior). He advocated a Christian ‘agnosticism’ linked with adoring love. Only love is able to transcend any knowledge and experience we have of God. ‘The very fact that he could speak of a Christian “agnosticism”, at a time when the word had only recently entered religious controversy, is itself significant.’ In the light of Fr Benson’s understanding, the divine mystery is ‘not the mere knowledge of a completed statement, but the continuous apprehension of a continuous reality, a living receptivity corresponding with a living object of contemplation.’

Agnosticism has been present in Anglicanism since the time of the Reformation. According to the most influential theologian of the Church of England, the divine Richard Hooker, truth and meaning are not matters of infallible certitude and of formal incontrovertibility. Between converging probabilities and certainty there is always a gap. Reason alone cannot produce certainty. Against Roman Catholic infallibility of the Church and of the pope, and the puritan appeal to biblical absolutism, Richard Hooker insisted that the highest form of certainty we enjoy is that of ‘probable persuasions’. Though the human mind craves ‘the most infallible certainty which the nature of things can yield,’ assent must always be proportionate to the evidence. Certain knowledge is not given to humanity in its earthly

2 Smith, Benson of Cowley, 23.
3 Ibid. 31.
pilgrimage: ‘in defect of proof infallible, because the mind doth rather follow probable persuasions rather than approve the things that have in them no likelihood of truth at all.’ John Henry Newman, the founder of the Oxford Movement, introduced his theory of the ‘illative sense’ which is the converging of antecedent probabilities, confirming each other. The illative sense leads to a judgment, not only to act as if a statement were true, but actually to accept and believe it.²

Agnosticism and probabilism received full citizenship within Jesuit ethics, with its casuistry. At the center of casuistry was the ‘principle of accommodation to times, places, persons, and other circumstances’.³ Jesuits were confessors for many persons of high standing and therefore needed some flexibility in moral questions. Jesuits were very active within the mission in the newly discovered territories. They had developed therefore a successful method of mission known as ‘accommodation’ which was based on tolerance and adaption, and could not be pursued on the basis of strict European moral laws. Jesuit preference for probabilism, based on the principle of accommodation, is nothing but a further consequence of the emphasis Ignatian Spirituality places on the mystery of Incarnation. ‘It was Jesuit spirituality—with its anthropological and soteriological assumptions, and the rhetoric of accommodation to the circumstances of concrete situations that was central to the Jesuits’ ministerial style that sowed seeds for future adoption of the probabilistic mentality.’⁴ The Jesuit College S. Hermenegildo in Sevilla became the leading place of research with respect to probabilism. Jesuits as Diego Ruiz de Montoya, Diego Granado, and Luis Molina were upholders of such theological trend.

Anglicanism understands ‘probabilism’ not only as the method by which the practical intellect formulates moral judgments, but as the way by which the speculative intellect discerns and defines truth. Anglicanism applies, therefore, ‘probabilism’ to dogmatic as well as to moral theology. A particular Christian truth may not be asserted as

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¹ Hooker, *Of the Laws*, 226.
'certain' or 'true,' since it receives only 'probable persuasion'. Is there a similar approach to dogmatics in Catholic tradition, or is it just here, in the distinction between moral and dogmatic probabilism, that the divide between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, and finally between Anglicanism and Ignatian Spirituality, is to be found? The theology of Karl Rahner is an example that a true and radical agnosticism, an unconditional surrendering to the incomprehensible God, defines not only a true Christian spirituality, but also Catholic identity.¹ According to Rahner the divine self-communication can be expressed only in manifold mysteries: the personal assent given to these many formulations of the same mystery differs according to how each proposition is related to the ineffable mystery of God, and to the personal faith of a particular individual. In an essay on *The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church*, Rahner refers to Vatican II’s concept of the hierarchy of truths and affirms that each single truth does not always live with the same certainty and infallibility in every single conscience or throughout the life of an individual. Truth is always perceived within an existential and historical hierarchical setting. In this context we can discern not merely an objective structure in this Christian truth taken as a whole, but also (and this is just as important) a subjective ‘hierarchy of truth’ and, moreover, one that is perfectly justified. What we are seeking to convey is this: the various aspects and perspectives from which any Christian regards his personal life as it un-folds, or alternatively the totality of Christian doctrine from his own individual standpoint, vary very greatly.² A distinction needs to be made between the official teaching of the Church and the personal acquisition by affective and rational assent. We are not people who always and in every case have to uphold all that they actually state with the deep notes of ultimate interior conviction and with an ‘absolute assent’ (as with the dogma of the Church) as though we were convinced of the fact that we are already in absolute and total possession of the truth in its fullness. Precisely so

long as we are neither willing nor able to do this, precisely so long as we are, in this sense, humble individual Christians, subject to the influence of historical conditions there is a difference between the official teaching of the Church and that which concerns the concrete content of the personal faith of each particular individual.¹

What Rahner allows for each particular individual in relation to the official teaching of the Church, Anglicanism allows not only for the individual but for the Church as such. An Anglican cannot expect everyone to be Anglo-Catholic (High Church), evangelical (Low Church) or latitudinarian (Broad Church); and outside his/her Communion, an Anglican cannot expect the Anglican Communion to exhaust the spectrum of the whole catholicity. Anglicans understand themselves as particular church within the One Church of Christ.²

Each church is just a fragment of the whole, acknowledging that all are victims of disunity, all share the responsibility for schism, and all are called to work for the healing of the wounds of the body of Christ.³

Such ecclesiological understanding differs from the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church as the ‘only’ fulfilled realization of the Church of Christ. The final divide between Anglicanism and Ignatian Spirituality lies, therefore, in ecclesiological dogma and not in spirituality.⁴

In his first Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis reminds us that

there are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that ‘the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these

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² Avis, The Identity of Anglicanism, 4.
forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning.\(^1\)

In the interview on behalf of La Civiltà Cattolica, the magazine America and several other major Jesuit journals around the world, the ‘Jesuit’ Pope Francis stated that the Ignatian identity is not shaped by discussion, but by discernment, which of course presupposes discussion as part of the process. The mystical dimension of discernment never defines its edges and does not complete the thought. The Jesuit must be a person whose thought is incomplete, in the sense of open-ended thinking.\(^2\)

Anglican ethos and Ignatian spirituality share a common interest in and emphasis on the theology of Incarnation, which calls for an ever deeper promptness in assuming humanity in all its complexities and paradoxes, in the contemplation of the ever greater glory of God (\textit{Deus semper maior}). Both share as well many other common elements which derive from this main interest: comprehensiveness and probabilism, indifference and an apophatic sense of mystery, agnosticism and probabilism.

These two spiritual traditions look like members of a family. It is easy to see numerous overlapping similarities shared by them. They are not identical but they have many common features. The notion of ‘family resemblances’ is an important element of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later linguistic philosophy and may help in looking at our two traditions. This notion of logic argues that things which may be thought to be connected by one essential common feature may in fact be connected by a series of overlapping similarities, where no one feature is common to all. Wittgenstein states that ‘I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”’; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and crisscross in the same way.\(^3\)


\(^2\) See http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview

possible that no one feature is shared by each individual within the family. This does not necessarily prevent there being a visible family resemblance. Wittgenstein uses such a notion of ‘family resemblances’ in order to show how ‘a word’ works and is understood and allows to connect ‘words’ beyond sharp boundaries. Wittgenstein asserts that there is a kind of family resemblance which runs through the meanings of words.

The notion of ‘family resemblances’ can be applied not only to words or languages but also to spiritual traditions. Between Ignatian Spirituality and an Anglican ethos there are resemblances which are not the result of a patchwork of common traits, but the disclosure of a shared major focus, the mystery of Incarnation, from which common traits descend and nourish each tradition, and make possible the exchange of gifts from one to the other, from one spirituality to the other. Looking at Anglicanism through the lenses of Ignatian Spirituality, we are reminded how God’s loving Spirit is present far beyond one single spirituality or one denomination. Ignatian Spirituality is not synonymous with Jesuit spirituality. The Society of Jesus and its way of life are one particular embodiment of Ignatian Spirituality, but they are not the only form in which Ignatian Spirituality exists. Ignatian Spirituality is prior to Jesuit spirituality and in a sense more fundamental.1 Through the centuries Ignatian Spirituality has been a beacon for many Anglicans and adapted to their own tradition, inspiring those elements—comprehensiveness, indifference, probabilism and an apophatic sense of mystery—which both traditions share and emphasize because of their common focus on Incarnation as the mystery God’s assumption of human reality.

Being aware of this ‘chemistry’ and ‘family resemblance’ between these two traditions, the former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Rt. Revd Frank Griswold, supported the inclusion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the liturgical calendar of the Episcopal Church on July 31, moving the previous feast of Saint John of Arimathea to another day. Frank Griswold described himself as but one of many Anglicans nourished by Ignatian Spirituality. For many years he has made his annual retreats, following the Spiritual Exercises, and has trained other Anglican priests to give the Exercises according to this

1 David Lonsdale, Eyes to see, ears to hear. An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1991), 3.
method. The opening prayer for the feast of Saint Ignatius, written by the former Presiding Bishop who was also member of the Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church at that time, reads: ‘Almighty God, from whom all good things come, you called Ignatius of Loyola to the service of your Divine Majesty and to find you in all things . . . .’ Ignatius Loyola’s feast is also found on the Liturgical Calendar of the Church of England (see Common Worship published in 2000).
MARY HODEGETRIA: SHE WHO SHOWS THE WAY

Martin Browne OSB

The National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin houses a collection of Eastern icons which were acquired by Mr W.E.D. Allen in the early part of the twentieth century. To mark the re-launch of the Dublin branch of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the ESBVM organised an illustrated lecture on the collection’s Hodegetria icon in the Gallery on 11 April 2015. The following is an edited version of the talk.

The task of speaking about a medieval Byzantine icon of Mary to an ecumenical gathering in the National Gallery is a particularly challenging one. There are so many places from where we could start and so many avenues down which we could wander: the history of iconography; the place of icons in Byzantine worship; the place of Mary in Byzantine theology and worship; Mary as ecumenical bridge or ecumenical stumbling block; icons as works of art or as sacramentals; and so on. Over the next while we will explore many of these themes, but I want to begin with the very human story of how the icon which is the focus of today’s gathering came to be part of the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland.

Our icon is the first in a collection of 24 items acquired by the National Gallery in 1968. The items, made up of 14 Byzantine and Greek items and 10 Russian items, formed what was called the Natasha Allen Collection. An extensive catalogue, on which I have relied heavily, was prepared by David and Tamara Talbot Rice.¹ In an introduction, the then Director of the Gallery, Dr James White, explained that the Gallery had purchased the collection from Mr W.E.D. Allen, but that Allen had himself contributed to the cost of the purchase and to the cost of preparing the catalogue, in memory of his late wife, Natasha.

¹ Fr Martin is a Benedictine monk of Glenstal Abbey, and a member of the Editorial Board of One in Christ.

Allen spent much time in Istanbul and the Caucasus during the 1920s. It was the period after the Russian Revolution and ‘thousands of fugitives from the Russian Revolution came to Istanbul with any treasures they could save’. And so it was that both Russian and Byzantine church art became readily available to collectors. As Allen put it: ‘For several years the great bazar [sic] of Istanbul was full of the debris of those times including many icons, lecterns, carved gates, and other church furniture."

And so, Allen began collecting. He acquired over a hundred items, though he knew little about them and most were kept in storage. In 1931, a Mr P. Yukin, from the famed Hermitage museum in what was then called Leningrad, was visiting London, saw ‘our’ icon, declared it to be very rare—from the fourteenth century—and recommended that it be cleaned. The icon came from Trebizond. It would appear to have come from the monastery of Miriamana (‘Mary the Mother’), which was wrecked in fighting between Russians and Turks in 1916 and abandoned in 1923. The restorer who was recommended to Allen was Natalia Maximovna Kossovski, the daughter of a Moscow lawyer, then living in London. Natalia—or Natasha as she was better known—became Allen’s third wife in 1943.

William Edward David Allen was a most interesting man. Born in London of Ulster Protestant stock and educated at Eton, he worked as a war correspondent in Eastern Europe before entering politics in Northern Ireland, being elected Unionist MP for Belfast West in 1929. He left the party two years later and joined Sir Oswald Mosley’s New Party, admiring and sharing Mosley’s fascist beliefs. By the time he was 30 he had already published his important *History of the Georgian People*. He later entered the UK Foreign Service, serving in Beirut, Mosul and Ankara. He retired in 1949, at the age of 48, to an estate in County Waterford, later becoming an Irish citizen.

He devoted much of the rest of his life to historical research—and to collecting. An admirer wrote in 1970s that Whitechurch House in Waterford, Allen’s home, ‘houses his library on the Russian Empire and the Caucasus, probably one of the best on the subject outside the Soviet Union’.\(^1\) The icons were transferred to Whitechurch House

\(^1\) Talbot Rice, p. 11.
after World War II. Two of them were lost in slightly surreal circumstances: the next most significant icon after the one we are considering today disappeared one night, and appears to have been mistaken for scrap wood by men working on the restoration of Whitechurch and burned. Another, an icon of Christ, was given by Natasha to a local church during re-building work. It was left outdoors for several months and consequently ruined.

Other items were added to the collection during visits to the Baltic republics in 1938 and during the Allens’ stay in Turkey from 1944-49. They couldn’t house them all though, and began giving them away as gifts. Soon, there were but thirty left. Natasha suffered a long final illness between 1960 and 1966. Allen retained six of the icons for personal reasons. In enabling the National Gallery to acquire the remaining 24 in 1968, Allen felt that he was honouring his late wife’s desire that the collection not be neglected or dispersed: ‘I am convinced that she is happy now that it has found a permanent home in the City of Dublin where she met with so much kindness and friendship during the last two decades of her life.’1 Allen himself died five years later in 1973.

There are two reasons why I started with the story of how the National Gallery’s icon collection came to be here. The first is that it mirrors in some ways the story of the icons in Glenstal Abbey’s Icon Chapel. Like the icons here, ours were originally bought by a collector. Like Allen, Sir Osmond Grattan Esmond was in Europe in the 1920s.2 A diplomat in Paris at a time when many Russians were fleeing the new communist regime in their homeland, he built up quite a collection of Russian icons. In the 1950s, his family decided, like Allen, that the collection should be located somewhere other than their house, but unlike Allen, that they should be in a religious location rather than a gallery, and so they presented them to the monks of Glenstal.

It was many years before a proper location was provided to house them as a single collection though. The current Icon Chapel, a stylised version of a Byzantine church located underneath the choir of the Abbey church, was inaugurated in 1988, the 1000th anniversary of the

1 Talbot Rice, 12.
Christianisation of Russia. Interestingly, the National Gallery hosted an important exhibition of Russian icons from collections around Ireland that same year, the catalogue for which is an important resource.¹

But the other, more significant reason that I wanted to start with the human story of the Gallery’s collection of icons is that icons take humanity very seriously indeed. The Incarnation—the Eternal Word taking flesh in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth—is obviously a central truth of the Christian faith. But it also has implications as to who or what can be represented in iconographic form without committing sacrilege or sinning against the Commandment against the making of ‘graven images’.

But before we can begin to appreciate the implications of this we need to be clear as to what we are speaking of when we use the word ‘icon’. Many of us are more accustomed nowadays to hearing the term used to describe something we click on our computers in order to open a programme or an app. However, the understanding which an Eastern Christian has of icons is rich and complex.

For a start, the word comes from the Greek word for ‘image’. If we look at the first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians we can begin to get a sense of the depth of meaning in this word ‘image’ or ‘icon’:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Col 1: 13-20)

Colossians tells us that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the visible icon of the God we cannot see. In this he is not just some piece of graphic art. It is he who mediates the presence of the ineffable God. That is the truth of the Incarnation. Jesus makes God present to the world in bodily manner. He is not a type or a cypher or messenger. Rather he is true God—in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

¹ Sarah Smyth & Stanford Kingston (eds), Icons 88 (Dublin: Veritas, 1988).
The Eastern understanding of icons has a similar sense. Now this is most definitely not to say that an icon of Christ is physically the body of Christ, but it is to say that an icon of Christ, or of Mary, or a saint, is more than an artistic depiction of the person or mystery concerned. Abbot Gregory Collins, of Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, and formerly of my own monastery, describes the icon thus: ‘It is a sacramental medium, a meeting point between the divine uncreated light and the human heart. Its visible created beauty is a luminous epiphany, a “place” of manifestation, where prayer gains access to the uncreated beauty of God’s grace and truth.’ Icons are clearly more than just pretty pictures, but even in religious terms, they are also more than mere religious illustrations. They are not graphics for the benefit of the illiterate or for visual learners. They are, to use the title of an ecumenical anthology of writings on icons produced by the World Council of Churches, ‘windows on eternity: theology and spirituality in colour’.  

The idea of the icon as a “place” of manifestation is something of a paradox. The icon is not only the work of human hands, an artistic offering made by mortals to the Almighty. It is also what Leonid Ouspensky called ‘God’s descent into our midst, one of the forms in which is accomplished the meeting of God with man, of grace with nature, eternity with time.’

As well as ‘windows on eternity’, I like to think in terms of ‘windows on the mystery’ or ‘windows on the mysteries’. ‘Mystery’ is the word favoured by Eastern Christians to describe both what we Latins call sacraments and also the key moments in the saving work of Jesus. However, the word ‘mystery’ itself requires some clarification. The American liturgist Rita Ferrone is most helpful here:

> It is important to note that ‘mystery’ in this theological sense is not something that disappears upon investigation, as does a mystery that is solved in a crime novel. Neither is mystery something to which the

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door of knowledge is firmly closed, like a statement that defies all rational argument and must therefore be taken on faith. A mystery in the theological sense implied by the term ‘paschal mystery’ is rather a truth so deep that you cannot see the end of it. A mystery is something you can explore without ever exhausting its treasures. It is in the nature of a mystery such as this that God invites people into it and the church guides them around in it, as in a city. The faithful are endlessly discovering the riches of such a mystery. Without defining or limiting it, human understanding, like sonar, plumbs its depths.¹

An icon is intended to be a window into the truth of Christ—a truth, as Ferrone says, that is so deep that you cannot see the end of it, and which you can explore without ever exhausting its treasures, whose depths we are invited to plumb. Gregory Collins has written about what he calls:

... the remarkable capacity of the icon to function as an opening on to the mysteries of Christ. It is another filter, through which the one great mystery can manifest itself and reveal its power. In Orthodoxy, the art of ‘writing’ an icon involves much more than just painting. It is never simply art for art’s sake. It is rather a priestly act, a form of sacramental activity meant to take place in the context of prayer and worship. Its purpose has always been to allow Christ to mediate his presence and his work of salvation.²

And so, while it is wonderful that Mr Allen got his collection of icons into this gallery, where they are properly stored and cared for, the Grattan Esmonds were closer to the mark with their instinct that their collection of icons should be housed in a place of prayer. (No insult intended to our hosts here at the National Gallery!) Because while icons can certainly be admired by those of any or no religious affiliation as beautiful things in their own right, they are not ultimately ‘pictures at an exhibition’ and were not created to be admired. Rather, they were created to be contemplated and to be used to inspire and nourish meditation on the mysteries of Christ.

The figures in icons are nearly always looking straight at us, or at the very least, three-quarters-full frontally. They are never in profile. The

² Gregory Collins OSB, Meeting Christ in his Mysteries (Dublin: Columba Press, 2010), 112.
eyes are often very big. The foreheads are often long, suggesting wisdom. Some people even describe icons as ‘looking’ at us. While that is true in certain ways, it’s important not to misinterpret it, as if to suggest either an artist’s trick or a creepy kind of ‘Big Brother’ surveillance. Icons are often seen to be looking at us because their immediacy, their eyes and their often emotionless faces somehow draw us in and demand our contemplation.

That’s what makes them so important and therein is manifested their sacramentality. For, in the prayerful contemplation of icons, the viewer enters a kind of dialogue with the Almighty. This world meets the heavenly world, darkness meets the uncreated light, human nature meets God’s grace. And when human nature meets God’s grace, transfiguration is possible. Gazing on the images of the divine or saintly persons or of the mysteries of salvation, we gaze on humanity filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. And so, said Ouspensky:

the icon is not a representation of the Deity, but an indication of the participation of a given person in Divine life. ... Holiness is the realisation of possibilities given to man by the Divine Incarnation, an example to us; the icon is the means of revealing this realisation, a pictorial exposition of this example. In other words, the icon transmits visually the realisation of the patristic formula ... ‘God became Man so that man should become god.’

This formula may be a commonplace among Eastern Christians but it is not heard often in the Latin Church; a notable—but silent—exception being when the deacon or priest says, while he pours a drop of water into the chalice of wine at the offertory: ‘By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity’. In the New Testament, the second letter of St Peter speaks of the hope that we ‘may become participants in the divine nature’. (2 Pet. 1:4). Eastern Christians have a much more lively sense of this process of what is called ‘divinisation’, ‘deification’, or ‘theosis’. St Maximus the Confessor wrote:

A sure warrant for looking forward with hope to deification of human nature is provided by the Incarnation of God, which makes man God to the same degree as God himself became man. ... Let us become the

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image of the one whole God, bearing nothing earthly in ourselves, so that we may consort with God and become gods, receiving from God our existence as gods.¹

Note that word ‘image’ ... ‘Let us become the image of the one whole God’: image ... icon. To contemplate an icon is to invite God to transfigure us, to bathe us in his light, so that we in our turn may become icons of the living God.

Time is moving on and we haven’t looked at very many images yet and we haven’t talked very much about the Blessed Virgin Mary yet either... So let us turn our attention now to her, and to her depiction in sacred art. Mary has been depicted in Christian art since the earliest days of Christianity. Tradition holds that St Luke the Evangelist painted the first icon of her in the home of St John, to whom she was committed from the Cross by the Saviour, and he is frequently depicted writing an icon of her. Some traditions hold that he consigned this icon to the mysterious Theophilus in Antioch at the same time as his Gospel.²

Some years ago, I visited the monastery of Santa Giustina, in Padua in Northern Italy, and saw this icon. The original is not on public display, but is kept under glass in a small chapel inside the monastery. Happily, my room was just two doors down and so I could look at it in comfort. The icon has traditionally been attributed to Saint Luke, whose relics are kept in the monastery. Like ‘our’ icon, it is Constantinopolitan, and legend has it that in 741 it leapt from iconoclasts’ flames to the arms of a woman who gave it to St Urio, who took it from Constantinople to Italy. It has been in the monastery in Padua since the 12th century.

This tradition might be a bit more credible were it not for the fact that there are so many other icons attributed to St Luke too. He couldn’t have given them all to Theophilus! The most famous of the others are probably the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, the Mother of God of Vladimir and the image of *Maria Salus Populi Romani* in the Basilica of St Mary Major—the icon before which Pope Francis prays before and after all of his trips outside Rome. In fact, one source I found listed 68 separate images which are held to be by Saint Luke.¹

Another factor against the claims of many of these icons being from the apostolic era is the style. Before the period of iconoclasm, about which more in a few moments, the focus of much iconography of the Virgin and Child was the humanity of the Christ-child. Depictions of the Annunciation portrayed his divinity, whereas depictions of the Virgin and Child, or of the Visitation—the visit of the pregnant Mary to her more heavily pregnant cousin Elizabeth—very much expressed his humanity. And so, Mary and Elizabeth were frequently depicted with swollen bellies and distended breasts.²

Two good examples – both from the 6th century – are this mosaic of the Visitation from the Cathedral of the Croatian city of Poreč and this ivory carving from Ravenna of an exhausted Mary leaning on Joseph during the journey to Bethlehem; her exhaustion underscoring the natural physical birth of the Saviour. Interestingly, the earliest Western manuscript image of the Blessed Virgin is from the 9th century Book of Kells. Like the early medieval

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Eastern images, the composition emphasises Mary’s maternity, as does the physical prominence of her breasts.¹

During the 8th century, controversy arose in Constantinople and the Eastern Empire around the honour being given to icons. Superstitious excess and the impact of Islam on the surrounding culture no doubt contributed to this. We haven’t time to go into the matter in detail here, but the effect was the wholesale destruction of sacred images. In the second half of the century, due to the influence of the Empress Irene, iconoclasm—the destruction of images—was gradually stamped out. The matter was addressed definitively by the Seventh Ecumenical Council of the Church (the second Council of Nicaea) in 787. The Council called for images, whether painted, mosaic or in other forms, to be placed in churches, on sacred vessels and vestments, in homes and even on roadsides.

In fact, the more frequently these are seen through iconic representation, the more those who contemplate them are moved to remember and long for their original models and to give them salutation and respectful veneration. This, however, is not actual worship, which according to our faith, is reserved to the divine nature alone. But as it is done for the figure of the glorious and life-giving Cross, the holy Gospels, and all other sacred objects, let these images be honoured with an offering of incense and light, according to long-standing pious custom. For the ‘honour rendered to the images passes on to the original’, and he who venerates an image venerates in it the person whom the image represents.²

The decrees of the Council go on to direct the deposition of any cleric and the excommunication of any monk or layman who teaches otherwise.

We accept the veneration of images; those who do not believe in this way, we place under anathema. ... If anyone does not honour these images made in the name of the Lord and all his saints, let him be anathema.³

A further regional synod, held under the Empress Theodora in 843

³ Denziger, *Enchiridion*, 605, 608.
formally decreed the veneration of icons and the Empress, her son the Emperor and the Patriarch solemnly restored the icons in Hagia Sophia. Great celebrations accompanied this defeat of iconoclasm and the restoration of the icons to the churches. Since then, the first Sunday of Lent has always been observed as the Sunday of Orthodoxy or of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Icons are carried in procession, recalling the return of the icons to the great churches of Constantinople.

The moment is itself interpreted in many holy icons. As you can see, an image of the Mother of God—the Theotokos—is at the centre of these icons. The word ‘Theotokos’ is Greek for ‘God-bearer’, or ‘Birth-Giver of God’, or ‘the one who gives birth to God’. Eastern Christians rarely speak of the Blessed Virgin by name, but use this term instead. In doing so, they are making a powerful statement not just about who she is, but about who Jesus is.

This was proclaimed at the Second Ecumenical Council of the Church at Ephesus in 431:

If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel is truly God and for this reason the holy Virgin is the Mother of God (since she begot, according to the flesh, the Word of God made flesh), let him be anathema.¹

It is because the Virgin Mary is the God-bearer that she is venerated. But, more importantly when thinking about icons, it is because she is the God-bearer that Jesus can be depicted. Even more, it is because he has a human mother that Jesus must be represented in icons. To do otherwise would be tantamount to denying the truth of the Incarnation. Celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy, by venerating this icon of the restoration of the icons in Constantinople, with the

¹ Denziger, Enchiridion, 252.
icon of the Theotokos at its centre, is, says Leonid Ouspensky, the ‘manifestation of the role of the Mother of God, veneration of her as the indispensable condition of the Incarnation, the cause of the fact that God became representable.’

St Theodore the Studite taught:

In respect to his birth from a circumscribed mother, with good reason he has an image, just as his mother's image is expressed in him. But if he should not have an image, then he would not be from a circumscribed mother, and is of only one origin, namely the paternal—which destroys the divine economy.2

The iconoclast position was rejected by the Church. God took human form in the womb of the Virgin Mary and this renders her worthy of veneration and renders both of them capable of iconic depiction. As I said at the start, icons take the Incarnation very seriously indeed. We spoke a few moments ago, too, about the encounter with an icon being a window on eternity and a potential moment of transfiguration. This is encapsulated very well in the Kontakion for the Sunday of Orthodoxy in the Byzantine liturgy for the day:

The uncircumscribed Word of the Father became circumscribed, taking flesh from thee, O Theotokos, and he has restored the sullied image to its ancient glory, filling it with the divine beauty. This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy ikons [sic].3

Through the birth of Emmanuel from the Blessed Virgin Mary, the path to glory was opened up to humanity. And just as she is herself an icon of his glory, so it lies open to humans too to reflect his glory, and thereby themselves become icons of the uncreated Light.

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3 The Lenten Triodion trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1978), 300.
If we look more closely at the depiction of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, we see an icon-within-an-icon, depicting the image of the Mother of God and the Saviour being restored to Hagia Sophia by Empress Theodora and her entourage. If we look closely at that icon, we can see that it has the same basic composition as the main part of ‘our’ icon.

There is a lot more going on in this image than a simple holy picture of mother and child. Mary looks not down towards her child, but out at us. He sits on her left arm, and with her right arm she points at him. Some refer to this type of icon as ‘the Virgin of Guidance’, since Mary is pointing him out to the viewer, as if guiding the viewer towards the Christ-child. If we follow her signal and look at him, we see that his body is certainly appropriately small for an infant. But his head isn’t. He has a full head of hair and a slightly high forehead. The head is not that of an infant, but the infinitely wise head of the Eternal Word in human form. As Jesus said in John’s Gospel, ‘before Abraham was, I am’ (John 8: 58). Not so much a case of an old head on young shoulders, but of an eternal head on young shoulders ... This is not an ordinary infant, but Emmanuel, ‘God with us’.

Later in John’s Gospel, when Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure he speaks of going to prepare a place for them, where they can follow. Thomas asks how they are going to know the way and Jesus responds with the extraordinary words: ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14: 6). He is ‘the way’—hodos in Greek. Mary, just as she brought him into the world; and just as she launched him into public life by telling the under-supplied wine waiters at the wedding in Cana to ‘do whatever he tells you’ (John 2: 5), so now, in this image, she shows him to the viewer. She guides us to the one who is Hodos, ‘the way’, and so she is Hodegetria, the one who shows the way. He holds his Gospel in
Constantinople 14th century

Virgin and Child, Saint John the Baptist and Prophets, c.1325
Tempera and gold leaf on wood panel 132.5 x 111 cm
Photo © National Gallery of Ireland NGI.1858
his left hand. And here there is a beautiful conjunction: he holds the Word, but she too, in holding him, holds the Word.

In some icons he is clearly blessing with his right hand. That is not so clear in this one. His fingers are arranged in blessing style, even if his hand is at an angle. He responds to her in blessing. One scholar puts it:

> The image-type expresses the notion of conversation silently conducted through the painted hands of the Mother and Child. The dialogue has the potential to expand in the physical space of the viewer when the same gestures are mimetically reproduced by the faithful in the process of prayer...¹

She is robed in purple, the royal and most expensive colour. Maybe he is pointing at her, as the true Queen. He is robed in vivid gold, the colour of the heavenly light, for in him, truly heaven has walked on earth.

Recall those lines we quoted earlier from Colossians: ‘He is the image of the invisible God’ and ‘for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell’. Perhaps he is drawing the viewer to himself, reminding the viewer of who he is. Maybe her showing of ‘the way’ is an invitation to deification, to contemplate the icon and, in turn, become an icon of the living God. So, you can see how even a short amount of time spent considering this icon can yield rich material for contemplation. The Hodegetria is the oldest Christian iconographic form, being the form attributed to St Luke, and most depictions of him at work show him working on the Hodegetria. The original was held to have been venerated as a miracle-working icon in the Hodegon monastery in Constantinople. Interestingly, local lore explained the title as coming from the belief that the Virgin as depicted in the icon appeared to two blind men and ‘showed the way’ to a nearby healing spring to them.

Whereas many of the earlier images of the Theotokos which we looked at were very physically maternal in their depiction, there is a certain austerity about the Hodegetria. The famous émigré Russian

theologian Vladimir Lossky put it:

On the icons of the Hodigitria created at Byzantium, the Christ-Child always appears seated, erect, on his mother’s left arm. The Infant is no longer a suckling: He is the type of the Christ-Emmanuel, the infant ‘pre-eternal God’, full of wisdom despite his tender years. Clothed in a glorious himation, woven of gold, the Christ-Emmanuel has in his left hand a scroll, whilst with his right hand he blesses, turning full face and looking straight before him. The Mother of God, upright, straight and majestic, has no expression of intimacy towards her Son: She looks at the spectator, or rather her look is directed to the side, above the head of the Emmanuel. The right hand of the Hodigitria, raised towards the chest, could be expressing a gesture of prayer; but rather—it is a gesture of presentation: the Theotokos shows to men the Son of God, who, by her, has come into the world.

Or again—it is the attitude of the Sovereign who presents to her son the people of the faithful, to which the Christ Emmanuel responds with a broad majestic gesture of benediction.¹

Getting back to the Hodegetria in the Natasha Allen collection, we need to remember that we’ve only been looking at the centre of it. There are many more images on it. It is a very big piece—132.5 cm x 111 cm. The margin is about 20 cm wide, so these marginal images are not negligible. So who are all these figures? The Gallery’s catalogue describes the piece as the ‘Virgin and Child Hodegetria with St John the Baptist and 12 Prophets’, which only identifies one of them. Happily, the Talbot Rices’ 1968 catalogue gives a full account of who they are. John the Baptist, the Forerunner, is in first place, in the centre, flanked by Jacob and Ezekiel, and, reading each row from left and right, Moses and Aaron, Habakkuk and Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and David and Solomon. While the icon of the Hodegetria itself is thought to be from the 14th century, the prophets are presumed later, probably 15th century.

Each figure carries a scroll along with the item which identifies them. Time prevents giving a full account of the sources and allusions contained in all the images and inscriptions, but they are worth looking at, even briefly. It is clear that the ensemble is praising the Theotokos, using imagery from the Old Testament to speak of her merits, in much the same way as the Eastern Akathistos hymn and the

¹ Lossky, ‘The Hodigitria’, 81.
Western Litany of Loreto do. For instance, Moses’ scroll recalls the burning bush, which, because it was not consumed by the fire is often understood as a type of Mary’s virginity: ‘I have called you a tree, in a bush have I beheld a divine mystery’. Ezekiel’s scroll also praises her virginity, and its part in the Incarnation: ‘I have beheld you, closed gate of God, by which the sole God of the universe has gone forth’.

It strikes me as a little unusual to have such a gallery of saints gathered around the Theotokos Hodegetria. Such a host with their scrolls of praises are more traditionally seen in icons of the Theotokos Enthroned. Incongruous or eccentric as the combination of the Hodegetria with the host of prophets a-praising might be though, the full piece is a most striking work, worthy of admiration, appreciation and contemplation, and of which the National Gallery of Ireland can be most proud.
Night Prayer

Rembrandt: Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt

I

This, too, you see, is prayer, these words I labour to admit under the spirit’s prompting, words on the notebook difficult to decipher, the ink flowing out too fast

in the first stirrings; pen, copybook and keyboard in an attempt to touch the source of light, of life, the groundwork of our hope. Here, too,

II

figures in a nightscape, a pause in the difficult journey; questions of resting in penumbra, of knowing light is fragile, like a child holding its greedy mouth to the breast;

there is a fire of sticks, trouvaille of twig and branch, to keep wolves at bay (between here and destination, Emmaus, say, beyond a life’s full circle, light against the darkness) and this

III

is Jesus, name and nature of our source and sustenance, this is God, dwarfed by trees and distances, enormous landscape and a darkening night, and you grow aware that here

the watchful small lamps of greed and power are looming over all. The canvas, too, is prayer, impasto, brush and palette knife, working to ease the blackness about the light, cognisant
IV

of the death of innocents; it is all self-portrait, still life, a halt in the hastening, the helplessness of humankind before its own, the helplessness of God trusting Himself to flesh;

love is a small child, far from consciousness, hunted; should he be found and killed, what then? what then? Rembrandt knew that distance between himself and God – all time, all space, all

V

life, all death – had been too great; the instruments of art, sharpened and softened in the desiring heart, shorten the distance, finding a sheltering tree, light shoudering the darkness; this

Egypt of the imagination, this den of safety called exile, as world with its instruments of power and economics preys on you and how can you believe your pigments

VI

touch beyond impossibility? Image, less real than thistledown in a western gale, less permanent than golden light reflected on a pond, you try to empty the ocean of silence

with the holding power of pigments, the silence that is God. Christ-beyond-all-grasping, the heart in its pleading is a series of shifting darkscapes, vaulted in night-prayer passageways.

John F. Deane

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The Legacy of Ecumenism in the Armenian Orthodox Church

Vrej Nerses Nersessian*

The Council of Chalcedon’s statement of Faith of 451 caused the first rift in the universal church. Though accepted in both West and East, it was nonetheless rejected by the Oriental Orthodox Churches, including the Armenian Church. However, the Armenian Church, with its long history and particular circumstances, led the way in ecumenical dialogue, mediating both between the various churches of the East, and between East and West. This article presents the unprecedented contribution of three Armenian Church fathers of the twelfth century, in the ecumenical spirit that was to mature in the Church in the twentieth century and in the Second Vatican Council. It was originally given as a lecture at the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, London University.

The only essential requirement for union
is unity in faith and charity
Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali

The creation of an independent Cilician state became possible with the establishment of the Crusader kingdoms in Jerusalem and Antioch counterbalanced by the ever diminishing power of Byzantium in the East. This combination of circumstances permitted the coronation at Tarsus in 1199 of the Rubenid Prince Leo II as King Leo I of Cilicia, before a brilliant assembly including the Syrian Patriarch, the Greek metropolitan of Tarsus, and the representative of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI. The arrival of the Mongols in the Near East and

* The Revd Dr Nerses Nersessian was born in Tehran in 1948. He studied at the Gevorgian Theological Seminary of Holy Etchmiadzin in the former Soviet Armenian Republic, then at King’s College, London, gaining a BD (1972) and Ph.D (1975). From then until his retirement in 2011 he was the British Library curator of the Christian Middle East section. He has published widely and in 2005 received an honorary doctorate from the Armenian Republic Academy of Sciences for his contributions to Armenian Studies and Art History. He is married with two sons and two grandchildren.
their conversion to Islam at the end of the thirteenth century, the frequent raids of the Mamluks from Egypt, and the religious controversies between the Armenian and Roman Catholic Church contributed to the collapse of the Cilician Kingdom. In 1375 the last king, Leo V of Lusignan was taken captive to Cairo in 1375. He died in Paris on 29 November 1393, and a tombstone bearing his name was placed in the vaults of the Royal tombs of St Denis.¹

The Venetian statesman and geographer Marino Sanuto (Sanudo the elder of Torcello, d. 1138) described the precarious state of the Armenian kingdom in these terms:

The king of Armenia is under the fangs of four ferocious beasts—the lion, or the Tartars [Mongols] to whom he pays a heavy tribute, the leopard or the [Mamluk] sultan, who daily ravages his frontiers, the wolf, or the Turks, who destroy his power, and the serpent, or the pirates of the seas, who worry the very bones of Armenians.²

The fifth ‘fang’ was the ecclesiology of the medieval Byzantine and Latin Churches, which held that there could be only one church, with one faith and one supreme authority. That faith was the bond of unity of the whole Christian community and the one authority was that of the keeper of the faith, the pope. Heresy and schism were denials of that unity, and heretics and separatists placed themselves outside the pale of the Christian community.³

As had been the case earlier of Great Armenia, however, so also the strategic position of the Kingdom of Cilicia, located at economic and cultural crossroads between the Christian West and the Muslim East, insured its importance for contemporaries.⁴ J. J. Saunders in his essay ‘The Armenian Ally’ writes:

² Marino Sanuto, Liber secretorum fidelium crucis in Gesta Dei per Francos, J. Bongars, ed. (Hanover: 1611), II, 179-86; Vrej Nersessian, Treasures from the Ark: 1700 years of Armenian Christian Art (London: The British Library, 2001), 52.
³ Joseph Gill, Byzantium and the Papacy 1198-1400 (New Jersey: 1979), 245.
Of all the Christian communities of the East, the most conspicuous service to the Crusaders was rendered by the Armenians ... Thus Little Armenia disappeared from history, and has been almost completely forgotten. Yet its role was not a negligible one, either in the political or in the cultural sphere. For three hundred years ... it upheld the Christian faith in the old homeland of St Paul against the assaults of the Seljuks from the north and the Mamluks from the south.¹

In 1584 Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85) paid this tribute to the Kingdom of Cilicia in his Bull Ecclesia Romana:

Among the other merits of the Armenian nation ... there is one that is outstanding and deserves particularly to be remembered, namely, that when in times past the Christian princes and armies went forth to recover the Holy Land, no nation, no people, came to their aid ... other than the Armenians.²

Bernard Hamilton in his ‘The Armenian Church and the Papacy at the time of the Crusades’ begins his study with the assertion that ‘during the Crusader period religious unity was established between the Armenian and Western Churches’, but concludes his study with this qualifying assertion: ‘although it has been argued that Frankish settlement in the Levant in the 12th and 13th centuries led to the growth of religious unity between the Armenian Church and the Holy See, this view is open to question’.³

Christological disputes

In the beginning the Roman Catholic Church in the west and the Greek Orthodox Church of the East recognised seven Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (535), Constantinople III (680-1) and Nicaea II (787). After 787 increasing tensions between Rome and Constantinople (Byzantium) hardened into a religious schism in 1054 over the unilateral introduction by western Catholics of the word Filioque, ‘and from the son’ into the common profession of faith, the Nicene Creed. The Roman Catholic Church then assumed

¹ J. J. Saunders, Aspects of the Crusades (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd.), 63.
responsibility for convening General Councils, most of which were attended solely by western clergy, and their decisions remained binding on the western church.¹

The Armenian Church, together with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, recognizes the doctrinal and canonical validity of the first three Councils of the Christian Church—namely Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431). The fourth Ecumenical Council called Chalcedon after the name of the place it was held in 451 failed to guarantee the unity of the church. The terms of the formula approved at Chalcedon had unhappy consequences for the unity of the churches in the Orient. In Syria, Armenia, Egypt and Ethiopia, those who were against Chalcedon’s compromise language about Christ’s two natures ‘inseparably’ united, opted instead for Cyril of Alexandria’s insistence that the one incarnate nature of Christ is divine, ‘out of two natures’ but not ‘in two natures’, which led to the first division of the Universal church. Byzantine efforts to reunite the Church failed. In 482, a theological formula known as the Henoticon was proposed, sponsored by the Emperor Zenon, insisting on the Ephesus decrees, together with the Twelve Chapters, and anathematizing anyone who ‘has thought or thinks anything else, either now or any time, either in Chalcedon or in any synod whatever’. This stark choice did not succeed in bringing the dissenting parties together.

On the eve of the Arab invasions Emperor Heraclius’s attempt to win over the non-Chalcedonians issued a formula or Ecthesis, i.e. a statement of faith forbidding the mention of ‘energies’, whether one or two, in the Person of Christ and asserting that the two Natures were united in a single Will, but this also failed to bridge the rift between two parties.²

From the time of the official rift between the Imperial and Armenian Churches, in the sixth century, neither side could be anything but

fundamentally hostile to those whom each reciprocally viewed as heretics. Despite the protestations of the Armenian Church that it hold to the Christological definition of St Cyril of Alexandria accepted by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, and its **anathemata** directed, then as now, against Eutyches as well as Nestorius, its rejection of the Council of Chalcedon automatically placed it among the Monophysites in the eyes of Constantinople and Rome. The Armenians, for their part, identified the Chalcedonian doctrine with Nestorianism. In all their endeavours Armenian theologians have endeavoured to underline the fact that ‘Armenian Christianity, was by no means a doublet of Byzantine Christianity’.

**Ecumenical theology of the Armenian Church in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries**

‘The most glorious contributions of the Armenian Church in Cilicia to the Church Universal was its gift of two early giants of ecumenism, still far too little known in the West’ writes Peter Cooke in his review article entitled ‘The Armenian Church: A Guiding Light on the Ecumenical Highway?’ The first two Armenian giants of ecumenical thought are Nerses IV Klayetsi, Catholicos of All Armenians called Shnorhali (‘filled with grace’, incumbency 1166-73) and his great-nephew Nerses Lambronatsi, Archbishop of Tarsus (1153-98), to which may be added the continuator of their work, Grigor IV P’ahlawoni, Catholicos of All Armenians (1173-93).

Nerses IV Klayetsi composed three confessions of faith of the Armenian Church, in the course of his ecumenical dialogues, at the

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2. Peter M. Cooke, in *One in Christ*, 37/4 (October, 2002), 76.
4. The epithet *shnorhali* (‘filled with grace’) given to Nerses IV Klayetsi is more than just an honorific title. The distinctive *shnorhali* designation was reserved for the graduates of the theological seminary at Karmir Vank’ (Red
request of Byzantine and Latin negotiators. The first of these was written in 1165, a year before the death of Catholicos Grigor III P’ahlawoni (1113-66). This he called Գրիգոր Հաւատոյ [Profession of Faith] addressed to Prince Alexios, the Byzantine Duke of Mamistra, and a son-in-law of Emperor Manuel Comnenus. It became the first text among a long list of correspondences exchanged between the parties in the course of their dialogues on church unity. In the Profession of Faith, Nerses explains that his position is based on Armenian patristic theology, then gives a confession of the Orthodox faith. The unity of the person of Christ is central to his Christology. Supporting his discussions, first by direct references to the Bible, and then to the Church Fathers, Nerses deals with a wide range of rites, practices, and liturgical traditions, such as the dates of the Nativity and Epiphany, the Annunciation, the doctrine of the one nature, the preparation of the holy chrism, veneration of images, mixing water with wine in the communion cup, and the Trisagion (in particular the words ‘who was crucified for us’). These were the principle themes of discussion between the two churches. In his response the Emperor Manuel praised the positive disposition of Nerses toward Constantinople.

In 1116, Grigor III died, and Nerses was elected Catholicos. Soon after, he was invited by the Emperor to visit Constantinople, but he declined to undertake the journey in view of the situation in Cilicia, and suggested that the Emperor himself should initiate a peace mission to the East.

In 1172, the Byzantine court theologian Theorian was sent to Bishop Nerses. He submitted, on behalf of the Greek Church, nine rather

Monastery), where scholarly erudition and deep spiritual life were pursued, devoted wholeheartedly to the propagation of the Word of God and the spiritual values of the Christian faith. The emphasis was not on speculative endeavours but on the revelation of Scripture as a light which, like the sun, overwhelms and dims the lamplight of philosophy. In the tradition of the Eastern Fathers the graduates of Karmir Vank’ felt a real fear of the ‘golden ingot’ of rational constructs, because they understood the essential difference between ‘mere knowledge’ and ‘spiritual knowledge’, and the danger of mistaking the former for true knowledge (Rom. 1: 18, 2: 14-ff). See Vrej Nersessian, ‘The significance of the Bible for Saint Nerses Shnorhali’s theology’, in Actes du Colloque ‘Les Lusignans et L’outre-Mer’, Poitiers-Lusignan, 20-24 octobre 1993, 218-27.
severe prerequisites for the union of the churches, and expected a response from Nerses. Shnorhali and the Armenian Bishops declined to reply, due to the fact that Nerses’ approach to the reunion of the churches followed a different path. For him, union was ideally the fruit of the communion of faith and not of administrative submission, or uniformity in practices, as indicated in the following statement.

Various signs have been given to us as a result of the outpouring of the graces of our Saviour, such as the Holy Eucharist, the blessing of the Holy chrism (miwron), the Dominical feasts, and the rest. Now what purpose does it serve to deviate from these established practices as regards to their content, or time of observance, as the case may be, other than, stubbornly clinging to such divergences, only to destroy the unity of the peace of the church of Christ? Why not follow our Lord’s example, who on the day of the Sabbath instituted for man’s rest, nevertheless deemed it right to break it for the sake of restoring the health of a human being? If we are not willing to do this, we are indeed fallen into Jewish practices ... let us beware lest the world also call us hypocrites who so destroy the Law of God in order to enforce their own traditions?¹

He was also critical about the Byzantine persecution of Armenians, the destruction of their churches, and oppressive measures to convert the Armenian faithful to the Chalcedonian faith, as a hindrance to achieving union. In his General Epistle ¹[Թուղթ Ընդհանրական] he addresses to the emperor of Constantinople this plea:

The cause of our running away from you is that you have been pulling down our churches, destroying our altars, smashing the signs of the Christ [reference to the Armenian stone crosses], harassing our clergy, spreading slanders in a way that even the enemies of Christ would not do, even though we live in the midst of them. Such behaviour will not only fail to unify the divided, but it will divide those who are united. For human nature loves contrariness. And men are drawn to the execution of commands not so much by violence as by humility of love.²

¹ Nerses Shnorhali, Թուղթ Ընդհանրական (Constantinople, 1825). For the Latin translation see Epistola pastoralis S. Nersetis Clajensis catholici Armeniorum (S.Lazzaro, 1829). English translation by Fr Arakel Aljalian (General Epistle, New York, 1996), 4.
² General Epistle, 5.
He concluded his letter by warning against feelings of superiority and resentment. He observed that relations should not be based on master–slave patterns, but on a feeling of unity in Christ. Nerses urges Theorianos, the envoy of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-80), that the discussions proceed 'not in a spirit of contention or futile disputation, as has been the case hitherto for so long with no profit to anyone ... but rather mildly and gently, "each bearing the other one's burdens," and to heal the damages of ills, according to the precept of the Apostle'.

In all his endeavours Nerses Shnorhali is keen to underline the unique identity of the Armenian Church.

Nerses Shnorhali died on 13 August 1173, and was succeeded by Gregory IV, named Tgha (1173-78). Manuel Comnenus dies in 1180, and the whole programme, designed to bring about the reunion of the two churches, fell through. Issac Angelus (1185) abandoned the negotiations, and inaugurated a policy of oppression against the Armenians who had settled within the borders of the Empire. In 1196 when Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi went to Constantinople for a final attempt at resuming the dialogue, he found himself in the position of ‘a dove sitting among vultures’. The haughty attitude of the Greek divines, their ‘thick wordedness’ and lack of interest in renewal of the spirit disappointed Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi. To achieve full consensus Archbishop Nerses had called the Armenian bishops and abbots to a council held in Hromklay in 1179. An agreement was reached on the content of the letter, in which without deviating from their own traditional orthodoxy, and without offending the Greek sensibilities, they requested Emperor Isaac Angelus to resume the negotiations. Though the attitude of the Catholicos in Cilicia is more conciliatory and reveals a desire to reach an understanding with the Greeks, there is no change so far as their doctrine is concerned. They send to the Emperor the text of the treatise Against the Phantasiastae by Yovhanes Ojnetsi (650-728) with the synodal letter, adding:

We have deemed it important to send you this, so that you may know with certainty that Orthodoxy has not been recently introduced among us; it has come to us from our fathers. But our enemies are not

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paying any attention to this, instead slandering us with cruel and unseemly words.\(^1\)

Ecumenical dialogue intensified during the incumbency of Catholicos Grigor IV Tgha on the eve of the Third Crusade in 1187. In 1189 Pope Clement III wrote to Prince Lewon II (1189-1219) and to the Catholicos asking them to assist the crusaders. St Nerses Archbishop of Tarsus, one of the twelve who had signed the Document of Union, arrived at the council of Jerusalem in 1142. In defending himself against the accusations levelled by the eastern clergy (i.e. the Armenian clergy in the homeland) opposed to the union, he writes in these terms:

> It is self-evident to anybody who takes the trouble to think about it that Christian people differ from each other on some points, but God’s grace has given me the strength of intellect to view vain tradition with detachment, and to value an exchange of brotherly love. As far as I am concerned, the Armenian is like the Latin, the Latin like the Greek, the Greek like the Copt, the Copt like the Jacobite ... By the grace of Christ who breaks down all barriers which separate us, and so my good name extends to the Latin, Greek and Jacobite Churches, as well as to Armenia, while I remain immovable in their midst without ever bowing to their particular tradition.\(^2\)

In their dialogues for union with Byzantium and Rome the Armenian primates of Cilicia had to take into consideration the views and concerns of the Armenian clergy back in the homeland—the abbots of the Monasteries of Sanahin and Haghpat. Grigor in response to the representatives of the ‘Eastern clergy’ says ‘the law of love is universal, but it must extend beyond the limits of the group and that people must not act as if one Christ had come for the Armenians, one for the Greeks, and one for the Franks’. He defends himself against the accusation of having betrayed the Armenian traditions: ‘I am a true

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Armenian of undivided heart’ [հայ եմ ճշմարիտ և անեկբայրիւ], he declared, but he found it preposterous to engage in a sweeping condemnation of the Greeks as being ‘in ignorance and error’, nor did he accept that to speak of ‘two natures united’ would damage the Armenian Church.

Catholicos Grigor III Pahlawuni and St Nerses Lambronatsi indeed showed a degree of tolerance toward other Christian traditions which is rare in any age, recognizing that the common faith which different confessions share is more important than the issues which divide them, and that many of their minor differences are insignificant. Nevertheless, his charity towards the Latin Church, and his readiness to admit that, in some matters, the Armenian Church could learn from others, echoes the sentiments of his colleague Nerses IV Shnorhali. It was impossible for twelfth century Latin Christians to grasp that St Nerses could hold the Roman see in genuine reverence and yet regard the Latin, Greek, Jacobite and Armenian Churches as valid, autonomous parts of the universal Church.

Although union with Rome was formerly accepted by Cilician Armenia as early as 1198 at the council of Tarsus, other councils were later summoned for the same purpose in 1307 at Sis, and again in 1316 at Adana, where the union agreement were rejected by the ‘eastern clergy’. An Armenian representative at the council of Acre in 1261 is recorded to have said to the papal legate:

Whence does the Church of Rome derive the power to pass judgment on the other apostolic sees while she herself is not subject to their judgement? We ourselves have authority to bring you to trial, following the example of the apostles. And you have no right to deny our competence.1

In connection with Mkhit’ar Skewratsi’s experience it is worth mentioning the experience of the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople. In 1437 on the entrance of Patriarch Joseph into Ferrare, he absolutely refused, despite the demands of the papal representatives and his own pro-unionist convictions, to salute the pope in the western manner of genuflecting and kissing his foot. According to Silvester Syropoulos, the Patriarch exclaimed indignantly to the papal legates:

Whence has the pope this right? Which synod gave it to him? Show me from what source he derives this privilege and where it is written? The pope claims that he is the successor of St Peter. But if he is the successor of Peter, then we too are the successors of the rest of the Apostles. Did they kiss the foot of St Peter?1

Almost a century later the prospect of union between the Catholic-Byzantine and Armenian churches comes to an end. The Council of Florence failed to heal the rift. The Armenian Cilician Kingdom came to an end in 1375. The Armenian clergy in Cilicia failed to lift the enduring tensions and the threat to safeguarding the authenticity of the Armenian Church. The transfer of the See of the Catholicos of All Armenians from Cilicia to Holy Ejmiadsin in 1441 was a major achievement of the ‘Eastern clergy’.

In December 1869 to October 1870 at Rome in St Peter’s Basilica the First Vatican Council was convened. In the organisation of the Council the Armenian Catholic theologian Maghakia Ormanian had a pivotal role. In 1870 he published in Italian his ‘The Eastern Armenian Catholics and Armenians’, followed in 1872 by an Encyclical ‘The Freedom of the Eastern Catholics and political rights’. These titles were censured by the Catholic censor. Soon after on 28 October 1879 Ormanian with 75 fellow Armenian Catholics in protest returned to the fold of the Armenian Church and were received in the grand surroundings of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople by the Armenian Patriarch Nerses Varzhapetian. In 1911 he completed and published first in Armenian and in French his ‘The Church of Armenia’ (1911, 1912).2

Patriarch Ormanian found equally inappropriate, both the Latin Catholic Church’s spirit of exclusiveness which dominated negotiations, and the Greek Orthodox tradition which wished to impose their rite and authority on other Churches. He wrote:

Such intolerance is altogether foreign to the spirit of the Armenian Church, which cannot admit that any particular or national Church, however vast she may be, has the power to arrogate to herself the

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character of universality. In the sentiment that true universality can only be brought about by the combination of all the Churches, she upholds the author of the principle, *unitas in necessariis*, wherein are summed up the fundamental principles of Christianity. Having once admitted that condition, each one is at liberty to differ on points of secondary importance. Such are the principles on which the Armenian Church places the most stringent significance. She admits as essential only the dogmatic definitions of the first three Ecumenical councils, definitions whose origin can be traced to a single period, during which the particular churches still maintained among themselves their unity and their respective communions. So that every church which accepted the dogmas of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the Redemption, could, though following her own views, form a part of the Church Universal, and, by such title, she conferred on her faithful followers the right to eternal salvation. They all maintained among themselves the communion *in spiritualibus*, whereby the union of faith and of charity was exalted—a necessary condition if we are to have the unity of Christendom.

**Recent Christological Consultations**

Thanks to the efforts of the Ecumenical Movement since 1948 and to the remarkably positive deliberations of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) immense progress has been achieved with respect to the rapprochement of all Christian Churches. The intense and long Christological unofficial consultations that started in 1964 and lasted about thirty years are beginning to show some positive outcomes though are not yet conclusive. The first unofficial consultations between theologians of the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox churches were held in August 1964 at Aarhus, Denmark. The representatives of the Armenian Church were Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan (1904-89), Bishop Karekin Sarkissian (former Catholicos of the See of Cilicia and later Catholicos of All Armenians, 1995-99) and Bishop Mesrop Krikorian (Primate of the Diocese of Austria). Archbishop Nersoyan in his paper wrote that

> The supposedly poisonous heresies have produced no deleterious effects on the general health of our Christian faith and the overall orthodoxy of our Churches. The conclusion cannot be escaped that neither the teaching of the one nature nor the teaching of the two natures had made a difference in the real orthodoxy of the church or in

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1 Maghakia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, 111.
the operation of the Holy Spirit therein. Can we say, perhaps, that the very exercise of our intellectual muscles has kept us on both sides fairly trim and healthy?

and concluded his study with this assessment:

To be sure, events happen in history with valid reasons grounded in the realities of a given situation. And powers, sometimes divine and sometimes also demonic, propel men and things forward. Yet we cannot eliminate accidents that divert history from its course. Who knows, perhaps we are committed to our several theological positions because of legacies we inherit from history that is full of accidents or the result of series of accidents that have happened during the turbulent life of the Church. Should we not be mindful of this possibility and re-evaluate our positions accordingly, giving free, unobstructed rein to the Holy Spirit in our minds and souls?

This observation of Archbishop Nersoyan was made part of ‘An Agreed Statement’ in the following words:

The significant role of political, sociological and cultural factors in creating tension between factions in the past should be recognised and studied together. They should not, however, continue to divide us.

Catholicos Vazgen I (incumbency 1955–99) in his encyclical of 4 July 1965, emphasized unity in diversity and asked that ‘each historically developed Christian church with their saints, doctrines, traditions, etc. should be preserved in their purity, whole and unmixed, and unchanged, without addition or subtraction.’ His understanding was that:

Doctrinal and Christological differences are no longer impediments to the maintenance of amicable relations and brotherly co-operation of churches. Efforts for unity through the re-examination of doctrinal positions as to effect uniformity are still premature. Such efforts may

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2 GOTR, X, no. 2 (1964-65), 15.
open the door to new disputes, new misunderstandings and new dissensions.¹

This clearly formulated sentiment has also been the guiding principle in the dialogues that have taken place subsequently between non-Chalcedonian and Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Five International Ecumenical Consultations were held in Vienna between 1971-88 in which the Armenian church was represented by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and Archimandrite Mesrop Krikorian (who was also the co-chairman). On 12 February 1988 an ‘Agreed Statement on Christology’ was signed. The statement declared:

We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos is perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. He made His humanity One with His Divinity without mixture, nor Mingling, nor confusion. His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity even for a twinkling of an eye. At the same time, we anathematize the Doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches.²

In quick succession Common Declarations were signed with the leaders of the Syrian and Ethiopian Orthodox churches. During the incumency of His Holiness Vazgen I, such an agreement could not be signed without the consent of the Catholicate of the See of Cilicia, who had not participated in the consultations. By 1991 all the heads of the other participating Oriental Orthodox non-Chalcedonian Churches had endorsed the Common Declaration. In the light of Armenia becoming an independent country in 1991 it was deemed appropriate for the Armenian Church to endorse also the Common Declaration. On 13 December 1996, His Holiness Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians (1995-99) and formerly Karekin II, Catholicos of the See of Cilicia, in a signed Common Declaration with His Holiness Pope John Paul II endorsed the agreed formula on Christology which was achieved by the common efforts of the theologians of the Oriental Churches and of the Roman Catholic Church. It states:

We particularly welcome the great advance that their Churches have registered in their common search for unity in Christ, the word of God

¹ English translation in Hayastaneayts Ekeghetsi (The Armenian Church), July 1965.
made flesh. Perfect God as to His Divinity, perfect man as to His Humanity; His divinity is united to His humanity in the Person of the Only-begotten Son of God, in a union which is real, perfect, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without any form of separation.¹

The Common Declaration of 1996

In 1996 Catholicos Karekin I and Pope John Paul II signed a Common Declaration which did not go unopposed. Soon after signing the Declaration a number of Armenian clergy publically voiced their opposition.² Catholicos Aram I of the See of Cilicia defended the Catholicos by declaring:

What was said in the declaration was very much in line with the Christology of the Armenian Church—it is 100 per cent compatible. I don’t see any deviation from it. The position of the Armenian Church in the 5th and 6th centuries differed from the position in the 12th and 13th centuries [reference to St Nerses Shnorhali and Nerses Lambronatsi]. There has been a constant evolution.

The signed Common Declaration is entirely in line with Catholic teaching, which means that it makes no concession to the Christology of the Oriental Churches and of the Armenian Church. Christology is the theory of who and or what Jesus Christ was and is. We and the Latin have differed over the answers to that question since 451. Unlike us, who are a ‘one nature’ church, the Romans recognise in Jesus Christ ‘two natures’. It is true that the phrase ‘two natures’ does not appear anywhere in the Common Declaration mentioned above, but there are more ways than one of skinning the proverbial cat. The Pope’s advisors, highly competent and wily know only too well that Armenian classical theologians abhor the term ‘two natures’ and that no Armenian Catholicos who wished to keep his throne would formally adopt that phrase. So while he does not use the phrase ‘two

¹ L’Osservatore Romano, 14 December 1996, 1, 5.
natures’ in the text of the Declaration, he weaves its theory into it. The document in question speaks of a union in Jesus Christ which is said to be ‘without division’, ‘without separation’, ‘without confusion’. All these qualifications are found in the Tome of Leo.

Now it not beyond anyone to observe that these adverbial definitions imply two things (you have to be referring to two things in order to be able to say that they are not to be divided or separated). The two things in question cannot, moreover, be abstract things like humanity and divinity. They have to be real things like human nature and divine nature. It is regrettable that advisers to His Holiness Karekin I have failed to appreciate that for the last two hundred years or so, Christology has been moving in a way in favour of the non-Chalcedonian position. Major Catholic and Protestant theologians (Hans von Balthasar, Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann) show in their writings, overtly or between the lines, that the Cyrillian Christological formulation ‘One nature of the Word incarnate’ makes better sense, that it is better attuned to the Biblical world view. Paul Tillich says ‘courage of wisdom and resignation could be replaced by the courage of faith in salvation, that is by faith in God who paradoxically participates in human suffering’ (Courage To Be). As to the Armenian position it behoves us to realise that it fits better the rest of our Armenian faith and practice. Every Sunday during Divine Liturgy the Armenian interpretation of the Cyrillian formulae is used.

In the Profession of Faith we recite:

God of God ... very God of very God ... who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, was made man, was born perfectly of the Holy Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. By whom he took body, soul, mind and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance.

And in the secret prayer that the priest recites over the host he declares:

For having become man truly and without phantasm, and having become incarnate, through union without confusion, through the Mother of God, the Holy Virgin Mary, he journeyed through all the passions of our human life without sin and came willingly to the world-saving cross, which was the occasion of our redemption.

These two doctrinal statements are not compatible with the pronouncements in the Common Declaration.
There was no evolution properly speaking in the Christology of the Armenian Church. Our position as to the identity of Jesus Christ remained the same before and after Nerses Klayetsi and Grigor III Pahlawuni. Nerses’s own willingness to use the phrase ‘Երկու բնութիւն’ [two natures] that would pacify the Greeks is rooted in his being a man of good will. It makes sense to look upon that phrase as a trial balloon, or a way of testing the water. It is instructive to observe, moreover, as we look at Shnorhali’s underlying Christological convictions, the critical phrase must be translated not as ‘two natures’ but as ‘[one] dual nature’. It is clear from Shnorhali’s ‘Profession of Faith’ that the saint’s two-nature discourse does not waver in intent from the pre-Chalcedonian Christology of the Armenian Church. Nor should one forget, as already suggested, that there were Armenian theologians at the time of the incumbency of these two Catholicoses, who attended three local councils in Cilicia, and continued defending the Armenian position.

Had the Roman and Armenian pontiffs adopted some such vantage point, it should have been possible for them to simply declare that both their Churches have viable beliefs as to the identity of Jesus Christ, and that their formulations to that effect, although different, are nevertheless not, by themselves, an impediment to full communion. Now that would have made history. That, as distinct from the signing of yet another compromise statement, would have been something done in the spirit of Nerses Klayetsi—a spirit which according to Hagop Nersoyan’s appraisal would better be articulated in these terms:

You keep your formulation, we keep ours, hoping all the while that further advances in the art of thinking will lead to a more convergent interpretation of ‘and the Word became [physical] body’ (John 1: 14). Our common aim is nothing more and nothing less than the gradually deeper understanding of the foundational assertion ... Let us not keep producing formal compromise statements as variously initiated ecclesiastical conferences and meetings, for if we already, truly accept each other’s orthodoxy, we do not have to engage in that sort of courteous fraternisation. Let us, instead, keep conversing in a loving frame of ‘humility and love’.

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1 Hagop Nersoyan, *The Christology of the Armenian Church*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: 2001), 60.
Conclusion

Although union was never achieved, the three primates of the Armenian Church—St Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali (1163-73), his sister’s grandson Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi (1152-99) and Catholicos of All Armenians Grigor IV Tgha (1173-93)—had traced out the guiding principles of an ecclesiastic union that are valid even today. Let us, in conclusion, remind ourselves of those principles:

a) The only essential requirement for union is unity in faith and charity. All other differences are secondary.
b) If one of the parties insists on something that is not essential, though that should be avoided, the other party should nevertheless strive to meet the requirement to save the common charity.
c) Every effort must be made to prevent the search for union by creating new wounds within the individual national churches.
d) Reciprocal dialogue is fundamental. Thus, the past must be forgotten, and none of the parties should wish for a position of privilege or superiority (as the Greeks and the Romans were in relation to the Armenians).
e) No political or any other kind of motivation or interest that is not Christian charity and the desire for evangelical peace must influence the search for unity. Otherwise, we would have no more than a denial of faith.
Appendix: Contributions of Armenian theologians to the Vienna Consultations

Five Vienna Consultations. Selected Papers in One Volume, published and edited by the Ecumenical Foundation Pro Oriente, Vienna/Austria, 1993.

GOTR: Greek Orthodox Theological Review.


——, ‘Christological discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Ancient Oriental churches, Wort und Wahrheit, suppl. issue no. 1 (1972), 11-23.


——, ‘What Are the Reactions to the Previous Four Vienna Consultations and what future actions could be envisaged for their implementation within the Armenian Apostolic Church?’, Five Vienna Consultations (1993), 317-18.


——, Sermon at the Pontifical Mass, The Fourth Vienna Consultation, 1978, ‘This is the day which the Lord has made, come let us rejoice and be glad in it’, The Vienna Dialogue, Booklet No. 1 (1990), 89-91.


AN ORDINARIATE CONTRIBUTION TO ECUMENISM

Mark Langham*

The Ordinariate, established amidst publicity and controversy in 2011, has now become part of the ecclesiological landscape. However, its potential to model and promote unity with Anglicans, and to invigorate Roman Catholic worship and spirituality, remains largely untapped. At a time when ecumenism in general is facing grave difficulties, the Ordinariate represents an honest and coherent ‘thinking through’ of the consequences of recent developments that underlines the essential characteristics of consistency and communion. It also represents a prophetic warning that mere coexistence is not enough, and models a way towards a unity which allows space for distinctive traditions.

1. A Quiet Reality

President Obama, moving to restore relations with Cuba, has declared that the Cold War is ended. Undoubtedly the peeling colonial architecture and battered Cadillacs that typify the revolutionary isolation of Cuba will soon share space with Starbucks and MacDonalds. Some revolutions, at the time daring and unprecedented, in time become part of the scenery, the accepted state of affairs. That is the back-story of ecumenism itself, in the years since Vatican II’s landmark declaration on Ecumenism and the recognition of aspects of the Church outside the borders of the Catholic Church itself. Back then, there was a palpable sense of history in the making; high hopes were entertained for ecumenical possibilities. For Anglicans and Catholics, it seemed, major developments were just around the corner.

In this heady atmosphere ARCIC was established, in the wake of the Council’s singling out of Anglicanism as a tradition in which significant Catholic elements had survived. Hopes were high that

* Mark Langham, a priest of the diocese of Westminster, served on the Anglican and Methodist desks of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from 2008 to 2013. He is currently Roman Catholic Chaplain to Cambridge University.
something big was going to happen. Something big did happen: during the visit of Archbishop Michael Ramsey, Pope Paul placed his fisherman’s ring on the finger of the Archbishop—a gesture that seemed to signify some recognition of his episcopal status, perhaps even hinting at a re-visiting of the negative Catholic judgement on Anglican orders.

That was then, and now is now. The exhilaration of those early years has faded—partly because we have become familiar with a level of interaction between Christians that was unthinkable before the Council. Catholics are well acquainted with our Anglican neighbours; we meet regularly at civic services, ‘Churches Together’, running the Food Bank. That is good: ecumenism should not be extraordinary. It should be our normal way of doing things.

It is also the story of the Ordinariate. Launched with significant publicity, some controversy, and much comment, it was unprecedented, intrepid, audacious. It felt as though something mighty were happening, a shift in the tectonic plates of our ecumenical endeavours. I was working for the Council for Christian Unity at the time, and the Ordinariate was at the top of the agenda of every ecumenical discussion, East and West. There were expectations of a new realignment, a new way of doing ecumenism. Nowadays, the Ordinariate is part of the ecumenical scenery; an increasingly familiar reality within the Catholic Church, an established part of our tradition. That is probably as it should be. We need to get over the shock of where people have come from, and it is good for the Ordinariate to move on from being characterised by its origins, to be free from labels and histrionics. Elation gives way to a calmer, more grounded, narrative. This quieter reaction does not betoken loss of importance or significance. Quite the opposite: it provides a space to reflect and assess how the Ordinariate can enrich and contribute to the life of the Catholic Church. That is true in many areas: liturgy, spirituality, the exercise of authority, and, notably, ecumenism. In an era when ecumenical dialogue has become more reflective and meticulous, the Ordinariate can, I believe, provide some direction and impetus to our discussions.
2. A reflective period for Ecumenism

Contemporary ecumenism has become reflective. Which is perhaps another way of saying that it is going through a difficult time. It is notable that current phases of official dialogues, among them ARCIC III, have adopted a more cautious, painstaking, approach in their discussions. Forty years ago, it was assumed that resolving the high-profile issues of Eucharist, Ministry and Authority would bring rapid re-union. The decades have shown this not to be the case, so now the dialogue is returning to the assumptions that lie behind formulae and agreements, painstakingly to build up a picture of what Anglicans and Catholics agree upon, and what sources we draw upon and how we use them in formulating our own positions. There are no longer startling announcements (as there once were) that Anglicans are willing to accept elements of Universal Primacy or Marian devotion. For some, this careful re-assessment is frustrating. A generation which remembers Pope Paul placing his ring upon the finger of a startled Archbishop Michael Ramsey is perplexed at the lack of progress on the ecumenical front. Four decades of theological dialogue, nine agreed statements, do not seem to have yielded their anticipated fruit. Many look upon the ecumenical dialogues as foot-dragging, ignoring the desire of ordinary Christians for unity. One such is the former archbishop of Canterbury, George Cary, who, during the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, labelled ARCIC ‘irrelevant to the ordinary Christian’.

Even those who take a more positive view of the value of ecumenical dialogue do not doubt that we are going through a difficult patch in the quest for unity among Christians. Cracks in the relationship were visible as far back as 1982, when a downbeat assessment of the Final Report of ARCIC I by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith questioned the assertion that ‘substantial agreement’ on key disputed matters had been reached. ARCIC II continued its discussions, and Archbishops of Canterbury were unfailingly received with great warmth on visits to Rome, but as the Church of England proceeded to ordain women in 1992, there was an increasing sense of an ecumenical dialogue going through the motions. ARCIC II produced some fine documents, but there was no over-arching theme to them:
Justification, Communion, Authority, Mary, Ethics. The dialogue was searching for a thread.

Further difficulties were, of course, to come. In 2003 and 2009, active homosexuals were elected Bishops in the Episcopalian Church. Here the issue was moral, as well as doctrinal; it was no longer an issue of what to talk about when we sat down together, but whether we could sit down at all. These developments within Anglicanism were, it was felt, unacceptable in themselves, but also undermined the achievements of the historic dialogue. ARCIC had previously published Agreed Statements on Priesthood, Authority, Communion, and Eucharist. The Robinson/Glasspool elections called some aspect of each of these into question. Rome, fearing a lack of consistency, began to ask the not unreasonable question, ‘What was the point of our discussions?’

The ecclesial shock of the Robinson/Glasspool consecrations has been acutely felt in other ways, as a rift has developed within the worldwide Anglican Communion itself, whereby some Anglican bishops refuse to recognise the authority of other Anglican bishops, and declare themselves out of communion with them. All of which leads Rome to ask with plausible bewilderment—’Where is the Anglican Communion? Who speaks for it?’ There is a de facto schism within worldwide Anglicanism, so that even the current Archbishop of Canterbury himself wonders whether the Communion can survive the present controversy.

3. Essential qualities of ecumenism

The crisis within Anglican-Catholic relations centres upon the concepts of consistency and communion, both essentials in ecumenism. I believe that the Ordinariate can help re-invigorate, re-apply, and re-tune both these concepts, particularly in the light of recent events in the Church of England.

On 26 January 2015, Libby Lane was consecrated Bishop of Stockport at York Minster, the first woman bishop in the Church of England. In the same Minster, on 2 February, Philip North was consecrated Bishop of Burnley in what I consider a more significant event, by only three bishops, none of whom had participated in the ordination of women priests. Both new bishops claim to stand in the succession historic episcopate as maintained in the Church of England. But one of them, significantly, does not recognise (or, in Anglican terminology, ‘cannot
receive’) the ministry of the other, although he had to assent to the Guiding Principle that the Church of England has ‘reached a clear decision’ on the matter of women bishops.

This succession of events demonstrates the impressive ability of the Church of England to find a formula for the most seemingly intractable of issues. The Church of England, formed by a Queen who did not want to make windows into men’s souls, and consolidated in the golden age of English prose, has a way with words. The solution on display at York, whereby the Church of England consecrated two bishops whose ministry excludes communion with each other, is a triumph of diplomacy and ingenuity, representing, in the words of the Archbishop of York, ‘the Church of England’s gracious magnanimity, restraint and respect for theological convictions’.

While respecting the Archbishop of York’s interpretation, one might raise concerns. There is a point where gracious magnanimity and breadth of opinion are in danger of conspiring together to exclude integrity, and where acceptance of another point of view demonstrates not only a determination to live with opposing views, but also a seeming willingness not to follow through the consequences of that decision. Perhaps this runs deep within Anglicanism. I recall, as a parish priest in Notting Hill, being phoned by my High Church opposite number asking for Mass texts for the Feast of the Catholic Martyrs of England and Wales. Our friendship notwithstanding, I spluttered down the line: ‘How can you celebrate that Feast?! The martyrs died precisely because they would not accept what you represent: Catholicism without the Pope!’ His reply was, ‘Oh, we don’t really think it through like that.’

Thinking it through. That surely is the crux of the issue. Thinking through what communion means, and the consequences of certain actions for communion. Attending the 2008 Lambeth Conference as part of the Catholic delegation, I asked about those bishops present at the Conference who were unwilling to celebrate the Eucharist with other bishops. The answer was, tellingly, that ‘we haven’t really thought through’ what that means for ‘our communion’. The comprehensiveness of Anglicanism is one of its glories; it is what has made it such a superb national Church. But it can also be a flaw, which hinders addressing serious doctrinal or moral disagreements in a rigorous or consistent way. This leads not so much as to respect for different points of view as the loss of a theological compass. The
presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church calls us to ‘celebrate [...] difference’ as the ‘only road to the kingdom of God’, and has even defined Anglicanism as ‘diversity in fellowship and communion’. I see what she is trying to say—I think—but it is not good enough. Not good enough for communion. And in this respect I think Anglicanism has failed to think things through.

Of the two Anglican Episcopal consecrations at York, that of Philip North is perhaps the more significant in terms of communion, both within and without Anglicanism. Women were always going to be made bishops within the Church of England; even the negative General Synod vote of November 2012 concerned how, not whether, women should be ordained bishops. What is more significant, to my mind, is that a line of bishops has now been identified, within the wider Church of England episcopacy, that considers itself distinct from that episcopacy. As a practical solution it may well work, at least for a while, and knowing and admiring Philip North I am sure that if anyone can make it work it is he. But that will be despite, not because of, the theology. It can only work if you don’t do the theology. That was conceded by one non-consecrating bishop present in York who praised the provision, while acknowledging that some ‘theological questions and issues were left hanging.’

Where is communion here? Unless you are to define communion in the loosest of terms, as ‘belonging to the same institution’ or even ‘sitting at the table together’, I would maintain that it is not possible to recognise communion in this provision. Communion is, of its nature, more than a visible unity and certainly more than a formula that enables you to maintain cordial relations with those who disagree with you. Communion is an inner bond of faith, the reality of our membership of the catholic, apostolic Church, that communion of all the faithful united to each other in Christ to form one body. ‘Whenever differences become embodied in separated ecclesial communities, so that Christians are no longer able to receive and pass on the truth within the one community of faith, communion is impoverished and the living memory of the Church is affected’—not my words, but those of ARCIC’s own document on Communion. Have not the York provisions institutionalised just this inability to share and pass on the life of faith? My question, one which has already been asked by others, is: in what sense are Bishop Lane and Bishop North bishops in the same Church? There are serious ecclesiological
and sacramental questions problems here that put into the hazard the Catholic tradition claimed by Anglicanism. Mutual love and respect is not enough. There needs to be consistency. Someone needs to think things through.

4. The path of consistency.

I would suggest that the Ordinariate is what happens when you do think things through, and are rigorous and truthful about the effect of certain actions upon communion. Communion is more than affection, or toleration, or elasticity. Communion has a breaking point—it is a configuring of oneself and one’s community to the universal community of the Church, and certain developments render that configuration impossible, disfigure that likeness. The fact that two bishops who will not celebrate the Eucharist together can be photographed side by side is not, as was claimed, ‘a wonderful expression of the unity of the Church.’ Communion has content; only when the two bishops share the Eucharist is the claim of unity made real.

It is in this that the Ordinariate is a truthful response to the claim to be Catholic, a realistic expression of the unity of the Church. In so doing, it contributes to a more honest ecumenical project, by demonstrating the need to draw a rigorous theological conclusion from the claims of communion.

Catholics crave certainty. Our whole sacramental system is predicated on an assurance given to us that the sacrament is doing what it claims to be; that the sign is authentic, that grace is truly conferred. I want to know that my priest is truly ordained; that I am really receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, that my sins are really forgiven. Ultimately, there is only one guarantee of that: communion. Communion with the Church and, when all is said and done, communion with Peter. Anglicans can speak (and did in York) of ‘impaired communion’ with which they are willing to live. Impaired communion may or may not be communion. For me, that is not sufficient; it cannot guarantee the life of grace I need. The Ordinariate bears testimony to that demand for certainty—which is a reasonable demand since our Lord went to such lengths to ensure that his presence and saving acts might endure and be available at every moment in history. For the Ordinariate, this championing of certainty
is a sign of what unity needs to include; a rigorous pursuit of what communion means, and what it takes to guarantee the sacraments.

5. The Ordinariate as Realised Ecumenism.

A second element of the Ordinariate’s contribution to contemporary ecumenism is its embodiment of a goal. The Ordinariate is a model of ‘realised ecumenism’ which is ever more important both as a prophetic sign and a commitment to faithfulness. One common response to the difficulties of the contemporary ecumenical situation is to say that we have gone as far as we can go. That, given the seeming impossibility of coming together, we should live with our differences. In this case, the task of Christians is co-existence, getting on together, within our distinct traditions. By and large, we do that quite well. Peaceful co-existence has been hard won. Moreover, it allays our fears about ecumenism; protecting beliefs, ceremonies and practices that are dear to us. Co-existence, in charity, allows full expression of our own doctrines, and avoids any danger of compromise or watering down difficult issues.

An even more compelling version of this stance notes that just because we cease to do theology, we are not thereby condemned to ecumenical inertia. There is a Practical Ecumenism, which means Christians doing together what we can do together. This, in fact, is the way that most of us encounter ecumenism these days. The opening of food banks, the campaigns against poverty, the work to combat global slavery, joint witness in countless parishes and cities—here Christian charity knows no distinction of denomination. There can be no questioning the value of any of this. Vatican II makes that clear when it says: ‘Cooperation among all Christians vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant.’

But there is also a danger, alluded to by Pope Benedict, that in a seemingly intractable theological situation, we shrink ecumenism to ‘what we can do together’—into purely practical ecumenism. Speaking to the CDF in 2012, he warned against reducing ecumenism ‘to a kind of “social contract” to be joined for a common interest, a “praxeology” for creating a better world.’ We turn from the difficult work of theology, to take refuge in local projects and practical initiatives. Pope Benedict’s point is that practical initiatives must not become a
substitute for the difficult, but ultimately necessary, theological dialogue.

So, we have to do the theology. There is one reason above all why we must repeatedly attempt the seemingly impossible task of untangling the knots of our different Christian positions. It is the will, the prayer, of Christ: ‘May they all be one, as you and I are one.’ Christ did not pray that we simply live peaceable side by side, or even that we collaborate. He prayed that we may be one, in a unity that reflects the inner life of the Trinity—’as you and I are one’. That Trinitarian unity is an inner bond, a unity of being, although diverse in its relationships. Pope John Paul II was blunt: ‘To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ’s prayer: Ut unum sint.’

Here the presence of the Ordinariate within the Church is prophetic and exhortative; a warning both to Catholics and to other Christians that co-existence, even with a Communion in which historically the Catholic Church can see a great deal of itself, is not enough. Faithfulness to the prayer of our Lord is to commit ourselves to his agenda, his journey, his prayer; however unlikely or difficult that may seem to us. True ecumenism is not only about sustaining the present bonds of charity; it must direct itself forward, towards its goal, a goal that will be visible in sharing Eucharistic fellowship. The Ordinariate not only represents a realisation of that goal, but also a reminder to all Christians that where we are is not good enough. We need once more to see ecumenism not as an abstract notion, but a reality that makes demands upon us. The Ordinariate, in the end, underlines that in staying divided as we are, we are lacking in witness to him who name we claim to bear.

6. Modelling Unity

If the Ordinariate restores the sense of movement towards unity, it also models what that unity can look like. Here I believe that the Ordinariate’s contribution to ecumenism has potential yet to be unlocked.

The unity we seek is, to some, frightening. There is a dread of having to let go cherished traditions and devotions; of having to take on unfamiliar and uncongenial practices. One Episcopalian Bishop in
2010 warned against any scheme that would ‘drag the communion down the slippery slope towards a coercive structure like the papacy.’ Fears by Catholics of watering-down doctrine, by other Christians of Roman centralisation, make the ecumenical goal less that attractive. Given such fears, we need to be careful about what we mean by the unity of Christians. What would be its characteristics? What would be its room for diversity?

In the first place, unity must be solid. ‘Solid’ in the sense of truthful. Ecumenism can only be truthful, and is not, and never can be, compromise. Our unity must be, in the words of Vatican II, ‘constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and hierarchical communion.’ We cannot found our unity on anything less, by glossing over difficult elements or diluting doctrine. But that does not mean that we should not employ discernment. To some extent, the Reformation in Europe was brought about by insistence upon precise words or phrases: transubstantiation; justification by faith alone; sola scriptura. In its newest and most cautious phase, when ARCIC III is contemplating the roots of our common traditions, its method is to ask: do we really need to use particular historic words, specific formulae, to describe a theological issue truthfully?

A unity which is truthful, needs also to do justice to the diversity of traditions within Christianity. Unity, as Cardinal Müller said in 2012, is not achieved by the elimination of distinctiveness—and certainly not by the requirement that diverse liturgies, customs and spirituality should be replaced by one, Roman, model. Pope Benedict himself usefully distinguished Tradition (with a capital T), from traditions. Pope Francis during his visit to the Orthodox Patriarch in Constantinople, said significantly to his hosts that, in the search for unity, the Catholic Church ‘does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith.’ This does not mean that we will ignore central doctrines, or sit light to Church authority and teaching. It does mean that we will be sensitive to the concerns and fears of our ecumenical partners, and not seek to violate their own traditions. Vatican II recognised ‘elements of sanctification and truth’ in other Christian communities, and it is important to honour and respect these elements, and even to learn from them.

Here the Ordinariate has much to offer the wider Church. It holds out a viable model of diversity in unity, a visible sign that proclaims that shared communion does not mean uniformity of worship,
traditions, or even of government. This is a point that has been well made within the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, but that needs also to be broadcast in wider ecumenical circles: an assurance that the price of unity is not too high, that fears need not be realised.

The model of unity represented by the Ordinariate is also a reassurance to Catholics themselves, that ecumenism per se does not call for fearful innovation in, or attenuation of, cherished traditions. Rather, ecumenism strengthens who we are, and transforms our traditions from a dusty treasure-chest of doubloons buried in our cellar into a resource to be freshly appreciated and articulated, to help us flourish and grow. The Ordinariate, particularly in its texts and liturgies, shows that within the Catholic Church all our identities have space to grow. This is not some concession, some enclave that has been conceded; it is part of what being Catholic is. The Ordinariate is drawing upon the traditions and resources of its Anglican liturgical and spiritual life, in order (and this is the point) to play a fuller part in the life of the Catholic Church. Here is a lesson for us all. Ecumenism is not afraid of diversity; rather, it thrives upon it. The search for unity renders the Church strengthened, more Catholic, in having available within it a richness of Christian heritage. For Catholics of all backgrounds, it is an opportunity to see their own cherished traditions, their way of doing things in parishes and dioceses, as more than a state of affairs, but rather as a resource to celebrate, strengthen, employ, even re-discover, in the search for unity.

I would encourage members of the Ordinariate to be more pro-active in this field. The Ordinariate is not some sheep-pen in which you are given leave to mill about so that your curious ways may be observed by the great number of Roman Catholics. It is a catechising tool; it is an example in methodology. It has resources which the wider Church needs. The Ordinariate can show how to go about exploring and re-presenting one’s own tradition.

### 7. An exchange of Gifts

Underlying all ecumenical endeavour there is a basic need to learn more about each other. Much time in formal dialogues is spent un-learning stereotypes, and un-picking the misunderstanding and lack of knowledge in which we have grown up. How many Catholics have a basic idea about Anglicanism? At Lambeth in 2008, some members of the Catholic delegation were frustrated that the Archbishop of
Canterbury did not simply tell everyone what to do. When Archbishop Rowan met Pope Benedict in Rome at San Gregorio in 2012, it was suggested by Vatican authorities that he wait in a corridor while the Pope prayed before the Blessed Sacrament. Not a few Curial jaws hit the floor when Archbishop Rowan asked why he might not pray at the Blessed Sacrament also. Ignorance is an enemy of ecumenism, as Pope John Paul keenly noted:

Christians cannot underestimate the burden of long-standing misgivings inherited from the past, and of mutual misunderstandings and prejudices. Complacency, indifference, and insufficient knowledge of one another often make this situation worse.

Presuppositions about each other’s history, motivations, and practices can be deeply embedded. The Ordinariate has a twofold mission here, grounded in the famed ‘exchange of gifts’ of which Pope John Paul spoke. The first is to introduce Catholics to Anglicanism. Here I would highlight the Customary of Our Lady of Walsingham, which, for the first time (apart from hymns and a few poems in obscure pages of the Breviary) introduces into the Catholic liturgy prayers and readings from outside its own tradition. Remarkably, the treasures of another Christian tradition are now available to Catholics within the liturgy, a powerful resource of theology and spirituality. As a priest committed to praying the Office of Readings in the Roman Breviary each day, I cannot tell you how tempting it is to substitute readings from St Augustine’s interminable Sermon on the Shepherds with meditations from Lancelot Andrewes, Thomas Traherne, or John Keble. The Customary is a resource that can provoke interest, open up to a new audience a world of reasonable, scholarly, accessible writing, and introduce a new readership to the freshness and vigour of some of the greatest theological minds this country has produced. I hope that members of the Ordinariate will press our Bishops to make its readings and prayers more widely available, and even to make them regular alternatives to the readings of the Divine Office.

The second aspect of the Ordinariate’s mission is, through sharing of the Anglican theological and spiritual heritage, to oil the wheels of Ecumenical dialogue for Anglicans themselves. In my own research on the Caroline Divines, I have become aware of resources within Anglicanism of which Anglicans themselves need to be reminded. At the General Synod discussion on Mary in February 2011, it was clearly news to many delegates that there was any history of Marian devotion
within Anglicanism. The startled and hostile Anglican response to the mild endorsement of some sort of Papal Primacy in ARCIC’s statement *Gift of Authority* signified no awareness of the remarkable Caroline statements on the subject. Archbishop Rowan Williams himself lamented the absence of historical Anglican moral theology in ARCIC’s discussion of moral theology. In a host of areas, greater familiarity with the treasures of Anglican heritage, and particularly those aspects of it with which members of the Ordinariate are particularly familiar, can reconfigure ecumenical discussion, so that, for sceptical Anglicans, solutions can be achieved based not upon what are seen as Roman impositions, but from within Anglicanism itself.

8. **An English strand of Catholicism**

Following from this, my final point is that the Ordinariate's championing of elements of the traditions of Anglicanism can re-introduce Catholics in this country to their own Catholic inheritance. There is a common assumption among English Catholics (certainly it was prevalent in my own schooling) that the Catholic faith disappeared from this country in 1534 and was re-introduced again in 1850. There was simply an intermission, like turning your computer on and off. It was in no way acknowledged either that Catholic elements had been preserved in the interval, or that the form of Catholicism restored in 1850 was in many ways unlike that of the middle ages, drawing its identity and spirituality from sources unknown to native English Catholicism. The names of Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, St Edith of Wilton, St Wilfrid, St Frideswide are virtually unknown to modern English Catholics. They are all there, in the Customary. The Ordinariate can help re-present a Catholicism whose spirituality, language, customs and music are rooted in the history and climate of these islands; whose mysticism draws upon not only upon St Theresa of Avila but also the Cloud of Unknowing; not only upon Francis de Sales but also Aelred of Rievaulx; whose piety, as well as Italian and baroque, is also forged in the landscape of England; who honours Mary not only at Lourdes and Fatima but also at Walsingham; whose liturgical seasons, as well as marching to the mighty beat of Rome, also recall the closer footfall of Sarum. It is easy to be romantic and over-precious about this, and many have fallen into that trap. Moreover, it is important to state that Catholicism is vigorous because
it is universal, and English Catholicism today boasts many cultural strands which enrich and strengthen it. But one undervalued and distinctive strand of English Catholicism is missing. Anglicanism has preserved something of the rich and distinctive flavour of a Catholicism that was moulded in this land throughout a millennium, and it is the Ordinariate's task to contribute this to our national treasury of spirituality.

The Ordinariate has rich potential for ecumenical endeavour which is only just starting to be realised. It has in particular a mission to bring to the fore, for both Catholic and Anglican audiences, those same Catholic elements within the Anglican tradition which were noted by Vatican II, elements within Anglicanism in which the Catholic Church sees itself and which are features impelling us to unity, drawing us together. The Ordinariate has a unique role in distinguishing these elements and, both directly and indirectly, encouraging, reminding and urging onward Catholics and Anglicans in their pilgrimage towards Christian Unity.
An analysis of how Williams’ theology developed at a personal level has led to an emphasis on the ‘self-dispossession’ (kenosis) of the Christian disciple in order to engage in dialogue as genuine peacemaker with those whose ideas emanate from other world-views. Dialogue is understood not as a process for synthesis, resolving difference by compromise, but engagement in a struggle to understand and a challenge provoking growth ‘in the broken-middle’ where, in negotiation, each participant matures and is reconciled to continuing in patient dialogue with the other in the hope of developing a richer self-understanding, and as a foundation for cooperation for the common good in a reconciled humanity. Part 1 published in ONE IN CHRIST, vol. 48 no. 2, pages 232-52.

Problems in dialogue are not limited to communication with those committed to other ideologies and faiths. There are also intra-faith tensions demanding dialogue: problems of schism and heresy, or as Christians express themselves more positively today, problems of ecumenism—the desire for Christian unity. Dialogue between faiths must also take into account diversity within faiths to attempt to retain realistic theological integrity.\(^1\) In his early career this was a serious concern for Williams and his research into the causes for tension within developing Christian tradition reflect this.

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* Philip Ind is a retired Anglican priest serving in Suffolk. He received an MA in Christianity and Interreligious Relations from Heythrop College, London in 2006 and an M.Phil (Research) also from Heythrop in 2013. His thesis was on ‘Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury 2003-2012 and his relation with Islam’.

1.5 The Continuity of Christian Tradition

Myers reminds us that a divinity student at Oxford or Cambridge in the 1980s could have been forgiven for supposing that early Christian History is really ‘just one damn thing after another,’ and it is true that ‘British academic theology was dominated by a profound scepticism towards doctrinal tradition, coupled with an implicit trust in the primacy of modern reason’.2

One of the foremost historians of Christianity of the time, Maurice Wiles, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, advocated a method of ‘doctrinal criticism’,3 whereby the early faith of the church is carefully extricated from its ‘outdated metaphysical framework’. Doctrine, he agreed, remains valid, but only after it has been recast in a form that fits ‘the scientific, anti-supernatural world-view of modern thought’. What is left is little more than a Christian mythology.

Rowan Williams in the 1980s was first at Cambridge as a young lecturer, and then as Professor at Oxford. From his researches into the contemplative theology of Russian Orthodox tradition he had acquired ‘a more confident perception of the vitality of Christian Tradition’4—the continuity of the process by which the church interprets and applies the Gospel in responding to the spiritual challenges of each new age. Williams comments:

If, as Wiles often appears to think, you think that doctrinal formulae are rather poor attempts to solve intellectual questions that we no longer ask, then you will inevitably wish to relativize them, if not to abandon them. If on the other hand, they are shaped by the desire to find the least problematic way of holding a profoundly elusive truth, and by the impulse to push towards the edge of what can be said, and to impel a kind of ‘emptying-out’ of personal and intellectual assertion, they will be viewed differently and will not so readily be brought before the supposed impartial tribunal of ahistorical, modern reason’.5

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1 Benjamin Myers, Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams, (London, Continuum C&T Clark 2012), 43–49.
2 Ibid. 43.
4 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 43.
5 Rowan Williams, Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology, ed. by Mike Higton (London: SCM Press, 2007), xiii.
Williams viewed the history of Christian thought with remarkable theological confidence. After his engagement with Russian Orthodox theology he would never again be able to look at the Christian tradition as a merely secular affair or accept the procedure of ‘doctrinal criticism’, with its easily supposed dichotomy ‘between the enlightened methods of modern thought and the antiquated world of early Christian dogma’.1 As has been mentioned, in his doctoral research, Williams had read Vladimir Lossky’s criticism of the habit of studying church history using methods that bracket-out that factor which is, in fact, most essential to the church—its religious nature. Where this occurs, Lossky argued, the religious dimension is merely replaced by something else: social or political interest. He wrote: ‘We think ourselves shrewder, more up to date, in invoking these factors as the true guiding forces of ecclesiastical history’.2 In contrast, Lossky defined tradition ‘as the critical memory of the church, made alive by the Holy Spirit’.3

Nothing could have been further from the spirit of British theology in the 1980s than the assumption of Georges Florovsky that church history is ‘part of the story of redemption’.4 Williams accepted exactly this assumption, and throughout the 1980s he set about developing a full-scale assault on the methods of doctrinal criticism.5 His response to the cool rationalism of ‘doctrinal criticism’ was to establish ‘Church history as a spiritual discipline’. It was his conviction that a community generated by a traumatic event of rupture must try ‘to explain how it locates itself in a world decisively disrupted and contradicted.’ Thus, he claimed, the struggle for normative Christianity ‘orthodoxy’ belongs in essence to the Christian community. Orthodoxy is the church’s attempt to resist fragmentation and to compose for itself a coherent social imagery, and the purpose of historical study is to invite us into ‘a process of questioning and being questioned by the past’, so that we come to see that the

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1 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 43.
2 Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 19.
5 Rowan Williams, Why Study the Past? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 110.
Christian past is right at the centre of the Christian present. ‘The present is simply what the past is doing now’.

Williams’ most important contribution to the study of doctrinal history is his influential 1987 work, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. Here, he argues that the Arian controversy was essentially a series of debates about the nature of Christian continuity. Christians need to ask, how does the Church remain faithful in a new historical situation? Should the Church remain committed to the language and formulations of the past, or is some kind of innovation necessary in order to secure a deeper continuity? An axiom of modern writing on heresy, according to Jacques Berlinerblau, ‘is the belief that the heretic is a progressive element, one who heroically [...] expands the parameters of a restricted collective conscience for future generations to benefit.’ Against this trend, Williams depicts Arius as ‘a committed theological conservative’. In his account, Arius emerges not only as the archetypal heretic but also as the archetypal propagandist conservative who viewed himself as a guardian of Christian formulae. Standing firm against the threatening encroachment of the Nicene innovators, Arius presented himself as both a biblical exegete and as a defender of doctrinal tradition. The whole Arian controversy, Williams argues, is thus a series of debates about ‘how to be loyal to a tradition under strain’; how to be faithful to the biblical testimony amid the changed conditions of the fourth century when Christianity, under Constantine, became *religio licita*, (a religion permitted by law). The theology of Nicaea represents a crucial moment in doctrinal history when the Church perceived that critical theological reflection is not only legitimate but necessary.

Williams compares the Nicene crisis with the German Confessing Church’s struggle of the 1930s, where a small group of pastors and

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teachers resisted the German Lutheran Church’s complacent acceptance of Nazi ideology. ‘The Barmen Declaration’, written by Karl Barth and other ‘confessing’ leaders, represents not a confessional conservatism but a profound struggle for theological self-awareness and for a new openness to the church’s originating event, so that the gospel becomes at once more difficult and more immediate in its contemporary demands. The lesson of Barmen, Williams thinks, is that ‘proclaiming now the same gospel as before is a great deal less easy than it sounds.’ It is a matter of intense struggle, of risk and commitment.

The history of doctrine is, then, a history of formative conflicts and struggles and so it would be a mistake to think of conflict only as a clash between truth and error, or between a pre-existing ‘orthodoxy’ and a divergent ‘heresy’. On the contrary, Williams claims, orthodoxy actually comes into being only through its struggle with heresy. His historical work from the 1980s is thus at pains to underscore the unfinished character of doctrinal orthodoxy. There is no straightforward ‘deposit of faith’ which needs only to be conserved and defended. Rather, Orthodoxy must be experienced as something still future, a continuing project, which is not finally settled or resolved. It is not so much a settled system of beliefs as a ‘tool’—a set of self-reflective practices—‘a tradition of discriminating, imaging and symbolising’. ‘It is the Church’s therapeutic response to the trauma of Christ’s resurrection’. Properly understood Arianism should not be seen then as a complete deviation from orthodoxy—its basic premises were rooted in tradition—but it was a failure of nerve, an inability to accept the incompleteness and ambiguity of Christian belief. Its ‘heretical’ impulse lay in what Williams calls a ‘destructive longing for final clarity, totality of vision’—the same totalizing impulse that ‘brings forth the monsters of religious and political idolatry.’

Karl Barth once said that Christian doctrine is truthful only to the extent that it ‘points beyond itself and summons us to hear not itself,'

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1 Williams, On Christian Theology, 87–8.
2 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 47.
3 Ibid. 48.
but [Christ].\(^1\) As Williams views it, the Christian Tradition is the extension through time of that self-dispossessing witness. Its aim is to point beyond itself, to formalize its own unfinishedness, to hold open a space for new encounters with what Flannery O’Connor calls God’s ‘dark and disruptive grace’.\(^2\) Tradition keeps the church in contact with its own traumatic origins: the dark grace of an empty tomb.

This work by Williams on Arianism is recognized as a very considerable contribution to intra-faith, ecumenical dialogue seeking unity between the multiplicity of cultural expressions of Christian belief, Eastern and Western, African and Asian. It is another example of the importance of respect for the differences of language between persons of different cultural backgrounds, and how dialogue can provoke growth towards maturity, helping Christian Tradition to adapt faithfully to new historical situations. Already, in the years of Archbishop Rowan’s primacy, his work has brought Christian theologians from many traditions together in dialogue with Muslims of great cultural diversity in the ‘Building Bridges’ Seminars.

Myers describes how in the early stages of the development of Williams’ theology he revealed the process by which an orthodox Christian language was established, and how it relates to the creation of a new humanity in the infant communities of the People of God, the Church. Myers writes: ‘I have been exploring Williams’ commitment to a catholic understanding of Christ and humanity:—Christ, as the beginning of a reconciled human community in which all dividing boundaries are broken down’.\(^3\) He has been exploring the relation between language and sociality. This has become crucially important in the search for a means of establishing an ecclesiology for the Anglican Communion with its many Provinces of disparate historical and cultural origins.\(^4\) In multicultural Britain it is also relevant to answering the question how the Established Church might

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\(^1\) Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 49.


\(^3\) Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 50.

exercise a pastoral ministry in a multicultural and multi-faith society. Exploring how this question is resolved is the next task of this essay.

1.7 The Second period of Theological Emphasis

In Myers’ analysis of the middle period of Williams’ work—the late 1980s to the late 1990s—he sees Williams’ concern moving on ‘to the Hegelian question of whether a social order is more than the sum of its parts.’ Here he seeks to establish a philosophical foundation for his priority for pastoral concern in a multicultural nation.

1.8 Ecclesiology and Spiritual Growth

In 1992 Williams left academic life in Oxford and as Bishop of Monmouth was able to put his thinking about the Church and its relation to a broader society to the test. His work as Bishop of Monmouth and as Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Wales ‘has been one long struggle to uphold this catholic vision. It is a vision that sharpens the riddle of identity and difference.’

It has sometimes been said that the Anglican Church is itself an ecumenical work in progress. If there is an absolute difference between persons, there can be no genuinely catholic community, only a conglomerate of individuals who occasionally bump against each other in more or less bewildering incomprehension: if the difference between persons finally collapses, then again there is no catholic community, but only a colourless homogeneity, more like the society of Huxley’s *Brave New World* than like the glorious clamour of a family containing every tribe and tongue. A catholic conception of human sociality demands that both doctrines—absolute difference and fundamental sameness—be firmly refused. Williams has groped his way towards a third possibility in which difference is neither absolutized nor abolished, but tenuously preserved; ‘my own identity emerges from the hard work of sustaining the difference between myself and others’.

In the 1990s Williams found a philosophical tool to resolve the problem, the philosophy of Hegel. This marks a critical turning-point in his intellectual progress. In an early comment on Donald

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1 Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 6.
2 Ibid. 51.
3 Ibid. 51.
MacKinnon’s theology, Williams still found it possible to follow the usual textbook criticism of Hegel’s method which envisioned God as a totalizing principle that finally reconciles all opposites into itself—something akin to the Neo-Platonic ‘One’.

All differences collapse into a sublime and idolatrous whole, a unity beyond differentiation. The contingency and limitations of human history are obliterated in this schema, as thesis and antithesis drive relentlessly toward a higher synthesis.

But that was Williams in 1986, reflecting not only MacKinnon’s aversion to Hegel but also his own distaste for some of the rather imperious varieties of Hegelianism he had encountered in nineteenth century Russian theology. Since by 1995 he had disclaimed these interpretations of Hegel’s philosophy, one would be justified in asking the reason for this radical change of heart and mind.

In 1991 Williams met the Jewish philosopher, Gillian Rose, who was one of the most vigorous and eccentric of Hegel’s modern interpreters. She and Williams soon became friends and although Rose died of cancer in 1995, by then her friendship had left indelible marks on his imaginative life. Her contribution to the study of Hegel’s thought was to wrest it from his teleological interpreters and to show him not as an exponent of synthesis but of opposition. ‘Her writing sets out to shatter not only this teleology but also its contemporary alternative, the French postmodern ethics of the Other’. In the theory of Jewish post-holocaust post-modernism, exemplified by Emmanuel Levinas, the self must be ‘devastated, traumatized, unthrone by the commandment to substitute the other for itself.’

Rose rejects the assumption in contemporary thought that there exist only two options—teleological loss of difference or ethical loss of

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1 Williams, ‘Trinity and Ontology’, in OCT.
2 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 57.
3 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 52.
self, both of which she rejects as forms of ‘closure’ to dialogue. They are, in her view, evasions of the world’s ‘brokenness’ and the intractable difficulty of living with difference in a damaged world. We betray difference whenever we try to ‘mend the world’, whether through a secular or religious teleology or through the elevation of an absolutely transcendent Other.

Rose argues that instead of seeking resolution, as though difference were an obstacle to be overcome, we ought to sustain the flawed middle-ground between every difference—engaging with this ‘broken middle’. This she calls the ‘agon’ of difference. There the agony of difference is endured in the philosophical arena of encounter without seeking the relief of synthesis:—we should neither grudgingly evade opposition nor blindly accede to it, but willingly act, even in the face of an opposition which may never be overcome. By the very staking of a position it becomes possible to negotiate difference and so to change and be changed. Already knowing that I may fail, I nevertheless stake myself again. Thus Rose’s interpretation of Hegel might be read as a philosophy of growth, an account of the way change may emerge when the tragic limitations of our experience are sustained in patient wisdom. It is this brand of Hegelianism, stringently ethical and anti-teleological, that became central to Williams’ thought in the 1990s. It gave him a precise way of articulating, even in the irresolvable, tragic dimensions of social life, a way of understanding the significance of the Church as the adumbration of a new catholic community—that is to say, a fully human one. Thus in a series of essays Williams took up Rose’s Hegelianism and transmuted it into a Christian theology of identity, difference and sociality. He was persuaded by Rose’s polemic against French post-holocaust postmodernism in The Broken Middle.

He is seriously uncomfortable with the direction of post-modernist sensibilities represented by Levinas and Derrida. When he insists that language is always open-ended and incomplete this has nothing to do with Derrida’s infinite deferral of meaning—it is by contrast a

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3 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 53.
Hegelian conception of the social mediation of truth. Authentic social exchange, Williams claims, takes place wherever different persons mediate meaning to one another. He argues that we must give up our desire to ‘possess the truth’ in order to receive it and share it freely with others. What he calls ‘negotiation’ is the dynamism of both giving and receiving. ‘The self rebounds back to me when I give it freely, and the rebounded self is clearer, sharper, more definite than the self I gave away’. But this process of negotiation has a tragic shadow. Because the distance between myself and another can never be overcome, only reasserted and sustained, there is no final harmony of shared truth, no synthesis but only the slow limping history of (self)–dispossession and negotiation. Truthfulness is a risky venture: above all else it demands patience, and the refusal of any anaesthetic against the ‘agon’ of truth.

Patience in this context is never a sedate acceptance of things as they are, but a costly commitment to endure unresolved difficulty, vulnerability and loss. Human subjectivity is a continuing process of learning, a never ending ‘adjustment’ of each self in relation to others. Returning to Rose’s language, kenosis is a willingness to endure the devastation of the ‘middle’. It is not a matter of passivity therefore, but of work—the hard, patient labour over time of life together. (What Rose has described elsewhere as ‘love’s work’.) Williams thus interprets all social life under the theological category of kenosis. He understands kenosis not as a divestment of self to make way for the transcendent Other, but (following Hegel) as a willingness to ‘tarry with the negative’, to undertake the painful work of negotiating difference. In Williams’ thinking there are no short cuts to the slow formation of mutual subjectivity. There is no point in attempting, with Levinas, a ‘total self-cancellation before the sacredness of the Other’. Whether we try to bridge human distance through control or self-erasure, the result is an abortive dissolution of difference. This will only result in immature and destructive patterns of relating to one another in which ‘I fail to see others in their proper distinctiveness, or to recognise how my own identity will need to be adjusted in relation

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1 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 53.
2 Ibid. 55.
to others.” Williams claims that wherever such failures occur the gospel’s promise of a new catholic humanity is deflected or obscured.

Williams’ theology of the Church is thus also, at heart, a theology of growth. In the circumstance of the vote in General Synod (November 2012) on the ordination of women bishops, Williams’ painstaking efforts to avoid schism become comprehensible. For him, the claims of the gospel itself are at stake in the question: has the church the potential for nurturing a continuing movement of human persons towards God, and thus towards one another? In his thought, this conception of growth and patience is fused with MacKinnon’s tragic emphasis. Like Gillian Rose, Williams shares the conviction that theology is unfinished and comes close to renouncing teleology altogether. Whatever Christian teleology might mean, it cannot posit any final triumph over human imperfection and limitation, for to eliminate tragedy would, in his view, do away with the differences that makes us human. Myers comments:

Although this pessimistic note is seldom muted, its counterpoint in Williams’ writing is a profound assurance that truthfulness is a real possibility—possible because the structures of social life repose on an infinite depth of divine difference, divine self-donation, and divine truthfulness.

Even the divine identity is constituted through difference!

In Myer’s assessment, ‘Williams reads Hegel as a thinker who elucidated the internal logic of Christian Trinitarian faith’. His reading of Hegel aims ‘to abandon a theology in itself; and to eliminate a theology that refuses to be a way of thinking about the nature of human sociality’. More simply, he interprets Hegel’s philosophy as catholic ecclesiology since he wants to show that speech about God is always simultaneously speech about a universal human community. One might imagine this as a structuring of the Kingdom of God through the resolution of dissonant voices and instruments into symphonic harmony where differences all make their own important contributions.

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1 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 55.
2 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 56.
4 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 57.
It was the philosophy of Hegel that enabled Williams to move beyond the ‘reverie’, criticised earlier by MacKinnon when he reviewed *Resurrection*,¹ in order to elaborate this theme with conceptual precision. But the broad outlines of his thought have been remarkably constant. ‘A new community—a community of difference, identity and truthful subjectivity—is adumbrated in the redeemed sociality of the church. It will be marked by patience, seeking its own identity as something not yet possessed.’ Here the church is sustained by what Sergei Bulgakov has called ‘the patience of the Spirit’:² in the Holy Spirit, God is patient with us, just as a parent is lovingly patient with the slow growth of a child. As Williams sees it, the church is the rough draft of a new humanity, ‘God’s pilot project’, and the Spirit is its author. Rough drafts are always rather tragic states of affairs, but, as every writer knows, revision is the only adequate response and that is the work of the Spirit; revising and repairing the human race, slowly and patiently, one fragment at a time and this, I believe, is the philosophical theology that underlies the ‘Building Bridges’ initiative, which has been of central importance in the relationship of Archbishop Rowan with Islam.

1.9 *The Church: God’s Pilot project—Mission in a plural society*³

In his address to the Clergy Synod of the Diocese of Chelmsford, Rowan Williams reminded colleagues that the Church is not an end in itself.⁴ It is the experimental beginning of a new creation, which he has called a ‘pilot project for the human race’.

Sometimes theologians have spoken of the authentic ‘marks of the Church’, but catholicity is not, Williams claims, simply a ‘mark’ of the authentic church. It is the church’s whole rationale; its form of life; its mode of encountering the world. Catholicity is the continuing reality of the resurrection of Christ. It is the foundational response to the

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<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1779/the-church-gods-pilot-project> [19/05/2013].
command of the risen Christ to his apostles to go into all the world: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them.’ Williams thinks that the gospel is just the sort of message that ought to take root in different places, languages and cultures, just the sort of thing that ought to be translatable into every conceivable human situation. It is a universal community constantly reaching beyond itself to those from ‘every tribe and tongue and people and nation’ (Rev. 5: 9) which shows that Christ is risen indeed and that no human boundaries can contain (or limit) his life. This is clear in the Anglican document *For the Sake of the Kingdom*.

It follows then that the church’s identity and its mission are one and the same. The church has no internal identity prior to its engagement with the world. Its very existence is a demonstration that ‘he is not here; he is risen’ (Luke 24:6). Bearing witness to Christ is not a secondary charge, not a mere application of the church’s faith in Christ; it is Christ’s own life translated into the medium of human community. This recognition, that the liturgy of the church is witness to and translation of the Spirit of the risen Christ to the whole of humanity, is one of the most characteristic emphases of Williams’ theology. He is fully aware that in Russian Orthodoxy the catholicity of Christ is envisaged in terms of cosmic ecclesiology. According to that view, all reality will finally be encompassed within the church. By contrast, Williams sees the church not as an end in itself but as the beginning of a new world in the midst of the old. He does not see it as a ‘special’ form of sociality but the place ‘where the rationale of all other relations is made plain’: the message of Christ’s resurrection continually draws the church beyond itself, into a world whose lines of division have been abolished. The catholicity of the church is simply its capacity ‘to accommodate human beings in the full range of

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1 Matt. 28: 19-20.
2 Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 60.
their humanity.” But the logic of global capitalism has the potential to reduce western societies to a new tribalism where each segregated interest-group competes against the others in chaotic economic rivalry. Williams argues that what we are left with then is the depressing vision of ‘a world in which there aren’t and never could be any real prospects of discussion of the goals and destiny of human beings as such’. Each interest group would ruthlessly brandish its own rights and freedoms, while the State is reduced to the role of suppressing open conflict by policing the borders of ‘difference’ and this situation threatens to produce a crisis in the social imagination of humanity.

As Bishop of Monmouth in the 1990s, this social crisis dominated Williams’ pastoral concern and as Archbishop in Wales he assumed the role not only of pastor to the Christian community but also that of public witness to the wider British society. In his scholarly writings of the 1990s he struggled to find expression for a distinctively political ecclesiology and to re-imagine the nature of contemporary society through the lens of Christian catholicity. Drawing on the cosmic ecclesiology of Russian Orthodoxy Williams projects Christian catholicity onto the screen of humanity as a whole and, applying the philosophy of Hegel, tries to show that the church is not just one interest group alongside others but a community whose only ‘interest’ is the interest of all. If Christ is anything less than the redeemer of the world, then it will not make sense to speak of him as our own ‘personal Lord and saviour. [If] he can be relevant to anybody, [it is] only as he is relevant to all’.

Here Williams develops Hegel’s argument that there is no such thing as mere individual freedom; freedom is mediated through community, and any purely individual freedom is pathological. Human persons ‘have no legitimate interests that are purely private or individual’; there are no legitimate individual ends which do not somehow coincide with the good of the whole community. Williams

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3 Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 62.
also explains the concept of ‘rights’ along these lines. Rights are not something that I brandish like a weapon against the rights of others; rather I relinquish my purely private rights ‘so as to negotiate with [...] other persons a good [which is] neither mine nor theirs’.

Wherever one social group is convinced of some particular right, it is their responsibility to enter into a wider process of negotiation in order to discover how their own aims can form part of a common good.

For Williams, then, real political engagement is a form of kenosis. ‘Politics begins where I am dispossessed of my attachment to my own interests, and I accept responsibility for the interests of others’. Such a political vision is, admittedly, addressed more to those in political power than to the vulnerable and dispossessed for whom the language of ‘rights’ and ‘freedoms’ is often a last ditch stand to maintain a precarious footing within an oppressive social order but Williams is too much of a realist to be enticed by the rhetoric of liberation theology. Instead, his brush with liberation theology provoked him to ask: What would it mean to practise Christian political commitment in a society like that in Britain, where the [established] church is not a powerless or persecuted minority but is itself one of the institutions of cultural power? In British society, by contrast with Christians in Latin America, the church’s task is to give away power; to divest itself of security and privilege, to use its own voice to negotiate on behalf of more vulnerable social groups.

1.10 ‘Civil and Religious Law in England’ 2008

‘Human society must therefore be understood as more than the sum of its parts.’ That was the whole point of Williams’ controversial lecture ‘Civil and Religious Law in England, 2008’, when his reference to the possible accommodation of aspects of Islamic shari’a law in English Family Courts was greeted with almost hysterical alarm. The lecture was delivered in the year following the terrorist bombings in London by Muslim extremists (Summer 2007). The public perception of Islam was still coloured by the influential film of a novel about

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1 Rowan Williams, ‘Logic and Spirit’, in On Christian Theology, 44.
2 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 62.
3 Rowan Williams, On Christian Theology, 62–3.
4 Myers, Christ the Stranger, 6.
Afghanistan under the Taliban by Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*.

The tabloid headlines, following the lecture, heralded the supposed victory of *al-Qa’eda* and a Home Office Minister complained that Williams wanted to ‘fundamentally change the rule of law’.

Williams’ intention was actually to implement the model of his Hegelian understanding of a style of political engagement, where the vision of what is good for any single part of the community will also be reflected in what is good for all.

Nothing could have proved more eloquently the importance of the Archbishop’s lecture than the vociferous animosity of its reception. In a climate of deeply entrenched segregation, suspicion and thinly veiled cultural hostility, his words were taken as an ominous threat—as though he had betrayed his own side in a culture war. But if Christ is risen and the church is catholic, then there can be no ‘sides’, and the church’s role is to dismantle the whole logic of side-taking. The church invites all members of society into a wider world, into a fully human community where the ends of each are identical with the ends of all. The real question is, ‘can what they see be part of the world that I see?’ and vice versa. Archbishop Rowan made a significant contribution to wording the Anglican Central Office press release *Generous Love: the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue. An Anglican theology of interfaith relations* and his Lecture to the Royal Courts of Justice was intended to be a demonstration of this generous love for our Muslim fellow citizens and neighbours. It expressed the self-dispossession which has the potential to bring about the creative negotiation of a renewed society. Unfortunately it was entirely submerged in the resulting hysteria and sank almost without trace from public awareness at the time. As a result there was a danger of further ghettoizing Muslim communities, resulting in little or no converse with, or contribution to, society as a whole. This would have been entirely contrary to the government’s policy for cohesion and integration of minorities.

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1 Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 63.
2 Ibid. 63–4.
Williams refers to his position on interreligious relations as one of ‘interactive pluralism’, a form of social engagement in which distinctive communal loyalties are related to the wider society, aiming at a greater social cohesion and unity between the local and the universal through dialogue in a shared sense of citizenship. J. Neville Figgis, CR was deeply influential on Williams’ thinking in this area.

Since becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams has become intensely involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Myers points out that, if all his recent lectures and essays on Islam were collected, they would form a sizable book. The need for involvement of the local with the universal has been a driving force in his understanding of the relation between Christian mission and inter-religious relations.

1.11 Christian Mission and Interfaith Dialogue: the uniqueness of Christ

Interfaith dialogue, Williams argues, is not an additional, external activity on the part of the Church. It is not pursued either in conformity to a politically correct inclusiveness nor is it simply an indication of liberal relativism. It is an essential aspect of his understanding of Christology and his Christian faithfulness. For him it is a dimension of ‘liturgy’—service to God and humanity: a public demonstration of the church’s commitment to the finality of Christ. Far from relativizing the uniqueness of Christ, he sees ‘the radical singleness of Jesus Christ’ as the whole rationale for interfaith engagement. Because Christ’s life is catholic and unbounded, he is never fully absorbed by any particular human context, he is both ‘native’ and ‘stranger’ to all social locations. The word of life and love that Christ addresses to the church is only an echo of a word

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addressed to the whole of humanity. As Vladimir Lossky argues, ecclesiology is derived from a vision of redeemed humanity in global communion: the church’s own ‘internal’ identity springs from its mission to embody a renewed creation.¹

Therefore, the church itself has no good but the common good. Wherever it becomes withdrawn and introspective, the confession of Christ withers. The life of Christ ceases to be available when we want it merely for ourselves; it is active only when we are pushed beyond ourselves into mission. ²

Thus, Williams claims, the church’s mission is to go out looking for Christ in the world, following the risen one on his way across all the self-protective (but divisive) barriers that human beings have erected. As it follows this path, crossing boundaries with Christ, the church lets go of its power, privilege and security. For the church exists not for itself but for the sake of reconciled humanity. Christians are called into a laboratory for the fuller development of human potential, human flourishing, human belonging.

‘But our equipment consists not of test tubes and chemicals, but of a book, a chalice and the broken body of God in Christ.’³ Faced by the challenges of this personal pilgrimage we shall become more truly ourselves in embassy and hospitality.

1.12 The Third Period of Theological Emphasis
Myers claims that in this later period—the 1990s to the present—Williams’ thought has been dominated by ‘the Freudian question’: Is human desire necessarily trapped in selfish fantasy or can human beings enter into that mode of relating which the New Testament calls ‘love’?⁴

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³ Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 66.
⁴ Ibid. 107–12.
1.13 Williams’ contribution to the development of an Anglican Theology of Religions

The task now will be to discover to what degree the Christian language of love for God and neighbour resonates with Muslim discourse and to what extent this language is uncompromisingly realistic, avoiding the temptation to become clouded by religious fantasy or ideology. Only a love directed completely towards delight in God can rescue the world from the egotistical possessiveness of human desire. Following the argument of Augustine of Hippo in *The Confessions*, Williams advocates ‘a language which indefinitely postpones fulfilment or enjoyment’ since all worldly loves should be marked by ‘non-finality; growing and learning’. In seeking the finality of satisfied desire within the created order, the world is robbed of its objectivity (its capacity to direct us to more than the simple satisfaction of our appetites), and we cut ourselves off from the process of growth in love. The limitation of desire by anything less than the God, who has revealed himself as love in trinity, is therefore unworthy. In fact, one might go so far as to say it is psychotic. Myers develops this emphasis in Williams’ writings in his important section on religious fantasy.

The central importance of the spiritual life is evident everywhere in Williams’ work. He finds in Augustine’s *Confessions* a model of what it looks like to speak of God with integrity so that the struggle for truthful speech becomes part of a wider pattern of devotion to God—attention to God—love of God. His work is animated by that passion for the conversion of the mind to God which is illustrated in the *Confessions* of Augustine of Hippo. Myers writes:

This is why he finds himself crossing the boundaries of so many different genres and disciplines. It is why he soon found himself restless with academic life at Cambridge and Oxford and seemed driven ineluctably into the hard and unedifying business of Christian leadership, first as Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop in Wales, then as Archbishop of Canterbury. Some people become Church leaders through careerism, cunning and political calculation. For Williams, it is more a matter of obedience, discipline and kenosis—of theological integrity.¹

¹ Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 100.
In 1991 Williams published an essay on *Theological Integrity*,¹ which disavows the usual assumption that the highest value should be reckoned as belonging to the internal harmony and coherence of a theological system. What interests Williams, by contrast, is the spiritual integrity of theological reflection and the life that it puts into practice, subverting pretensions to theological mastery or completeness. He accepts the post-modernist suspicion that language about God often conceals the hidden interests and fantasies of those who speak, but reserves a deep distrust of post-modernists in other respects. Theology can too easily become a covert means of gaining, exercising and holding on to power, a too-close collusion of Church and State, which rings alarm-bells and at times leaves him deeply troubled.²

Williams continues to explore the relation of British Muslim faith communities with the state: relations of loyalty and belonging, in the writings of Tariq Ramadan, Maleiha Malik and others in ‘Faith in the Public Square’.³

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³ Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2012), chapter 3.
THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION: A SOURCE OF ECUMENICAL EMBARRASSMENT?

Eric Bodson*

This paper will attempt to examine the relevance of what is commonly called baptism ‘in’, ‘of’ or ‘with’ the Holy Spirit (referred to as BHS) in the framework of the process of Christian initiation explicated by the World Council of Churches in the study text One Baptism of 2011. Some language will be proposed for additional reflection and further steps on the path of recognition of a common baptismal understanding including those churches and denominations that consider the experiential dimension of BHS as essential to the life of a Christian.

‘No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit’ (John 3:5)

1. Introduction

In this paper I propose (from my Roman Catholic background but attempting to faithfully represent other opinions) to examine the relevance of what is commonly called baptism ‘in’, ‘of’ or ‘with’ the Holy Spirit (referred to as BHS or Spirit Baptism) for the process of Christian initiation explicated by the World Council of Churches in the study text One Baptism of 2011:

Christian initiation refers to a process that begins with hearing the Gospel and confessing the faith, continues with formation in faith (catechesis), leads to baptism, resulting in the incorporation of the

* The author is an oblate of the Benedictine Monastery of Chevetogne (Belgium) and enrolled at the formation program for permanent deacons of the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussel. The research for this paper was done in 2013-2014 as a student of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University (LVIV). I wish to thank the following in particular for their useful comments on earlier drafts of the article: Fr Thaddée Barnas, Fr Jos Vercruysse, Dagmar Heller, Mary Healy, John Joy and Jelle Creemers. ewbodson@busmail.net
baptized into the Christian community, marked by the sharing of the eucharistic meal.¹

In particular this paper will consider to what extent doctrine with regard to BHS such as expressed in the Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue Between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998-2006),² the ‘International Dialogue’, could help articulate the experiential dimension of BHS within the overall process of becoming a Christian.

Concluding, I will suggest some language that could be incorporated in the abovementioned study text One Baptism with a view to stimulating additional reflection that may lead to further steps on the path of recognition of a common baptismal understanding by those churches and denominations that consider the experiential dimension of BHS as essential to the life of a Christian.

2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is impossible in the framework of this paper to examine all that has been written about the theological, spiritual and pastoral meaning of BHS. The exposition of the different approaches and understandings of BHS herein will necessarily be partial and approximate.

From the outset it is important to note that the expression ‘baptism in the holy Spirit’ is a flexible metaphor³ rather than a terminus technicus and belongs to a diverse and complex biblical, theological and liturgical semantic field including (water) baptism, sacraments, anointing, chrismation, confirmation, imposition of hands, salvation, seal of the Spirit, imparting of the Spirit, indwelling of the Spirit, filling with the Spirit, empowering, endowment, grace, gift of the Spirit, outpouring or effusion of the Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, charisms, deification, etc.

The related expression used in the title of this article, ‘seal of the Spirit’ illustrates this complexity. According G.W.H. Lampe the notion

² On becoming a Christian: insights from scripture and the patristic writings with some contemporary reflections, Final report, October 2007. Published at the Vatican website: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/christuni/sub-index/index_pentecostals.htm
always refers in Patristic, post New Testament times to (water)baptism.' Others have examined its use by Paul in Eph. 1:13 ('seals with the Holy Spirit of promise') and 4:30 and 2 Cor. 1:22 to conclude that Paul uses it within the wider complex of terms including 'promise' (the Spirit of Promise in Gal. 3:14), 'earnest' (Eph. 1:14) and 'first-fruits of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:23) all referring to the event of the promised outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as a foretaste of the coming of the Lord in glory/parousia and the accompanying charismatic gifts:

The seal therefore will be a charismatic effusion of the Spirit, connected no doubt with the whole process of Christian initiation, but not to be identified with baptism as such.²

The absence of a commonly accepted definition of BHS by theologians or in church documents such as the Lima document or One baptism reminds us of the fact that it has potential for multiple and diverging understandings. For the purpose of this paper it makes sense to distinguish between the sacramental/theological category of the gift of the Spirit and the concept BHS, and its modern experiential understanding by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, focused on the charismatic gifts of the Spirit.

In the New Testament, ‘baptism with the Holy Spirit’ refers to the baptism to be performed by Jesus as announced by John the Baptist (used as verb in Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:32-34; Acts 1:5 and 11:16), to the Pentecostal event (Acts 2:1-6) and to the experience by Jews and gentiles of the coming of the Holy Spirit (‘filled with’ in Acts 4:31; ‘poured out’ in 10:44-48; ‘fell on’ in 11:15-18).

Pentecostal and charismatic renewal Christians consider BHS as a particular event/experience of a life-changing personal encounter with the Holy Spirit identifiable with the biblical Pentecostal event of Acts 2.³

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Although they believe that through the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them they consider BHS as a separate spiritual experience occurring sometime after regeneration or baptism.

Further in this paper it will be assumed that BHS in its present day experiential meaning relates to a particular and authentic life-changing religious experience also described sometimes as a release or effusion of gifts of the Spirit and His power in a believer’s life—a spiritual experience that initiates the believer in the use of the spiritual gifts or charisms such as those mentioned in the NT.

However ‘gifts of the Spirit’ and ‘charisms’ are not identical. It seems that a semantic leap occurred between the biblical and patristic use of the term ‘charismata’ (understood in general as gifts bestowed by God) and the more restricted theological concept of a ‘freely given ability for the service of the salvation of others’.¹ The present church situation may put into a different perspective the strict distinction made by Thomas Aquinas between sanctifying grace necessary for all for salvation (and related gifts of the Spirit) on the one hand and extraordinary gifts such as prophecy and miracles (charisms) entrusted freely only to some with a particular mission for the salvation of others on the other hand.²

As will be developed further, some consider that BHS is theologically and organically linked to regeneration/baptism/confirmation and is therefore an integral and essential part of the process of Christian initiation as through BHS one embraces the fullness of Christian initiation; it is integrally part of the process of becoming a Christian.³ Others however understand it as a ‘second

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¹ N. Baumert, ‘Charism’ and ‘Spirit-baptism’: presentation of an analysis. See http://www.sankt-georgen.de/leseraum/baumert7.html#N_1. This article is a summary in English of the author’s position exposed more fully in Charisma, Taufe, Geisttaufe. Bd I: Entflechtung einer semantischen Verwirrung; Bd II: Normativität und persönliche Berufung (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 2001).


baptism’, an experience distinct from and subsequent to salvation and regeneration beyond Christian initiation.¹

Attempts have been made to harmonize these diverging theological/sacramental and experiential approaches of BHS by the ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services):

BHS is to be understood as a life-transforming experience of the love of God the Father poured into one’s heart by the Holy Spirit, and received through a total surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. This grace brings alive sacramental baptism and confirmation, deepens communion with God and with fellow Christians, enkindles evangelistic fervour and equips a person with charisms for service and mission.²

In 2013 an international ecumenical congress on Baptism in the Holy Spirit attempted to unlock the ecumenical potential associated with BHS.³

3. Christian initiation

Christian initiation refers to the beginnings of Christian life and discipleship and leads to full communion through incorporation in the body of Christ. Christian initiation extends beyond the mere rite of baptism which is nevertheless its central event. Although some flexibility may occur in the sequence of the events leading to full communion and church membership (such as admission of children to first communion before confirmation), churches generally apply a normative order of unrepeatable events (Ordo).

³ The Chemin Neuf Community, a Catholic community with an ecumenical vocation, organized in collaboration with ICCRS from 7 to 10 March 2013 an international ecumenical congress on Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The papers have been published under the title Du Coeur de l’homme au corps de l’Eglise: le baptème dans l’Esprit Saint in the ecumenical review ISTINA, 2014, n° 2-3. For a report on the congress see One in Christ, 47/1 (2013): 142-5.
The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Anglican Church in its 2011 document published under the title *The Journey of Christian Initiation. Theological and pastoral perspectives*, describes it as a pilgrimage, journey into grace, a process marked by particular moments:

The term ‘Christian initiation’ refers to the beginning of the Christian life, to the way in which new Christians are led to participate fully, through the sacraments, in the life of grace within the Church. Christian initiation encompasses what the Christian Church believes and practises about preparation for baptism (catechesis), baptism itself, personal profession of faith, confirmation and first communion. Although ‘initiation’ is not a biblical word—neither is Trinity, for that matter—it is a useful portmanteau term for the journey of faith, and the major milestones on that journey, that leads us to share fully in the sacramental life of the Church. Christian initiation is a journey into grace.

The pattern recognized by the Anglican Church comprises catechesis-water baptism-confirmation-first communion either as adult baptism or child baptism. The RCC and Lutheran churches recognize more or less this broad pattern as well.

The Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Churches practice a comparable but unified rite of initiation, mainly of infants, which includes several moments, including exorcism, baptism, chrismation and communion. They strongly insist on the temporal and spiritual unity of these different elements.

A number of protestant denominations (Baptists, Evangelicals) who reject child baptism insist on an alternative pattern including proclamation of the Gospel-conversion-profession of faith-water baptism/regeneration. Pentecostals generally consider BHS as a second or even third blessing or grace distinguished from and subsequent to regeneration/water baptism (salvation) and sanctification.

4. The World Council of Churches on Christian Initiation

*One Baptism* (3a) refers to Christian initiation as a process which begins with hearing the Gospel and confessing the faith, continues with formation in faith (catechesis), leads to baptism resulting in the

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incorporation of the baptized into the Christian community, marked by the sharing of the Eucharistic meal. Baptism, confirmation/chris- 
smation and Eucharist are considered sacraments of initiation. 
According to BEM’s ‘some churches consider that Christian initiation is 
not complete without the sealing of the baptized with the gift of the 
Holy Spirit and participation in holy communion.’

5. BHS in different ecclesial traditions

The theological views on BHS held among Christian traditions can be 
categorized broadly into three main groups. Some link it to (1) 
sacramental initiation (Orthodox and Catholic churches and 
Lutherans); (2) to regeneration, conversion, and justification 
(Reformed tradition), or (3) to empowerment for witness and vocation 
(Pentecostals). 2

1) For Orthodox Christians the gift of the Spirit is related to water 
baptism and is sacramentally authenticated and sealed and becomes 
effective by the seal (sfragis) of the gift of the Spirit. 3 This seal is 
expressed by the sign of chrismation i.e. the priestly, kingly and 
prophetic consecration or anointing with chrism of the baptized. 
During chrismation, the newly baptized person is anointed by making 
the sign of the cross with the myron on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, 
lips, both ears, breast, hands and feet. The priest uses a special brush 
for this purpose. Within the Orthodox church BHS is predominantly 
understood in a theological/sacramental meaning. 4

The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is also 
essentially theological and sacramental and links the gift of the Holy 
Spirit both to post-baptismal anointing and confirmation. It teaches 
that baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist—the sacraments of

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2 Frank D. Macchia, Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 64.
4 A spiritual author such as Symeon the New Theologian however advocates an experiential meaning of BHS by referring to the need for a vital Christian life to undergo a second baptism (in the Spirit) or baptism in tears (penthos).
Christian initiation—lay the foundations of the Christian life.¹ The Christian life is based on baptism. It is ‘the gateway to life in the Spirit’ and ‘signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit’. The post-baptismal anointing (Chrismation in the Eastern churches) signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit and announces a second anointing to be conferred later in confirmation that completes the baptismal anointing.

Confirmation, then, is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. When confirmed, Catholics receive the ‘full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1302). For the confirmand it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, unites more fully to Christ and the Church, and gives strength to confess Christ and defend the faith. The rite of confirmation orients toward mission, reminds the initiate that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be used for service to the church and the world. In the words of the Catechism:

1303. Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God’s presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.

1304. Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the ‘character’, which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.

The Catechism considers charisms as special graces by which the Holy Spirit makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church’:

799. Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

800. Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_with_the_Holy_Spirit - cite_note-RCCcat1212-40
the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.

At the request of the late cardinal Suenens, a group of theologians undertook in 1974 through *Malines Document I* to develop both a theological and an experiential view on BHS. BHS is clearly situated within the overall process of Christian initiation. In a theological sense every Christian is baptized with the Holy Spirit. However, in an experiential sense, one is baptized in the Holy Spirit at the moment one personally experiences His power.

Traditional Lutherans would also link BHS with water baptism and reject the idea of a second baptism. Ritual baptism confers the Holy Spirit but a conscious, concrete experience thereof may occur later on.²

2) According to the Reformed tradition BHS (the sending of the Spirit by Christ at Pentecost) is a once-and-for-all accomplished event situated in the *historia salutis* (Christ’s redemptive work) and not in the *ordo salutis*. BHS as the experiential participation in the life of the Spirit is available to all but has limited importance. It is not an enduring, normative model of individual empowerment distinct from or even subsequent to conversion, regeneration and the coming to faith. All who have faith in Christ receive a share in the Pentecostal gift on coming into the fellowship of the invisible Church or Christ’s body, that is at conversion, and not subsequently.³ The Spirit’s work of regeneration is symbolized and sealed through water but is enacted by the Holy Spirit apart from the sacramental act.

3) In contrast, classical Pentecostal theology holds two baptisms, namely water (or ritual) baptism and Spirit baptism.⁴ BHS is essentially an experiential reality and is understood as a separate

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¹ Accessible online at http://www.stucom.nl/document/0236uk.pdf
action from both water baptism and regeneration, most often identified with the manifestation of extraordinary spiritual gifts such as glossolalia. In contrast BHS, according to Pentecostals, is the full reception of the Spirit through an additional spiritual experience (a ‘second’ or even ‘third’ blessing) subsequent to regeneration or sanctification, which empowers the believer for witness and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

D. Albrecht in *Witness in the Waters: Baptism and Pentecostal Spirituality* explains that according to Pentecostal doctrine the Holy Spirit is received at the new birth (metanoia) which is expressed in the rite of water baptism. But BHS is a second baptism (not with water) which is an inner empowerment essential for the Christian to live a life in the Spirit.

The gift or coming of the Spirit (BHS) in its theological/sacramental meaning is traditionally accompanied by an action of the church, usually a ritual act (e.g. anointing or laying on of hands). BHS in Pentecostal experiential perspective can be a result of prayer of others (often during the laying on of hands) but can also take place privately, a direct gift of the Spirit without special mediation of the church. Whether this imparting of the Spirit also necessarily includes the experience of New Testament prophetic gifts or charisms is a much debated point of discussion between proponents of the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal movement and their opponents who adopt a dispensationalist or cessationist view. It is an issue beyond the scope of this paper but the WCC seems to follow this second option.

To summarize: almost all traditions would theologically recognize the imparting of the Holy Spirit as essential in the life of the Christian, but not all would recognize that this should normatively imply a particular spiritual experience, or would identify such imparting with a particular moment in the process of Christian initiation.

6. World Council of Churches and BHS

The terminological uncertainty surfaces also in the Lima document of the WCC where the sealing is on the one hand acknowledged as a baptismal practice of only some churches in the framework of the celebration of baptism (BEM-B, 20):

> Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism; an invocation of the Holy Spirit; a renunciation of
evil; a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity; the use of water; a declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God, and as members of the Church, called to be witnesses of the Gospel. Some churches consider that Christian initiation is not complete without the sealing of the baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit and participation in holy communion.

Nevertheless, BEM considers ‘the gift of the Holy Spirit’ as normative for baptism as such and for salvation (BEM-B, 14):

In God’s work of salvation, the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, participation in Christ’s death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the receiving of the Spirit. Baptism in its full meaning signifies and effects both.

Christians differ in their understanding as to where the sign of the gift of the Spirit is to be found. Different actions have become associated with the giving of the Spirit. For some it is the water rite itself. For others, it is the anointing with chrism and/or the imposition of hands, which many churches call confirmation. For still others it is all three, as they see the Spirit operative throughout the rite. All agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit.

BEM does not refer to specific charismatic gifts as being associated with the effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost (speaking in tongues and prophesy). The gift of the Spirit (singular) is approached in a theological meaning and articulated within the baptismal scenery (as part of a sacramental rite) and not as an experience within the broader context of Christian initiation. BEM introduces the ‘gifts of the Spirit’ (plural) and defines charism only in the framework of the topic of Ministry and ordination in the church but does not link them to the grace of baptism; nor does it further explain when and how these gifts are communicated to the church or the individual minister (see BEM-M, 5, 7 and 32).

BEM thus distinguishes theologically and sacramentally between the saving gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the experience of charismatic gifts as witnessed at Pentecost which are by implication not considered essential for salvation or integral to Christian initiation.
7. BHS and the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue

In the report *On Becoming a Christian* the dialogue partners clearly articulate BHS within the broader process of Christian Initiation (see 192). They understand BHS as a common ‘Pentecostal experience’ but affirm that the Pentecostal doctrine of BHS is not identical with the ‘gift’ or ‘reception’ of the Spirit. Said experience is however not easily apprehended by Catholics but these diverging theological understandings do not amount to a church dividing issue:

194. Both of our traditions identify two principal moments for the reception of the Spirit. For Pentecostals these moments come in conversion and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For Catholics they come in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

195. (...) It is the conviction of the members of this Dialogue that the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit need not be a divisive issue among our communities. On the contrary, it may provide a meaningful bridge to greater understanding and mutual appreciation.

*On Becoming a Christian* confirms—referring to the Final Report 1972-1976 of the International Dialogue—that all Christians receive the gift of the Spirit even if they do not experience BHS and adds in this respect (nr. 198).

The difference between a committed Christian without such a Pentecostal experience and one with such an experience is generally not only a matter of theological focus, but also that of expanded openness and expectancy with regard to the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

8. Is BHS to be part of Christian initiation?

Pentecostal view.

According to the traditional doctrine of the classical Pentecostals the Holy Spirit is received in the new birth (conversion) process but reception of the Holy Spirit is to be distinguished from BHS which occurs as part of the process of sanctification or even following sanctification. In fact according to this view BHS is not essential to Christian initiation but is more related to vocation and charismatic ministry and constitutes a separate initiation in the use of the gifts of the Spirit:

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1 Oneness Pentecostals however consider BHS as linked to conversion-water baptism which they consider essential for salvation.
Pentecostals testify that Spirit baptism deepens their openness toward gifts of the Spirit (including the Pauline charisms given in 1 Cor. 12), gifts which operate for the good, for the edification, of the Body of Christ. They believe also that it is a baptism that intensifies and empowers the life in the Spirit—which is the normal life of a follower of Jesus!—toward charismatic ministry. Within Pentecostal spirituality, empowerment for charismatic ministry has been ‘democratized,’ it is for everyone. Such ministry depends upon the Holy Spirit and the baptizer, Jesus Christ, to empower for service and witness to the world. It foments a Spirit-baptized empowerment and gifting, to assist in the building up of the Church.¹

*Catholic view.*

Catholic theologians and scholars of the catholic charismatic renewal clearly have struggled with the question whether BHS as ‘the Pentecostal experience’ is part of the sacramental process of Christian initiation and constitutes a further release (hence the so-called ‘release theory’) or a re-actualization of such baptismal grace (gift of the Spirit) or should rather be considered as a special grace, a new imparting of the Spirit unrelated to an immediate sacramental context and in view of a personal mission or service. The already cited definition proposed by ICCRS is aimed at combining both approaches.²

The proponents of the non-sacramental view such as F. Sullivan, P. Hocken and N. Baumert articulate BHS as a new, non-sacramental sending of the Holy Spirit subsequent to baptism in response to prayer. This view is based on the possibility of multiple ‘comings’ of the Spirit according to Thomas Aquinas and the specific theological difficulty inherent in the sacramental interpretation of the Pentecostal experience which implies that the distinction between sacramental grace and charismatic grace is blurred. There is a fear that the sacraments of Christian initiation appear to fail in some respect when they do not confer charismatic gifts on the recipient.³

For that reason John Joy (in line with Thomas Aquinas) argues that charisms constitute a freely bestowed charismatic grace (intended for

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¹ Albrecht, ‘Witness in the Waters’, 163, 165.
the building up of the Church and the salvation of others) to be clearly distinguished from sacramental or sanctifying grace imparted through the sacraments (intended for the salvation of the recipient himself) and that the answer to the question whether the Pentecostal experience can legitimately be construed as the release of sanctifying grace conferred by a sacrament (baptism/confirmation) therefore should be negative to the extent that the charisms are considered essential to the Pentecostal experience. To put it differently: If the essence of the Pentecostal experience is restricted to a general growth in sanctifying grace, which is always rooted to some extent in baptism, then there is no difficulty. The charisms, then, would be non-essential manifestations of the growth, or renewal, of baptismal grace. The pentecostal experience as a whole may legitimately be interpreted as a sacramental grace only if the charisms are clearly distinguished as accidental to the experience.

According to P. Hocken it does not make sense to say ‘that we received all the charisms or any charisms at baptism when there was no evidence of that. What we received at baptism was a capacity to receive charisms of the Spirit’. Hocken however also admits that BHS is a challenge for our understanding of Christian initiation and is part of the overall renewal of the Church. In this view receiving multiple BHS or comings of the Spirit with new gifts during one’s life as a Christian is conceivable.

Without denying the validity of the supposition that there can be multiple impartings of the Spirit, the sacramental understanding of BHS has been advocated strongly amongst others by Killian McDonnell OSB within the context of a communion ecclesiology and community life based on biblical and patristic precedents:

To become a Christian, one needs to hear the gospel proclaimed, to be converted, to share in the death and resurrection of Jesus, thus becoming a member of the body of Christ, one participating in the local worshiping communion. There are no isolated Christians.

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2 Ibid. 154.
Based on a close reading of Tertullian’s On Baptism, McDonnell concludes:

The whole context suggests that what many today call baptism in the Spirit (usually involving imposition of hands, prayer ‘inviting and welcoming the Holy Spirit,’ expectation that a charism would be received) was integral to the rite of initiation as presented by Tertullian in the first centuries of the Church’s life. If this is true, it means that baptism in the Spirit belongs not to private piety but to the public official liturgy. This places baptism in the Spirit in a wholly new light. Baptism in the Spirit is, then, integral to those sacraments (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist) which are constitutive of the deepest nature of the Church.¹

This means that Christian initiation implies commitment to ministry in the Church as part of the normal life of communion and to witness and evangelization:

The dynamic of the logic is: charisms are ministries; no Christian without a ministry; each ministry oriented toward church and world in the work of evangelization. The charisms, therefore, are not peripheral but are the equipment and material which belong to the normal operation of the day-to-day life of the Church. In some way they belong to the center. Rather than being ornaments of the individual, they are ecclesial, service for the building of the body of the Church, which is itself entirely ministerial. But also charisms are ministries of the Church to the world. In summary, the point of departure for talking about charisms is the whole communion, which is a composite of mutually supporting ministries all oriented, directly or indirectly, toward evangelization.²

To avoid the risk of an elitist view on Christian life³ and from an ecumenical perspective towards Pentecostals, the position of Baumert seems to disclose a greater potential. To the extent BHS is considered in its primary theological meaning as the coming of the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts, there is no doubt that this is part of Christian initiation and normative for all Christians. Becoming a Christian is

the author has been exposed more extensively in K. McDonnell and G.T. Montague, Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Collegeville/Min. USA: The Liturgical Press, 1994).

² Ibid.
indeed unthinkable without the gift of the Holy Spirit. With regard to its modern experiential meaning of being filled with the Holy Spirit as manifested through extraordinary gifts or charisms (speaking in tongues, prophecy, miracles, etc.), Baumert makes valid arguments to avoid considering BHS as normative or confining it within the boundaries of the process of Christian initiation.

This position in turn brings about the risk of a ‘two speed’ Christianity. However, if one considers that becoming Christian and member of the body of Christ includes being prepared to participate actively in the life of a particular Christian community that is commissioned to proclaim the Gospel of Life, and to serve the poor, Christian initiation should also prepare the initiand for service and witness. According to Etienne Vetö, BHS would rather encompass both dimensions, as openness to mission is an essential part of salvation.

To the extent the charismatic gifts of God to His Church are not confined to particular extraordinary gifts ‘frozen’ once and for all after the event of Pentecost (e.g. tongues and prophecy) but developing and diversifying in accordance with the need of the Church in a particular place or period of its history, there are valid arguments for including in the liturgy or rite of Christian initiation (e.g. adult baptism or chrismation or confirmation) an initial epiclesis for the manifestation of charisms in the life of the initiand and his or her commitment to be open to serve and witness as a normative part of the fullness.

In this sense, Susan K. Wood argues that the sacramental ritualization of Christian initiation must be both Christological and pneumatological and should include baptism, reception of the gift of the Spirit, attention to apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayers (referring to Acts 2:38-42) because this broader pattern and more expansive rite which is evident in the experience of Pentecost is more revelatory of the richness and complexity of what is accomplished in Christian initiation than pure water baptism in the trinitarian name.

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2 Ibid. 225.
Also some non-catholic scholars advocate a broader approach to Christian initiation that gives room for a personal experiential and communal appropriating of the gift of the Spirit within an extended sacramental context. R. Rice argues in favor of investing an experiential dimension in the laying on of hands at confirmation:

Let us view the laying on of hands in confirmation as an occasion for experientially, subjectively appropriating the fullness of the Spirit once received in baptism.

Whether one associates glossolalia or prophecy with the fullness of the Spirit as some, but by no means all, Episcopalian charismatics do is irrelevant here. But if we seek to be faithful to Luke as well as to Paul, we must invest the laying on of hands at confirmation with an experiential dimension. Let us prepare young people and adults for the power of the Spirit whether that power be manifested (as will vary with individual personality) as a mighty wind or as a still, small voice.¹

According to Paul Fiddes the importance of charismatic gifts for the life of the Church justifies an extension of the period of initiation to the point and the age when the Spirit can manifest charisms in the human person and commission him or her for responsible service in church and world:

Whether this is in a laying-on of hands within the occasion of the baptism of a believer, or in a rite many years after infant baptism, it is still part of beginnings. Just as in baptism the Spirit takes an element in the natural world—water—and uses it as a place of encounter with God for renewal of life, so the Spirit takes natural human faculties and opens them up as a place to manifest spiritual gifts. When this begins to happen it is the end of the ‘beginning’, the end of laying foundations: a woman or man has become a disciple.²

Is not the genuine search of so many today for an authentic, transformative and convincing religious experience of the living God an appeal to ‘traditional’ churches to disclose the potential of BHS as a personal spiritual experience/event in the life and service of each ordinary Christian and each community (subject to spiritual

discernment and guidance) rather than a somewhat exceptional charismatic, mystical or vocational grace given to some ‘chosen’ Christians?

In the final analysis, the judgment to be made is whether full apostolicity can be guaranteed sufficiently by the apostolic creed, Church doctrine, proclamation of the Word, sacraments and an ordained ministry (Episcopal succession) or should it also include a dimension of a living personal and communal experience of God, resulting in a faithful commitment to live an apostolic life according to the gospel of the Risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit?

There is no reason why at least an openness to the experiential dimension of BHS should not be reflected in the catechumenate and the rites of Christian initiation even at the risk of some ecumenical discomfort in the search for One Baptism. Taking into account the possible link of charisms to ministry, fellowship and witness one would rather situate BHS at the end of the Christian beginnings, marking the transition to Christian maturity.

Churches practicing a confirmation rite at the beginning of adult life, could include a special prayer looking to prepare the candidate to personally open him or herself to experience and appropriate the power of the Spirit through the gifts and charisms required for future service, fellowship and witness in the Church as koinonia.

This however does not exclude further occasions when mature Christians are explicitly invited collectively or individually to open themselves again to become further equipped by the Holy Spirit for service and witness within or outside a sacramental context. One could think of such occasions as the renewal of the baptismal vows at the Easter vigil or during liturgical service at Pentecost. Other occasions could be the ordination rite or liturgical events by which the church marks the conferral by the bishop of certain pastoral ministries on lay persons.

With respect to the Orthodox and oriental churches practicing infant baptism and a unified rite of baptism, chrismation and first communion, additional occasions for such a prayer of invitation to adults believers in this respect could be offered in connection with a special unction rite during or after the Sacred Liturgy e.g. at Pentecost or during the presanctified gifts liturgy.

For those churches that know of no confirmation rite and only practice believer baptism, water baptism would remain the first natural occasion to ritually integrate baptism in water with baptism in the Holy Spirit.
9. Conclusion: A possible ecumenical expression of BHS within the process of Christian initiation defined by the WCC

The following wording could stimulate further discussion regarding the articulation of BHS as the initial manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit within the process of Christian initiation as developed in the framework of BEM and One Baptism.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century numerous Christians have witnessed to a special post-baptismal ‘Pentecostal’ experience comparable to what happened to the Apostles in the early church accompanied with the manifestation of charismatic gifts as described in Acts, chapter 2.

This experiential dimension of the coming of the Holy Spirit with His gifts which is frequently identified with what is called baptism in the Holy Spirit has been linked by some to the sacramental signs of baptism and/or chrismation/confirmation—a view which can be supported by both biblical and patristic evidence.

Although not in itself a sacramental sign and not restricted to the sacramental gift of the Spirit, baptism in the Holy Spirit understood as the initial experiencing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit should nevertheless be considered integral to the process of Christian initiation because the gifts of the Spirit are intended to empower and equip Christians for service and witness which is to be considered as normative for active members of the Body of Christ.

Future Christians should be initiated in the reception and exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which they are or may be endowed for service in the church and the world. Such gifts may, depending on the needs of community and the situation of the church, include both more common gifts such as community building, leadership, teaching, liturgical service and pastoral care and more extraordinary gifts such as the gift to speak a truly prophetic word, to be able to communicate a genuine mystical experience of God, to boldly witness of one’s faith or worship the Trinity in the community through spontaneous religious expressions such as speaking or singing in tongues.

It would be appropriate in case of adult baptism for the churches to prepare the initiand to be receptive for these gifts with a view to
take up service and include in the initiation rite a special prayer for a subsequent manifestation of these gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of the newly baptized. Those churches who practice baptism of newborns would do well to provide for such a prayer in the framework of the sacrament of confirmation, or at the occasion of the renewal of baptismal vows during a special Eucharistic celebration (at Easter vigil or Pentecost). The regular Eucharistic assemblies may also constitute an occasion during which prayer and openness for ministry through the gifts of the Spirit may be expressed and encouraged by liturgical signs (e.g. liturgical anointing before the sending away of the faithful).
NO TURNING BACK: THE TESTAMENT OF MARGARET O’GARA (1947-2012)

Catherine E. Clifford*

The publication of Margaret O’Gara’s collected essays, edited by Michael Vertin her husband and colleague, provides an opportunity to appreciate the contribution of one of the most important North American ecumenists of the past century. She was a leading member of several ecumenical dialogues, local, national, and international. Essays in Part I emphasize that ecumenism cannot proceed without common prayer, asceticism in the face of disappointment and frustration, and friendships which provide the ‘proper context’ for ecumenical dialogue. Part II offers expert treatments of papal primacy, teaching authority, infallibility, and ordained ministry.

Margaret O’Gara, a distinguished Professor of Theology and tireless ecumenist, passed away on August 12, 2012. The recent publication of a collection of papers from the final decade of her scholarly life, aptly entitled, No Turning Back,¹ offers an occasion to reflect on her life as a theologian and on her many contributions in service to the cause of Christian unity. I first met Margaret over twenty years ago when I began teaching at St. Michael’s College in Toronto. As I was new to university teaching, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the time, Michael Fahey SJ, suggested that I meet with her to discuss student assessment. I soon discovered why he considered Margaret to be the most conscientious teacher among the professors of the Faculty. It was later my privilege to work with her as my thesis advisor, and in more recent years, to collaborate as a colleague on a number of research projects.

* Dr Clifford is Associate Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Her most recent publications include Decoding Vatican II: Interpretation and Ongoing Reception (Paulist, 2014), and Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II (Liturgical Press, 2012), co-authored with Richard Gaillardetz.

Margaret was born in 1947, the daughter of James and Joan O’Gara. Her parents had been shaped by the values of the Chicago Catholic Worker and Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action (CISCA) movement. Her father, a deeply committed and well educated layman, moved the family to New York when Margaret was four years of age, in order to accept an appointment as the Editor of Commonweal magazine, a post he would hold for thirty-two years. Her mother volunteered frequently in after-school programs for disadvantaged children. Margaret and her sister Monica imbied the values of their parents, ‘growing up Commonweal,’ as Monica wrote in 2004.¹ As children, they listened attentively as an impressive array of Catholic intellectuals shared conversation in the family living room, and watched as their father travelled to Rome to report on the Second Vatican Council. ‘Well-reasoned and well-expressed thought was of great importance in our home,’ wrote Monica. ‘We saw in our lifetime how ideas written in the pages of Commonweal and other publications—about liturgical renewal, the role of the laity, ecumenical dialogue—could cause real change in the church at Vatican II. So our house was a house of conversations.’ Peter Steinfels wrote of the ‘wisdom’ and ‘good sense’ that characterized the quiet demeanor of James O’Gara during his time at Commonweal, ‘the product of intelligence allied with humility.’² Anyone who has ever worked with Margaret would recognize a similar admixture of penetrating intelligence, sound judgment, discretion, and humility.

At a very young age, and inspired by her parents’ vision of lay responsibility, Margaret was inhabited by a desire to pursue the study of theology. After a Bachelor of Arts at Trinity College, Washington DC (1969), she completed a Master’s degree in theology at Yale Divinity School (1971). She often recounted how the seeds of her ecumenical vocation were planted at Yale, when one of her professors invited her, during a discussion of the Reformation, to explain to Protestant classmates the Catholic doctrine of indulgences! Her doctoral dissertation, completed in 1980, and later published as Triumph in Defeat: Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority

Bishops, served as an important initiation into a lifetime of reflection on the vexing theme of teaching authority in the church. This work remains required reading for anyone studying the First Vatican Council. Colleagues continue to regard it as a model of scholarship. Its title, Triumph in Defeat, is a clue to Margaret’s shrewd judgment. Even in conflict and apparent failure, she was able to discern the workings of God’s grace—in this case, the important insights and moderating influence of the bishops whose positions were not entirely received at Vatican I. In 1976 Margaret joined the Faculty of Theology at St. Michael’s College, Toronto, where she held the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Toronto Chair in Systematic Theology. She retired due to declining health in the spring of 2012.

Over time Margaret honed her skills, building upon the O’Gara family’s commitment to the art of conversation to become a leading contributor to several ecumenical dialogues at local, national, and international levels. She was a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (1976-1993), of the Disciples of Christ–Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue (1983-2012), of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1994-2012), and of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity (1995-2007). O’Gara was instrumental in establishing the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (2008-2012), and was a participant in Bridgefolk, a North-American organization fostering dialogue between sacramentally-minded Mennonites and peace-loving Catholics. While it is true that the ecumenically-minded are often consummate multi-taskers, few could match the depth and breadth of O’Gara’s experience or the wisdom gained through her long-suffering commitment.

Students at the Toronto School of Theology valued the engaging conversation that took place in Margaret’s classroom, where students from diverse cultural and confessional backgrounds were schooled in the arts of respectful dialogue and rigorous scholarly discourse. Any student who sought her advice discovered Margaret’s gift for attentive listening and for considering all sides of a question before arriving at a decision. Her collegial style of leadership was appreciated by many

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colleagues of the Catholic Theological Society of America, which she served as President in 2008, and those of the North American Academy of Ecumenists, over which she presided from 1987-89.

Bishop Richard Sklba, who served as co-Chair to the U.S. Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue during Margaret’s tenure, writes, ‘I learned a great deal from the way Margaret often tested an idea or a tentative suggestion privately during coffee break before bringing it to the full body of delegates. It seemed as if her probing mind was constantly seeking the right phrase or the most understandable approach to the question. I always found her dialogic to the core, perhaps the modern epitome of how theological dialogue should be conducted responsibly and fruitfully.’ If Margaret was always looking ahead, working constructively, and building on the hope of Christian unity that flows from Christ’s prayer that ‘all may be one,’ she also experienced disappointment and frustration in the face of opposition to the ecumenical advance. She writes of the ‘embarrassment and frustration’ that ecumenists bear when confronted with ‘the sins’ of their, and their dialogue partners’ own church communion. She acknowledges the pain caused when ‘their efforts are frequently feared or suspected by members of their own church.’ Despite this incomprehension and the failure to receive our work, we must forge ahead, she would insist, because the Gospel requires it. As David M. Thompson, who worked with Margaret over many years in the Disciples–Roman Catholic dialogue, writes in his Foreword to No Turning Back, the astute reader will detect a ‘controlled impatience’ in many of these papers ‘with the churches’ unwillingness to recognize that things have changed, that convergences and agreements have been reached, but that readiness to act on those agreements is still hard to find.

In No Turning Back, Margaret O’Gara’s husband and colleague, Michael Vertin, gathers together a collection of papers from her later years, half of which were previously unpublished. Vertin provides a gracious introduction where he acquaints the reader with the basic history and goals of ecumenism, with O’Gara’s work and ecumenical engagement, and with the aims of the book. The essays are organized

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1 Bishop Richard J. Sklba, ‘Foreword,’ No Turning Back, ix.
2 O’Gara, No Turning Back, 35.
3 David M. Thompson, ‘Foreword,’ No Turning Back, xii.
in two parts: Part I, which provides the general reader with an initiation in the basic principles of ecumenical commitment; and Part II, which invites the reader to a deeper appreciation of a number of topics which are the focus of scholarly attention by specialists, including the exercise of the pastoral teaching office, the infallible character of the church’s belief, the nature of ordained ministry, and the future of ecumenism.

More than one reader has commented on how ‘personal’ these essays are. They will endure as a testament offered by a seasoned ecumenist whose life was finely attuned to the promptings of God’s Spirit. This is especially true of Part I, ‘Introducing the Ecumenical Perspective,’ which contains a number of brief testimonies, often delivered in the first person. They provide a window into Margaret’s personal commitments and enable the reader to drink of a wisdom distilled from long years of experience. She comments in chapter 2 on the opportunity for ecumenical growth provided by the experience of teaching and learning together with Christians from across cultural, linguistic, and confessional horizons which is characteristic of theological education in Canada.

Of particular note, are a series of chapters where she invites the reader to consider the theological significance of friendship in ecumenical work, of common prayer, and of the experience of dialogue as one of personal transformation. These chapters can be read together as an extended reflection on what abbé Paul Couturier, and after him the Decree on Ecumenism, have called ‘spiritual ecumenism.’ O’Gara rightly points to the need for discipline, for a real asceticism, if one is to stay at the table of dialogue in the face of intractable disagreement, or to bear the burden of being misunderstood by ecumenical partners and even by members of one’s own church.

Prayer is at the heart of this asceticism, in particular the discipline of common prayer. O’Gara notes in chapter 5 that when we pray together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we can no longer regard our differences in the same light: ‘I can never treat my disagreement with them as the last word, because I discover that God has the last word, and it’s directed at both of us.’ As well, when we pray with others according to their tradition ‘we learn a second language—and the ear of our heart is opened.’ Prayer for unity, an unceasing prayer, takes
many forms. At times it leads us to lament with the psalmist: ‘How long, O Lord, must we wait for the unity for which you prayed?’

O’Gara comments on a number of occasions about the sometimes painful discipline of praying together at one another’s Eucharistic celebrations—a common practice which belongs to the ethos of ecumenical dialogue. At such moments, she observes, witnessing to the present separation of the churches requires that dialogue participants ‘fast’ from the Lord’s Supper. The pain of such fasting is sometimes heightened by the deep awareness that we fundamentally agree that Christ comes to us in the bread and wine of the sacrament; yet even so, our churches have not yet arrived at a point of fully recognizing one another’s ministries and sacramental life. This form of asceticism reminds us that the ultimate purpose of dialogue is to work towards the day of full sacramental sharing and should deepen in us the hunger for unity.

It is a given that mutual trust is a prerequisite for any serious dialogue. O’Gara qualifies the character of that trust, contending in chapter 6 that Christian friendship establishes ‘the proper context’ for ecumenical dialogue, creating a climate for growth in mutual understanding and nurturing ‘the perseverance necessary for making progress.’ In such a context, she observes, ecumenical research becomes a cooperative effort, rather than a competitive one. In academic circles, bilateral dialogue where participants aim at full consensus, emerges as a ‘countercultural model’ of research. Dialogue is a common search for a deeper understanding of the truth of the gospel. No room for one-up-manship or ‘I-told-you-so’s.’ The focus is not on the speck in the other’s eye, but on the plank in one’s own.

1 O’Gara, No Turning Back, 25.
2 Bishop Richard Sklba recently observed, when reflecting back on his experience as co-Chair of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue U.S.A.: ‘it’s interesting to acknowledge that although virtually all of the individual members of the national Lutheran/Catholic Dialogue felt personally justified in approaching the Eucharistic table at our meetings (because of the degree of reconciliation in faith already achieved), we did not ever do so because we were representatives of Churches as yet not formally and officially living in reconciled diversity.’ Unpublished paper, ‘The National Lutheran/Catholic Dialogue: Convergences, Challenges and Opportunities.’
3 O’Gara, No Turning Back, 29.
O’Gara notes that the asceticism of ecumenical friendship entails a creative tension as one learns to understand and empathize with ecumenical partners, while remaining in ‘a form of intellectual communion’ with one’s own ecclesial tradition. This is not the place for scholars to simply ‘advocate their own theological opinions.’ Yet this should not constrain us to remain in the rut of the ecclesial status quo. It calls theologians to promote a creative re-appropriation of the tradition. As part of this process, participants mandated in official dialogues have both the responsibility and an opportunity to cultivate a rapport of ‘genuine cooperation’ with their bishops, who have effectively asked for their best advice after a period of careful research.¹

All genuine spiritual ecumenism leads to personal and ecclesial conversion. In chapter 8 O’Gara describes how persons are transformed through the experience of rereading their common history; through carefully analyzing the teachings of each tradition with a readiness to correct inaccuracies, one-sided emphases, or misunderstandings; by being open to receive and learn from the gifts and insights of others; by being prepared to undertake a serious reform of ecclesial structures; and in learning to collaborate with one another for the sake of evangelization. O’Gara has often described the process of ecumenical dialogue as an exchange of gifts.² Drawing on the thought of George Tavard, she observes, ‘these gifts are really given by the Holy Spirit for the whole of the church: in dialogue we receive back some of the gifts that have been missing since our separation.’³ The experience of genuine dialogue will change our way of seeing things, allow our vision of the other and of ourselves to be purified, and ultimately led us to a fuller embodiment of ecclesial life.

The essays of Part II, entitled ‘Deepening the Ecumenical Perspective,’ reflect O’Gara’s expertise and learned conversation with scholars of other church communions on the questions of papal primacy, teaching authority, infallibility, and ordained ministry. In chapter 9, which explores the teaching of Vatican I, she rightly notes that while much ink has flowed on the nature of infallibility and more

¹ O’Gara, No Turning Back, 30.
³ O’Gara, No Turning Back, 51.
recently on episcopal collegiality, scholars have not probed deeply into the nature of primacy and its limits.¹ The Second Vatican Council attempted to re-establish a balance in Catholic ecclesiology by recognizing the collegial character of ecclesial governance. The many dialogues that have studied the papal office and the exercise of authority in the church have repeatedly underlined the need to restore this balance in the actual structuring and practice of discernment and decision-making in the life of the church. They have focused on the binaries of the pope and the bishops, or the universal and the local churches. Yet few studies have actually explored the nature of primacy and the various forms or expressions of primacy in the various regional structures of the church.

In perhaps the most substantial and original essay in this collection, O’Gara’s expertise in ecclesiology is met by her interest in epistemology in chapter 11. She deftly uncovers the differing philosophical and epistemological perspectives that often underlie conflicting views of how the Holy Spirit assists the magisterium in discerning the parameters of orthodox doctrine. She argues convincingly that the non-reception of magisterial teaching on a particular question often hinges upon an unaddressed general theological disagreement or ‘a philosophical disagreement about how epistemically objective knowledge arises.’² She points to the practice of ecumenical dialogue for a model of authentic ecclesial learning.

Chapters 10 and 12 explore the growth in agreement and the mutual recognition of ministries achieved through dialogue between important constituencies of the Anglican and Lutheran Communions. O’Gara considers how they embody a concrete reception of the growing ecumenical consensus on the apostolicity of the church.³ Many dialogues on ministry, including the work of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, have helped us to understand that the whole church is apostolic. This mark of the church cannot be reduced to an unbroken line of ordinations, nor to the intentions of an ordaining minister. The intention to remain in the faith of the

¹ O’Gara, No Turning Back, 75.
² Ibid. 123.
³ Ibid. ch. 10, ‘Anglican Order and Ecumenical Dialogue on Ministry,’ 79-100. See also chapter 12, ‘Watching from the Sideline: Recent Lutheran-Anglican Agreements,’ 124-147.
apostles is born by the whole community of the baptized. While discerning the persistent presence of a votum unitatis or desire for catholicity is a far more complex task than analyzing lines of succession or rites of ordination, she shows how reframing the question in this way has moved us considerably beyond the framework of Pope Leo XIII’s Apostolicae Curae.

Several more chapters are devoted to various aspects of the exercise of authority in the church. In chapter 13 on Scripture and Tradition, O’Gara provides a solid overview of Catholic teaching and theology concerning the centrality of the Word of God in the life of the church.1 Chapter 14, first presented in the context of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, develops a Catholic view of ‘Divine Law,’ a question of some importance in Lutheran and Catholic understandings of the distinction between the office of bishop and presbyter, and on the essential mission of the Bishop of Rome in service to the communion of the local churches.2 Acknowledging that this notion is ‘not the frequent focus of Catholic discussion’ in Catholic theology today, underlying disagreement regarding that which is or is not ‘divinely mandated’ continues to inform conflicting claims.3 She demonstrates that a variety of meanings are ascribed to this term both within Catholicism, and in the ways that Lutherans have understood it, and suggests that deepening consensus would be helped by further clarification of this matter.

Chapter 15 surveys the agreements on teaching authority that have emerged from Dialogue between Catholics and Disciples of Christ, and between Catholics and Lutherans. She notes that the process of sustained dialogue over many years has contributed to ‘a remarkable degree of consensus’ marked by ‘the virtual end of debate about the authority of the canon of the Scriptures and the authority of creeds, councils, and dogmatic formulations in church history.’4 They also reflect a high degree of consensus on the responsibility of oversight that belongs to ordained ministers, working in collaboration with

1 O’Gara, No Turning Back, ch. 13, 148-162.
3 O’Gara, No Turning Back, 163.
4 Ibid. 204-5.
theologians and with all the baptized to discern the witness required of the church. Such discernment takes time. A Spirit-led process involving the whole of the church gives rise to expressions of doctrine marked by the contingencies of history yet faithful to the truth of the gospel.

The final essay and epilogue is a convocation address that Margaret wrote several months before her death. It was delivered by Michael Vertin in November of 2012 when she was posthumously awarded a Doctor of Divinity honoris causa by Regis College, Toronto. Taking her cue from chapter three of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, O’Gara reflects on how the journey of theological studies often implies allowing our knowledge to be renewed and transformed ‘according to the image of its creator’ (Col. 3: 9-10). The edifice of faith we have constructed for ourselves is often overturned by the maturation of our understanding. This is also true of our experience of seeking the truth of the gospel together in ecumenical dialogue. The transformation of our minds and hearts prepares us to give an account of our hope to the world. This slow transfiguration of our vision takes time. Indeed, a lifetime. She concludes, fittingly, ‘theology is worth a life!’

This book will inspire the novice and the expert alike. It is a rich testament from one of the most important North American ecumenists of the past century. May Margaret O’Gara’s example of scholarly service and integrity inspire others to continue the transformative work of ecumenical study and dialogue. And may Christians soon overcome the scandal of division and give a credible and common witness of love to the world.
REPORTS

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE ON MOUNT ATHOS

Stefan Reynolds

A report on a conference organized by the Friends of Mount Athos at Madingley Hall, Cambridge, 8–10 March 2013.

Madingley Hall dates back to the mid-sixteenth century. In 1948, after long being in private hands, it became a conference centre for Cambridge University. Situated in beautiful topiary gardens and offering five-star accommodation, it was the perfect place to enjoy meeting old friends and new, and to celebrate before the rigours of (Orthodox) Lent. This year’s conference was opened by Metropolitan Kallistos with a talk on ‘Spiritual Guidance in the Eighteenth Century: St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, St Paisy Velichkovsky, and the Philokalia’. His Eminence spoke about how the Desert Fathers, like St Nilus of Sinai (died c. 430), always saw spiritual direction as a very difficult task: ‘the art of arts’, it involved a continuous commitment to the disciple and intercession for him or her as well as giving counsel. The spiritual father was to play the role of Christ, and from the disciple the requisite commitment expressed itself in loyalty and obedience. This tradition was renewed with the publication of the Philokalia in 1782 by St Nikodimos and St Makarios of Corinth and its translation into Slavonic by St Paisy Velichkovsky. They differed in that Paisy felt the tradition was only relevant to monks (this was one of the reasons he was reluctant to have printed editions circulated widely), while Nikodimos saw it as relevant to all Christians. The spiritual father or mother was, for them, not a substitute for God but someone who ushers the disciple into the presence of God. Such a relationship is recommended as the most propitious, but if no elder can be found, then the mutual obedience of spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood among spiritual companions can offer profitable guidance. Even for an individual, to read the Scriptures and the Fathers and to trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit will keep one on the path. The root of the word ‘obedience’—in both Greek and Latin—means to hear, to listen, to be open.
The following morning we had a Mnemosynon (Memorial Service) in the church of St Mary Magdalene in Madingley which dates back to Saxon times and has many medieval features. After breakfast Sister Seraphima of the Tolleshunt Knights monastery spoke on ‘The Athonite Tradition of Spiritual Fatherhood: from St Gregory Palamas to Fr Sophrony Sakharov’. Sister Seraphima spoke of the art of spiritual guidance as ‘healing another’s wounds’; it is a deeply personal relationship. Within the Church there is apostolic paternity, shown by the bishops; but there is also a less explicit tradition of charismatic paternity, shown by wise men and women often not ordained. The goal of spiritual direction is the classical value of finding a happy life through virtue. In the Christian tradition virtues are seen as gifts of God in creation, as the image of God in which our true nature lies. Spiritual guidance helps to recover this in three stages: (1) by realizing that sin has corrupted our minds, so that we are encouraged in the laborious task of knowing ourselves and rejecting evil thoughts, the passion-driven logismoi; (2) by learning how to contemplate the universe spiritually, discerning the logoi of created things; and (3) by theosis, whereby self-denial is realized in the kenotic happiness of the Beatitudes.

The twin brothers Fathers Kirill and Methody, from St Petersburg Theological Academy, then gave a joint paper on ‘Spiritual Guidance in Mount Athos and Russia and the Theological Notion of the Person’. They said that the Russian Church profited from Mount Athos like wise bees collecting pollen and bringing it back to their homeland. St Paisy’s translations renewed spiritual fatherhood among the Slavic nations, but there were earlier ‘pollinations’ like that of St Gregory of Sinai (1260s–1346) whose disciples, in exile from Athos, travelled to Thrace and from there had a great influence on Russia. A pre-eminently personal spiritual fatherhood helps us rediscover the meaning of the human person as not just an individual but as constituted by relation. Its meaning is theological in that God is a trinity of persons. Like God, the human person is irreducible to rational categories: spiritual fatherhood is always based on freedom expressing itself in unexpected, creative, and often humorous ways. Based on the Trinitarian relation, its purpose is the integration of the human person into love. The problem of how one can make another’s life one’s own without imposing on or controlling them is resolved in the inclusivity of theological personhood. Spiritual direction may at
times demand blind obedience, but this is always given in freedom, as it is for the purpose and end of deeper insight and personal flourishing.

After lunch and a period of rest Graham Speake read a paper sent from Archimandrite Ephrem who is Prior of St Andrew’s skete near Karyes on ‘Spiritual Fatherhood on the Holy Mountain’. This moving paper looked at the evangelical counsel, ‘Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven’ (Matt. 23: 9). The tradition has always accepted the designation of fatherhood, even spiritual fatherhood to human beings; Abraham, for example, is our father in faith. Archimandrite Ephrem offered seven categories of fatherhood: natural parents, godparents, teachers, ecclesiastics, monks, spiritual fathers, and lastly God, from whom all the former are derivative and in whom they all participate. On the Holy Mountain the office of spiritual fatherhood is often fulfilled by priests who are confessors. However, Archimandrite Ephrem pointed out that some elders who were not priests acted as spiritual guides, hearing confessions, although a priest would read the absolution at the end. Many of the Desert Fathers, both in the past and in recent Athonite history, have not been priests.

Sister Theoktisti of the monastery of the Righteous Forerunner on Mount Ossa in Greece gave our post-tea talk on ‘The Renewal of Women’s Monasticism in the Twentieth Century through the Guidance of Athonite Monks’. Though in the late eighteenth century Athonite monks started many monasteries in Greece, most of these were undermined and dissolved by the state in the mid-nineteenth century. A revival of female monasticism occurred under the patronage of St Nektarios at the beginning of the twentieth century. Though not an Athonite monk, St Nektarios travelled to the Holy Mountain in 1898 and founded the Holy Trinity monastery for nuns in Aegina and other monasteries, following Athonite ways of life and spirituality. Others like the Athonite monk Joseph the Hesychast in the early twentieth century had a great influence on the Church in Greece, America, and Canada.

Sister Theoktisti went on to list six ‘points of spiritual guidance’ which have informed women’s monasticism in Greece: (1) the monastic has nothing in this life except Jesus; Jesus is found in community; ‘we are saved together; the only thing we do alone is sin and fall’; (2) the monastic has to force his/her nature and overcome
self-love and egoism, denying one’s wilfulness and habitual ways; (3) the need for guidance, obedience, and humility goes for all; ‘the community is like a river that takes rough rocks and, grinding them together, makes small pebbles’; (4) by means of spiritual growth in Christ, the monastic (already in the image of God) becomes the likeness of God through monastic life; (5) through heroic witness the monastic realizes that, if he or she is liked by mankind, then she would not be a servant of God; (6) the monastery is a vision of human community: the control of the passions is a model of human maturity, and the Church is also guided by the prayers and intercessions of the monks.

We adjourned for Vespers, sung beautifully in the church, followed by another marvellous supper. Then Fr Liviu Barbu, a Romanian priest who wrote a doctoral thesis on ‘Spiritual Fatherhood’ at King’s College London and now serves a pan-Orthodox parish in Norwich, gave an evening talk on ‘Translating Spiritual Fatherhood from the Monastery into the World: A Romanian Case Study’. Fr Liviu spoke of the differences in applying spiritual guidance in a monastery and a parish and the cultural differences between Christians brought up in Eastern Europe and those in the West. In the Orthodox tradition, he said, spiritual fatherhood is rooted in God’s fatherhood. God’s covenant with humanity makes God manifest, tangible, and, in Jesus, gives God a human face. This is reflected in spiritual fatherhood as evidenced in the monastic tradition, based as it is on covenantal love, sacrifice, and communion and on the model of the bishop in the early Church as a physician of souls. Rooted in these covenantal and ecclesial models, it must be a relation open to all Christians. Private judgement and efforts can be misleading, as Proverbs 1:5 says: ‘A man of understanding shall attain unto wise councils’. Such humility in seeking guidance leads to discernment. There are varied approaches to obedience from unhesitating obedience on the one hand to dialogue and friendship on the other. Certainly monks take a vow of obedience, whereas for laity it is only pastoral advice. Christians brought up in the West are more used to following the Church’s teachings without seeking reassurance as to their personal application. Those brought up in the East place more reliance on the advice of their pastor. There must of course be an effort to avoid slavish dependence on another, but at the same time the value of self-renunciation is always valid: obedience leads to freedom and humility.
Fr Liviu gave examples of a parish in Budapest where lay Christians are devoted to the monastic ideal of spiritual paternity through the influence of their wise pastor, Fr Georg. In Britain, he said, pastors tend to avoid the title ‘spiritual father’, though they are often known as such by their disciples. His studies have shown that spiritual paternity is practised by Orthodox of all communities, and outside the monastery its most common medium continues to be the confessional.

The day ended with Compline, after which we retired to our beds or the bar, according to the greater need. In the morning we woke up to find the topiary gardens covered with snow. The Divine Liturgy, with six priests, was celebrated in the parish church, after which Fr Andreas Andreopoulos from Winchester University gave the final talk, on ‘The Challenges of Spiritual Guidance in Modern Greece’. Fr Andreas spoke of the holistic model of monks and laity in the Church in which guidance can also come from the laity. Spiritual guidance is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to an individual for the sake of the Church and that is recognized by the community. In Greece, in recent years, there has been a fragmentation of parish life (due to urbanization, nineteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, popular heterodox religious movements, and the influence of communism) and there is a great need for spiritual direction. Partly this is provided by the revival of the monasteries in Greece in the twentieth century, since monks have traditionally carried this prophetic vocation. Partly it is provided by a return to a eucharistic eschatological understanding of the Church, a community with a prophetic calling, not just a moral exemplar.

This was a wonderful conference which, given the beautiful grounds and frequent times of prayer, for me also seemed a time of retreat. As one of the speakers said, we felt that the spirit of Mount Athos was with us in this beautiful corner of Cambridgeshire.
WE ARE MANY, WE ARE ONE, SENT OUT TO BUILD GOD’S PEACE

W. Salters Sterling


Some or maybe indeed all of the readers of One in Christ may not know that the World Student Christian Federation is both the oldest nearly world-wide ecumenical movement and the oldest international student organisation. Founded in 1895 it first brought together the members of Student Volunteer Missionary Union organisations in the universities and colleges of Europe and North America. It had working associations with the YMCA and the YWCA. Its original intention was to mobilise graduates around the call ‘The World for Christ in this Generation’. The students who answered that call and went abroad in Christian service were among the most influential of the leaders of Edinburgh 1910—the International Missionary Conference—as they articulated the message that a divided Church is greatly disadvantaged in speaking of or working for Christ in an equally divided world. In the century and more since 1895, in whatever guise, that has been the fundamental message of the WSCF/Federation. Originally protestant and reformed in membership, Orthodox Churches’ members were quick to become associated—and more slowly since the pontificate of John XXIII those of the Churches in communion with Rome have felt free to join. Its ethos is inclusive rather than exclusive so that students and young people who seek truth and pursue it find a ready welcome in the fellowship of local Branches and national Movements. It is best known as the Student Christian Movement in its local and national incarnations. Of the latter there are approaching 140 worldwide with a total membership of some 1.2 million of whom 380,000 are in Africa. In current parlance it aims to educate and train ecumenical leaders for service in both Church and Society.

This then is the historical context in which the 35th General Assembly convened in the YMCA premises in Bogota, Colombia, in late February 2015. That meeting had been postponed from August 2014 because the funding necessary for travel, accommodation and programme costs had not been secured. Persistence and hard work in the six month interval meant that the Assembly when held ended modestly in the black, a first in recent decades. Nevertheless the
experience of having to face severe economic constraints has raised immensely important issues for the future of the Federation and for all similar ecumenical organisations. Immediately the resource crisis was identified the Executive Committee of the WSCF moved to appoint a Future of the Federation Task Group. I was privileged to convene that Group and in a matter of three months to produce a unanimous report which, following its consideration and minor amendment by the Assembly itself, was adopted to provide the basis of immediate functioning and intermediate development. Because its consideration in plenary, sectoral and regional levels in the Assembly caused the overall programme to be significantly recast and because of the significance of issues much beyond the control of the WSCF organisation I propose to isolate this matter of resourcing ecumenical work for comment at this point as an almost independent concern.

In being briefed for the work of the Future of the Federation Task Group I became acutely aware that in the past decade there has been a very sharp decline in the funding available for the core work of ecumenical agencies internationally. That information reinforced my own experience from the Chair of the Steering Committee of the Irish School of Ecumenics because when economic catastrophe hit Ireland in 2008 the Churches which had been supporting the ISE either greatly reduced or entirely ceased their financial support for the School. At a first glance that could be interpreted as good housekeeping but a longer look suggests that the understanding of ecumenism as central to both the esse and the bene esse of the Church has not yet sufficiently engaged the attention of ecclesiastical decision-makers even though the current ecumenical dynamic is more than 100 years in its thrust. It may very well be the case that concern for the receptivity of the ecumenical vision needs to apply not only to the pew but even more so to the boardroom. An examination of the income of the WSCF since 2002 was instructive. With the honourable exceptions of Churches in the Lutheran, Methodist, Uniting and Waldensian traditions there is no financial contribution internationally from Churches. Equally instructive were the conversations with the Chief Executives of those funding agencies which do continue to support the work of the Federation including several of the contributing Churches. Without exception they reported declining income for themselves and greater and greater requirements for accountability and transparency from their own funders. A vicious
circle is being created: less money + more bureaucracy = declining front-line project work. The way forward to a significantly more secure financial future would appear to be by developing a culture of self-reliance in which each member of the local SCM contributes to the financial needs of the local, national, regional and global organisation and indeed an emergency scheme for such has already been implemented. As the GiveOne—BeOne Appeal it will be refined according to the cultural and economic conditions in which the Federation operates and Africa with its almost 400,000 members is already setting the pace for the other regions: Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North America. Hopefully they will follow suit and hopefully too it will mean that the experience of economic self-sufficiency at least for core funding will create in turn a reviving and renewing sense of dignity and prophetic authority.

That prophetic authority has been the almost continuous golden thread of meaning and of purpose in the history of the Federation. It was certainly not absent in Bogota. Exploring the theme ‘We are Many, We are One, Sent out to build God’s Peace’ was a challenging exercise. In the first of three keynote addresses the Reverend Dr Johnston McMaster, currently an adjunct staff member in the Irish School of Ecumenics in Trinity College Dublin and previously Director for more than twenty years of the School’s Education for Reconciliation Programme in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, with the precision of a sharply honed academic mind tempered in the white-heat of on-the-ground experience disclosed the incontrovertible fact that there can be no real peace without justice. It was a scholarly contribution of the first class and of an argued order that is too infrequently found in an era of sound bites. It demonstrated how the roots of violence and non-peace when traced back through the chain of cause and effect almost if not always arrive at an origin of injustice. It further demonstrated that the Church into whose apostolic keeping the gift of Godly Peace has been imparted had too often sacrificed the responsibility and the capacity to share that Peace by too close an alignment of church interest with secular/state power. While recognising that the origins of this thesis is a European reading and perspective it did not take a great deal of translation to identify the significance of the analysis for those situations in which Churches
are related to or are part of colonial regimes. It required concentrated attention but it was worth it.

Under pressure of time the second key note speaker, the Reverend Dr Chris Ferguson from Canada via Latin America, currently General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, speaking alternately in English and Spanish addressed the theme ‘SCMs Gathered in Colombia: seeing, interrogating and transforming the world’. Dr Ferguson’s presentation involved illustrative contributions from persons involved in Justice and Peace work in both Colombia and Mexico. It was powerful and challenging in its design and delivery so that delegates could not escape the question of what they are doing in their own situations. Biblically based it was the perfect partner for the material presented earlier by Dr McMaster.

As indeed was the address given the next day by Dr Fulata Moyo from Malawi. Dr Moyo, a deeply impressive black woman, Christian and Feminist, was forthright in the way in which she drew attention to her evaluation that in many parts of the post-colonial world justice for women is far from being achieved. In her descriptive and analytical material she moved easily from the domestic, through the economic and social realms into the political world and beyond that into the world of sex relationships and sex practices while always trying to demonstrate what godly justice, inspired by Jesus, might look like. She spoke frankly and openly and from personal experience. Many of the questions which followed, while sincerely posed, grew out of biblical understandings which reference men as superior in being to women. Dr Moyo was having none of it and her answers had as their touchstone the insight of Jürgen Moltmann when he speaks of Patriarchy not having been created by Christianity but Christianity as having proved incapable of overcoming it.

There was much to ponder and digest in all three major papers and delegate reaction to some of the material. For the writer the ruminating process continues without end in sight. The task of formulating a shared vision and agreeing common action around something as basic as justice is riddled with difficulty within the world and maybe especially in the Household of God. That is in itself worth reflection.

Bible Study organised in plenary session following morning worship was immensely rewarding. It was led by a man and a woman contributing on different days, both from Latin America and working
with justice material found in Isaiah centring on chapter 53 and following. Here was a message of justice for various categories of despised, rejected, isolated humanity who were for real in the days of the Prophet and the invitation was to identify and become concerned for the welfare of the groups and individuals who may be corresponding in our time. Certainly in Ireland we need to be asking questions about the treatment of the Travelling Community, the Asylum Seekers, those in care homes and the degree of invidious domestic violence against mainly women and children. There is an agenda there for a lifetime of seeking justice.

Worship was the context in which we began and ended the day. It was also the context in which the deeply spiritual and high-achieving intellectual quality of the students and young people at the Assembly was most immediately and continuously evident. It remained that way from the beginning to the end of the Assembly. Provided by the Regions in turn and by the host SCM, the worship was without exception superb. As experiences of the insights of faith given to those who seek truth and pursue it, each worship session was, without exception, deeply moving, frequently to the point where the only meaningful response is the sharing of shed tears. I know from what was said in Bogota and since then that I will not be accused of the invidious if I mention the session of praise and prayer composed and presented by the delegations from the Middle East including Egypt. In it through power-point images and commentary delivered in tones of quiet objectivity we were introduced to a series of contemporary Calvareys, persons beheaded, shot, crushed and buildings blown-up, demolished, made useless, contrasted with the staggering beauties of creation in the Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, Egypt, Iraq to mention only some of the locations projected. The works of men and the Work of God. It concluded with a silent sharing of Blessed Bread. We do all need to learn from the historic imagination of the Orthodox Churches certainly as it is expressed in their faithful youth.

Not just intelligence but also wisdom was demonstrated in the content and debate of the report from the working party on Identity, Diversity and Dialogue which had been established at Montreal in 2008 to help the Federation deal with the multiplicity of responses that there are to issues of sexual, gender and trans-gender identity world-wide and very particularly in faith communities. As the report indicated one of the first tasks of the working party was to work
towards a shared language which did not polarise passions and made dialogue possible. The report itself was a model of dispassionate prose and the debate a model of an oratory that did not inflame. Both are models of the mind infused by faith working at its best. The report makes clear just how complex a matter sexual identity is. It eschews any notion of superiority or inferiority of perspective. It gently reminds all of us that there are many different forms of identity expression and it notes the way in which it has been possible for some societies to give spiritual leadership roles to those whose identity can be described as trans-gender. The key recommendations of the report are that the study of the issue should continue to be pursued; that violence can never constitute an appropriate response to sexual, gender or trans-gender difference; that in this matter as in all other matters with which the Federation has had to deal in its 120 year history the key is to be able to hold diversity in creative tension and continue to celebrate our common fellowship as we seek and pray for deeper understanding. As I have already noted the debate of the report adopted the same tenor and its recommendations were approved. The learning and the discerning are to continue and I for one simply note how right Robin Boyd was to sub-title his short history of the British SCM: ‘The Church ahead of the Church’. I should add that the Identity, Diversity and Dialogue Report notes that no one from Africa was able to attend the in-person consultation because of visa problems and also notes that a submission from one person in Africa had been received. Given that the tone of the Report and of the debate were similarly respectful I think that it is fair to say that my evaluation of the Federation process still stands.

Of equal importance was the attention given to reports from the Advocacy and Solidarity Working Party. In this area the Federation had focussed on the issues of Justice and Peace in two areas, Colombia and Palestine. In the case of Colombia the Assembly had, as part of its programme, the opportunity to visit educational centres and community projects contributing to the search for Justice and Peace in Colombia. There was also the opportunity to hear on site of the work of the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation in Bogota. There was one poignant moment during these visits when delegates were able to contribute to the burial costs of a victim of violence, dead for some time and uninterred, whose mother and family had not the wherewithal to perform the task themselves. Such immediate
unplanned and spontaneous engagement drives home the human consequences of violence and in Bogota sharpened the learning from the victims of violence and the Justice and Peace Workers who visited and spoke at the Assembly. Arising from the Report the Assembly passed resolutions which: encouraged the Colombian Government and FARC not to leave the negotiations which were then current until peace is agreed and armed conflict eliminated; the Government to open public conversations as quickly as possible with ELN; and called on the churches globally and the global community generally to continue to support the efforts for Peace in Colombia.

The partner Advocacy and Solidarity Report on the Federation efforts for Palestine outlined for the Assembly the findings and recommendation which flowed from meetings of the Federation held in the Near Eastern countries in 2013. Without being able to record fully the Report and the debate on it I am content to say that again the tenor was magisterially wise in seeking to find pointers to the way forward which would see the implementation of all UN resolutions affecting the area; the eschewing of violence by all parties; the common recognition of the shared history of all those whose roots are in the Abrahamic tradition and the consequences of that for the City of Jerusalem; a study and review of all theological issues which could hinder progress to peace; a concentrated effort by churches and governments to understand the issues involved in the present tragic situation and to seek advances which are in keeping with International Human Rights Conventions and take advantage of the Kairos Document’s contribution towards a peaceful resolution. Again a measured contribution by those who had been, and seen and talked and reflected and prayed, perhaps too radical for some and not radical enough for others but the stuff of what non-violent contributions are made.

It has been a privilege to share this information and these insights with the readers of One in Christ. My own association with the Federation stretches back to the early 1950s, was close from then until 1970 and again committed since 2008. It is an organisation worth knowing about and worth supporting when the opportunity arises. Thanks to One in Christ for this occasion to share.
A NEW MONASTIC REALITY

Stuart Burns OSB

The Abbot of the Anglican Benedictine Abbey of Mucknell traces the development of this community, with its roots in Anglo-Saxon mixed monasteries of nuns and monks. The community of Anglican Benedictine nuns at Burford, founded in 1941 to pray for the unity of the Church, evolved into the present ‘mixed’ community, now further enriched by a solemnly professed Methodist minister, in full connexion with the Methodist Conference.

There is a tendency to assume that the way things were in the recent past is how they have always been—or should have been!—not least in monastic practice. Study of any period of monastic history will tell a different story—with the possible exception of the Carthusians—eras of decadent opulence followed by ones of harsh asceticism, surges of missionary activity contrasting with periods majoring on contemplative enclosure, most of them a far cry from what we can glean about the reality of monastic life in St Benedict’s monasteries.

Little is known about the monastic communities in Britain in the pre-Anglo-Saxon times, but we do know that they were much less structured and included both celibate, single and married members. In Anglo-Saxon Britain the ‘double’ or ‘mixed’ monasteries of nuns and monks were common, often presided over by an abbess. Amongst the most famous of these was the great abbey at Whitby, presided over by the Abbess Hilda who hosted the Synod of Whitby to decide between the customs of the Celtic and Roman traditions. Only after the Norman Conquest did single gender monasteries begin to become the norm. One significant exception in England was the ‘Gilbertine Order’. In the early twelfth century Gilbert of Sempringham founded double communities of Benedictine nuns and Augustinian Canons living side by side. At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries there were twenty-five Gilbertine houses up and down the country.

Fast forward to 1987 and the Anglican Benedictine nuns at Burford. The community, which had been founded in 1941 to pray for the unity of the Church, had shrunk to the Reverend Mother and five elderly nuns, one of whom was in a nursing home. With the encouragement of the Archbishop of Canterbury the novitiate was opened to men and the first two male postulants were admitted at the beginning of
October 1987, thus restoring the Anglo-Saxon tradition of a ‘mixed community’ presided over by a female superior.

While ‘the boys’ were received with great generosity and patience by the elderly nuns, the collision of two very different cultures was not without its difficulties (let the reader understand!). The death of one of the nuns only three weeks after the arrival of ‘the boys’ proved to be a watershed in the relationship. The brothers quietly shouldered all that had to be done from the laying out of the body (one of them had worked in a hospice) to arranging the funeral and seeing to all the paperwork. Though there were still a host of misunderstandings and mismatched expectations to be worked through, they quickly became one community.

Gradually other brothers arrived—the next four not as young as the first two, and the Reverend Mother received the first vows of six and the solemn vows of three before retiring from office in 1996. The new constitution of the Community is clear that all solemnly professed nuns and monks under the age of seventy-five are eligible for election as superior—though they must normally retire within a month of their seventy-fifth birthday. The superior is currently elected for an initial term of ten years, renewable for periods of six years, though this is due for review in the near future.

After the first male superior had been in office for a year the Community was given permission to receive its first female postulants, and a good deal of work was done in preparation. There was to be no gender stereotyping! Already the monks had shouldered the cooking, cleaning and laundry, but they sought the help of some mature female religious to hone certain sensitivities in preparation for living with ‘younger’ women. Because of the work done the learning curve was not as steep as it might have been, but there were some bumpy moments—not least as the new ‘sisters’ (they were never referred to as ‘the girls’) showed no signs of complying unquestioningly with the Victorian expectations of postulants and novices held by the older nuns: ‘Postulants and novices should be seen but not heard.’ ‘How dare they question the abbot?’

It was a pretty turbulent period but gradually the rhythm of the life asserted its calming influence, and as it did the Community began to become increasingly aware of issues of ‘sustainability’ and environmental responsibility.
Burford Priory was a draughty Grade 1 listed Jacobean manor house in which every floor-board creaked and there was little sound insulation, expensive to heat and even more expensive to maintain. The first recorded conversation about the desirability of a move comes in the 1974 Chapter minutes, but the issue was shelved as being too disruptive. It re-appears in the minutes roughly every five years, but always there was an excuse to defer a decision. The crunch came in 2007: a new Cotswold stone roof and compliance with new fire regulations meant launching an appeal which would have kept the Community tied to a building deemed unsuitable for the life it was trying to live. The January 2008 Chapter decided to sell and the Community moved into temporary accommodation in November that year, having bought a derelict farm, unaware that for centuries it had been part of the estate of Worcester Cathedral Benedictine Priory and therefore among the titular owners were the Benedictine Saints Oswald and Wulfstan.

The next two years saw the physical transformation of Mucknell Farm into Mucknell Abbey incorporating as many ‘sustainable’ features as the Community could afford and using recycled building materials locally sourced wherever possible. All internal walls are built of ‘breeze blocks’ made from recycled ash from a power station. The floor flags of the Oratory and courtyard walkways are made from recycled milk bottles and car tyres mixed with aggregate—sounds dreadful but looks good and many ‘breakable’ things bounce when dropped! Other floor coverings and insulation materials are all made from recycled materials, though no one would guess. Solar panels and photovoltaic cells on the roof heat water and generate electricity; rainwater is harvested for flushing toilets; a biomass boiler fed on locally sourced woodchips provides heat and a large kitchen garden and young orchard provide a good deal of our food. The ‘effluent’ is taken care of by a bio-digester and a series of reed beds. The monastery is set in forty acres of land, much of which is flower/hay meadow, but several thousand trees have been planted to increase the biodiversity and provide habitats for creatures other than humans.

While the building was being completed the Community itself was undergoing considerable change. We had a two year ‘retreat’ in which the Community reviewed its understanding of what it was about; how to re-vision the Benedictine life for the twenty-first century? How to develop a sustainable lifestyle? What was the Holy Spirit asking of us?
How open were we to change? How ready were we for the unforeseen challenges of the new monastery? How might the Community be ‘used’ in its new rural rather than urban setting? How to cope with the inevitable limitations of the new site?

Living at very close quarters for two years involved a good deal of work on interpersonal relationships—each member has a very different temperament and, interestingly, each represents a different strand of Anglican liturgical tradition. Sensitivities were further honed. The Horarium and Offices were revised and an ‘Office of Readings’ was added at the beginning of the day.

The decision was also made to change the initiation process. Several recent postulants had begun to articulate the crushing sense of ‘expectation’. What they really wanted to do was to explore monasticism, but becoming a postulant gave everyone else—family, friends, the community etc.—the clear message that they were looking towards a novitiate and subsequent profession. The Community decided to invite young people simply to come to live alongside the monastics, sharing the life and getting to know—and be known by—the members of the Community with no expectation that this would lead to a novitiate, however much the Community or the individual might hope that it would. The ‘alongsider’ and the Community make a contract for one month at a time. If all is working well, the contract may be renewed for a further month, up to twelve months. If, after several months, the ‘alongsider’ expresses a desire to enter the novitiate and the Community is happy, then this can happen and a novitiate lasting between 20 months and four years can begin.

Almost without noticing it, the Community was also being invited to explore the reason for its foundation—prayer for the unity of the Church.

A young Methodist presbyter asked to come to live alongside the Community in order to learn more of the Benedictine monastic tradition which had so influenced John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism which began as a vibrant and disciplined movement within the Church of England, a renewal which the established Church of the time badly needed but was largely unable to embrace. John and Charles Wesley, the founders, were both Anglican priests and lived and died as members of the Church of England. They had no desire to form a separate church. The present Archbishop of Canterbury speaks of early Methodism very much in terms of a
Religious Order with the daily prayers and Bible study, and with its ‘Class’ system: groups of ten or twelve meeting weekly for study and accountability for the way they had lived their Christian discipleship in the previous week.

Shunned by the established Church, the Methodist movement has, over the years, developed a ‘connexion’ structure of governance or ‘episcope’ known as ‘Conference’. This is an elected body of lay and ordained members which meets annually, presided over by the President of Conference. The country is divided into Districts, equivalent to dioceses, each presided over by a Chair. Every minister—presbyter or deacon—’in full connexion’ is stationed annually by Conference on the advice of the Stationing Committee.

In 2003 the Church of England entered a covenant with the Methodist Church to work together towards the goal of full visible unity, and a Covenant Implementation Group was set up. It can never have crossed the minds of its members that one of the issues they would have to deal with would be monastic vows.

It was the Stationing Committee that gave permission for the young presbyter to spend a year out of circuit ministry. A year later he asked for and was granted permission to enter a two year novitiate, and then to make Simple Vows for three years while remaining a Methodist minister ‘in full connexion’. During this time the Covenant Implementation Group had the task of examining the possibility of a Methodist Presbyter making monastic vows in an Anglican community.

Who would ‘hold’ his vows?—the Archbishop of Canterbury, who holds the vows of Church of England Religious, couldn’t. Who would have the competence to release him from Solemn Vows? Would members of Conference agree to a presbyter remaining in full connexion if they didn’t have the freedom to station him? All these questions were addressed and everyone involved was extremely gracious at every step. Conference would hold his vows. In the event of release being requested, the President of Conference, after consulting with a ‘group of reference’, would have the competence, and the Stationing Committee affirmed the implications of Monastic Stability in the vowed life and the abbot’s authority.

And so it was that on 31 July 2014 Brother Ian Mead made his Solemn Vows as the first Methodist Benedictine monk at Mucknell Abbey. The Chair of the Birmingham Methodist District presided at the
Eucharist (Methodist rite, of course!) and preached in the presence of the President of Conference who, until recently, was the Methodist minister in Rome and the representative of Methodism to the Vatican. The Abbot of Mucknell received his vows and the Community’s Visitor, the Bishop of Worcester, was there to bless him, as was the Regional Baptist Minister, representing the Free Churches of the West Midlands. History was made amidst great rejoicing and the Anglican-Methodist Covenant took a step nearer to fulfilment!!

Brother Ian continues to lead services in the local Methodist circuit each month and is increasingly called upon to lead retreats and quiet days for Methodist ministers and lay people. He is one of the monastic members of the Church of England Young Vocations Group, set up to promote the sense of vocation among young people and has become the Novice Guardian at Mucknell.

The Community’s prayer for the unity of the Church is articulated eloquently in the daily celebration of the Eucharist. The three ordained members of the Community take it in turns to preside: Abbot Stuart, Brother Ian (using the Methodist rite) and Sister Alison (affirming the place of women in the Anglican priesthood).

As for the ‘alongsider’ scheme, this has worked well. Since 2008 there have been eighteen, each one contributing enormously to the life of the Community. Of these one was baptised and confirmed during his time in the monastery, one is now solemnly professed, two are in first vows, two in the novitiate and four are still with us. One is in the novitiate of another community and the others are all still very much in touch, and feel enriched by the experience. The Community, on the other hand, has been enriched by the presence and energy of a good number of young people and has seen the average age of its members reduce dramatically: well over half the habited members of the Community are under fifty-five, and ages range from twenty-five to ninety-one.

The Unity of the Church is being explored and strengthened between generations, genders, denominations and nationalities as the Community seeks to model a responsible stewardship of creation and the treasure of the Benedictine charism.
**DOCUMENT**

**RESPONSE TO THE 2015 SYNOD ON THE FAMILY FROM THE INTERCHURCH FAMILIES INTERNATIONAL NETWORK**

The Interchurch Families International Network (IFIN) gives a voice to interchurch families at global level, bringing together associations and groups of interchurch families from different parts of the world. Following the Second Vatican Council, with its more positive attitude towards mixed marriages, national and regional groups and associations began to come together in many European countries, beginning in the 1960s (France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany and Austria), and later developed also in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At a multi-lingual world gathering held at Rome in 2003 representatives came from eleven different countries and three continents; it adopted the paper Interchurch Families and Christian Unity, which is still the most comprehensive statement in brief format of the self-understanding of interchurch families, the contribution they feel they can make to Christian unity, and the kind of pastoral understanding they need if they are to fulfil their potential (available in English, French, German and Italian at [http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/rome-document/rome-document](http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/rome-document/rome-document)). IFIN is also in touch with interchurch couples and families in countries where groups and associations do not yet exist, including Africa.

**SUMMARY OF THE IFIN RESPONSE**

1. **Mixed and interreligious families**

This submission to the Synod suggests that the *Instrumentum Laboris* should devote a *special section with a clear heading* to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families (1).

It notes that marriages with ‘disparity of cult’ are now called ‘interreligious marriages’, and suggests that more specific terminology should be given to ‘mixed marriages’ (between baptised Christians), e.g. ‘interchurch marriages’ in English, and similar expressions which have gained currency in other languages. ‘Interchurch families’ seems to be a suitable parallel description to ‘interreligious families’ (2).
2. The vocation and mission of interchurch families in the Church and in the contemporary world

The particular vocation of interchurch families is described (3). Like other Christian families, they are called to mirror the reconciling love of God in Christ, on the pattern of Christ’s love for his Church. In the covenant of marriage they form one church at home, but in their case their domestic church is related to two as yet separated ecclesial communions. Thus interchurch families embody Christian unity. Simply by their existence interchurch families can offer a visible sign of unity, and by their involvement in the life of two churches can help to bring them together.

The mission of interchurch families is set out (4). The first witness of the partners is to one another. As their love and mutual understanding grows, they have practical experience of a ‘hierarchy of truths’, an ‘exchange of gifts’ and ‘receptive ecumenism’. They share with their children the particular riches of both their ecclesial communions, stressing unity in diversity. They bring together their extended families and their local congregations in important family celebrations such as baptism. They undertake local ecumenical responsibilities, stimulating common prayer, study together and joint service to the community. They demonstrate on a family scale the conditions in which growth into unity becomes possible. In this way they exemplify and anticipate some of the attitudes and actions that the churches also need as they strive to grow closer together.

Interchurch families need wise pastoral understanding if they are to fulfil their vocation and mission to be a sign and means of visible unity within their churches (5). Sometimes church legislation and attitudes seem to be pulling the partners apart, rather than strengthening their unity. What they need above all is a pastoral understanding that will focus on building up their marriages in respect for the unity and equality of the partners.

The paper then deals with particular pastoral issues. First, there is need for marriage preparation and follow-up adapted to interchurch partners (6). The contribution that interchurch couples themselves can make to marriage preparation should be valued, and pastoral support given to the work of interchurch family groups.

The pre-nuptial ‘promise’ required from the Catholic partner can still cause pastoral problems, and appear to deny the shared
responsibility of parents for the religious upbringing of their children (7). Interchurch families ask whether a pre-nuptial ‘promise’ in any form need be required; might it not be sufficient to remind Catholics of their responsibilities as parents, and ascertain that they seriously desire to share their faith with their children, without requiring that this be expressed in juridical terms?

Interchurch parents sometimes have difficult decisions to make about their children’s religious education (8). They ask for respect for parental decisions on the baptism and upbringing of their children, and support for the whole family unit as they seek to walk forward together in growing unity.

Some interchurch families experience a serious spiritual need and deep desire for on-going eucharistic sharing (9). Interchurch families would therefore ask for an explicit statement that interchurch spouses who express a real need and desire for eucharistic sharing, and who fulfil the criteria for admission, can be allowed to receive communion alongside their Catholic partners on an on-going basis, whenever they are at mass together.

Interchurch families are greatly encouraged when their ecclesial communions see them not as problems, but as pioneers of Christian unity. They need pastoral understanding and support to liberate them to give this witness to the best of their ability (10). As they are welcomed in their family units into both their communities, the gift of ecclesial communion that they offer on a small scale to their churches will be more clearly seen. They ask for the kind of pastoral care that will welcome them as family units, while recognising that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community.

I. MIXED AND INTERRELIGIOUS FAMILIES

1. Special attention to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families

A preliminary question in the final section of the Lineamenta for the Synod on the Family 2015 asks whether the description of the various familial situations corresponds to what exists in the Church and society today, and what missing aspects should be included.

We would like to point to the very restricted space given to mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages,
and also to the fact that they are not given a specific heading in the text.

In Part I, ‘Listening: the Context and Challenges of the Family’, there is a clear recognition of the existence of many mixed and interreligious marriages. It speaks of their ‘inherent difficulties in terms of jurisprudence, Baptism, the upbringing of children and the mutual respect with regard to difference in faith’. It is recognised that in these marriages there can be ‘a danger of relativism or indifference’. However, it states, there can also be ‘the possibility of fostering the spirit of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue’ (7).

Yet in the rest of the Relatio there seems to be nothing about the pastoral care of mixed (Christian) and interreligious families. (There is simply a reference to the fact that the matrimonial regulations of the Orthodox Churches create serious problems in some contexts (54); nothing else.) Should not the particular difficulties and potential of such marriages be given specific consideration? Should not these families be helped to foster the spirit of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, rather than allowing them to fall into relativism or indifference through neglect?

In Part III, ‘Pastoral Perspectives’, the Relatio states that the problems relating to mixed marriages were frequently raised in the interventions of the synod fathers in 2014 (54). But this passing reference is hidden away at the end of the section entitled ‘Caring for Wounded Families (persons who are Separated, Divorced and Not Remarried, Divorced and Remarried and Single-Parent Families)’. This does not seem to be a suitable heading under which to address the specific needs of mixed (Christian) and interreligious families.

Similarly, in the list of questions given in the final section of the Lineamenta, the question on mixed and interreligious marriages comes under the heading of ‘Caring for Wounded Families (Separated, Divorced and Not Remarried, Divorced and Remarried, Single-Parent Families)’. It asks: ‘Does current legislation provide a valid response to the challenges resulting from mixed marriages or interreligious marriages? Should other elements be taken into account?’ (q.39). Again, this question seems to bear no relation to the heading.

We ask that a specific section in the Instrumentum Laboris should be devoted to mixed (Christian) and interreligious families’, with its own clear heading.
2. **Similarities, differences and terminology**

Within that heading, there are some questions that affect both mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages. One is that of the pre-marital promise required from the Catholic partner to do all that is possible for the Catholic baptism and upbringing of any children of the marriage. This can cause pastoral difficulties in both. Would it not be sufficient to ensure that Catholic partners were reminded before marriage of their responsibility to share their faith with their children? Similarly, both mixed (Christian) and interreligious couples need special attention during the period of marriage preparation; they will both have to face particular situations and decisions that do not arise in the marriages of two Catholics. Should not this be considered in the section on ‘Guiding Engaged Couples in their Preparation for Marriage’ and in the following one on ‘Accompanying Married Couples in the Initial Years of Marriage’, or else in the proposed new section?

Although there are certain similarities between mixed marriages (between baptised Christians) and interreligious marriages, there are also big differences, and the two will need to be considered separately. If the Catholic Church gives permission or dispensation for them, it recognises both kinds as valid marriages, and therefore to be supported. However, the marriage of a Catholic with a baptised Christian of another church or ecclesial community is recognised as a fully sacramental marriage. The partners ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’ (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 160). What is said of Christian marriage in Part II of the Relatio, ‘Looking at Christ – the Gospel of the Family’, applies to all mixed marriages between baptised Christians. The kind of pastoral care needed for mixed Christian marriages on the one hand and interreligious marriages on the other is therefore different. Indeed, it is recognised in Part I (7) that mixed marriages can promote Christian unity, while interreligious marriages can contribute to interreligious dialogue.

The distinction between the two has long been canonically recognised by the terminology of ‘mixed religion’ and ‘disparity of cult’. In the preparatory papers for the Synod the expression ‘disparity of cult’ has now been replaced by ‘interreligious marriage’. We would like to suggest that it may be time to revise the terminology for mixed marriages (between Christians). For a long time couples have disliked
being called ‘mixed marriages’, which is an ambiguous term which can apply to many kinds of mixity, including interracial and interreligious marriages. When such couples have come together in groups and associations for mutual support they have used other terminology to identify themselves. In English-speaking regions they call themselves ‘interchurch families’, in German-speaking regions ‘konfessionsverbindende Familien’, in French-speaking regions ‘foyers mixtes interconfessionnels’, and in Italy ‘famiglie miste interconfessionali’.

We ask that consideration should be given to revising the terminology ‘mixed marriages’ when it refers to mixed marriages between baptised Christians. ‘Interchurch families’ seems to be a suitable parallel description to ‘interreligious families’.

II. THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF INTERCHURCH FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

3. The vocation of interchurch families

There are many kinds of mixed (Christian) families where the spouses ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’ (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 160). Here we are mainly speaking of those who would intentionally call themselves ‘interchurch families’. Husband and wife both retain their original church membership, but so far as they are able they are committed to live, worship and participate in their spouse’s church also. As parents they exercise a shared and equal responsibility under God for the religious and spiritual upbringing of their children, and they teach them by word and example to appreciate both their Christian traditions. There is no blueprint for interchurch families; each is unique, and makes its own conscientious decision about the way in which it lives out its two-church character. But as the couple and family strive to build up the unity of their own ‘intimate communion of life and love’, their own ‘domestic church’, they intentionally situate their efforts within the wider ecumenical commitment of the churches to which they belong. They believe that this is what God is calling them to do.

They did not choose this path for themselves. For many it was not easy to come to a decision that God was calling them to marry
someone from another ecclesial communion. They have often been strongly discouraged by church authorities and by their families, and in some places by the society in which they live. Yet it was often the deep Christian faith of the other that attracted them to one another. As one Canadian Catholic wife put it: ‘God gave me all I had asked for in a spouse – only I had forgotten to say he must be a Catholic’. And a Protestant wife from New Zealand said the same: ‘only I didn’t ask that he shouldn’t be a Roman Catholic’.

But once the decision to throw in their lot with one another for life has been made, they want to share all that is of value in each other’s lives, and as Christian marriage partners this includes especially the riches of their respective ecclesial communions. When they meet, the two individuals often share the mutual ignorance and prejudice of their fellow church members. But because they love and respect one another, and try to forgive each other’s weaknesses, they grow to love and respect each other’s churches. Just as ‘your family’ becomes ‘my family too’, so ‘your church’ becomes ‘my church too’, and their children take their places naturally in ‘our churches’. By learning to live in the traditions of one another’s communities they realise that not all differences are church dividing, but many are complementary and can lead to the enrichment of diversity. They want to share their joy in this discovery with their fellow Christians. Thus a vocation to marriage becomes also a vocation to promote Christian unity.

Interchurch families, like other Christian families, are called to mirror the reconciling love of God in Christ, on the pattern of Christ’s love for his Church. In the covenant of marriage they form one church at home, but in their case this domestic church is related to two as yet separated ecclesial communions. Thus interchurch families embody Christian unity. Simply by their existence interchurch families can offer a visible sign of unity, and by their involvement in the life of two churches can help to bring them closer to one another. They can form a connective tissue helping in a small way to bring the churches together in the one Body of Christ. Their domestic church can become a visible and prophetic sign of the unity to which all Christians are called – an imperfect sign, because of human weakness and frailty, but all the same a real sign that can be recognised in their mutual love and forgiveness, in the way that they share the whole of life with one another as they strive to help each other forward on their journey to the Father’s house.
4. The mission of interchurch families

Christian married partners are called to bring one another to perfection in the love of God. Their first witness is to one another. Because they love one another they want to understand one another, and they keep on asking questions. So many spouses have said: ‘I am a better Catholic (or whatever) because I am married to a Christian of another tradition. I have had to think through and articulate my faith in a way I would never have done otherwise.’ One Anglican wife reflected: ‘I don’t suppose many engaged couples spend an evening discussing what it means to ask the prayers of a saint, what incense is for, or what the word “priest” really means. We still share, and we are still growing in knowledge and respect for each other’s churches.’ Interchurch partners have practical experience of the ‘hierarchy of truths’, as they discover the many Christian resources they have in common. They also understand, from their daily life together, that ‘exchange of gifts’ which comes from sharing with one another the specific riches of their respective traditions. They practised ‘receptive ecumenism’ before it had a name.

Interchurch partners are sometimes able to draw their own families of origin into an ecumenical orbit too. Their parents may at first be shocked by their son or daughter’s choice, but be won over by the human and Christian qualities of their daughter- or son-in-law. They are enriched by being drawn into a wider ecumenical context. Instead of battling over which family is going to control the religious upbringing of their grandchildren, both can come to rejoice together in the broader perspective in which the children’s Christian initiation takes place.

The primary responsibility for the Christian upbringing and education of children rests with their parents. Interchurch parents, like all Christian parents, are together the first teachers of their children. From their earliest years they give witness to them by their actions and their words of the self-giving and reconciling love of God. It is natural that both parents will want to share with their children the treasures of the particular ecclesial communion in which they personally are members. They have to work out how to do this together, stressing unity in diversity rather than treating difference as a threat which will pull them apart. Many interchurch children grow up feeling at home in the traditions of both their parents, and feel
themselves privileged rather than confused to have been brought up in this way. ‘I’m lucky, not weird’, said one child in Northern Ireland.

Interchurch spouses can also help to make links between the church communities to which they belong. As they join in the life and worship of their partner’s church, they can come to appreciate the distinctive witness of that community and to feel welcome there. Sometimes they accept a particular office or responsibility in the congregation of their partner’s church, such as teaching the children, leading youth work, singing or belonging to the music group, joining the welcome team. They can become ‘one of us’, not simply ‘one of them’. As mutual understanding grows, prejudices can melt away. When there are important family celebrations, both ministers and both congregations are sometimes invited to participate. On the occasion of a baptism, for example, a shared celebration can demonstrate and make real, in a way that no amount of talking could do, the fact that it is the One Baptism that is celebrated in different communions.

Indeed, the Catholic Church has recognised the mission that interchurch families can be asked to undertake within their church communities. In Cardinal Kasper’s *Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (2007), he writes that they can ‘be called upon to play a role in organising or leading ecumenical groups who gather for prayer and the study of Scripture, or for the support of other mixed marriage families; be given a particular responsibility in the preparation of ecumenical prayer services, both during the Week of Prayer and throughout the year; be invited to study and make known the Church’s teaching concerning the promotion of Christian unity and developments resulting from ecumenical dialogue.’

Interchurch families can also, as domestic churches, demonstrate to their church communities the conditions under which growth into unity becomes possible. In marriage their love is not content with a parallel separate existence, but yearns for, and therefore promotes, growth into deeper and deeper unity. Their marriage covenant gives formal expression to this love, and provides a support and framework that encourages it to grow and deepen. Living together under the same roof enables them to share each other’s daily life and activity, and get to know one another at a deep level. They share their resources, and make decisions together on how these are to be used for the good of the whole family and of their neighbours. They say
they are sorry and ask for forgiveness when things go wrong. The parents share responsibility for their children’s education, and celebrate their Christian development (baptism, first communion, confirmation or profession of faith) in as united a way as possible. They are hospitable to others, and sensitive to the needs of each, so that nobody is obliged to act against their conscience. If the churches could assume some of these attitudes and actions, so essential if interchurch families are to flourish, their walk together on the road to Christian unity might become smoother.

5. Pastoral understanding for interchurch families

The particular problems that face interchurch families stem from the fact that the two churches represented in their one domestic church are themselves divided. Happily, since Vatican II the Catholic Church has been committed to promoting Christian unity, and this has made it possible for mixed couples to be seen in a far more positive light than was the case earlier. Instead of being simply dismissed as a problem, they have increasingly been seen as having a potential to contribute to Christian unity. This was already recognised (though hidden in a negative formulation) in the Apostolic Letter Matrimonia Mixta issued by Pope Paul VI in 1970: ‘Mixed marriages do not, except in some cases, help in re-establishing unity among Christians.’ They came to be appreciated as living ecumenism in a particularly intimate way: ‘You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian unity’, said Pope John Paul II in 1982. In 2006 Benedict XVI declared that the decision to found a mixed Christian family ‘can lead to the formation of a practical laboratory of unity’. Indeed, the Relatio of the 2014 Synod on the Family, in its brief reference to mixed Christian marriages, said that they have the potential to foster the spirit of ecumenism (7).

But this does not happen automatically, and in spite of these positive words, there are still areas in which church legislation seems to be pulling the partners in an interchurch marriage apart, rather than strengthening their unity. Interchurch families cannot fulfil their vocation and mission to be a sign and means of visible unity within their churches unless they are welcomed, understood and supported by their extended families, their local congregations and their pastors. The role of the clergy is vital, and many have not been prepared for it. It would be helpful if further education on the pastoral care of
interchurch families could be included in all seminaries, especially if some of the input is given by interchurch couples. Where this has been done, it has proved very positive.

What interchurch families need above all is a pastoral understanding that will focus on building up their marriage in respect for the unity and equality of the partners. In some parts of the world, for example in Africa, this may mean opposing the social pressure for a woman to be obliged to join the church of her husband – and this not only when it is the wife who is the Catholic. In other parts of the world it may mean extending more generously the provisions for eucharistic sharing in the case of some interchurch spouses. In his final address to the 2014 Synod, Pope Francis spoke of the year ahead as one in which ‘to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.’ It is as a small contribution to that work that the Interchurch Families International Network would like to refer especially to particular pastoral issues that affect interchurch and mixed families.

6. The need for marriage preparation adapted to interchurch and mixed partners

In the past interchurch couples were treated as a problem when they presented themselves for marriage, unless they were prepared to accept without demur all the conditions laid down by the Catholic Church: the Catholic was to work for the ‘conversion’ of his or her partner, and both were to promise that all the children of the marriage would be brought up as Catholics. Even so, the wedding would be a second-class affair, taking place in the sacristy without music or flowers. Those days have gone. But some Catholic pastors still prefer to be faced with a non-practising Christian who will not cause difficulties rather than a devout Anglican or Lutheran. It is a problem to many pastors when they meet with prospective partners whose expectations, particularly over such issues as the religious upbringing of children and admission to communion, seem to conflict with existing church law and existing pastoral norms. If they react by presenting the Church’s position in an authoritarian and unsympathetic way, the couple will feel unwelcome and may be turned away from the Church. Listening and trying to understand is crucial. Only after that can the Church’s position be explained in a
way that will help the couple to realise that getting married across denominational boundaries may not be quite as straightforward as they may have thought.

It is not easy, and sometimes impossible because of distance, for the pastors of both communities to come together with the couple before a marriage to exercise joint pastoral care. Where it is possible, it is the ideal, and will reassure the couple that both their churches are involved in their marriage, and are concerned for the good of their future family. It will often benefit not only the couple and their families of origin, but also the ecumenical relationship of the two pastors.

Much marriage preparation nowadays is undertaken by lay married couples, who sometimes work according to a syllabus prepared at national or diocesan level. It is important that the needs of interchurch and mixed couples should be specifically addressed. It is even better, of course, if this can be done in the context of local churches working together in joint preparation for marriage. One of the most helpful ways of preparing for an interchurch marriage has proved to be the opportunity to talk with married couples who are further ahead on the road, and if prospective partners can be put in touch with groups of such couples this should be done.

Interchurch couples are increasingly involved in marriage preparation themselves, either in ecumenical or denominational contexts. Since so many couples who present themselves for marriage in some parts of the world are mixed couples, an interchurch family presence on the marriage preparation team has often proved very valuable. It can give mixed couples of many different kinds the feeling that they will not be regarded as second class marriages, and can open up wide discussion on how to cope with major differences in marriage and family life. It can witness to the importance of not allowing religion and spirituality to become a no-go area between the couple and in the family, and thus impoverishing relationships which could, rather, be immensely enriched by sharing on a deep level.

Like other married couples, interchurch couples also need to be sustained and encouraged in the years following their marriage. Interchurch family groups are a lifeline for some couples, and groups are very grateful for the support both of their Catholic priests and also of pastors from other churches. In such groups mutual support can be given, experiences can be shared, interchurch family spirituality can
be developed, the challenges of interchurch parenting can be discussed, the fruits of ecumenical dialogue can be received, and the vocation and mission of interchurch families can be explored together. Interchurch children too can share their experiences and develop their faith journeys with their peers, and as they grow older, can reflect with the adults on their situation; in their turn they can take on a teaching role, to the great benefit of their parents. They have much to teach their parents, their extended families, and their churches. Teenagers claim that it is not they who are confused: ‘It is you of former generations who have been confused in accepting and perpetuating the divisions of the churches. Christ willed only one Church.’

Interchurch families therefore ask for pastoral attention to be given to the way in which interchurch couples are prepared for marriage, and that the contribution that interchurch couples can make to marriage preparation should be valued. They would ask for such care to be extended to the period after their marriage, and for encouragement and support to be given to interchurch family groups.

7. The ‘promise’ required by the Catholic Church before marriage

The religious and spiritual upbringing of their children is not easy for parents today, and interchurch parents will face challenges that same-church parents do not have. It is right that they should think carefully about them before they marry, and of how they will try to use them as opportunities rather than problems. But experience suggests that it is not wise to press them to make a final decision on the baptism and upbringing of possible future children before marriage. A spouse cannot know how he or she will feel when a baby actually arrives.

Of course an absolute promise by both partners to baptise and bring up all the children as Catholics has not been required by the Catholic Church since 1970. However, the Catholic’s obligation to ‘make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all offspring are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church” (CIC 1983, can. 1125 §1), is still interpreted in some places as equivalent to the former promise of both partners. In any case it appears to drive a wedge between the couple, and to envisage a struggle in which the Catholic must do all that is possible to ‘win’. Of course interchurch couples are grateful that it is now recognised that the partner who is a member of
another church may well feel a conscientious obligation to bring children up in his or her church. It is also pointed out that the unity of the marriage is paramount, and that if this is threatened the Catholic partner will not be penalised if children are brought up in the other church (cf. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 142, 148, 150-151).

But couples can still experience the ‘promise’ as imposing a unilateral demand on a relationship that they are striving to make fully mutual, and many interchurch partners feel that it is unfair and divisive. It can be presented in a way that appears to deny the shared responsibility of parents for the religious upbringing of their children. As such it seems to some Catholics entering marriage to deny the relationship of equality that is required both in ecumenical relationships (*par cum pari*) and in marriage. Unfortunately the intention behind the promise is not always explained to them in a way they can understand. A refusal to make the promise in these circumstances can lead to Catholics feeling rejected by their Church and to great tensions in family and church relationships.

It can be a bad witness to all who are concerned for the well-being of the couple, many of whom will not be practising Christians. One fiancée realised the scandal of it when she was talking to a friend about the pre-marriage difficulties she was experiencing. ‘I’m glad I’m not a Christian if it causes all these problems when you want to get married’, said her friend.

In many countries the episcopal conferences have helped by modifying the wording of the promise over the years. In England and Wales the phrase ‘as God’s law requires’ has been replaced by ‘within the unity of our partnership’. The Austrian form of the promise includes the word ‘conscience’. In Ireland all Catholics getting married have to make a promise about the religious upbringing of their children, whether they are marrying Christians from other churches or not. In France mixed couples can express their intentions about the baptism and upbringing of their future children in their own words.

*Interchurch families would like to ask whether a pre-nuptial ‘promise’ in any form need be required; might it not be sufficient to remind Catholics of their responsibilities as parents, and ascertain that they seriously desire to share their
faith with their children, without requiring that this be expressed in juridical terms?

8. The baptism and upbringing of children

Interchurch parents would ask that the sometimes difficult decisions that they have to make about their children’s upbringing should be respected and supported by their pastors, even if they cannot always be fully approved. What many want – as do many of their children as they grow older – is that the stages of Christian initiation should be celebrated as far as possible as ecumenical events in which both churches play at least some recognisable part. If both their pastors take part in the celebration of their wedding, it seems natural that both should come together in celebrating the birth and baptism of their child. Only one minister normally performs the actual baptism, but the other can share in various parts of the rite, and the couple are able to feel that both their churches are supporting them as parents. Sometimes the fact of the baptism is recorded in the registers of the two churches of the parents, which gives them a similar reassurance. In some countries a common Certificate of Christian Baptism has been produced listing the churches that have agreed to accept it as evidence of Christian baptism. It is difficult to over-estimate the joy that a shared celebration of baptism can bring to some couples, their wider families, their friends, and to their pastors and congregations as well. As a priest from Northern Ireland reflected after he had taken part in two recent shared celebrations of baptism in interchurch families: ‘I came away from these experiences utterly convinced of the unsurpassable value of time spent in mutual preparation by both clergy in a spirit of co-operative partnership.’

When it comes to confirmation, it is possible for the minister and congregation of one church to take a significant role in a confirmation in another church. This is very important to some interchurch children, who have experienced their Christian nurture within two church communities. Some have arranged a Profession of Faith in which they can witness for themselves to the commitment they are making to Christ in the context of the two communities which have shared in their journey of faith. The family life of interchurch families is immeasurably strengthened when they know they have the support of both their pastors and their two congregations.
When a family member dies, whether a spouse, parent or child, the family equally needs this kind of support. Some interchurch family funerals have given a particularly poignant and joyful witness to Christian unity and shared resurrection hope, as well as being a great comfort to the family members grieving the loss and celebrating the life of a much-loved partner, parent, child or relative.

**Interchurch families would therefore ask for respect for parental decisions on the baptism and upbringing of their children, and support for the whole family unit as they seek to walk forward together in growing unity.**

**9. The experienced need for on-going eucharistic sharing in some interchurch families**

For some interchurch parents, it is the time when their child comes to receive First Communion that has been a culminating point in their desire to receive communion together. They may have longed to share communion together as a married couple, but when a child questions why their baptised parent from another community will be excluded, or hesitates to receive communion at all if both parents cannot receive with him or her, the pain is compounded and their dilemma seems to have no answer. They realise that they cannot fully witness to their child what they are actually living in the unity of their domestic church. The scandal of our divided churches becomes all too apparent to the child and can become a stumbling block. They try to explain the situation as best they can. ‘I don’t think that’s a very good rule’, responded one child to her Anglican mother, ‘because it tears families apart’. One Italian couple was very moved by the story of a French child, distressed that his Protestant mother was not receiving communion with him at his First Communion, who kept part of the host he had received for himself and brought it to his mother for her to share. For twenty years, when the Italian couple were at mass together, they acted ‘according to the teaching of that unknown child’. Stories of a young child who has spontaneously divided his or her host to share with a mother have come from different countries and continents.

Interchurch families are grateful that exceptional eucharistic sharing is now recognised as appropriate in the case of some of those couples and families who ‘share the sacraments of baptism and marriage’; the other baptised spouse can be admitted to communion where there is a
real need and desire, a free request, and Catholic eucharistic faith. But there is a general uneasiness about the present situation, because there is so much diversity of practice, from country to country, from diocese to diocese, from parish to parish. Some interchurch spouses who express their spiritual need and desire for eucharistic sharing are still told this is not possible. Others to their great joy are admitted to communion on an on-going basis. Yet others are told that they can be admitted only on rare occasions, and that some occasions are not ‘exceptional’ enough. This can be a real cause of scandal in some congregations.

Official and unofficial permissions are given at all levels and decisions are made that cannot be talked about. This is a bad witness. Interchurch families often find it difficult to speak about their experiences openly, for fear of compromising others. They feel they must protect clergy whose pastoral concern sometimes leads them to go beyond the letter of the law, at least as it is interpreted where they live. Interchurch families would like more freedom to witness to the joy of eucharistic sharing together, allowed because of their serious need and desire in their privileged situation of commitment to one another in their domestic church.

They feel that their ecumenical witness is hindered in the present situation, either because they are bearing the crushing burden of being unable to share communion except on rare occasions, or because they are unable to share openly their joy at being able to receive communion together. Some feel that they have to make a choice on the one hand between keeping a low profile locally and receiving communion together discreetly, for the sake of family unity, and on the other playing a full part in the local ecumenical scene – where they may have a great deal to offer. All Christians are called to suffer on account of the divisions that are contrary to the will of Christ, but if growing understanding between the churches can help to avoid unnecessary suffering and enable a stronger witness from interchurch families, is this not to be celebrated with joy? The witness of truly interchurch families is a living gift offered to the churches by those who have experienced sacramental communion in both baptism and marriage (and in the Eucharist where possible), through which Christ builds up their domestic church. Their witness to spiritual ecumenism and ecumenical reception is vital. The loss is great when they feel they must remain quiet about their situation.
Not all partners in interchurch marriages wish to share communion; they may have very different eucharistic beliefs or think of communion as an individual relationship with God. But for those who do so desire, sharing communion can transform their life and witness. Indeed, the urgent need for on-going eucharistic sharing may well be felt most by those ‘exceptional cases’ who in their mixed marriages ‘help in re-establishing unity among Christians’ (Matrimonia Mixta). Christian marriage is not a series of special occasions, but an on-going daily commitment to becoming ever more fully an intimate community of life and love, a domestic church. Exceptional eucharistic sharing is needed throughout an interchurch marriage to sustain this communion in Christ, to express and to deepen it. As one interchurch couple put it: ‘For us, the Eucharist is what binds and strengthens us as a couple and a family, and gives us any hidden strength we may have in order to bear Christ’s love into our beautiful but broken world.’ Recognising the need for on-going eucharistic sharing in those interchurch families who deeply desire it would be a clear sign of the importance that the Catholic Church attaches to the marriage covenant and to supporting marriage and family life.

Interchurch families would therefore ask for an explicit statement that interchurch spouses who express a real need and desire for eucharistic sharing, and who fulfil the criteria for admission, can be allowed to receive communion alongside their Catholic partners on an on-going basis, whenever they are at mass together.

10. The pastoral care that is prepared to welcome interchurch families as a unit, while respecting the fact that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community

If interchurch families are received in each other’s churches with an understanding welcome, then their interchurch character and commitment can become a gift and a visible sign of hope for their churches on their path to unity. In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI stressed the responsibilities of their respective church communities, if interchurch homes were to be able to be authentic ‘laboratories of unity’. These communities would need ‘mutual goodwill, understanding and maturity in faith’, he said, with ‘full respect for the rights and responsibilities of the spouses for the faith formation of their own family and the education of their children’.
Interchurch families are greatly encouraged when their ecclesial communions see them not as problems, but as pioneers of Christian unity. They bring both gifts and challenges to their churches; both are to be welcomed. Interchurch families are called to witness by their lives, their actions and their words to the fundamental and growing unity of all Christian people, and to share a common life in the Church for the reconciliation of our churches. They need pastoral understanding and support to liberate them to give this witness to the best of their ability. When they receive such understanding they are encouraged in faithfulness to their vocation, and in their witness to Christian unity. They are also strengthened in their mission to those ‘mixed marriage’ couples who feel rejected by the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II said that ‘the Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realisation of ecclesial communion’ (*Familiaris Consortio*, 21). As interchurch families are welcomed in their family units into both their communities, the gift of ecclesial communion which they reveal and realise will become more evident, and they will become more effectively a connective tissue helping in a small way to bring the churches together in the one Body of Christ.

**Interchurch families ask for the kind of pastoral understanding that will welcome them as family units, while at the same time recognising that they also have loyalties to another ecclesial community, and respecting their particular ecumenical vocation and mission.**

**Interchurch Families International Network**
c/o Prof. Thomas Knieps Thomas.knieps@theo.kuleuven.be
**REVIEWS**


As Christians celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II and its legacy in opening the Roman Catholic Church to the modern world, to other Christian communions, and to interreligious friendship, United Reformed Church minister Donald Norwood reminds that Barth’s engagement with the Vatican in *Ad Limina Apostolorum* (1967) along with Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* (1932-1967) and other writings cannot be forgotten. This review begins with a larger context, which Norwood alludes to in his book. I will summarize his treatment, and offer a concise response.

The twentieth century Swiss Protestant dogmatician Karl Barth epitomized a Protestant intransigence to Catholicism when he condemned the Vaticanum’s view on the natural knowledge of God via the concept of *analogia entis*—the Analogy of Being—as an invention of the Anti-Christ and defended why one could not become a Roman Catholic in the preface to his first volume of *Church Dogmatics* I/1 (1932, viii-ix). After Barth’s dialectical exposition on *The Epistle to the Romans* (1922), German-speaking Catholic theologians, including Erich Przywara (1889-1972) and Karl Rahner (1904-1984), dismissed his work as overemphasizing immanence (to the neglect of transcendence), anti-metaphysical, counter-intuitive to Neo-scholasticism, and a passing trend (Benjamin Dahlke’s *Karl Barth, Catholic Renewal and Vatican II* [2012] registers the point). However, it was not Barth’s goal to dismiss Rome or the *analogia fidei*. Distressed by the scandal of the disunity of the churches of Christ, he was nonetheless determined to set ecumenicity on legitimate grounds rather than accept the Catholic ‘return’ model of ecumenical ecclesiology at that time or the then emerging modern ecumenical movement (cf. Barth’s *The Church and the Churches* and *Church Dogmatics* I/2, p. 826, V/1, 675-6). Barth was also reacting to the Protestant Liberal trajectory in particular of Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), and secondarily, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) for producing a theology that in his opinion had degenerated from the centrality of God and revelation to that of humanity’s interpretations of itself and the world. Thus,
Barth’s program began with the ‘infinite qualitative difference’ between God and creature and a dogmatics that he deemed to allow the ‘Wholly Other’ to correct the anthropocentric starting point of liberal theology. Who would have imagined in 1932 that Barth would later be an invited non-Catholic observer to the Second Vatican Council three decades later? And who would have thought that though in absentia due to health reasons, Barth would continue to play a role in the shaping of the Roman Catholic Church, and would enthusiastically support the accomplishments of Vatican II till his death? For the positive reception of Barth among Catholics in the middle of the twentieth century, we would have to thank Jesuit Hans Urs von Balthasar’s careful appropriation of Barth to the Catholic readership. It was said that Balthasar aborted his own plans to write Catholic dogmatics as superfluous after reading Barth’s incomplete magnum opus. And of course, Barth’s participation in ecumenical meetings, and emerging friendship with Dominican Yves Congar, Jesuit Hans Küng and several others who were eventually appointed as periti (experts) to the Council made all the difference.

Norwood’s Reforming Rome consists of seven chapters, excluding the introduction. Chapter One argues that because Barth, though not a Roman Catholic, was a “Catholic” and ecumenical theologian for the whole church’, and because like Calvin, he wanted a ‘reformed catholic church’ instead of a Protestant offshoot, he ‘assisted’ the reform in Rome, which had typically resented Catholic dissent. The hour-long conversation he had with the Pope was mentioned, though as Norwood explains, because of Barth’s promise to Paul VI, much of the Papal response remained confidential. Taking seriously the themes of ‘Reformation and Reunion’ in the writings of Barth and Congar, Chapter Two answered positively that Vatican II was what the sixteenth century Reformers had dreamt of, no less because of the Council fathers’ openness to debate, dialogue, catholicity, and the many concerns raised by the Reformers, none of which were possible in Trent or Vatican I. The sixteenth century Protestant-Catholic mutual repudiations are analyzed as the backdrop for Norwood’s examination. It also surveys the influence that the many non-Catholic observers had on Catholic conversations about scripture, tradition, church, ecumenism, Jewish-Christian relations, human rights, communism, and Mariology. In Chapter Three Norwood describes and analyzes Barth’s multi-dimensional response to Vatican II’s Dei
Verbum, Lumen Gentium, and Unitatis Redintegratio; and thematically on the papacy, episcopacy, collegiality, polity, apostolic succession, and the laity in Humanae Vitae and other Council documents in Chapter Four.

Norwood claims that Barth celebrates Vatican II’s rediscovery of the Word of God, Christ as the Lord of the church, the role of the laity, and Rome’s ecumenical openness to other churches. Norwood also corrects any misreading of Barth which might suggest that he followed the sixteenth century Reformers and the latter Westminster Confession of Faith in denouncing the Roman Catholic Church as an Antichrist (pp. 91-2). For Norwood, Barth celebrates Vatican II’s decision to pronounce no anathemas as a positive step towards ecclesial reconciliation and fellowship. Similarly, Rome’s decision to enter into genuine renewal, with Christ as the head that summons the church, is seen as a move that Protestants could affirm.

Chapter Five examines the validity of Catholic criticism of Barth’s response, the notion of provisional ecclesiology, and asks if Barth, with his Catholic critics, feminists, women, and men, can help reform Rome. Chapter Six considers ‘differences that still divide’, particularly, on justification by faith, natural knowledge of God, Mariology, and hierarchy of truth. Of importance here, Norwood shows that Barth did not denounce the pope as antichrist; rather, the dogmatician’s critique of analogia entis pertains to the Catholic theological method of the day which, Barth claimed, did not begin with Christ, and which had erred in Roman theology’s efforts to control God’s grace. The concluding chapter (36 pp.) takes a long-range view, starting from John XXIII’s vision of conceiving the Pastoral Council as an ‘event’ for ‘the restoration of unity’ as God’s work, and discusses a range of topics on scripture, receptive ecumenism, ecumenical gift exchange, the eucharist, universal catholicity, subsidiarity, episcopacy, conciliarity, and interfaith ecumenical work with Jews. Among many items deserving reiteration, Norwood reads that in the Barthian response to Vatican II, for the church to embrace Catholic learning in the fullest sense, even heretics have to be listened to, and the universal Church, especially from non-European sectors, cannot be ignored in the Church’s attempt to renew her mission.

Norwood’s learned and carefully annotated review of two trajectories—Barthian theological response to Rome, and Vatican II’s development of Roman Catholic traditioning—is supported by
innumerable English, German, and French sources. The book provides substantial background of Vatican I, Vatican II, and Catholic history, and difficult questions surrounding the interpretation of the Council’s legacy then and now by Catholics, Protestants, and secondarily, in interreligious arenas. Also, Norwood is at pains to demonstrate the mutually enriching ecumenical relationship Barth has nurtured with Congar, Küng, and other Catholic luminaries even before the Roman Catholic Church became open to ecumenicity, and thus, we may say that Norwood has indirectly narrated the importance of cultivating ecumenical relations. In many ways, the book has not only presented a detailed evaluation of Barth’s Protestant Reformed dialogue with Catholic doctrinal and pastoral development, but also an introduction to Protestant-Catholic issues of the twentieth century that continue to be rigorously discussed. The book would also benefit Christians seeking an understanding of the Protestant-Catholic divide, though it is much more positive in claiming that the recommendations of the sixteenth century have been largely accomplished in Vatican II, and in that sense, the more purist heirs of the Reformation today may not find it convincing. Nonetheless, it would be an interesting follow-up project to inquire if Barth’s critique and the other non-Catholic observers’ response to Vatican II have transformed the renewing of the Catholic Church today, especially after decades of Catholic Church participation in Bilateral and Multilateral dialogues since Vatican II. Until then, some Christians will still wonder, what has Vatican II to do with the heirs of the Reformation.

Timothy LIM Teck Ngern, Regent University (Virginia Beach, VA, USA) and King’s Evangelical Divinity School (London, UK)


The publication of a new journal invites both celebration and assessment. The online Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism reveals a continued interest in the study of pietism. The co-editors, Prof. Dr. Willem J. op’t Hof, extraordinary professor emeritus in the History of Reformed Pietism at VU University Amsterdam, Faculty of Theology and Dr. Jan van de Kamp, Postdoctoral student in religious history at the University of Bremen and lecturer in Dutch church
history at VU University Amsterdam, clearly frame their agenda in the opening words of the editorial. Hartmut Lehmann, well respected historian of pietism, is quoted regarding the need for continued research in pietistic studies and expounds on how he envisions this: ‘What further needs to be investigated are the many personal networks as well as communication channels, that overlapped—local and regional networks, transregional and transatlantic networks and, finally, communication channels, at which confessional boundaries were relativized and not infrequently, surmounted’ (p. 1). The editors elaborate on this declaring ‘The focus [of the JHRP] is on earnest Reformed individuals, communities, their theological convictions, emotions, rituals, patterns of life, communication structures, media, material culture, memory culture, and so on’ (p. 1).

Of particular interest to the editors are historical examples that cross confessional boundaries. Two recent publications that demonstrate this are mentioned. The first is Feike Dietz’s dissertation on the Dutch adaption of Herman Hugo’s, *Pia Desideria* (1624). Dietz analyzes the Protestant retrieval and adaption of this Jesuit emblem book and suggests the earlier premise that Dutch publishers employed the original Roman Catholic illustrations needs to be reconsidered. She believes that there was a greater dependence upon Protestant sources beyond the Netherlands. My own recent scholarship in the eighteenth–century British Moravian evangelist and hymn writer, John Cennick reveals a similar fascination with Hugo’s emblem book. Cennick confesses during his early years of spiritual struggle that he relied exclusively on the Bible and Hugo’s emblems. The second example is Elizabeth Bouldin’s scholarship that traces through a close reading of letters and travel networks the interaction between transatlantic radical Protestants. Again this work reiterates the desire and challenges of crossing confessional boundaries and recognizing the reality of theological barriers in these efforts. The editors affirm these initial forays of research are critical and recommend additional study is required that expands upon and tests these initial insights. Additionally Alec Ryrie’s recent study, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2013) is referenced as a model of the

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importance ‘of emotions, the ritual of prayer, communication processes like reading and writing, the Protestants in company (worship and household), and the meaning and stages of life’ (p. 3).

Significant for readers of One in Christ is the realization that Dutch Pietism and Puritanism did not suddenly emerge in the later decades of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather it was both a reaction against the prevailing Roman Catholic Church but at the same time this new movement was in many respects a reformation of piety that was deeply indebted to many of the devotional writings of the Western Catholic Church. Numerous Dutch and British authors drank deeply from the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Jean Gerson and Thomas à Kempis as well as earlier sources from the patristic period. This demonstrates that while there was indeed doctrinal discontinuity between the Protestants and Roman Catholics there were also some forms of devotional continuity between these divergent traditions. Accordingly the JHRP welcomes manuscript submissions that examine the interaction between Reformed Pietists and Roman Catholic devotional literature. In summarizing their goals for the JHRP, the editors conclude that ‘Together, these contributions might give further impetus for an international discussion of international, interconfessional, and interdisciplinary approaches to Reformed Pietism’ (p. 4). The seriousness of this is reinforced by the broad geographical diversity of the editorial board that includes representatives from eight different countries spanning North America, Great Britain and Europe.

The first article is authored by op’t Hof who has devoted much of his scholarly pursuit to Reformed pietism and in particular to the writings of Willem Teellinck (1579–1629). Op’t Hof contends that Teellinck is an important figure because he was the ‘Father of Dutch Pietism’ often known as the Further Reformation or Nadre Reformatie. Teellinck is also illustrative of the journal’s goal of exploring the international networks among early devotional writers. His own life was formed not only by the more than two years he spent in England, marrying an English woman and return visits across the North Sea but his extensive correspondence with Puritan ministers throughout his life. This article based on extensive archival research in the Netherlands and England traces first the context and formation of Teellinck. It reveals the deep fascination that Puritan piety and certain specific ministers, especially Arthur Hildersham, William Whately and
William Perkins, had on Teellinck and how it shaped his own faith and ministry when he returned to Holland. Op’t Hof is conversant with the sources and handles them well reminding readers that any act of retrieval from one tradition to another, even within the same theological family, involves theological fine-tuning to reflect the uniqueness of that receptor context. Therefore, while Teellinck was significantly shaped by Puritan piety this does not imply that Dutch Reformed piety was a mere duplication of what already existed across the sea. The ecclesiastical distinction of the British context was unlike that of the more thoroughly Reformed environment in Holland. Given the importance of Teellinck it is unfortunate that more of his writings have not been translated into English.

The second article is contributed by Prof. Dr Tuija Laine, professor of Book History, Faculty of Theology, at the University of Helsinki. This essay traces the reception of pietistic devotional literature in the Scandinavian countries, in particularly, Sweden and Finland. Laine’s chronological summary provides a helpful overview of initial resistance to the reception of devotional literature by the orthodox Lutheran leaders to the eventual embrace of this more experiential devotional writings. Laine’s research reveals opposition was strongest against Calvinism, in particular its doctrine of predestination, but also somewhat surprisingly in its understanding of the Eucharist as well.

This volume concludes with three book reviews that further indicate the international focus of the *JHRP*. The first reviews the publication of Kristiina Savin’s Swedish dissertation that explores the uncertainties of life including the nature of fortune and misfortune. The second is a lengthy critique of Feike Dietz’s doctoral thesis mentioned above on Herman Hugo’s emblem book. This evaluation nicely reflects the journal’s interdisciplinary focus. The final review is of Joel Beeke’s and Paul Smalley’s American publication of *Prepared by Grace for Grace* that delves into the Puritan understanding of preparationism.

New journals also call for assessment. How accurately does this initial volume of the *JHRP* measure up to the expectations presented in the editorial? Clearly both articles exhibit the stated editorial agenda of examining the strong networks and interconnections that were established through letters and travel. The essays are also very intentional in displaying the frequency of crossing confessional boundaries in the development of devotional practices. Additionally
there is a dedicated concern to focus on the translation and adaption of texts from the various denominational traditions. This point in particular, is a fascination more commonly found in European scholarship than British and North American circles and provides a helpful context for studying the significance of various works of piety and how their retrieval was incorporated into new contexts. Another helpful feature is that the two essays ended with a summary that provides readers with a quick overview of the article. However, a few constructive observations also need to be made. The Laine article assumed more knowledge in places than general readers would normally possess to fully follow her thinking. Somewhat surprisingly the three book reviews were all republished from previous journals. Perhaps this reflects the nature of beginning a new journal from the ground floor and not possessing the normal reservoir of reviews that editors can draw upon. Since they all were translated from different languages they at times reflect strange syntax for English readers. But these are minor concerns and the JHRP exhibits great potential for those interested to become part of the critical conversation regarding the nature and dynamics of Reformed and Puritan pietism. Many from Great Britain and North American would be cognizant of German pietism, and in some respects, the rich textual history of Dutch pietism, but one value of this fine journal is that it introduces readers to the farther reaches of Reformed pietism in Hungary, Scandinavia and beyond. For myself I celebrate the arrival of the JHRP and eagerly await future volumes of this promising work.

Tom Schwanda, Wheaton College (Illinois)
**BOOKS RECEIVED**

