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Most of the articles in this issue are devoted to The Church: Towards a Common Vision (Faith and Order Paper 214, WCC 2013). We are pleased to publish contributions from the Catholic Theological Society of America (Clifford, Colberg, Flanagan), and papers originating in the December 2015 conference of the Joint Commission on Doctrine of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church (Tanner, Storrar).

In ‘Communion and Communication among the Churches in the Tradition of Alexandria’ (Sheridan), we see to what extent our current concerns and problematics were already present in the third century: ‘The questions of authority and communion among the churches had become inextricably combined.’ Secondly—regarding the place of lay people in the church—Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem (215-30), rejects the prohibition of laymen preaching in the presence of bishops: for ‘where there are found persons suited to help the brethren, they are also invited to preach to the people by the holy bishops.’ Thirdly—and perhaps most thought-provoking—Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (247-64), pleads that ‘a man ought to suffer anything and everything rather than divide the Church of God, and it were not less glorious to incur martyrdom to avoid schism than to avoid idolatry.’

In addition to our systematic essays on TCTCV and other issues, and the historical study just mentioned, another genre is happily, and well represented in this issue—that of the particular narrative, or storytelling, which affords its own characteristic insights: thus Storrar, Ó Tuama and Kearney, each writing with a discernible Celtic accent.

Our book reviews likewise include the witness of a remarkable individual: Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (Briskina-Müller), in a book which traces the development of her thinking on the ordination of women. The question posed—‘whether or not there is a spiritual dimension or ontological significance to gender’—is one which resonates through much of today’s world, beyond the specifically ecclesial, or explicitly religious.
**The Church: Towards a Common Vision.**  
A Faith and Order Perspective

Mary Tanner*

This paper was presented to the Joint Commission on Doctrine of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church at their Edinburgh conference in December, 2015: Sharing Future Church. It outlines the provenance of The Church: Towards a Common Vision, and presents it as a convergence document, cross-referencing other dialogues. Faithful to Faith and Order, each chapter represents a breakthrough in a particular area.

I. A trip down memory lane

The journey to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV) began in Edinburgh in 1910 when Bishop Brent called for a world conference to explore honestly the points of agreement and of disagreement which were the original cause of separations and which continued to keep churches apart when the mission of the church demanded unity. It took another seventeen years before the First World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, and was to set the agenda of faith, sacraments, ministry and the church—an agenda which became foundational for the World Council of Churches when it was established in 1948 and whose first function is:

for churches to call one another to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ.¹

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¹ WCC Constitution, see WCC web site.
The Constitution of Faith and Order is almost identical. Its first aim and function is:

   to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ in order that the world may believe.¹

It is not too much to claim that Faith and Order has been, since 1948, the conscience of the Council and of the ecumenical movement to keep churches focused on the goal of visible unity. Thus, TCTCV is directly connected to the mandate of both Faith and Order and the WCC.

By the 1970s the Commission had agreed that three things were needed for visible unity: the common confession of the apostolic faith; common sacraments and a single ministry; and ways of deciding and teaching together.² Intensive work on sacraments and ministry was well underway when I attended my first Faith and Order Commission meeting in Accra in 1973. A miraculous moment was reached with the publication of the Commission’s convergence document: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* agreed in Lima, 1982.³ Almost as influential as the text were the questions put to the churches about the text and the intensive response process that followed, producing six volumes of responses from churches, and a response to the responses. One of the issues raised by some churches was the ecclesiological question: ‘Is there an integrated ecclesiology lying behind BEM bridging the divide between catholic and reformed understandings of the Church?’

Work on confessing the one faith followed, though never received the attention the brilliant text deserved.⁴ Studies on racism, the handicapped and the community of women and men in the Church were making us aware that unity also entails renewal in the human community of the Church with implications for the language we use to confess faith, the ministry we exercise, and the way we take council.

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Unity and renewal belong together. We have to be renewed into unity if the Church is to be a sign to the world of its own possibility.

By the end of the 1980s the idea of a Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order was gaining support, to answer the frequently asked question: ‘Where are we, and where are we going in the ecumenical movement? What has Faith and Order to say in the light of its completed work on BEM and Apostolic Faith and Church and World?’ The theme of the Conference emerged as a preliminary answer to that question: ‘Towards koinonia in faith, life and witness’. This theme would provide an opportunity to harvest Faith and Order’s work and give a preliminary answer to the question of the goal of visible unity. The Conference in Santiago opened with a magisterial biblical exposition of koinonia; Wolfhart Pannenberg presented the work on the apostolic faith; Elizabeth Templeton spoke on communion in sacramental life and service; and Metropolitan Khodr from Lebanon on communion in witness. Perhaps the most important affirmation of the Conference came in its final message: ‘There is no turning back either from the goal of visible unity or from the single ecumenical movement that unites concerns for the unity of the Church and concern for the engagement in struggles of the world’.

It was from this harvesting at Santiago that work on ecclesiology came to be the focus of the Commission’s work, producing first The Nature and Purpose of the Church and then The Nature and Mission of the Church, both with the modest sub title, ‘on the way to a common statement’. These two proto texts were sent to churches for response. The comments received helped to mature the text, though the responses were not as many as in the case of responses to the BEM proto text, the Accra text. Did that reveal a dwindling commitment to unity, visible unity, with the growing urgent interest in issues of justice and peace?

As we engage with TCTCV there is much at stake. If the text is an answer to ‘where are we, where are we going’ then much rests on the response churches make. Reactions will show whether churches believe any longer in unity, visible unity and whether there is convergence in the understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church.

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II. Two important characteristics of TCTCV

- A convergence document:
  Like BEM, TCTCV is a convergence document in that it sums up what Faith and Order believes the churches can say together about the Church and its unity. It paints in words an emerging portrait of what life together might entail and in italicised paragraphs, remarkably few and all extremely eirenically phrased, invites churches to consider whether some of the remaining differences might be legitimate differences, not destructive of unity. I like the way the questions are put back to the churches encouraging further dialogue e.g. Could this be a time for re-appraisal? (para. 24).

- Cross-referencing other dialogues:
  A very helpful feature of the document is the inclusion of footnotes referring to convergences or agreements in other international bilateral documents, giving a sense of a convergence movement in the one ecumenical movement.

III. A breakthrough in each chapter

It is a great achievement that the most representative ecumenical forum that exists has produced a convergence text on ecclesiology, helping churches to face the question of what sort of Church God is calling us to be together and what is the Church’s role in God’s plan for the whole creation? Looking back over more than forty years involvement in the work of Faith and Order it seems to me that there are significant advances in each chapter.

Chapter I. God’s Mission and the Unity of the Church: setting the scene

The document doesn’t start with ideal statements about the Church but with God’s great design for the whole creation. God’s purpose is to establish communion with God and with one another, a purpose thwarted by sin but become a restored possibility through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Only in the context of God’s grand design in creation can we understand the Church as called to continue the life-giving mission of Jesus in prophetic and compassionate ministry, by participating in God’s work of healing in a broken world.

The clue to the Church’s nature is signalled in the opening paragraph:
Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the Church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing. (1)

Throughout the text *koinonia* is the key for understanding the nature, the unity and the mission of the Church.

It is striking that Faith and Order’s compelling vision is not of a self-absorbed Church turned in on itself, interested in its own organisation and structure, but a Church living in the life of God and facing outwards in service to the needs of the world, proclaiming the good news, and working for justice and peace for all.

There is an emphasis throughout on mission, which reflects the closer collaboration with the mission department of the WCC. Mission, we are warned, is not an easy vocation. It wasn’t in the early years of the Church’s life and it isn’t today in a world of rapidly changing circumstances. (7) The Church’s mission faces new challenges: the claims of other faiths; the communications revolution; emerging churches which propose new ways of being church; a global secular culture which questions the possibility of faith at all; the radical decline in membership and a need to re-evangelise: the real church in the real world.

The chapter’s conclusion is that Christian unity is vital for mission, and adds that visible unity requires that Christians are able to recognise in one another what the creed calls the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and warns that this may call for a change in doctrine, or practice, or forms of ministry for some of us. Here is a call to renewal. There is an implied warning of the need to be alert as to how what follows may, even now, challenge each of us. The first italicised paragraph raises questions of how we are to identify the Church which the Creed calls, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic; and what we consider to be God’s will for the unity of the Church.

The first chapter is re-assuring. The Church is set within God’s grand design for the whole creation. We are offered not a cosy inward looking picture of the Church that God is calling us to be. It has been clear that there will always be new challenges: there always have been; there always will be.
Chapter II. The Church of the Triune God

The second chapter now focuses on the Church, picking up the trailed theme of the Church as koinonia, affirming the central place that communion ecclesiology has come to have in our understanding of the life and unity of the Church and the call to visible communion. It is reassuring that Faith and Order has not given up on an ecclesiology of communion as it seemed to be doing in earlier versions of the text. Communion, a communion of love, describes the life of the Holy Trinity, and is the source and ground of the Church’s life. In the Church, through the Holy Spirit, believers are united with Jesus Christ and thereby share a living relation with the Father and with one another. (13) We are told that koinonia ecclesiology is not simply the union of existing churches in their current form. Does this rule out a federal model of unity? It is rather a state of being drawn together into the life and love of God and making that visible in our life together.

Drawing on the ancient Creed of Nicaea, the text explores the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic and helps us to understand the nature and purpose of the Church by using two familiar ecumenical insights: the Church as both sign and servant. This means that the mission of the Church is both in action and service but also in being a reflection of God’s life, pointing towards the sort of life God desires for all people. The quality of our life together really matters. It is not only unity in the service of others—the important justice and peace agenda—but the way we are together in worship, in fellowship, in service of each other and in enjoyment of one another, secure in our common identity/being: the ecology of unity. The italicised paragraph here addresses the question of the apparent difference between those who refer to the Church as sacrament and those who do not use this language and asks tentatively: ‘Might this, therefore, be seen as a question where legitimate difference of formulation are compatible and mutually acceptable?’ (27)

So far the text has offered an ideal picture of what the Church is called to be in God’s plan for the world. We turn now to two aspects of the actual, visible life of the Church. As if to reassure us that visible unity is not imposed uniformity, the text deals with diversity—legitimate diversity—as a gift from God. (28) This is important as so often the accusation is made that in Faith and Order’s work there is no room for diversity, offering instead a structured, monolithic view of
unity. The text is clear that the Gospel has to be incarnated in different languages, symbols and imagery relevant to particular times and contexts. It has to be lived out authentically in each time and place. Diversity is gift, yes, but that does not mean that anything goes: there are limits to diversity. The Church has struggled with this from the Council of Jerusalem on. When diversity goes beyond acceptable limits it can be destructive of God’s gift of unity as we know from history and from our experience today. We can sense a problem here. The italicised paragraph nails it. Churches have no common criteria or structures to discuss the question of what is legitimate diversity. Then we are gently invited to consider: ‘What positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?’ This is one of the most important parts of TCTCV. The issue has been raised but we have to wait for the next chapter for a substantive advance.

This chapter ends with a second important advance for Faith and Order—a reflection on the local church and its relation with all the local churches acknowledging that there are today different ways of understanding the boundaries of local church. Each local church contains within itself the fullness of what it is to be the Church. ‘It is wholly Church but not the whole Church.’ But the communion of local churches is not an optional extra. The local church cannot be isolationist. Communion ecclesiology entails belonging to the whole Church both across space and through time. Again Faith and Order poses the question eirenically and as invitation: ‘We invite churches to seek more precise mutual understanding and agreement in this area ... what is the appropriate relation between the various levels of life of a fully united Church? What specific ministries of leadership are needed to serve and foster those relations?’ Such reasonable, but such important questions.

The chapter has seen an advance in the handling of diversity in unity and the relation of the local churches across the world and through time. Our portrait of visible unity is being filled out significantly.

Chapter III. The Church: growing in Communion

The third chapter turns to what it calls ‘the ecclesial elements’ required for full communion or full visible unity. In a nutshell:

The ecclesial elements required for full communion within a visibly united church—the goal of the ecumenical movement—are communion in the fullness of the apostolic faith; in sacramental life; in
a truly one and mutually recognisable ministry; in structures of conciliar relations and decision-making and in common service and mission. These attributes serve as a necessary framework for maintaining unity in legitimate diversity. (37)

This is an important statement from Faith and Order. The firmness with which these elements are stressed as an ‘essential and a necessary framework’ for unity, is perhaps stronger than we have been used to in more recent years. The full realisation of God’s gift of communion requires Christians to agree about these fundamental aspects of the life of the Church. (37) That’s a bold statement. It challenges each of our traditions to ask whether this is really what we believe? The text goes on to take the ecclesial elements one by one.

- A communion in faith. There is substantial agreement among Christians concerning the faith grounded in Scriptures and focused in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed, a faith which has to be expressed in each generation. Here the work on the common confession of the apostolic faith is summed up.

- A sacramental communion. The BEM process showed how much churches share in common in their understanding of the two dominical sacraments, and where old divides might be overcome. The italicised commentary invites churches to consider whether they can reach even closer convergence: for example on who may receive baptism, or preside at liturgical celebrations, and between those who celebrate sacraments and those who do not. There is an important discussion to be continued with the Society of Friends who have much to teach us about the sacramentality of all life.

- It is no surprise that the greatest number of differences remain in the area of ministry constituting considerable obstacles on the path to unity. (46) The subject of ministry must continue to be an urgent priority for the churches. Issues need facing and must not be ducked: the understanding of priesthood; the threefold ordering of the ministry and whether such a pattern is God’s will for the Church; episcopacy and apostolic succession. Is episcopacy and apostolic succession a barrier, a blockage, or simply an excuse? Without greater convergence, progress in some relationships is hardly possible. We know that in these islands but seem unable to make progress. But ministry is not just a matter of the ordained. A question for all of us is how lay and ordained share and work together.
• Perhaps the most important advance comes in what is said about authority in the Church and about a ministry of oversight. It was clear that the subject was coming from the hint in the opening chapter which asked: who says what is legitimate diversity? It is the authority of the crucified Christ that is lodged in the Church, an authority different in character and in exercise from worldly power and authority. The question is again posed as invitation. ‘May not the seeking of ecumenical convergence on the way in which authority is recognized and exercised play a creative role in this missionary endeavour of the churches?’ (51)

• This sets the scene for all that is said about the ‘service’ of authority, making for a more sympathetic approach to the role of any ministry of oversight. Oversight is understood as a ministry of co-ordination, and leading in mission. The personal ministry of oversight is never to be exercised in isolation, but collegially with all the ordained, and communally with the whole people of God. The BEM triad, ‘personal, collegial and communal’ was one of the important, though underdeveloped, insights of that document and it is good that progress is being made in the present ecclesiology text. None of our churches has got the exercise of authority right. We are all churches in change. We have much to learn from one another. In conversation around this text we may learn new things about ecclesial structures of graced belonging. The personal and relational life of the people of God requires structure to nurture, sustain and guide its life and mission.

• The text goes on to make a very bold step for Faith and Order, one which some wanted at Lima in 1982 to see put into BEM; the Commission however was in agreement that it was unwise to add anything on this without significant background work. TCTCV says that for the sake of good order there is need for someone to summon and to preside over gatherings. and goes on to ask how ‘a personal ministry serving to foster and promote the unity of the Church at the Universal level might be understood and exercised? … If according to the will of Christ, current divisions are overcome, how might a ministry that fosters and promotes the unity of the Church at the universal level be understood and exercised?’ (57)

By including the matter of authority and a serving ministry of oversight, and at least raising the question of whether for all of us
visible unity requires a personal focus of unity at the Universal level, Faith and Order has provided the churches with a more complete ecclesiological portrait of visible unity and its essential characteristics to consider in the years ahead. Perhaps we can dare to enter that discussion as we watch Francis, Bishop of Rome, in his ministry of service, turned towards the poor, leading in a serving ministry of justice and peace and gathering leaders together to reflect on some of today’s difficult issues.

Chapter IV. The Church in and for the World

The final chapter returns to where TCTCV began, with God’s plan for creation and the role of the Church in God’s plan. The Church is faced with new issues today, including the fact of religious diversity, and the varying responses of the churches to this, and to moral issues. Then comes what is perhaps a surprise for some. Communion, koinonia entails not only shared faith, the celebration of common worship, but also shared moral values based on the Gospel. Faith and Order has never been so clear that moral values are ‘an essential characteristic’ of visible unity. It is, of course, moral values and not agreed response to moral issues. And we are warned that because of our ecumenical closeness what one denomination does now has consequences for all of us. We need to be accountable to one another, even now, listening to one another engaging in mutual questioning. Our responses to new moral challenges affect the unity already gained as well as the unity we seek—an uncomfortable warning for some of us!

The document ends by returning to the beginning, to the relation between Church and world, reminding us that the Church has a responsibility to help those without power to be heard, to respond to human suffering, HIV and AIDS, violence and the threats of war, and to promote justice, peace and the care of the environment. It is in light of these huge challenges in today’s world that unity, the visible unity of the Church, is an imperative and can never be an optional extra. Paragraph 68 sums it up.

Our brokenness and division contradict Christ’s will for the unity of his disciples and hinder the mission of the Church. This is why the restoration of unity between Christians, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is such an urgent task. Growth in communion unfolds within that wider fellowship of believers that extends back in the past and forward into the future to include the whole communion of saints. The final destiny of the Church is to be caught up in the
koinonia/communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to be part of the new creation, praising and rejoicing in God forever. (68)

IV. What next?

I am sure, looking back over the history of Faith and Order, that this text is a gift. We have been given an important convergence text in the tradition of BEM. It comes with five questions and throughout the text it eirenically poses further questions for future agendas. The first question may seem to some disappointing when it asks ‘to what extent this text reflects the ecclesiological understanding of your church?’ BEM asked whether churches could recognise in the document ‘the faith of the church through the ages.’ This was a deliberate phrasing of the question to turn churches away from themselves and their own identity and only then to consider themselves in light of the Church through the ages.

It is now over to the churches. But there remains an important task for Faith and Order to monitor and encourage responses, to publish them and to respond to issues raised in the ongoing work of the Commission. There is much at stake in the responses of the churches, or indeed the lack of responses. The response ought at least to indicate whether some churches are still committed to the goal of visible unity and, if they are, what are the issues Faith and Order needs now to help them with. They ought to show whether the ecumenical venture is all about concerns of justice and peace. This text would suggest that it is not a matter of either/or; rather, that these elements can be held together in an ecclesiology of communion, just as they are in the Unity Statement adopted by the Tenth Assembly of the WCC in Busan. It would be creative to include in the discussions some of the newer and fast-growing churches to discover what common agenda we can claim and how much there is to learn from a more inclusive ecumenical circle.

There is much at stake in TCTCV for Faith and Order, for the WCC and for all our churches. The world needs signs of reconciled life, and of life in unity with amazing diversity. May the response process flourish!
TOWARDS THE COMMON GOOD. A CHURCH AND
SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHURCH: TOWARDS A
COMMON VISION

William Storrar*

The Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions in Scotland have
complementary notions of the common good that can inform an
ecumenical approach to public issues in Scottish society. The normative
understanding of the common good in Catholic social thought should
be combined with a Protestant style of social engagement rooted in the
Reformation: pursuing the common good through persuasion in the
public sphere. The fusion of these two ways of seeing the common good
in an ecumenical style of engagement in society will put the ecclesiology
of The Church: Towards a Common Vision into practice through
faithful performance and public persuasion.

From an ecclesiological perspective, the heart of The Church: Towards
a Common Vision is to be found in its understanding of the Church as
communion or koinonia: communion with the triune God and
communion with one another in Jesus Christ:

The biblical notion of koinonia has become central in the ecumenical
quest for a common understanding of the life and unity of the Church.
(13)

From a church and society perspective, the heart of The Church:
Towards a Common Vision is to be found in its commitment to the
common good, and to making common cause for the good of
humanity and all creation:

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was formerly Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology and
Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of
Edinburgh.
Together with all people of good will, the Church seeks to care for creation ... by opposing the abuse and destruction of the earth and participating in God’s healing of broken relationships between creation and humanity. (66)

In the final section of our document, headed ‘The Church in Society’, these two ideas of communion and the common good are brought together:

The world that ‘God so loved’ is scarred with problems and tragedies that cry out for the compassionate engagement of Christians. The source of their passion for the transformation of the world lies in their communion with God in Jesus Christ. (64)

If this document calls us towards a common vision of the Church as communion, it also calls us towards the common good of society. More than that, it calls on particular churches to work for the common good in ways appropriate to their own particular context:

Jesus said that he came so that human beings may have life in abundance; his followers acknowledge their responsibility to defend human life and dignity. These are obligations on churches as much as on individual believers. Each context will provide its own clues to discern what is the appropriate Christian response within any particular set of circumstances. (64)

So what does working for the common good mean for church and society in our Scottish context? The common good is an idea that carries weight for both Christians and Scots. In the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church* issued under John Paul II, the principle of the common good was reaffirmed as a major component of Catholic social teaching. In our recent Scottish Referendum, much was made of the comparison with Scandinavia and its social democratic model of the common good—a sort of IKEA for Independence!

Clearly, the common good is an idea whose time has come in Scotland. So what do we mean by this term in our Catholic and Reformed traditions in Scotland? What clues to its content can we discern in our own Scottish context?

To answer these questions we must go back to a moment in our history that both Catholic and Reformed churches share, Scotland in the 1540s, when the cry for reform in church and society was in the air. At that moment, a poor man stepped on to the stage of Scottish history. He is the most remarkable character in the history of Scottish
drama. His name is John the Common Weal. He appears in the late medieval Scottish play, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, written by the courtier and diplomat Sir David Lindsay.

As its name suggests, this drama is a biting satire on the corruption of the three estates in contemporary Scotland: the nobility, the Church, and the merchant class. The first half of the drama follows the conventions of morality plays performed across Europe in this period. The personified virtues and vices fight for the soul of the king, Rex Humanitas. The welfare of the kingdom hangs in the balance, depending on whether the king listens to Flatterie and Sensualitie or Guid Counsel and Divyne Correction.

In the second half of the play, everything changes. We move from the conventional style of a morality play to the realist style of a political satire. The Parliament of the Three Estates is summoned to reform the realm. They enter backwards, symbolizing that all is not well in the kingdom. Then on to the stage steps John the Common Weal in the company of a Poor Man. Unlike the imaginary characters in the first half of the play—Sensualitie, Guid Counsel and so on—John the Common Weal and the Poor Man are inhabitants of the real world and live in the real Scotland, facing ‘a real history of privation’. John the Commonweal speaks out against the three estates in the name of the poor, who are sorely oppressed by the greed and corrupt practices of the lords, the bishops and the merchants. He calls for reform in the name of Christ and the New Testament, much to the consternation of the bishops. When the king, Rex Humanitas, meets ‘Johne the Common-weil of fair Scotland’ for the first time, he asks, ‘Quhat is the caus the Common-weil is crukit?’ to which John replies, ‘Becaus the Common-weil hes bene overlukit.’

The commonweal, the common good, is here described not in the abstract terms of virtue but in the concrete terms of poverty. In a memorable line from the play, we learn that the condition of the poor in contemporary Scotland, 'gars John the Common Weill want his warm claes'. Poverty in a cold climate makes the common people want for warm clothes.

Seen through the eyes of John the Common Weal, the common good is defined by whether the poorest among us have clothes on their back, food in their stomach, shelter from the storm, and hope for tomorrow. If the poor go cold and ragged into an uncertain tomorrow, then there is no equity in the land, and no wellbeing for anyone in
society, not even the rich and mighty, no common good. In this definition of the common good, as applicable to the wretched of the earth today as it was to late medieval Scotland, we surely hear the echo of Jesus in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel: ‘I was naked and you clothed me ... When, Lord, did we see you naked? ... In as much as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me.’ Here too the common good is a question of whether you have clothes on your back to keep you warm.

I have drawn on Scottish drama as well as the Gospels to define the substance of the common good as the want o’ warm claes, and a theology of the common good as a warm claes theology. The common good is about clothing the naked, and righting every wrong in the crooked commonweal to make it so. The common good has evangelical litmus tests that we can see and God can judge: the naked are clothed; the hungry fed; the stranger welcomed; and the prisoner visited. As the Satire of the Three Estates reminds us, the commonweal of Scotland means that the poor are not forgotten.

But nor do the poor forget. While a student at Edinburgh University, I spent three summers working as a night cleaner, cleaning the offices and toilets around George Square. Among the local men I worked with was Jimmy Kelly. Jimmy loved to reminisce about his Catholic childhood in the Cowgate—especially when he was skelped for skipping Mass because he couldn’t tell his mother the right colour for the liturgical season. Early one morning in our tea break, looking out from the David Hume Tower over the Southside of Edinburgh, Jimmy Kelly turned to me and said, 'Aye, son, this is no’ a poor man’s city.' In heeding this document’s call to the churches to seek the common good of society, let us not forget that it is the poor who are the experts on what that means in reality.

Of course, the roots of the idea of the common good lie deep in Western culture as well as the biblical tradition. Aristotle argued that the common good is the goal of public life for all free citizens of the polis, but not for the women, slaves and aliens who were excluded from public life and citizenship. Aquinas wrote that ‘the supreme good, namely God, is the common good, since the good of all things depends on God.’ More recent Catholic social teaching has a twofold understanding of the common good as both the societal conditions for human flourishing and the goal of society.
These are definitions of the substance of the common good. I wish to argue that the common good is about style as well as substance. The case for the common good is not only about the unacceptable style of ragged poverty. The style in which we argue for the common good is important as well. It illuminates the substance of the common good in new ways. Style matters.

My interest as a public theologian in the question of style has been prompted by a remarkable study of style in politics by the American professor of rhetoric and communication studies, Robert Hariman, in his book, *Political Style: the artistry of power*. There he argues that to understand politics one must look not only at questions of governance and law, political ideology and interests, but also at the question of political style.

Hariman has in mind the repertoire of persuasive skills that every successful politician intuitively possesses in making an appeal for support or agreement: the artful way with words and use of gestures in order to appeal to voters or colleagues or even opponents. There are different political styles, each with its own ‘sensibility, taste, manners, charisma, charm’, and accepted ways of communicating in speech, in written texts or in performance. Hariman defines political style as: ‘a coherent repertoire of rhetorical conventions depending on aesthetic reactions for political effect.’ In other words, a political style is a distinctive way of communicating and acting intended to win an appreciative response and political outcome—’I like the candidate. She seems one of us. She gets my vote.’

Hariman sees each political style as drawing on universal elements in the human condition but configuring them in distinctive ways. His thesis is this: ‘To the extent that politics is an art, matters of style must be crucial to its practice.’ While arguing that questions of style can shape human conduct and represent important elements of human communication, he also recognizes the importance of other factors in determining human action. Style matters but it is certainly not the only thing that matters. However, it matters more than we think.

There are different styles of rhetoric and performance in politics. Similarly, I wish to argue, there are different styles of rhetoric and performance when it comes to imagining the common good. But what

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is our style of imagining the common good as Christians in contemporary Scotland?

Christians in particular and society in general are deeply indebted to the classical and Catholic traditions of thought on the common good from Aristotle and Aquinas to more recent statements by the Catholic Church, its bishops and theologians. From this body of literature, we can see there is a Catholic style of imagining the common good, just as there is an Aristotelian style of imaging the common good, and indeed a civic republican style from Cicero to Rousseau.

In particular, I would draw your attention and acknowledge my debt to the Jesuit ethicist David Hollenbach for his seminal study, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Hollenbach believes that in a globalizing and pluralistic world, ‘the idea of the common good is an idea whose time has once again come.’ He believes that a Christian ethic and theology can help people to build the solidarities with one another that our globalizing and pluralist world needs. He sees the biggest challenge to the idea of the common good today lying in the very pluralist nature of the contemporary world, with many different, sometimes conflicting notions of the public good leading many to say the very idea is impossible. The notion of the common good he offers takes that plurality into account. He states: ‘The common good that can be achieved in history is a pluralistic ensemble of goods.’

In making that argument for the global common good, however, Hollenbach rightly draws on his own Catholic tradition to articulate that case in his style of composition and sources, drawing not only on papal encyclicals and Catholic social teaching but on the example of John Paul II’s global travels and media impact. Writing today, he would surely highlight the Franciscan style of Pope Francis and its global impact: the power of moving from the splendor of the papal apartments into hostel accommodation, driving a second-hand car, and employing the rhetoric of compassion rather than condemnation. Once again, we see that style matters and sheds light on substance.

Hollenbach also urges his own Catholic community to remember the historic ways in which they have imagined the common good as a resource for their contemporary engagement in society:

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In the Europe of the medieval epoch ... the notion of the common good played a very important role in serious thinking about the direction of governments, economics, and culture, in a world where nation-states did not exist. It also exerted practical influence ... Is it too far fetched to suggest that the idea of the common good could play an analogous role today? To go one step further ... it may be fruitful to ask whether the Catholic community remembers something from its medieval history that could make a distinctive and perhaps even indispensible contribution to a globalizing world.¹

That is certainly true for the Catholic community in Scotland. If it remembers the figure of John the Commonweal from its medieval history, the Roman Catholic Church would indeed make a distinctive and indispensible contribution to Scotland, where the poor still want their warm clothes in winter.

In closing, I wish to focus on a Protestant style of imagining the common good as the way in which my own Church of Scotland might respond to the challenge with which The Church: Towards a Common Vision concludes: the call to compassionate engagement in society. I have in mind an ecumenical Protestant style of imagining the common good that has its source in the Reformation. Like Hollenbach for his Catholic community, I want to call on my own Reformed community to remember something from our Reformation history that could make a distinctive and even indispensible contribution to the common good in contemporary Scotland.

I should at the outset come clean on my motive for doing so. As a minister in the service of that ecumenical Protestant tradition, I want to see our name restored to its true estate in the world at large and Scotland in particular. I want us to recover our nerve. Ecumenical Protestants are being written out of the story of global Christianity in the twenty-first century. We are seen as a dying minority in the West. Growing conservative churches despise our numbers. Radical theological voices dismiss our civility. I take a contrary view. Far from declining into the past, we are inclining to the future. In a complex, pluralist world, marred by militant religion, ecumenical Protestants bring a vital gift to our global era, a commitment to the creative tension of being both disciples and citizens.

¹ David Hollenbach, The Common Good and Christian Ethics, 241-2.
At its best, the identity of ecumenical Protestants is complex: porous not watertight, a dazzling mixture not filtered and pure. We don’t have all the answers. We look to our neighbors for wisdom. We aim to be good disciples and good citizens. We are called to be saints, set apart for God’s purposes in the world. We are called to be citizens, commanded to seek the welfare of the city. We make common cause with strangers for the public good. We connect faithful discipleship of Jesus with active citizenship in the public sphere. We are moved to action by regard for the public interest. Our gift to the wider Church and world is this public spirit. The public spirit of ecumenical Protestantism needs to be re-affirmed, re-thought and renewed in a global era, not rejected or relegated to history. It is the breath of our Christian humanism. It may even be the breath of the Spirit on occasion.

We live with the creative tension of trying to connect citizenship and discipleship in our thinking and practice as ecumenical Protestants. This case for a Protestant style of imagining the common good is for all those who recognize that tension and welcome it as God’s gift. More broadly, it is delivered in gratitude for the good Samaritans and porous saints of every tradition who see the common good as a shared conversation on the question of who is our neighbor.

I am an unlikely candidate to talk about style! The particular Christian tradition to which I belong seems disqualified from the start. Isn’t the Protestant Reformation the end of all style in religion and the beginning of an abstract, rational way of believing and living, devoid of all color, imagination and artistry? That is the received view but recent scholarship has proved it to be otherwise. As Peter Matheson has shown in his superb study, *The Imaginative World of the Reformation*, the several Reformations of the sixteenth century were characterized by a popular revolution in the religious imagination, as much as by elite disputes on doctrine:

The new vogue for dialogue, satire and narrative history gave priority to story-telling, to the *via rhetorica* over the *via dialectica*; conversation, intuition and empathetic imagination took over from logic, paradox from syllogism; open disputations in the ‘public square’ from magisterial pronouncements behind closed doors. These are not
just matters of style and form. They point to a fundamentally new way of perceiving and presenting the truth.¹

The Protestant Reformation was not just a matter of style and form but certainly it was not less than a question of style and form. Matheson marvelously describes the Reformation as 'less a shopping-list of demands than the choreography for a new dance'.² And in that new dance, everyone was invited to participate, whether in the open disputation of the public square or the intimate steps of dialogue and conversation. In particular, as he points out, it offered new communicative as well as religious opportunities.

What we see emerging is an empowered laity that is finding its own voice in both church and society. Against Jürgen Habermas’ dating of the emergence of a public sphere in the bourgeois world of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Matheson argues that the Reformation’s embrace of these new means of communication led to the creation of the first public sphere in Europe, where everyone was free to persuade public opinion of the merits of one’s case. While the disputation had been a scholastic exercise within the walls of the medieval university, it went public after 1517, as Matheson notes in his book, *Rhetoric of the Reformation*:

> As the Reformation began to take root the disputation left the cloistered realm of the university for the Rathaus, or Town Hall, the inn and the home, and—through the new medium of the printing press—went on to address the wider forum of public opinion ... As reformer and conserver clashed, the body public would act as jury, and come to an informed and just verdict. Under the proper conditions polemic would elicit the truth, or at least that which best served the common weal.³

A Protestant style of imagining does not see the common good as the teleological goal of society, as in the Aristotelian style of imagining; nor as the ideal conditions for human flourishing, as the Roman Catholic style of imagining sees it; nor as the cause for which one would die, as the civic republican style of imagining the common good would have it. From the perspective of the Protestant principle, none

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¹ Peter Matheson, *The Imaginative World of the Reformation* (T&T Clark, 2000), 28.
² Ibid. 9.
of these notions of the common good are ultimate and absolute goods to be defined by philosophers or authorities in church and state. Our goals, ideals, and causes are all relative and therefore contested matters for public debate.

The Protestant style of imagining the common good sees the good of all as a daily, continuing and never ending public debate about our common interests and public goods in a pluralist society. The common good lies in our style of public argumentation—and the question of who is included in or excluded from it. The common good is about who steps on to the public stage, like John the Common Weal, and who is left in the wings, like the million Scots living in poverty today.

As sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches of Scotland, that is our common vision, our common cause, the common good of our common earth—the world God loves.
CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHURCH: TOWARDS A COMMON VISION

Catherine E. Clifford*

At the 2015 annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), a newly constituted ‘Interest Group’ began a three-year study process to examine the Faith and Order convergence text, The Church: Towards a Common Vision, from a variety of Catholic theological perspectives. This paper provides a brief introduction to the document and to the study process, situating the work of the research group within the history of previous studies by members of the CTSA to promote the reception and critical study of the work of Faith and Order. Anticipating more comprehensive studies, it explores some of the key advances in ecumenical convergence and challenges to reception in the present context of the global Catholic Church.

In June of 2015, during the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the work of a three year ‘Interest Group’ began. The purpose of this research group is to generate theological reflection from a Catholic perspective and to promote the reception of the most recent convergence text of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV), which has been commended to the churches for study and response.¹ Those of us old enough to recall will note the resemblance of the book cover to the previous convergence text of the Faith and Order Commission, published in 1982, Baptism, Eucharist and

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Ministry,¹ also known as BEM, or the ‘Lima’ document. That text represented perhaps the most significant ecumenical breakthrough in modern times. The convergence expressed in TCTCV builds upon the progress marked by the previous work of Faith and Order, deepening and carrying forward many of its important perspectives.

**A Brief Overview**

BEM was published in at least thirty-seven different languages and invited the churches to consider, from the highest levels of authority, whether the consensus expressed there was consistent with their understanding of sacramental doctrine and practice. The reception process that ensued generated 186 official responses which were collected in six volumes, including an official response from the doctrinal authority of the Catholic Church.² It is fair to say that the dialogue, study, and reception of Faith and Order’s work on BEM shaped a generation of sacramental theology and liturgical renewal. Its theological convergence has provided a basis for the mutual recognition of baptism among many churches, for a mutual recognition of ministries and more generous sacramental sharing among many Anglican and Protestant Churches, and has led to important measures of institutional rapprochement between Angilcans and Lutherans in Europe and North America, and among many Reformed communities. The ‘colour coding’ of the present book jacket suggests that the Faith and Order Commission would want us to consider the theological convergence of TCTCV as both building upon the convergence of sacramental theology contained in BEM, and heralding a parallel development of ecumenical consensus in the area of ecclesiology. While marking significant advance on a number of vexing questions, it also points to those which must yet be faced as the churches grow together in unity.

A helpful ‘Historical Note’ accompanies the convergence statement and shows clearly that the understanding of the church—its nature, mission, and unity—have been a focus of continuous study since the


inception of the Faith and Order movement in 1927. A perusal of the notes in this section provides a serious introduction for new generations of ecumenists. More than any other international body, the Faith and Order Commission has kept before the churches the goal of full visible unity and sought to clarify the doctrinal bases for the structuring of sacramental and ecclesial communion. Catholic theologians have followed the development of the Faith and Order movement with interest from its inception. In 1963, midway through the Second Vatican Council, Catholic scholars were authorized to take part in the discussions of the fourth world conference on Faith and Order at Montreal, where they both received from and contributed to its reflections on the question of Scripture, Tradition, and traditions. Since 1968 Catholic theologians have participated fully as officially mandated members of the Commission.

The seeds of the present document can be found in the churches’ responses to the convergence achieved in BEM. If, in receiving the advances of the BEM text, they were able to recognize a broad agreement on matters pertaining to sacramental life, persistent disagreement on questions pertaining to ministry, authority, and ecclesial structure prevented many communities from advancing toward fuller sacramental or institutional communion. The Catholic Church’s response to BEM was ‘largely affirmative’, yet indicated a number of significant areas requiring further dialogue.

1 ‘Historical Note’ in TCTCV, 41-6.
2 P. C. Roger and L. Vischer (eds.), The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963 (London: SCM Press, 1964). This dialogue took place at the same time that the Second Vatican Council was deliberating on the draft text of the Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, a text elaborated by a joint commission which included participation from both the council’s Doctrinal Commission and the new Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Drafters were deeply aware of the ecumenical import of their work, and were no doubt aided by the perspectives developed within the context of this Faith and Order meeting.
ecclesiological themes were identified in the responses to BEM as requiring further study, including: ‘the role of the Church in God’s saving purpose; koinonia; the Church as gift of the word of God (creatura verbi); the Church as mystery or sacrament of God’s love for the world; the Church as the pilgrim people of God; the Church as prophetic sign and servant of God’s coming kingdom.’ At the 1989 meeting of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission, a decision was taken to launch a study process entitled: ‘The Nature and Mission of the Church—Ecumenical Perspectives in Ecclesiology.’ Echoing this ecclesiological focus, the Fifth World Conference of Faith and Order, meeting in Santiago de Compostela in 1993, was organized around the theme, ‘Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness’.

Other important influences on the development of theological convergence reflected in TCTCV include the study process of Faith and Order which developed through the 1980s, ‘Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today’, and the 1991 statement by the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches on ‘the unity of the church as koinonia/communion’. Throughout the Faith and Order study process many other studies on questions of ecclesiology were produced in the context of bilateral dialogues as well, often drawing from the understanding of the church as communion or seeking to clarify the sacramental character of the church. To name but a few representative studies, one might consider: the Reformed-Catholic Dialogue’s study, ‘Towards a Common

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4 See, for example, Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Faith and Order Paper No. 153 (Geneva: WCC / Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010).
Understanding of the Church [1990];¹ the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission’s agreed statement on ‘The Gift of Authority’;² the Anglican-Lutheran Report, ‘Growth in Communion [2002]’;³ the agreed statement of the Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue, ‘The Church of the Triune God [2006];’⁴ or the Ravenna document of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, ‘Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesiastical Communion, Conciliarity and Authority [2007].’⁵ All of these are cited or referenced by TCTCV, and reveal the extent to which it can be seen as a ‘harvesting’ text, bringing together the insights and growing consensus emerging from a wide range of conversations.⁶

TCTCV is the fruit of a process spanning more than two decades. Along the way, the Faith and Order Commission published two documents qualified as ‘stage[s] on the way to a common statement’: the first, The Nature and Purpose of the Church,⁷ published in 1998;

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and the second, entitled *The Nature and Mission of the Church*,\(^1\) published in 2005. Both of these were widely circulated for study and consultation. Churches, commissions, institutions and individuals were invited to consider the extent to which they might recognize in the emerging consensus of these draft texts an echo of the apostolic faith and to comment on those aspects of the documents they consider as requiring further work or having been neglected.\(^2\) Their responses contributed to the process of shaping TCTCV.

**Some Notable Features of TCTCV**

Those familiar with the original text of BEM will recall how that document included a column in the margin for ‘comments,’ often pointing to areas of differing pastoral practice or persistent differences of theological opinion. The previous two versions of the church document included text boxes which explored areas of remaining disagreement between the churches. Such marginalia are not to be found in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. This is in keeping with the Faith and Order Commission’s desire to place before the churches a text of mature theological and doctrinal convergence. The churches are asked to indicate ‘the extent to which this text reflect[s] the ecclesiological understanding of [their] church;’ that it might offer ‘a basis for growth in unity’; and to consider where its reception might challenge them to undertake ‘adaptations’ or to renew their ecclesial life.\(^3\) Occasional entries in italics indicate areas of divergence, but are framed as questions now addressed to the churches: ‘How do we identify the Church which the creed calls one, holy, catholic, and apostolic? What is God’s will for the unity of the Church?’ (10); or again, as challenges to the churches to address areas in need of deepening understanding: ‘We invite the churches to recognize and honour each other’s commitment to seeking the will of God in the ordering of the Church. We further invite them to reflect together about the criteria which are employed in different churches for considering issues about continuity and change’. (24)

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3 ‘Introduction’, TCTCV, 3.
A second and unprecedented feature of the document is to be found in the footnotes. The majority of texts cited in the over sixty footnotes are references to previous studies of the World Council of Churches, of the Faith and Order Commission, and strikingly, of the many bi-lateral dialogues that have contributed to broader ecumenical consensus in ecclesiology over these past several decades. The inclusion of these notes is indicative of two things. First, a certain waning of ecumenical memory and a generational changing of the guard requires a more careful delineation of the work accomplished in the last half century and across the ecumenical landscape which has contributed to the convergence expressed here. Secondly, the fact that Faith and Order has chosen to harvest from the extensive work of the bi-laterals enables us to consider that TCTCV is already, in many respects, a ‘reception’ document.

The affirmation of an ecclesiology of communion grounded in a Trinitarian confession of faith is central to the growing consensus on the nature of the church. An understanding of the church as a communion of diverse local churches is framed by a reflection on the biblical images of the church as people of God, body of Christ, and temple of the Holy Spirit. This framework provides for a fuller appreciation of the unity of the church as a unity in diversity, rather than as a fusion or uniformity that would extinguish the many gifts reflected in the ethos and diverse spiritual, liturgical, theological traditions of Christianity. Such an understanding is at once an invitation to the churches to a fuller recognition of the common faith that underlies the diverse expressions of faith in the life of their ecumenical partners, and a spur to re-examine those aspects of their own ecclesial life which are not in harmony with the life in communion to which they are called.

TCTCV marks an important advance on the convergence of BEM. Many communities were unable to receive the proposal contained in BEM’s Ministry document, that the threefold structure of ministry (episkopos-prebyteros-diakonos) be considered something intended by Christ. Protestant ecclesiology has been resistant to the suggestion that the office of ‘bishop,’ in particular, is instituted by Christ, finding no biblical warrant for such a claim. The sustained dialogue of recent decades has enabled the churches to come to a fuller agreement on the constitutive role of episkopé, a ministry of oversight, in maintaining unity within each local church, communion with other
local churches, and continuity in the faith of the apostles. Even in the absence of an ‘episcopal’ order, individual persons or groups are charged with this essential ministry of oversight. In light of this emerging consensus, TCTCV renews the invitation to consider whether the threefold model might serve the realization of visible unity. (47)

Another important theological development in this text can be found in its efforts to place greater emphasis on the missional nature of the church. Ecclesial unity, the church, is not an end in itself. Unity flows from the very nature of the church, a community of those reconciled by God and now placed at the service of humanity as both a sign and instrument of reconciliation. TCTCV appropriates the ancient vision of the church as a participation in the life-giving mission of God, the missio Dei, to heal a broken world. (1) This aspect of the text has evolved in important ways over previous drafts, with two of the four chapters now centered on the outward witness and engagement of the church. The text is divided into four distinct chapters: (I) God’s Mission and the Unity of the Church; (II) The Church of the Triune God; (III) The Church: Growing in Communion; (IV) The Church: In and for the World. The third chapter represents a deepening reception of the work begun by BEM, and explores the recognition of communion in faith, sacraments, and ministry, broadening the discussion of ‘the ecclesial elements required for full communion within a visibly united church’. (1)

**Ecclesial Unity: Still Relevant Today?**

It may well be argued that the vision of ecclesial unity being proposed here is no longer shared by many Christians today, namely ‘unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world … in order that the world might believe’. (2) This vision implies a common confession of faith, the mutual recognition of baptism, eucharistic sharing, a mutual recognition of ministries, and shared structures for

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(1) TCTCV 37, p. 22; citing the Study of the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, ‘The Church Local and Universal,’ in *Growth In Agreement II*, 862-75, at 868.

discernment and shared decision-making. The Pentecostal theologian Cecil Robeck has observed that the image of the church expressed in TCTCV and the theological categories it has opted to use are heavily weighted in the direction of the ‘ancient churches and those with episcopal governance’.¹ This, he suggests, will make it difficult to receive for new Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches, who today constitute well over one quarter of the global Christian population, and whose perspectives may not be easily found here. It is to be hoped that TCTCV might at least form the basis of a deepening dialogue between the churches of classical Christianity—Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and those issuing from the sixteenth century Reformation—and those of the newer, third wave communities.

The approach of these same churches is also a largely European one, or one dominated by the perspective of churches in the northern hemisphere. With the majority of Christians, including Catholics, now residing in the southern hemisphere, it is fair to ask whether TCTCV will find an echo in the lived experiences of the churches of the south, churches of the poor, whose daily concern is for greater justice and integrity of witness. Catholics must acknowledge honestly that the commitment to Christian unity embraced by the Second Vatican Council often remains unknown or poorly understood in many regions of Africa and Asia, as seminary formation has largely neglected official directives regarding the necessity of ecumenical formation. This situation has been exacerbated by the growing presence of new evangelical communities in these regions that are given to proselytizing among the Catholic faithful.

These factors might make it easy to dismiss the convergence represented in TCTCV as a failed project, or as a theological vision which has no relevance to the evolving life of the churches and their increasing plurality. I would contend, however, that the traditional vision of the church that it conveys stands as a challenge to all the churches today. As Thomas Rausch has observed, ‘It is testimony to both how far the ecumenical movement has come and how far it needs to go.’² Catholics will need to take seriously the need for the

renewal of structures of church governance, including a greater participation by competent lay persons and women at every level of ecclesial life, and the need for a more generous recognition of the gifts of God’s Spirit present in other communities. Other churches may yet discover the importance of the Sunday celebration of the eucharist, and the need to strengthen the structures of communion among the local churches.

Every church must continue to ask whether its existing structures and practices continue to serve the purposes of continuity in the apostolic faith and the effective proclamation of the gospel in our time. No church is equipped to answer these questions today in isolation. Each church has need to learn from and receive from the wisdom of others. TCTCV helpfully invites the churches to redouble their efforts—in the face of new divisions rooted in divergent approaches to moral discernment—to come to a common understanding of the criteria, structures and procedures for discerning the way of the Gospel in communion. Consensus on these matters will be essential if the churches are to ‘offer appropriate models of discourse and wise counsel to the societies in which they are called to serve’ (63), as TCTCV suggests. TCTCV is an important contribution to convergence on the self-understanding of the church and might serve as a foundation for such a discernment in common.

Reflections by Catholic Theologians in North America

In 1983, in recognition of the importance of the publication of BEM, the Board of the CTSA established a ‘task force’ to prepare a theological evaluation of the Lima document from a Catholic perspective. That team consisted of Michael A. Fahey, then Dean and Professor of Theology at the University of St. Michael’s College Toronto; Edward J. Kilmartin, of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, and of Boston College; William Marrevee of Saint Paul University, Ottawa; Pheme Perkins of Boston College; and George Worgul of Duquesne University. The task force produced a series of papers that were edited by Michael A. Fahey, in a collection entitled
Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and published in 1986.¹

From 2003 to 2005 an Interest Group was established within the CTSAn under the leadership of Michael Fahey to study The Nature and Purpose of the Church. Papers were presented by Francis A. Sullivan of Boston College; Catherine E. Clifford of Saint Paul University; Jaroslav Z. Skira of Regis College, Toronto; Bishop Richard J. Sklba, then Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Milwaukee; William G. Rusch, from the Foundation for a Conference on Faith and Order; Michael Fahey, then of Marquette University; and Ann K. Riggs, then serving in the Faith and Order Office of the National Council of Churches.² A number of these papers appeared in Ecumenical Trends.³ Like the previous initiative, these studies sought to promote study, dialogue, and the reception of Faith and Order’s work by theologians and those engaged in theological and seminary education.

In 2015 the Board of the CTSA once again lent its support to an initiative to promote an extended reflection on the maturation of ecumenical consensus summarized in TCTCV. The aim of these sessions is once again to create a space for the elaboration of substantive Catholic reflections that might contribute to the reception of this historic convergence statement, as well as providing a critical reflection from a variety of Catholic perspectives. The contributions of Kristin Colberg and Brian Flanagan which are found in this issue of One In Christ will be complemented, over the next two years, by those of other participants of this interest group.

In a recent message to Christians in Arizona for a Day in Celebration of Christian Unity, Pope Francis wrote: ‘I am convinced it won’t be

theologians who bring about unity among us. Theologians help us, the science of the theologians will assist us, but if we hope that theologians will agree with one another, we will reach unity the day after Judgment Day. The Holy Spirit brings about unity. Theologians are helpful, but most helpful is the goodwill of us all who are on this journey with our hearts open to the Holy Spirit! Theological dialogue alone will not bring about the fullness of Christian Unity, but neither can it be accomplished without the wisdom and understanding of our common faith that is born by the theological community, who, together with all the baptized, are guided by God’s Spirit. The future of visible unity must be built upon solid theological ground.

It is our hope that the reflections produced throughout this process will not be the last word, but that they might generate greater interest and study of the important work of Faith and Order. Much lies ahead for the work of Catholic theology—not only in its contributions to the dialogue with others, but especially in its service to the ongoing self-examination and reform that is required of the Catholic Church itself as it continues on the path to full unity with other Christian communions. May these reflections contribute to the wider study and reception of the important work of TCTCV in service of the growing unity of the churches.

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QUESTIONS OF UNITY, DIVERSITY AND AUTHORITY IN
THE CHURCH: TOWARDS A COMMON VISION.
ADVANCES AND TOOLS FOR ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

Kristin Colberg*

This essay examines the treatment of unity, diversity and authority and their inter-relation in the WCC’s document The Church: Towards a Common Vision. It exposit the ways in which the document serves as both the product of significant ecumenical work and a tool for further ecumenical growth. The essay identifies episkopé as a creative avenue that some dialogue teams are pursuing as way to leverage the insights of this document.

The 2013 publication of the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) convergence document, The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV) charts tremendous common ground among Christians on ecclesiological issues while also indicating topics requiring further reflection.\(^1\) The document highlights two central themes that simultaneously demonstrate growth in agreement and demand further dialogue: the relationship between unity and diversity in the Christian community and the character of ecclesial authority. These themes are not simply two issues among many unresolved ecumenical questions; rather they constitute ‘issues under the issues’ in that progress on these topics is indispensable to the progress of ecumenical dialogue as a whole.\(^2\) This study will examine TCTCV’s treatments of

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\(^1\) The Church: Towards a Common Vision, Faith and Order Paper 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013); hereafter, TCTCV. Bracketed numbers in the text refer to paragraphs in TCTCV.

\(^2\) John Courtney Murray SJ famously referred to change as the ‘issue under the issues’ at Vatican II meaning that the question of how change happens in the
the relationship between unity and diversity and the ecclesial character of authority as well as the inter-relation of these loci. It will also explore some of the ways in which TCTCV already guides bilateral dialogues and serves as an exemplary tool for on-going ecumenical exchange. Particular attention will be paid to creative ways that some Christian churches and dialogue teams are pursuing open questions raised by TCTCV regarding the ministry of episkopé. All of these perspectives will demonstrate that TCTCV speaks to the heart of these ‘issues under the issues’ both by advancing mutual understanding among Christians and pointing a way forward for on-going dialogue.

TCTCV identifies convergences and divergences in Christian understandings of the church, and doing so is a monumental achievement. Its findings represent two decades of effort by thousands of theologians, lay people and church leaders from across the globe working and praying together for deeper mutual understanding. TCTCV is not only the product of ecumenical exchange; it constitutes a valuable tool for ecumenical dialogue inasmuch as its achievements illumine fruitful starting points and poignant open questions which facilitate the location of real ecumenical tensions and opportunities for particular dialogue teams. The work of TCTCV permits those engaged in dialogue to bypass the lengthy process of having to rediscover and repeat ecclesiological agreements and disagreements on their own, and it instead equips them to concentrate their energies on areas where real contributions can be made. TCTCV recognizes that advancing ecumenical dialogue requires serious reflection among Christians on their various understandings of authority so that they can make progress not only on this issue, but on others as well.

Addressing ecclesiology, in itself, often represents a significant advance in ecumenical exchange. Questions regarding the nature of the church, its mission, and its membership are generally regarded as some of the most critical topics for ecumenical advance, yet they are also recognized as some of the most potentially divisive. Matters of authority and ecclesial structure often emerge as particularly challenging for dialogue because they can generate anxiety among church was a central issue underlying all of the council’s work. See: John Courtney Murray SJ, ‘This Matter of Religious Freedom,’ America 112 (9 January 1965): 43.
Christian communities that others may not recognize their polity or form of community as legitimately ecclesial. Given the difficulty of this locus, participants in ecumenical dialogue regularly opt to begin with other themes in order to develop mutual understanding and trust before engaging these sensitive and historically divisive issues. Yet, ecclesiological issues cannot be put in abeyance for too long because the prospect of ecumenical advance is bound up in particular aspects of ecclesial self-understanding.

John Gibaut, a priest of the Diocese of Ottawa and the Director of Unity, Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion, underscores this point by drawing on an analogy from the world of technology. Gibaut observes that while not everyone who owns a smartphone is technologically savvy, most know enough to understand that if computers or smart phones are using incompatible operating systems, their users cannot communicate, work together, or even recognize one another. Gibaut asserts that the same is true when Christian communities with different ecclesiologies try to engage in dialogue because ‘that is what ecclesiology is—the operating systems of Christian communities.’ In the divided church, Christian communities have developed distinct ways of being church—different ‘operating systems’—that hinder their ability to effectively communicate, even on matters on which they largely agree. Gibaut asserts that a timely question for ecumenical dialogue is whether Christian communities ‘have compatible ecclesiastical operating

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1 As evidence of this I could cite my own experience on the U.S. Catholic-Reformed dialogue which is just now, after seven prior rounds of dialogue, undertaking the topic of ecclesiology. After reaching a mutual agreement on baptism in 2013, the group decided that it was necessary to consider issues related to the church before moving forward with other topics.


3 ‘This internal division also presents serious problems in Christian efforts at evangelization and mission as this discord can seem to provide a counter witness to the truth and unity of the gospel. This was a central insight of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the gathering which is widely identified as birth of the modern ecumenical movement. For more reflection on how internal division within the church inhibits its ability to advance its mission see: Brian Stanley’s The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).
systems and can recognize “church” in the other and can receive from one another and, indeed, receive one another as Christ has received us.” TCTCV, in many ways, seeks to ‘sync up’ varying ecclesiologies as much as possible in order to illumine areas of agreement as well as points of tension so that Christian communities can recognize each another and communicate successfully. Thus, while all ecumenical documents seek to promote conversations, TCTCV undertakes this task in a distinctive way by seeking not only to advance discussion on a particular topic, but to advance the ability of Christian communities to dialogue effectively about all topics.

TCTCV acknowledges immediately in its introduction the centrality of ecclesiological issues and the difficulty that they raise for ecumenical dialogue. The document begins by stating that it will address ‘what many consider to be the most difficult issues facing the churches in overcoming any remaining obstacles to their living out the Lord’s gift of communion: our understanding of the nature of the Church itself.’ Echoing Gibaut’s point, TCTCV notes that Christians today ‘live and do theology in an abnormal situation of ecclesial division.’ This ‘abnormal situation’ impedes dialogue about critical aspects of shared faith and frustrates the advance of Christian unity. As a prologue to further work, TCTCV highlights existing agreement as well as persisting differences in order to illustrate ‘how far Christian communities have come in their common understandings of the Church, showing the progress that has been made and the work that still needs to be done.’ Towards this end, the document highlights considerable common ground among Christians in the realm of ecclesiological understanding including theological convergence on topics such as the church’s origin, its connection to the saving activity of the Trinity, and the centrality of the Eucharist. It also identifies specific issues where divisions remain; it indicates these issues in italicized paragraphs throughout the text in order to promote further reflection. The synthesis offered by TCTCV does not provide a

2 TCTCV, Introduction, 1-3 at 1.
3 TCTCV, Historical Note, 41-6 at 41.
5 Ibid. 270-1.
roadmap for achieving visible unity; rather, it projects a vision of how a common understanding of the church’s life and mission might look. Critical to this projected vision of the church’s life and mission is greater consensus among Christians regarding questions of unity, diversity and authority for mutual understanding on these issues provides an important foundation for deeper dialogue and exchange.

1. Convergences and Divergences on Unity, Diversity and Authority

TCTCV acknowledges the existence of both unity and diversity in the ecclesial community as critical to the church’s nature and mission. Throughout the document, unity is presented as a gift of the Spirit—a gift for which Christ himself prayed and one which is necessary for the church to do Christ’s work in the world. TCTCV notes that Christians are part of one body formed by one Spirit, believe in one Lord, share one faith and one baptism, and worship ‘one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all’ (Eph. 4:4-6). Christians are also united in their creedal profession that the church is ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. (22) They acknowledge these attributes as mutually interrelated and as ‘God’s gifts to the Church’ which all believers are ‘constantly called to actualize’. (22) TCTCV also affirms that the church plays a key role in fostering this gift of unity for ‘[it] is God’s design to gather humanity and all of creation in communion under the Lordship of Christ.’ (25)

TCTCV is careful to underscore that a primary source of Christian unity is baptism. Accordingly, there are numerous references throughout the text to the 1984 WCC document—*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM). TCTCV’s reliance on BEM is noteworthy for at least two reasons. The first is that it underscores the close relationship between understandings of baptism and ecclesiology. The pastoral reception of BEM in the 1980s led to a dramatic increase in the mutual recognition of baptism among churches. As churches published responses to BEM and noted convergences in their theologies, they developed a deeper sense of their unity and desired a visible

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1 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper 111* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). TCTCV’s reliance on BEM is also fitting according to Rausch because they are, in his mind, the two most significant ecumenical documents since Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism.
expression of it.\footnote{On the reception of BEM see: \textit{Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-90: Report on the Process and Responses} (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992).} These developments led to important ecumenical questions such as: ‘With whom am I in communion as a consequence of my baptism?’ as well as important ecclesiological questions such as: ‘What does a strong sense of the importance of baptism say about the structure of the church and the roles of the baptized within it?’ Therefore, BEM not only promoted deeper mutual understanding among Christians on the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist; it also contributed to a realization that a connection through baptism affirms a real though imperfect communion among Christians. TCTCV’s focus on the church, in many ways, represents a natural progression from BEM’s achievements and an effort to consider its implications.

Significantly, TCTCV’s reliance on BEM affirms the constructive and progressive character of ecumenical dialogue and its documents. By building on BEM’s common principles, TCTCV avoids tedious and potentially unproductive efforts to recreate the wheel in ecumenical conversations. The common ground established on baptism in BEM instead catalyzes and guides many of the questions and issues in TCTCV. This is especially evident in TCTCV’s treatment of the importance of ecclesial unity. BEM teaches that baptism is a sign of unity and a gift from God. It states that: ‘Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to faith in Christ, is thus a basic bond of unity.’\footnote{BEM, 6.} TCTCV uses BEM’s points of convergence on baptismal unity as a starting point for its reflections on ecclesial unity. In an important italicized section TCTCV states: ‘In the light of the convergences on Baptism and Eucharist and of further reflection upon the historical roots and potential compatibility of the expressions of “sacrament” and “ordinance”, the churches are challenged to explore whether they are able to arrive at deeper agreement about that dimension of the life of the Church that involve those rites.’\textsuperscript{(42)} TCTCV uses the authority and momentum of BEM to inform and guide its reflections on the church. Its reliance on the earlier document underscores the important reality that in efforts to reach greater mutual
understanding and agreement—even on difficult issues such as the nature of the church—dialogue ought to start from deep commitments which already unite Christian communities. Christians need not and should not engage in important ecumenical conversations as if these key areas of agreement did not exist or were insignificant.

While TCTCV highlights that unity in the church is a gift from God, it likewise argues that diversity in the church is also such a gift and constitutive of the Spirit’s presence. It notes that ‘The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of complementary gifts on the faithful for the common good. The disciples are called to be fruitfully united, while respectful and enriched by their diversities.’(28) TCTCV affirms that Christians are united in the sense that diversity in the Christian community is not accidental to the life of the church, but a source of vibrancy that it is central to its identity as it seeks to unite the fullness of God’s creation in Christ. Authentic diversity is a constitutive dimension of God’s design that salvation in Christ be incarnational and thus ‘take flesh’ among various people in various ways.(12) Therefore, far from needing to be suppressed, legitimate diversity is an aspect of the church’s catholicity and a reality which allows it to participate in the fullness of faith and life that God intends. While affirming the need for a robust diversity in the church, the text is also clear that Christian communities must guard against illegitimate forms of diversity for ‘[t]he essential catholicity of the Church is undermined when cultural and other differences are allowed to develop into division.’(30) So, while diversity is to be embraced, it is not to be uncritically accepted for inauthentic expressions of the gospel are detrimental to both the church’s unity and the flourishing of real difference.

Because unity and diversity in the church are gifts from God, Christians agree that both should be cultivated in a non-competitive mutuality. Accordingly, Christians are called not only to overcome divisions and unite as a community; they are called to ‘preserve and treasure their legitimate differences of liturgy, custom and law and to foster legitimate diversities of spirituality, theological method and formulation in such a way that they contribute to the unity and catholicity of the Church as a whole.’(30) While there is clear convergence among Christians regarding the value of both unity and diversity within the church, open questions remain regarding the
proper balance between these two central aspects of the church’s identity. Therefore, TCTCV insists that it is important for Christians to reflect upon ‘what is necessary for unity, according to the will of God, and what is properly understood as legitimate diversity.’ (30) The text encourages that more work be done to identify ‘common criteria or means of discernment’ for distinguishing legitimate diversity from divisive diversity.

Questions regarding the relationship of unity and diversity in the church are intrinsically tied to questions about the nature and purpose of ecclesial authority. Preserving unity and promoting legitimate diversity while excluding illegitimate diversity are among the primary purposes of ecclesial authority. As such, structures of ecclesial authority often express a community’s understanding of the relative value and relationship between unity and diversity. Accordingly, the exercise of authority often provides an expression of what a community values and what it fears. TCTCV considers and commends forms of authority that cultivate the church as a communion of churches which honor the Spirit’s gifts of diversity and unity. The text approaches the topic of authority not from the perspective of comparing various ecclesial structures and notions of power, but by underscoring the way that ecclesial authority seeks to hold unity and difference in a fruitful tension. Thus, TCTCV creates a strong link between the relationship of unity and diversity in the church and expressions of ecclesial authority. This connection sets questions of authority in a new or renewed light; it moves away from considering authority primarily by comparing differences in ecclesial structure to emphasizing how varied expressions of ecclesial authority share important goals.

TCTCV underscores that from the time of the earliest Christian communities there has always been a plurality of ministries within the church and a corresponding multiplicity in the way that ministerial authority is exercised. While authority has been expressed in manifold ways within Christian communities, it has always been understood as a form of humble service rather than a means of domination or suppression. This model of authority as service is clearly demonstrated by Christ himself. TCTCV states:

The distinctive nature of authority in the Church can be understood and exercised correctly only in the light of the authority of its head, the one who was crucified, who ‘emptied himself’ and ‘obediently accepted
even death, death on the cross’... Thus, the Church’s authority is different from that of the world... Authority within the Church must be understood as humble service, nourishing and building up the koinonia of the Church in faith, life and witness; it is exemplified in Jesus’ action of washing the feet of the disciples. It is service (diakonia), of love, without any domination or coercion. (49)

While the issue of authority is often a highly sensitive and potentially divisive topic among Christians, TCTCV urges Christian communities to remember that there are many significant points of convergence among them on this topic. Christians are united in a sense that ecclesial authority is distinct from a notion of authority as mere power. They also agree that all exercise of authority in the church must be patterned on Christ’s example of humble service and that this authority must be seen in light of Christ’s eschatological promise to guide the Christian community to its fulfillment. Even the shared affirmation of a plurality of ministries in the early church creates space for acknowledging the existence of legitimate diversity between Christian communities. All of these points of consensus create a foundation for deep and honest engagement.

Within the agreement among Christian communities regarding the character of ecclesial authority, TCTCV highlights the convergence on a ministry of episkopé or oversight as particularly significant. Christians affirm that Christ exercised a ministry of oversight or coordination to promote the gifts of the Spirit and unite his followers within one body. Christians also concur that Christ entrusted this ministry to his followers. On this issue TCTCV points to scripture noting that: ‘Having received from his Father ‘full authority in heaven and on earth’ (Matt. 28: 18), Jesus shared his authority with the apostles (cf John 20: 22).’(48) As Jesus’ successors in this ministry of oversight (episkopé) the apostles exercised authority in the proclamation of the gospel, in the celebration of the sacraments, particularly in the Eucharist, and in the pastoral guidance of believers.(48) TCTCV speaks at length about the nature of this ministry:

The faithful exercise of the ministry of episkopé under the gospel by persons chosen and set aside for such ministry is a requirement of fundamental importance for the Church’s life and mission. The specific development of structures of episkopé varied in different times and places; but all communities, whether episcopally ordered or not, continued to see the need for a ministry of episkopé. In every case
episcopé is in the service of maintaining continuity in apostolic faith and unity of life. In addition to preaching the Word and celebrating the Sacraments, a principle purpose of this ministry is to faithfully safeguard and hand on revealed truth, to hold the local congregations in communion, to give mutual support and to lead in witnessing to the gospel. (52)

Christians concur that episkopé has as its purpose the building-up of the faithful, maintaining unity in the church and coordinating the planning and direction of mission and evangelization. Another critical area of consensus is that this ministry must be exercised at varying several levels. On this point TCTCV states: ‘All these functions, summed up in the term episkopé or oversight, are exercised by persons who relate to the faithful of their own communities as well as to those who exercise such ministry in other local communities. This is what it means to affirm that the ministry of oversight, as all ministry in the Church, needs to be exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways’. (52) Thus, TCTCV creates a foundation for dialogue by highlighting the existence of fundamental points of agreement among Christians regarding this ministry at the center of the church’s life.

While Christians agree that Christ institutes and shares a ministry of episkopé, they often disagree on the proper exercise of this ministry. The personal, collegial and communal character of episkopé often bring conversations among Christians to a seeming impasse. Some worry that certain Christian communities have concentrated this authority so firmly in the personal expression of a bishop that they have lost sight of its communal dimensions. Others fear that certain expressions of episkopé have focused so heavily on a communal exercise of this ministry that they have neglected the personal dimension of this authority. The WCC’s 2005 study document The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement articulated the agreement and disagreement on episkopé effectively.¹ It states:

On the question of how the authority of Christ must be exercised in the Church, we are in accord that the structure of the ministry is essentially collegial. We agree on the need for episkopé in the Church,

on the local level (for pastoral care in each congregation), on the regional level (for the link of congregations among themselves), and on the universal level (for the guidance of the supranational communion of churches). There is disagreement between us about who is regarded as episkopos at these different levels and what is the function or role of episkopos.¹

TCTCV acknowledges these questions and seeks to advance them, but is unable to totally resolve this disagreement. TCTCV clearly affirms the importance of exercising episkopé in personal, collegial and communal dimensions. Drawing on BEM, TCTCV affirms the ministry of episkopé as having multiple dimensions; it states:

It should be personal, because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is a need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community’s effective participation in the discovery of God’s will and the guidance of the Spirit. (52)

Even with this consensus about the importance of episkopé and the need to exercise it on a variety of levels key questions remain regarding the nature and exercise of this ministry. These questions include: What is the role of episkopé? How do episkopoí seek to maintain unity, yet also promote the flourishing of diverse gifts? How does the responsibility of episkopé differ from other roles or charisms in the life of the church? Can different Christian communities be united while embracing distinct notions of episkopé? Significantly, these questions underscore the close relationship between notions of authority and understandings of the balance between unity and diversity. These questions demonstrate that determining the role and exercise of episkopé requires reflection on questions such as: What types of diversity do we most readily embrace? What types of diversity do we often perceive as a threat? What view do we have of unity? Are there ways that we see unity as a threat or an inimical to freedom?

¹ NMC, 142.
As a convergence document, TCTCV is presented to the churches who are asked to test the text’s conclusions regarding common understandings about the nature and mission of the church. In other words, the text asks: ‘Can we converge on the convergences?’ If so, can Christian communities use these points of agreement as a way of moving forward and as a larger horizon against which to view their differences? Accordingly, two key questions posed by TCTCV are whether or not its presentation of episkopé accurately reflects a consensus among Christians and, to the extent which it does, how can it be used as a foundation for reaching greater agreement? Thus, recognizing important convergences among Christians on the ministry of episkopé is a product of TCTCV’s work and offered as a tool for churches as they move forward in their efforts towards greater mutual understanding.

2. Coming in through the Roof—Looking at the Exercise of Episkopé

Scripture provides helpful perspective for engaging the disagreements among Christians regarding their exercise of episkopé. In the second chapter of Mark’s gospel, men bring Jesus a paralyzed man for healing. However, when the four men carrying the man come to the place where Jesus is, they cannot reach him because the crowds are already too great and their way is blocked. Mark’s gospel notes that: ‘Being unable to get to him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying’ (Mark 2: 4). When these men encountered an obstacle to gaining access to Christ, they created a new point of entry. As in Mark’s story, the ways to greater ecumenical unity often seem blocked by the presence of competing opinions, teachings, and ways of understanding the nature of the church and ecclesial authority. At times participants in theological or ecumenical dialogue can imagine one way forward and when that avenue seems impassable they assume there is no other way.¹ Often, however, the answer is not to keep trying to push through doors that seem blocked,

¹ I am indebted to Wes Granberg-Michaelson, former General Secretary for the Reformed Church in America and a member of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue, for a conversation where he used the story from the second chapter of Mark’s gospel as an analogy for ecumenical dialogue.
but—as symbolized in Mark’s account—by creating an alternative ingress. The shift in ecumenical conversations to focusing on episkopé, in itself, represents just such an advance. After decades of ecumenical progress stalling over the issue of authority, a new point of entry was identified in moving away from focusing on the question of the episcopacy, to focusing on the ministry of episkopé which all communities acknowledge and value. Thus, episkopé became the hole in the roof when the door of episcopacy seemed blocked.

Dialogue groups have received TCTCV and taken note of the way it presents episkopé as a locus of opportunity for future ecumenical work. In thinking about how they might take advantage of this opportunity and make meaningful progress, many Christian communities have begun to ask whether shared aspects of the exercise of episkopé present another hole in the roof. While dialogue groups have often found themselves stalled over the way that the ministry of episkopé is expressed in their various polities or questions about who is endowed with this ministry—some groups have shifted to focusing on how this ministry is exercised by various Christian communities. As TCTCV highlights Christian communities converge on the need for a ministry of coordination that promotes a healthy balance of unity and diversity in the church; all Christian denominations create means of achieving an effective balance between these two gifts. A new point of entry might be created by looking at practical ways that various communities seek to achieve this shared goal. Looking at the exercise of episkopé from a practical perspective, it becomes clear that while some Christian communities may emphasize a more personal form of episkopé and others exercise a more communal form, their practical expressions of this ministry are never completely devoid of the less-emphasized dimensions. For example, in examining churches which recognize episkopé as exercised in a special way by individual bishops, it becomes clear that these bishops do not regularly act in unilateral ways; they typically work in a consultative fashion, making decisions through a process of communication and consultation. Similarly, in observing churches which see episkopé primarily exercised in a collegial dimension, one sees that these communities have leaders or ministers who are, at times, explicitly or implicitly called upon to exercise authority individually in order to maintain unity. Thus, from a perspective of practical expression, one can see that all Christian communities exercise a ministry of episkopé on personal, communal
and collegial levels—even if this is done differently and in different degrees. This recognition opens an enormous hole in the roof which allows for new understandings and new agreements to emerge. Highlighting the importance of a practical approach does not suggest that questions of theological commitments and issues of polity should not continue to be examined, but that this new point of entry provides a potentially fruitful avenue for exploring difficult ecumenical questions related to ecclesiology and authority.

More and more Christian communities are drawing a helpful distinction between form and substance. There is broad agreement that a ministry of *episkopé* is essential to the church for ordering our Christian life and that this ministry ought to take varied forms. As Anna Case-Winters of McCormick Theological Seminary notes: ‘If we recognize the *substance* in one another, need the forms be church-dividing? In the quest for unity, should the differences be blessed, or should they be brought into greater conformity with one another?’

Ecumenism has largely moved beyond a sense that unity can only be realized in uniformity and has embraced the notion that unity can take the form of differentiated consensus. This means that affirming a shared understanding of *episkopé* does not require that every community must look alike and exercise this ministry in the same way. This view recognizes that the diversity among us is not necessarily a threat or a sign of division but is, perhaps, a manifestation of the Spirit’s presence among us.

TCTCV addresses two key ‘issues under the issues’ in ecumenical exchange—the relationship between unity and diversity in the church and the character of ecclesial authority. Not only does it highlight important areas of shared understanding on these topics, it also illuminates critical links between them which set the often contentious topic of authority in a productive new light. In addition to mapping out common ground, TCTCV also demarcates important divergences in Christian understandings. It identifies these as places of

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1 See Anna Case-Winters, ‘Expressions of Episcopé,’ in *Call to Unity, Resourcing the Church for Ecumenical Ministry*, Issue No. 7 (December 2006), 31.

opportunity rather than obstacles. Both the areas of agreement and disagreement highlighted by TCTCV are critical for Christian churches as they seek to ‘sync up’ their operating systems so that they can recognize one another and communicate effectively. Dialogue teams across the world continue to receive TCTCV’s work as a product of ecumenical collaboration and a tool for continuing the work of finding a way past the ‘abnormal state of ecclesial division’ towards a common vision of the church.
CATHOLIC APPROPRIATION AND CRITIQUE OF
THE CHURCH: TOWARDS A COMMON VISION

Brian P. Flanagan*

The article evaluates The Church: Towards a Common Vision from a Roman Catholic perspective as a foundational ecumenical statement. After a brief survey of the statement, the author traces the structural and substantive changes by comparison with the two previous documents upon which the current text was based. The author then evaluates the document’s success as a foundational statement, critiquing the change in its treatment of ecumenical divergence, and arguing for further theological study of the hermeneutics of ecumenical consensus statements. It concludes with reflections on how Catholic theologians can begin to receive the text into their practice as theologians.

The release of The Church: Towards a Common Vision (hereafter TCTCV) in 2012 marked an important milestone in the history of the multilateral Faith and Order dialogue on ecclesiology.¹ The culmination of decades of dialogue and scholarship, TCTCV opens a new horizon for bilateral and further multilateral ecumenical dialogue. In the document, the Director and Moderator of the Commission on Faith and Order request ecclesial responses to the

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¹ The Church: Towards a Common Vision. Faith and Order Paper 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013). In my spoken remarks at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, I encouraged the theologians gathered to use the acronym ‘TCTCV’ as regularly as possible, until it became as natural to say as ‘BEM.’ I want to thank Catherine Clifford for her organization of the TCTCV Interest Group of the CTSA, and my colleague Kristin Colberg for a stimulating session.
document, and this essay, and the Catholic Theological Society of America Interest Group where it originated, represent attempts to assist the Roman Catholic Church and other ecclesial bodies in their response to the text. I attempt to do this by focusing upon the ‘nature and purpose’ of TCTCV through analysis of this text in comparison to its two predecessor statements, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*¹ (1998; hereafter NPC) and *The Nature and Mission of the Church*² (2005; hereafter NMC). This analysis helps to highlight the development of the churches’ dialogue on ecclesiology that led to the current document, as well as the particular methodological decisions made in the structure of TCTCV. From the perspective of an ecclesiologist, this analysis also raises important questions about the genre of the text itself—what kind of text is a ‘common statement’ or ‘convergence text’? While requiring further ecumenical reflection, TCTCV delineates not only an ecumenical vision of the church, but furthers the construction of a genre of ecclesial document that began with the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* statement (hereafter BEM).³ After exploring these methodological issues, I conclude with some reflections on how Roman Catholic theologians might help and be helped by the achievement that is TCTCV.

**History and Summary**

Arguably reflection upon ecclesiology in the World Council of Churches goes back to its origins, a history outlined in the document itself in a ‘Historical Note’ appended to the end of the document,⁴ as well as in Catherine Clifford’s and Mary Tanner’s essays in this volume.⁵ More immediately, the process leading to TCTCV began in response to the reception—and often non-reception—of BEM. The

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⁴ TCTCV, 41-7.
numerous ecclesiological questions raised by that text, especially with regard to episcopal ministry, led in part to the focus of the Fifth World Conference of the Faith and Order Commission in 1993 at Santiago de Compostela on the theme *Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness*, to NPC and NMC, and, concurrently, to the World Council of Churches' Porto Alegre text of 2006, *Called to Be the One Church*. At each of these stages, feedback from the churches, local ecumenical bodies, and individual theologians and ecumenists further influenced the texts.

For this essay, I will be focusing primarily upon the origins of TCTCV in the two texts identified as ‘stages on the way to a common statement,’ namely NPC and NMC. After a preface and introduction, the current convergence text is divided into four major chapters. The first, on ‘God’s Mission and the Unity of the Church,’ solidifies the prioritization of mission begun in NMC. The second, ‘The Church of the Triune God,’ attempts a shared theology of the nature of the Church rooted in scriptural metaphors, notably the Church as Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit; in the four marks of the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic; and in an understanding of communion as a principle of unity and diversity. The third chapter, ‘The Church: Growing in Communion,’ begins with a statement of the ‘already but not yet’ eschatological conditioning of the Church, and then explores numerous practical issues of continuing divergence and disagreement between the churches: faith, the sacraments, ministry, authority, and oversight/episkopé. Included in this section are discussions of local episcopal, conciliar, and primatial forms of authoritative ministry. Finally, the fourth chapter, ‘The Church: In and for the World,’ explores the Church in relation to religious pluralism, contemporary moral questions, and wider, implicitly secular, society. After a short conclusion, the document ends with the aforementioned ‘Historical Note’ detailing the remote and recent pre-history of the document.

Taken as a whole, the document is a remarkable achievement, which gathers together many of the major achievements of the last five decades of the ecumenical movement. As might be expected, not all of the sections of the document maintain a consistent voice or the same. Much of the material was taken directly from NPC and NMC, though in differing order and format in the final form of TCTCV, and the effect of ‘cutting and pasting’ from different parts of the previous
documents is sometimes evident. Nevertheless, ‘such unevenness is inevitable if the texts originate in committees. The marvel is that this unevenness is not more noticeable.’ This was the judgment of a CTSA Research Team to BEM; the same judgment holds for TCTCV.¹

Development of the Text

In this section, I will address the text’s development in relation to the two earlier ‘stages towards a common statement’, NPC and NMC. Some of these changes are structural or stylistic, but still ecclesiologically indicative of deeper shifts, while others relate more directly to ecclesiological content. In all cases, my analysis is drawn primarily from evidence in the published final texts, rather than further archival or interview-based data, which would likely help to clarify, detail, and, hopefully, corroborate some of my conclusions based on a close reading of the texts.

Structural Development

There are at least three major structural changes in the text. First, noticeably, the boxes that in NPC and NMC had been used to distinguish ‘common perspectives’ in the main text from ‘areas where differences remain both within and between the churches’² have been removed. A similar system of ‘commentaries’ in italics was pioneered in BEM, and the shaded boxes were used through the earlier stages of the church document. In TCTCV, 11 blocks of italicized text separated from the main statement remain, described in the Introduction as ‘paragraphs about specific issues where divisions remain’.³ The adaptation of material from the previous drafts’ boxes to the present draft’s italicized paragraphs is, however, inconsistent and a weakness of the document. Some significant ecclesial points of difference from the previous drafts’ boxes were directly placed in the body of the convergence text, without the resolution of those differences; others remain in the new italicized paragraphs; further, new questions and points of divergence were added to the final document. Many, but not

¹ The team, commissioned by then-president Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, was composed of Michael Fahey, Edward Kilmartin, William Marrevee, Pheme Perkins, and George Worgul. Their research was published in Michael Fahey (ed.), Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (New York: University Press of America, 1986). Quotation at 10.
² NMC, 2-3.
³ TCTCV, 3.
all, of the italicized paragraphs end in a question for the churches. In short, while the boxes of NPC and NMC provided a helpful way of distinguishing points of convergence and divergence in the text, the new formatting of TCTCV unhelpfully blurs those distinctions.

A second, minor structural change is the length of TCTCV. The final text of TCTCV is only about 10 per cent shorter than the earlier stages, despite requests for a shorter, less dense text, but the balance is different. Relatively theoretical discussion of the nature of the Church has been significantly shortened in favor of expanded or newly added sections on the Church’s engagement with the world.

The most substantial and positive structural change in the final text is the breadth of the references upon which the document draws to support its claims. With regard to its use of the Bible, TCTCV has engaged much more fully with the Gospels and with numerous other extrabiblical sources. While it would be dangerous to rely solely upon frequency of references, it is indicative of the overall trend that in NMC 84 of all of its references, some 46 per cent, are to Pauline or Deuteropauline sources, with only 42 references to the Gospels. In TCTCV, this is more balanced, with 63 references to the Pauline epistles and 58 references to the Gospels. This is reflected as well in the language used to describe Jesus; the document refers far more frequently than NMC to ‘Jesus’ or to ‘Jesus Christ,’ rather than the more abstract title of ‘the Word,’ and draws upon a fuller picture of Jesus’ life and mission and of the Church’s participation in that mission.\(^1\) Similarly, NMC’s programmatic description in classically Lutheran terms of the Church as the *creatura Verbi* is mostly absent in the final text, reduced to a footnote.\(^2\)

The document’s additional references also expand outside of the ‘classical’ sources of the Bible and previous WCC and Faith and Order statements. In addition to multilateral dialogues, TCTCV makes reference to a number of patristic authors,\(^3\) to statements by other

\(^1\) A change possibly stemming from Orthodox critiques at the Cyprus Inter-Orthodox Consultation on NMC in 2011. See Theodoros Meimaris, “The Inter-Orthodox Consultation in Aghia Napa, Cyprus, March 3-9, 2011, on the Orthodox Response to the Faith and Order Study “The Nature and Mission of the Church,”” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 57 (2012): 246.

\(^2\) TCTCV, 10 n.3.

\(^3\) Namely Ignatius of Antioch, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, 1 Clement, Tertullian, and John Chrysostom.
modern Christian thinkers and bodies, and to a number of bilateral ecumenical dialogues. TCTCV in fact points the reader to 39 statements or documents of bilateral ecumenical dialogue. In these references, one can see the document as ‘harvesting the fruits’ of many decades of bilateral dialogue at local and regional levels for the good of the wider church, rather than relying as exclusively as did NPC and NMC on previous WCC and Faith and Order multilateral dialogues. The closest analogue to the shift this represents in TCTCV is Pope Francis’s extensive citations of local and regional episcopal conferences’ teaching documents in Evangelii Gaudium and Laudato Si: in both the pope’s letters and TCTCV, we can see a global authority speaking with and from the work of those at the local level, rather than speaking to them from on high.

Substantive Development

In addition to these three structural changes, I would like to highlight some of the changes in the content of the document from NPC and NMC to the final convergence text. The first is the change of how koinonia/communion language is used in TCTCV in comparison with the previous statements about the church. From NPC, through NMC, to TCTCV, there is a continuing decline in the quantity of references to koinonia and/or communion, as well as an increasingly focused use of the terms to address particular ecclesiological issues rather than as a catchphrase invoked more epideictically across a wide range of statements about the church. In other words, the final document uses communion language more systematically to address questions of unity and diversity, rather than to try to capture the essence of the church in a single, multivalent image.

This is true, once more, in terms of sheer quantity of usage. In the three documents, outside of section headings and notes, koinonia is used 31 times in NPC, 18 times in NMC, and is down to 10 times in TCTCV. Similarly, communion language (used in various ways) is

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1 Namely Desmond Tutu, Walter Kasper, the Vatican II document Lumen Gentium, the Lutheran World Federation, John Paul II, and Brother Roger Schutz of Taizé.

employed 73 times in NPC, 87 times in NMC, and only 49 times in TCTCV.

But more important than the numbers is the manner in which the use of this family of terms changed as the document grew into this final form. In the earliest document, shortly after the 1993 Santiago de Compostela meeting, koinonia and communion language is found scattered throughout the text. In NPC the terms are used to refer to the relationship of the Trinitarian persons, the relations between churches, the relations between members within those churches to each other, the relations between members of those churches to God, etc. The third chapter of NPC invokes koinonia as ‘a key to understanding the nature and purpose of the Church.’

But even within NPC, one of the shaded boxes states that ‘the question is being asked whether this notion [koinonia] is being called to bear more weight than it is able to bear.’ Such voices were not alone then, and are not now, in questioning how koinonia/communion language might best be used in ecclesiology. The drafters of NMC seem to have agreed with this concern, since in NMC communion language is prominent only in two places, in a section on biblical insights into the nature of the church, and in the sections on unity, diversity and relations between the local churches. The ‘church as koinonia,’ rather than constituting a separate chapter as in NPC, is contextualized as the fourth of four notions of the church, after the more traditional images of the church as People of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit.

In TCTCV, despite the retention of the section heading ‘The Church of the Triune God as Koinonia,’ explicit discussion of the church as koinonia is reduced to two paragraphs, while the notions of the church as People of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit remain in distinct, extended sections of the text. Elsewhere, however, communion remains crucial in addressing the more specific issues of

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1 NPC, 24.
2 NPC, 28.
4 Chapter II, Section B. TCTCV, 10.
unity and diversity within the Church and of communion between the local churches, with the phrase ‘ecclesiology of communion’ used only when discussing it as ‘a helpful framework for considering the relation between the local church and the universal Church’.1

This development, from an early, underdifferentiated use of the concept of koinonia/communion in NPC, to the more restrained, focused, and systematic use of this language in TCTCV, indicates a very important shift not only in the multilateral dialogue’s understanding of the church but also in trends in ecumenical ecclesiology. In past work, I identified a similar development in the thought of the ecumenist and theologian Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, OP.2 Tillard shifted from an early, exuberant use of koinonia/communion language in his 1987 work Église d’églises3 and related articles and publications, to a more mature theology by the mid-1990s, including his final major publication L’Église locale,4 in which communion language is used to address the specific issues of unity and diversity in the relationship between local churches. Tillard was intimately involved in many of the drafting processes that led to BEM, and in other bilateral and multilateral ecumenical dialogues that led up to TCTCV, and Pascale Watine Chistory has masterfully outlined the contours of that involvement.5 Without implying a direct line of causality in either direction, one can observe with appreciation the increasing focus and clarity of the use of communion language in both the later Tillard and this final stage of study on the Church. This is another form of ‘harvesting the fruits’ of the ecumenical movement, that is, a movement in which the slightly faddish use of koinonia as an ecclesiological panacea, evident in NPC, has been replaced in TCTCV by a more mature use of communion in ecclesiology tied to the specific question of ecclesial unity and diversity within and among the local churches.

1 TCTCV, 17.
A second major change in content between the earlier stages and TCTCV is the continued emphasis upon the church’s turn outward towards the world. This was one of the major critiques of the earliest text, NPC, which led to a greater focus upon mission in both the name and the content of NMC. TCTCV continues this trend of focusing more upon the mission of the Church, and its participation in the mission of God through Jesus Christ and the Spirit. In both the first chapter’s discussions of ‘The Church in the Design of God’ and ‘The Mission of the Church in History,’ as well as the fourth chapter on the Church ‘In and For the World,’ TCTCV focuses more than previous stages on what the Church does, and reflects on what the Church is in the light of that mission. In the concepts of Neil Ormerod’s recent work in foundational ecclesiology, in this document the ‘operator function’ of the Church’s mission is driving the ‘integrator function’ of maintaining the Church’s identity, rather than the reverse.¹

The eminent Anglican ecumenist Mary Tanner wrote that ‘the great strength of TCTCV is the way it sets the Church and the Church’s task in the context of the world and creation, touching on issues of justice, ecological justice and peace, as well as relations with those of other faiths. The compelling vision is not of a self-absorbed Church turned in on itself but of a Church facing outward in service to each other’s needs and the needs of the world. The movement to visible unity in one faith, Eucharistic fellowship and ordered life is not for its own sake but for service and mission.’² This outward turn, of a pursuit of a ‘common vision’ of the church not for its own sake but for the sake of the world, is also deeply resonant with more recent trends in Catholic ecclesiology and ecclesial practice promoted by the vision of Pope Francis of ‘a poor church, for the poor’ and of a church whose pastors have ‘the smell of the sheep’.³

In addition there are other smaller changes in the content of TCTCV in comparison with the previous documents that relate to the new

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Ecumenical achievements proposed in the bilateral dialogues, as well as to newly prominent issues and questions for contemporary ecclesiology. There is an important extended discussion on ‘The Gift of Authority in the Ministry of the Church’, also discussed in this volume by Kristin Colberg,¹ which explicitly draws much of its content from the 2007 Ravenna Statement of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.² Another addition in TCTCV is a wider discussion of religious pluralism, from a one-sentence reference in NMC³ to two new paragraphs in TCTCV, one in the body of the text and one in italics.⁴ There are extended sections on ethics, on the relation of the Church to society, and on moral questions and ecumenical unity. In addition to the questions raised in the shaded boxes of NMC, there are also new questions on matters of divergence between the churches in the italicized paragraphs of TCTCV. In addition to those just mentioned on religious pluralism and moral questions, there are new questions on tradition, continuity, and change, on the sacraments, on authority in general, and on the authority of the classic ecumenical councils. All of these new features suggest the document’s status as not simply a re-draft of NPC or NMC, but a document growing in conversation with more recent issues and questions in ecumenical dialogue on the Church.

Evaluation and Methodological Critiques

Before addressing a particular set of methodological concerns that TCTCV raises, it is important to begin with a further statement of appreciation for the richness of the text for further ecumenical dialogue and ecclesial appropriation. As a ‘foundational text,’ in Catherine Clifford’s terms,⁵ it gathers together in one document much

³ NMC, 64.
⁴ TCTCV, 34-5.
of what has been said together by the churches in other bilateral and multilateral dialogues into a single source to be received, not without a challenge to further conversion, by the churches. While bearing some stigmata of its composition, it does as good a job as a multilateral document can do in expressing a shared understanding of the church in our time and across our ecclesial divisions.

In order for the document to serve as such a foundation, that is, as a ‘shared horizon of understanding the apostolic faith’ that ‘establish[es] the parameters within which each church will carry out all other operations of theology’, further clarity, and dare one say consensus, is needed on just what kind of document TCTCV and texts like it are. The question is this: what is the genre of a ‘common statement’ or a ‘convergence text’? How could, or should, it function within the churches as a magisterial or theological statement?

While a full discussion of the nature of the document might not be germane to the content of the text itself, there are various places in TCTCV where the nature of the document is discussed, though not always clearly or consistently enough. In the Preface, Canon John Gibaut and Metropolitan Vasilios, the Director and Moderator of the Commission on Faith and Order, respectively, write: “The churches have responded critically and constructively to two earlier stages on the way to a common statement. The Commission on Faith and Order responds to the churches with The Church: Towards a Common Vision, its common—or convergence—statement on ecclesiology.” In the introduction, the text is described as a ‘convergence text’, which is then further defined in negative terms between two poles: ‘Our aim is to offer a convergence text, that is, a text which, while not expressing full consensus on all the issues considered, is much more than simply an instrument to stimulate further study.’ In the concluding Historical Note, the document’s genre is further described by a negative contrast, this time with its predecessor documents: ‘Thus the present text is not a stage on the way to a further common statement; it is the common statement to which its previous versions—NPC and NMC—were directed.’

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1 Catherine Clifford, ‘Lonergan’s Contribution to Ecumenism,’ 531.
2 TCTCV, viii.
3 TCTCV, 1.
4 TCTCV, 46.
A further idea of what the drafters want the genre of a ‘convergence text’ to be can be deduced by looking at how they expect it to function. The Introduction expresses the hope that TCTCV will ‘serve the churches in three ways: (i) by providing a synthesis of the results of ecumenical dialogue about important ecclesiological themes in recent decades; (2) by inviting [the churches] to appraise the results of this dialogue [...] and (3) by providing an occasion for the churches to reflect upon their own understanding of the Lord’s will so as to grow towards greater unity’—a process they summarize as ‘information, reaction, and growth’.1

Finally, and most importantly, the document’s genre is defined by comparison with the BEM statement. This is done explicitly in the Historical Note: ‘The commission believes that its reflection has reached such a level of maturity that it can be identified as a convergence text, that is, a text of the same status and character as the 1982 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. As such, it is being sent to the churches as a common point of reference in order to test or discern their own ecclesiological convergences with one another, and to serve their further pilgrimage towards the manifestation of that unity for which Christ prayed.’2 The comparison with BEM is also implied in various ways: in the method of convergence text and divergent, italicized paragraphs employed, if not consistently, in TCTCV; in its finality in relationship to the two previous texts; and most obviously in the physical form of its publication as a roughly 8” x 8” square, like BEM and unlike any of the previous stages towards the final document.

It may have been neither appropriate or feasible to have done more to define the document’s genre within the genre itself—after all, it would patently have contradicted the text’s renewed focus on the church’s mission to the world if it had included a lengthy discussion of current ecumenical consensus on the nature of an ecumenical consensus text. Nevertheless, there seems to be a possibly strategic lack of clarity as to what kind of document this is. Not expressing full consensus, but not an instrument to stimulate further study. A common statement, rather than a stage on the way to a further common statement—but one pointing us ‘towards a common vision.’

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1 TCTCV, 2-3.
2 TCTCV, 46.
A document qualified by a ‘level of maturity’. And, finally, a document of the ‘same status and character’ as BEM—a status and character that is not yet defined or a matter of ecclesial convergence.

In the Catholic Theological Society of America’s research study on BEM, William Marravee wrote in 1985 about ‘the unprecedented character of the document’, stating that ‘texts of this sort are so new that we really have not developed the terms of reference for this literary genre.’ Thirty years later, during the process of receiving a second multilateral ‘convergence text,’ it would seem that ecumenical theology and ecclesiology yet have further work to do if the document is to take on some of its hoped-for foundational character.

This seems appropriate, given that the interpretation of the ‘teaching status’ of an ecclesial document is a traditional ecclesiological task, and it seems that the document and its authors are claiming some form of magisterial authority in their promulgation of this text, explicitly and implicitly offering it to the churches at a higher level of authority than previous ecumenical texts. This makes the interpretation of the genre of a convergence text by theologians an exercise in hermeneutics. In this, the strategies of my own Roman Catholic tradition in the practice of interpreting magisterial documents might provide a helpful point of comparison, even given the explicit denial of magisterial authority to the Faith and Order Commission implied by the Toronto statement. TCTCV is presented as a foundational document, less to be evaluated by the churches and more to be received as a synthesis against which the churches evaluate themselves. Further developing principles and criteria for the interpretation of the growing body of ecumenical teaching, and aiming for some form of ecclesial and theological consensus on those hermeneutical strategies, would seem to be an important task for ecclesiology, even a crucial one if TCTCV is going to have a lasting impact on our ecumenical dialogues.

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1 William Marravee, in Fahey, Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 49.
2 Ibid. 50.
3 For a classic guide to interpreting Roman Catholic documents, see Francis A. Sullivan, Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium (New York: Paulist, 1996).
4 For the Faith and Order Commission’s starting attempts at outlining an ecumenical hermeneutics, see A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument
Given such a goal, and the expectation of further forms of ecumenical statements in the future, another task of ecumenical ecclesiology will be to critique ecumenical statements when they fall short of their stated goals. Despite the many achievements of TCTCV, I would like to highlight one important shortcoming of the final text that may negatively impact its future effectiveness, namely, the inconsistent way in which the material in the shaded boxes has been moved into the body of the text.

By comparison with BEM, TCTCV unfortunately blurs the distinctions between points of convergence and divergence in ecclesiologies. With a couple of significant exceptions, BEM kept most of the areas of disagreement out of the main body of its text, and raised those issues for further reflection by the churches in the italicized commentaries. In TCTCV, many of the substantive issues from the boxes in previous stages have simply been moved to the main text, with enough unresolved questions to make it difficult to see those sections as representing ‘convergence’. For example, on the difficult question of mutual recognition of ecclesiality between different churches, NMC presents a lengthy survey on the ‘Limits of Diversity?’ in a shaded box in its section on Communion and Diversity. In TCTCV, the same material is shortened, but a list of possible theologies of ecclesiality are included in the body of the text rather than in the following italicized paragraph. The discussions of continuing disagreement about theologies of the presence of the Church of Christ in different churches and communities is therefore found in two places, the main convergence body of the text and the paragraph for further reflection by the churches. Locating the continuing divergence in this divided way may seem a small and unimportant move, but by doing so the document creates two tiers of open questions or disagreements, some in the body of the text and some in the italicized paragraphs. It hurts the clarity of both the convergences achieved and the remaining issues to divide them in this way.


1 NMC, 37-9.
2 10, TCTCV, 8.
In her important work *Method in Ecumenical Theology*, Gillian Evans explores some of the same issues of genre, clarity, and method in her exploration of the churches’ responses to BEM, some of which are exacerbated by the treatment of convergences and divergences in TCTCV. Referring to the responses to BEM, she wrote that: ‘It was also asked where on the continuum from dissent to agreement a given “convergence text” may be said to lie. To one Lutheran Church BEM seemed “a statement of convergence, which implies less than agreement and yet more than dissent” ... it was “only” convergence which was being judged, some allowed-for inadequacies or even imprecision in BEM’s formulations.’ Evans rightly judges that ‘this would seem a dangerous concession on a number of counts. It implies that there is a working from the rough to the exact, rather than a continuing striving for exactness.’ The particular choices around the still-contested material within and without the main body of the text undermine the systematic clarity of the text *qua* ‘convergence statement’; in attempting to move more material from the boxes into the main body of the text, the authors unintentionally weaken the impressive consensus and foundational character of the statement as a whole. Continuing theological study of the hermeneutics of ecumenical statements might assist in the appropriation of TCTCV and in closer attention to genre in any future consensus texts.

**Conclusions from a Roman Catholic Perspective**

I would like to end by discussing how Roman Catholic theologians in particular might assist in the continuing reception of TCTCV. As I have already noted, there are many happy resonances between this document and the formal and informal teaching of Pope Francis’s pontificate. This is especially true of the shared focus on the Church’s participation in the wider mission of God, leading to a vision of a Church for the sake of the world that spends less time on its own maintenance and more time ‘in the streets’ in pursuit of its mission.

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2 Ibid.
3 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49: ‘Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a
Some of the new statements of TCTCV on care of creation\(^1\) may be amplified and strengthened through integration with Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.

Most importantly, however, our role as Roman Catholic theologians might be to *receive* TCTCV, and to assist our local churches to receive TCTCV, rather than simply to respond to it. These essays and the CTSA interest group may assist in any Roman Catholic response to TCTCV, but if its foundational status is to be taken seriously, our continuing reception of the document into our own practice as theologians is just as important a contribution. A small yet significant first step is simply to consciously and consistently make use of the document, rather than allowing it to remain on the shelf as a past ecumenical accomplishment. In the terms of Benjamin Durheim and David Farina Turnbloom, such a move would be a small way of moving from the ‘strategic ecumenism’ of formal ecumenical dialogues to a form of ‘tactical ecumenism’ in our classrooms, local churches, and offices.\(^2\) This will look different in different contexts, but some possibilities might include choosing to use TCTCV for an apt quotation rather than immediately turning to *Lumen Gentium* or a more recent encyclical; using TCTCV in our ecclesiology and general systematic theology courses as often as we do other foundational texts; and seriously appropriating some of the language of the document and citing it early and often in our scholarship. These and other practices might assist Roman Catholic ecclesiology in receiving TCTCV not only as an object of study but also as a starting point for shared ecumenical discourse on the church, and in so doing to promote the unity towards which the document and our theology aim.

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1. For example, in TCTCV 62, 35.
COMMUNION AND COMMUNICATION AMONG THE CHURCHES IN THE TRADITION OF ALEXANDRIA

Mark Sheridan OSB*

This paper was a contribution to the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches during the meeting of 2011. What is particularly impressive and striking is the degree of communion that existed in a movement that lacked central direction after 250 years of expansion throughout the Roman Empire and beyond in an era that lacked instant communications and despite numerous false paths (heresies), etc. It has been estimated that by the middle of the third century AD the Church had about a million members and most of these were in communion with one another.

Before the year AD 200 we know very little about the Church in Egypt and what little information we have comes chiefly from Eusebius of Caesarea. According to Eusebius, the Church in Alexandria was founded by the preaching of the evangelist Mark and he gives the names of the first bishops after Mark. However, it is only with Demetrius that he begins to cite documents, from collections of letters that seem to have been preserved in the libraries of Caesarea.

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1 All the evidence for Christianity in Alexandria in the first two centuries has been thoroughly reexamined by Attila Jakab, Ecclesia alexandrina. Evolution sociale et institutionnelle du christianisme alexandrin (Ie-IIe siècles) (Christianismes anciens I; 2e édition corrigée; Bern: Peter Lang, 2004) pp. 368.
and Jerusalem.\(^1\) Demetrius, according to the indications given by Eusebius, was bishop of Alexandria for forty-three years, from 189 until AD 232.\(^2\)

**The Church in Egypt**

Before examining these letters, which offer the earliest evidence of communion and communication for the Church of Alexandria, it may be useful to mention what we know about the extent and organization of the Church in Egypt at the beginning of the third century. According to Eutychius, the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria in the first half of the tenth century, ‘Demetrius consecrated three bishops and he was, in fact, the first patriarch of Alexandria to consecrate bishops.’\(^3\) According to the same source, Demetrius’ successor at Alexandria, Heraklas, ‘consecrated twenty bishops.’\(^4\) However, we do not know their names and they are not mentioned by Eusebius. Eusebius does say that at the time of the persecution that started under Septimius Severus in 202 the martyrs were escorted to Alexandria ‘from Egypt and the whole Thebais,’ but the only one mentioned by name is Leonides, the father of Origen. Such a vague reference has caused historians to doubt that Christianity had spread throughout Egypt at this point.\(^5\) From a slightly later period Eusebius quotes a letter from Alexander, the bishop of Jerusalem (215-30), to the Antinoites urging them ‘to be of one mind.’ This has been interpreted to mean that the bishop of Antinoë had appealed to Alexander against the bishop of Alexandria, who would have sided with dissidents against him. This is far from certain, but we may conclude that there

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\(^2\) *Historia ecclesiastica* (hereafter: HE) VI, 26. Eusebius says that Origen moved from Alexandria to Caesarea in the tenth year of the reign of the Emperor Alexander (AD 232) and that Demetrius died not long afterwards.


\(^4\) Ibid. See also Jakab, p. 227.

was a Christian community in Antinoë in the first part of the third century. Whether or not it had a bishop or was governed by priests under the authority of the bishop of Alexandria is unclear.¹ For the sake of completeness it should be mentioned that Photius, citing the Apology of Pamphilus (and Eusebius), mentions that Demetrius held a synod of bishops and presbyters to condemn the ordination of Origen. He mentions that Egyptian bishops signed the decree. This would have been about 232, but again we have no names and do not know where the episcopal sees were located.²

With Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria from 247 until 264, we have considerably more evidence for the development of the church in Egypt. We are told by Eusebius that Dionysius traveled to the nome of Arsinoë to refute the millenarist doctrines of Nepos, called ‘bishop of the Egyptians’.³ Likewise he warned the churches of the Pentapolis against the monarchist heresy of Sabellius in a letter to Ammon, bishop of the church at Bernice. Also mentioned is Basilides, bishop of the communities in the Pentapolis. Three other names are mentioned of persons who may also have been bishops there, which means that all five cities would have been episcopal cities.⁴ A letter of Dionysius to Colon, bishop of Hermopolis, is also mentioned.⁵ Eusebius says that Dionysius also composed festal letters ‘with reference to the festival of the Pascha’, a custom that would be continued by his successors.⁶

Thus in the middle of the third century Christianity is no longer confined to the capital, but extends from the delta at least to the Fayoum (Arsinoë) and as far as Antinoë further south as well as to Cyrenica in the west. The letter writing and other literary activity of Dionysius gives the clear impression that the bishop of Alexandria exercised authority over the other churches in Egypt.

We have no information about the development of the church in Egypt during the last part of the third century. By comparing the

¹ HE VI, 11, 3. For the interpretation, see Nautin, op. cit. pp. 119-20 and Martin, Athanase d’Alexandrie, p. 19.
² Photius, Biblioteca I18 (PG 103, 397C).
⁵ HE VI, 46,2.
various lists of bishops from the Council of Nicaea and the list of the bishops sent by Melitios of Lykopolis to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, in accord with the decision of the Fathers of Nicaea, it has been possible to arrive at the conclusion that, by the time of Nicaea, there were 73 episcopal sees in the four provinces of Egypt proper, the Thebaid, Libya and Pentapolis. For these we have both the names of the bishops and the names of their sees. Of these 68 were bishops of sees with the civil status of cities according to the Diocletian reform. This suggests a dramatic expansion of the church in Egypt in the previous 50-60 years.\(^1\)

The question of the authority of the bishop of Alexandria over the other bishops became especially clear and acute at the time of the Diocletian persecution and the resulting Melitian schism. As is well known, while Peter, the bishop of Alexandria, and other bishops were imprisoned in 303, Melitios, the bishop of Lykopolis, began to ordain bishops for sees that were vacant because of the imprisonment or absence of their bishops. In a letter of protest addressed to Melitios from their prison, four Egyptian bishops (Ischyius, Pachumius, Theodorus, Phyleas) recall that ‘no bishop is authorized to celebrate ordinations in other dioceses than his own.’ Moreover they accuse him of having ignored this rule and of having not acknowledged ‘the honor of our great bishop and father, Peter, from whom we all depend through the hope that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.’\(^2\) They add that even if he had learned of their death, ‘he should have awaited the judgment of the Father and his permission to do it.’\(^3\) It seems clear that in the hundred years between Demetrios and Peter, the Egyptian Church had developed a monarchical structure. The bishop of Alexandria was the Father of all the other bishops. The evidence from the time of Athanasius only confirms this.\(^4\)

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3 Kettler, p. 161,9 (= PG 10, 1566C).

Letters between the bishops

With this background in mind, we can examine some of the letters that have been preserved from this period. The earliest letter relating to the Church in Egypt preserved by Eusebius is a fragment or quotation from Alexander, the bishop of Jerusalem to the Antinoites. Eusebius states:

And in fact Alexander himself in a personal letter to the Antinoites, which is still to this day preserved with us, mentions Narcissus as holding the chief place along with him, writing as follows, in these very words, at the close of the letter: ‘Narcissus greets you, who before me was holding the position of bishop here, and now is associated with me in the prayers, having completed 116 years; and exhorts you, as I do likewise, to be of one mind.’

The date of the letter is probably about 215-20, not too long after Alexander became bishop of Jerusalem. The exhortation to unity is reminiscent of Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians to be of one mind (Phil. 2:5). This shows that the letter has as its goal to exhort the Christians of Antinoë to concord. To preach concord to a church means usually that a group of malcontents has entered into conflict with the bishop and one wants to lead them to reconciliation with him. But this letter was addressed to a church of Egypt, which was under Demetrius of Alexandria. How is it that the Bishop of Jerusalem should meddle in this affair? Nautin sees only one explanation: the bishop of Antinoë had solicited the support of the bishop of Jerusalem. If he addressed himself to a foreign metropolitan, it must be because his own metropolitan has sided with the dissidents. This interpretation is plausible but uncertain given the scarcity of the

\[1\] HE, VI, 11, 3.
\[2\] For the dating, see Nautin, pp. 112-4. Eusebius says that Alexander had already been bishop in Cappadocia, 'but was called by a dispensation of God to a joint ministry with Narcissus, by a revelation which appeared to him in a vision at night. Whereupon, as if in obedience to some oracle, he made the journey from the land of the Cappadocians, where he was first deemed worthy of the episcopate, to Jerusalem, for the purpose of prayer and investigation of the [sacred] places.' (HE VI, 11, 1-2). He says the people together with the bishops administering the churches round about compelled him to remain.
\[3\] ‘The verbs used are similar: tou/to fronei/te evn u`mi/n o] kai. evn Cristw/] Vlhsou/( (Phil 2:5) and o(mofronh=sai (HE VI,11,3). Like Paul, Alexander is writing to a Church that he did not know personally.
evidence. It is also unclear to what extent the concept of ‘metropolitan’ was operative in the early third century. In any case Alexander appears at the beginning of his pontificate as the recourse of Egyptians in disagreement with Demetrius and he hastens to respond to their appeal.

Also in reference to Demetrius, Eusebius cites a letter from Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus, the bishop of Caesaera. The subject is the accusation apparently made by Demetrius against Origen that he had preached in the presence of bishops:

And he (Demetrius) added to his letter that such a thing had never been heard of, nor taken place hitherto, that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops; though I do not know how he comes to say what is evidently not true. For instance, where there are found persons suited to help the brethren, they are also invited to preach to the people by the holy bishops, as for example, in Laranda Eulupis by Neon, and in Iconium Paulinus by Celsus, and in Synnada Theodore by Atticus, our blessed brother bishops. And it is likely that this thing happens in other places also without our knowing it.¹

The two bishops appear to be referring to a general (encyclical) letter of Demetrius in which he had reported that a synod at Alexandria had condemned Origen and had given the reasons therefor.² What is of interest here is not the specific question regarding Origen, but the communication taking place among the bishops.

The next group of letters quoted or mentioned by Eusebius concerning the Church of Alexandria are those of Dionyius, bishop of Alexandria from 247 until 264, the successor of Heraklas, who was the successor of Demetrius. The immediate background of these letters was the schism at Rome caused by the question of the lapsi, those who sacrificed or purchased the libelli pacis during the Decian persecution. Cornelius had been elected to succeed Fabian as bishop of Rome after a long interval lasting from January 250 until March 251 and during this period the question of the lapsi had arisen. Cornelius represented the more lenient attitude in favor of reconciling the lapsi. The rigorists were not content with his election and elected Novatian (called Novat by Eusebius). This is the point of departure for the exchange of letters between Dionysius of Alexandria and others.

¹ HE VI, 19, 16-17.
² See Photius, Bibliotheca, 118 (PG 103, 397C). Photius says he is relying on the Apology of Pamphilus.
The first letter quoted is from Dionysius to Fabius of Antioch recounting the persecution in Egypt at length and telling of those who had suffered. At the end Dionysius takes the position of leniency, saying that the martyrs themselves advocated leniency. He asserts that the martyrs themselves ‘have espoused the cause of certain of the fallen brethren who became answerable for the charge of sacrificing.’ He states that because of the conversion and repentance of the fallen brethren, the martyrs ‘received them and admitted them to the worship of the Church as consistentes, and gave them fellowship in their prayers and feasts.’ Dionysius then asks rhetorically ‘What then do you counsel us, brethren, on these matters? What are we to do? Are we to be of like opinion and mind with them, uphold their decision and concession, and deal kindly with those they pitied?’

This letter was written apparently after Dionysius had received a copy of the letter that Cornelius had written to Fabius of Antioch. It seems to have been known that Fabius was taking the side of the rigorists in the Roman dispute. Cornelius wrote to Fabius in the spring (April or May) of 252 to inform him of what a council held at Rome had decided. After the election of Novatian a large synod (60 bishops, a greater number of priests, and deacons and the pastors in the provinces) had condemned Novatian and his opinions regarding the lapsi. A copy of the dossier of documents sent to Fabius by Cornelius seems to be the background for the letter of Dionysius to Fabius. Further on Eusebius quotes from the same letter of Dionysius to Fabius mentioning the example of an old man named Serapion, who had fallen during the persecution, but who was miraculously kept alive long enough to receive the Eucharist before he died thus reconciled. This case was cited as an added motive for leniency.

Eusebius then quotes from a letter of Dionysius to Novatian urging him to be reconciled and to withdraw his claim to be bishop of the Roman Church, saying, ‘For a man ought to suffer anything and

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1 HE VI, 41-2.
2 HE VI, 42, 5-6.
3 HE VI, 44. See Nautin, pp. 152-3 for a reconstruction of the sequence of events.
4 HE, VI, 43.
5 HE VI, 43. Eusebius also mentions a letter in Latin from Cyprian of Carthage in agreement with Cornelius.
6 HE VI, 44.
everything rather than divide the Church of God, and it were not less
glorious to incur martyrdom to avoid schism than to avoid idolatry.”
Evidently Dionysius engaged in extensive letter writing because of this
controversy. Eusebius mentions (but does not quote) a letter to the
Egyptians On Repentance and a letter to Colon, bishop of the
Hermopolitans with the same title. He says that Dionysius wrote
another as a rebuke to his own flock at Alexandria and a letter to the
brethren at Laodicea ‘over whom Thelymidres presided as bishop’ and
he wrote to those in Armenia ‘likewise On Repentance, whose bishop
was Meruzanes.’ Finally he wrote also to Cornelius of Rome a letter ‘in
which also he clearly indicates that he had been invited by Helenus,
bishop at Tarsus in Cilicia, and the rest of the bishops with him,
namely Firmilian in Cappadocia and Theoctistus in Palestine to attend
the synod at Antioch.’ By this time Fabius of Antioch had died and
been succeeded by Demetrian. Alexander of Jerusalem had also died,
as Dionysius informs Cornelius. Eusebius concludes this account by
saying of Dionysius: ‘And in his communications with many others,
likewise by letter, he has left behind a varied source of profit to those
who still to this day set store by his writings.’

From the information provided by Eusebius, it is clear that the
bishops consulted frequently with one another by letter about how to
resolve problems, what were considered the common practices, etc.
and these letters were collected and passed on to others. Speaking in
general of the mid third century, Eusebius even tells us where he
found the letters: ‘Now there flourished at that time many learned
churchmen, and the letters which they penned to one another are still
extant and easily accessible. They have been preserved even to our day
in the library at Aelia (the Roman name of Jerusalem), equipped by
Alexander, then ruling the church there; from which also we have
been able ourselves to gather together the material for our present
work.’ It seems not unreasonable to conclude also from all this
correspondence that new bishops must have written to their
counterparts announcing their election, since Dionysius seems to have

1 HE VI, 45.
2 HE VI, 46.4.
3 HE VI, 46.5.
4 HE, VI, 20.
been aware always when a bishop had died and been succeeded by another.

The controversy over the re-baptism of heretics also provided the occasion for an extensive exchange of letters. Eusebius mentions at least six from Dionysius to the bishop or presbyters at Rome. The first of these was to Bishop Stephen of Rome, who had apparently written to him protesting what he considered the innovation of Cyprian of Carthage in re-baptising heretics. Eusebius says that Stephen, ‘thinking that they ought not to make any innovation contrary to the tradition (paradosis) that had prevailed from the beginning, was full of indignation.’ Dionysius apparently agreed with him ‘at great length’ and at the end mentioned that all the Churches of the East were now at peace after the innovation of Novatian, that is, the controversy over the lapsi. He mentions the bishops of Antioch, Caesarea, Aelia, Tyre, Laodicea, Tarsus, Cappadocia, saying that he is naming only the more eminent bishops.\footnote{HE VII, 2–5, 2.} In a second letter on baptism to Xystus, Stephen’s successor, Dionysius says that Stephen had written that he would not hold communion with ‘Helenus and Firmilian, and all those from Cilicia and Cappadocia’ because they were re-baptizing heretics. In this same letter he also mentioned the heresy of Sabellius that was spreading at Ptolemais in the Pentapolis.

In the third letter On Baptism, written to ‘Philemon the Roman presbyter’ Dionysius mentions the ‘rule and pattern I myself received from our blessed pope [Heraklas, who] admitted them to the congregation, without requiring of them a second baptism,’ after the heretics had renounced their false doctrines. But then he adds that he had learned that the Africans had not introduced this custom for the first time, but that synods at Iconium and Synnada had adopted this practice and that he was reluctant to overturn their decisions. The fourth letter of Dionysius on baptism mentioned by Eusebius is to the Roman presbyter Dionysius, who later became bishop. In the part quoted he speaks chiefly against Novatian. In the sixth letter written to Xystus, ‘bishop of the Romans,’ he asks advice regarding a former heretic, apparently very scrupulous, who insisted himself on being re-baptized. Finally Eusebius mentions another letter ‘On Baptism,’ addressed by him and the community over which he ruled to Xystus and the church at Rome, in which with a long proof he gives a
protracted discussion of the subject in question.\footnote{HE VII, 3 - 9. On these letters, see also A. Jakab, 243-5.} From these letters on the subject of baptism and many others cited by Eusebius on other subjects, it is clear that Dionysius considered himself a major player in the affairs of the church outside of Egypt as well as inside. Eusebius calls him ‘the great bishop of the Alexandrians’.\footnote{HE VII, 1.}

At the beginning of the fourth century, because of the Melitian schism already mentioned earlier, the Church in Egypt faced grave internal problems regarding communion and communication. The bishop of Alexandria, Peter I, during whose episcopate the schism had begun, died in 311 and was succeeded by Achillas, who died after a short period. He was succeeded in 312 by Alexander I, who lived until 326 after the Council of Nicaea. Alexander faced the problem of a divided and parallel hierarchy. By the time of the Council of Nicaea, as many as 21 cities may have had two rival bishops out of a total of 78 bishops. Among these 43 would have recognized the primacy of Alexandria or 55.1 per cent of the episcopate against 35 Melitian bishops or 44.8 per cent. This was the case in both the province of Egypt proper and the province of the Thebaïd. It seems that Alexander did not systematically name a bishop to every see occupied by a Melitian bishop and there were Melitian bishops present at the Council of Nicaea.\footnote{A. Martin, Athanase d’Alexandrie, pp. 307ff.}

The question of the schism in the Egyptian Church, and therefore of the authority of the bishop of Alexandria, was raised at the Council of Nicaea. In the Synodal Letter sent by the Council ‘to the Church of the Alexandrians, and to believers in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis,’ after dealing with the question of Arius, the problem of Melitius was addressed.\footnote{The letter is preserved by the church historian Socrates. For an English translation, see Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF] 2-02, Bk.I, chap. 9.} The Council decided to show clemency to Melitius, but decreed that ‘he remain in his own city but exercise no authority either to ordain or nominate for ordination; and that he appear in no other district or city on this pretense, but simply retain a nominal dignity.’ Those who had been ordained by Melitius were to be admitted to communion but were to ‘regard themselves as inferior in every respect to all those who have been ordained and established in
each place and church by our most-honored fellow-minister, Alexander.' The Council also provided that when a legitimate bishop died, one of the reconciled Melitians might succeed him: ‘then let these who have been thus recently admitted be advanced to the dignity of the deceased, provided that they should appear worthy, and that the people should elect them, the bishop of Alexandria also ratifying their choice.’ Melitius himself was explicitly excluded from this provision.  

These rules do not seem to have been followed. Alexander died 17 April 328 and Melitius seems to have died before him. The death of these two protagonists did not resolve the situation. At the death of Alexander, at least a third and perhaps half of the Melitian bishops had not submitted to the bishop of Alexandria. The reasons for this situation are not altogether clear. Epiphanius recounts that the Melitians had petitioned the emperor Constantine for the right to assemble without hindrance, and that this had been granted after they agreed to accept Arius into communion. The continued existence of the Melitian hierarchy led, among other things, to the contested

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1 The English text reads as follows: ‘When it may happen that any of those holding preferments in the church die, then let these who have been thus recently admitted be advanced to the dignity of the deceased, provided that they should appear worthy, and that the people should elect them, the bishop of Alexandria also ratifying their choice. This privilege is conceded to all the others indeed, but to Melitius personally we by no means grant the same licence, on account of his former disorderly conduct, and because of the rashness and levity of his character, in order that no authority or jurisdiction should be given him as a man liable again to create similar disturbances. These are the things which specially affect Egypt, and the most holy church of the Alexandrians: and if any other canon or ordinance has been established, our Lord and most-honored fellow-minister and brother Alexander being present with us, will on his return to you enter into more minute details, inasmuch as he has been a participator in whatever is transacted, and has had the principal direction of it.’ NPNF 2-02, Bk.I, chap. 9.


3 A. Martin, Athanase d’Alexandrie, pp. 316-7.

4 Epiphanius, Panarion 68, 5, 1 - 6, 3.
election of Athanasius, as will be explained later.¹ The result of all this was, however, that the question of who was in communion with whom needed constant clarification.

The need to clarify this question of communion is the background for understanding Athanasius’ practice of announcing the list of new bishops in his festal letters. In the Syriac version of these letters, after the 11th letter for 339, there is inserted a letter from Athanasius to Serapion of Thmouis followed by a list of bishops newly named to replace those who have died ‘so that you can write to them and receive from them canonical letters’.² A second list accompanied by the same formulary is attached to the 19th festal letter for 347, the first written by Athanasius after his return from exile in October 346. There are three other letters preserved in the Coptic version of the festal letters that contain such lists of bishops newly appointed. At the end of the 40th letter we find the formula: ‘Write to them and receive from them letters of peace according to the custom.’³ It seems reasonable to conclude that, at least in the time of Athanasius, the bishops in Egypt expressed formal communion with each other after hearing officially from the bishop of Alexandria of the appointment of new bishops. Whether such a custom existed before the Melitian schism or was the result of it, is not possible to determine.

**Constantine and the authority of the bishops**

In the period before Constantine, as we have seen, there was considerable communication among the bishops of what were considered the major sees. The political status of the cities concerned, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, etc., undoubtedly played a role in that. A principle motive for this communication seems to have been the

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² See Ibid. p. 62. The Latin translation of Cureton, the editor of the Syriac version reads: ‘Haec aio, ut his scribatis, mutusque canonicas epistolas recipiatis’ (PG 26, 1414A). Martin believes that each of the bishops received a similar letter with a copy of the festal letter for that year. See p. 62, n.145.

question of determining correct and traditional doctrine. There is no evidence that any of these major sees saw themselves as subordinate to one another, although they do seem to have considered other bishops to be subordinate to them. The imperial power did not play a role in these matters. After Constantine adopted Christianity, that changed and the imperial power took an active interest in doctrinal questions. This resulted in changed relationships among bishops. There was now a third party involved.¹

The effects of the changed relationship began to be seen almost immediately. In 313 the Donatists in North Africa requested Constantine to name bishops from Gaul as judges in the controversy over the consecration of the two bishops, Cæcilian and Majorinus. Constantine wrote to Miltiades, the bishop of Rome, requesting him with three bishops from Gaul to give a hearing in Rome to Cæcilian and his opponent and to decide the case. On 2 October 313 a synod of eighteen bishops from Gaul and Italy assembled in the Lateran Palace, which Constantine had recently given to the bishop of Rome, and after deliberating three days, decided in favor of Cæcilian, whose election and consecration as bishop of Carthage were declared legitimate.² The Donatists did not accept the decision and again appealed to Constantine, who then called the Council of Arles held in 314. Constantine’s letter to Chrestus of Syracuse in Sicily provides a remarkable example of imperial micromanagement of church affairs. He instructs the bishop to choose two presbyters and three servants and, using a public vehicle, to arrive in Arles before 1 August 314. The letter expresses unhappiness with the Donatists because they did not accept the decision passed at Rome in the previous year and the desire to end the controversy in the presence of a greater number of bishops. Constantine himself took part in this synod. Bishop Marinus of Arles, who had taken part in the assembly in Rome in 313, presided and the bishop of Rome was represented by two presbyters and two deacons.³

These early developments have been cited as important background for understanding the more important and decisive interventions in

³ The letter of Constantine is preserved By Eusebius, HE X, 5, 21-24.
the affairs of the church by the imperial authorities that were to take place beginning a few years later in the East, which would involve the Church in Egypt more directly. The decisions of the Council of Nicaea (in which Constantine also took part personally) regarding the Melitians have already been mentioned. It should be stressed, as recent historians have done, that the authority of the bishop of Alexandria to name all the bishops of Egypt and Libya gave him a prestige and influence unequaled elsewhere in the Church, not only in Egypt but in the entire Orient. By the same token, the designation/election of the bishop of Alexandria acquired a greater importance than in other churches. His quasi theocratic power transcended that of all the other bishops.¹

Such was the situation on the eve of the election of Alexander’s successor. But there also existed opposition to the unlimited power of the bishop of Alexandria.² This played out in the long struggle to delegitimize the election of Athansius as successor to Alexander. Only a few moments in the struggle can be mentioned here. It appears that the Melitian bishops, contrary to the provisions of the Council of Nicaea, claimed the right to participate in the election of Alexander’s successor. Those Egyptian bishops that elected Athanasius (to the exclusion of the Melitians) declared the election regular and public in their letter to all the bishops and insisted that the entire people had acclaimed the election.

At this point it seems that the Melitians, having lost out in their attempt to participate in and determine the election, entered into an alliance with or came under the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia, who, although exiled by Constantine a few months after Nicaea, had managed through his relationship with Constantia, the widow of Licinius and half-sister of Constantine, to reenter imperial favor. Eusebius of Nicomedia, through his via media (‘semi-Ariansim’)³ gained increasing influence over the emperor and became the

¹ See A. Martin, Athanase d’Alexandrie, p. 328 for this formulation. The author notes that the structure of the Egyptian Church reflected also the way in which the capital city dominated the nome capitals of the Nile Valley. See p. 338.
² Ibid. p. 342.
³ The term is used by Epiphanius. See The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III (Sects 47-80), De Fide. Section VI, Verses 1,1 and 1,3. (Translated by Frank Williams. EJ Brill, New York, 1994), pp. 471-2.
principal opponent of Athanasius.¹ Through the influence of Eusebius, the Melitians were able to gain access to the emperor and bring charges against Athanasius that he and his fellow bishops had used all sorts of violence against them including murder.² In addition Athanasius was accused of refusing to receive into communion both the Melitians and the Arians. In a letter preserved only fragmentarily by Athanasius, Constantine instructed the bishop (Athanasius) to allow all those who wished to enter the Church and threatened him with deposition and exile.³ In effect the emperor had become the arbiter of the affairs of the Church.⁴

**Athanasius, the Synod of Tyre and the Council of Rome**

The pattern of imperial micromanagement of ecclesiastical matters did not cease with the death of Constantine in 337. After his death the Eusebians again took up the offensive against Nicaea, of which Athanasius was the champion and thus their principle obstacle.⁵ Now the situation was rendered more complicated by the fact that there were three emperors, the three sons of Constantine: Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans. As is well known, Athanasius had been condemned by the Synod of Tyre in 335 on the charges brought against him by the alliance of Eusebians and Melitians. At that meeting, Eusebius of Nicomedia and the other supporters of Arius deposed Athanasius. Athanasius left the Synod and went to Constantinople to lay his case directly before the Emperor. On November 6, both parties of the dispute met with Constantine. At that meeting, Athanasius was accused of threatening to interfere with the supply of grain from Egypt, and, without any kind of formal trial, was exiled by Constantine to Trier. When Constantine died in 337, Athanasius was allowed to return to Alexandria. Shortly thereafter, however, Constantine’s son, Constantine II, renewed the order for Athanasius’s banishment in 338. Athanasius went to Rome, where he was under the protection of Constans, the emperor of the West.

² The accusation of murder was eventually refuted through the discovery of the alleged victim alive and well. See A. Martin, *Athanase d’Alexandrie*, pp. 352-7.
³ Ibid. p. 346.
⁴ Ibid. p. 357.
⁵ Ibid. p. 396.
During this time, Gregory of Cappadocia was installed as the bishop of Alexandria, usurping the absent Athanasius, and in violation of all established practice for the election of the bishop of Alexandria.

For our purposes it is the period of Athansius’ stay in Rome that is of particular interest in illustrating the question of communion among the churches. Gregory of Cappadocia sent letters of communion to the Egyptian bishops. Athanasius then sent a ‘Letter to all the Bishops’ putting them on guard against the maneuvers of the Eusebians and Arians and warning them against entering into communion with Gregory, who was not the lawful bishop.¹ The letter was addressed to all the bishops (everywhere) and called on the aid of all to resist the persecution of the Church in Alexandria. At Rome Athanasius sought the support of Julius, the bishop of Rome, actively participating in the assemblies of the Church of Rome. A number of other bishops forced into exile from the Orient, Marcellus of Ancyra, Asklepas of Gaza, Lucius of Andrianople and other bishops from Thrace, Cœle-Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine were also present in Rome. The city thus became the center of resistance to the politics of Eusebius.² Julius then sent a letter to the Eusebian bishops inviting them to Rome for a synod, urging them to cease disturbing the church and to put an end to their ‘innovations’.³ The letter was taken to Antioch by his legates. By addressing only the Eusebian bishops, Julius seemed to be acting with Athanasius and setting himself up as arbiter between the two parties, placing the bishop condemned by the Synod of Tyre on the same level as his former judges. For Julius it was a question of reopening a process in which traditional procedure had not been respected. He cited a canon of the Council of Nicaea authorizing that

¹ A. Martin, Athanase d'Alexandrie, pp. 408-9. In his letter Athanasius warned: 'If therefore Gregory shall write unto you, or any other in his behalf, receive not his letters, brethren, but tear them in pieces and put the bearers of them to shame, as the ministers of impiety and wickedness. And even if he presume to write to you after a friendly fashion, nevertheless receive them not. Those who bring his letters convey them only from fear of the Governor, and on account of his frequent acts of violence.' NPNF 2-04, p. 314.
the acts of a first synod could be examined by another synod. Such an attitude on the part of the Bishop of Rome was greeted with complete incomprehension by the Orientals, who interpreted it as an attempt to establish an authority, even if that of an apostolic see, above that of a council. The eastern bishops finally responded to Julius by arguing the difficulties involved in coming to Rome, but more importantly by asserting (1) the absolute authority of the Synod (of Tyre) whose decisions have the force of law and cannot be put in question, and (2) that Julius had shown contempt for the decisions of the eastern councils by according communion to bishops legitimately deposed by a synod—by Tyre for Athanasius and by Constantinople for Marcellus—and thereby broken with the tradition of mutual recognition of synodal decisions between east and west. They insisted that Julius and the western bishops must disassociate themselves from the exiled bishops and recognize the new bishops installed in their sees or accept the entire responsibility for a rupture with the Orient.

When his priests returned with the negative response of the Orientals, Julius continued to wait in the hope that some might come. The Council was finally held in the winter of 340-1, eighteen months after the arrival of Athanasius in Rome. More than fifty bishops came, mostly Italians together with the exiles already mentioned and the priests of Alexandria chased out by Gregory, who had come to defend the cause of their bishop (Athanasius). The judgement pronounced by Julius with the approval of the bishops present was the reversal of the decision of Tyre, the declaration that Athanasius was innocent and to be admitted to communion. The illegitimacy of the election of Gregory of Cappadocia was also denounced. In this entire affair, in contrast to the Eusebians, the Bishop of Rome held to strictly ecclesiastical grounds without seeking the intervention of the political authorities.

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1 A. Martin, *Athanase d’Alexandrie*, p. 412. Canon 5, to which he alluded, concerned the appeal before a provincial council of a sentence pronounced by his own bishop. The Council did not foresee the instance of an appeal higher than that of a provincial assembly, even if in fact it had been constituted to review judgements already pronounced by provincial councils such as that of the Church of Egypt against Arius.

2 Ibid. p. 413.

3 Ibid. p. 417.
In the eyes of the Orientals, supported by the secular authorities, the Synod of Tyre, insofar as it brought together bishops from all the eastern provinces, constituted an authority superior to that of a provincial council (alone foreseen by the Council of Nicaea) and consequently had authority over the Churches of the Orient. The Egyptian Synod of 338, on which Athanasius based the legitimacy of his return, could not pretend to overturn the sentence pronounced by Tyre. In the face of this recently instituted practice of a hierarchy of synods, the Bishop of Rome seemed to be arrogating to himself a kind of power superior to that of the council judged to be representative of the Oriental college of bishops. In fact the procedure that had prevailed up to then consisted only in informing the other churches of a synodal judgement as had been done after the Synod of Tyre in 335 and those of Antioch in 338 and 339. By elaborating a theory of ‘appeal’ for grave sentences, Julius had sought to fill a void left by Nicaea in ecclesiastical jurisdiction. What was at stake, as can be seen in his response to the eastern bishops, was nothing less than safeguarding the unity of the Church in an empire now split in two. Considering himself as representing the tradition of Peter, he invites them to reconsider their position and proposes once again a new meeting. At this point no Church in the East could pretend to the role of Rome in the West, but the Eusebians were sufficiently powerful to be able to impose the principle of the autonomy of regional synods. The letter of Julius was not the end of the story, but we cannot follow it further here.

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1 A. Martin, *Athanase d’Alexandrie*. p. 418. The letter is preserved by Athanasius, *Ap. Apol. c. Ar.* 35.5: ‘Supposing, as you assert, that some offence rested upon those persons, the case ought to have been conducted against them, not after this manner, but according to the Canon of the Church. Word should have been written of it to us all, that so a just sentence might proceed from us all. For the sufferers were Bishops, and Churches of no ordinary note, but those which the Apostles themselves had governed in their own persons.’ For the English translation, see NPNF 2-04, p. 349 (118).

2 Ibid.: ‘For what we have received from the blessed Apostle Peter, that I signify to you; and I should not have written this, as deeming that these things were manifest unto all men, had not these proceedings so disturbed us.’

3 Ibid. p. 419.
Conclusion

The questions of authority and communion among the churches had become inextricably combined. What we witness in these events are new developments in the relationship among the Churches caused in large part by the intervention of the imperial power in the affairs of the Church, the attempts by those in the Church to use the imperial power to their advantage, and the divisions within the imperial power, especially the political split between East and West. The Church had to confront new situations, which had not existed a hundred years earlier, caused by rapid growth, the new relationship with the political powers and new developments in Church structures. The relative authority of various synods was as yet unclear, or, to put it another way, was still contested.

What is particularly impressive and striking is the degree of communion that existed in a movement that lacked central direction after 250 years of expansion throughout the Roman Empire and beyond in an era that lacked instant communications and despite numerous false paths (heresies), etc. It has been estimated that by the middle of the third century AD the Church had about a million members and most of these were in communion with one another.

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1 Referring to the reply of Bishop Julius of Rome to the eastern Greek bishops (mentioned by Athanasius, Apol. c.Ar. 20-35), Chadwick writes: ‘the disagreement between Rome and the leading Greek bishops of the time marked the first confrontation between a conciliar ecclesiology in the east and a primatial ecclesiology beginning to become dominant in the west’, op. cit. p.238-9. It may be observed that, by appealing to the western political and ecclesiastical authorities for support, Athanasius had played a key role in these developments.

2 It is precisely in these years that the title ‘ecumenical council’ is first applied to Nicaea by Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius to imply an ‘authority coextensive with the universal Church or at least with the Roman empire.’ See Chadwick, op. cit. pp. 205-6.
SQUARING THE CIRCLE: ANGLICANS AND THE RECOGNITION OF HOLY ORDERS

Will Adam*

At least since the Act of Uniformity 1662, sacramental ministry in the Church of England and, by extension, other parts of the Anglican Communion, has been restricted to those episcopally ordained. As Anglican churches entered into ecumenical agreements with churches which did not retain episcopal ordination or the historic episcopate as understood by Anglicans questions began to be asked about how different systems of ministry might be reconciled without seeming to denigrate the ministry of non- or differently episcopal systems. Anglican churches have found a variety of mechanisms, identified by this author as akin to the Eastern concept of oikonomia, whereby orders can be reconciled and the Anglican commitment to episcopal ordination and the historic episcopate retained.

INTRODUCTION

When Anglicans are involved in ecumenical dialogue with other churches and Christian bodies the question of the recognition or not of holy orders can often be seen to be a dominant topic. Agreement on the mutual recognition of orders can be seen to be the key which unlocks a greater degree of unity and communion. A failure to reach agreement leaves the partners falling short of the fullest expression of communion. The two most significant (involving Anglicans at least) northern European ecumenical agreements of the later twentieth century illustrate this point. The Meissen agreement between the Church of England and the Protestant Churches of Germany (EKD) saw significant convergence in terms of theology and ecclesiology between the two churches but different understandings of the place of episcopal succession meant that ‘[b]ecause of this remaining

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difference our mutual recognition of one another’s ministries does not yet result in the full interchangeability of ministers.” However, just a few years later, the Poorvo agreement between the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches moved beyond the agreement achieved in Meissen to the full interchangeability of ministers that eluded the earlier agreement. Thus the result of the Porvoo process was that the signatory churches became ‘in communion’ with one another and, *inter alia*, committed themselves ‘to regard baptized members of all our churches as members of our own’.¹ The difference in these two agreements, one achieving full, visible unity and the other falling short rests almost entirely on differences in understanding of ordained ministry, and in particular the episcopate.

**THE ANGLICAN VIEW OF ORDINATION**

The early part of the English Reformation under Henry VIII and Edward VI differed from the reform of Churches in other European jurisdictions in that the larger part of the bishops and clergy of the Church in England submitted to reform. Bishops, therefore, largely remained in their dioceses, the parish system and most parochial clergy remained in place. Whilst there was considerable change in the holders of offices during and after the Marian period the Elizabethan settlement retained the threefold order of ministry of bishops, priests and deacons and retained the principle from Archbishop Thomas Cranmer’s ordinal of the bishop as the invariable minister of ordination. Despite historical rumours to the contrary, Archbishop Matthew Parker, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury, became the principal consecrator of Elizabethan bishops, was consecrated as a bishop in Lambeth Palace Chapel by four bishops, who had themselves been consecrated either before the Reformation or during the reign of Edward VI.

The Reformation in England was a lengthy affair with many of the same ecclesiological debates resurfacing during the English Civil Wars and Commonwealth period of the mid-seventeenth century. This time the system of dioceses and the episcopal ordering of the church was dismantled but was put back together again after the restoration of

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² *The Porvoo Declaration*, in *The Porvoo Common Statement* para. 58 b(iii).
Charles II in 1660. It was via the Act of Uniformity 1662 and the *Book of Common Prayer* annexed thereunto that the pattern of ministry that we know as the Anglican pattern was set down. The Act of Uniformity compelled those ministers who had been ordained other than by Bishops (during the Commonwealth period) to be episcopally ordained or be ejected from their ecclesiastical positions on St Bartholomew’s Day (24 August) 1662.\(^1\) For the Church of England the provisions of 1662 remain in force. Bishops are ordained by bishops in the historic succession of bishops; bishops themselves are the invariable ministers of ordination ofdeacons and priests; only those who have been episcopally ordained are permitted to minister as deacons, priests or bishops in the Church of England.\(^2\) The spread of the Anglican tradition overseas exported this pattern to what is now known as the Anglican Communion.\(^3\) ARCIC considered the threefold order to ‘substantially reflect the [Anglican] view on ministry and ordination as conveyed in ... liturgical documents.’\(^4\) Owen Chadwick’s analysis of decisions of Lambeth Conferences\(^5\) points to the fact that Anglican bishops

... believed that their ministry must indispensably be a ministry of persons ordained by bishops in succession from the apostles; the sacrament of ordination lay at the heart of their practical concern for Christian unity.\(^6\)

### THE ECUMENICAL CHALLENGE

The Anglican view of the threefold order of ministry and the historical succession of bishops and insistence on the preservation of both in

\(^{1}\) Act of Uniformity 1662, s. 10.
\(^{2}\) Canons B 43 and B 44 of the Church of England permit a certain amount of ecumenical co-operation and joint worship. However, this does not extend to holding office or indicate an interchangeability of presbyteral or episcopal ministry.
\(^{3}\) See e.g. *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* (London, 2008), principles 32 and 35.
\(^{5}\) The Lambeth Conference is a meeting of bishops, traditionally held once every ten years or so. Its resolutions are not binding on member churches of the Anglican Communion but of significant persuasive authority.
ecumenical dialogue and agreements has led to the criticism that Anglicans deny the efficacy or validity of any non-episcopal ordination. Dialogue partners have been unwilling to enter into any agreement with an Anglican church on the basis of appearing to deny their previous ministry. What is more, an inflexible and non-negotiable system leaves little room for dialogue. As a result of this the churches of the Anglican Communion have, over the years, developed flexible theological and legal mechanisms to enable the recognition of orders (and other sacraments) that would not normally be recognisable, but to maintain in the long run the usual rules.

**The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the Lambeth Appeal**

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church (in the United States) meeting in 1886 set down four points of agreement that would be necessary for any union between that Church and another. This was subsequently adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 and remains as the basic approach to ecumenical dialogue for Anglican Churches:

I. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

II. The Apostles Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

III. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

IV. The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.¹

In 1920 the Lambeth Conference issued an *Appeal to All Christian People* which called on those churches that had lost the historic episcopate to take it into their system. Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, reiterated this call in a Cambridge University Sermon in 1946.

The Lambeth *Appeal*, whilst affirming the importance of the historic episcopate in providing the longed for ‘ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church’,¹ also stated that the spiritual reality of other churches’ ministry was not in doubt. It stopped short, however, of recommending any interchangeability of ministry (or even mutual Eucharistic hospitality) without other ministers accepting ‘a commission through episcopal ordination’ and, interestingly, Anglican ministers accepting ‘a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations.’

**Ecumenical Dialogue and Unity Schemes**

The Lambeth *Appeal* and Fisher’s University Sermon are important way points in the history of ecumenical relations involving Anglican Churches. Both set up the expectation, trailed in the historic Anglican practice and in the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral* that any relationship of communion between an Anglican church and another church not ordered in the historic episcopate would require the partner church to become so ordered. As noted above, this leads to a sense that this is the single most important topic to Anglicans. However, the view of the church held by Anglicans in ecumenical dialogue holds unity in ministry and oversight to be an indispensable part of the character of a united Church. To take an example, *The Challenge of the Covenant*, the final report of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England makes the explicit link between visible unity and united ministry and oversight: ‘... growing

into visible unity and creating a united, interchangeable ministry go together, hand-in-hand."

**The Jerusalem Bishopric**

The first scheme that sought to unite the ministries of a Church not ordered in the historic episcopate with those of an Anglican church was the ill-fated and ultimately unsuccessful Jerusalem Bishopric scheme in the mid-nineteenth century. This politically motivated scheme sought to set up a Bishop in Jerusalem to oversee both Anglican and German protestant congregations and clergy. The post-holder was to be consecrated by English bishops and would, in turn, ordain clergy for service in Anglican and protestant churches in the Middle East. In the end no German protestant clergyman was ever consecrated as a bishop and it seems that most German ministers arrived in the Holy Land already having received holy orders in their German churches and were not re-ordained. The scheme cannot be adjudged a success (indeed, Blessed John Henry Newman regarded it as having been one of his reasons for departing the Church of England), however, it did indicate a willingness on the part of English church authorities to consider flexible solutions to ecumenical problems.

**The Churches of North and South India**

The mission field also provided the impetus for the unity schemes that brought about the Churches of South India and North India. Long negotiations between Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in the South of India led to the formation of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947. The Anglican insistence on the maintenance of the threefold order of ministry was met with a condition from the South India United Church (the already united Presbyterian and Congregational church that was part of the scheme) that ‘its present ministers (Presbyters) shall after union be recognized

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as ministers (Presbyters) without re-ordination.” The scheme came into being holding the two in tension. Bishops for the new, united, church were consecrated by bishops in the historic succession. These bishops became the invariable ministers of the ordination of deacons, presbyters and bishops in the new church but presbyters of each constituent church were able to minister in the new church even if they had been ordained in one of the non-episcopal churches.

The CSI scheme demonstrated what became known subsequently as a ‘period of anomaly’. Ministers of whatever background who had been ordained in the CSI after union were able to take up posts in the Church of England, and many did. Those who were ordained in the non-episcopal churches prior to union were not able to do the same. Archbishop William Temple described the relationship between the CSI and the rest of the Anglican Communion as something less than ‘organic union or full communion’ but more than ‘total lack of any communion in sacris’.

The arrangements put in place for the coming into being of the Church of North India (CNI) in 1970 were different. Each minister, of whatever background, went through a rite of reconciliation. This rite included the laying on of hands by an Anglican bishop for those who had not been previously episcopally ordained. This was significant. CNI ministers were able, from the outset, to minister and take up posts in the Church of England and wider Anglican Communion.

**Anglican-Lutheran Agreements**

Significant conversations and agreements between Anglicans and Lutherans in different parts of the world were struck in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The first significant

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4 For a more detailed discussion see W. Adam, *Legal Flexibility and the Mission of the Church* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 159-60.
agreement was the *Meissen* agreement between the Church of England and the Protestant Churches in Germany. As has already been noted, this agreement did not lead to a situation where Lutheran (or Reformed) presbyters were recognised as interchangeable with their Anglican counterparts.¹ Only a few years after *Meissen*, the *Porvoo* agreement between the Lutheran Churches of the Nordic and Baltic states and the Anglican Churches of the British Isles built on the theological convergence of *Meissen* but moved towards a fuller relationship of communion. As in *Meissen* each church recognised the others as churches, but in *Porvoo* each church was able to acknowledge and recognise each others’ episcopal ordering and, consequently, each others’ ordained ministry. The *Porvoo Common Statement* committed churches
to welcome persons episcopally ordained in any of our churches to the office of bishop, priest or deacon to serve, by invitation and in accordance with any regulations which may from time to time be in force, in that ministry in the receiving church without re-ordination;²

However, it is notable that the history of episcopal succession in some of the Porvoo Churches is not the same as that in the Anglican Churches. The tactile succession of bishops ordaining bishops that forms an integral part of Anglican self-understanding was broken during the sixteenth century in Denmark. There had been continued appointment of bishops to episcopal sees in Denmark, but in the sixteenth century episcopal consecrations had been carried out by a presbyter. The episcopal succession in the Churches of Norway, Iceland and Latvia derived from the Church of Denmark. This history is detailed and analysed elsewhere.³ The *Porvoo* agreement was able to argue that

The mutual acknowledgment of our churches and ministries is theologically prior to the use of the sign of the laying on of hands in the historic succession. Resumption of the use of the sign does not

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¹ The provisions of canons B 43 and B 44 of the Canons of the Church of England do, however, allow for limited exchange of ministry and for German ministers to minister within Local Ecumenical Partnerships set up under the *Meissen Agreement*.


imply an adverse judgment on the ministries of those churches which did not previously make use of the sign. It is rather a means of making more visible the unity and continuity of the Church at all times and in all places;¹

and that

those churches in which the sign [of the historic episcopal succession] has at some time not been used are free to recognize the value of the sign and should embrace it without denying their own apostolic continuity. This also means that those churches in which the sign has been used are free to recognize the reality of the episcopal office and should affirm the apostolic continuity of those churches in which the sign of episcopal succession has at some time not been used.²

The signatory churches that had not preserved the historic (tactile) succession undertook to take this succession into their system.

The model of recognition of orders was less radical than that of the church of South India in that all³ Nordic and Baltic Lutheran clergy had been ordained by a bishop in some sort of succession but more radical in that the visibly united churches would, for a generation, contain within them bishops who were not ordained as such within the tactile historic succession. Guidelines issued by the Church of England’s Porvoo Panel in 2000 for bishops of the Church of England state that those ordained by women bishops in the Nordic and Baltic churches may not be received in the Church of England in their orders. This changed in November 2014 with the legal admission of women to the episcopate in the Church of England. The same guidelines also exclude from the arrangements for exchange of ministry those Lutheran clergy ‘who were ordained by a Cathedral Dean not in episcopal orders’.⁴

Porvoo constituted a laying aside of the norms of the Anglican Churches in their understanding of ‘episcopal ordination’ in its own laws and formularies. That this is the case is shown by the absence of an agreement on intercommunion and mutual co-consecration

¹ Porvoo Common Statement, para. 53.
² Ibid. para. 57.
³ Note, however, the provision for Norwegian Cathedral Deans to ordain, albeit very rarely.
between the Church of England and the Churches of Norway, Denmark and Iceland prior to Porvoo and by statements by those involved in the process, including Bishop John Hind of Chichester who said that Porvoo represented a ‘significant shift’ in that it brought about ‘an interchangeability of ministries with churches which did not presently possess the unbroken succession of the laying on of hands in episcopal succession.’ The purpose of the Porvoo agreement, and the reason for the Church of England to lay aside its usual norms in this particular case, was to bring about full visible unity between the churches.

Building on Porvoo, agreements have also been forged between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church (TEC) in the United States and between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC). Arguments about succession of bishops in historic sees over the turbulent years of the reformation were not available to these churches founded since the sixteenth century. Unlike the SIUC and Methodist Church in South India, the ELCA and ELCIC had bishops, albeit not in the historic succession and unlike the Nordic and Baltic Churches these bishops were not necessarily always the ministers of ordination. Up to 2001 the normal minister of ordination in the ELCA was a presbyter, rather than an ELCA bishop. The agreement went further than the CSI agreement in that there were, after the agreement, Lutheran bishops (who became, save in ‘unusual circumstances’ the invariable ministers of ordination to the presbyterate) who were not themselves within the historic succession. These bishops continued to ordain and those whom they ordained post-agreement are recognised as interchangeable with priests of TEC, just as are those ordained prior to the agreement and those ordained by Lutheran bishops in the historic succession after the agreement. As a consequence of this the period of anomaly is likely to last longer than that of the Church of South India, in which all ordinations after 1947 were carried out by bishops who were unambiguously within the historic succession. Between 2001 and 2007 some thirty-three of the

2 The Porvoo Common Statement para. 60 in Together in Mission and Ministry, p. 32.
sixty-six serving bishops of ELCA had been ‘installed’ by means of episcopal consecration.

**Anglican-Methodist Agreement in Ireland**

In 2014 the General Synod of the Church of Ireland agreed Bill 1, introducing a new canon to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. This followed an agreed statement between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland agreed in 2011. The agreement and subsequent legislation enabled ‘Interchangeability of Ministry’ between the two churches. The basis of the agreement was the adoption of the title ‘episcopal minister’ for the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the full participation by at least two Church of Ireland bishops in the installation of this episcopal minister.² This full participation includes prayer with laying on of hands. Presidents and former presidents of the Methodist Church would also, in future, participate in the ordination of Church of Ireland bishops. Presidents, former presidents and bishops would become the normative ministers of ordination.

The agreement acknowledges (as noted above) a ‘period of anomaly’ in which ‘those ordained as priests/presbyters and consecrated/installed as bishops, archbishops and presidents before the mutual participation of both churches in each others’ consecrations be fully recognised and accepted within both churches.’ The new Church of Ireland canon states that the Church shall consider presbyters of the Methodist Church in full connexion as being equivalent to those ordained priest within the Church of Ireland and past Presidents of the Methodist Church as equivalent to those ordained bishop within the Church. All Methodist presbyters in full connexion (however ordained) are, therefore, eligible for appointment to any role within the Church in Ireland which necessitates being in priests’ orders and former Presidents (however ordained or installed) are eligible for election to vacant episcopal sees within the Church of Ireland.

As with the agreements in North America the agreement envisages those not previously ordained by a bishop who was him- or herself ordained in the historic succession being enabled to hold office in the Anglican church. Unlike the CSI (or the CNI) the Church of Ireland

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¹ Canon 10A of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.
² Three Church of Ireland Bishops participated in the first such installation in 2014 (including the Arcbishops of Armagh and Dublin) and three in 2015.
and Methodist Church in Ireland remain separate entities after the agreement rather than a united church.

Agreements and dialogue between Anglicans and Methodists have also been taking place in other parts of the world. There is significant overlap between them, not least because the fruits of discussion are published and shared between churches. In England, with the failure of the proposed Anglican-Methodist Unity scheme of the late 1960s and early 1970s still in living memory, a new Anglican-Methodist Covenant was signed in 2003. Continuing difficulties in addressing the question of ministry and the historic episcopate mean that this covenant was more akin to Meissen than some of the other agreements outlined above. Conversations continue between the churches to bring forward proposals for the interchangeability of ministry.

COMMENT

In 1662 the Church in England had been through the turmoil of the Reformation, Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Restoration. The Act of Uniformity 1662 left no room for anomaly and those who had not been episcopally ordained were removed from office. The relevant sections of the Act of Uniformity remain in force in England and the understanding of ordination based on the Restoration settlement is shared across the Anglican Communion.¹ The agreements outlined above were not without controversy. There were examples of parish churches in England displaying notices informing worshippers and passers-by that that particular church was not in communion with the CSI. Most, if not all, the above agreements resulted in situations where closer unity in one place led to anomalous situations in others, where, for instance, some ministers of a non-Anglican church are able to minister in Anglican churches and other ministers of the same church are not. Most, if not all of the schemes are also open to the criticism that, in seeking both to hold onto a catholic understanding of the episcopal ordering of the church and at the same time seeking progress in Christian unity Anglican churches have not, in point of fact, held to that traditional understanding at all. The following

¹ Although the Scottish Episcopal Church existed as a separate entity from the Church of England prior to 1662.
comments are offered as potential means of explaining this squaring of the episcopal and ecumenical circle:

Legal Fiction

A legal fiction is a device where something may be held to be the case where, in fact, it is not. Such fictions may enable the law to effect some course of action where, without the fiction, this would not be possible. Examples from outside the church include, in commercial law, the fiction that a corporation is a person separate from its members or, in probate law, the possibility of holding that a beneficiary predeceases a testator even when this is not, in fact, the case.

In the case in hand it may be argued that, for the purposes of enabling the greater goal of the unity of Christ’s church a series of legal fictions have been created. Thus, for example, a Methodist minister in Ireland may, after the change in the canon law of the Church of Ireland, be considered ‘as being equivalent to those ordained priest within the Church solely for the purposes of being considered for or appointed to any role which necessitates being in priest’s orders within the Church’.

Legal fiction is, however, not an ecclesiological term and may not be considered helpful. What is more, much of the language used in ecumenical dialogue is necessarily affirmative and the concept of ‘fiction’ introduces an unhelpful element of negativity when speaking of the ministerial and sacramental life of another church.

The Priority of the Church

As has been alluded to above, most modern ecumenical agreements contain within them ‘Affirmations and Commitments’, the latter following on from and dependent on the former.¹ The first affirmation is generally an affirmation that each church considers the other to be a church. This is a powerful statement. For a church to state that another body is a church the one church must consider that the other possesses those marks of the church that it holds itself. This is made manifest in modern agreements. Typically the affirmation of the

¹ This is the case in, inter alia, the Meissen and Porvoo agreements, the Anglican-Methodist Covenants in England and Ireland, the Waterloo Declaration in Canada and, using different terms, Called to Common Mission, the agreement between TEC and ELCA.
churches as churches is followed by affirmation that in the churches the faith is held and taught and the sacraments duly administered and that each church possesses the ordained ministry. Thomas Seville CR comments that ‘it is good Catholic ecclesiology ... that the recognition of church is prior to the recognition of ministry.’¹ For Anglicans this is not new. Recognition of ministers goes hand in hand with recognition of the churches that ordained them. Anglican churches have long been suspicious of the so-called *episcopus vagans*, despite the often flawlessly ‘valid’ episcopal pedigree of such bishops. The Lambeth Conference has resolved that it ‘cannot recognise the Churches of such “episcopi vagantes” as properly constituted Churches, or recognise the orders of their ministers’.² For the Church of England, the statutory basis for the recognition of the ministry of other churches comes from the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, which gives the Archbishops of Canterbury and York the power to determine ‘whether the orders of any church are recognised and accepted by the Church of England’.³

If there is to be substance to an affirmation that another church is a church then the recognition of that church’s faith, mission, ministry and sacraments gives flesh to the affirmation. Mutual affirmation of churches can help to make sense of a period of anomaly: each church acknowledges that the other is a church, and in doing so recognises that they are in some way incomplete without the other. The mutual recognition may then, in turn, be seen to supply that which is lacking in each. However, for Anglicans this may still require recourse to the concept of legal fiction when seeking to square the circle of holding both to the recognition of ministry that, previously, would not have been recognizable and to continuing faithfulness to the catholic order made manifest in the Act of Uniformity.

³ Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, s 6(2).
Oikonomia

Orthodox canonical jurisprudence has long employed the concept of ‘oikonomia’ (economy) as a means whereby the Church may achieve or enable something that a strict application of the law (‘akribeia’) would not permit but which is, nonetheless, good. Economy is most usually applied in the area of the sacramental life of the Church. For instance, marriages that are, strictly speaking, not canonically allowed may, by economy, be recognised with the knock-on effect of legitimising the married couple and their children and preventing their excommunication. Economy was, particularly in the patristic age, employed by the mainstream church in healing the rifts in the Church caused by heresy or schism. In Orthodox thought the ultimate reason for applying economy is ‘the salvation of souls’.

From an Anglican perspective economy is attractive. The western version, dispensation, appears more rigid. An advantage of economy is that it enables the existing rule to remain intact whilst allowing something that would otherwise not be allowed in order to achieve a greater good. Whilst there is no formal definition of or application of economy in Anglican canon law it is possible to trace numerous examples of instances where, for the good of the church and the gospel, the strict application of the law has been set aside for a time without necessarily changing the law.

From an ecumenical perspective economy may be more troublesome. In dialogue between Anglicans and non-episcopal churches an appeal by Anglicans to economy may be seen to have the effect of placing the Anglican church in the position of the mainstream or orthodox church and the other in the role of the schismatic. This flies in the face of the affirmations made consistently in ecumenical agreements that the partner church is, indeed, a church (or, in some cases, a true church).

However, economy does allow for an acknowledgment by both bodies that ongoing division is a wound in the body of Christ and, thus, detrimental to the life of any church. The process of mutual recognition and moves towards full, visible unity require change and sacrifice on the part of any church. Economy is an ecclesiological and a theological term with a long pedigree. In Eastern church life it is not applied carelessly or indiscriminately but is, though, available to the church to enable the church better to fulfil its mission and ministry. Despite shortcomings noted above, economy may be seen as the most
satisfactory ecclesiological underpinning of the actions of Anglican churches in ecumenical agreements.

CONCLUSION

Anglican churches can be seen to have employed various mechanisms, depending on the situation, to bring about the mutual recognition of ministries in dialogue with churches not hitherto ordered in the historical episcopate as traditionally understood by Anglicans. It is difficult to identify a theoretical basis for holding to the traditional insistence that the church be ordered in the historic episcopate whilst at the same time enabling recognition of the ministries of those from churches not so ordered. However, the Eastern concept of economy provides the most satisfactory theological and ecclesiological basis for modern ecumenical agreements. The story of the Church of South India shows that, in practice, the pattern that, after nearly seventy years, is still being employed in ecumenical agreements can and does work. A period of anomaly can and does come to an end. The ecumenical imperative has inspired churches to come up with ever more ingenious mechanisms for uniting Christians in the church and, for Anglicans at least, this has involved considerable effort to square the circle of the recognition of other ministries within a church ultimately ordered in the historic episcopate.
ECUMENISM: WHY THE SLOW PROGRESS?

Gideon Goosen*

The question of whether ecumenism has made much progress in recent times is debated. The author argues that ecumenism has made substantial progress but that there are still many practical obstacles or problems which impede progress. These problems are mainly of an attitudinal, cognitive and conative nature although managerial and financial problems are also included. The article identifies and describes the problems and suggests some possible remedies while pointing out significant theological insights as appropriate. The author concludes that it is clear there is a connection between renewal, change and ecumenism and that transformational action is a key to making greater ecumenical progress.

Introduction

Is the progress of ecumenism slow today? Some, such as Michael Kinnamon, would say that the doctrinal dialogues seems to have come to a halt, or at least slowed down, and that many Christian leaders and parishioners lack any obvious commitment to the restoration of unity.¹ Some individual Christians and some Christian churches even oppose ecumenism.

On the other hand, if we compare the approximately five hundred years since Martin Luther allegedly posted his nine-five theses to the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg in 1517, to the past sixty years, much has been achieved by the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church and the Global Christian Forum.² Significant

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² The Global Christian Forum seeks to offer new opportunities for broadening and deepening encounters between all Christians. It met in Limuru in 2007 and Manado in 2011. In the organizing committee a 50/50 balance between
doctrinal milestones such as the ARIC statements\(^1\) and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*\(^2\) have been achieved as well as the setting up of numerous ecumenical councils, covenants and agreements. The *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* and the *World Day of Prayer* have become part of the liturgical calendar. These types of infrastructure have also been accompanied, here and there, by some attitudinal changes.

I am inclined to take an optimistic, historical view of ecumenism. Nevertheless problems in the practice of ecumenism have arisen. In this article I would like to identify some problems in the practice and progress of ecumenism today, suggest ways to overcome them and draw attention to the underlying theologically relevant insights. The problems identified below are mainly of an attitudinal, cognitive and conative nature although managerial and financial problems are also included. The issues below relate more to practical than theological issues. It must be pointed out that the attitudinal, cognitive and conative nature of problems sometimes overlap occurring at the universal, the regional, and local levels.

**1. The problem of indifference, lack of commitment**

If we think deeply about it, the following statement seems quite logical: if we continue as we are, largely in an attitude of indifference, we are opting to undermine our Christian mission daily. How is that possible?

In 1910 in Edinburgh, missionaries agreed that disunity among Christians was undermining their missionary work, namely, evangelization.\(^3\) The WCC repeated this and so did the Catholic representatives of Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions on the one hand, and those from Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican streams of the church on the other, is maintained as closely as possible.


\(^1\) ARIC (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) first met in 1969, and has produced a number of agreed statements on various topics.

\(^2\) A Declaration by the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches on the Doctrine of Justification, published in 1999. In 2006 the World Methodist Council added their name to the agreement.

Church at Vatican II when it stated that ‘without doubt, this discord, openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature’.

In 1995 John Paul II thought it necessary to exhort his fellow bishops to be especially mindful of their commitment to ecumenism pledged at the Second Vatican Council. He reminded them: ‘If they (believers in Christ) wish truly and effectively to oppose the world’s tendency to reduce to powerlessness the Mystery of Redemption, they must profess together the same truth about the Cross.’

Pope Francis expresses it thus: ‘The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians would overcome their divisions.’ So why do we go on largely ignoring this clear statement? Bishops, pastors and others in leadership roles, are knowingly lessening the effectiveness of their mission by continuing to operate in their narrow denominationalism. This is a serious sin. They are giving scandal by allowing the scandal of disunity to continue. Token gestures like ineffective diocesan commissions, or sending unenthusiastic representatives to ecumenical meetings, undermine ecumenism. There is evidence that overall Churches have ignored the sharp end of

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1 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1, W. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966). The Decree also states that ‘promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the chief concerns of the Second Sacred Ecumenical Synod of the Vatican.’ (1)

2 *Ut unum sint*, 100 and 1.

3 Two recent biographies that give a good insight into his thinking and experience are: Elisabetta Pique, *Francis: Life and Revolution* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2014) and Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014).

ecumenism. And we know that there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.¹

Regarding official ecumenical structures the same point can be made. In my experience, many representative nominees on ecumenical councils, are not totally committed to action. They are half-heartedly committed to attending meetings but not committed to doing something about ecumenism, like changing their actions. The comment one hears is that people can talk the talk but not walk the walk. Once they get back to their ecclesial family, they follow the demands of denominational tribalism. This calls for serious reflection.

This problem of lack of commitment might be addressed by sustained ongoing education and growth in understanding of ecumenism. People who represent their church or diocese need ongoing development in ecumenism, they need to both update and deepen their understanding of the issues. One could call it ecumenical formation. It is essential that it be affective as well as cognitive.

It can be pointed out that leaders like Willem Visser ‘t Hooft (first General Secretary of the WCC), Pope John XXIII, Cardinal Bea, Patriarch Athenagoras, Patriarch Bartholomew I, Pope Francis, Patriarch Kirill I, all had ecumenical experiences and intellectual formation that enabled them to be great ecumenical leaders.²

¹ Unitatis redintegratio, #4; Ut unum sint, #15.
² Willem Visser ‘t Hooft, first Secretary General of the WCC, was involved in the Dutch student Christian movement in his early adult years and soon became involved internationally. In 1925, he became interested in the ‘social gospel’ movement. He served as editor of The Student World, a quarterly magazine published in Geneva by the World’s Student Christian Federation. The magazine’s motto was Ut Omnes Unum Sint.

Pope John XXIII was sensitized to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue by his time as Apostolic visitor in Bulgaria, Apostolic Delegate in Turkey, visits to Greece and as Apostolic Nuncio to France. Cardinal Bea was a biblical scholar and President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity in the Roman Catholic Church. He served on numerous ecumenical bodies and was the author of nine works, including The Church and the Jewish People (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Athenagoras, as Patriarch of Constantinople, was actively involved with the World Council of Churches and improving relations with the Pope. His meeting with Pope Paul VI in 1964 in Jerusalem led to rescinding the excommunications of 1054 which historically mark the Great Schism, the schism between the churches of the East and West.
Formation in ecumenism should occur at all meetings, be they general, executive, or of commissions. If it does not occur there, the chances are it will not occur at all. At each meeting some time should be set aside for this personal and collective growth in understanding ecumenism. In my experience, what often happens is that practical issues absorb all the time to the exclusion of personal growth, resulting in a consequently uncritical and largely unreflective approach to ecumenical work.

The above section has spoken about commitment. The theology behind this call to commitment is clear: it is the call for unity by Christ. The theology of ecumenism points to Christian unity as the will of Christ (John 17:21), so any indifference would be a contradiction of the will of Christ. As the encyclical Ut unum sint expresses it: ‘At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the “signs of the times”’. Neglect of ecumenism would then be seen as a ‘sin of omission’, to use a traditional term, thus making it less easy to see and address than sins of commission.

There is also the ecclesiological issue of the unity of the body of Christ as seen in Ephesians (Eph. 4:1-16). Paul says for example: ‘Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together.’ (Eph. 4:3) Or, as Pope John Paul II has it: ‘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

Bartholomew I of Constantinople, studied at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in Germany. He later taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Pope Francis as Archbishop of Buenos Aires was a leader in ecumenical and interfaith dialogues. He introduced a leadership course in Interfaith Dialogue in his diocese; he has been a leader in establishing relationships with not only the mainline Protestant leaders but with evangelicals and Pentecostals as well. Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow was president of the International Department of the Orthodox Church and contributed much in the ecumenical movement in Russia. He was responsible for the launching of Christian education for women; and also recognized as the true man of ecumenism, the movement for justice, peace and harmony.

1 John Paul II, Ut unum sint (That They May be One), Strathfield: St Pauls, 1995, 3.
which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ’s prayer: *Ut unum sint.*¹ We know that the body of Christ should be one and yet we tolerate or ignore the disunity. Often people are not able to see the ‘scandal’ of Christian disunity.² The above scriptural texts about unity need to be meditated upon, not merely read, if any cognitive and affective change is to be achieved.

2. Ecumenism as ‘Optional Extra’

Ecumenism is regarded as an ‘optional extra’ to Christian life, not a radical and necessary commitment. It is seen as a free option, not an imperative, or as an acceptable alternative, not a necessary game-changer. On the contrary, I see ecumenism, like ‘justice’, which should pervade all we do as Christians, and not be pigeonholed. Indeed, to continue to ignore striving for unity is doing an injustice to the good news.

Let me expand on this point. Initially, at parish level, some people thought ‘justice’ or ‘social justice’ applied to a specific group of people who were keen to apply justice to issues like ‘the unemployed’ or ‘wages’ or ‘welfare payments’, that is, to issues possibly far removed from the parish and their own lives. When people applied justice more comprehensively to everything, including women in the church, wages of parish secretaries, or the finances of a parish, the penny dropped and people saw the ‘danger’ of justice to the *status quo*. They soon learnt the all-embracing cost of discipleship.

So too with ecumenism. The application of ecumenism requires that we examine all aspects of our lives to see how we can further Christian unity and remove obstacles that impede ecumenism. For example, how can we not join in with other Christians on *The World Day of Prayer?* How can we celebrate the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity?* The Lund principle has been neglected far too long. It affirms: ‘that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep

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¹ *Ut unum sint.* 9.
² Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), agrees with this opinion saying that people are no longer ‘pained by this profoundly abnormal situation’. Kurt Koch, ‘Fundamental Aspects of Ecumenism and Future Perspectives,’ an unpublished paper presented 3 November 2011 at Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., cited in Kinnamon, *Can A Renewal Movement Be Renewed?* 148.
differences of conviction compel them to act separately.” Each diocese, each parish, each presbytery, could well ask themselves this question today.

The attitudinal problem relating to this point is that often church people work in silos. This means that people work within the denominational boundaries and often in a competitive and adversarial way. This was the pre-ecumenical era, but it persists even today. The silo-mentality crops up in other parts of society, like hospitals, police and university departments. As regards churchgoers, they cannot see why they should co-operate with other denominations. The situation is exacerbated by a certain ‘renewed focus on denominational identity’, as Kinnamon expresses it. At its worst it is when a minister tells his congregation to focus on Jesus and not to be distracted by other denominations!

Here the theology that we invoke is the totality of the gospel message. Christian unity is not peripheral but integral to the gospel. The scriptural emphasis on unity is pervasive in the New Testament. Disunity among early Christian communities is often mentioned in the letters of Paul who makes strong exhortations to unity in belief and practices in 1 Cor. 1:10-16. The same in Eph. 4:1-6 and Phil. 4: 2-3.

In other early church writings of the second and third centuries, we also find mention of the importance of unity and of being united around their *episkopos* or *presbyteros*. Clement I in his letter to the Corinthians (ch. 46) and Ignatius of Antioch, to the Magnesians and Philadelphians, and later Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies*, emphasize unity. If unity is the will of Christ it cannot be peripheral to Christianity. Unity of the body of Christ, is of the essence of Christian theology.

1 The Lund principle arose from a question raised by the 1952 Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches held at Lund, Sweden.


3 Ibid. 149.
3. Ecumenism as a Burden

Ecumenism is seen as a burden, as extra work for already busy people. Some religious leaders seem to see it as an imposition—a bit like an extra item added to an already over-crowded school curriculum. Reluctantly some leaders will respond to the requirements of ecumenism in a minimalist way by setting up a commission (or structure) which meets regularly but does little.

On this point theology will repeat that ecumenism is integral to the message of the gospel. It is not a burden; unity is a gift and privilege to be protected and guarded. That we Christians have allowed the scandal of disunity (West-East Schism and the Reformation) to prevail is our fault and needs urgent attention. We might consider the paradoxes of the gospel: Christ’s burden is heavy yet it is light; the first shall be last and the last first; those who desire to be at the top of the table will be at the bottom; to enter the kingdom you must become a child again; my yoke is sweet and my burden light. From these we could learn that the so-called ‘burden’ of ecumenism is after all, a light burden to carry. On the practical level, experience has shown that ministers who take on the ‘extra burden’ of ecumenism and collaborate with other ministers, experience a lightening of their load and feel re-energized in their ministry.

4. Councils seen as Alibis

David Gill has said that an ecumenical council can sometimes be seen as an ecumenical ‘alibi’.¹ What does this mean? If there is a council, the Head of Church can rest assured he has done his job and that now ecumenism is being looked after. A Catholic bishop who sets up an ecumenical commission can rest assured he is doing his bit for ecumenism as required by Rome. As long as the commission meets and produces an annual report, he is satisfied he can tick the box. He need not ask: what progress the commission has made in changing attitudes and developing new relationships with other churches? Are they collaborating more closely with other Christians according to the Lund principle? These challenging questions need to be asked.

Here we need a theology of personal commitment. Using councils as excuses for HOCs (Heads of Churches) to do nothing, is a form of avoiding one’s duty. In the same way as the call of Christianity is for all individuals, so too the call to ecumenism is for all, not just those taking on leadership roles. Like justice, ecumenism is for all in every part of life. It is a basic orientation for all Christians, not a duty for the chosen few. Just because a bishop has an ecumenical commission or council it does not mean that he is ‘off the hook’ as regards ecumenism. One notices in passing how some Catholic bishops become personally involved in World Youth Day because they see it as important to their mission. It should be the same with ecumenism.

5. Restorationism: a problem

By this term I mean an antagonistic reaction to a trend, development, or event, or a falling back into bad old ways. In the case of ecumenism, I mean the tendency of some to resist reform, to strive to set the clock back and to ‘restore’ things to the way they were before the reform.

This problem is common to all renewals and reforms (like Vatican II, for Catholics). There has been a backlash against the council and against ecumenism in particular. Lefebrevism¹ is one obvious example. It is normal for every revolution to have a period of restorationism or back-sliding. Pope Francis identifies this as a contemporary problem as he tries to reform the Catholic Church according to Vatican II, as indeed St Francis of Assisi did in the thirteenth century. In one of his homilies, Pope Francis asked whether the faithful have done everything the Second Vatican Council asked for. His reply was: ‘No. We celebrate this anniversary almost as though we are erecting a monument to the council. I’d say there’s even more to it: there are rumors that some want to turn back. That’s called being stubborn, that’s called wanting to tame the Holy Spirit, that’s called becoming foolish and slow of heart.’²

¹ Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991) was a French Roman Catholic archbishop. He took the lead in opposing certain changes within the Church associated with the Second Vatican Council. In 1970, Lefebvre founded the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). In 1988, against the expressed prohibition of Pope John Paul II, he consecrated four bishops to continue his work with the SSPX.
² Elisabetta Pique, Francis; Life and Revolution (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013), 200.
I see restorationism as manifesting itself in various ways regarding ecumenism. With regard to Redintegratio unitatis, some Catholic negative reaction against this new trend was to re-examine religious identity and to try and become more ‘Catholic’ than the pope. This kind of mistaken Catholic Identity attempted to look inwards to one’s denominational identity and view with suspicion any movement that seems to water down Catholicism. At the WCC Assembly in Canberra in 2001, a group of Orthodox protestors marched around the venues with banners saying just this: ecumenism is a watering down of Orthodoxy. This is a narrowing of denominationalism. At the Busan WCC Assembly in 2014 Evangelical Christians protested against the Assembly on similar grounds.

Proponents of this brand of Catholicism say: Ecumenism is a dilution of Catholicism. Catholics can learn nothing from other Churches; Catholics have all the truth, etc. These are all manifestations of a desire to avoid moving forward and changing. It is a strong desire to turn the clock back and leave things as they were. (It is also a refusal to renew one’s understanding of ‘church’ in the contemporary context.)

These people see their future church continuing as it is today. (‘I don’t mind ecumenism as long as they leave us alone’ attitude, or ‘ecumenism within the status quo’.) On the contrary, I see ecumenism as all churches converging as they all move forward while re-orientating themselves to the gospel. Change is at the heart of this problem. We do not like change; it can be painful. Some would have a mild kind of ecumenism that makes few demands on one’s denominationalism. However real ecumenism has visible unity as a goal and is particularly demanding because it requires change. If one can accept this, then one can think of the ecumenical journey as all denominations moving forward trying to be more Christian and converging at some point in the future.

6. Ecumenism as ‘too idealistic’

On the cognitive level, the goal of ecumenism is sometimes rejected as being too idealistic. Proponents of this opinion dismiss the goal of visible unity and are happy for things to continue unchanged. I have encountered this opinion among both professional theologians and sincere Christians.
Evangelical Christians have said to me that we are united by our baptism and therefore form one church in Christ. There is no need to seek any further unity. This argument does not permit of degrees of union, it does not distinguish between perfect union and the rudimentary, incomplete union we do have among all baptised Christians. What we have, causes scandals because it is so imperfect.

On the other hand we must not confuse the unity we seek with uniformity which unfortunately is often the case. We might not have a clear image of the final unity we seek but we reject uniformity. I think a good model of ‘unity with diversity’ lies in the examples from the first millennium before the break with the Eastern Churches. Churches at this point in history in Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Rome or Lyon, were united as Christians but had their own practices, languages, liturgies and customs.

The theology of ecumenism would point out in this respect that unity based only on baptism is not full unity. For full unity there must also be Eucharistic unity, as the hymn expresses it: ‘One Bread one Body, One Lord of all’. We do not have full unity unless we have sharing of the Eucharist.

7. There is a lack of transformational action

Leaders like bishops, moderators, patriarchs, can fall into a sense of complacent satisfaction. This means they have made an initial move and need do nothing more. Ecumenism does not stop once Christians share a cup of tea together. When churches began to take some action in an atmosphere that was competitive and sometimes antagonistic, the first move was often to be friendly and socialize. Kinnamon says that an initial success in ecumenism has ‘lessened the urgency for further ecumenical advance’. But we cannot take one step and stop. We might have forgotten that there are stages along the ecumenical way: conflict, competition, coexistence, cooperation, commitment, communion. Some people may have got stuck at the ‘co-existence’ or ‘co-operation’ stage. Fortunately most have gone beyond the ‘conflict’ stage.

Theology must be transformational or it is nothing. All the tomes of theology in the world count for nothing if they do not transform the reader. Often theology has been dry and academic instead of

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1 Kinnamon, *Can A Renewal Movement Be Renewed?* 148.
transformative. Pope Francis for one, has spoken about theology in a very different way than previously heard in Rome. He spoke about theology as being directly involved with people and where they are at. It is more about people’s lives than finer, abstract points. In other words it must transform lives rather than preoccupy minds. This is transformative theology.

It would be useful if all those involved in ecumenism identified which stage their group/church was at. That would give them an idea of the work to be done. The next step on the journey is always the important one, requiring some attention as to the transformational actions needed to rise to the next stage.

Here are some examples of these transformational actions which are so vital to growth in unity. Churches could engage (more) in pulpit exchange. This helps to emphasize the fact of a common message from a common bible. It shows that one’s minister/priest accepts the validity of the gospel in other churches. The sacrament of baptism could be held in a given church in a village, suburb, for all candidates for baptism across the churches. The venue could change every quarter. Many Christian churches already acknowledge the validity of baptism in other churches as can be seen on baptismal certificates. So why baptise separately?

More common action on local, national and even international social justice issues could be taken. In many areas a lack of housing for the elderly is apparent. Common action on refugees, asylum seekers and domestic violence is crying out for more church response. Could not the co-operation of churches spread and expand to take further action on these and similar issues?

Other strategies are Men’s (and Women’s) Breakfasts held across denominations on virtually any topic. Here is an opportunity of learning from other churches, or receptive ecumenism as it is now called.¹ Men’s breakfasts have long been used in Protestant churches, so Catholics could well try this form of getting a message across.

Interdenominational Lenten and Advent programmes is another possibility. Where adult education courses are offered, such as a series on the gospels or whatever, they could be offered to all Christian churches in the area, not just for the organizing denomination. There

is one thing that holds people back from this kind of interchange and that is the ‘silo mentality’ mentioned above.

Some examples of this attitude are: I do not attend The World Day of Prayer because it is held in the Uniting Church this year; I will not attend that church’s Men’s Breakfast because some of our church members ‘converted’ to them; I belong to Anglicare and am not interested in Vinnies or other organizations that deal with poverty.

As a remedy for the silo mentality and need to relate to members of other churches, one can recall the theological conviction that all Christians have a common baptism and calling. They share a common mission. Rather than the institutional model of Church (which unfortunately can encourage silo mentality), Pope Francis speaks about seeing fellow Christians as fellow pilgrims and travellers: ‘We must never forget we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another’ (The Joy of the Gospel, 244). We must likewise never forget the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ.

8. Communication Problems

There is a problem with the ecumenical councils having to communicate with the member churches. How do they do this? I suggest this is a problem faced by many institutions today. Administrators, CEOs, parish priests/ministers and others in charge, are very busy with paper work; the volume of incoming mail (texts, emails, advertizing, Facebook, Twitter, personal mail) is so voluminous that few can adequately keep up with the demands. It is therefore not surprising if sending communications to the ‘Head of Church’ or busy administrators, frequently results in it going no further. Given the sheer volume of communications these days that lands on one’s desk, laptop or ipod, this is no wonder. Innovative ways to cope with this need to be tried.

One approach which has been tried and found to work, is the following: all communications regarding ecumenism be sent to designated key people (as well as to the HOC) in the diocese, parish, or community who will promote and distribute the information. They also need to co-opt co-workers to help distribute the information. Networking is the key and people who will forward information need to be identified. Often ecumenical councils still work with the wheel-and-hub model of communication instead of a network model.
Reflecting on how theology can help us at this stage, one would have to invoke the concept of sensus fidelium. What do people think and believe on points that come up for discussion? Good communication needs good consultation which implies the art of listening to the Holy Spirit, discernment. The theme of the Holy Spirit was one of the themes of Vatican II and it remains a theme of many evangelical and Pentecostal churches today. How to communicate with each other, with churches, should be seen in the framework of how we listen to the Holy Spirit first. If individuals and churches do not listen to the Spirit through prayer and discernment, how can they communicate effectively with each other? Often the Spirit will speak though others. In recent times, because many ecumenical councils have had their income cut and therefore have had to reconsider if they can continue, the need to discern what the Holy Spirit wants, is paramount. For some this has been a salutary experience in pausing to listen to the Holy Spirit.

9. Lack of Funds

A lack of funds means that councils, like State councils or National Council of Churches, are sometimes unable to carry out their work or have their work seriously curtailed. In tough financial times (such as the GFC), funds are cut, and therefore councils have sometimes to cease their operations.

The reality of a lack of funds is an existential fact. The revenue of many churches is declining as are contributions to ecumenical bodies. We have to accept that this tendency can thwart ecumenical work. The answer may partially lie in more voluntary help in running an office or events, or in attempting less. Neighbourhood centres use voluntary labour as do many other community groups. One advantage of voluntary workers is that they tend to contribute because they have a passion for their work.

There is also a valuable upside to a lack of funds. It forces institutions (like ecumenical councils) to scrutinize their mission. There is a danger in building up any bureaucracy with paid officials that they may become just another bureaucracy and with time, acquire ‘spiritual Alzheimer’s’, that is, forget what the real mission of the institution is. An ecumenical council’s work is to foster

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relationships among member churches, not to be engaged in self-aggrandizement or focused on self-perpetuation. If churches were totally committed to Christian unity, no ecumenical councils, or similar bodies, would be needed.

**Conclusion**

The main problems with slow progress in ecumenism have been identified and some suggestions made to overcome them with the appropriate theology. Transformational action is key to this process which requires a degree of commitment often lacking today.

From the above discussion of the problems confronting ecumenism, it is clear that there is a connection between renewal, change and ecumenism. For all Christians this is a challenge for our times requiring courage and hope. For Catholics it is clearly on the agenda, as one of the four main aims of Vatican II was ‘to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ’.

In describing the main problems above it is clear that most of the problems have a strong affective element. Feelings and attitudes need to change as well as understanding the issues (the cognitive level). This is possible but requires a greater effort than has been forthcoming so far, particularly in the area of transformational action.

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1 The four main aims can be seen from the document on the Liturgy, the first document of Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, i: ‘This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.’
THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY

Pádraig Ó Tuama*

Elie Wiesel often quotes a Midrash tale that says ‘God made humans, so there could be stories.’ As they celebrate their golden anniversary the leader of the Corrymeela Community reflects on the human stories at the heart of Corrymeela. Visit www.corrymeela.org for more information.

When I was sixteen, a new boy arrived in our class on the first day of school. His family name started with the same letter as mine, so we stood near each other in the alphabetical lineup with which we started each morning.

First days are important. He was a nice guy. He came with me to spend the break times with the bunch of lads I hung around with. While we were talking, our school principal came in to view. ‘That’s the school principal’, I said to the new boy, ‘he’s a total idiot.’ Then I did my own favourite impression of the principal. Usually this brought some laughter, and usually we all would then pretend to the principal. But not this day. The new boy smiled, awkwardly, looked around. The other friends of mine looked at me with that wide-eyed-shut-up-now look. I hadn’t noticed that the new boy’s surname was the same as the principal’s. The new boy was the son of the principal.

At the end of Luke’s gospel, there are two disciples walking, one of them is named Cleopas, and we don’t know the name of the other. A stranger walks up next to them and seems ignorant of the events that are causing such intense exchange of words between them, and then Cleopas and his friend look at the stranger and say, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that have been

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happening?’ and he says ‘What things?’ and they begin to tell him his own story.

Right now I am thinking about what happens when we start to tell a story and I am wondering where we begin stories. I am wondering about what happens when we are unsure what the story of the listener is and how our assumptions about the listener influences our beginning points. I began in a particular place when I told the story of a principal to the boy I didn’t know was the principal’s son. Cleopas and his companions began a story of a dead friend when they didn’t know they were speaking to the dead friend himself.

So, where do you begin to tell a story?

Corrymeela began in the Presbyterian Centre at Queens in the years before 1965

Corrymeela began before the end of one war and before the beginning of another.

Corrymeela began in 1965.

Corrymeela began because sectarianism was brewing.

Corrymeela began in February 1945.

Corrymeela was begun by Ray Davey. During the second world war, Ray, a pacifist volunteer chaplain for respite camps, was captured and incarcerated across a number of prisoner of war camps. In February 1945, Allied Troops bombed Dresden. Over three days, almost 4000 tons of bombs were dropped on less than five square miles and up to 25,000 people died. Ray was, at that time, incarcerated in a camp a number of miles from Dresden. Being a Padré, he had more freedom than many, so often visited injured soldiers in Dresden. Being a man of kindness, he had made friends with people from the city, residents and refugees, all kinds of people and prisoners. He had hoped to spend some of those days in February visiting an injured man in the city but permission was refused and he watched the firestorm from his own prison and could not join in jubilation.

Do not rejoice when your enemies fall
And do not be glad when they stumble.

That’s what one of the writers of the book of Proverbs said (24: 17). It’s a good sentiment, but a hard one. The word for rejoice in Hebrew here is samach and one of its interpretations is ‘rejoice arrogantly’. So Ray
could not rejoice. In all the annihilations of War Ray saw humanity’s capacity for inhumanity. He was profoundly changed. Dresden fell three months later.

Ray returned to work as a chaplain in Belfast. There, he became concerned at the tensions brewing between people of different political, religious and ideological differences in Northern Ireland. He gathered people around him in the chaplaincy. He was inspired by many other Christian communities that were beginning across Europe—the Iona Community, the Agape Community, the Taizé Community. Taking inspiration from these places he began to plan and when a plot of land with an old holiday house became available on the north coast of Co. Antrim in 1965, Ray, at that stage having celebrated his 50th birthday, together with students from Queen’s University fundraised and the land was bought. The townland—a six acre site about a mile from the village of Ballycastle—came with a name: Corrymeela. Some said it meant ‘Meeting place’ others said it meant ‘Meeting place of strangers’. Some said it meant ‘Hill of Harmony’ others said it meant ‘lumpy crossing place’.

It has meant them all and more over the past fifty years.

Corrymeela grew organically from the original members, now with 40 full–time staff, dozens of volunteers and community members who are committed to this place. We have over 10,000 people through our programmes a year and it is Northern Ireland’s oldest peace and reconciliation centre. Our vision is a world where people learn and live well together, Corrymeela makes place for meeting and welcome, where we can hear stories in a safe place, explore the power at the heart of those stories, take risks of trust, and together, find ways to live and learn.

We work alongside people from youth and education groups, family and community organisations, faith communities and political parties. Using dialogue, experiential play, art, storytelling, mealtimes and shared community we help groups embrace difference and have important conversations.

We believe that there is powerful truth to be discovered in the stories of the powerless. We are a gathering place for stories where strangers meet and encounter each others’ lives, histories, pain and hopes.

David Wagoner, when giving lines of advice to someone lost in a forest, said:
Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger.¹

When the two disciples, walking along the road to Emmaus,
encounter the unrecognised one, they are amazed at his ignorance.
They cannot understand how someone didn’t understand what had
happened. ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn’t know
the things that have been happening?’ they ask.

The noun ‘stranger’ here, in Greek, comes from the verb paroikeis
which can mean ‘to dwell near’ or to ‘reside as a foreigner’, to ‘sojourn
in’ or ‘to be a stranger’. In the body of Jesus of Nazareth, the strange
God became a nearby stranger, living alongside us, among us, with us.
What the two disciples didn’t yet know is that this stranger had
something to tell them. He had a message for them, he could tell them
their own story, and in hearing their own story, the story of their text,
their hopes, their lives and their grief, their hearts would burn, and
when the stranger disappeared, they hurried home, back to their own,
and started the story in a different place.

There’s a woman in Corrymeela, Joanne, who tells a story of meeting
her first proper Nationalist friend. They were part of a ‘Seed Group’, a
group process for young people that has been part of Corrymeela’s
witness over decades. Bringing people from different political,
religious, national and ideological identities together, they explore
group dynamics, difference, argument, politics and social change in
the context of shared weekends, dialogue, skills-learning and that
most beautiful of words: friendship. Joanne remains friends to this
day, with her first proper nationalist. Joanne’s life was changed. She
encountered herself by encountering a stranger. She’s still a part of
Corrymeela.

There’s another woman, Desney, who decided that her work in the
world would be to work with children who had been burdened by a
sudden bereavement. She began a group, Treetops she called it,
working with children whose lives had been interrupted and shattered
by grief. Desney worked as Ray Davey’s assistant in the Presbyterian
Centre in the 60s. Desney was the first person to hold the keys to the
house on the hill. She’s still a part of Corrymeela.

¹ ‘Lost’ by David Wagoner in Collected Poems, 1956-1976, Indiana University
Both of these women met and witnessed the stranger, and in so doing, met and witnessed their own self, and there they saw the shelter and shadow of who and how humanity can be in shared spaces. We are not all light. We are not all darkness either. We hurt and heal each other. We harm and hold each other. Our words can be sharp and soothing at the same time. We are strangers to each other even as we begin to belong to each other. This is one of the mysteries of being human. It is good, in places that have known such pain, to find places to come together to explore this mystery, never to own it.

In 2015, we at Corrymeela remembered that we were fifty years old. To remember is to re-member, to make present again, to bring what has happened in the past into the present and to look at it, celebrate it. Remembering needs an ethic—we need to see the past as an icon to be seen through, not an idol to be forged. As part of our witness of remembering, we did many things, some ordinary and some enormous. Some of our Corrymeela groups began pilgrimages of friendship and faith in Lent 2015, visiting parishes and congregations along the way; some held film nights that explored culture and conflict; some hosted storytelling nights where individuals told a single story about a single experience of Corrymeela from the past fifty days or fifty years; we held a festival over the summer celebrating faith, arts, culture, politics and food; we had a gala evening with a poet, a president and a peacemaker; we had a big celebration of faith in St. Anne’s Cathedral in Belfast where we had the Archbishop of Canterbury alongside the Primate of All Ireland, we had a liturgy written by John Bell from the Iona Community, and the gospel was both carried and read by Desney Cromey, the original keeper of the key of Corrymeela. I walked alongside her and couldn’t figure out if I was smiling or crying.

One of the features that first attracted me to Corrymeela was a sense of dis-ease in Corrymeela. The dis-ease was a dis-ease with diagnosis. Corrymeela does not see itself as separate from the forces of pain and power that caused grief. Corrymeela, if it is anything, is part of the problem, and Corrymeela works hard to be part of the solution. At each of our events of commemoration in 2015 we made a small act of acknowledgement of this truth. At an event called ‘50 years 50 stories’ on the last day of October we had a short liturgy, led by Mary Catney, a woman whose witness to telling the truth is welcome and wonderful.
There are Troubles and there are troubles.

As Corrymeela we are set up as an open village for all people of good will. We are a centre of peace, reconciliation, dialogue, diversity and inclusion. We are an open Christian community that welcomes all.

And yet
And yet
And yet

There have been people who have come here and not felt welcome
There have been people who have worked here who have felt unappreciated
There have been people who have come here and given all they have and felt like they were given nothing back.

We know that there are many things that we have done that have been good and lasting.

But we must not shy away from the things that call for our attention:

The limitations of Corrymeela
The times we’ve said we’ll act but haven’t
The difficulties we have caused.

We pray for our society—from small corners like Corrymeela, to all the counties of Ulster.

May we tell the truth
May we learn the places where we need to apologise
May we find the courage to live
May we sit with our grief
May we work, may we work hard, may we work with everything we have, so that troubles decrease, not increase.
There’s a phrase ‘We do not tell stories as they are; we tell stories as we are.’ Who said that first? I don’t know. Some attribute it to Anaïs Nin who, in an autobiographical novel *Seduction of the Minotaur*,¹ has a character recall Talmudic words: ‘we do not see things as they are, we see them as we are.’ There’s a long argument about whether those words are in the Talmud or not, and another argument about the other authors who use the phrase.

So we don’t know where it’s from, but I think it’s very true, wherever it’s from.

We see six faces of our Corrymeela story as we reflect on our story of fifty years and reflect on the journey ahead of us. The first face is that we meet and welcome each other. For us, this corresponds to being a place of hospitality, a place where cups of tea, and tables and shared washing-up and fireplaces and meeting rooms and human encounter can happen. The second face of our witness builds directly on this—we hear each other’s stories. We are a place where we are interested in hearing the story of the other, of each ‘other’—and this includes the others in ourselves. So often we crucify or convict the other, when the

¹ Part of the *Cities of the Interior* sequence, originally published by Anaïs Nin, found in the publication compiled by Swallow Press, Chicago, 1974.
other has a story to tell. This telling can be painful. We tell stories in circles of gathered people, through games, through experiential play, with people who are eight years old and people who are eighty years old.

The telling of story, as the disciples discovered on the way to Emmaus, has a way of changing your viewpoint on things. Each story begins in one place, but sometimes you realise that you can begin a story in a new place. ‘The troubles began with the outbreak of violence in the late 1960s’ some might say and others say ‘The troubles began with partition in the early 1920s.’ To tell and hear a story draws lines of power. That’s the third face of our witness—we explore the dynamics of power, dynamics that can both enliven and explode if unexamined. We recognise the major powers that continue to subjugate women’s narratives—indeed, much of the story of Corrymeela is often told through the lenses of the founding men, and we are working to correct this. We recognise that the marginalised have often had the terms of their protest dictated to them by the privileged, and we seek to see each story within a systemic analysis and explore pathways out of subjugation into intersubjectivity.

We also, as mentioned, seek to bear witness to another face, the fourth face of our work—we confess our complicity in the fractures that have undone us. We are part of the problem, and working to be part of the solution. The fifth face of our work is that we take risks of trust. Everybody knows, I think, that it’s easier for the other to take the first risk. When they do that, it’s easier for others to follow. ‘You go first’ we hear from playgrounds to politics. Trust is a risk, and we depend on those who take it first.

The final face of our work is a face of witness. We witness to what it can mean to live well together. By creating small temporary communities of encounter, we encounter the deep capacity of humans to create hope, even—and especially—in the wake of harm. It is not enough for these small corners of light to shine. When we see people whose lives bear witness to a witness of light, it causes our hearts to burn, and so we tell the story in order to bear witness to something bigger than each of us, but held by all of us. We rush to our friends, we proclaim this good news—‘Come see what can happen when people meet one another.’ Come read, come share, come join, come witness.
As we’ve told stories of Corrymeela over 2015, as we have engaged in acts of re-membering, we have been telling of things that have happened but we have also been telling stories of who we are today. And, unsurprisingly, we are as ordinary as we always have been. We are groups of people who live our ordinary lives trying to bear witness to a hope that guides us—that friendships can be built across the most burnt of bridges; that reconciliation is a practice that both tires us and fires us; that peace is painful but the alternative is worse.

Corrymeela is a place of generosity. We have staff who work tirelessly to host over 10,000 people a year. Our work is made possible by around eighty thousand volunteer hours every year. Many of our volunteers have been working on the site for decades, generously giving time and service to the work. The faith community of Corrymeela has grown too, with 150 members, 70 associate members and thousands of friends around the globe. We gather around the symbols of the Turf Cross, an Open Bible and a Lit Candle. Together we make commitments to be engaged with the world at its points of fracture, faith and potential.

Corrymeela is people. We are young people, middle-aged and old people, we are people of doctrine and people of doubt. We engage with the differences of our world. We disagree with each other, and we seek to disagree agreeably. We know we’re part of the problems of the world. We work hard to be part of the solution. We are people of prayers and protest, curiosity and questioning, work and learning. We are Corrymeela. And you are always welcome.
THE HURLEY LEGACY: A PERSONAL APPRECIATION

Paddy Kearney*

On the 100th anniversary of the birth of Denis Hurley, Paddy Kearney explains how the man who was Archbishop of Durban for 45 years is still having an impact on that city. Why would Archbishop Hurley have approved of Pope Francis’ priorities for the Church, and how are those priorities finding expression in a new project to honour Denis Hurley’s legacy?

9 November 2015 marked the centenary of the birth of a man who, for 45 years, would be Archbishop of Durban. This anniversary is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the lessons that can be learnt from Denis Hurley’s life. To do so in the context of the papacy of Francis adds an extra poignancy to Hurley’s legacy.

In writing a biography of the archbishop, I was struck particularly by his commitment to prayer and by the fact that he was a lifelong learner: after his formal education was finished, he kept himself up-to-date through reading and private study. He loved to discuss and debate new ideas. As a young priest in the early 1940s, it was this keen interest in dialogue that attracted him to take part in the Pietermaritzburg Parliamentary Debating Society; twenty years later the Second Vatican Council he called ‘the highlight of my whole life’; in the 1990s, he relished being Chancellor of Natal University, in frequent contact with lecturers and students from many different disciplines. Discussion, debate and reading were the oxygen of his

* Paddy Kearney, long-time collaborator with the late Archbishop, is now Chair of the Denis Hurley Centre Trust. His biography of Denis Hurley is entitled Guardian of the Light: Denis Hurley Renewing the Church, Opposing Apartheid (Continuum: London and New York, 2009). More about the centre can be found on www.denishurleycentre.org including ways of donating for SA, UK and USA tax-payers. Photo by permission of the Denis Hurley Centre. This article first appeared as a post dated 13 February 2015 in Thinking Faith, the online journal of the Jesuits in Britain: http://www.thinkingfaith.org/
spirit, keeping him in touch with the ‘signs of the times’ so that he could be aware of the critical issues facing the Church.

From this awareness, and from his intense prayer life, flowed his ability to speak prophetically. During his studies in Rome, he (like Oscar Romero, his contemporary at the Gregorian University) had been impressed by Pope Pius XI’s vigorous opposition to the great dictators of that era: Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin. No wonder, then, that he was emboldened to lead the Church’s struggle against Apartheid.

Hurley insisted that if the Church was to speak out it must be thorough in its research, having the facts and figures at its fingertips; staff of the Southern African Bishops’ Conference attest to the demands he placed on them for such rigorous preparation. Equally strong was his insistence that although the Church should keep out of party politics, it must be involved in politics. He urged St John Paul II to write an encyclical that would clarify the difference, though he never did.

Truth, and the courage to speak the truth, are crucial for prophetic ministry. Hurley was unwilling to disguise his own views on controversial topics for the sake of advancing his career or making himself popular. When, after some agonising, he made a statement disagreeing with the view on birth control expressed by Pope Paul VI in Humanae Vitae, he said to a priest friend: ‘They can have my mitre, but I won’t change my standpoint.’ Well, the Vatican didn’t deprive him of his mitre, but they also didn’t give him the ‘red hat’ for which many felt him eminently qualified.
In deciding to question the papal position on birth control, the archbishop had been encouraged by the collegial atmosphere of the Second Vatican Council and the promise it seemed to offer of a future in which the bishops would govern the Church together with the pope. But 50 years later, that promise is yet to be realised as Hurley longed for. The Synod of Bishops is intended to facilitate collegiality, but the impression is often given that it is controlled by the curia rather than by the participating bishops—although the recent Extraordinary Synod on the Family gave distinct signs of a very different kind of Synod under Pope Francis.

Hurley would have been heartened by reports of the cardinals’ pre-conclave discussions before the election of Pope Francis. He would have discovered that he was by no means alone in his longing for the collegiality promised by Vatican II: in fact, the promotion of collegiality became part of the mandate given by the majority of cardinals to the one who would be elected to succeed Pope Benedict XVI.

Hurley was well-known as an intellectual and a fine administrator who enjoyed writing scholarly articles and planning ambitious campaigns for church and societal reform. Drafting constitutions or composing hymns were like hobbies to him. But if his presence was needed anywhere, to comfort or stand alongside suffering individuals or communities, to speak out about injustice, he would readily put aside desk work and make himself available to show solidarity, no matter how busy he was. His presence—and good humour—were often a calming influence in tense situations.

It was his great desire that the Church should be a ‘community serving humanity’, a theme that he persuaded the Southern African bishops to adopt for their pastoral plan. Like Pope Francis, he didn’t want the Church to be ‘turned in on itself’. Many organisations and associations exist for the sake of their members—they’re commonly known as ‘clubs’. The Church is not meant to be a club but rather a sign of God’s love for all people. One theologian has even said that the Church exists ‘for the sake of those who are not its members’—another point on which Pope Francis and Archbishop Denis would agree, I think.

How should this service to humanity be expressed? Archbishop Hurley spoke of a continuum of compassionate responses—ranging from social welfare through to advocacy, development and liberation.
The Church has to be involved in this whole spectrum, he said, but it often seems most comfortable with welfare work and can easily get stuck there. Hurley liked the Young Christian Workers’ simple method—‘see, judge, act’—which always asks the questions: Why are people poor? Why are they unemployed? Why are they homeless? What can we do about the causes?

Discovering the causes of major social problems and then seeking to bring about change is, as Hurley recognised, a massive task. That is what drew him to ecumenical and inter-faith movements. Despite our differences, he would say, there are so many things we object to and could tackle together: human rights abuses, poverty and inequality, violence and war, to mention just a few. Hurley was keen that people of different denominations and religious beliefs work together on these issues and become a powerful force for change.

It is thus fitting that, in Durban, we have built a concrete tribute—literally!—to this man, one which expresses the heart of his mission. The Denis Hurley Centre sits alongside Emmanuel Cathedral, next door to the mosque and in one of the most difficult parts of the city. Its very position defines what it is: a place where people of all faiths can come together in common mission; and where the mission is first and foremost the service of the poor. We work with our Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist and fellow Christian brothers and sisters to be a source of light in the darker aspects of the city. In this we are inspired by the gospel and by Hurley—after all, his earliest years were spent underneath the lighthouse of Robben Island. We also find ourselves inspired by Pope Francis and his recommitment to a Church of the poor and a Church which is not afraid to dialogue with those whose journeys to God have been along other paths.

Although the building was only officially opened on the archbishop’s 100th birthday, it had already been ‘open for business’ from the beginning of 2015: offering food, clothing and healthcare to the homeless; welcoming refugees; and providing skills and education to those in need. People of all faiths in Durban and across the world have helped us to build this centre—we now hope that they will continue to support us so we can continue this work. The Denis Hurley Association in the UK is one of many partners who see this as a centre not just for Durban but for the world. In an age where stories of religious division and conflict fill the media, we hope to show how
faith can be the source of the solution, not the problem, and that people of different faiths can work together.

The Centre aims, in all it does, to reflect one final aspect of Archbishop Hurley’s legacy: the primacy of love. Just days before his death, in a conversation with Fr Wilhelm Steckling (then Superior General of his religious congregation, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate), Hurley said:

You know, more and more I realise that love is the only thing that matters. Love makes the difference. Paul said that out of faith, hope and love, love is the most important. Sometimes we want to turn it around ... saying that faith comes first. We should return to the original message: give love the place of honour. Love is the distinguishing mark of the Christian.

For Jeremy Hurley, nephew of the archbishop, this is the most important aspect of his uncle’s legacy. ‘Love’, says Jeremy, ‘makes sense of all that the Archbishop did in his life, all his emphasis on ecumenism and social justice, his great compassion for people in any difficulty or suffering, his loving relationship with his family. In old age it had become clearer than ever to him that love was the unifying principle.’

We hope that Archbishop Denis would be overjoyed at the work that goes on under his watchful eye at the Denis Hurley Centre. We also imagine his excitement at the election of Pope Francis and all that has happened since. Imagine, if you will, a conversation between these two, in expressive Italian: Francis enthusing about the importance of mercy, and Hurley about the importance of love! Of course it would hardly be an argument—rather a mutual delight in these complementary divine qualities.

Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of the Mahatma and a patron of the Hurley Centre, has spoken with excitement about Pope Francis, and then added: ‘But you know you could have had a pope like that long ago if you had elected Archbishop Hurley!’
SAINT IRENAEUS JOINT ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC WORKING GROUP

Communiqué — Halki 2015

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group met for its twelfth annual meeting from 4 to 8 November 2015 in the historic Theological School of the Ecumenical Patriarchate which is located in the Holy Trinity Monastery on the island of Halki (Heybeliada, Turkey). The 2015 meeting was chaired by the Orthodox Co-President of the Working Group, Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos, and by the Catholic Co-President, Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg, Germany.

At the opening session on Wednesday evening, November 4, the group met with the Abbot of the monastery, Metropolitan Elpidophorus (Lambriniadis) of Bursa. During the meeting the members of the group attended the daily monastic prayers. On Sunday, the participants attended the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of St. George in the Phanar. Thereafter, they were graciously received at the center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The papers at this year’s meeting dealt with the emergence of national churches in 19th-century Orthodoxy, the notion of communio/koinonia and its ecumenical relevance and the understanding of authority in the Church. In addition, intensive work took place on the draft of a document which is meant to give an overview of the work done over the years by the Working Group. The results of this year’s meeting were summarized by the participants in the following theses:

Theses on the emergence of national churches in South-Eastern Europe in the 19th century:

(1) Unlike the ancient patriarchates and the Church of Russia, the formation of autocephalous national churches in South-Eastern Europe was closely connected with the establishment of national states in the 19th century. Different but interrelated factors such as territory, ethnicity, state, politics, and language played a part in this. Their ecclesiological relevance calls for further clarification. The
national churches were expected to assist the formation of the national states and the consolidation of their national identity.

(2) The formation of the autocephalous national churches in South-Eastern Europe (Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians) followed different patterns, but also exhibited a number of common traits: the majority of South-European ethnic groups lived in more than one country, with the result that several church structures had emerged for each of them. Moreover, the governments of the newly established national states wanted the proclamation of autocephalous churches on their territory, which led to a discussion on whether the church in the new state should end its relationship with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Bulgarians, however, followed a different path: in their case the movement towards church autonomy, namely the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate by the Sultan, preceded the independence of the state.

(3) Concerning the recognition of autocephaly, it should be kept in mind that all these newly established churches had been under the jurisdiction the Patriarchate of Constantinople. After the complete independence of the new national states, the autocephaly of the new national churches was subsequently recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the basis of the territorial-canonical principle. The Ecumenical Patriarch, together with the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, reacted to the Bulgarian aspirations for autonomy by condemning ethnophyletism at a synod in Constantinople in 1872; they would not accept a separate jurisdiction for the Orthodox Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire because that would have set the ethnic principle above the territorial principle; this resulted in a schism that was overcome only after the Second World War.

(4) All this led to a change in the understanding of autocephaly during the 19th century. It was no longer considered to be a matter of internal church order but became a sign of independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Ecclesial autocephaly was seen as parallel to state sovereignty. One consequence of this development was confusion between the ethnic and the territorial principles in church structure. This became a problem because the geographic boundaries of ethnic groups and the borders of states did not always coincide.
Theses on the notion of communio/koinonia:

(5) The reality of the Church as participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit is made fully apparent in the light of the Eucharistic mystery. The koinonia of the Church is grounded in the proclamation of the Gospel and the confession of the apostolic faith which it contains, consolidated by the church’s ministry in word and sacrament. The celebration of the Eucharist is the key event in which the koinonia of the Church is experienced.

(6) In principle, sacramental communion presupposes unity in faith. However, the precise extent of this unity in faith needs clarification. This applies within our churches, where there is the question of the relation between the faith of the Church and the faith of the individual, and between our churches, where criteria are needed to clarify what is absolutely essential for a common celebration of the Eucharist.

(7) The conception of the Church as a congregation of believers gathered in the Holy Spirit around Christ present in the word and the Eucharist requires and always presupposes communion among all the local churches that are presided over by a bishop. Each congregation celebrating the Eucharist ultimately under the presidency of the bishop is aware that it is within the koinonia of the whole Church. It is from the Eucharist that it derives its membership in this broader community.

(8) The recognition of the full reality of the Eucharistic mystery is the foundation of the mutual recognition of churches as the Church of Jesus Christ. From a Catholic point of view, the ecclesial status of other churches depends on the extent to which the sacraments in these churches are realized. In the Orthodox Church, there are historically conditioned different practices regarding the recognition of ecclesial reality and the validity of the sacraments of the non-Orthodox; so far, there is no agreement about this among the various Orthodox local churches.

Theses on the relevance of authority in the Church:

(9) As in every human society, the phenomena of authority and power are present in the Church. Authority concerns the influence of
a person or an institution that is grounded on tradition or competence and the prestige that accrues from it. Power, on the other hand, has to do with the possibility of using certain means and procedures in order to make decisions for others.

(10) Holy Scripture describes authority and power in different ways. Thus, there are persons with different gifts in the Church who receive and exert authority in various areas, as Eph 4,11 shows: “And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers.” This demonstrates that authority in the Church is always linked to the community. Authority and power are dependent on each other, even if there are cases of spiritual authority in the Church that are not connected to a church office. Saints such as Starets Siluan of Mount Athos and Mother Teresa are cases in point.

(11) We are of the common conviction that the use of power in the Church is meaningful only if exercised according to the model of the crucified Christ, as a service and not as a way of dominating others (cf. Mk 10,42-45 par; Jn 13,1-17). This applies also to the exercise of primacy at its various levels. The means at the disposal of those who exercise primacy are to be employed only in this spirit. It is regrettable that, although those in authority place so much emphasis on service, charisma and love, some of them identify themselves with their own power to such an extent that the true meaning of primacy is obscured. A sense of accountability would consequently show more clearly the interdependence of a primate and his community.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group is composed of 26 theologians, 13 Orthodox and 13 Catholic, from a number of European countries and the USA. It was established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), and has met since then in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), Thessaloniki (Greece) and Rabat (Malta). At this year’s meeting on Halki near Istanbul (Turkey), it was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Working Group in November 2016 at Taizé (France).
A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE OF CANADA TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA’S COMMISSION ON THE MARRIAGE CANON

The Commission on the Marriage Canon established in response to the 2013 General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada has seen fit to consult ecumenical partners in its discernment regarding the pastoral care of same sex couples, in what can be considered a sign of the maturation of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. Over the past several decades, both Anglican and Catholic Communions have been increasingly challenged by changing attitudes and developments in the social and legal understandings of marriage within the Canadian context. Within the forum of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission (ARC) of Canada, Catholics have followed with genuine interest and prayer as the Anglican Church of Canada has engaged in formal processes of discernment regarding the inclusion and the appropriate pastoral care of gay and lesbian persons. In the recent international synodal process centered on the life of the family today (2014-2015), Catholics have begun to repent of the sometimes ‘harsh and merciless’ attitudes adopted in the past towards homosexual persons, and to acknowledge the need for a more sensitive and inclusive pastoral response in their regard. The final text of the most recent international synod underlines the importance of eliminating all forms of ‘unjust discrimination’ against those with a homosexual tendency belonging to our natural and ecclesial families, insisting that their dignity must be fully respected.¹

Anglican and Catholic members of ARC Canada have sought to draw attention to the long history of agreement on the doctrine of marriage between our two Communions. This shared understanding was confirmed in the immediate wake of the Second Vatican Council. This consensus was a part of the basis for the revised pastoral guidelines contained in he Directory on Ecumenism (1970) on inter-church

marriage—policies that were further developed in the revised Code of Canon Law (1983) and complemented by a set of joint pastoral guidelines established in 1987 by the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops’ Dialogue of Canada. A common understanding of Christian marriage is also reflected in the agreed statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church (1993).

The proposed changes to the marriage canon now under consideration by the General Synod touch directly upon the doctrine of Christian marriage. Our common understanding of Christian marriage, until now, has understood Christian marriage to be a permanent covenant entered into by a man and a woman and whose purposes include, insofar as possible, the procreation, nurture, and education of children. Catholic teaching continues to reject an understanding of homosexual unions as ‘analogous to God’s plan for marriage and the family.’ The proposed revision of the marriage canons of the Anglican Church of Canada ‘to allow the marriage of same sex couples in the same way as opposite sex couples’ would be a serious departure from the shared understanding of sacramental life existing between Anglicans and Catholics.

The process undertaken to propose such a revision of the canonical and doctrinal understanding of Christian marriage also raises fundamental questions in matters of ecclesiology. Catholic theology does not envision a situation where an individual province or national church might revise existing sacramental doctrine independently of the world-wide communion of the local churches, especially in matters

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where a clear consensus is lacking. Catholic ecumenical partners would be saddened by any initiative that might further impair the bonds of communion within the wider Anglican Communion, or weaken the communion that Anglicans and Catholics already share.

Together, Anglican and Roman Catholic members of ARC Canada draw the attention of the Commission on the Marriage Canon and of the General Synod to a number of questions which bear consideration in light of our respective ecumenical commitments. The text is written in the spirit of dialogue, where we are called to ‘speak the truth in love’ (Eph. 4:15). Over four decades of dialogue, the bonds of trust between us have grown, enabling us to address one another with the ‘frankness that friendship allows.’ This common statement was submitted to the Commission on the Marriage Canon on June 16, 2015. It is acknowledged along with the consultations of other ecumenical partners in the report of the Commission, ‘This Holy Estate,’ which was submitted to the Council of General Synod of the Anglican Church.

I. Introduction

Canadian Anglicans and Roman Catholics have been in formal dialogue with each other for more than 40 years. The bonds of trust that have grown between our two churches during that time allow us, even in difficult times, to ‘speak the truth in love’ to each other, and to engage in dialogue with one another with ‘the frankness that friendship allows.’

The Anglican Church of Canada and the wider Anglican Communion have been grappling with questions of human sexuality for at least a generation. In 2013, the Canadian church’s General Synod proposed an amendment to its canon law that would change the definition of marriage to include couples of the same sex. A process demonstrating ‘broad consultation’ was mandated, and this included seeking the counsel of the Anglican Church of Canada’s ecumenical partners, of which the Roman Catholic Church is one of its longest standing. The General Synod’s Commission on the Marriage Canon therefore invited the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada to provide input on a matter that has clear ecumenical implications.

1 Ephesians 4:15.
2 Cardinal Walter Kasper’s address to the 2008 Lambeth Conference.
1. Social and Cultural Context

We live in a time of tremendous cultural and social upheaval. Christian churches face intense pressures with respect to their teachings about sexuality, marriage, and human relationships. Things we long took for granted as self-evident turn out not to be so, and we search for answers to questions we had never imagined. In particular, changes in the legislative and social understandings of marriage, and what it means to bless a marriage, continue to engage, and sometimes perplex, Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike. We both perceive these to be critically important issues, touching people where they live and impacting essential dimensions of human identity and well-being. As such, they demand an intelligent, faithful, and pastorally sensitive response.

Over the past century, a general consensus on the societal purposes of marriage has given way to a complex and often contradictory array of understandings of what marriage is or should be. Whereas religious marriage was once the rarely challenged norm, today many couples, even in our congregations, choose civil marriage, cohabitation, or some other form of union. Anglican and Roman Catholic congregations alike have seen a dramatic drop in the number of church marriages performed, and an increase in the number of marriages ending in divorce. Among so many changes, the introduction and widespread use of contraception and the availability of different forms of assisted reproduction have blurred the strict link between sexuality and procreation, with distinctive consequences for our understanding of the goals and purposes of marriage. Paradoxically, at a time of growing ambivalence to marriage as a social institution, one sector of society is newly demanding the blessings of the churches for same-sex unions. All these societal changes raise consequent theological, pastoral and canonical challenges. Our communions share in the quandary of how, in the tradition of faith and in light of Scripture, we might wisely respond.

Closely related to the question of marriage is the issue of family. Just as we have seen shifts in our understanding and experience of marriage, so now are families seen as coming in many shapes and forms: two-parent, single-parent, blended, or multi-generational. The reasons behind these changes are complex. Personal values, social and economic pressures, evolving roles of women and men within
marriage, and a host of other factors all shape the shifting reality of family life in our time.

In the midst of the complexity and stresses of our context and the commitment of our churches to find appropriate pastoral responses, there is a perennial hope and expectation that marriage and family life will bring joy, a sense of belonging, and blessing. As Christians, we affirm the holiness of this aspiration, perceiving marriage and children as gifts of God and means of his grace. In the spirit of the Gospel, we jointly feel a pastoral responsibility to engage our people in their diverse and often messy situations—to be present, to advise, to comfort, to encourage, to inspire.

This complex situation for marriage and family life is being discussed in both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. In preparation for the [forthcoming] Synod on the Family, the Roman Catholic Church reaffirmed its traditional teaching on marriage as a loving, faithful, permanent, and life-giving relationship between a man and a woman. It is also giving explicit attention to the pastoral response to those in common-law unions, divorce and remarried Catholics, those facing economic pressures, those living in contexts of violence and war, and families living through other forms of crisis. Those preparing for the Synod also asked ‘what pastoral attention might be appropriate for [members of our families who have homosexual tendencies] in accordance with the Church’s teaching.’

Without compromising the fundamental vision of marriage and family life to which the Catholic Church is committed, it has reiterated the importance of avoiding all unjust discrimination, and of welcoming with respect and sensitivity all persons regardless of their sexual orientation.

II. A Common Understanding of Marriage

1. Agreed Statements

Over the more than 45 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue since the Second Vatican Council, we have been pleased to discover the depth of our agreement in many areas of Christian life and doctrine, including marriage. In particular, we have affirmed

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'substantial convergence' on the doctrine that undergirds marriage through our dialogues on mixed marriages and through the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) in Life in Christ (1994). Here are some of the things we have commonly affirmed:

On marriage itself the Commission finds no fundamental difference of doctrine between the two Churches, as regards what marriage of its nature is or the ends which it is ordained to serve.2

Neither of our two traditions regards marriage as a human invention. On the contrary, both see it as grounded by God in human nature and as a source of community, social order and stability. Nevertheless, the institution of marriage has found different expression in different cultures and at different times. In our own time, for instance, we are becoming increasingly aware that some forms, far from nurturing the dignity of persons, foster oppression and domination, especially of women. However, despite the distortions that have affected it, both our traditions continue to discern and uphold in marriage a God-given pattern and significance.3

Our shared reflections have made us see more clearly that Anglicans and Roman Catholics are at one in their commitment to following the teaching of Christ on marriage; at one in their understanding of the nature and meaning of marriage; and at one in their concern to reach out to those who suffer as a result of the breakdown of marriage.4

We acknowledge that these joint agreements have been made at the international level and the process of their full reception is ongoing. However, they have already influenced pastoral practice and subsequent dialogue. Here in Canada, the national Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue has been exploring these developments as they have touched the Anglican Church of Canada. In particular, we have studied together the St. Michael Report of the Primate’s Theological Commission, and noted the theological and ecclesiological questions it raises, many of which remain unanswered. We have also followed with interest discussions in preparation for the coming Synod on the Family in the Catholic Church. In light of our common affirmations

2 Final report, 21.
3 Life in Christ, 59.
4 Life in Christ, 77.
above, we offer an exploration of the depth of our agreements and raise questions concerning our emerging divergence in light of the proposed change to the marriage canon of the Anglican Church of Canada.

2. Marriage in our Rites

Our traditions affirm the goodness of marriage as founded in creation as a gift of God’s love. We believe that marriage for Christians is a sign of Christ’s self-giving love for the church, affording it a sacramental character. We affirm that marriage is an exclusive bond between parties for life. The aims of marriage include the procreation and education of children, mutual comfort and help of the spouses, and the fulfillment of the conjugal relationship.

In the Roman Catholic rite, the introduction expresses the aims of marriages this way: ‘Married Christians signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love that exists between Christ and his Church...’

The marriage covenant is established by ‘the irrevocable consent that the spouses freely give and receive from each other.’ ‘Christ the Lord raised [marriage] to the dignity of a sacrament, modeled on his own nuptial bond with the Church.’

Marriage’s purpose is ‘the procreation and education of children’ to be brought up ‘according to the law of Christ and his Church.’ In the case of couples of advanced years, the question regarding their willingness to accept children is omitted.

One of the prefaces to the nuptial Eucharistic prayer states: ‘For you have forged the covenant of marriage as a sweet yoke of harmony and an unbreakable bond of peace.’ In another prayer, God’s intention is described as follows: ‘For you willed that the human race, created by the gift of your goodness, should be raised to such high dignity that in the union of husband and wife you might bestow a true image of your love.’

Marriage also entails responsibilities to others. So, for example, the solemn blessing includes the petition: ‘May you always bear witness to the love of God in this world so that the afflicted and the needy will find in you generous friends and welcome you into the joys of heaven.’

The marriage rites of the Eastern churches in communion with the bishop of Rome witness to similar tenets. For example, in the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church we find this description of the end of marriage: ‘Sustain them with the holy union that comes from You,
for You made male and female from the beginning and You are the One who matches a wife to her husband so that she may be his helpmate and the human race may continue.’ Similarly, the nuptial blessing states: ‘May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the all-holy Trinity, One in Being, the Source of life, one Godhead and one Kingship, bless you and give you long life, fine children, success in life and Faith, a great store of the good things of this earth and find you worthy of receiving as well the good things which have been promised. We ask this through the prayers of the holy Theotokos and those of all the saints.’

The Anglican Church of Canada’s Book of Common Prayer (1962) describes marriage as ‘an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying unto us the mystical Union which is betwixt Christ and his Church.’ Its ends are ‘... the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman; for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord; and for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, in both prosperity and adversity.’

The 1985 Book of Alternative Services describes marriage as ‘a gift of God and a means of his grace, in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God’s purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love, they shall grow together and be united in that love, as Christ is united with his Church.’ It describes the ends of marriage as the couple’s ‘mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love [and that they may be blessed in the procreation, care, and upbringing of children].’

3. The Sacramental Character of Christian Marriage

Both Anglicans and Catholics count seven liturgical celebrations of the church as sacramental signs or actions through which we encounter the saving grace and love of Christ. Where Anglicans have traditionally distinguished between the two sacraments ‘ordained of Christ the Lord in the Gospel’ (namely baptism and eucharist), and five other actions ‘commonly called sacraments’ (matrimony, confirmation, penance, ordination, extreme unction),¹ Catholics also admit a certain ‘hierarchy’ or ordering among the seven sacraments. Within an ‘organic whole’ where each sacrament has ‘its own vital place,’ the teaching of the Catholic faith is attentive to show how each

¹ See Article XXV of the 39 Articles of Religion.
is ordained toward participation in the Eucharist, which stands at the heart of Christian life and prayer.¹

Life in Christ notes that Anglicans and Catholics agree that, ‘Marriage, in the order of creation, is both sign and reality of God’s faithful love, and thus it has a naturally sacramental dimension.’ Further, the document affirms that marriage ‘also points to the saving love of God’ and ‘is open to a still deeper sacramentality within the life and communion of Christ’s own Body.’² Against the horizon of consensus on the ‘nature and meaning of Christian marriage,’³ ARCIC observes a certain differentiation in Anglican and Catholic interpretations of the sacramentality of marriage. Differing interpretations and emphases have ‘given rise to differing understandings of the conditions under which the sacramentality of a marriage is fulfilled.’⁴ Where Catholic theology views the sacrament of marriage as raising up a natural sign of God’s love in the order of redemption, Anglicans regard civil marriage between two Christians as already participating in the sacramental order. Where Catholics emphasize the redemptive role of grace encountered in the sacramental action of the church, Anglican theology and practice underlines the action of God’s grace in the order of creation. These emphases, ARCIC contends, ought to be seen as complementary.⁵

This raises questions for consideration in the present context: Of what are same-sex covenantal bonds a sign within the order of creation? What would a sacramental celebration within the church add to such covenantal bonds?

4. Homosexuality

Our churches have affirmed the goodness of human sexuality as ordered toward the gift of self and the creation of life. Our agreed statements have said that it is within the covenant of marriage between husband and wife that the physical expression of sexuality finds its true fulfillment, and in the procreation, care, and upbringing

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¹ General Directory for Catechesis [1997], n. 115).
² Life in Christ, 61.
³ Life in Christ, 77.
⁴ Life in Christ, 62.
⁵ Life in Christ, 62.
of children that two people together share in the life-giving generosity of God.¹

Anglicans and Roman Catholics affirm that all persons, including those of homosexual orientation, are made in the divine image and share the full dignity of the human person. We also uphold the importance and significance of friendship and affection among men and women, whether married or single. In Life in Christ, our churches have both rejected the claim that homosexual relationships and married relationships are morally equivalent and equally capable of expressing the right ordering and use of the sexual drive.²

III. Some Questions and Possible Implications

In a spirit of love and friendship this dialogue commission—which includes both Catholics and Anglicans—was invited into the Anglican Church of Canada’s discernment about changing its canonical definition of marriage. For one church to invite an ecumenical partner into an internal discussion of this kind is an extraordinary gesture of deep trust between our churches. We are grateful to be given an opportunity to be able to offer this contribution.

In light of the communion we share, there is no such thing as an entirely unilateral decision or action; what one church does has consequences for the other. In this spirit the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada invites the Anglican Church of Canada to consider the following questions, clustered in two categories: moral teaching and ecclesiological considerations.

1. Moral Teaching

- The Roman Catholic Church holds a firm position on homosexuality, which is set out, for example, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (see numbers 2357-2359). It has a clear teaching on marriage as being exclusively between a man and a woman, and Anglicans and Roman Catholics have agreed on that until now. Given this past agreement, Roman Catholics are left to wonder what has changed, such that our previous common understanding of marriage is now in doubt. If same-sex marriage becomes possible in the Anglican Church of Canada, what then becomes of the enduring meaning or value of the distinction between male and female, and of

¹ Life in Christ, 55-58.
² Life in Christ, 87.
procreation as one of the ends of marriage? How would the distinctiveness be maintained?

- Anglicans, in the context of dialogue with Roman Catholics, would ask whether there was a pastoral response between offering no ecclesial affirmation of same-sex relationships and changing the definition of marriage to include same-sex relationships. Is there a way of maintaining the traditional teaching on marriage while finding ways to honour the good in homosexual relationships?
- ARCIC speaks of Tradition as the dynamic transmission of apostolic faith from one generation to the next, but stresses that all new expressions of the Gospel message ‘must be consonant with the apostolic witness recorded in the Scriptures.’ The church is ‘constantly to measure its teaching, preaching and action against the Scriptures.’ Roman Catholic teaching interprets the Scriptures as offering a clear teaching about human sexuality and marriage. How would a change in the definition of marriage be in continuity with this apostolic witness?

2. Ecclesiological Considerations

Anglicans and Roman Catholics have addressed the discernment of moral questions in the past, and continue to address this question in the present work of ARCIC. As dialogue participants, our understanding of the process by which the Anglican Church of Canada is discerning this matter evokes concerns about sources of authority, the nature of the theological discernment, the role of bishops in safeguarding apostolic faith, the duration of the discernment, the sense of faith, and wider ecclesial relationships.

- To the traditional Anglican sources of authority of Scripture, tradition, and reason is sometimes added experience. Roman Catholics are asking how these various sources of authority are weighted in comparison to each other, if they are applied consistently, and if wider cultural influences are being considered in proportion to the witness of Scripture and apostolic teaching. How does a church differentiate between cultural changes that encompass truth from those of which we may need to be more cautious?
- Concerning the nature of theological discernment, both Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the dialogue have questions. Anglicans

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1 *The Gift of Authority*, 15.
2 *The Gift of Authority*, 15.
wrestle with how they are giving adequate theological underpinnings to the process while respecting the synodal structures. Catholics would ask whether detailed biblical and theological study have preceded decision-making on this question. They have not heard a cogent rationale to explain how a possible change in the doctrine of marriage would be a true reflection of the apostolic faith and of the sense of faith of the whole church.

● Through ARCIC Anglicans and Roman Catholics have agreed that bishops are responsible for assuring continuity of the apostolic faith, and that the teaching authority of bishops, including primatial and collegial dimensions of episcopal ministry, is intended to ensure the unity of the church in continuity with the church through the ages.\(^1\) Where is that understanding of the episcopate evidenced in the Anglican synodal process as it addresses the possibility of changing the marriage canon?

● The relatively rapid pace of this synodal process is worrisome for Roman Catholics, given the gravity of this potential doctrinal change and its implications for the daily living of Christian faith, for Christian anthropology, and for ecumenical relations.

● From the perspective of the Anglican Church of Canada, the synodal process is seen as a sufficient means of discerning the sense of the faithful \((\textit{sensus fidelium})\). Catholics would ask whether the discernment process truly reflects the \textit{sensus fidelium} of its members. The same question may be raised by Anglicans elsewhere in the Communion or even within Canada.

● ARCIC has dealt extensively with the interdependence of churches as constitutive of the \textit{koinonia} in which they share. ‘The mutual interdependence of all the churches is integral to the reality of the Church as God wills it to be. No local church that participates in the living Tradition can regard itself as self-sufficient.’\(^2\) To what extent does the Anglican Church of Canada give consideration to its responsibilities as part of a wider communion of churches, and as part of the universal Church, and what role does this self-understanding play when making significant decisions? The St. Michael Report also


\(^2\) \textit{The Gift of Authority}, 37.
raised this question for Anglicans in 2005: ‘Is it theologically and doctrinally responsible for one member church of the Communion to approve a course of action which it has reason to believe may be destructive of the unity of the Communion?’ How much impairment of communion with other Anglicans (throughout the Communion) is the Anglican Church of Canada willing to bear?

3. Ecumenical Implications

The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism noted that among the communions who separated from Rome ‘in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.’ This affirmation rests on the recognition of the many ‘catholic traditions and institutions’ which have continued to exist within the Anglican Communion, and which have their roots in our common patrimony. A common understanding of marriage is an important aspect of the real but incomplete communion in which Anglicans and Catholics share.

The Anglican Church of Canada has given priority to ecumenical relations and taken its ecumenical commitments seriously. The invitation to ecumenical partners to contribute to its discernment about the marriage canon is an indication of that commitment. Any divergence on the doctrine of Christian marriage, which our dialogue has until now presented as a matter of fundamental convergence, would weaken the very basis of our existing communion, and weaken the foundations upon which we have sought to build towards fuller ecclesial communion. It would have profound consequences for our common understanding on matters of ecclesiology and discernment in communion. Not only would it signify a new obstacle on the road to full visible unity between us, it would also put at risk the fuller reception of the consensus and convergence that has been achieved through the years, raising questions about the level of awareness and authority that past agreements carry, and abrading the ecclesial trust between us.

Because it touches both the sacramental life of the church and our basic understanding of who we are as human beings, such an emerging difference would be felt deeply in our parishes and on all levels of our relationship. It would diminish our ability to give

1 St. Michael Report, 16.
2 Unitatis Redintegratio, 13.
common witness to our faith, and reduce the sphere in which we could engage in common mission.

Catholics would also regret any further fragmenting and ‘impairment of communion’ within the Anglican Communion on questions of doctrine and sacramental life, a concern also shared by many within the Anglican Church of Canada.

Our two churches have experienced similar challenges in our relationship in the past. We continue to differ on questions such as the ordination of women, the remarriage of divorced people, and the exercise of authority. Despite these differences, we have remained in dialogue, and seek to continue to give living expression to the reality that ‘what unites us is much greater than what divides us.’\(^1\) It would be our desire that we would continue to be engaged in dialogue, both in our bilateral conversations between theologians and bishops, and in the multilateral relations we are both a part of. But we would grieve the weakening of our communion and the diminishment of our common life. The understanding of human personhood and of human sexuality in relation to the expression and fulfilment of human dignity by persons created in the image and likeness of God is one that we recognize as requiring urgent attention and dialogue as our communions seek to welcome and pastorally minister to homosexual persons with sensitivity and respect.

One immediate and practical consequence of the Anglican Church of Canada proceeding with the authorization of same-sex marriages would be a necessary revisiting of our Pastoral Guidelines for Interchurch Marriages Between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Canada, which were jointly produced in 1987 and based on what was then our common understanding of marriage.

Whatever the outcome of the Anglican Church of Canada’s discernment on this question, be assured of this dialogue’s continuing prayer that we might be led ‘into all truth,’\(^2\) and of our commitment to place ourselves at the service of our Lord’s prayer and desire that his disciples be one.\(^3\)

\(^1\) *Ut Unum Sint*, 20.
\(^2\) John 16: 13.
\(^3\) John 17: 21.

This book by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, Assistant Research Professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg and editor of *Lutheran Forum*, deals with one of the most outstanding and at the same time disputed figures of twentieth century Western Orthodox Theology, the ‘Grandmother of Western Orthodoxy’: Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (1907-2005) [henceforth B-S].

The book contains Acknowlegments (vi), Foreword (vii-viii), eight chapters, a bibliography of B-S, a list of ‘works used and consulted’ and an index of names and important theological terms.

The first two chapters deal with the biographical and theological background of B-S; chapters 3 to 5 sketch her theological development chronologically, with chapters 6 to 8 focussing on the systematic development of selected areas of her work.

In the foreword, the author explains that Orthodoxy has taken too little notice of B-S through categorizing her as a feministic theologian. In fact, her interest in the women’s issue does not take its origin in secular feminism, but is a result of her biblical and patristic research. The focus of this interest is not primarily the ordination of women in the Orthodox Church, but ‘understanding human personhood, on the basis of the triune nature of God’. (viii) The author aims to adjust the stereotypes which have attached themselves to B-S.

Chapter 1, ‘The Grandmother of Western Orthodoxy’ (1-10), sets out the biographical material, drawn almost entirely from the biography by Olga Lossky. (p. 1 n. i) It deals with the facts and circumstances of B-S’s life which influenced her theological path. Among them are her Jewish roots; how she came to the Christian faith; her study of philosophy and theology; her conversion to Orthodoxy (1929), after which [sic!] she was for eight months an ‘auxiliary pastor’ for a Reformed parish in the West of Strasbourg; her contacts with representatives of the Russian Orthodox diaspora and with other important Orthodox theologians (Paul Evdokimov, Vladimir Lossky, Sergius Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Timothy Ware, Anthony Bloom, Olivier Clément, John Meyendorff, etc.); her master’s work in theology about Russian holiness, as well as her participation in the
work of ecumenical groups, her doctorate gained in 1976, and her publications and courses.

Chapter 2 (‘Paul Evdokimov on “Woman”, 11-28) attends to B-S’s theological background: Paul Evdokimov, and through him the nineteenth century Russian theologian Alexander Bukharev (on whom she did her doctoral studies), Vladimir Soloviev, and later Bulgakov. Here, the author describes the ideas of a number of Orthodox theologians on the women’s issue. Considerable space is devoted to Evdokimov—justifiably, inasmuch as B-S followed him on women’s issues in her early years.

According to Evdokimov, a cause of the common Orthodox lack of interest in gender as a soteriological and eschatological subject could be ‘Platonic mind-body dualism’. Paradoxically, as Wilson explains, Evdokimov was himself unable to escape this tendency. He insists on the ‘fundamental birthgiving spirituality’ of women, in the ontological, not the biological sense: ‘a high and holy calling ... to protect the world of humans as mother ... by giving to this world a soul’. The main problem in Evdokimov is, according to Wilson, ‘a largely negative approach, focusing on differences’: he wants to establish a clean-cut (‘ontological’) distinction between the characteristics and areas of influence of the genders. The author queries his ‘grounds for saying such a differentiation exists at all’.

Evdokimov rationalizes his construct by means of a trinitarian theology: the Son is masculine and the Spirit feminine, which is why one may not confuse the ‘charisms’ of men (‘christic charisms’) and of women (‘pneumatic charisms’). From this he concludes that any confusion of the respective features of the genders constitutes a “betraying” of their own being. Even so, Evdokimov finally made it possible for Orthodox theologians to talk about these matters.

Chapters 3 to 5 trace B-S’s theological development on the basis of her publications. This period begins with an invitation to deliver the keynote address at the first ever international gathering of Orthodox women at the Agapia monastery in Roumania (1976) which became a key event for her, leading to books, articles and meetings.

Chapter 3 (‘Agapia to Sheffield’, 29-51) demonstrates B-S’s first doubts concerning Evdokimov. B-S investigates purity taboos, analyzes women’s participation in the sacraments, their role in Church history as ‘martyrs, apostles, evangelists’, the possibility of
the ordination of women to the priesthood and the diaconate, considers the argument of ‘the iconic character of the [male] priest’ and the trinitarian arguments for excluding women from the priesthood, and investigates patristic anthropology. B-S establishes that ‘the connection between Trinity and anthropology [is] not quite as clear as desired’ (47) and that ‘it [is] impossible to specify ... the differences between the sexes with great accuracy’ (47) as Evdokimov believed.

At this time B-S experienced a sense of disappointment, and of alienation from the feminism of the WCC, which she perceived as ‘global criticism and condemnation ... against the entire church’. (48)

Chapter 4 (53-78) demonstrates how B-S began to shake off Evdokimov’s ideas and to move to her own mature position in favour of the ordination of women. The author presents one of B-S’s most central texts: ‘The Place of Women in the Church’. At that time B-S was working on ‘historical and cultural analysis’ as well as ‘extensive scriptural exegesis’ (54) and the Didascalia. (55) Together with Gregory of Nyssa, she comes to the idea of ‘humanity beyond sex’ (55) and points out that the fathers were ‘far more interested in the fact of Jesus Christ as true anthropos, not as “man”’. She criticizes Evdokimov’s idea of profound spiritual differences between men and women as having inadequate scriptural and theological foundation. She no longer finds the ‘iconic argument’ convincing, since 1) the priest is not the actor in the act of worship but only the instrument of Christ and the Spirit, and 2) in the epiclesis, the priest represents not Christ as the bridegroom but the church as the bride. (56) In discussion with Thomas Hopko, she demonstrates that to say that ‘the spiritual vocation of men is found in the Son and that of women is found in the Spirit’ is not only ‘to divide Son from Spirit, but to imply that the salvation of each is somehow different.’ (61) She researches the meaning of the gender symbols concerning Father and Son in the Bible and stresses that this symbolism does not imply any sort of biological analogy(61) because the Scriptures use animal metaphors too. The conclusion of these years is that personhood, not gender, is the key to patristic and biblical anthropology. In 1987 she published her first collection of essays on the subject. The turning point for her was the Interorthodox Consultation of Rhodes, 1988.

Chapter 5 (‘After Rhodes’, 79-103) presents her ‘mature position on the ordination of women’ as well as her discussions with other
Orthodox theologians, supporters as well as opponents. The central tasks for modern Orthodoxy are, for B-S, to eliminate all practices based on impurity taboos; to develop the theology of personhood; to ask what kind of priesthood is the Christian priesthood, keeping in mind its essential connection to personhood. (80)

Chapters 6-8 (105-165) proceed rather systematically. Chapter 6 (‘The Female Diaconate’, 105-12) deals with B-S’s thoughts about recreating the diaconate for women for a new situation (without imitating the old ways), and her friendship with Mother Maria Skobtsova—‘an eschatological, apocalyptic spirit’—in particular Skobtsova’s unique ability for discerning the ‘signs of the times’. (108) In the light of this friendship, the author makes it clear that B-S was herself a unique and apocalyptic figure.

Chapter 7 (‘Feminist, Protestant, Orthodox?’, 113-42) considers how life events and personal contacts influenced her theology. The question ‘How feminist?’ is investigated mainly on the basis of her book reviews for Contacts. Despite her fundamental sympathy for ‘feminist goals in secular life’, (118) in contradiction to secular feminists ‘her criticism of church practice stemmed from the Orthodox Tradition itself. She did not view the Tradition as fundamentally flawed.’ (118) For her, dealing with women’s issues meant a re-conversion to the Gospel.

In the section ‘How Protestant?’ B-S is situated in line along with other famous converts (such as Lev Gillet, Kallistos Ware, Olivier Clément, Michael Plekon, etc.). This is a fine exposition which deserves a book to itself. It is clear that in Orthodoxy, there is a tendency ‘to chalk up advocacy or the ordination of women ... to undue Protestant or ecumenical influence.’ (119) It is somewhat surprising that the author deems that ‘B-S seems not to have been subject to such accusations.’ (119) On the contrary, this is precisely why she has found so little favour in, for example, the Russian Orthodox Church. Wilson presents here the texts dealing specifically with the relationship between the Protestant and Orthodox Churches. It becomes clear that B-S was a unique figure even in the line of other converts, among other things because she had arguably never really broken with Protestantism (‘even taking communion on rare occasions’, 126). Also, according to her own testimony, she was ‘an orthodox Protestant, or a protestant Orthodox’. (127) The clearest reference here is to be found in her two part article, Regards
Orthodoxes sur le Protestantisme, published in 2000, which contains criticisms of both Protestantism and of Orthodoxy. (128)

In the section on ‘Which school of Orthodox theology?’ the author courageously attempts to systematize the various ‘trends’, or schools. She distinguishes two: 1) the ‘neopatristic school’ of thought issuing from Florovsky; and 2) the ‘suprapatristic school’ (or the ‘Russian school’, ‘sophiologists’, ‘Slavophiles’), a movement which goes beyond the patristic foundations of Orthodoxy. The author finds this term ‘especially useful in identifying later twentieth-century members of the school who were not immediately connected to Russia.’ (136) B-S is seen as influenced by the ‘suprapatristic school’ and as finding her place amongst the following thinkers: Skovoroda, Bukharev, Berdiaev, Soloviev, Florensky, Bulgakov, Evdokimov and Vladimir Lossky. (139-40) The questions touched upon here are so complex, and Wilson’s exposition of them so auspicious, that one would like to encourage her to develop this work in a separate investigation. For the risk is that her achievement might simply be pigeonholed under ‘women’s studies’, and so escape the notice of readers who are interested in the broader issues.

Chapter 8 (‘Tradition, Priesthood, Gender and Personhood’, 143-65) is a sort of summarizing. B-S was the first who ‘internalized’ the ‘Western’ women’s issue for the Eastern Church. A number of male Orthodox theologians moved toward her position. (144) Wilson’s book makes it clear that the women’s issue uncovers a truly important subject for Orthodox Theology which urgently requires developing: personhood. The question to solve is, whether or not there is a spiritual dimension or ontological significance to gender. (159) Wilson demonstrates that B-S here follows Vladimir Lossky with his correction of how the Trinity operates as an analogy for humankind: it is personhood, not gender, that constitutes the human hypostasis. (164)

The book exhibits a few weaknesses. One could wish for more precise dates. For example, we are told that B-S studied philosophy, but not when she started and finished; likewise, that she started her study of theology in Strasbourg, but not when. Having to work out dates on the basis of expressions like ‘the following month’ (49), ‘two years after Sheffield, seven years after Agapia’ (53), ‘over the next 15 years or so’ (79), ‘two years later’ (87), etc., makes reading a bit difficult.
One could also wish for more precise references in reporting the thoughts of others. For example, some ideas of Evdokimov are paralleled with those of the Church Fathers, but these parallels are not always quoted from sources. One encounters also rather general references such as ‘elsewhere’ (cf. p. 21: ‘Evdokimov himself elsewhere posits that …’) And in presenting B-S’s thoughts, the author does not always make it absolutely clear where B-S’s thoughts finish and the author’s comments start.

One correction is advisable. The phrase: ‘starting with the sixteenth century when patristic theology was abandoned under Tsar Peter the Great’s Westernizing project’ (129) suggests that Tsar Peter lived in the sixteenth century whereas he lived from 1672 till 1725. To present the decline of patristic theology in Russia as a conscious aim of Peter’s ‘Westernizing project’ is in any case not correct.

Undoubtedly, this book has great merit, with much to recommend it. The concept of the book (a continuous representation of B-S’s and her opponent’s texts interspersed with the author’s comments) may have the disadvantage of inevitable repetition. But its undeniable advantage is that the book becomes a unique reference work for the history of the debate concerning the subject.

The book makes possible a more detailed encounter with Paul Evdokimov’s theology. The author has managed to expose discrepancies in his theology. She summarizes particular points of his thought accurately, sagely, and not without fine irony. She also succeeds in demonstrating the gap between two extremes: the feminism of the WCC on the one hand, and Orthodox indifference to any women’s questions on the other; and to make clear what made B-S’s thinking remarkable, even unique. Problems discussed in the book are still with us: Orthodox anthropology remains underdeveloped. The author succeeds impressively in demonstrating the hugeness of this lacuna, as well as the fact that Orthodoxy is not as monolithic as sometimes thought.

Anna Briskina-Müller, Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg

The Farba Sabina Group are technically an unofficial group of Lutheran and Roman Catholic ecumenists and canonists. But they meet under the sponsorship of the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. They include very distinguished scholars and ecumenists, including their chairs, Professor James Puglisi SA of the Centro Pro Unione in Rome and Professor Peder Nørgaard-Højen, Copenhagen. They also include veteran ecumenical friends known to Anglican ecumenists such as Professors André Birmelé and Harding Meyer of Strasbourg, Sven-Erik Brodd of Uppsala and Hervé Legrand OP of Paris. The original German edition of this ‘agreed Statement’ was published in 2010. This excellent synopsis of Catholic-Lutheran dialogue on the ‘Petrine Ministry’ is highly relevant for any ecumenist, theologian or church leader engaged in discussion about the Papacy, whether Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed or Orthodox. The basic question it seeks to open and tentatively answer positively is: can the Papacy be developed into an office which serves the wider, emerging, ecumenical communion of the churches? The arguments deployed are well grounded in historical scholarship but also realistic about past and present obstacles. There is an admirable frankness and honesty about these discussions which comes over with some freshness in this agreed text in which the Farfa Group presents its findings over the ten years from 1995 and the promulgation of Ut Unum Sint by Pope John Paul II.

The participants are committed to a real dialogue rather than pious aspiration cloaking ‘confessional re-integration’. They start from the presumption that the Church abides in the truth according to the promise of Christ; the need for ‘visible and recognisable’ unity; that there is an apostolic ministry of episcopate.

The opening chapter explores the complex criticism of the sixteenth century Papacy made by Martin Luther and the Roman reaction to it. It is well footnoted. Luther certainly described the Papacy polemically as ‘Antichrist’, but only after he had spoken conditionally in terms of assent to the Papal ministry in terms as described by Gregory the Great—whom Luther described as the ‘last
bishop of Rome’. Melanchthon appended similar views to the Smalcald Articles. It should be remembered that even Newman in his early days thought of Rome as Antichrist. With the commemoration of the Reformation in Germany coming in 2017, this material has significance for not only Lutherans and Catholics.

Though there could have followed material on conciliarism and the Gallican Movement, we move next to the First Vatican Council. The distinction and inter-relationship between the teaching office (infallibility) and authority (universal jurisdiction) is well made. Ultimately ‘infallibility’ is a facet of universal jurisdiction. There is an important elaboration of the arguments presented by the opposing minority at the Council and a scholarly exposition of the delineation of the limits and conditions for an ‘infallible’ pronouncement. The context is well dealt with: fear for the Church in the light of radical revolutions, the Enlightenment, and Gallicanism. As is also the one-sided nature of the Council due to its break-up by reason of the Franco-Prussian conflict—only one schema of the fifteen intended. To those familiar with the history of Vatican I the careful arguments of Bishop Gasser on behalf of the Commission presenting the draft of Pastor aeternus will come as no surprise. But short of either a history of the Council or works such as Fr Jean-Marie Tillard’s L’évêque de Rome this summary of the limited meaning of the decree will open up arguments only known to ecumenists working on the question of the Papacy. But however generally limited this meaning—a limited meaning confirmed by the Second Vatican Council—the language used on first reading could be taken as maximalist. This was one of the arguments of the minority against. And the Farfa Group are to be congratulated that they recognise that in practice the maximalist, ultra-montaine, interpretation was certainly victorious.

The need for the balancing and completing work of the Second Vatican Council is expounded: the Church as the People of God; bishops and collegiality as well as the Primacy. A Lutheran response to Pastor aeternus is clear both about its difficulties and recognition of its intended meaning. They note the necessity of the RC Church listening to doctrines and traditions outside itself in the process of discerning truth. But the Lutherans also acknowledge with such a contribution the implication of recognition of such discerned truth as binding. That is an assertion not only relevant to Lutherans but to all Christians who inherit the fragmentation of nation-state
churches. A final reflection in this chapter is on the *necessity* of a primacy of jurisdiction. A distinction is made between *necessity* for salvation and *necessity* for unity. As with Anglican discussion about episcopacy being of the *bene esse* of the Church rather than its *esse*, problems with their distinction are also recognised.

The group then moves to discussion about the ‘Service of Unity’ and the Lutheran Churches, including the recognition that the description of the Lutheran Church as a ‘communion’ only dates back to 1990 and that such communion is still in need of increasing depth and intensity. Anglicans could clearly say the same even if we have used the term Anglican Communion since the early nineteenth century. The meaning of communion is also explored with reference to the Reformed and Union Churches in Germany (The Leuenberg Concord) and with the Anglican Churches in the Meissen, Porvoo and Reuilly Agreements, together with the significance of the Lutheran World Federation agreement with the Roman Catholic Church on Justification. On the Roman Catholic side there is a good discussion of the ecclesiology of Vatican II, including the admission that in several of the key documents of the Council there are signs of compromise, ‘not always free of contradictions’. But the ‘openings’ are there. It is noted that Vatican II corrected Trent on the divine institution of an ‘ecclesiastical ministry’ rather than ‘bishops, priests and deacons’. Again there is Anglican relevance here—this reviewer speaks as one!—with reference to the absolute language in relation to the three-fold ministry as found in the Preface to the Ordinal of 1662 as compared with its counterpart in the Common Worship Ordinal.

There follows a very interesting section on Canon Law in relation to doctrine. Though primarily contributed by the Catholic canonists it clearly notes the danger of interpreting canon law from a ‘maximalist’ or ‘positivist’ perspective and the presumption that norms are the equivalent of binding doctrine. An excursus follows on the weight of authority—or otherwise—of Curial texts. Such documents ‘are not exempt from discussion to which they frequently lead even if they intend to end discussion’! Later, texts of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on communion and the church are itemised; pronouncements ‘that have aroused considerable irritation among Catholics and in ecumenical circles’. It is regretted that the new Code of Canon Law of 1983 only partly drew
on the ecclesiological insights of Vatican II. On the other hand the ‘earlier’ Ratzinger is quoted with approval on what was possible in the first Millennium must also be possible today.

There is a valuable discussion of ‘Honorary Primacy’. I had wished the translation here read Primacy of Honour, as in English at least an honorific primacy sounds only such. The Councils of Constantinople (381) and Calcedon (451) are duly discussed and the position of the Orthodox Churches is reviewed. Here the main text only refers to the Roman Catholic-Orthodox Report of 1988. Much more is to be found of relevance in the later Ravenna Statement of 2007, which is referred to in a later footnote but may have been published too late for major consideration in this Report. The Anglican and Methodist dialogues on authority are also sympathetically discussed.

The final two chapters outline developments and challenges and then a statement towards the renewal of the Petrine ministry. Positive developments include the Montreal Faith and Order conference on Tradition of 1963, following in the steps of Yves Congar OP; the documents on Revelation and the Church of Vatican II; the international and regional Lutheran-Catholic dialogues (USA and Germany). Problems include the ecclesiological status of Lutheran Churches and their catholicity in relation to ‘territorality’, again an inheritance of a ‘nation-state’ polity. As a consequence ‘unity becomes totally spiritualized’. There is an important section on the principle of ‘re-reading’ Vatican I. Cardinal Kasper is quoted on ‘re-reception’. Then equally importantly a section on the balance of Petrine Ministry and Councils. Here I missed the specific proposal that even under the present Canon Law the Synod of Bishops could become the canonical instrument of conciliar/primatial balance. No doubt this would have been explored had the Group completed its work in the time of Pope Francis. Finally, there is the important affirmation that the divine promise to remain in the truth is an aspect of the indefectibility of the Church.

As Bill Rusch of the Yale Divinity School rightly remarks, this book is an indispensable resource for those concerned with disunity. It is to be highly recommended not only for Lutherans and Catholics.

+Christopher Hill, President of the Conference of European Churches

This elegantly written short book makes a significant proposal towards Roman Catholic-Orthodox convergence on the nature of primacy within the Universal Church. The author, a leading British Catholic theologian, is a member both of the International Theological Commission and of the current International Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, which is particularly dedicated to finding an agreed way ahead in joint understanding of the nature of primacy and conciliarity at all levels in the Church.

Fr Paul takes his starting point from the *Ravenna Statement* of 2007 in which the dialogue commission agreed that primacy exists in the context of conciliarity at the local level of particular church or diocese, at the regional level and at the universal level. He argues that the trinitarian basis of communion ecclesiology indicates that ‘in the midst of the many, there is a unifying one’ and that conciliarity is ‘part of the deep seated nature of the Church’ in the ‘togetherness’ of its fellowship.

He asserts that primacy is anchored in the nature of the eucharist, the sacrament that makes the Church and which expresses both the *sameness* of the sacrifice offered in every local Church and the *togetherness* of the embrace of Christ in which all Christians are held. He acknowledges that Roman Catholics and Orthodox came, particularly in the context of the second millennium, to have very different concepts of universal primacy and its proper exercise. Gregory VII’s reforms in the West led to the transformation of the communion of western churches into a single international organisation, with the Pope at its head. The East was prepared, as in the first millennium, to accord a primacy of honour to Rome, whilst arguing (to use the words of Nicetas of Nicomedia) that ‘Rome has appropriated to herself the monarchy that is not contained in her office’. Increasingly, the bishops of the West were sidelined in terms of conferring and consulting with the Popes, being progressively eclipsed by the college of cardinals. The *per Petrum* view of bishops as inherently deriving their authority only through the Pope became increasingly common. At Vatican II, it was repudiated and a new stress placed on the fact that all the bishops received the tasks of teaching sanctifying and governing in virtue of their ordination,
albeit that these tasks were to be carried out in collegial communion with each other and with the head of the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome himself. It was stressed that all the bishops shared a common concern for the welfare of the whole of the koinonia, a concept resonant to this Methodist reviewer with the traditional Wesleyan understanding that all the ministers in full connexion with the Conference watched both over each other in love and also over the whole Connexion. I would argue that this deep similarity is no accidental product, but the result of a fundamental common participation in the universal sensus fidelium that the Church is a communion, a fellowship of common participation in the one Christ and in His Word and sacraments.

In the third chapter, McPartlan looks back to the first millennium, and to the future. He traces the role of Rome in helping to settle disputes in the early fourth century and points to the particular importance in this respect of the Council of Sardica, a council that was not purely western in its implications, even though its significance remained unclear in the east. He cites the modern French scholar, Hervé Legrand, as arguing that the council has ‘exceptional ecclesiological and ecumenical interest’ as being the only council where the churches of east and west both acknowledged a principle of primacy.

McPartlan moves on to a very precise analysis of the teaching of Vatican II, showing very clearly that it accepted the patriarchal rights of the ancient churches of the East and that while Rome claimed primacy, this did not mean jurisdiction over their inherited forms of discipline, liturgy and spiritual patrimony; rather, these were affirmed strongly as contributing to the overall catholicity of the Church.

McPartlan’s proposal involves three points: acceptance of the role of the universal primate in moderating disputes; acceptance of his role in presiding at ecumenical councils; and, most central of all in McPartlan’s mind, his role in serving the Eucharistic communion of the entire Church, ‘a primacy of love in the Eucharistic sense,’ to quote Benedict XVI. It is devoutly to be hoped that his suggestion will lend momentum to the ongoing Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. However, as I have already hinted, I think his work also has purchase and use in the dialogues of Catholics with the separated western churches, though there it could benefit from an enlargement of vision relating to the petrine teaching ministry.
Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, called for dialogue on the future exercise of the petrine ministry with the leaders and theologians of all the churches (including those classed by Rome as ‘ecclesial communities’ rather than churches). His immediate successor, Benedict, made relations with the Orthodox a particular priority. The present Pope, Francis, both by gesture and teaching, has helped to widen the appeal of his ministry to evangelical Christians. He has done this both by following the example of Peter, as recorded in the early chapter of Acts, in being bold to recall all Christians to the essentials of Gospel faith and living in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, and in his pastoral gestures of reconciliation, particularly important in his relationships with Pentecostalists, both in Latin America and more recently in Italy.\(^1\) In *Laudato Si*, he has given a lead to his brothers and sisters in Christ, the pastors of all the communions, in spelling out the implications of the Gospel for the current ecological and economic crisis.

Fr McPartlan’s book was published in 2013 and presumably written in the latter days of the previous pontificate. It remains a valuable contribution to dialogue on the nature of primacy, but it now requires complementing and extending, whether by Fr Paul himself or others. In the 1990s, in the context of the *Called to be One* process initiated by Churches Together in England, all the churches were encouraged to examine their bonds of communion in the light of their own experience and the witness of others. Perhaps a universal primacy is more necessary than ever in a globalising world but always a primacy that is committed to listening and reception within a synodical context where the voices of both the other ministers and the whole people of God can be heard. Since I first drafted this review, it has become abundantly clear that this is a priority for Pope Francis. There is much in this book, particularly in the Introduction and Conclusion, that calls for further reflection and dialogue throughout the oikoumene.

David Carter

\(^1\) The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity’s Bulletin (2014) contains a particularly moving account of Francis’ visit to a Pentecostal rally in Caserta at which he was warmly welcomed by the Pentecostalists, a spokesman stating, ‘Many of us are convinced that the Holy Spirit was behind your election’.
BOOKS RECEIVED

I Am With You, Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Bloomsbury: Continuum, 2015).


How to Believe, John Cottingham (Bloomsbury: Continuum, 2015).