

**ARTICLES**

'Putting ashes on our heads': Anglican reflections on the problem of liturgical English. <i>Janet Rutherford</i>	182
ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change. <i>Paul D. Murray</i>	200
On 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct'. A Pentecostal Perspective on Evangelism & Religious Pluralism. <i>Tony Richie</i>	212
Melanchthon: between Humanism, Protestantism and Catholicism. <i>Martin Jung</i>	223
Tagore: Poet, Mystic and Humanist. <i>Leonard Fernando sj</i>	233
Tagore and Christianity. <i>William Radice</i>	238
Healing and Hope: Remembering Michael Hurley. <i>Fintan Lyons osb</i>	260
Sr Minke de Vries: an Interview with <i>Thierry Marteaux osb</i> .	280
Ecclesial Thought and Life Trajectories. Part 2. Olivier Clément and Paul Evdokimov: <i>Deux Passeurs</i> . <i>Stefanie Hugh-Donovan</i>	297
Christianity in Iraq. The development of Secular Christian Political Thinking. <i>Herman Teule</i>	312
History and Hope: Towards a Common Date of Easter. + <i>Demetrios Charbak</i>	321

**REPORTS & EVENTS**

The Reims Statement: Praying with One Voice.	328
Forty years of walking together: ARC dialogue in Canada. <i>Bruce Myers</i>	332
Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.	338
Catholics and Pentecostals: Sixth Round of Conversations.	344

**BOOK REVIEWS**

346



## ***EDITORIAL***

*Nati sumus ad mutuam sermonis communicationem.*

'We are born to understand each other', wrote Philipp Melanchthon (*Jung*, 228). A life task implicit in Receptive Ecumenism's programme (*Murray*): we live to learn from each other.

Catholics concerned, for whatever reason, about our new English translation of the Roman Missal may learn from the balanced, informed analysis by an Anglican liturgist and patristics scholar of the multiple issues at stake (*Rutherford*).

The relationship between Ecumenism and Mission (Evangelism) is prominent in the following pages (*e.g. Richie, Charbak*). Articles on Rabindranath Tagore, born 150 years ago, lead us from Receptive Ecumenism to Receptive Evangelism. Simply, this great non-Christian Indian poet can teach us about Christ (*Radice*). Listening to him, we will learn about ourselves. From one of his Christmas Day sermons:

Shall we say that today is his birthday by consulting a calendar? If we do not feel that day in our hearts, can we feel it through a temporal calculation? The day on which we renounce in the name of truth, on which we are able to call people our brothers in a simple spirit of love—that's the day on which God's son is born in our lives, that is Christmas Day, on whichever date it falls. His birthday comes at specially happy moments in our lives, but his death by nailing on the cross comes day after day. I know that on today's special day praises are ringing out in many churches in many lands for him who has brought to the children of men the message of his supreme father—and outside those churches the world is awash with the blood of brother slaughtering brother.<sup>1</sup>

*Natus est, nati sumus.*

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 252, below.

## 'PUTTING ASHES ON OUR HEADS': ANGLICAN REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF LITURGICAL ENGLISH

**Janet Elaine Rutherford\***

*The 2010 English translation of the Missale Romanum is the latest of many attempts by western ecclesial traditions to create an appropriate liturgical idiom in the English language. None of these has been entirely satisfactory. This latest translation provides an opportunity to examine why this might be, and leads directly to a consideration of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum concilium, and its vision for the reformed Mass. This vision is patristic, and is a source of unity for all the liturgical denominations of the West, as well as between West and East. But secular influences in the late twentieth century worked against an implementation of the Conciliar reform in its full patristic intention, which integrated rite, music, art and architecture on the basis of the unity of the Person of Christ. The agendas of rival 'language-games' came to take precedence over addressing God, and this is reflected in contemporary liturgical English. By recovering our correct liturgical orientation towards God, a shared English idiom can be created which finds its integrity in prayer.*

### **Introduction**

All of us in the English-speaking world have seen the language of our liturgies, and also our Bibles, change dramatically in the last fifty years. This has been a painful experience for many, involving many false starts and repeated adjustments. It is a process that has not finished. For one thing, English is very dynamic, and constantly changing. But it is probably also true to say that none of the western denominations has yet succeeded in creating a contemporary liturgical idiom that is entirely natural, and thus entirely satisfactory.

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The most recent attempt at creating an English liturgical idiom was of course the 2010 translation of the *Missale Romanum*, and it is thus a good place to start when asking the question: Why have we all found it so difficult to compose good modern liturgical English? Is there something about contemporary English that makes it inherently unsuitable for liturgical use? Or are we all doing something wrong?

The 2010 translation of the Mass also makes a good starting point because, unlike Anglican and Lutheran rites, it is a translation of a single, identifiable text (*Missale Romanum*) according to a published translation instruction (*Liturgiam authenticam*). It thus lends itself to objective examination. *Liturgiam authenticam* explicitly directed that the translation should be couched in an idiom that is recognizably different from that of the liturgical language of other denominations,<sup>1</sup> and stressed fidelity to the Latin text by means of ‘formal equivalence’. In addition, *Liturgiam authenticam* made a distinction between ordinary speech, and what it calls a ‘sacral vernacular’. Since liturgical English has been founded largely on the translations (and indeed compositions) of Thomas Cranmer, and the King James Bible, it is clear that to meet the requirements of *Liturgiam authenticam* an entirely new English idiom would have to be created. This idiom would therefore not be familiar to English speakers as their daily spoken language, nor as existing formal spoken English, nor as historical liturgical English. Given that this new idiom would also have to be audibly comprehensible to listeners, the translators of the 2010 edition faced an almost impossible task.

Inevitably, the English idiom that resulted is a synthesis of existing English idioms and borrowed or invented features, and is thus an English that was never spoken at any time, anywhere, by anyone. It might be (and indeed is) argued that this is what lends it its ‘sacral’ register. And yet the register of the translation is itself uneven. New, composite verb phrases (‘to take up battle against’) are often employed, presumably with the intention of lending *gravitas* to the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions, so that such a factor will not cause them confusion or discomfort.’

language.<sup>1</sup> But in other places we find startling colloquialisms ('on account of'). The implicit intention that the English should clearly reflect a Roman Catholic understanding of the sacrament has also been applied unevenly. The Latinate 'chalice' has been introduced, and yet the words of institution retain the 1973 rendering 'Do this in memory of me' (*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*). This is especially unexpected because 'memory' calls to mind Zwinglian 'memorialist' sacramental theology.

It is also obvious that although English only adheres loosely to its grammatical rules (such as they are), there are things in this translation that are simply wrong. For instance, although it is arguable that English ought to have vocatives such as, 'O God who bestow', it doesn't. This is why translators generally have 'O God, you bestow'. (The only alternative is 'O God, you who bestow', which amounts to the same thing but sounds worse.) Again, English is only comprehensible, especially when heard, if it follows a subject/verb/direct object/indirect object ordering of words (or phrases, or clauses). There is some flexibility here, but not much. There are many errors of word order in the 2010 translation, particularly in the Propers, which were subject to most of the revisions made between 2008 and 2010.

One would naturally assume that this sort of thing arises from adhering too closely to the requirement of formal equivalence to the Latin. This might also be thought to account for some of the unevenness of the translation. Daniel McCarthy OSB identified this elephant in the room of formal equivalence, writing in *The Tablet*:<sup>2</sup>

The Latin text of the *Missale Romanum* is not homogeneous because it includes the Latin used by different peoples of very many eras and in a variety of contexts. The vocabulary and content of some prayers comes from the Carolingian court or the Mozarabic tradition or military imagery or magisterial documents or the pastoral care of people or mediaeval Latin poorly expressed.

Thus, for a translation based on formal equivalence to succeed, the Latin text would need to be revised first.

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<sup>1</sup> Gravity and elegance would have been better served by taking advantages of some of the existing subtleties of the English language, such as the distinction between 'might' and 'may'.

<sup>2</sup> *The Tablet* 26 November 2011, pp 13f.

It should be noted in defence of the 2010 translation that it did restore many words (often adjectives) and entire phrases that had simply been omitted in the 1973 translation. These omissions impoverished the 1973 version not only theologically but also devotionally, and it is obviously good that so many of them have been reinstated. And yet upon closer examination we find that there are significant ways in which the 2010 translation has not in fact adhered to the principle of formal equivalence. The problem of faulty word ordering in English is often not due to having followed the ordering of the Latin, since in many places clauses are neither in their original Latin position, nor in their correct position in English. And there is more. Canon Alan Griffiths, in a letter to *The Tablet* of 5 November 2011, observed that the English of the Post-communion prayer for the First Sunday of Advent has translated the Latin incorrectly. The translation suggests that we learn to love the things of heaven through the ‘passing things’ through which we ‘walk’. In fact it is clear that the Latin means that we learn to love the things of heaven through ‘the mysteries in which we have participated’. Despite the amount of time taken to ‘correct’ the Gray Book text,<sup>1</sup> this mistake in rendering the sense of the Latin was not caught. Canon Griffiths asked, ‘How can [we] explain such a howler? Why was it not spotted early on, rather than left to appear in a lavishly produced final text?’

In fact very many errors were spotted before publication, but were left in the text uncorrected. The internal Vatican memo ‘Areas of difficulty in the received text of the Missal’<sup>2</sup> listed a great many, including mistranslations of Latin, the use of verbs that do not reflect the Latin, and using the same English verb for several Latin verbs. Taken together, the suspicion arises that in at least some cases the translation was corrected without reference to the Latin at all. That in turn would suggest that errors in grammatical English arose because the corrections were made by people whose first language is not English, a point that has been made on more than one occasion.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Gray book’ denotes the ICEL text that was issued for canonical vote, and subsequently delivered to the Congregations for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2008. Before the release of the new translation in 2010 the text was subjected to many revisions. These were identifiable because both the ‘gray book’ text and the text that was subsequently released were leaked online through Wikispooks.

<sup>2</sup> Leaked online through Wikispooks.

The purpose of making these detailed observations is that they point to another elephant in the translation room, one that has caused much suspicion and fear. If the Latin of the Roman Missal is not the 'Latin' referred to in *Liturgiam authenticam*, what is? The fact that the Mass of Paul VI is so rarely said in Latin in the English-speaking world has led to the Mass of Pius V being referred to as 'the Latin Mass'. As a result, references in *Liturgiam authenticam* to fidelity to Latin are suspected of implying that the Mass of Pius V is the normative form of the Roman Rite. The requirement for the provision of extraordinary form celebrations has fuelled this suspicion. In this way, the 2010 translation has come to be associated with a perceived attack on the Conciliar reform, and its introduction heightened antagonism between loose associations of people considered to be 'liberal' or 'conservative'.

This leads me to the most important reason of all for discussing this translation of the Mass—the fact that the English of the Mass is now being used as a weapon in a liturgical battle. For one thing, this is not how to translate. But more importantly, a general confusion has arisen about the nature of the Conciliar reform. This confusion involves language, but also much more. I would therefore like to contextualize the translation battle in order to point out that in fact common ground exists between people who perceive themselves to be in opposition. This common ground is at the heart of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, and it is here we must look to understanding what the Mass of Paul VI was meant to be, and thus know how to translate it. Since the liturgical revisions and translations of all the western denominations are linked to the Conciliar reform, this is of importance to all of us, separately and together.

### **From Pius V to Paul VI**

The first thing that should be stressed when discussing the Roman Rite is the continuity between the Mass of Pius V and that of Paul VI. This is not very apparent, not least because few people are used to hearing the Mass of Paul VI in Latin, or the Roman Canon. But both the Tridentine and Second Vatican Council reforms began with the expressed intention of correcting the Mass in such a way as to make it conform more closely to the liturgy and teaching of the Fathers of the Church. It is in this that we find not only the basis of continuity in the



evolution of the Roman Rite, but also of unity between the other liturgical traditions that grew from it. Recovery of the liturgical tradition and sacramental theology of the Fathers was the expressed desire of all the sixteenth-century reformers, which is why the liturgical and sacramental battles of the Reformation era involved a 'war of the Fathers' between all the reform movements, including the Tridentine. Happily, the liturgical reforms of the last century have transformed this 'war' into the source for unity that the Fathers ought to be. This was made possible because we now have a much clearer understanding of the history and development of the eucharistic liturgy.

It was accepted even in its time that the Mass of Pius V did not achieve its aim of restoring ancient liturgical norms. This was in part due to defensiveness in the face of the protestant reformations, which led the Tridentine reformers to find greater authority in Thomas Aquinas and mediaeval scholasticism than in patristic tradition. But it was also due to a lack of complete and accurate patristic texts, and faulty understanding of those that were available. It was only in the middle of the twentieth century that, having applied the critical approaches of biblical scholarship to patristic texts, and recovered more sources, scholars were able to clarify what the historical liturgy of the Church had looked like, and what its theological bases had been. This is why the liturgical reform movement of the twentieth century involved reforms of Lutheran and Anglican eucharistic rites as well as the Roman Rite. Although Lutheran and Anglican reformers had already attempted to restore the Roman Mass to consistency with its historical origins (according to their understanding), deficient resources had affected those attempts also. The importance of being grounded in the early tradition is not to claim any previous period as normative, but to ensure that what we retain from each phase of liturgical development conforms to the theological principles that Christianity started out with, so that the eucharistic liturgy doesn't gradually change into something other than itself.

In the twentieth century it became clearer where distortions had entered into the liturgy with the passage of history, particularly during the Middle Ages. The Conciliar reformers thus had a real opportunity of revising the Roman Rite in the light of the entire history of the eucharistic liturgy. Since liturgical revisers in different denominations were working towards this same end, it was inevitable that the new

liturgical forms would resemble one other. This of course is a source of misunderstanding. Although it is true that the second half of the twentieth century also saw a rising interest in ecumenism, the fundamental changes to liturgical practice that are common to different denominations were not made 'in order to be ecumenical', but because those denominations had a common aim, and reliable sources. One of the changes to the Roman Rite that fed the suspicion of an 'ecumenical' agenda, was the introduction of alternative eucharistic prayers. These eucharistic prayers resemble some of the 'new' anaphoras of the other liturgical reform movements of the twentieth century, because they are founded on a new understanding of the two great liturgies and Christologies of the early Church, those of Antioch and Alexandria.

Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon, is the historic eucharistic prayer of the Roman Church and retains precedence in the new Missal. Nonetheless, although Enrico Mazza has argued persuasively in its defence, it remains the case that the Roman Canon 'shows no kinship with any of the [patristic anaphoral] structures known to us today'.<sup>1</sup> In the choice and composition of the three new eucharistic prayers it is evident how the Conciliar reform sought to re-appropriate ancient patristic tradition. Eucharistic Prayer II is almost verbatim the anaphora attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, which is the earliest extant anaphora. If it is indeed to be attributed to Hippolytus, it dates from 215–20. In it we encounter the overarching theme of the Conciliar reform—the unity of the Church expressed in the liturgy of the sacrament. In this the Hippolytan anaphora draws on an even older tradition, found in the *Didache* and St Paul. This anaphora therefore expresses the oldest tradition of the western Church. The theme of unity is again at the basis of Eucharistic Prayer III, which adjusts the Roman Canon in the light of the Antiochian anaphora known as the anaphora of Basil. But the significance and value of Eucharistic Prayer IV is still under-appreciated. Although it is a new composition, it skilfully balances the Basilian Antiochene anaphoral tradition with the Alexandrian, by emphasizing the life of Christ

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<sup>1</sup> E. Mazza, tr. M.J. O'Connell, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of Its Interpretation* (Collegeville MN, 1999), p. 63. I am indebted to Mazza for the comments I make in this article about the eucharistic prayers of the Roman Missal.

(Antiochene), within the entire context of salvation history (Alexandrian). In Eucharistic Prayer IV we see clearly how the Mass of Paul VI consciously appropriated the patristic and Byzantine theology that to see the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity depends on a correct understanding of the unity of the Person of Christ.

### **Liturgy and the Person of Christ**

The duality of Antiochene and Alexandrian approaches to the mystery of salvation, as expressed in their respective eucharistic liturgies, arises from their being based in two different aspects of Jewish ritual, and two different Jewish cultures: the Aramaic Palestinian on the one hand and the Hellenistic Alexandrian on the other. In theology, the Antiochene tradition came to emphasize Christ's human nature, and therefore liturgical symbolism related to the life of Christ. The Alexandrian tradition emphasized Christ's divine nature, and symbolism that related to the whole of salvation history. Though the general principles behind the great Christological struggles of the fifth and sixth centuries had always been known, twentieth century scholarship led to much greater understanding of the respective anaphoras of the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions, and the importance of retaining a balance between them.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, liturgical complementarity reflects a correct balance of Antiochene and Alexandrian Christologies. This became clear during the Iconoclast crisis in the Eastern Churches during the eighth century, which culminated in 787 with the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II. Nicaea II established the theological importance of liturgical iconography, and its correct aesthetic principles. I have argued extensively elsewhere<sup>2</sup> that the western Churches have yet to implement fully the lessons of Nicaea II, and that our liturgical balance is at risk until we do. In formulating a defence of the depiction of Christ during the Iconoclast crisis, it became clear that icons are a dogmatic affirmation that Christ was one Person, divine and human, and that it is thus not only

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<sup>1</sup> See E. Mazza, pp 35-73.

<sup>2</sup> See J.E. Rutherford, 'Back to the Future: Ecclesiastical Art after Postmodernism', in *Sacred Architecture Journal*, 17 (2010): 22-6; 'The "Triumph of Orthodoxy" and the Future of Western Ecclesiastical Art', in D.V. Twomey and J.E. Rutherford (eds.), *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture* (Dublin: 2011), pp. 54-76.

appropriate, but necessary to depict him. On this basis the Eastern Churches came to realize that the unity of the Person of Christ had to be represented in the symbolic and aesthetic integrity of the entire liturgy—rite, music, art, and architecture.<sup>1</sup>

It is not a coincidence that the greatest theologian of Christological orthodoxy—Maximus Confessor—also wrote the oldest extant Byzantine liturgical commentary, the *Mystagogy*. For Maximus, the entire context of the liturgy, including the church building, forms an organic unity, like the divine and human natures of the one indivisible Christ. All of salvation history, from the Old Testament to the Eschaton, is symbolized in the spatial context of the architecture and iconography of the church, together with the words, music and ritual of the liturgy. But ‘symbol’ in its Alexandrian and Byzantine sense is not merely a thing that represents something divine. It is the place in which the divine is made present. Visible and invisible, material and spiritual, are inseparable in the eucharistic *synaxis*, the gathering into one of Christ’s body, the Church. The unifying aesthetic principles of this liturgical whole, which assure its sacrality, derive from the geometric ratios that govern the created order: the static symmetry of inorganic things, and the ‘dynamic symmetry’ of all living organisms.<sup>2</sup>

It is common to hear people say that they feel closer to God when taking a walk in the country than when going to church; and most of us will have experienced a feeling of God’s presence when surrounded by the natural world. When the physical principles of the created world are knowledgeably replicated in the integrated sacred space of the liturgy, we instinctively feel that same sense of God’s presence. Even (or perhaps especially) children do. We know that it is beautiful, and we know that that beauty is divine. But unlike a walk in the country, where we encounter God in this world, in sacred liturgical space, rationally created on divine principles, we stand on the threshold of the world to come. When we look at the greatest and most enduring music, art and architecture of the Church, we find the same proportional and aesthetic principles, enshrining the same

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy*, (London: SPCK, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> See J. Hambidge, *Elements of Dynamic Symmetry* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1926); K. Knee, *The Dynamic Symmetry Proportional System* (Torrance CA: Oakwood, 1988); J.E. Rutherford, ‘Pythagoras, Byzantium and the Holiness of Beauty’, in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 71/3&4 (2006): 302–19.

theological and Christological principles. These are the principles upon which Orthodox iconography is based. They are also the principles inherent in the hexachord of Gregorian chant, upon which Desiderius Lenz based his *senarium*, the proportional canon of the Beuron school of art.<sup>1</sup> It is arguable that the aesthetic principles of the Church's tradition have been best preserved in the West within the Benedictine tradition. This explains the fact (which must confuse many people) that there have been Benedictines on both sides of the barricades in contemporary liturgical disagreements. They are two sides of the same coin, as I hope to show.

I will argue that the majority of those who wish to preserve the old, and those who wish to embrace the new, actually want the same thing. There is, for example, no confusing a twentieth century Greek icon with a fifteenth century Russian one, though both conform to the same compositional principles. These aesthetic principles express the Christological principles that form our common Christian inheritance. They are the basis for genuine ecumenism, and informed *Sacrosanctum concilium* (see SC 50).

### **Sacrosanctum concilium**

As we have seen, the 'new' eucharistic prayers of the Mass of Paul VI were in fact composed on the basis of the recovery of old anaphoras. This is characteristic of the vision of the Second Vatican Council. Ancient things were recovered, valid liturgical developments within the Roman Rite were retained, and the guidelines for implementing the reform were left in general terms in order to facilitate legitimate development into the new. *Sacrosanctum concilium* is indeed like the head of a house who brings out of his storeroom both what is new and what is old.<sup>2</sup> When looking at *Sacrosanctum concilium* therefore we must remember that the question is not, what would the Mass it envisaged seem like today, but what would it would have seemed like in the 1970s, had it been implemented in full?

Looking at the document as a whole, the Mass it envisaged would have been celebrated in the context of integrated sacred space comprised of architecture, art and music, composed according to the principles described above.<sup>3</sup> The ordinary of the Mass would have

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Brooke et al., *The Aesthetic of Beuron* (London: Francis Boutle, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:52; cf. SC 4, 21, 23.

<sup>3</sup> SC 46, 112, 121, 122, 124, 127.

remained in Latin;<sup>1</sup> and since music is intrinsic to the liturgy, the Mass would be sung, by clergy and laity, led by trained choirs<sup>2</sup> (with Gregorian Chant retaining pride of place).<sup>3</sup> Language, music, art, and furnishings would be simplified and without useless ornament, but only in order to clarify their beauty and make their symbolic meanings more explicit.<sup>4</sup> Statuary would be ordered within the context of the integrated liturgical space,<sup>5</sup> probably in a schematic representation of salvation history. Everyone, clergy and lay, would be trained not only to understand the liturgy, but to move, sing and speak with the reverence and dignity appropriate to a Church gathered together in the presence of God.<sup>6</sup> Lay people would form part of an integrated liturgical act, joining themselves to the priest through word, song and sacrament.<sup>7</sup> To accomplish the necessary training for this, the liturgy was to be taught to clergy and people in the context of the history of the Church,<sup>8</sup> with rite, art, architecture and music being treated together.<sup>9</sup>

When we imagine this Mass, it is clear that its greatest resemblance would have been to the Orthodox Liturgy. Had the Conciliar reform of the eucharistic liturgy been implemented in this way, it would have benefitted us all, serving as a model for other denominations to develop their patristic inheritance in the traditions of their own reformations. This in turn would have promoted not only unity in the West, but unity between West and East. Sadly however, the Mass envisaged by *Sacrosanctum concilium* failed to materialize. This is because patristic tradition was set aside in favour of adopting principles of twentieth century ideologies that are inimical to that tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> SC 36, 54.

<sup>2</sup> SC 114, 115.

<sup>3</sup> SC 112, 114, 115, 116.

<sup>4</sup> SC 122, 124.

<sup>5</sup> SC 125.

<sup>6</sup> SC 28, 29.

<sup>7</sup> SC 27, 30, 34, 48, 50, 54, 55, 114.

<sup>8</sup> SC 129.

<sup>9</sup> SC 46.

## Twentieth Century liturgical reforms

Unfortunately, at the same time that all the reformed liturgies were being introduced, and the Roman Rite translated into English, other powerful forces in the West were influencing the theory of language, and also theories of western music, art and architecture. Logical positivism undermined the status of theological language by claiming that it is not possible to make valid philosophical truth claims about metaphysics (and thus, God). For whatever reason, theologians conceded the philosophical ground and retired from western philosophy (though John Hick did make a Quixotic last stand, pointing out that physicists also make truth claims about things they can't see).<sup>1</sup> Equally damaging was Wittgenstein's<sup>2</sup> suggestion that religious language does have a valid use. But that use is not to make truth claims about God, it is rather to provide a vocabulary for 'language-games' that serve the sociological needs of a religious group. Linguistic philosophy then developed into deconstruction. This, as its name suggests, took texts to pieces in order to understand the significance of their separate components, and came to the conclusion that language is meaningless.

With logical positivism, Wittgenstein and deconstruction fuelling an intellectual climate that denied the existence of objective truth, theology came increasingly to emphasize pastoral care and social justice, without the benefit of dogmatic underpinnings. While some theologians retreated into ivory towers to talk among themselves, many simply embraced the spirit of the age. Since history was held to be meaningless, Church history came to be taught less and less. Christianity became a form of 'agapeistic living',<sup>3</sup> using 'God-talk' without theological content, to bond individuals into a religious subculture. All this had a devastating impact on the language of all the liturgical revisions of the late-twentieth-century.

The wording of new hymns, and the revision of old ones, suffered similarly. Consideration for the sensibilities of the congregation took precedence over dogmatic content. Theological understanding

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Hick, 'Theology and Verification', in B. Mitchell (ed.), *The Philosophy of Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp 53-71.

<sup>2</sup> Set out in *The Blue and Brown Books*.

<sup>3</sup> See R.B. Braithwaite, 'An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief' in B. Mitchell, *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp 72-91.

deteriorated to the point where doctrinal errors of the most fundamental sort, relating to Trinitarian theology and Christology, entered in. The oldest heresy was the first to reappear: docetism. This is the belief that Jesus didn't really suffer and die; he just *seemed* to. Under the guiding principle that the eucharistic liturgy exists to provide a welcoming meeting place for Christians, the unpleasantness of Jesus' anguish in Gethsemane, his agony and sense of dereliction on the Cross, and the genuine extinction of his mortal life, seemed out of place. To give one of many possible examples from the 2003 *Church Hymnal* of the Church of Ireland, the hymn *Lead us heavenly Father, lead us* has replaced the line 'Lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert thou didst go' with 'Self denying, death defying, thou to Calvary didst go'—which gives the impression that Jesus didn't really mind that much.

Those of us who are old enough to remember (and not so old as to have forgotten) C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* retain a vivid impression of his description of the magnetic pull exercised by absolutely everything that gets us out of having to encounter God. Whether in private prayer or corporate worship, addressing God requires efforts of concentration and engagement, and an uncomfortable awareness of our own inadequacy. How insidiously seductive therefore is the temptation, when gathering together on a Sunday, for Christians to address one another rather than God. How easy to fall into this trap, given that we are enjoined to love not only God but also one another. With the entire liturgy suddenly in modern English, and the dominant philosophical theories of the day stating that the purpose of religious language is to bond as a community, it is clear how great a temptation it was to enter into a dialogue with the celebrant and one another rather than for the laity to join the celebrant in addressing God. That this happened is also illustrated by what became the dominant trends in church architecture and art.

Though not a philosophical movement, post-modernism is the usual umbrella term for the belief (arising from deconstruction) that it is impossible to make value judgements about anything. In literature, art and architecture, form exists simply to be played with. The art and architecture of all times and places are held to be equally meaningless. Since the aesthetic values of the liturgy enshrine theological truths, it is clear how dangerous this has been. Just when religious language and the wording of hymns were succumbing to playing 'language-



games', architects decided that no shape or iconographic programme was normative for churches. To complement the anthropocentricity of the way religious language was being used, churches became circular or square meeting places. Art also was no longer considered necessary, or meaningful. Growing out of the modernism of the *Bauhaus*, minimalism's emphasis on clean lines and clear spaces created an aesthetic climate hostile not just to ornament, but to anything that obscured architectural design. Where there was art, socially interactive forms like drama or installation art were preferred. Where there was explicitly religious art, any symbolism was as good as another, and every artist could invent his or her own (of the 'this feather represents the Holy Spirit' type). This tendency reached a nadir with the suggestion made several years ago by a Church of England think tank that Christianity should invent a new 'logo', since the cross was no longer relevant to people, and it would be better to have something fresh.<sup>1</sup>

The abandonment of the unifying principles of the liturgy inevitably resulted in the fragmentation of sacred space into unrelated features. Music, which had been liturgical in that it involved the singing of the rite and/or of hymns that had a logical place within the rite, also increasingly became a sociological phenomenon. It was said that traditional liturgical music was too difficult for the laity (in the way that complex sentences and multiple adjectives were thought to be). If it is impossible to make value judgements, it is clearly unnecessary to teach anybody anything, and so everything was made as easy as possible. Lay people were encouraged to engage in as many liturgical activities as possible, but were seldom taught how to perform them properly. Responses were mumbled, and lessons very often inaudible. Constant minor adjustments of wording made it difficult to memorize responses and psalms. These two factors together produced a proliferation of service sheets, leaving individuals adrift in their own personal liturgical bubbles, no longer addressing even each other.

I am not the only lay person who finds it galling that all of this was done in the name of lay participation. The reform that had begun with the aim of uniting the people with the celebrant in adoration of God ended up uniting the celebrant with the people in adoration of the

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<sup>1</sup> This was reported in the *Church Times*, but I did not retain the copy I had of that issue and am therefore unable to cite it. But the story is not apocryphal.

community. As a result, practices were introduced that had their origins not in the patristic vision of the Conciliar reform, but ‘in order to be ecumenical’—which undermines the basis of true ecumenism. Postmodernism acts like a virus in the body of modern liturgy precisely because those things designed to unite the people in addressing God also, and necessarily, first bond individuals into a group. It isn’t possible to tell by outward appearance whether that group is addressing God or not. A group of concelebrating priests who, like the people, are uniting their prayers to those of the president, who represents the whole body before God, looks exactly like a group of priests bonding as a group of priests. The only difference is the presence or absence of sustained prayer, which is invisible. To ensure that everyone—clergy and lay—is always thinking of God, we must first introduce the liturgical instruction of clergy and people, as set out in *Sacrosanctum concilium*. This will enable us to know what we are doing, and thus to know how to choose art, music and language that create real sacred liturgical space which sustains and directs our prayer. In this way, with hearts and minds united, we will be able, together, to pray without ceasing.

## Conclusion

In the light of these reflections, we can identify the source of the flaws in the 2010 English translation of the Mass. It lacks the linguistic integrity that is necessary for liturgical integrity—that is, it lacks the ‘noble simplicity’ required by *Sacrosanctum concilium*. It is not a real English idiom but a synthetic one, produced on the basis of artificial translation principles. It is thus just as much a child of post-modernism as the translation it was designed to replace. All the modern liturgies and biblical translations of the English-speaking denominations show signs of having prioritized rival ‘language-game’ agendas (whether of inclusive language,<sup>1</sup> lay participation, Latin-sounding English, or whatever) over standing together in the presence of God. Liturgical language has thus too often become a place to hide

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<sup>1</sup> One experimental inclusive-language rendering of the Creed posited that the Son ‘became human’, which invites irreverent speculation as to what he had been before (animal, vegetable, mineral ...). When I pointed out to one of the translators responsible that this might compromise the doctrine of the Incarnation, and perhaps also that of the Trinity, I was told that ‘people care about other things now’.

from God, leaving us to experience his presence most strongly during those rare points in the liturgy when there is simply silence.

In seeking to understand what constitutes nobly simple language, it is useful first to look back at the history of liturgical language. The Greek and Aramaic (Syriac) of the early liturgies, and the Latin that gradually succeeded Greek in the West, were not artificially 'sacral' idioms, nor couched in a rhetorically exalted style (a proposition that would have astonished Augustine, never mind Cicero). They were the idiom of day-to-day public life, spoken in empires in which they were not the first languages of most people. Writing in a supplement to *The Tablet* of 19 November 2011, Nicholas King SJ drew attention to the fact that what we might call 'business English' will become the new liturgical *lingua franca* of the West, succeeding Koine Greek and Vulgar Latin. It is the second language of almost everyone for whom it isn't the first, and is therefore the vernacular form most likely to be used in multinational eucharistic celebrations around the world. To quote Fr King: 'Something has to happen to a language if it is to be this kind of common tongue. We can see it happening to English in our world, and it is what happened to the Latin that became the *lingua franca* of Europe. It becomes simpler to manage, and the grammar less pressing, with an inevitable sacrifice in elegance and sometimes in power ...'

In other words, liturgical language must derive from a genuine idiom that grows organically within the shared life of the people of God. Such an idiom can only achieve integrity and noble simplicity by having its basis in prayer. When addressing God as 'thou' (as it were), our speech immediately becomes more solemn (nobler), and more direct (simpler). Shaping liturgical English on the language of prayer would also fulfil the stated intention of *Sacrosanctum concilium* that in everything the Church undertakes, action should be directed by and subordinated to contemplation (SC 2).

But where will we find this idiom of prayer? We might perhaps try the following experiment. As many people as possible might be asked to find time in their private devotions to compose a short prayer, addressing God about something that really matters to them. Few if any of these prayers would be suitable for liturgical use. But when collated and compared they might reveal dominant linguistic patterns of a shared English idiom of prayerfulness, which would provide a

good basis upon which to build the English of the liturgy. Jeffrey Tucker has made another suggestion:

A Web site with the full Missal with wiki-like editing functionality would have permitted the experts to engage with each other on talk pages, and we could have access to complete records of who is saying what to whom, and know the arguments and issues that go into the translation process. This would elicit contributions from the greatest liturgists, Latinists, and proofreaders on the planet. This would enhance respect for those who have dedicated their careers to this task. The suspicion would be replaced by trust, and power struggles by genuine dialogue and exchange of ideas. ... By now we would have the best possible edition.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, there is no reason why such a project couldn't be undertaken anyway—not to make a liturgical translation, but in order to clarify what the Latin of the text really means. That would eliminate 'howlers', and would identify problems of unevenness in the Latin. It would also provide an excellent opportunity to continue to discover more about our patristic inheritance by comparing the Latin text with its ancient sources. A study translation would then be in place that could serve as a resource for the next liturgical translation.

It is also worth bearing in mind that an obscure text will always retain obscurities in translation, and translations from an archaic language will inevitably contain archaisms. Ultimately it might be useful to ask whether, if Latin is to remain the official language of the Roman Church, it wouldn't be better to use its modern form. Italian is already the *lingua franca* of daily life and business in the Vatican. If the next edition of the Missal were written in Italian, it would be perfectly easy to translate it into other modern languages. The original would be in a 'real' idiom that would translate naturally into others.

Looking ahead, I would suggest that the first natural meeting point between the language of prayer and that of the liturgy is in the Collects. Collects have always exercised an irresistible fascination for Anglicans, and I have to confess that, having spent so much time reflecting on the Mass of Paul VI, I have been unable to resist trying my hand at a few. For that reason (and also to put my money where my mouth is), as we look forward to the 'revision of the revision' that

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<sup>1</sup> Published online 1 December 2010 at InsideCatholic.com.

shall surely be, I will conclude with my own translation of the Collect for the Sunday of Pentecost:

O God, by today's feast you sanctify your entire Church among all peoples and nations. Pour out the gifts of the Holy Spirit across the whole world, and fill the hearts of believers once again with the divine grace that was at work when the Gospel was first preached.

*Deus, qui sacramento festivitatis hodiernae universam Ecclesiam tuam in omni gente et natione sanctificas, in totam mundi latitudinem Spiritus Sancti dona defunde, et, quod inter ipsa evangelicae praedicationis exordia operata est divina dignatio, nunc quoque per credentium corda perfunde.*

## ARCIC III: RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR AN ECUMENICAL GEAR-CHANGE

**Paul D. Murray\***

*The strategies of previous phases of ARCIC bore fruit, in dispelling misconceptions about the other's beliefs and, more profoundly, in demonstrating that, in some important areas, alternate expressions of belief may not be mutually exclusive. Receptive Ecumenism is presented as a way to animate the new phase. Founded on the principle of church as Trinitarian communion, it explicates strategies of self-criticism and mutual learning which can help open a perspective in which Christian churches hear the voice of the other as call to conversion—the life task of the Christian, be it church or individual.*

### **Introduction: the beginnings of a new phase of ARCIC**

Those of us called to serve on the third phase of work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III) gathered in May 2011 amidst the profound beauty of life, liturgy, prayer and physical context of the ecumenical monastic community at Bose in northern Italy. The story, witness, tangible joy and deep appeal of the community provided the ideal context for this first meeting of a new phase of ARCIC's existence, rooting us in prayer and the life of the Spirit and reminding us very clearly that the vitality of Christian life and tradition lies not in steadfast identical repetition but in the preparedness to return to our core calling and to ask what fresh performance of this is required by the specific challenges and opportunities of our times.

As we got to know each other over the first few days and began to form as a group, sharing our stories, hopes, questions and concerns, before attempting to discern a way forwards for ARCIC III, many of us referred to the daunting nature of the task that lay ahead.

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For myself and my fellow neophytes there was a sense of being mere grasshoppers relative to the ARCIC giants who had gone before us; a sense intensified by the presence amongst us not only of eminent members of ARCIC II such as Adelbert Denaux, Nicholas Sagovsky and Charles Sherlock<sup>1</sup> but also of Bishop Christopher Hill who, in one capacity or another, has participated in every previous phase of ARCIC's existence and who, therefore, represented for us the living memory and embodiment of the tradition of ARCIC.

Beyond this, for all of us, experienced ARCIC members and beginners alike, there was also an appreciation for the fundamentally changed context in which ARCIC III is now being called to operate and the correlative fresh challenges this poses. Prior to arrival, each of us had, on at least one occasion, been faced with the question, 'What's the point?' As one colleague had posed it to me: 'Surely anything that an ARCIC-style process can achieve has already been achieved? Quite apart from the fact that both the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and elements within Anglicanism have been unenthusiastic about those achievements, issues around women's ordination and human sexuality surely now make it impossible to continue with the originating ARCIC concern of seeking to overcome the causes of division with a view to opening the way to full structural and sacramental unity in the foreseeable future.' This is indeed to give sharp articulation to the nature of the specific challenges facing ARCIC III.

On the morning of the third full day, when we might have been tempted to be overwhelmed by a sense of our inadequacy to the task relative both to the stature of our forebears and their achievements and the magnitude of the challenges confronting us, a real, live errant grasshopper jumped onto the tables at which we were working. We took heart: if we are not the giants on whose shoulders we stand nor, perhaps, are we mere grasshoppers but people of faith called together to discern as truly for our time as our forebears had for theirs the appropriate way forwards in relation to the particular challenges we face; and called to trust that, as held in circles of prayer and as called

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<sup>1</sup> Very sadly, Charles Sherlock had to depart within the first couple of days of the meeting due to a bereavement. I am grateful to Charles for his many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this short piece, as also those of Nick Sagovsky and Adelbert Denaux.

to share in what is first and last God's work not ours, we will truly be resourced for the task at hand. It was in this sense of the Spirit's call and gift that we turned to consider the rich legacy we inherited and how we might be being called to step out afresh in ARCIC III.

### **Some characteristic ARCIC strategies**

The standard pattern of procedure in ARCIC I & II was annual residential meetings involving a team of officially representative theologians from each tradition working together on key themes traditionally regarded as constituting continuing causes of division (e.g. Catholic understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass relative to Anglican understanding of the sole sufficiency of the sacrificial death of Christ), all with a view to seeking specific ways beyond these historic points of division. Amongst others, four interrelated strategies can be seen to have variously been at work:

- 1) the concern to clear up respective misunderstandings and caricatures of one tradition by the other in the light of nuanced and authentic articulations of each tradition that can open the way to a shared understanding that each does in fact maintain what the other believes to be required in relation to a given aspect of belief and practice;
- 2) the preparedness to acknowledge that the practice of one's own tradition can fall short—and, in practice, historically has fallen short on occasion—of authentic performance and understanding in ways that can appear to justify the distorted caricatures;
- 3) a commitment to exploring what fresh concepts and understanding are now available that might help both traditions more easily and more clearly to say jointly what they each respectively believe to be important on a given point;
- 4) a related commitment to asking after the extent to which the historically different theological frameworks, languages and emphases of the respective traditions on a given point are more accurately to be seen as just that: different yet complementary emphases and languages rather than irreconcilably contradictory and opposed positions.

A couple of examples might help.

First, let us take the case, already mentioned, of Catholic understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass relative to Anglican



understanding of the sole sufficiency of the sacrificial death of Christ. ARCIC I was able to make real progress here both by acknowledging that Catholic practice has indeed sometimes fallen short in this regard (cf. strategy 2 above) and by nevertheless clarifying that when Catholics properly speak of the Mass as sacrificial, it is definitely not intended to propose an additional sacrifice to the sole-sufficient sacrifice of Christ on Calvary but to refer precisely to its sacramental re-presentation and the making present of its transforming effects. Where this dual process of honest recognition and clarification enabled Anglican participants to gain a better, less contentious appreciation for authentic Catholic understanding, it also enabled Catholic participants better to understand justifiable Anglican concerns about possible Catholic distortions and to appreciate that Anglicanism also allows for the sacramentality of the Eucharist relative to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

In turn, this process of clarifying and correcting misunderstandings (cf. strategy 1 above) was helped by the fact that scripture scholars had made great progress in tracing and understanding more fully the Hebrew roots of the word that is used in the Greek New Testament for 'making memory' (*anamnesis*). What they discovered is that 'making memory' of the saving acts of God in a full, scriptural sense is never simply about recalling the past to mind but about allowing the living force of that great act of God to be present and active: 'making memory' is about 'making present'. This is a very neat way of giving fresh articulation to what Anglicans and Roman Catholics have always claimed about the efficacy of the Eucharist, but in a way that clearly avoids both the traditional Protestant anxiety about appearing to add something to the death of Christ, and also the traditional Catholic concern that a 'mere memory' understanding of the Eucharist means that it ceases to be a means of grace (cf. strategy 3).

A second example, this time taken from the work of ARCIC II, pertains to the doctrine of justification and, more broadly, respective understandings of God's saving work in Christ and the Spirit. In this regard, the primary concern for Catholics has traditionally been to maintain that the totality of God's saving work involves us in being transformed through grace into the likeness of God (sanctification) rather than our mere forgiveness. For their own part, Protestants have first and foremost wanted to stress that God's forgiveness comes freely without our having to earn it through good works—on this Lutherans,

Calvinists and the Church of England's Articles of Religion, for example, are agreed, regardless of what differing emphases might be placed on sanctification. The problem, compounded by differing translations of the relevant terms in the Greek New Testament, is that Catholics have tended to assume that Protestants espouse what Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to as 'cheap grace' that does not attend to the need for our renewal and transformation. In turn, Protestants have tended to assume that Catholics make God's forgiveness conditional upon our sanctification.

In contrast, recent ecumenical theology, aided by fresh scholarship (cf. strategy 3), such as in the work of ARCIC II on justification and more recently and most clearly in the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, has clarified that these assumptions are based on misunderstandings (cf. strategy 1). Catholics have come to understand and accept that Protestant teaching does in fact, in various ways, emphasise that God's free, forgiving grace brings us to renewal and holiness. Correlatively, the Anglican participants in *Salvation and the Church* (1987) recognised that Catholics also emphasise that God's transforming grace is utterly unearned, coming first in forgiving embrace in our situation of incapacity through sin.<sup>1</sup> Through the combination of clearing up misunderstandings and recognising that not everything always requires to be expressed in the exact same way, respective Protestant and Catholic theologies of justification and salvation have come to appear not as contradictory theological frameworks but as two legitimate and complementary languages or grammars, each saying what the other believes needs to be said, albeit with respectively different emphases (cf. strategy 4). Whilst these are not identical, they can and do map onto each other.<sup>2</sup>

As this illustrates, these strategies have been hugely successful in showing ways in which to overcome apparently absolute differences between traditions by showing such differences to be, in key aspects, more apparent than real; as resting on misunderstandings about what are correctly viewed as legitimately diverse ways of articulating the

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19860903\\_salvation-church\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19860903_salvation-church_en.html).

<sup>2</sup> For further, see Paul D. Murray, 'St Paul and Ecumenism: Justification and All That', *New Blackfriars*, 91 (2010): 142-70.

same area of Christian truth. In this regard these strategies have been immensely powerful, significant and useful and will doubtless continue to have a key role to play on occasion in relation to specific issues. Equally, as they have been presented here—that is, as modes of reasoned analysis and argument somewhat abstracted from the spiritual, existential, and lived ecclesial and ecumenical contexts in which they have characteristically been put to work—they can also be seen to have their limitations.

In themselves, viewed as modes of analysis and argument, the characteristic ARCIC strategies identified here work primarily not by changing the substance of either party's own belief but by clearing up respective common misunderstandings of each about the other. As such, and even allowing for the predispositions of self-criticism and attentive hospitality to the truth of the other within which they have characteristically been situated and which they presuppose, they are themselves ultimately best viewed as strategies of clarification and explication rather than of growth, change and conversion *per se*. In substantive rather than perceptual and relational terms they effectively leave things as they are.

That is, at the level of theological understanding, the change (or continuing conversion) promoted by these strategies is largely limited to the fact that we come to think differently about the other due to the fact that we have each been able to express ourselves more clearly and teach the other more effectively about our respective theologies. The point, however, is that such perceptual and relational change can occur without the deeper conversion taking place of one's own tradition being challenged to expand and re-think how it understands and does things in relation to a given issue.

In this regard, the key emphasis placed upon the *Church as Communion* within ARCIC II from 1991 onwards acts as a highly significant and necessary complement to the strengths and limitations of the formal strategies here reviewed.<sup>1</sup> The timely reminder is that the churches, as called forth by and held within the Trinitarian communion of God, are called to grow more deeply together precisely in this communion.

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Nick Sagovsky for reminding me of this point, see [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19900906\\_church-communion\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19900906_church-communion_en.html).

With this, Charles Sherlock identifies two further ways in which the later cycles of ARCIC II's work recognised and sought to offset the limits of the characteristic composite strategy of seeking to 'get behind' historic divisions.<sup>1</sup> First he points to what he refers to as the 'double negative' conclusion to the 1994 ARCIC text on *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*<sup>2</sup> wherein it is both acknowledged that there are areas of continuing disagreement that cannot currently be overcome and nevertheless maintained that these 'need not constitute an insuperable barrier to progress towards fuller communion' (§101). As Charles Sherlock writes, 'the "get behind" method was starting to reveal its limits ... it oriented discussion to the past, from which approach some topics would remain intractable.' Complementing this is the eschatological rather than merely historical view of tradition that comes into view in *The Gift of Authority* in 1999<sup>3</sup> and then to fuller development in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005) wherein a "future into the present" orientation emerges such that the tradition is not simply measured by how it has been articulated in the past but by all it is understood to be when set within the saving purposes of God in Christ and the Spirit.

It is such shifts and recognitions already present within the work of ARCIC II that are now being extended in the work of ARCIC III.

### **The changed context of ARCIC III and the need for an ecumenical gear-change: the explicit turn to Receptive Ecumenism**

It was already recognised within the later stages of ARCIC II work, that the hugely successful and abidingly significant formal strategies forged in ARCIC I and the earlier phases of ARCIC II, cannot of themselves overcome those areas of real substantive difference between traditions, for example as to whether or not it is possible for a non-ordained person to preside at the celebration of the Eucharist, as

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles Sherlock, 'The Journey—An Anglican Perspective', in Donald Bolen and Gregory Cameron (eds.), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ: the Text with Commentaries and Study Guide* (London & New York: Continuum, 2006), 204-31.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19930906\\_life-in-christ\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930906_life-in-christ_en.html).

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_12051999\\_gift-of-authority\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_12051999_gift-of-authority_en.html).

figures in Anglican-Methodist dialogue. With the best will in the world and regardless of what deeper and more authentic mutual understanding can be reached, such issues will never be patient of being explained away as alternative ways of expressing the same basic points.

Nor is this an isolated problem. Many of the issues that now continue to divide the traditions bear closer analogy to the either/or question as to whether or not a non-ordained person can preside at Eucharist than they do to the more integrating question as to whether Anglican and Roman Catholic understandings of eucharistic sacrifice can be seen to be compatible. As such, we are at the point where the traditional formal strategies, for all their erstwhile success, have for the time being quite possibly gone as far as they can on most fronts. They are fine for problems based either on misunderstandings or the erroneous assumption that a point can only be expressed in one way and must always be expressed in the exact same way, failing to appreciate that it is not always necessary to choose between alternate expressions. But many of the problems that are now regarded as dividing the traditions simply do not lend themselves to being resolved in this way.

Think, for example, in the Anglican-Catholic context of continuing significant differences over the way in which the communions are respectively structured; of issues about the nature and exercise of authority and associated processes of decision-making;<sup>1</sup> and, perhaps most obviously, radical differences over whether women can legitimately be ordained. In the latter case in particular, regardless of what one personally thinks on these matters, and regardless even of whether one is seeking to explore how Catholic understanding may, with integrity, develop in these regards, it is clear, to say the least, that formal Catholic understanding is not going to be able to embrace such proposed developments within the ARCIC process.

As such, we are in a fundamentally changed context from that to which ARCIC I and, to a lesser extent, ARCIC II responded. It accordingly became clear to us in the course of the first meeting at Bose that we need a correlatively changed understanding of the appropriate strategy for ARCIC III. In essence, if we are to make progress with the kinds of more intractable problems identified here

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<sup>1</sup> As clearly recognised in *Gift of Authority*, 56-7.

then we need not just increased mutual understanding and appreciation *between* traditions but direct, explicit and effective self-criticism, growth, development, change—continuing ecclesial conversion to the truth of God in Christ and the Spirit—*within* each tradition respectively. Here we need a different strategy that will complement and extend the more familiar ARCIC strategies reviewed above by bringing forth the basic background predispositions of self-criticism and attentive hospitality and setting them centre-stage as a formal strategy in its own right; a strategy, that is, explicitly aimed at exposing each tradition to the challenge of the other.

As has been discussed on a number of previous occasions in the pages of this journal, it is in direct relation to this changed context and its challenges that a fresh strategy referred to as Receptive Ecumenism has come to be formally and explicitly articulated and tested through a series of projects operating out of the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University.<sup>1</sup> This basic strategy, which is correctly to be viewed as simply bringing to explicit systematic articulation instincts and principles that have long lain at the heart of the ecumenical movement, has subsequently been taken up and put to work by groups and ecclesial bodies in a wide variety of international contexts.<sup>2</sup> In turn, as indicated in the official communiqué released at the end of the May 2011 meeting, ARCIC III has now explicitly adopted Receptive Ecumenism as providing an appropriate way of proceeding and theological orientation for this next phase of the Commission's work as it seeks to serve its abiding goal of full sacramental and structural unity and of growing more deeply and visibly into real communion in the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

To summarise what has been said at greater length elsewhere, Receptive Ecumenism accepts the significantly changed ecumenical context in which we find ourselves but remains convinced that Life and Work ecumenism—doing things together—whilst vital, can never

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<sup>1</sup> See Murray, 'Recent Developments in Receptive Ecumenism at Durham University', *One in Christ*, 42/1 (2008): 207-11 and 'Receptive Ecumenism and Faith and Order', *One in Christ*, 43/2 (2009): 189-94.

<sup>2</sup> The Third International Receptive Ecumenism Conference will take place from 8-11 July 2013 at Fairfield University, Connecticut, USA on the theme 'Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective: Contextual Ecumenical Learning'. To register interest, contact [ccs.admin@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ccs.admin@durham.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2011/5/27/ACNS4874>.

be enough; convinced that precisely in this situation we need to retain the aspiration for structural and sacramental unity and to find an appropriate way to pursue this.<sup>1</sup> With this, Receptive Ecumenism recognises that this means that we need to focus on the organisational structures, processes and cultures of the churches and how they are challenged to learn from each other.

At its heart is a J. F. Kennedy style reversal: 'Ask not what your ecumenical others need to learn from you, ask rather what your tradition can learn and needs to learn from your ecumenical others.' This is to transpose the ethic of self-criticism and conversion that lies at the heart of Christian life from the level of personal ethic wherein we are more used to applying it and to apply it to the collective ecclesial level.

In terms of what it means for ARCIC III, alongside and in service of its commitment to deepened ecclesial communion in the Trinity, to be adopting the strategy and methodology of Receptive Ecumenism for this crucial third phase of its work focussed jointly on the relationship between the local and universal levels of the church and on the dynamics and substance of ethical discernment, two implications come immediately into view.

Firstly, in terms of the shape of the work of ARCIC III, it implies that the key question will not be 'How can Catholics and Anglicans seek to come directly to a common mind on issues such as decision making at local and universal levels?' but 'What respective difficulties are there in each of our traditions around decision making and how can these potentially be helped by learning from what is strong in the other tradition?' This is to take the kind of question of perceived specific strengths and difficulties in each other's traditions that might characteristically have been engaged at the start of practically any series of ARCIC conversations on a given topic and to give it explicit strategic-shaping influence and structuring priority over the entire conversation and anticipated outcomes.

Secondly, it means that ARCIC III will both seek to model this process in its own work and seek to stimulate similar processes at all

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<sup>1</sup> Two key texts are: Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); and Murray, 'Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs', *Louvain Studies*, 33 (2008): 30-45.

levels of the lives of the churches through creating appropriate consultation documents and resources. Here the process of receptive ecumenical learning and showing forth its transformative potential in clear, useful, attractive and convincing ways is actually more important than seeking to arrive at a theorised conclusion in a convergence statement.

As such, the final statements arising from ARCIC III will very likely include clear acknowledgment of continuing areas of substantial and substantive disagreement between the traditions. It is hoped, however, that what they will also do is to articulate, witness to and serve a process of real receptive, life-giving learning on behalf of each tradition precisely in the context and in face of such continuing substantive disagreement. Each tradition will be called, as an ecclesial spiritual discipline analogous to individual examination of conscience and correlative conversion into greater life, to grow in specific ways in its respective practices and structures of decision-making through effective receptive ecumenical learning.

In terms of what it means for the theology and practice of Receptive Ecumenism that ARCIC III is explicitly taking it up in this way, one bishop-friend wrote to me to the effect: 'Receptive Ecumenism has now moved from being a good idea discussed by some academics and ecumenists with some church support to being embraced by the most significant international bilateral process in the English-speaking world that has in turn tended to influence the methodology of all the other dialogues. It has gone global!'

This needs to be kept in perspective. As indicated earlier, whilst the specific language and systematic articulation of Receptive Ecumenism as an explicit strategy fit for our times might be of relatively recent articulation, it is a way of thinking and acting that has been long incubated in the ecumenical movement and which has, in part at least, been assumed in all good ecumenical work.<sup>1</sup> If Receptive Ecumenism is indeed fruitful for our time, it represents the coming of age and to full voice of a gift born within and given by all that has

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Murray, 'Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity in the Work of Yves Congar: Ressourcement, Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Reform', in Gabriel Flynn & Paul D. Murray (eds.), *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), forthcoming.



gone before in the ecumenical movement. As such, the appropriate attitudes are those of gratitude, rejoicing, humility and confidence that in as much as Receptive Ecumenism is indeed right and fitting for our times, it will be shown so to be by its fruits and, similarly, in as much as it is not, it will in due course be discerned so to be and so be suitably adapted and developed by the community of the church.

In the mean time, it is profoundly engendering of hope to recognise, contrary to the prophets of doom who would write-off formal institutional ecumenism in general and ARCIC in particular as a now redundant exercise, that ARCIC continues to work at the forefront of the ecumenical agenda, exploring and in some respects pioneering a path appropriate to our age. By the grace of God may this work come to fruition in God's good work and God's good time.

## ON 'CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCT'. A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE ON EVANGELISM AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

**Tony Richie**\*

*In June of 2011 an important and unprecedented document, 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,' was made public. In this essay, Tony Richie, a participant in its formulation, overviews its contents, assessing and interacting with some early responses, both Christian and non-Christian. Richie highlights the ecumenical nature of the document and its amazing affirmation by major ecclesiastical bodies representing the vast majority of contemporary Christian groups. He further explores its insights and implications for his own faith family of Pentecostal Christians. Richie aims for enthusiastic Christian evangelism and witness with ethical sensitivity to the needs and context of today's religiously plural world.<sup>1</sup>*

Evangelism has to do with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As such, evangelism is an essential element of the mission of the Church. The New Testament is the basis of the Church's evangelistic understanding and mission. However, it is sometimes difficult to describe a specific model or define a particular program for 'the kind of cross-cultural mission and inter-faith dialogue in which

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<sup>1</sup> This article also appears as 'A Pentecostal Perspective on Evangelism and Religious Pluralism' in *The Pneuma Review* 15:1 (Winter 2012), to whom *One in Christ* is grateful for permission to publish Dr Richie's article. See <[www.PneumaFoundation.org](http://www.PneumaFoundation.org)>. The full text of the document 'Christian Witness ...' is reproduced below, pp. 338-43.

today's evangelists must engage.<sup>1</sup> Religious pluralism at its simplest and most fundamental level of meaning expresses the obvious fact that an actual plurality of religions and other beliefs and practices exists in the world.<sup>2</sup> Increasing technologies of communication and transportation, as well as the international phenomenon of globalization, have brought Christianity and other religions into closer contact than ever before. Accordingly the Church's evangelistic mission in the world's religiously plural context calls for some careful explication.

On Tuesday June 28, 2011 the news became public that an important, and in some ways, unprecedented, document on Christian witness and mission had been finalized and published. In the interest of full disclosure, along with several others, I helped write it. That doesn't mean that what follows is a defense. Although some of us who worked long (5 years) and hard (in Lariano, Italy; Toulouse, France; and Bangkok, Thailand) on it may be tempted to see this document as our 'baby,' we also know better than anyone its faults and flaws. However, I must express my deep and profound respect for my colleagues. It was a special blessing to work with them all. And this document is important and unprecedented, and it is the right moment for it. It is important because it addresses some of the most challenging and significant aspects of Christian mission in today's religiously plural world.<sup>3</sup> As a collaborative effort involving representatives of 90% of the world's 2 billion Christians, it is also unprecedented. It is the right moment for it because global conditions demand we face the reality of interfaith conflict and violence.<sup>4</sup> 'Christian Witness in a Multi-

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Stoll Armstrong, 'Evangelism,' *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds. Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 192-193 (193).

<sup>2</sup> Ninian Smart, 'Pluralism,' *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992): 360-64.

<sup>3</sup> On doing Christian mission in a religiously plural world, see *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission: Towards a Renewal Theology of Mission and Interreligious Encounter*, Asbury Theological Seminary Series in Christian Revitalization, Pentecostal/Charismatic section, eds. Amos Yong and Clifton Clarke (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> On religion-related violence and its religious pluralism components, see Tony Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit: A Pentecostal Model for Interreligious Dialogue*, Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian

Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct' is literally the first document ever to receive unanimous endorsement from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). In a time of interreligious tension, often involving issues of Christian mission, the Preamble to 'Recommendations for Conduct' unapologetically affirms the mission of the churches in a manner respectful of others, including non-Christian religions.

### **An Ethical Approach**

More of a practical guide than a theological statement, 'Recommendations for Conduct' outlines 'A Basis for Christian Witness'. This is the most consistently biblical section, and primarily upholds mission as a participation in the mission of God and obedience to the example of Jesus and the early church with a strong emphasis on ethical behavior and responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The document also details 'Principles' of Christian conduct in bearing witness to the gospel: 'Acting in God's love,' 'Imitating Jesus Christ,' 'Christian virtues,' 'Acts of service and justice,' 'Discernment in ministries of healing,' 'Rejection of violence,' 'Freedom of religion and belief,' 'Mutual respect and solidarity,' 'Respect for all people,' 'Renouncing false witness,' 'Ensuring personal discernment,' and 'Building interreligious relationships.' True to its subtitle, it also suggests 'Recommendations' for guiding relationships between Christians and others as Christians respond to God's call to do mission: 'study' the critical issues involved, 'build' relationships of respect and trust,

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Revitalization Movements, gen. ed. J. Stephen O'Malley, Pentecostal/charismatic Studies, ed. William F. Faupel (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011), 14-22. Religion-related violence is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, global challenges facing our world and its religions today, 220-21. Essential to its resolution is recognizing the responsibility of all churches, including Pentecostal movements, to promote peace through improving interreligious relations, 237 (fn 151).

<sup>1</sup> Pentecostals fervently affirm the divine mission of the Church to bear bold witness to the world of Jesus Christ as the only Savior, Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, 28. This evangelistic commitment does not lessen but rather increases a responsibility to act ethically toward religious others. See Tony Richie, 'A Threefold Cord: Weaving Together Pentecostal Ecumenism, Ethics, and Evangelism in Conversion,' *Current Dialogue* 50 (January 2008): 47-54.

‘encourage’ Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith, ‘cooperate’ with other religious communities for justice and the common good, ‘call’ on governments to respect religious freedom, and ‘pray’ for all neighbors.

‘Recommendations for Conduct’ ends with an Appendix describing the background and process of its origin and development over the last five years. As a participant from beginning to end in that process, I understand that this background is essential for appreciating many of the nuances of the statements of this document. Also, it would be a mistake to divorce the content and tone of ‘Recommendations for Conduct’ from the clear purpose statement in the Preamble.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

## Early Response

The early response to ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct’ has been mostly positive. Of course, almost everyone can see the need for addressing interfaith conflict, and the role that issues of conversion and evangelism play in that scenario.<sup>1</sup> Many seem almost amazed that such diverse Christian groups were ready, willing, and able to work so closely for so long and, of course, to succeed in producing a unanimous statement. Some misunderstand. For example, *Religion Today Summaries* (30 June 2011)

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<sup>1</sup> Pentecostals believe conversion is essential for salvation, and therefore feel compelled by love to present everyone with an opportunity in liberty to repent and believe, Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, 28, and are known as aggressive and active missionaries and evangelists. See Grant L. McClung, Jr., ‘Evangelism,’ *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements (NIDPCM)*, 617-20 (esp. 617, 620). Pentecostals understand their evangelistic fervor and effectiveness as directly derivative from their experience of Spirit baptism (Acts 1:8). However, it is imperative to underscore that the Church’s mission is broad enough to embrace such wide-ranging activities as evangelism, social activism, and interreligious dialogue, Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, 102-3.

put it like this: 'Top 3 Bodies in Christianity Issue Evangelism Rules.' Of course, 'recommendations' and 'rules' are not the same at all. This kind of oversight sets up potential problems. No one is trying to impose rules on anyone's evangelism. (Below you will notice that Chris Norton makes the same mistake.) The World Council of Churches press release put it better: 'Christians reach broad consensus on appropriate missionary conduct.' This news release is also informative and balanced.<sup>1</sup>

Then Francis X. Rocca (*Religion News Service*, 30 June 2011), in 'Ecumenical Accord Reached on Proselytizing: Did You Know?' suggests this historic document is little more than 'the latest attempt to assuage sometimes violent tensions over proselytizing in non-Christian societies'. He offered expert testimony that though 'not a full-throated apology for such practices, the injunctions are "tantamount to an admission that they have been going on"'. While to be expected, these kinds of comments don't do justice to the strong fiber and vibrant substance of the overall work. Nevertheless, Rocca clearly recognizes the need for peaceful relations among world religions. And that may be the main thing here.

*Christianity Today's* Chris Norton's 'Top Evangelical, Catholic, and Mainline Bodies Issue Evangelism Rules' (29 June 2011) is especially interesting. Before looking at it, I will mention that I'm not happy about his exclusion of Pentecostals from the title and the task. The major news releases from participating bodies stressed the inclusion not only of Evangelicals but also specifically of Pentecostals. One of the original organizers and leaders of the whole project, Hans Ucko, told me personally that he considered one of the major accomplishments to be the inclusion of Evangelicals and Pentecostals. While in my North American context I consider myself both an Evangelical and a Pentecostal, these are not necessarily synonymous terms. In many parts of the world they may have quite different meanings.<sup>2</sup> *Christianity Today* should've been more specific. Yet it is important to note that Pentecostal involvement was more informal and less official than, say members of the WEA, who formally and

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<sup>1</sup> See <[www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/christians-reac-broad-co.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/christians-reac-broad-co.html)>

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Vinson Synan: 'Classical Pentecostalism,' *NIDPCM*, 553-55, and 'Evangelicalism,' *NIDPCM*, 613-16.

officially endorsed their participants and the outcome of their work. Kudos to WEA! Right now, too many Pentecostals are still struggling with stepping up to the plate to take their place at bat in the critical 'game' of living and serving in a multi-religious world. Accordingly, Pentecostal involvement with this significant document was mostly at the individual level, although with awareness and encouragement of organizational leadership.<sup>1</sup>

### **Engaging Issues Presented**

One of the things I like about Norton's article<sup>2</sup> is that it does honestly engage the document and wrestle with the issues it raises. His subtitle, 'Missiologists applaud unity effort, but note what's missing and what will raise eyebrows' sums up its substance well. Not to quibble (again!) about words in the title/subtitle, but I would mention we need to understand 'unity effort' in the sense of a united effort. In other words, this was not an effort toward unity, but an effort arising out of unity. One thing that's most impressive about this process and the document it eventually produced is that fact. An underlying unity already in place made it possible. Admittedly, it was sometimes stretched; but, I also think it was strengthened. Those who don't think ecumenism can be effective need to think again. Along that line, Norton does a good job of explaining the significance of the release of 'Recommendations for Conduct.' As an Evangelical myself, I gladly note that his article rightly points out, from Kevin Mannoia, professor of Ministry at Azusa Pacific University, and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, that Evangelical involvement in this process signals that Evangelicals are beginning to take their proper place in the broader Christian context—and are even willing to address and discuss interreligious dialogue. To me, that's a real plus. He also quotes a former professor of mine, George Hunter, dean of the School of World Missions at Asbury Theological Seminary, who calls attention to what's not in the document. Notably, Hunter thinks the omission of any statement on the sacraments was a major concession by the Catholics. While I can certainly see where he's coming from, I

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<sup>1</sup> Besides me, other Pentecostals involved with various stages of the process include Cheryl Bridges Johns (USA), Connie Au (Asia), and a few Elim folks (UK).

<sup>2</sup> See <[www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/juneweb-only/evangelismrules.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/juneweb-only/evangelismrules.html)>

don't remember there being a big to-do about it in our work together. My impression is that most of us just thought we were talking about something else: namely, appropriate Christian behavior in doing the mission of the churches in religiously plural settings.

Norton notes that Lon Allison, executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, said the document doesn't include everything Evangelicals would have liked to see, either. He states that more emphasis on evangelism as verbal proclamation would have been beneficial. He seems to think that too much emphasis on deeds takes away from the importance of words. I just think they both go together. Naturally those who favor one over the other will feel like insufficient emphasis has been given to their preference.<sup>1</sup> And I disagree with Allison that our work operated from an assumption that Christians 'do witness, but do it badly or incompletely.' However, I wonder would he deny that *some* Christians have *sometimes* done witness in ways that don't glorify God or don't result in saving souls? If so, these kinds of recommendations might be helpful in such cases. Jerry Root of Wheaton College has concerns similar to Allison but agrees that Christians should not be offensive in their evangelism and admits that he likes the 'spirit of the document'.

### **Admitting Some Problems**

I personally have more problems with what Norton reports from Craig Ott, professor of mission and intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He objects to the document's emphasis on interreligious relations and dialogue as leaning toward the Catholic and Mainline Protestant view that the God of other religions is the same as the God of Christianity. He argues that Evangelicals cannot accept that idea. That totally misses the point. I'm neither Catholic nor Mainline Protestant; I'm an Evangelical and a Pentecostal. Yet I believe that righteous relations with religious others is required of Christians. In a way, it has little to nothing to do with what I think of the other religions' god or gods.<sup>2</sup> For me, it's about being a good

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<sup>1</sup> See Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007). Cp. Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, 102-03 and 125 (fn 250).

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, for an intriguing study of this subject, see Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011).



Christian through loving my neighbor. Of course, there is an appropriate time and place for addressing that topic; but, I suggest that it isn't determinative for Christian ethics. Christians should act as Christians should act regardless.

In Norton's article, Hunter, and also Dana Robert, co-director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University, rightly point out that the word 'evangelism' is not even in the document, and that it stresses 'changing one's religion' rather than 'converting'. I agree that 'evangelism' and 'evangelize' are good, strong biblical words that it would have been well to include. That is something that stands out to us Evangelicals but doesn't so much to other Christians. I'd like to have seen it in there, but I understand that this is a broad consensus statement that includes other Christians. The word 'witness' is also a good, strong biblical word; and, perhaps it doesn't carry as much emotive baggage for some. Further, this document does address conversion, but argues that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit and not a human act. I'd also suggest that Robert's suggestion that the lack of 'activist' language flowing out of the Great Commission assumes that the Great Commission itself is very narrowly interpreted to mean only evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Most biblical scholars, including Evangelicals, don't go that far. However, I readily admit that finding the right language is one of the greatest challenges, and I'm sure it can be improved upon. Further, Robert is, along with Douglas McConnell, dean of Fuller Theological Seminary, certainly right that interpretation and perception will play a huge role in how 'Recommendations for Conduct' gets applied in varied contexts. But then, I see it as a strong point of this document that its general statements can be effectively adapted to specific contexts. In fact, that's part of its purpose.

Nevertheless, I share the concern that it is in areas where interfaith hostility is most intense that applying these recommendations will perhaps also be most difficult. After all, how does one enforce these guidelines? Or how are we held accountable? And yet, I can't help but believe that having them out there, with the full significance of

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<sup>1</sup> See Raymond F. Culpepper, *The Great Commission: The Solution...* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 2009). Cp. also to Peter Wagner's Foreword to Cindy Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto: Your Part in God's Plan to Change the Nations Today* (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2008), 10.

knowing that 90% of the world's Christians favor some version of morally sensitive evangelism such as it signifies, and that interfaith violence is not acceptable, may bring a little salt and light to what has been a flat and dark situation for too long. I hope so. I pray so.

### **Affirming the Potential**

In any case, as one who helped in a small way in the writing of 'Recommendations for Conduct,' I certainly concur with Ott's general assessment.

What's valuable about the document is that Christians are letting the world know that they are intending to be respectful, loving, and transparent in their approach to missions and that they do not intend to be seen as violent or coercive... If it causes some groups to give a little more pause to the way they consider others, especially a lot of the real nasty, uninformed rhetoric that is out there, if it somehow calls people to be tempered in their speech, then it is a good thing.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, I would be the first to admit that 'Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct' is not a perfect document. How could it be? Some of what I wanted didn't make it in, and some of what I didn't want in did make it! I'm sure my colleagues could each say the same. To an extent, that also sounds a lot like what I'm hearing come through from others who are now reading it for the first time. That being said, I think this is the right moment for such an important and unprecedented document—a unified statement on unapologetic Christian mission and witness characterized by honesty and humility. A world of anger and danger needs believers to bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel in love with gentleness and respect without compromising righteousness and truth (1 Pet. 3:15).

### **Example of an 'Other' Perspective**

Rabbi A. James Rudin has helpfully provided us with some insights from another religious tradition, in this case, from the Jewish perspective, in an 18 August 2011 *Huffington Post* article.<sup>2</sup> He candidly

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<sup>1</sup> See also Hans Küng, 'Global Ethics and Education,' *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, eds. Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 267-83.

<sup>2</sup> See <[www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/18/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world\\_n\\_930912.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/18/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world_n_930912.html)>

admits that in spite of the 'ton of good' that many missionaries have done around the world many Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Native Americans, and others have some mixed emotions about Christian missions and missionaries, mostly because of overzealous and unwise extremists perhaps overly intent on converting others. The good rabbi quotes none other than Evangelist Billy Graham as instructing Christian evangelists to be more circumspect toward Jews regarding proselytism. It is in this context that Rudin affirms the importance of this document on 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.' After a brief and selective review of the document, Rudin suggests it indicates that 'the terms "mission" and "witness" mean something different than they did in the past.' He thinks mission 'has come to mean coercion or manipulation,' while witness 'is living one's personal faith without the covert or overt aim of conversion.' Rudin then commends the wisdom of the latter approach.

I completely agree—well, almost anyway. I think the rabbi makes valid points with his observations about the impressions some religious others have of some missionaries. I also think he's certainly correct in his contention that the most valid form of witness is living out one's personal faith while trusting the work of conversion to God. Perhaps I'm a little defensive, but I'd like to suggest that Christian mission never meant 'coercion or manipulation'. Or at least, it shouldn't ever mean those things. But if in some cases it did indeed come to mean that for some Christian activists, or gave that impression to non-Christian observers, then we can certainly agree together now on the need for clearing it up altogether. Accordingly, I'm encouraged that a fair-minded friend from another faith such as Rabbi Rudin can concur with us on the importance and intent of this particular document. Hopefully, it is a sign that religious others recognize that we Christians are striving to be faithful to our own sense of Christian mission, including evangelism, in a manner that lovingly respects the vulnerability of others. If so, then, in my humble opinion, 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' will have perhaps accomplished an important part of its objective.

### **Expanding for Pentecostals**

What does this important and unprecedented document, and even more especially, the issues it raises, mean for Pentecostal and Charismatic/Renewal Christians in terms of their mission? I'm

reminded of the words of Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches (USA), in St Louis at an Interfaith Relations Commission meeting (6-8 October 2011). He was particularly replying to Pentecostal participation in the process of developing the document 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct'. As I recall, he stated that Pentecostals today are demonstrating that they have longstanding resources in their tradition upon which to draw in helping to lead the way regarding Christian mission in contexts of ecumenical and interfaith relations. I agree. Furthermore, I'd add, our spirituality and theology, particularly our distinctive pneumatology, practically compel us to shoulder our share of the burden of responsibilities in such contexts.<sup>1</sup>

In closing, a few observations appear to be in order, however. First, of course Pentecostals (along with many other Christians of Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical traditions) are adamantly and unapologetically committed to the absolute and utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the incomparable inspiration and authority of the Holy Bible, and the unique nature and necessity of Christian salvation.<sup>2</sup> Second, Pentecostals also rightly resist any restriction on the right to evangelize others with a view toward offering them the temporal and eternal benefits of Christian conversion.<sup>3</sup> Finally, and this is critical in the context of the present conversation, Pentecostals fervently affirm the essential importance of spiritual discernment in situations of Christian faith and life as well as in all ministry and mission—including settings involving religious pluralism.<sup>4</sup> Really, I think that this is what 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct' is all about anyway: inviting the Holy Spirit to help us distinguish between right and wrong so that we may do evangelism well. Lord, please enable us to bear witness to Jesus Christ in a Christ-like manner (1 John 2:6)! Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> On Pentecostals' biblical, moral, and spiritual obligation to work for mitigation of interfaith conflict, see Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 26-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 101 and 124 (fn 247).

## MELANCHTHON: BETWEEN HUMANISM, PROTESTANTISM AND CATHOLICISM

**Martin Jung**\*

*Melanchthon, a humanist and Lutheran theologian, was one of the most ecumenical reformers. He believed in the unity of the Church and fought for its restoration. As professor of Greek language and a student of Luther in Wittenberg, he integrated his humanistic influences into the Reformation. Contrary to Luther, Melanchthon remained in close contact with Erasmus. He strove to reform by means of the written word—never by force. In 1530 he wrote the Confession of Augsburg, pleading for diversity in the church. Melanchthon kept up his efforts to unify both churches and to cure the wounds in the church caused by the the wars of religion.*

Melanchthon was at once a humanist, a Lutheran pastor, and the most ecumenical of the reformers. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, the German Catholic theologian, referred to him as the greatest ecumenist of the Reformation era. Melanchthon was moreover a reformer of European importance. His books were read and his opinions heeded all over Europe. His correspondents ranged over more than five hundred towns, as far as Iceland. I want to consider Melanchthon as situated somewhere in a nexus of Humanism, Protestantism and Catholicism—somewhat provocatively, since Melanchthon would not have seen himself located between Protestantism and Catholicism, but as a Protestant. Nevertheless, some of his Catholic contemporaries saw him as someone still open to the old church, to Catholicism. In contrast to Luther, he was never excommunicated. He retained

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Woodcut of Melanchthon, 1560 by Lukas Cranach. Reproduced by kind permission of Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten, Wittenberg.

personal contacts with Catholic theologians. He believed in the unity of the Church, and hoped for its restoration.

### **Between Humanism and Reformation**

But let us begin at the beginning. As a humanist, Melanchthon belonged to that movement of European scholars who wanted to revive the culture of the ancient world of Greeks and Romans. *Ad fontes*, back to the roots—that was the big idea.

Melanchthon was born in a family of artisans in South Germany. His father could afford a home tutor for his son, and the tutor was a humanist. Aged 12 Melanchthon had to leave home to attend a school some twenty miles away, in Pforzheim. The humanist credentials of the school were well known. Then at 14 he entered Heidelberg university: and once again his formation was thoroughly humanist. When he was 16 Melanchthon moved on to Tübingen university. He began to study theology, but he was not interested in the scholastic theology taught in Tübingen. His interests lay in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, as well as in rhetoric and philosophy, especially that of Aristotle.

We come to 1517, to Luther's theses on penance and indulgences, and the beginning of the Reformation. We do not know whether Melanchthon read the Ninety-Five Theses in Tübingen, though he may have done. But six months later, he was invited to take up the post of professor of Greek in Wittenberg, and so came into direct contact with the burgeoning reformation. The invitation came not from Luther but from the Elector of Saxony. Melanchthon began teaching in Wittenberg in September 1518; and also began to relearn his theology—protestant theology—as Luther's student. A few months later he lent his public support to Luther, and to the Reformation. Melanchthon was now a reformer. However, in contrast to other reformers, he remained a humanist, integrating humanism with reformation.

I wish to illustrate this under four headings: Melanchthon's continued interest in education; in peace; his continued contact with Erasmus; and his vision of man as God's partner, and not just as passive object.

#### *1. Melanchthon's commitment to education*

Melanchthon began his career at Wittenberg with an address on university education, on how to improve the education of the young.

Wittenberg was a new, modern, reform university. Melanchthon had been summoned there because it needed someone who capable of teaching Greek—something of a rarity, since Greek was not taught at medieval universities. Melanchthon was keen to instruct his students in Greek, Hebrew, and of course Latin, that is, Ciceronian Latin. He also wanted students instructed in mathematics and history in addition to philosophy and theology. This was the situation in 1518.

But just a few years later, in 1521-2, with Luther far away in the seclusion of Wartburg castle, education in Wittenberg suffered a major crisis. The students, along with some professors, now wanted nothing but bible studies and theological discussions. Philosophy, rhetoric, poetry and the rest were out of favour, as were exams. Some Protestants thought that possessing the Holy Spirit was enough to enable them to understand the bible, resolve theological questions, and to equip them to work in the Church. In 1523 Melanchthon put a stop to these developments. He brought new rules and new structures into the university. Exams were back, along with the study of languages and philosophy. Melanchthon's commitment to education lasted throughout his life. He supported the foundation of new Protestant universities and the reforming of old ones, not just in Wittenberg. He founded schools and developed a Protestant system of education.

### *2. Melanchthon's commitment to peace*

Humanism was a peaceful movement. Erasmus wrote a famous book against war; Melanchthon hated and feared war. As a child he had watched soldiers conquering and laying waste his home town, and his father had died—possibly because of drinking poisoned water—during the war. In later life he endured three major conflicts, in 1525, 1547 and 1552. Some reformers, such as Zwingli in Zürich, wished to further the reformation of the church by force of arms—Zwingli died in such a conflict in 1531. Melanchthon detested war and fought for reformation with words, never with arms. Throughout his life he sought to bring peace.

### *3. Melanchthon's continued contact with Erasmus*

Erasmus of Rotterdam, the most famous of all the humanists, had supported the early reformation. However in 1524 Luther had a major dispute with him. The following year Erasmus broke with Luther and the reformation and returned to the Catholic Church. Melanchthon's



contacts with Erasmus predated the latter's reformed period, and lasted until Erasmus's death in 1536. He subsequently gave two university addresses on the life and work of Erasmus, praising him as a great man.

#### *4. Melanchthon's view of man as God's partner, not as merely passive object*

The major dispute between Luther and Erasmus had been about free will. Does man have a free will? Is he able to do good and avoid evil? Can he make a decision to opt for faith, for God? Erasmus said yes—Luther said no. As a young reformer, under Luther's influence, Melanchthon agreed with Luther and denied free will. Later, he modified his view. True, without God man can do nothing; he is totally dependent on the grace of God. But man is not merely passive; he has to act, to respond. The possibility of refusing God's grace is open to him. The later Melanchthon supported a 'collaborative' model, not far removed from the humanist and Catholic point of view. Subsequently, this led some protestant theologians to accuse Melanchthon of betraying Reformation principles. But it should be noted that Luther himself did not condemn Melanchthon's revised opinion.

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These four aspects of Melanchthon are not without relevance today. At certain times Protestant theology, especially in Germany, has tended to see a conflict between humanism and Protestantism, along the lines of Luther's dispute with Erasmus. And some German Protestant theologians have seen Melanchthon as a traitor to Reformation principles. I myself remember an encounter some fifteen years ago in Tübingen when I was working on my first book, 'Melanchthon and Prayer'. A new professor of dogmatics and ethics in the university, who shall remain nameless, asked me what I was working on. When I told him 'Melanchthon', he looked most surprised and said, 'Perhaps you will be able to demonstrate that Melanchthon did not betray the Reformation'. Even in his own lifetime, from 1547 to 1552, as well as later, Melanchthon had been accused of treachery. How did this come about?

Reformation was not always peaceful, but was often accompanied by war and violence. The reformation in Germany had enjoyed a long period of calm: but in 1546, after Luther's death, the Emperor declared

war on the Protestant towns and regions of Germany. The war was successful. Within a year Protestant Germany was defeated and Catholicism restored. Terrible times followed. Some reformers went into hiding, others fled abroad. From Strasbourg, Martin Bucer went to England and worked in Cambridge where he died a few years later. For his part, Melanchthon stayed in Wittenberg and prevented the closure of his university. He did not declare out and out resistance, but sought compromise. He was ready to accept many Catholic elements, if only Protestant preaching could be kept safe. Preaching and teaching—these were the essentials. I would even say that Melanchthon would have been prepared to accept a German ‘Church of England’, a church with a hierarchical structure and traditional ceremonial.

But this was not to be. In 1552 history took a different course—another war, with new victors, and Protestantism was saved in Germany. Melanchthon however had suffered a loss of authority and influence, with some former friends turning against him because he had given in and sought to compromise.

## **Between Protestantism and Catholicism**

### *1. Catholics can also obtain salvation: Melanchthon’s mother*

Melanchthon was born in south Germany. He lost his father as a child, but his mother was still alive when he became a reformer. She stayed in that part of Germany, which was Catholic. In 1524 Melanchthon the Protestant reformer paid a visit to his Catholic mother in his Catholic home town. She was in turmoil about what to believe and asked her son’s advice. He questioned her about her prayer life, and ended up reassuring her that everything was alright. He was not about to put his mother’s piety at risk by taking her to Wittenberg. On the contrary, he advised her that she could obtain salvation as a Catholic in a Catholic town. That was their last meeting. She died five years later, aged 52.

### *2. ‘We are born to understand each other.’ Melanchthon’s continuing contacts with Catholics*

While on this visit to his home town in 1524, a notable visitor came to talk to Melanchthon—Frederic Nausea, secretary of Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, the papal legate. Nausea’s mission was to find out if Melanchthon might be persuaded to return to the old church. Despite offering some attractive inducements, he had no joy. Melanchthon’s

response was nonetheless friendly, explaining that he was not looking for his own advancement, but wished to defend the truth, without reviling those who took a different view. His reply to Nausea was: Let us work together to cure the Church's wounds... We have a letter from Nausea written sixteen years later in which he speaks positively about Melanchthon and their meeting. There were more offers from the old church in the years that followed. Melanchthon did not spurn the contacts, but he rejected the offers, remaining in Wittenberg as a reformer on the side of Luther.

In 1540 and 1541 Melanchthon took part in two famous religious colloquia in the South German towns of Worms and Regensburg respectively. These meetings were the first and only attempt during the Reformation period to maintain, or rather restore Church unity. The Emperor wanted these discussions and they were serious initiatives, to which both sides were committed. After some lengthy negotiations prominent theologians from either side succeeded in reaching agreement in some crucial theological areas, such as the doctrine of justification. But in the end these were rejected by Rome and the Pope, followed by the Protestant authorities. It was the religious authorities who disagreed, not Luther and the theologians. Let me say that in this year of 1541, as far as the Protestant authorities were concerned, political control and authority over their own church in their own land mattered more than a united Christendom.

In 1552 there was another opportunity for negotiation and mutual comprehension. The Protestants, defeated in the religious war, were forced to participate in the church assembly meeting in Trent. Melanchthon was one of only a few reformers who set out to attend the conference. Unfortunately, he did not reach Trent. A new war had begun in southern Germany and Melanchthon was prevented from completing his journey, to the disappointment of many in Trent—of those few Protestants who attended, and of those Catholic reformers who wished to maintain unity, and reform the Church.

*'Nati sumus ad mutuam sermonis communicationem.'* 'We are born to understand each other.' Words spoken by Melanchthon in 1543 in a speech he gave in Wittenberg (CR 11,613); words he always put into practice.

### 3. *Church unity does not mean uniformity. The Confession of Augsburg as a bridge between the churches*

In 1530 Melanchthon wrote the Confession of Augsburg, the best known and still the most important Confession of the Reformation period. With this Confession Melanchthon did not wish to divide the church and found a new one, but rather to maintain its unity. The Church is an assembly of saints, of Christians, where the gospel is taught and the sacraments duly administered. These two things are essential to the Church. Melanchthon also stressed a number of elements still held in common by Catholics and Protestants: the bible, the primitive Christian creeds, doctrines of God, Christ, and sin. And he stated clearly that the unity of the Church does not mean that everything has to be done in the same way. Pluralism is possible.

This position of Melanchthon in 1530 was rejected by Catholic theologians and the Emperor alike. But history moves on. Important discussions among Catholic theologians in Germany 450 years later concluded that today Catholic theologians would have no difficulty in accepting the Augsburg Confession as an ecumenical Confession.

### 4. *An evangelical pope? Melanchthon opposes Luther*

The papacy was and is the most sensitive issue between Protestants and Catholics. From 1535 on, Luther saw the pope as the antichrist, the devil's helper, destroying the church from within. With harsh words, Luther not only criticised the pope but spoke in violent terms about burning the papal see and hanging the pope and his cardinals. But in 1535 Protestants were surprised by a papal invitation to a church assembly, a holy council. For nearly twenty years Protestant demands for a church assembly had been rejected by the pope. Now things seemed to be changing, with the pope expressing a wish for such an assembly. How should Protestants react? In 1537 there was a meeting of Protestant theologians and political leaders in Schmalkalden, a town between Saxony and Hesse, at which Luther presented a new private confession of faith which later came to be known as the Articles of Schmalkalden. This confession spoke of the pope to condemn him. Many theologians signed Luther's text. Melanchthon also signed, but with this addendum: Regarding the pope, I disagree with Luther. I am prepared to accept the pope, if he allows evangelical preaching, and if he declares that his power derives from human,

rather than divine law. I am prepared to accept the pope, for I want to support peace in the world and the unity of the Church.

Let me quote him verbatim, first in German, then in English:

Ich Philippus Melanthon halt dise obgestalte artikel auch fur recht und christlich. Vom Bapst aber halt ich, so ehr das Euangelium wollte zulassen, das yhm, umb fridens und gemeiner Einikeit willen der jenigen Christen so auch unter yhm sind und kunfftig sein möchten, sein superioritet uber die Bischove die ehr hatt iure humano, auch von uns zuzulassen (und zugeben) sey. (BSLK 463-464)

I, Philipp Melanthon, also consider the articles above to be right and Christian. Yet, regarding the pope, I have the opinion that if he should allow the Gospel, his supremacy over the bishops, which he has according to human law, should then also be recognized by us for the sake of peace and common unity of those Christians who are also under his rule and perhaps could be so in the future.

Melancthon's proposal had no effect; the Protestant leaders rejected participation in a church assembly.

As previously mentioned, I believe that the papacy remains the crucial sticking point, now as then. Popes now are better than they were in the time of Luther and Melancthon; but they are also more powerful. Now as then, Protestants cannot possibly accept the doctrine of infallibility. On this I would have Melancthon's agreement.

### **Melancthon: living in the Spirit**

Let me finish on a very different note, with just a few words on his spirituality. Melancthon was a man of prayer, and prayed constantly for the unity of the Church. A few days before his death in 1560 he took some paper and wrote a few sentences under the heading: reasons who we should not fear death. He wrote that we will at last reach the light; we will see God; we will understand all those questions which we could not understand during our lives; we will understand the Trinity, and the two natures of Christ. We will understand why God made us as we are. And, wrote Melancthon, we will be freed from the rage of theologians. During his final years, months and weeks Melancthon had to endure many attacks from other theologians, Protestant as well as Catholic, including some of his former students. Death as liberation: the tragic, unhappy end of this great man.

Melanchthon: humanist and reformer, reformer and humanist. Luther perceived that Melanchthon embodied this conjunction. Once when he was sitting at table he took a piece of chalk, and wrote a few short Latin sentences: *Res et verba Philippus, verba sine re Erasmus, res sine verbis Lutherus, nec res nec verba Carolostadius* (WA TR 3619). Freely translated:

Only Philip Melanchthon understands theology and has the words to express it. Erasmus can speak and write, but he has no understanding. I, Luther, understand, but do not find the words. Karlstadt has no understanding and no words.

## TAGORE: POET, MYSTIC AND HUMANIST

### Leonard Fernando sj\*

*This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. The first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Tagore's appeal is universal. His loving concern for humankind, and for every living thing, was all-embracing, and incarnated in effective social and educational institutions, as well as in lyrical poetry. A mystic in the Indian bhakti tradition, his lyrics express a passionate love for God as Father. One in Christ is grateful for permission to reproduce the following article, which first appeared in the August 2011 issue of the Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection.*

During my days of study at Innsbruck, Austria, for a whole week I used different texts from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* for the afternoon community prayer. The response to them was overwhelming—some members who had planned to go out earlier waited till the end of the prayer! I received many appreciative comments for the prayer service. This was an eye-opener for me. I realized how much even the English writings of Tagore, original or in translation, could lead people to encounter God. I am convinced that the Indian poet is an international figure who speaks a language that touches the hearts of people across the world: they understand it and vibrate with it. He can evoke deep spiritual and psychological experiences in people. It is said that 'experience (*anubhav*) is the starting point of theology'. It is also the goal of an authentic spiritual life. Tagore's own life experiences had a lasting effect on his life and found expression in the themes and symbols of his writings and in the new way of education he introduced.

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The Sahitya Akademi has brought out his writings in English—original as well as translations done by him—in three large volumes.<sup>1</sup> Especially for those who cannot read Bengali these volumes are a great help to have an insight into the spirituality of our poet. There are also translations in the many Indian as well as other languages—German, Russian, French, Spanish, and Arabic to mention a few. Tagore really belongs to the whole human family.

This year India celebrates the 150th birth year of Rabindranath Tagore (861-1941) and August marked the 70th anniversary of his death. He had won the 1913 Nobel Prize for literature, the first ever given to an Asian, for the English version of his *Gitanjali*—an anthology of lyrics. In this issue<sup>2</sup> we offer an article on Tagore's education ideas, and another on the Jesuit who particularly impressed the young Rabindranath. We add a brief note on the 'history' of *Gitanjali*. Tagore is reported to have told a companion who walked with him through a forest, 'Be silent: the trees are praying.' We do not know if the saying is authentic or not, but it does rightly express the mystical side of the poet. In fact, *Fireflies* has two thoughts with similar metaphors: 'Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven' (60), and 'Forests, the clouds of the earth, hold up to the sky their silence, and clouds from above come down in resonant showers' (120).<sup>3</sup> We are therefore happy to publish also in this issue an article on the importance of forests in India, all the more fitting as the U.N.O. has declared 2011 as the 'International Year of Forests'. *Vidyajyoti*, a journal committed to providing space for views on spiritual and social concerns, salutes the poet, mystic and humanist Rabindranath Tagore, who as a deeply religious person, gave witness to his belief in a loving God who keeps 'company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost' (*Gitanjali* 10).

Tagore was born at Kolkata on 6 May 1861 as the fourteenth child of Devendranath Tagore and Saradevi. During his childhood days he lacked the nearness and guidance of his family members. The domestic helpers entrusted with the task of his upbringing were harsh

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<sup>1</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994-1996).

<sup>2</sup> *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, August 2011.

<sup>3</sup> *The English Writings*, III, 447 and 456.



and strict disciplinarians. In his *My Reminiscences* he refers to one of the workers named Shyam who 'would put me into a selected spot, and tracing a chalk line all around warn me, with solemn face and uplifted finger, of the perils of transgressing this ring. Whether the threatened danger was material or spiritual, I never fully understood. But a great fear used to possess me' (p. 10). Going away from this suffocating atmosphere and entering the school was not much better. Schooling within four walls was not to his liking. He loved nature and could spend hours together watching the rising sun, tall trees and flowing rivers. Love of nature continued to have a lasting influence on his life. 'But I felt that as I had a deep love for nature, I had naturally love for children also.' This instilled in him a strong desire to break away from the shackles of the oppressive educational system. Eventually he would found Santiniketan where the children were taught in a free atmosphere and natural surroundings. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he said:

My object in starting this institution [Santiniketan] was to give the children of men full freedom of joy, of life and of communion with nature. I myself had suffered when I was young through the impediments which were inflicted upon most boys while they attended school, and I have had to go through the machine of education which crushes the joy and freedom of life for which children have such insatiable thirst. And my object was to give freedom and joy to children of men.<sup>1</sup>

Literary activity was an important part of his life. The sensitive and observant Rabindranath began to write poems at an early age. A poem was published when he was only 15. At Shilaidah, where he took charge of his family estates, despite belonging to the *zamindari* class he was impressed by the love and simplicity of the villagers and was affected by their poverty and ignorance and moved to help them. Many of his short stories reflect the lives of these poor villagers. Not only in his writings but also through his actions he openly showed that he took the side of the ordinary people. One shining example of this was his surrender of the knighthood earlier conferred on him as a mark of protest and to be in solidarity with the ordinary Indians who were massacred in 1919 in Punjab. 'I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who,

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<sup>1</sup> *The English Writings*, III, 962.

for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings,' he wrote to Lord Chelmsford.<sup>1</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore was a mystic in the bhakti tradition of India. For him God was a God of love with whom one can relate with fondness and freedom. 'There is something very beautiful in Rabindranath: his heart, his tender love for God ... He had a tender love for people', said Mother Teresa. One of the beautiful songs of Tagore which has made it possible for me to go deeper into the Ignatian 'Finding God in all things' is the following poem, often sung in Catholic liturgical celebrations:

Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.  
 Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes,  
 comes, ever comes...  
 In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes,  
 comes, ever comes.  
 In the rain gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he  
 comes, comes, ever comes.  
 In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart and it is  
 the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine (*Gitanjali* 45).

In harmony with the Indian bhakti tradition and the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition, the bhakta-prophet Rabindranath invites the worshippers to move beyond the empty cultic activities and meet God in the menial workers, so often ignored and despised as worthless human beings:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Who dost thou  
 worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?  
 Open thine eyes and see the God is not before thee!  
 He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the  
 path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower,  
 and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even  
 like him come down on the dusty soil! (*Gitanjali* 11).

Yet for Tagore God was not cipher or a symbol for social concern, and commitment to God was not an impersonal search for fusion with the Absolute Brahman. As Dipakar Basu shows it with detailed analysis God is essentially Father ('*Pitā*') and King ('*Rājā*'):

Nowhere, says Basu, in the Bhakti tradition of Bengal has God been addressed by any of those two attributes. Bengal society has always been matriarchal. Children are closer to their mother than to their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 751

Father. A father-figure evokes awe and fear, at the very best respect, but not affection. Tagore, on the other hand, often invokes God as Father and expresses a passionate love for Him. We cannot forget songs like *Tumi ki go Pitā āmāder*, *Oi-je nehāri mukh otul sneher*. (Are you not our Father? We see your face radiating with affection!)

Basu offers many other samples and includes a prayer in Bengali which Tagore composed by joining three *ślokas* of the Vedas, a prayer very dear to Bengali Christians because it resonates the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. In English translation it reads:

You are our Father, may we know you as our Father. May we obey you with reverence. Do not pour your anger on us. O Father, O venerable one, remove our sins and faults. Grant what is good for us, grant whatever pleases you. O Father, all that is pleasant and good proceeds from you. You are good, You are the essence of all that is good. We bow down to You, O Father, we repeatedly bow down to you.<sup>1</sup>

In this context one may also contrast the gender language of our two national anthems: Tagore's *Jana gana mana* around the theme India's *Adhināyak* [Leader, equivalent of *Rājā*] with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay [Chatterji]'s *Vande Mātaram*.

As we celebrate this month India's Independence Day and feel in solidarity with the newly born nation of South Sudan, we invite our readers to pray with Tagore (*Gitanjali* 36):

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
 Where words come out from the depths of truth;  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action – Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

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<sup>1</sup> See *A Saga of Love, Faith and Hope. 150 Years of the Bengal Mission, 1859-2009* (Calcutta: Society of Jesus, 2009), 86-89.

## TAGORE AND CHRISTIANITY

### William Radice<sup>\*</sup>

*Tagore's relationship with Christianity is a subject that tends to be avoided, because of the sensitivities that were aroused in India under British rule by Christian missionaries. Those who read his translations in Gitanjali and subsequent books were often misled by their 'biblical' prose style into thinking they were more Christian than they were. Nevertheless, Tagore's reflections on Christianity, as expressed in a series of Christmas Day sermons that started in Santiniketan in 1910, provide ample evidence of the importance that aspects of Christianity had for him, though his interpretation of Christ's life and teaching was entirely unconnected with any Christian church.*

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.  
(I Cor. 12:4)

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.  
(Luke 19:41)

I am the proud custodian of a manuscript letter from Rabindranath Tagore, written in 1914. It was given to me by Tony and Jean Brown, who now live in Ludlow, Shropshire. From 1961 to 1967 they worked for the Baptist Missionary Society in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Tony became the administrator of the Arthington Mission Hospital in Chandraghona, Chittagong Hill Tracts. They both learnt Bengali well. Later, after returning to the UK, Tony became Senior Tutor and then Principal of Woodbrooke College in Selly Oak, Birmingham, the international Quaker College. A previous Senior Tutor of the College, Rendel Harris, had acquired a copy of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* (the reprint of January 1914) and had pasted into the book a letter

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<sup>\*</sup> William Radice is well known for his translations of the poems, stories and plays of Tagore. He is also a poet, with nine published collections. He taught Bengali language and literature at SOAS, University of London from 1988 to 2011. His latest book is a new translation of *Gitanjali*, commissioned by Penguin India for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011 of Tagore's birth.

from Tagore that was clearly a reply to a letter from him. Tagore wrote:

Shanti Niketan

Bolpur. Bengal

Feb. 16. 1914

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your kind letter of appreciation. The poem about the woman by the well, referred to in your letter, had been written when I was not acquainted with the story of the Samaritan woman. The expression "lash of lightning" has its obvious meaning.

Yours truly

Rabindranath Tagore

Mr Harris must have been alluding to *Gitanjali* No. 54, which begins, 'I asked nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear.' The reference to 'lash of lightning' is harder to place: the only comparable phrase in *Gitanjali* is in poem, No. 40: 'Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.' I do not know what, if any, biblical reference Mr Harris was making here, as in the Bible the normal phrase is 'flash of lightning'.

Tagore's polite dismissal of any connection between his poem and the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman by the well, described in St John's Gospel, Ch. 4, is perfectly reasonable. Other than the fact that a thirsty traveller meets a woman at a well, there is really no connection between the Gospel story and Tagore's poem. The Samaritan woman does not give Jesus any water, but gets immediately interested when he starts to talk about the water of everlasting life. The English style that Tagore adopted for his translation of *Gitanjali* and subsequent books and poems often seemed biblical to its readers, and it was natural for Rendel Harris and others to look for allusions to the Bible. But in the original Bengali this poem is written in ballad-like stanzas, and in my own new translation of *Gitanjali*, I have tried to capture the form and tone of the original:

I didn't ask for anything,  
                   I didn't speak my name.  
 When you took your leave of me,  
                   Bashful I became.

I sat alone beside the well,  
     Deep in the *nim*'s shade;  
 Others had with water-pots  
     Returned to where they stayed.

They had on leaving called to me,  
     'Come, it's noon, it's late.'  
 Somehow I could not shake off  
     My silent, pensive state.

I didn't hear your footsteps when  
     You hobbled close and said,  
 With weary voice and plaintive eyes,  
     'I'm thirsty, nearly dead - '

At once I rose and rushed to fetch  
     Fresh water from the well  
 To pour into your outstretched hands,  
     Your thirstiness to quell.

Koels somewhere chirped amidst  
     The rustling of the trees;  
*Bāblā*-blooms along the paths  
     Scented the mid-day breeze.

When you asked me for my name,  
     I suddenly felt shy.  
 What had I done that you should want  
     A name to know me by?

I had simply given you  
     Some water from the well:  
 To ask my name rewarded me  
     More than I can tell.

It's late and by the well-side still  
     *Koels* keep up their tune;  
 The *nim* still rustles; I just sit  
     And linger long past noon.<sup>1</sup>

From this translation, it will, I think, be clear that the poem does not allude to any text or tradition. It is a pure product of Tagore's imagination, and is all the more poignant and beautiful for being so.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, a new translation by William Radice, with an Introduction, and a new text of Tagore's translation based on his manuscript (Penguin India: New Delhi, 2011), 128-30.

Tagore's letter reflects the kind of misunderstanding that frequently arose from his own translations, from their secondary translation into other languages, and from the extraordinary international fame he enjoyed after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in November 1913. Tagore was not a Christian. Readers who thought his poems seemed Christian were wrong, and they would instantly have seen that they were wrong if they had been able to read the poems in the original Bengali.

This, among readers and critics who know Bengali, would be the standard view. In my reading, over the last four decades, of what has been written about Tagore, in Bengali or in English, I have very rarely encountered much reference to Christianity. Even the careful and scholarly researches of Jose Chunkapura S.D.B., whose book *The God of Rabindranath Tagore*, based on his doctoral thesis at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, relegates connections between Tagore and Christianity to a nineteen-page section at the end, and concludes: 'In our opinion, the influence of Christ and Christianity on Rabindranath's understanding of God consisted primarily in deepening, strengthening and confirming the ideas that he already had.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet if one goes really deeply into the poems and songs of *Gitanjali*, as I have inevitably done through doing my new translation, and if one reads many other works by Tagore, including the six heartfelt and penetrating essays on Christianity that he delivered as Christmas Day sermons at Santiniketan, one is inclined to think hard about whether it is correct or fair to leave Christianity so firmly on the periphery of Tagore's life and work. My purpose in this article is to make an initial and tentative survey of this 'yet', and to argue that among the many influences on Tagore's sensibility and creative achievement Christianity deserves to be given serious and respectful attention.

It is a difficult topic, one that I myself have shirked for a long time. The reasons for shirking it are obvious. They go back to the many sensitivities that were aroused in India by Christian missionaries. In the early years of East India Company rule, the British authorities were well aware of the trouble that missionaries could cause, and did their best to keep them out. In Bengal, the famous Baptist missionary,

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<sup>1</sup> Jose Chunkapura, *The God of Rabindranath Tagore* (Visva-Bharati: Kolkata, 2002), 304.

William Carey (1761-1834) was obliged to base his activities as a scholar and printer of Bengali and other Indian languages at Serampore, a Danish trading station up the Hooghly from Calcutta and outside British control. Pressure from Charles Grant and the evangelical Clapham Sect on the Court of Directors of the East India Company eventually led to the insertion of a 'pious clause' in its renewed charter of 1813, allowing missionaries and churches to operate freely. From then on, Christian churches became significant threads in the complex tapestry of nineteenth century Calcutta, and their contribution to education remains influential to this day. But relations between Christianity and the predominantly Hindu culture of modern Bengal were never easy, and became even more strained with the growth of nationalism and Hindu revivalism at the end of the nineteenth century. Tagore's stance on nationalism and revivalism was critical, and at times scathing, but as his oeuvre and standing grew, he came to be seen, and is still seen, as the powerful embodiment not only of modern Bengali culture but of the whole civilization of modern India. The Christian churches are now an established part of modern Indian life, and their rights and freedom are respected under India's secular constitution. But it is fully understandable that in the Bengali and Indian context—a context to which I myself must be constantly sensitive—Tagore's relationship to Christianity is not a topic on which his countrymen are inclined to put much stress. I doubt if it has featured at a single one of the numerous celebrations and symposia that have been organised in many parts of the world in 2011, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tagore's birth.

That Tagore himself was aware of the sensitivities is readily apparent from the first of his sermons on Christianity, dated 25 December 1910. Tagore gave regular sermons in the *Kāncher Mandir* or 'Glass Temple' which continues to play a central role in the life of the Santiniketan community today. His Christmas Day sermons began as a result of a decision in 1910 to honour the birth or death anniversaries of great religious teachers with special festivals. His sermon of 1910 entitled *Yisucharit* ('The character of Jesus') was the longest and most wide-ranging of the essays that were later gathered into a book called *Khrishhta*. It was also published as an introduction to a book with the same title by Ajit Kumar Chakravarty, a young teacher at Santiniketan, who went to Britain in September 1910 to study at Manchester College, Oxford. The sermon's first appearance in print was in the



*Tattvabodhini Patrika*, the journal that became the main mouthpiece of the Brahma Samaj when Tagore's father Debendranath took over and reconstituted that movement in 1843. The Brahma Samaj (founded as the Brahma Sabha by Ram Mohun Roy in 1828), Unitarianism, Manchester College: there are important connections and cross-currents here that a complete account of Tagore and Christianity would certainly have to include. It was at Manchester College that Tagore gave his lectures on the *Religion of Man* in 1930, and by and large he remained loyal to the 'Unitarian' aspects of his Brahma heritage, even if he personally moved away from what he himself called the 'Brahma church'. But the Unitarian dimension, interesting though it is historically, does not, I think, take us to the poetic heart of Tagore, which is what I want to focus on here.

1910 was the year in which Tagore published his Bengali book *Gitanjali*, a collection of 157 lyric poems, many of which were songs. 53 of those poems were used by Tagore as sources for his translations in the English *Gitanjali*, which he began early in 1912. (The rest of the 103 poems in the English *Gitanjali* were taken from a total of ten other books.) If Tagore's whole 'Gitanjali phase' began in a year in which he also wrote his first disquisition on the character of Jesus, then it is not unreasonable to look for connections between the two—connections far more profound than were noticed by western readers and critics reminded of Christianity by the English *Gitanjali*'s 'biblical' prose style.

In Tagore's eighteen-page sermon, Bengal's modern history, Christian missionaries, Indian nationalism, Judaism, the Roman Empire, and Tagore's interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus are woven together with wonderful grace and skill. Beginning with the problem of casteism and sectarianism, he writes of how such attitudes have been extended to Christians and Christian missionaries. In the early days of British rule, criticism by Christian missionaries of evils and abuses in Hindu society had demoralised the Bengali elite, and had alienated them from their own society. With the growth of nationalist feeling in the later nineteenth century, Bengalis had swung from one extreme to the other, and were now inclined to leap to the defence of all aspects of their society and dismiss criticism by Christians as an imperialist imposition. This attitude of strident self-justification had blinded them to the true nature of Christ and his teaching. Tagore argues that their situation was not dissimilar to that

of the Jews under Roman rule. They too, as a subject people, leapt to the defence of their traditions and scriptures, and rejected the challenging teaching of Jesus Christ as a threat to their society. Tagore in this essay, as in all his writings on Christianity, is not interested in the Christian churches: his focus is on Jesus Christ as a revolutionary preacher of what he later came to call *Manusher dharma* or the 'Religion of man'.

The poems that Tagore chose to include in the English *Gitanjali* were intensely personal poems. They stemmed from a period in which Tagore suffered an appalling series of bereavements: the deaths of his wife in 1902, his daughter Renuka in 1903, his father in 1905, and his son Samindranath in 1907. In his comments on the *Gitanjali* poems, Tagore always stressed their personal aspects, describing them in a letter to his friend William Rothenstein on 30 December 1912 as 'revelations of my true self to me'. This deeply personal aspect was perhaps not very well understood by W. B. Yeats, who in his famous and influential introduction to *Gitanjali* saw the poems very much as a product of an alternative, pre-modern culture, 'as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes'. But reading the poems alongside *Yisucharit*, one soon senses that their personal nature is closely allied to Tagore's equally personal response to the character and teachings of Jesus.

Let me now pick out some points at which the poems in *Gitanjali* and Tagore's great sermon of Christmas Day 1910 connect and touch. They show that western readers who found Christian echoes in the poems were not unjustified, even if Tagore himself, as in his reply to Rendel Harris, might have dismissed a direct connection.

Poem No. 10 in *Gitanjali* has impressed many Christian readers. In the standard text of *Gitanjali* as edited by Yeats it begins: 'Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.' Tagore's translation is among many in *Gitanjali* where I prefer what he wrote in his manuscript to the version that was later published. The manuscript begins: 'There is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost.' Changing 'there' to 'here' seems to me confusing, and the insertion of commas upsets the natural flow of Tagore's prose. (There is a great deal in the introduction and appendices to my new translation in *Gitanjali* about the effects of Yeats's editing: I argue that as well as many unnecessary and unjustified changes in the phrasing, the widespread insertion of



Shorn of biblical phraseology, this translation does, I hope, connect with a passage in *Yisucharit* in a clear and moving way. Tagore has been describing Satan's temptation of Jesus in the desert:

But the extraordinary thing is that he cut through this all-encompassing web of illusion and clearly perceived God's Kingdom of Truth. He did not see it in pride and wealth; he didn't see it in the arrogant glory of empire; he saw it in poverty and its lack of outward possessions, and he fearlessly flung before all rich people the strange idea that those who are lowly shall inherit the earth.<sup>1</sup>

This poem is followed in the published *Gitanjali* (though not in Tagore's manuscript, where they are Nos. 24 and 28 respectively) by a poem that is a poem not a song and which seems to have a more Hindu context. In Tagore's translation it begins 'Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!' The Hindu references are even clearer in the original Bengali, and in my own new translation:

Prayer and worship and rite –  
     cast them aside.  
 In a nook of the closed temple,  
     why hide?  
 Groping in your mind's dark,  
 What pooja-object do you seek?  
 Open your eyes and look:  
     God doesn't stay inside.

He's gone to where farmers labour  
     to hack the soil,  
 To where stone-breaking for a road  
     takes a year of toil.  
 He's there in the flood and the heat;  
 His hands are plastered with dirt;  
 Be like him, strip off your shirt  
     to be level with all.

Release? Where will you gain it?  
     Where is it found?

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<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Khrishta*, edited by Pulinbihari Sen (Visva-Bharati: Kolkata, 1959), 21. This and other quotations from *Khrishta* are my own translations.

Taking on shackles of creation,  
 God himself is bound.  
 Forget about trances or poojas  
 Throw away trays of flowers;  
 Rip clothes, get grimy, get sweaty;  
 get down to his ground.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the Hindu references, this poem connects strongly with the following passage in Tagore's sermon. This passage builds on a distinction that Tagore has been making between what in human nature is *baro* (big) and what is *choto* (small):

When man is small in this way, then his aims and activities all become small too; his capacities are diminished, and he merely meanders in futility. Therefore the Son of Man did not see custom or scripture as greater than man himself, and said that the worship of God is not achieved through rituals and offerings, but the heart's devotion. He then touched those who were untouchable and ate with those who were impure—and he did not abandon sinners but called them to the way of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

These aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus also, of course, made a great impression on Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's relationship to Christianity lies beyond the scope of this article, but in my view what Gandhi valued in Jesus and what Tagore valued were fundamentally the same.

It is noticeable that when one looks further for connections of this kind, often a statement which in the sermon is presented in general terms is articulated in the poems in a highly personal way. In the paragraph before the passage from the sermon that I have just quoted, Tagore writes:

When man sees himself properly then he sees God in himself; and when he looks at himself and only sees wealth or status, then he demeans himself and his whole way of life becomes a denial of God.<sup>3</sup>

This reminds me of Gitanjali No. 29, which in Tagore's translation begins: 'He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon.' It is a poem not a song, and in my new translation it reads:

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<sup>1</sup> *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, a new translation, 40-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Khrishta*, 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

He who by my name is kept in hiding  
 Within the prison of that name is dying.  
 Everything else by day and night forgetting,  
 Towards the sky that name forever piling,  
     I lose within its dark  
         My own true spark.

Dust on dust, layer on layer impacting,  
 Higher and higher that name of mine I'm rearing.  
 Lest anywhere a crack or hole is forming,  
 My heart is ever fearful and unresting.  
     As I this lie refine,  
         I lose what's mine.<sup>1</sup>

Other similar shifts from the general to the personal suggest that in certain moods Tagore was able to identify himself with Christ—which is not to say that he thought of himself, even for a minute, as some kind of messiah or prophet, though many of his western admirers thought of him in that way. The identification is with Jesus as a Man of Sorrows, with the religion of love that he imparted through his own suffering. Tagore endured great inner loneliness and suffering in his life, and as I have already said the poems and songs of the 'Gitanjali phase' grew out of a period of devastating loss and bereavement. Furthermore, his travels all over the world, and his meetings with people from many sorts of background, made him able to identify with Christ's ability to connect with people from different communities. In the beautiful concluding paragraph of the sermon, the phrase *ye par tahake apan kariteche* ('He who is foreign he makes his own') reminds me of *Gitanjali* No. 63, which in the original is a very well-known and well-loved song (*Kata ajanare janaile tumi, / kata ghare dile thāi*). In my own translation the song reads:

So much of the unknown  
                                   you've made known to me  
 You've given me a place in so many homes  
 You've made the distant near, my friend,  
                                   and made the stranger a brother  
 So much of the unknown  
                                   you've made known to me  
 You've given me a place in so many homes

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<sup>1</sup> *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, a new translation, 44-5.

*When I leave my familiar surroundings*  
*I worry about how it will be*  
*When I leave my familiar surroundings*  
*I worry about how it will be*  
*I forget that amidst the new*  
                   *you are always there*  
 You've made the distant near, my friend,  
                   and made the stranger a brother  
 So much of the unknown  
                   you've made known to me  
 You've given me a place in so many homes

Wherever and whenever you take me  
                   in life, in death and throughout the world  
 You who are familiar with everything  
                   will make me know all  
 Wherever and whenever you take me  
                   in life, in death and throughout the world  
 You who are familiar with everything  
                   will make me know all

*When you are known, no one is alien*  
*There are no obstructions, no fears*  
*When you are known, no one is alien*  
*There are no obstructions, no fears*  
*You are wide awake in everything –*  
*I feel that I always see you*  
 You've made the distant near, my friend,  
                   and made the stranger a brother  
 So much of the unknown  
                   you've made known to me  
 You've given me a place in so many homes<sup>1</sup>

For me, the sermon and the song touch at the phrases 'He who is foreign he makes his own' and 'You've...made the stranger a brother'. But the whole last paragraph of the sermon, so eloquent and poetic in its phrasing and especially in its metaphor of a spreading tree, shows clearly that the spiritual worlds of *Gitanjali* and of Tagore's sermon on the character of Jesus are united at a very deep level:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 11-12.

God is expressed through man—this message of Jesus is not imprisoned in a theory or a verse of scripture. Because he embodied its overwhelming truth in his life, it remains alive today like a tree that forever extends new branches. Every day he is engaged in cutting through the barrier of hundreds and thousands of superstitions in the mind of man. Every day the drunkenness of force insults him, the arrogance of knowledge dismisses him, the worshippers of power despise him for his weakness, the cruelly rich reject him as a coward: yet he humbly and silently spreads through man's profoundest thoughts, makes sorrow his aid and service his companion—makes those who are foreign his own, lifts up those who have fallen, endlessly dedicates himself to those from whom there is nothing to receive. In this way, the Son of Man has made the world and all people great—has given them power over hatred and extended their rights; and with the news that they live in their father's house he has removed from human society the fear of being despised. This is his gift of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

Reading through the rest of Tagore's Christmas sermons, given in the years 1914, 1923, 1926, 1932 and 1936, one can find many other connections, not just with *Gitanjali* but with other works by Tagore from all periods of his long creative life. Space does not permit me to describe these comprehensively, but let me pick out a few that I have found particularly striking.

There is a powerful poem in an early book by Tagore, *Manasi* ('The lady of the mind', 1890) called *Dharmaprachar* ('The preaching of religion'). A note at the beginning of the poem says it was inspired by a newspaper report. It is a poem with dialogue—almost a mini-play—in which a gang of fanatical young Hindu thugs mock and attack a Salvation Army preacher who has adopted Indian dress. Written at a time (1888) when nationalism and Hindu revivalism were growing apace, the poem is a passionate indictment of bigoted and sectarian attitudes to Christianity. In his sermon entitled *Khrishtadharmā* ('The Christian religion') of 1914, Tagore speaks out against the arrogance of some Christian missionaries and sects and writes:

Therefore one must specially aspire to rescue man [*manush*] from the hands of Christian sects, Vishnu from the Vaishnavites, Brahman from the Brahmos.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Khrishta*, 26-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 28-9.



But when he writes, as he does in his sermon of 1926, in praise of the Christian spirit of service and self-sacrifice, he praises missionaries for their courage in going out and preaching the gospel even to cannibals. This is in marked contrast, he says, with an Indian tendency to be concerned only with one's immediate community:

They [the missionaries] go even among those who eat human flesh and ask, 'You are human—what are doing? What are you thinking of?' And us? We take no interest even in those who live next door. We have no curiosity about them, no respect for them.<sup>1</sup>

The Salvation Army preacher in *Dharmaprachar* embodies the courage that Tagore admired in the best Christian missionaries. When the preacher prays to God as the thugs assail him, there is a reference to making the stranger one's own that is very similar to what we noticed in *Gitanjali* No. 63:

Pleasure, comfort, the love of women,  
           The chatter of friends –  
 I've forgone them all and taken on my head  
           My great vow to you.  
 I still can't forget them,  
           Often I think of them –  
 The bonds of pleasure and home  
           Still tug all one's life.  
 But then, when I look at your blood-stained face,  
           Turn towards your love,  
 Familiar and strange become nothing,  
           No own or foreign any more.  
 You spread that love  
           Through my heart –  
 Let those who come to throw poison at it  
           Go back with nectar.  
 Let those who have come with sin in their lives  
           Come to your breast –  
 Let the sweet light of your love  
           Fall on their furious faces!<sup>2</sup>

Another recurrent theme in Tagore's Christmas Day sermons—a theme that is related to the brutal assault on the Salvation Army

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 45-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabindra-rachanabali* [Collected Works of Tagore], West Bengal Government edition, Vol. 1, Poems (Kolkata, 1980), 398. My translation.

preacher—is the perpetual nature of Christ’s crucifixion. Tagore argues repeatedly that it is wrong to link Christ’s teaching and passion to particular historical circumstances. (Nineteenth-century Christian missionaries often argued that Christianity was superior to Hinduism because it was based on actual historical events. Brahmos from Ram Mohun Roy on argued against that kind of narrow historicism. In rejecting it too, Tagore is being loyal to a distinctively Brahmo tradition.) In his sermon of 1932, entitled *Barodin* (‘Christmas Day’), he writes:

Shall we say that today is his birthday by consulting a calendar? If we do not feel that day in our hearts, can we feel it through a temporal calculation? The day on which we renounce in the name of truth, on which we are able to call people our brothers in a simple spirit of love—that’s the day on which God’s son is born in our lives, that is Christmas Day, on whichever date it falls. His birthday comes at specially happy moments in our lives, but his death by nailing on the cross comes day after day. I know that on today’s special day praises are ringing out in many churches in many lands for him who has brought to the children of men the message of his supreme father—and outside those churches the world is awash with the blood of brother slaughtering brother.<sup>1</sup>

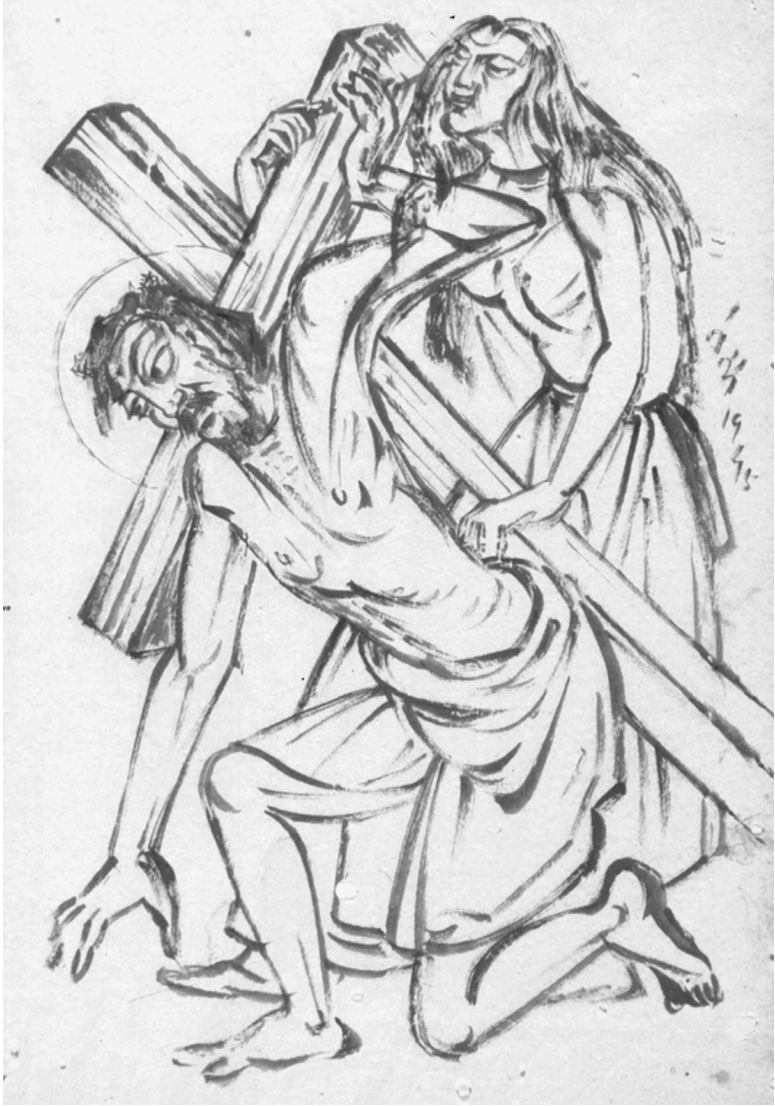
The perpetual nature of Christ’s crucifixion, and the hypocrisy of conventional worshippers who ignore it, connects with passages of bitter irony in Tagore’s poetry, such as lines from his famous poem ‘Africa’ (1936), which contrasts the brutality of Africa’s colonial violators with church services going on back home (note that church bells are described as ‘temple bells’, implying that hypocritical Christians are more ‘heathen’ than the peoples they have set out to convert):

Meanwhile across the sea in their native parishes  
                   Temple-bells summoned your conquerors to prayer,  
 Morning and evening in the name of a loving god.  
                   Mothers dandled babies in their laps;  
                   Poets raised hymns to beauty...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Khrishta*, 48.

<sup>2</sup> My translation, from Rabindranath Tagore, *Selected Poems* (Penguin Books, 1994 edition), 102.



*Manab-putra Khrishta* ('Christ the Son of Man') by Nandalal Bose (1882-1966), a major painter of the Bengal School and a member of Tagore's circle of artists at Santiniketan. Reproduced in *Khrishta* (1959, see fn. 4), opposite p. 28. Currently in the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

Tagore returned to the theme of the perpetual crucifixion of Christ, arising from human cruelty and violence, in a song that is also simply called *Barodin*, composed near the end of his life on Christmas Day 1939. Its tone is very similar to his agonised ‘Crisis in Civilization’ speech (1941) that was read on his last birthday before he died, and was published internationally as the world collapsed into the disaster of the Second World War. Tagore himself supplied a translation of this song:

Those who stuck Him once  
in the name of their rulers,  
are born again in this present age.

They gather in their prayer-halls in a pious garb,  
they call their soldiers,  
‘Kill, Kill’ they shout;  
in their roaring mingles the music of their hymns,  
while the Son of Man in his agony prays, ‘O God,  
fling far away this cup filled with the bitterest of poisons.’<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the song and its use of the repeated *maro maro* (‘Kill, Kill’) is almost identical to a powerful poem called *Manab-putra* (‘The son of man’) which Tagore wrote in 1932.<sup>2</sup>

But Tagore finds themes of joy and love in his reflections of Christianity just as much as *duhkha* (sorrow) or hypocrisy or crucifixion. An aspect of Christianity that he valued particularly highly was the centrality it gives to the father-son, God-man relationship. For him, Jesus Christ is not the unique son of God, but an embodiment of the way in which we can all become sons of God. In this passage from his sermon of 1923, entitled *Khrishtotsab* (‘Christ’s festival’) he identifies divine love (*prem*) and our relationship with God to the Indian concept of *ananda* (‘joy’) running through all things:

This supreme bond at the root of the universe that gives fullness to emptiness and enables a stream of joy to flow over the grief of death – that bond of sweetness must today be felt in our hearts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. 1: poems, edited by Sisir Kumar Das (Sahitya Akademi: New Delhi, 1994), 387.

<sup>2</sup> Included in *Khrishhta*, 73-74.

<sup>3</sup> *Khrishhta*, 36.

*Anandadhara* ('stream of joy') will immediately evoke for Bengalis one of Tagore's most beautiful and best-loved songs: *Anandadhara bahiche bhubane* ('A stream of joy flows through the world').

The exercise of finding links and connections between Tagore's reflections on Christianity and his poems, songs and other literary works could be extended almost indefinitely. His English poem 'The Child', written in 1931 after he had experienced the passion play at Oberammergau near Munich, which he saw in July 1930, would certainly need to be brought in, though Christian references in that poem, if any, are not precisely linked to either the nativity or the passion of Christ. The symbol of the King, too, in plays such as *Dakghar* ('The Post Office', 1916) or *Raja* (1910, translated as *The King of the Dark Chamber*, 1914) probably owes more to Christian conceptions of Christ the King or God as the King of Heaven than it does to Hindu traditions. If one extends the discussion to Tagore's social and educational work, to the ideals of Visva-Bharati with its emphasis on service to the community and mankind; and if one takes into account close associates of Tagore, especially the Reverend C. F. Andrews (whose initials, as Tagore himself pointed out, stood for 'Christ's faithful apostle') then 'Tagore and Christianity' becomes a very extensive topic indeed—far bigger than can be handled in a short article like this.<sup>1</sup>

Of course the exercise of finding connections between Tagore's thoughts on Christianity and his creative and practical work can be

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<sup>1</sup> Tagore's friendship with Andrews deserves a separate article, but it needs to wait until a complete and revised edition of the Tagore-Andrews correspondence is published. An edited selection was published long ago as *Letters to a Friend* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928). Tagore's leading biographer of recent times, Prasanta Kumar Paul, was working on a new edition before his untimely death in 2007, in collaboration with the German scholar and translator Martin Kämpchen. Dr Kämpchen tells me that he plans to complete the work in 2012. Meanwhile, Hugh Tinker's biography of Andrews, *The Ordeal of Love: C. F. Andrews and India* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1979) is recommended.

*Khrishta* (pp. 76-7) includes a poem called *Pujalayer antare o bahire* ('Inside and outside a place of worship', 1940) which the editor's notes say Tagore translated from a poem by C. F. Andrews. Its theme—peace and love and the spirit of 'Lift up your hearts' at a baptismal service inside the church, the sufferings of the labouring poor ignored outside—accords with the theme of Christian hypocrisy already noted.

equally well done with his numerous reflections on other religious traditions. In the collected sermons that he delivered in the *Kācher Mandir* at Santiniketan, published by Visva-Bharati in two volumes in 1949 with the title *Santiniketan*, the religious texts that are referred to most frequently are the Upanishads, and it is probably possible to find many more poems and songs by Tagore with Upanishadic echoes than there are poems and songs with Christian ones. Buddhism, too, was another religion that Tagore valued very highly indeed, and when writing or reflecting on *ahimsa* ('non-violence'), or caste or bigotry, it was often to Buddhist *jataka* tales that he turned, especially in plays such as *Chandalika* ('The Untouchable Girl', 1933) or *Natirpuja* ('Worship by the Dancing Girl', 1926). Tagore was eclectic in his religion, just as Visva-Bharati was eclectic in its creation of a universal centre of learning and culture in a rural Bengali setting. For him, the great religions of the world (including, let it be remembered, Islam, on which he wrote a number of essays) were all among the 'diversities of gifts' through which the Spirit expressed itself in the world.

To use a somewhat Tagorean metaphor, different religions, including Christianity, were like tributary streams that together formed a single great river. Nevertheless, I would want to argue that the stream of Christianity was one that Tagore liked to sit beside and contemplate when he was in particular moods: of *duhkha* (sorrow), or horror at the way human beings can crucify each other, or *ananda* (joy) when he felt a personal, filial relationship with God, or *seba* (service) when he felt a strong desire to serve humanity. It does not surprise me that Nirad C. Chaudhuri, in his provocative yet insightful chapter on Tagore in his massive autobiography *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*, writes of Tagore's conception of God:

Dominantly, it was of a deity who was both transcendental and personal. There can be no doubt that he was a fervent Deist of the Christian type, who was always ready to say: *In la sua voluntate à nostra pace*, and who was always seeking guidance from God. But on the other hand, he was also thoroughly pantheistic, if not animistic. His capacity to see God in everything animate or inanimate on earth was unlimited, and it was accompanied by a habit of seeing divine movements in the motions of water or wind.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987; The Hogarth Press, 1990), 618-9.

I began with a brief encounter between Tagore and an Englishman in the form of a letter that he wrote that was dismissive of a direct connection between a poem in *Gitanjali* and the story of Christ's meeting with the Samaritan woman by the well. Let me end with another encounter, one that deserves to be better known. I did not know about it at all until I started researching for the introduction and notes to my new translation of *Gitanjali*. In 1938 an Englishman called John W. Rattray visited Tagore in Santiniketan. (I do not know who Rattray was, or why he was in India, and would welcome information on him if any readers of this article have any.) Rattray had been a fan of *Gitanjali* for many years, and wanted to meet the great man not only so that his copy could be signed but because he also had a query about poem No. 76. In the standard text of *Gitanjali*, which by 1938 had been reprinted innumerable times and had been translated into all the major languages of the world, this poem began as follows:

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face?  
With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face?

Rattray had for a long time been puzzled by the question marks in this poem, and he asked Tagore why they were there. Tagore and the poet Amiya Chakravarty, who acted as Tagore's secretary at that time, were shocked when they looked at the poem and saw these question marks. They immediately broke out spontaneously into the song that was the translation's source—a song which expresses faith, or rather a determination to have faith, and is not a poem of questioning or doubt at all. In my new translation it reads:

Every day I shall,  
    O master of my life,  
Stand before you  
Every day I shall,  
    O master of my life,  
Stand before you  
Pressing my hands together  
    O lord of the world  
Pressing my hands together  
    O lord of the world  
I shall stand before you  
Every day I shall

*Beneath your uncrossable sky,  
 alone and secluded  
 Beneath your uncrossable sky,  
 alone and secluded  
 With humble heart and tears in my eyes  
 I shall stand before you  
 Every day I shall*

*In this multi-dimensioned world of yours  
 On the shore of this ocean of action  
 In this multi-dimensioned world of yours  
 On the shore of this ocean of action  
 In the midst of world-scurrying crowds  
 I shall stand before you*

*When my work in this world  
 is finished  
 When my work in this world  
 is finished  
 O king of kings, silent and alone  
 I shall stand before you  
 Every day I shall<sup>1</sup>*

It seems that in preparing *Gitanjali* for publication, Yeats—or maybe someone else in Tagore’s English circle—was misled by the inversions in Tagore’s own translation (‘Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand...’) into thinking that all the statements in the poem were questions. We know from Rattray’s vivid and moving account of this meeting with Tagore (reproduced in Appendix E in my new translation of *Gitanjali*) that Tagore was deeply shocked to discover that this error had circulated in print all over the world for so long. Rattray wrote:

I saw him scan the lines of his own creation with an interest and eagerness that seemed to be suffused with pain, and in the ticking seconds I had time to fear that I had distressed him. How long a few seconds can be! A silence enwrapped us. Both poets seemed as those to whom something has been revealed. I was astonished, and even a little frightened by the effect of my query and the confirmation that I had sensed the true attitude of the poem.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, a new translation, 81-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 243; from John W. Rattray, ‘I Shall Stand’, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1, May-July 1948, 43-52.



Of course there is nothing specifically Christian about this song. The God that Tagore stands before face to face every day of his life is a universal God, not a Christian or Hindu God. But frankly, it is impossible to imagine that this song and the translation of it that was done by Tagore himself into English (with no question marks at all in the manuscript) could have been written without the entry of Christianity into India's infinitely varied and complex religious world. A complete understanding of Tagore's spirituality, and of the profound links between his religious life and his poetic life, has to embrace and include Christianity, though always with the proviso that Christianity as understood and expounded by Tagore in his Christmas Day sermons was not the Christianity of any particular Christian church. Might one dare to suggest that the freedom of Christianity, in Tagore's conception of it, from any suggestion of 'Churchianity' is precisely what gives it meaning and relevance to Christians today, struggling to make sense of their religion in our ever more complex and interconnected world?

## HEALING AND HOPE: REMEMBERING MICHAEL HURLEY

**Patrick Fintan Lyons OSB\***

*Michael Hurley SJ (1923-2011) was a pioneer of ecumenism in Ireland. This article pays tribute to his work for this cause, above all in founding the Irish School of Ecumenics.*

Michael Hurley SJ died last April after a brief illness. The aim of the following contribution is to acknowledge without undue delay his place in the story of the ecumenical journey of the Churches in Ireland, especially of the Catholic Church. Inevitably there is the limitation of focusing that is blurred by too close a distance and it is to be hoped that from the longer perspective a detailed assessment of the man and his work will appear in due course. In a brief study it would not be possible to produce a clear portrait of this many sided personality, and for that, in any case, particular biographical skills would be needed, but it would do him an injustice not to give some account even now of Michael's impact on relationships between the Churches during the past fifty years, years that were tumultuous in the political sphere in Ireland and marked by considerable reassessment of their situation by the Churches. Another study would also be required to give an adequate account of Michael's academic achievements, especially his adventurous thinking on Eucharistic sharing, on the theology of Original Sin and on dual ecclesial membership, all of which at some point attracted criticism from Church authorities and from conservative theologians.

This reflection comes from the background of having known Michael for some forty years, first as a student of the Irish School of Ecumenics and thereafter as a friend, with, in the passing of the years, only occasional personal meetings, but never failing greetings on respective feastdays. There Michael always proved his alertness by sending a greeting on the Feast of St Benedict, several weeks before the Feast of St Ignatius would call for a message to him. This was the Michael of many personal friendships, who loved to surround himself

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\* Patrick Fintan Lyons OSB, a monk of Glenstal Abbey, Ireland, since 1986, was a student at the Irish School of Ecumenics 1972-3 as a priest of the archdiocese of Dublin .

with mementos of people and events, to have the walls of his room covered with photographs symbolic of his life's journey—and pressed into service for the covers of his books. A portrait of the man will no doubt emerge in time from sketches outlined by various friends and confrères but the public figure is more easily recalled at this stage.

For many years he had a high profile in ecumenical circles in Ireland and abroad. In the sixties and seventies of the century he was frequently in ecumenical and pastoral journals and often in the news media; he was an academic and an activist, but as the contributor of a Foreword to his memoirs pointed out he was first of all one who offered 'friendship across the confessional divide'.<sup>1</sup> His greatest achievement at the public level was his founding of the Irish School of Ecumenics and perhaps the greatest tribute to him is that the growth and development of this institution in the present has occurred while its founder remains in the shadowy past, hardly to be mentioned. The lapidary motto of the School, for which he happily claimed credit,<sup>2</sup> *Floreat ut pereat*, somehow adumbrates a summing up of Michael's life: the School went on to flourish while Michael faded from the scene, though only to take on a new initiative, the founding of the Columbanus Community of Reconciliation, an institution which ironically he outlived.

While these two initiatives express Michael's public profile in a significant way, they are also a record of an intellectual and spiritual journey, of the development of his thought and spiritual vision over the course of a lifetime. From his initial vision of a project to bring about reunion of Churches, he arrived in later years at understanding the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness; he went from an institutional perspective to one where personal relationships and a dialogue of charity appeared to him of as great an importance as the dialogue of truth, and he saw it as a source of greater hope. Thus his memoirs carried the poignant title, *Healing and Hope*, and at the end of the book he spoke of travelling on "buoyed up by hope" (Rom 12:12) ... still accepting that while we wander in the desert to hope is to hope

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<sup>1</sup> Foreword by Dennis Cooke in Michael Hurley SJ, *Healing and Hope. Memoirs of an Irish Ecumenist* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Hurley SJ, 'The Beginnings (1970-1980)', *The Irish School of Ecumenics*, ed. M. Hurley SJ (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2008), 48.

against hope. (Cf. Rom 4:18)<sup>1</sup> The title of the book reflects his ecumenical perception but there may be a more personal significance there also. A few years previously he had been diagnosed with an internal, life-threatening cancer and had after some time decided not to accept further treatment, a decision prompted by the depressive effects of drugs. Happily he was to survive nearly ten more years and he seems to have coped with a psychologically depressive state by the assertion of spiritual hope. Hope became a strong part of his spiritual armour and it buoyed him up through the last years. His last days, however, encapsulated some of the drama of his early years when a bout of surgery for a hip replacement brought on a mentally confused state and he revisited in his imagination some of the scenes of anxiety and conflict with which he had coped. Having relived in traumatic fashion some of the earlier conflicts, he recovered lucidity and his characteristic insouciance before a heart attack brought a sudden end, shortly before what would have been his eighty-eighth birthday.

### **Early Years**

He had begun life in Ardmore, Co. Waterford, a seaside town where his family's life and that of the parish were marked by intense Catholic devotion and of course strict separation from the local Protestant community. The local Rector he remembered later as 'a tall, gaunt, somewhat forbidding bachelor', whom he often saw, nonetheless, chatting with his father around the village.<sup>2</sup> Neither his years at home, however, or his schooling through the benefit of a scholarship at the Cistercian monastery of Mount Melleray contributed any anticipatory influence on the ecumenical vision he was later to develop. That came in embryonic and indirect form, it would seem, years later at Mungret College. He had followed the usual course of formation for a Jesuit: after a two-year novitiate, the study of Classics at University College Dublin and Philosophy at the Jesuit house of Studies in Tullabeg, he taught for three years at Mungret College in Limerick. These were years when he 'came to life and found myself'.<sup>3</sup> If not the beginning of an ecumenical vocation this latter period certainly saw the development of a new horizon, an interest in social questions. At a time of opportunities and energies on his part 'that seemed boundless'

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<sup>1</sup> *Healing and Hope. Memories of an Irish Ecumenist*, 123.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

he stirred up the social consciousness of his pupils to the extent that he was held responsible for their rebellion against the dietary regime. The charge was dropped, but underlying the perception of him at the time was the fact that he had visited the Communist Bookshop in Dublin in search of study material (dressed as he later recalled in clericals, complete with hat)<sup>1</sup> and had been observed by the Special Branch, with the result that a local Garda came to call, only to be reassured by the Vice-Rector of his 'orthodoxy and patriotism'.

His interest in social questions continued during his theological studies in Louvain, 1951-55, and found outlet in spending 'a good part of the summer with the Young Christian Workers, getting some experience of what life was like for a Charleroi coalminer, and part of the second summer in the south of France working in a steel factory'.<sup>2</sup> The formative influence of these experiences with regard to institutional awareness and the development of new perspectives would need further analysis—he remarks on these episodes only in passing—but it is certainly likely that his principal activity at the time, the study of theology, benefited from a new ability to critique positions and this must have been a contributory factor in developing an ecumenical vision as the reading lists included Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox authors and 'all were open to criticism, Catholics included'.<sup>3</sup> His ecumenical orientation certainly received a fillip when he moved to Rome for postgraduate studies, where he had as Rector, Charles Boyer SJ, who was director of an Ecumenical Centre. There he attended a lecture on the ecumenical movement given by a pioneering ecumenist, the Anglican Bishop Bell.

Perhaps oddly, Michael made no mention in his various memoirs of his work on a doctoral dissertation at the Gregorian University, subsequently co-published by the Gregorian and by Fordham Press in 1960. Under the title '*Scriptura Sola, Wyclif and his Critics*', it touches on issues of ecumenical importance still relevant today. In it he merely hopes that his study will make some contribution towards a proper understanding of the medieval attitude to Scripture and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 40.

Tradition 'on which so much emphasis is now being laid'.<sup>1</sup> The background to his study, he says, is that Catholic theologians interested in their separated brethren and the problems raised by the dogma of the Assumption have a desire to capture and revitalize medieval thought, showing that it did not separate or oppose Scripture and Tradition. Because of the controversy Wyclif caused, it was then necessary to understand his point of view on Scripture and Tradition.

Overall, the approach of the dissertation is to side with the critics of Wyclif, including modern Lutheran theologians, and he concludes that 'the whole trend of Wyclif's theology is to consider the Church, as a visible society, quite superfluous'.<sup>2</sup> The dissertation is a remarkably lucid account of difficult theological issues. It is perfectly orthodox, but shows little interest in the problematic relations between Church and State in which Wyclif was caught up or in the possibly noble motivation of those who upheld an ideal of poverty against Church property and riches. Michael was to declare in later years that his little book *Praying for Unity* (1963) belonged to his *juvenilia*. Perhaps he would have similarly categorised his earlier *Scriptura Sola, Wyclif and his Critics*, though he did cull it for articles in the journals *Traditio* and *Verbum Domini* shortly after its completion.

### **The Irish School of Ecumenics**

In 1958, Michael had joined the teaching faculty at the Jesuit House of Studies, Milltown Park, Dublin, where his subject was systematic theology, and he became involved in 1959 in a project of the faculty to hold public lectures. Influenced presumably in a significant way by his earlier studies, he suggested that there should be one on the movement for Christian unity. As a search yielded no Roman Catholic who had made the subject their own, he was asked to give the lecture himself. Of this occasion he said: 'It was on 9 March 1960 that my own ecumenical ministry began'.<sup>3</sup> The lecture proved so timely that he was never allowed to look back and began to be more and more involved in interchurch relations. This work developed in tandem with his theology teaching and led within ten years to two major initiatives, his

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hurley SJ, *Scriptura Sola, Wyclif and His Critics* (Roma/N.Y.: P.U.G./Fordham Press, 1960), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 40.

editing of a book to mark the centenary of the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and the foundation of the Irish School of Ecumenics. He subsequently pointed out on more than one occasion that ecumenism was so new as a matter of public interest and as material for the media that the two events were confused with one another. For him it was more a case of the first, the publication, being a powerful springboard for the launch of the School.

The book, *Irish Anglicanism 1869-1969*, did attract attention as more than a historical study. Church of Ireland people represented Protestantism for most Catholics and as a result the book gave the Protestant population a new and public profile. In the still young State they came in from the cold, no longer as the establishment, an image that had continued to cling to the Church of Ireland over the hundred years, but as fellow Christians. That Church was fortunate in that its Primate at the time was Dr G. O. Simms, whose personal warmth and deeply spiritual character made him such an attractive figure. At the local level in Dublin, the contribution to the emerging ecumenical climate should be acknowledged of two scholarly senior clerics, Archdeacon Jenkins and Dean Salmon, who became friends of Michael and who with notable humility welcomed young Roman Catholic priests who were seeking ecumenical fellowship. But on the Catholic side it was Michael who led the way.

As soon as *Irish Anglicanism* was in the hands of the publisher, he began to share his ideas with his confrères about a possible two-year course of instruction in ecumenism for those who had already completed their basic theological studies.<sup>1</sup> One can see that the underlying idea was to provide in a systematic way the formation that in a rather unstructured way he himself had gone through. It was a limited enough aim at that stage, as is shown by the fact that the series of lectures had already begun before what came to be known as the Irish School of Ecumenics was actually launched in November 1970.

By then his ideas had developed, aided by the publication of his 'Ecumenism. What and Why?' in *The Furrow* in July 1970, a study requested in fact by his Provincial, Fr Cecil McGarry, who was also interested in ecumenism, had done his doctorate on Anglican

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hurley SJ, 'The Beginnings (1970-1980), *The Irish School of Ecumenics* (1970-2007), 32.

ecclesiology in Rome and lectured on the subject at the Glenstal Ecumenical Conference in 1965. The situation was evolving rapidly at this point and so a press conference at the end of May 1970 made clear what the *Furrow* article would not contain: the School would be an independent, unofficial, interdenominational institute, 'confident that its courses will be immediately recognised by other theological institutions as fulfilling certain requirements for degrees conferred by them'.<sup>1</sup> This quotation from the text of the press conference is revealing. The expression of confidence in immediate happy outcomes is indicative of Michael's approach at the time: not brashness, for he had his subtle, diplomatic side, but great energy and determination and the security of support on the part of his Provincial. The School would not be associated with the Jesuits' Milltown Institute as that would place it under the auspices of the Catholic Church. The decision has proved extremely important for the development of the School and the establishment of its world-wide reputation as an academic institution ever since. Given the brief time-scale involved however, it seems clear that it was not arrived at over a long period of consultation and soul-searching, but was nonetheless the result of ideas maturing in Michael's mind over a period of years.

The story of the founding and the subsequent history of the Irish School of Ecumenics has been told in detail in a book he himself edited in 2008, and to which he contributed two chapters, on the preparatory decade and on the first ten years, the period of his own Directorship. The Church of Ireland contributor of a Foreword to his memoirs had been of the opinion that future generations of historians of an amazing period of change in the Irish Churches would turn to Michael's personal testimony to explain the change and this is undoubtedly a balanced judgement. It needs to be said also that his personal account of the opening and early years of the School will be an important witness to the defeats and victories, the changes of heart and the intransigence which marked that period of Irish ecclesiastical history.

### **Ups and Downs. Relations with the Irish Hierarchy**

As noted earlier, the courses of lectures began before the School was formally launched. While untidy beginnings are not unknown in the case of institutions whose right to be is not questioned, the institution

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 35-36.



in this case could not anticipate such recognition. The recognition, or at least acquiescence of the then Archbishop of Dublin, Dr McQuaid, in whose diocese the School would lie, was crucial and as late as mid-April 1970, with courses due to begin that Autumn, the Provincial of the Jesuits, Fr Cecil McGarry, wrote to Michael that the Archbishop was not 'at the moment sympathetic to things ecumenical'.<sup>1</sup> The intrepid Fr McGarry evidently knew how to deal with the Archbishop because it is recorded in Michael's memoirs and in the official history of the School, though without detail, that '[e]ventually the attitude of the Archbishop became less negative and more sympathetic'.<sup>2</sup>

Considerable credit is due to the present Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin, for providing such detail in the speaking notes<sup>3</sup> for his address at the launch of *The Irish School of Ecumenics 1970-2007* on 3 April 2008. The Archbishop had consulted the Diocesan Archives and found that the question of the founding of the School had come up in May 1970 in Archbishop McQuaid's correspondence with Fr McGarry. 'It is not clear to me whether you are merely informing me or asking my advice', the Archbishop stated, to which Fr McGarry adroitly responded: 'I know that you will understand that the phrasing of my letter was such as not even to seem to commit Your Grace in any way with regard to the project'. Archbishop Martin commented: "The Archive provides little evidence of a move from the "less negative to the more sympathetic". The concluding paragraph of McQuaid's letter reads: "How your proposed school will make a significant contribution towards preparing 'one flock under one shepherd', that is towards conversion to the one true Faith, is God's secret". Archbishop Martin also quoted from the McQuaid archives for December 1970: "The Ecumenical Institute was planned in detail and publicly launched without the slightest reference to me'. Worth noting too is another letter of McQuaid found by Archbishop Martin in which he states: 'The school is, of course, Fr Hurley, and will provide very few converts'. His understanding, apparently, was that the purpose of such a school should be to bring about conversions to 'the one true Faith'.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.dublindiocese.ie/content/030408-irish-school-ecumenics-book-launch>> accessed 24/10/2011.

The archbishop's reservations concerning Michael went beyond his suitability for recruiting converts to the issue of his orthodoxy. Michael had given a public lecture, 'The Problem of Original Sin' at St Paul University, Ottawa in 1967 and his text had been approved by the Canadian Jesuit authorities. When he proposed to publish it in *The Clergy Review*, the corresponding English censors had some reservations, but were satisfied by the insertion of a statement in the Editorial recalling the need for asking questions and proposing tentative solutions if theological science was to make progress.<sup>1</sup> When, however, it was proposed that he lecture on the topic in the Milltown Public Lecture series of 1968, the Dublin diocesan censor had objections and the lecture was cancelled an hour before it was to be given.<sup>2</sup> The archbishop had previously objected to an article by Michael on mixed marriages published in *The Furrow* in 1966 and had insisted that permission given to the *Irish Times* to re-publish it be withdrawn.<sup>3</sup> This had led Dr McQuaid to put pressure on his superiors to suspend Michael from teaching in the Archdiocese, and it was through the efforts of his friend, Fr Cecil McGarry SJ, who was not yet Provincial that a reprieve had been granted.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that it was also Fr McGarry's diplomatic skill in his dealings with the Archbishop that prevented him from expressing outright opposition to the School. As a result Fr McGarry felt able to write to the President of the Episcopal Conference, Cardinal Conway, and to the Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenism, informing them of the 'proposed opening of a small school of Ecumenics in Dublin'.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the official launch, an incident occurred which illustrates the troubled state of interchurch relations at the time and the attendant political complications. Months before the launch, Dr Eugene Carson Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), was invited to give the inaugural lecture.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Problem of Original Sin', *The Clergy Review* (52) 1967, 770-86.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Hurley SJ, *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* (Dublin: Veritas, 1998), 246.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this situation arose before the canonical regulations concerning mixed marriages in *Ne temere* were altered, first in 1967 and then in *Matrimonia mixta* of 1970.

<sup>4</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 10; *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* 247.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hurley S.J., 'The Beginnings (1970-1980)', *The Irish School of Ecumenics (1970-2007)*, 35.

Unfortunately, opposition had been growing among Protestants in Northern Ireland, especially among Presbyterians, during the preceding decade to the direction the WCC was taking, theologically but also at a political level; it was allegedly supporting terrorism in Africa by grants from its Special Fund, described as its Programme to Combat Racism. This was a particularly sensitive issue in an area subjected to Provisional IRA terrorism. This situation created a quandary for the then Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, Principal James Haire, who was invited to the launch in his official capacity. Though a friend of Michael's he felt obliged not to be present. Becoming aware of the impending difficulty, Michael, acting presumably in consultation with the Jesuit Provincial and the other newly appointed Patrons from the major Protestant denominations, did not withdraw the invitation to Dr Blake. It was an example of the unexpected difficulties affecting the School from the beginning, many of which could not be foreseen or if foreseen needed to be confronted. On finishing his year in office, Principal Haire became a faithful supporter of the fledgling school.

As an academic institution, the school, usually referred to as the ISE from its early years, made good progress. Student numbers were good, highly competent staff were recruited, but its financial situation soon deteriorated and this was to remain the case during Michael's Directorship (1970-1980) and for long after. But the issue that occupied him most for the greater part of the first decade was the uneven and mostly troubled relationship with the Irish Catholic bishops. The status of independence of the Churches which he considered essential did not of course mean that there would be no interaction, obviously so in the case of the Archdiocese of Dublin in which the School was situated. Archbishop McQuaid resigned at the statutory age in 1972 and was succeeded by Dr Dermot Ryan, who had been a fellow-student of Michael's in U.C.D. and was initially favourable to the school to the extent that, after an approach by Michael, he straightaway sent two priests of the diocese to study there. The issue that was to become a bone of contention between him and the School, or more exactly between him and the Director, Michael, was the International Consultation on Mixed Marriage held by ISE in September 1974, planning for which had obviously to begin very early in the School's life. Though the Catholic Church's legislation had changed—but only recently—with the issue of the

Motu Proprio, *Matrimonia mixta*, in 1970, it was not a 'safe' topic for an ISE project. Michael was however convinced of its pastoral importance domestically, and in this view he was justified by events, and it did prove helpful in establishing the School's reputation internationally, but it also led to adverse reactions on the part of Archbishop Ryan and the Ecumenical Commission of the Episcopal Conference.

Michael recorded in his memoirs that the archbishop's first reaction to news of the consultation in July 1973 was positive. 'In his letter of reply he noted that the Consultation would also consider inter-faith marriage and added encouragingly that "it is important that our own problems concerning mixed marriages in the narrow sense should be seen in a broader context"'.<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Ryan did in fact have quite a pastoral outlook and the sentiment he expressed at the time was undoubtedly sincere. The difficulty that arose subsequently seems to have come from his failure to accept the School's independence. When in December 1973 he and other Church leaders received copies of the Consultation programme, he replied resenting the fact that he had not previously been consulted. In his memoirs, Michael quotes a letter from him written on 5 January 1974: 'I must therefore require that your programme be re-arranged to make places in both the private and public sessions for the presentation of the viewpoints of persons with a genuine pastoral experience in this country'.<sup>2</sup> The reference to local pastoral experience does indicate the archbishop's genuine concern. Michael was able to respond to this by saying that relatively little had been done about participation in the Consultation and expressing the hope that Dublin clergy would take part, suggesting even representation of the Dublin Chancery. There was no response, apparently, to this suggestion.

In the years following, the archbishop's attitude was in effect that the ISE, not being a Catholic institution, was therefore a Protestant one and though there is no record of this in the documentation available, he seems to have insisted, and Michael to have acquiesced, that there be a series of lectures for students on Catholic doctrine. According to Michael's memoirs, in his contact with him the archbishop made no secret of his view that 'ecumenism in Ireland was

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<sup>1</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 86.

far too preoccupied with Northern Ireland and with the issue of mixed marriages. He was a very forceful personality'.<sup>1</sup> Anyone who knew both the archbishop and Michael could understand how this unhappy situation had developed. Of it Michael remarked in his memoirs: 'With hindsight I can now see how much tensions within myself (my own inadequacies and insensitivities and indiscretions) were a complicating factor in all these situations'.<sup>2</sup> True, but it has to be said of the archbishop that while he was pastorally minded, his disposition was highly intellectual. As a former university professor of Semitic languages, he took a considerable interest in ecumenical discussions of Scripture and his idea of ecumenism was focused on doctrinal questions. In effect it was a pre-Lund understanding of how denominations should set out their doctrinal positions in dialogue with each other. The relationship between the two men effectively ended when in 1984 the archbishop was appointed to a Curial position in Rome and died shortly afterwards.

### **The Columbanus Community of Reconciliation**

By that time, Michael had himself resigned as Director of the ISE, to the surprise of many who knew him. He was fifty-seven and in very good health, but the thought of retirement had been in his mind for some years. His summing up of his motivation in his memoirs settles on two factors, the situation of ecumenism in Ireland as this was reflected in the relationship between the School and the Catholic hierarchy and also his own relationship with the latter. He wondered if in the School's situation he was the problem but thought not as the relationship with the bishops was unchanged after his departure. He later came to realise that his decision had been influenced more than he had cared to admit by his personal relationship with the hierarchy. However, he concluded in his memoirs that 'the main reason for my retirement was a conviction that the ISE would be unable to develop properly and flourish if it continued to be dependent on the person who was largely responsible for its beginnings and first decade'.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, he had mixed motives for his move and he shows himself quite honest in hesitating over their relative significance. He was also looking for new experiences and his idea was that after a sabbatical he

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 87.

would offer his services to a seminary or theological college in Africa for a period of years. His plans changed in the course of that year and, as will be seen in the account below of his new foundation, he returned to part-time though significant involvement in ISE.

The way he would then relate to ISE, accepting an auxiliary position as Co-ordinator of the Northern Ireland programme while in Belfast, going back therefore in a subsidiary role to an institution of which he was the founder, would show a very commendable level of detachment on his part. This is something that might be expected of a religious, though because of human frailty and egotism is not to be presumed. There are many references to him and his work in the contributions of later Directors to the published history. They tend to be matter-of-fact and it would be more than difficult to find a note of criticism between the lines.<sup>1</sup> They have evidently shared his vision<sup>2</sup> and have been willing to accept the consequent hardships, especially financial difficulties, knowing that these arise mainly from Michael's initial vision of an independent institute.

Two chapters of his memoirs were devoted to his travels during the sabbatical year that followed his departure. Not a day seems to have been wasted as he encountered the Orthodox world in the very special setting of Mount Athos and there are copious extracts from his diary, noting in some instances relaxed Christian hospitality, 'whether from conviction or indifference seemed unclear',<sup>3</sup> but more often an anti-ecumenical current beneath basic civility. Greek Orthodox authorities whom he subsequently met on the mainland assured him that attitudes in general were not as negative as those he encountered on Mount Athos. His subsequent visit to China and to Hong Kong was in 1981 and he notes in his 2003 memoirs that China was by then a very different place. The journey was motivated of course by a desire to visit the places associated with the great Jesuit missionaries of four centuries previously, Matteo Ricci and others. He covered a great

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<sup>1</sup> John D'Arcy May, Director 1967-1990, relates that an article of his in the *Irish Ecumenical News* evoked an immediate response in a letter from Michael, who had gained the impression that in Dr May's view ISE was defined by the Irish problem. 'Realising our Potential', *The Irish School of Ecumenics (1970-2007)*, 112.

<sup>2</sup> Geraldine Smyth OP, 'Challenge and Change (1994-1999)', *The Irish School of Ecumenics (1970-2007)*, 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 104.

amount of territory, from Beijing to Xian (the ancient capital) to Shanghai and Canton, and experienced the complications of the relationship between the Patriotic Association and the Catholic Church recognised by the Vatican. Showing his usual sense of purpose, Michael managed to get an interview not only with the general secretary of the Patriotic Association but also with officials of the Protestant Three-Self Movement.<sup>1</sup> His Chinese journey concluded with a visit to the Jesuit community in Hong Kong, of which his brother Fr James, was and is a member.<sup>2</sup>

The sabbatical year included also visits to the Holy Land, to Africa and to India, where he did a thirty-day retreat, in a little village with Church of Ireland connections: in Sitagarha ‘the Dublin University Mission had once been at work, leaving behind such monuments as St Columba’s Hospital and St Columba’s College’.<sup>3</sup> The idea of founding what was to become the Columbanus Community of Reconciliation or CCR came to him during the retreat, though he was reminded a year later by a member of the German Evangelical Jesus-Bruderschaft that in the last paragraph of his *Irish Anglicanism (1869-1969)* he had already looked forward to the establishment of an inter-denominational community of reconciliation ‘in the spirit if not in the form of the well-known foundation at Taizé’. The idea had come to him therefore in 1970, re-appeared in 1981, come to fruition in 1983 and had its logic described in retrospect, a year after the closure of the community, in his memoirs of 2003.

This is a rather short span of time for the development and demise of a community and it suggests that the implementation of the project overtook what was planned as a two-year feasibility study. In effect, the project was not examined in sufficient depth despite the energy and zeal which he devoted to it – something he could only ‘admire and envy’ in retrospect! The motivation was certainly spiritual: he had visited a number of non-Catholic religious communities and felt that religious had a special responsibility to be promoters of Christian unity, so it was a logical step to think in terms of an ecumenical

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Here it should be noted that Fr James Hurley SJ from his base in Hong Kong has been very helpful in supplying information for the preparation of this article. The assistance of Fr Conall Ó Cuinn SJ, Rector of Milltown Park Jesuit Community and of the Librarian and Staff of ISE has also been invaluable.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* 317.

community in Northern Ireland where the problems of disunity among Christians had such painful consequences. In his memoirs this remained for him the logic of such a project, even though it had come prematurely to an end.<sup>1</sup> His initial move had been to write for advice from India to a number of Jesuit friends in Dublin and in the letter he admitted to a certain confusion: 'At times I think I could carry it off; at other times I have gave doubts'.<sup>2</sup> The extent of the confusion is evident in the description of the community which follows. It was to be 'an interdenominational religious community of men', 'a sort of Irish Taizé', 'a cross between a Benedictine monastery and a Jesuit house', a liturgical community with apostolic outreach.

In *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?*, he lists a series of interviews he undertook:

Twenty-four interviews with Anglican bishops, religious communities and agencies in Canada, England, Ireland and Scotland; four with communities and leaders in the German Evangelical Church; four with individuals and clergy groups of English and Irish Methodists; fifteen interviews with Presbyterian leaders and groups in France, Ireland and Scotland (including Taizé, Corrymeela and Iona); and thirty-five with Roman Catholic bishops, groups, communities and official bodies, directly in England, Ireland and Rome, and by correspondence with religious in Canada, the USA, Germany and Holland. There was also time spent with an *ad hoc* inter-Church group of clergy in Belfast on three occasions in the spring of 1982.<sup>3</sup>

This occurred during a period in which he also made many visits to Northern Ireland, greatly assisted by a Church of Ireland friend, Doreen Freer, who made the first donation, of £1000, towards the foundation. The general reaction to his project was to his surprise quite positive, so much so that he would often ask himself: 'Are they being honest with me or just being nice to me?'<sup>4</sup> At Easter in 1982, his report to his Provincial was inconclusive, due to 'lack of time' so that feasibility depended on continuing the study and the emergence of suitable candidates. Significantly he reports some late changes in the shape of the community: it had ceased to be all-male, was now open to married couples and membership had become temporary. What is

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<sup>1</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* 319.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 321.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 322.



not clear is whether the positive reactions he had encountered related to this form of community or to a more traditional type and there is evidence that this was not the case—for example, the Abbot of Glenstal had expressed doubts about the durability of a community with short-term membership.

His *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* gives a very detailed account of the preparations in 1982 and 1983 for the establishment of the community, without however reference to a formal decision to establish it, so it is not clear that there was one. It appears that the project had taken on a life of its own, would be initiated if money could be found for a premises and suitable members emerged. Oddly, it appears that Michael said nothing in his reports of his own putative membership of the community. Six very interesting people were successful in interviews that included one with a consultant psychiatrist. There were five ladies—three of them Roman Catholic, one Anglican and one Presbyterian—and their choice of leader fell on Michael. A seventh member, a Roman Catholic priest from Australia joined them in January 1984.

Apart from the issue of personnel, there was of course the need for suitable accommodation. The energy and zeal Michael had shown in his consultations again emerged in fund-raising. Between January and mid-September 1983, £100,000 was raised, between Irish and German contributions and from Catholic and Protestant sources. It was mid-July when a suitable house was found, 683 Antrim Road, Belfast, and possession was achieved in mid-November. It had been agreed that the community would come together in mid-September so the members lived as a dispersed community with Belfast friends until the formal inauguration of the CCR on the Feast of St Columbanus, its patron, on 23 November, 1983.

The speed with which a project for an ecumenical community with its own premises, first mentioned to his superiors two and a half years earlier, was implemented is rather breath-taking. Such an outcome is even more surprising than the setting up in a similarly short period of ISE, basically a teaching institution which could and did use borrowed premises. Both achievements testify to Michael's vision, energy, resourcefulness and determination, and inevitably to a certain stubbornness in face of opposition. The two foundations differed significantly in that the latter adapted itself to the laws of growth for an academic institution, however innovative it was, while the former,

as a unique experiment in Christian community living, could not look to any well-established ground-plan for its way of life. The models to which Michael had looked were not really similar. Though some did allow temporary belonging, all those that had permanent institutional status also had a core of permanent membership. None was as diversified—interdenominational, lay and clerical, celibate and married—as that which Michael envisaged. It is impressive then that it lasted as long as it did, up to 2002, with members coming and leaving again, with the heavy demands of a programme of work for unity and justice and with members' activities becoming restricted by their advancing years.

In his memoirs, Michael pondered the question of what he described as its early death. The immediate reasons were decline in membership and decline in financial support, with the former causing a crisis in identity as members stayed for shorter and shorter periods. 'Columbanus no longer had a good memory.'<sup>1</sup> There was less knowledge of its origins, its history, its ethos. In recognising this fundamental factor he was tacitly admitting the flaw that was there from the beginning, the lack of a permanent core membership—he had not even planned on permanent membership for himself and had in fact left after ten years, at the age of seventy. Another factor that would have contributed stability was also lacking: though it would have taken time and extensive discussion, given the heterogeneous nature of the group, a document would need to have been created as a guide for the community's life together, one setting out its aspirations and its practical guidelines or rules. This has always been found necessary in religious communities and would seem even more important in this case. There is no reference to such a document and one of the original members confirmed that there was none.<sup>2</sup>

As the end of community life seemed inevitable in 2002, it was hoped that by renovating the premises the future of 'Columbanus' could be more as a Centre than a community. But after the renovation no money remained to allow this plan to be implemented. Speculating on the more remote reasons for closure rather than on the immediate

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<sup>1</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 90.

<sup>2</sup> From the recollections of Mrs Claire O'Mahony, a founding member, interviewed in October 2011.

and obvious ones, Michael came to the conclusion that these included:

the decline in religious vocations both Anglican and Catholic, the decline in volunteering, the decline in interest in ecumenism which results logically from the decline in a church-centred spirituality; a growing fatigue with projects of reconciliation which of their nature take years and years; a growing fatigue with Northern Ireland in particular, and last but not least a change in funding policies and practices of various institutions such the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

Michael was eighty when, in contrast with his characteristically hopeful outlook, he made this pessimistic assessment. Hindsight probably brought with it an analysis that recognised factors operative, but not perhaps not fully taken into account, when his enthusiasm for an idea caused him to concentrate on the potential contribution of the CCR. His reference to growing fatigue with projects of reconciliation and with Northern Ireland indicates an unequal contest. Perhaps a community of young adults would have had the necessary stamina, though this is not to take away from the actual community's achievements and endurance over twenty years. Its history should however be seen in the context of the political situation which had been the background for its existence and activities and still existed when Michael was writing in 2003. The Good Friday Agreement had come into force in December 1999 and the Northern Ireland Assembly set up, but it was suspended some months after the closure of the CCR and did not resume with a functioning Executive until 2007. The IRA ceasefire took place only in 2005 and was not met with a reciprocal gesture by loyalists.

It would be difficult as well as inappropriate to decide whether the CCR project had been the best use of Michael's time, energy and ecumenical influence over those ten years of his later life or whether remaining with the project might have been the wiser option. After its closure he remained positive about what had been achieved:

Its aim had not been to bring the Troubles to an end but to challenge the sectarianism, injustice and violence prevalent in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in our world, to do so in deed and not just in word, to give a practical example of integrated living, of what a more united church, a more just society, a more peaceful world could be like, to

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<sup>1</sup> *Healing and Hope*, 90.

give encouragement to those committed to an improvement in interchurch relations. With that more modest aim, many feel that it may have done much good during its short life.<sup>1</sup>

### **A prophet recognised**

Michael's retirement from the CCR in 1993 did not of course go unnoticed among his confrères and in the wider Christian community. He was now seventy and a *Festschrift* appeared to mark this milestone, or climacteric, as he liked to call it, *Reconciliation. Essays in Honour of Michael Hurley*.<sup>2</sup> His international ecumenical reputation was acknowledged by the inclusion in the volume of contributions by distinguished theologians from different denominations and countries, many of them long-time friends. The title itself was significant in that it drew attention to his progress as a theologian from concern with institutional unity to recognition of the ultimate priority of reconciliation between people, a theme that was to appear also in the title of his own memoirs, as previously noted.

Receiving such a tribute did not prove an invitation to inactivity and he began to give retreats and preach sermons, usually in an ecumenical context. He also proceeded to gather and edit a collection of articles he had published over about twenty-five years, though a few seem to have been written especially for the project. The resulting volume, *Christian Unity: an ecumenical second spring?*, published in 1998, was an indexed and liberally footnoted set of essays covering his ecumenical vision, issues he identified and initiatives he had taken. The title indicated the hope that lay behind his decision to publish as the second millennium drew to a close: 'Its aim is to make some modest contribution towards ensuring that the third millennium does in fact bring an ecumenical second spring...'<sup>3</sup>

The first part of this work had the heading Ecumenical Vision and includes a chapter 'Christian Unity by 2000?', a title inspired by an Encyclical of Pope John Paul II. In it he discussed various grounds for ecumenical hope, concluding with a section on 'unity by stages'. In the context of his emphasis on reconciliation, this mechanism remained for him the most promising strategy for achieving the aim of organic unity. It is not clear whether in his final years he developed any new

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Oliver Rafferty SJ (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1993)

<sup>3</sup> *Christian unity: an ecumenical second spring?* 6.

insights in this regard and reconciliation remained the theme of the final chapter in his 2003 memoirs. He does not seem to have been involved in the development of the concept of Receptive Ecumenism which emerged, largely through the work of Paul Murray of Durham University, about 2006, a time when Michael was engaged with the major task of editing the history of ISE for publication. He was at that stage entitled to look back with satisfaction on his contribution to ecumenism both in theory and in practice.

He had been gratified that as an indication of how his perception by the Catholic authorities had changed the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Seán Brady, was among the Church leaders who contributed Prefaces to *Christian Unity: an ecumenical second spring?* Archbishop Brady's remarks included: 'Those of us who recall his early work *Praying for Unity* can only marvel at Michael Hurley's continued commitment to the ecumenical cause through times when it was internationally fashionable—and through times when it was in danger domestically of being suffocated by the weeds and thorns of bitterness and sectarianism'.<sup>1</sup> He was also much pleased by a further gesture of goodwill on the part of the Catholic authorities when Cardinal Edward Cassidy, then President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity came to launch the book both in Dublin and Belfast.

Among others who contributed a Preface was Michael's friend of many years, Dr Norman Taggart, then President of the Methodist Conference in Ireland, who recalled their first public venture together, a broadcast in 1969. As heading for his text he used a quotation from the Prophet Joel: 'Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions'. Dr Taggart returned to that text when in April last he spoke at Michael's Funeral Mass, having been invited ten years previously to do so should he outlive him. The text could serve as a seriously conceived tribute to his friend and was intended to do so, as his use of it in the Preface showed, but in the funeral address he also adapted it to serve as a humorous tribute to a close friend when he added that 'Michael's dreams were some other people's nightmares'. As the summing up of the life of a man whose ecumenical vision was so radical that it greatly alarmed those who felt threatened by it, while engendering great support and loyalty among those who were, this could hardly be improved upon as the final word of this reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* x.

## SR MINKE DE VRIES: AN INTERVIEW

*Born in Holland in 1929, member of the Reformed Church, Sr Minke joined the community of Grandchamp, Switzerland in 1958. She was prioress of her community from 1970 until 1999. Thierry Marteaux OSB, of Rostrevor Monastery, interviewed her earlier this year.*

**TM** *In your book about the founding of Grandchamp you write: 'This exceptional woman, Geneviève Micheli, was chosen by God in order to speak a Word to the Church of her time, a word which finds an echo in the life of the Community she founded in the Churches of the Reformation'.<sup>1</sup> What was this Word? What was it that Geneviève had to say to the Reformed Churches in 1940?*

**MdV** The Word was a life which encountered the living Christ and was transformed by that meeting. For Geneviève, Christ was a living reality; Christ was able to change her life: her married life and all her life situations. With her husband, she met with Christ through the ministry of a pastor from the French Reformed Church who was ministering in Switzerland. For the Micheli couple the Gospel became a 'living and active' word (Heb. 4:12). Six months after this conversion to the living Christ, Geneviève's husband drowned in the sea as he tried to rescue two women who were in danger. Suddenly, she was left alone, without her beloved husband and with three young children. She lived through this trial in desolation but also with trust in Christ, who had died and is risen. Because Christ remained a living reality and a source of life in her, Geneviève was able to go back to Geneva and pursue her life there.

Because she believed, and knew by experience, that the Word of God is life-giving, Geneviève, who had some experience with Catholic retreats, suggested to others the organisation of spiritual retreats. In 1931, during the first

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<sup>1</sup> *Une vocation de femme* (Ed. De Grandchamp, 1996), p. 5.

retreat in Grandchamp, she witnessed the fruitfulness of God's word in her own life and in the lives of the other retreatants. She was not alone in organising these retreats, a group of friends joined her in this endeavour. Between 1930 and 1940, still living in Paris, she was in touch with Marguerite de Beaumont who was soon to become a permanent and prayerful presence in Grandchamp. At first Marguerite was helped by a local woman called Marthe whom she paid every month. One day, Marthe declared: 'We pray and live together, I do not want to receive a salary anymore'. From Paris, Geneviève was attentive to the beginnings of this community life. She gave advice to the two women. When Sr Irène arrived, Sr Marguerite did not want to welcome her because she felt unable to organise community life. Geneviève invited Sr Marguerite to Paris. They went first to visit the first Sisters of Pomeyrol then the Benedictine nun-oblates at Cormeilles. Geneviève knew the founder and prioress of this community, M. Marie-Elisabeth de Wavrechin. It was a powerful visitation, the women met in the Spirit, trusting in God's word. During their stay at Cormeilles, Sr Marguerite felt that first she had to welcome Sr Irène and then to ask Geneviève Micheli to become the leader of this small community. Geneviève began by refusing this request but then discerned that she should accept the invitation addressed to her.

The living Word which helped her to get through the death of her husband was now calling her to pursue the journey further and she consented to do this. The birth of this community was also a word addressed to our Churches. In our congregations, we believed in God's Word, but biblical studies were sometimes dry and exegetical. It was all good teaching but there was a need for a word which would be received and meditated upon in the heart, a word which would convert the way we looked at one another and which would help us to welcome one another with our differences. The word of God must convert us and transform us into brothers and sisters.

The word was at work in the meeting between Sr Geneviève and M. Marie-Elisabeth, a Protestant and a Catholic. They met without separation, without walls, but in the Lord. It was a joyful and fruitful meeting. It gave birth to new life.

**TM** *For you, the Word is the Living Christ, it is a living Word which is able to transform and raise up new life?*

**MdV** Christ is this incredible thrust of God's love; Christ is God's compassion, which created us. Christ is God's intention. Sr Geneviève was a compassionate woman, all those who met her will confirm this. Each time we reach out to a brother or a sister and welcome that person, God is at work through the Spirit.

In an international community like ours, all this is very pertinent. At the beginning, after the war, sisters from countries which had been enemies of one another joined the community, and together we have been able to journey towards reconciliation. It has been possible for us to be a small sign that another way of life was possible, a life marked by friendship and generosity.

There is so much misery in our world. People are dying because they are living meaningless lives and because of the senselessness of others; so I believe that our Christian communities, which do not need to be big, can be places where there is love, where we sing and proclaim that God is here and that this is what matters.

Ultimately, what is the meaning of our different denominations?

**TM** *This is a real question for you?*

**MdV** Yes, of course. Last September I took part in a session whose theme was 'catholicity'. I was asked to speak about the Protestant perspective. The word *catholic* is present in our Confession of Faith, and yet we hesitate to say that we are Catholic, we prefer to use the word *universal*. Today, personally I can say: 'I am Catholic from a Reformed tradition.' In the past I did not dare to say that, because the word 'Catholic' always had a Roman flavour or connotation to it. It was as if the Roman Catholic Church



had the monopoly of catholicity and this was why we were hesitant about using this term. My faith is the fruit of a long lineage of men and women which includes Huguenots and Mennonites among others, a faith which has been through history, persecutions and liberalism, a faith which led me to baptism and confirmation. This long process led me to Grandchamp. What I learnt as a child has been broadened, and is still broadening. Each denomination, with its story, its culture, brings a particular aspect to the great symphony of the praise and richness of the Church universal which is truly Catholic.

**TM** *In your book, you write that ‘the community is a laboratory of communion’.<sup>1</sup> When I read the word ‘laboratory’ I thought of an explosion. Are there ever explosions at Grandchamp? When there are explosions, how do you journey towards reconciliation?*

**MdV** Indeed, there are explosions! The first person who needs forgiveness is oneself. We have to receive God’s forgiveness and then we are able to forgive others. The challenge is to dare to continually begin anew in my relationship with the other, to dare to foster trust. In fact, the problem is that we know the other, how he/she reacts. If I am not able to look in a different way at the same person then it is all over.

It is the same thing between our Churches. We are often tempted to dwell on the wounds we have inflicted upon one another, to rely on our desire to be right, to be better than the other, more inspired. What is sure is that the incredible love of God is given to us anew everyday even as we seem to waste it all the time.

**TM** *For you, is poverty a key for reconciliation?*

**MdV** Yes, I think it is. We cling so much to our ideas, it is so difficult for us to acknowledge that we have been wrong, we need to be in good standing, somebody who does everything perfectly. We are taught all this at home and school ... we have to be the best. Jesus tells us: ‘Look at the

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<sup>1</sup> *Vers une gratuité féconde* (Parole et Silence, 2009), p. 115.

birds of the air (...), consider the lilies of the field' (Mt. 6: 26, 28). He invites us to trust. Poor people are trustful. In Algeria, when we were invited to a meal, the poor had no problem about putting everything they had on the table, and everybody was able to feast and rejoice. Whereas if we have something, we calculate what we are going to hold back and keep for later, what will remain for tomorrow and the day after. Poor people do not calculate, and we criticise them, we say that they do not know how to manage. How difficult it is for us to learn to receive in order to love more and to welcome more.

Personally at my age, I need to clear out many things in my life, I have a lot of memories and I am afraid to forget them. I feel that there is still a journey ahead of me. Mary is really poor before the Lord. She does not understand everything. She asks: 'How can this be?' (Luke 1:34) and yet she trusts and is able to say 'Yes'. She is a beautiful model of a life marked by poverty, by a lack of pretension and an unconditional openness to God's word.

In community life, when I have been hurt by a sister, we come together for the Office and we sing 'Holy God'; suddenly I am no longer self-centred, focused on the sister who hurt me, we look together toward God and I experience a kind of release in my heart. It may happen that we do not want to sing together, and yet we sing and there is something mysterious which works within us to bring us to harmony.

**TM** *In your book, I was surprised to notice that you never speak of Grandchamp as a monastic community, you go as far as writing that you are 'inspired by the monastic tradition'. Are you monastics or not?*

**MdV** We say more and more that we are a monastic community. We are really rooted in the monastic tradition, but there are monastics who would not agree with us. There is no doubt that we are from the monastic race, we have been called in order to 'prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ' (Rule of St Benedict 72:11), called to adore God, and to be completely rooted in him. All this is very monastic.

The monastic lives for God in community, in solitude and in communion. Both of these aspects are important for us. We are not hermits. God's love is about life in communion: alone with our Sisters, in a community for God. Rublev's icon of the Trinity speaks better than I do of the articulation between solitude and communion, and of the necessity of openness and hospitality in Christ.

**TM** *When did Grandchamp connect with its monastic roots? Were they present at the origin?*

**MdV** Our origins are so strange. At the beginning there was not a very clear monastic project. First there were the spiritual retreats, then we adopted the Rule of Taizé. This Rule was inspired by the Rule of the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus, by the Rules of St Benedict and St Francis. The reality is that the first Sisters were very open to all this.

Obviously our relationship with the communities at Bec has been very important for us. Mother Geneviève visited the Little Sisters of Jesus in 1953. Since the 1970s we have been part of the Conference of the Contemplative Communities of our region of Switzerland.

**TM** *You write: 'Today still, a majority among us comes from different Reformed Churches (Switzerland, France, Holland and Germany), many come from the German Lutheran Church, some are Methodist (Switzerland and Austria) and our African Sisters are from the Baptist Church of Congo. This diversity is a typical feature of our community.'<sup>1</sup> Which denomination is the more influential?*

**MdV** The Reformed tradition is the more numerous, but a Reformed Sister from France is different from a Sister like me who comes from Holland: in France she comes from a minority, in Holland I come from the majority. We have to acknowledge that we are greatly influenced by our cultures and history.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vers une gratuité féconde*, p. 65.

I said that I am a Catholic from a Reformed tradition. Faith in Christ is Catholic, one has never finished grasping the height, the width and the depth of Christian faith. It is an unending growth. There are however some elements of my Reformed tradition which were good in the past but now their relevance is not so clear. I think that it is the same problem with the Catholic tradition.

**TM** *Are there any great differences or tensions between the different denominations in Grandchamp?*

**MdV** No. In the 1960s, when I heard Bro. Roger of Taizé speak about the unity of the Church, I was unable to foresee all that has been accomplished since then.

Here in 1973 in Switzerland, the Leuenberg Agreement has been a key moment in relationships between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. At last, it was possible for us to share communion and for our ministers to preach in each other Churches. At that time, we knew an Anglican priest. Because we were unable to receive communion at his Services, he had to celebrate on his own. He went to Africa, and realised that things were changing there (particularly with the Methodist Churches). When he came back to us he invited us all to communion, it was incredible!

Too often, we forget that the goal is not to be pure but to share God's love which makes us alive. The Good News calls us to open our doors to those who knock and are thirsty. For many, it is a life or death question. This explains why there was such a renewal after the Second World War, people were confronted with essential questions.

My grandfather was a farmer on an island in Northern Holland. He was the only Protestant in this region, his farm being surrounded by Catholic farms. He saw himself like Israel among the pagan nations. His greatest fear was that one of his children might marry a Catholic, for him it would have been a catastrophe. If only he were around today to see how his grandchildren are living! Belief in our election can make us proud, we take God's

choice upon us, our election for ourselves and we forget that it is about God and that it should be lived with love, especially in welcoming others.

This emphasis on all the differences between us is tiring! And yet I say that from a Reformed tradition! God has been active in my tradition, many Reformed men and women have worked tirelessly for the unity of the Church.

I have a problem with denominationalism. When we were working on our monastic roots, some of the Sisters asked for a stricter monastic enclosure. In Algeria, this was not possible, when you live in a slum you cannot close your door. I was not sure about what to do. One day, I was in England and I visited Fr Sophrony and shared with him my problem. He said to me: 'Sister, the rule is for the monk and not the monk for the rule'. I have come to believe that dogmas are for Christians and not Christians for dogmas. I am not a relativist, but we must recognise that there have been many mistakes, erroneous things were said and done, simply because we were not listening to one another, and made no real effort to understand one another.

It is important to have a clear identity in Christ, and yet we must acknowledge that God is at work in and through others, whether they belong to another religion or to none.

**TM** *In 1956 in Algeria, Sr Marguerite wrote: 'They always ask us: "Why do the Sisters not marry?" When we answer: because of God, they seem to understand. It is the only ray of light in something which remains for them an enigma'.<sup>1</sup> What is the meaning of your celibacy?*

**MdV** To be celibate means that we are not married. In our text of commitment we say 'celibacy lived in chastity'. There are so many ways to be celibate. Celibacy in chastity is the orientation of all our affective life because we have been touched by God's love, so real in the living Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> *Du Grain à l'Épi...* (ed. Communauté de Grandchamp, 1995), p. 178.

**TM** *Could you tell us how you chose to live a celibate life? In a Reformed Church, is it easy for a young woman to choose such a way of life?*

**MdV** It was very difficult for the first Sisters, but they were not so young and they knew what they were doing. They were labelled as Catholics.

Personally, I was very religious, I loved solitude. When I went to Leiden University (I liked Church History but was not fond of Latin and Greek), I thought of getting married. I was surrounded by people who prayed, and they invited me to be part of their prayer group. I was very quiet but I was fully present. One day, a friend invited me to pray with her. I do not remember the content of her prayer, but I do remember very well that at the end I said 'Amen'. And at this precise moment it was as if something had burst open within me, as if I have been touched by God's love.

After that, I actively took part in the prayer group. I was very sensitive to the social aspects of Christian life. I was not yet completely convinced but I was searching. I was very impressed by the ministry of the Salvation Army, I found them amazing. They were singing and bearing witness to their faith with courage.

Then I met a young woman from Grandchamp who was finishing her studies at Leiden. Our biblical group met in her flat. Praying together I was deeply moved by the meditation of St Paul's hymn in the letter to the Ephesians (2: 5-11). That was the real beginning of my way to Grandchamp.

In community, because of our vocation, we had to finish with denominationalism. I must acknowledge that it is difficult for me to understand those who wish to return to it in a rigid way. It is such a joy to journey with people from different traditions, inspired by the same faith. The essential thing is to respond to Christ's love with the whole of our life and to do so bearing witness to God's love before others in a world in which there is great thirst for love and where so many are unhappy. Our God loves us. The real question is: what does He want?

How can we share His love today, not so much in words as by our lives?

**TM** *Why do the Sisters in Grandchamp still have a religious habit?*

**MdV** At the beginning the Sisters did not have a special habit. However the first Sisters were originally from a privileged background and the differences between the Sisters became very visible. Moved by their desire for simplicity, they decided to have one. Sr Marguerite chose the colour blue. Why? Because it is was the colour of the habit of the workers (and not because of Mary!). We have decided to keep it because it is simple. And yet we are not very strict on the subject. For example at first, it was impossible for Sr Jakoba to go to Israel and to live in a slum with a religious habit. Then many years later, the Sisters in Israel chose to wear a religious habit again in order to be like the other religious women in the country and to have a clear identity. We keep the habit, it speaks about simplicity and about our unity as a community. But I do not know how long it will last.

**TM** *You seem to be close to the Little Sisters of Jesus. Did they influence you?*

**MdV** Indeed we are very close to them. When the brothers of Taizé went to Algeria, they realised quickly that it was impossible for them to work with Algerian women. So we went to Algeria. Sr Renée and Sr Albertine had the vocation to live among the poor, and there they met with the Little Sisters of Jesus. After that when the Little Sisters of Jesus welcomed Protestant women we became even more closer. I went to Tre Fontane in Rome and I had a very good meeting with Little Sr Magdelene, it was the beginning of a real friendship. Between our small communities there were no divisions, we were sisters in the sharing of a simple way of life.

**TM** *What is the place of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the life of your community?*

**MdV** For us, the Eucharist is the summit of our community prayer, of our life of praise. We do not celebrate the Eucharist every day, this does not seem necessary, Christ is present in our community prayer. We celebrate every Sunday and Thursday evening; it is our way to root our life in Christ's death and resurrection. The celebration of the Eucharist is not just a souvenir, it is a memorial. In the celebration, is present to us what was present once and for all. If we have a retreat, we may celebrate every day, but not all the time, for some Sisters it would be too much. We have to keep in mind that there are other ways for Christ to be present in our midst: in our community prayer, he is really present.

Last week after our Sunday celebration, we brought the Eucharist to Sr Albertine who was dying and you should have seen her face when we arrived with Communion! In the communion of the saints, the Eucharist opens us to other Churches. In this celebration we are in communion with the universal Church, the Church which is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic — and made up of sinners.

It is in the Eucharist that we find nourishment for our vocation to unity. The fact that we cannot receive communion together is a real source of suffering! What is missing in order for us to receive together what is Christ's most precious gift to the Church? This Sacrament is sacrament of unity, it unites us. I believe that the Holy Spirit does not erect barriers, we do. And the world is longing for generosity, longing for a love which is given freely.

**TM** *Regarding your relationship with Israel, you write: 'It is our responsibility to find today the way to be in communion while respecting our differences. There is need for repentance .... The presence of Sr Jakoba*



***in Israel, as soon as 1957, is fundamental for our community.<sup>1</sup> Can you develop this?***

**MdV**

Sister Jakoba has an amazing story. In the train going from Switzerland to Holland, she witnessed the burning of the synagogues, then she was widowed. She left for Indonesia, where she was a prisoner in a Japanese camp for four years. After the war, some friends of our community went to work in Israel, and asked us to follow them. Sr Jakoba felt that God was calling her to go to Israel. At first she lived in Nazareth among Jews. She soon had a lot of friends in Israel and some Sisters were able to join her. And so our presence there began and remains.

It is clear that we have to repent for all that the Church has done against Jews: it did not honour the first covenant with Israel, it wanted to take its place. We stand in solidarity with what was done by our ancestors, with all the words spoken and deeds done which were without love. However to repent is not to say that all that Israel is doing today is good. The Palestinian people is living in very difficult circumstances. We may have the impression that, because of fear and ignorance, the victim has become a torturer.

There are some Protestants who are so blind that they do not see what is happening in Israel. The Holy Spirit should enable us to see clearly and to have the courage to say what we think. It is important to ask the real questions, to say what is good and what is not. We should repent without feeling crushed by guilt.

**TM**

***In 1995, Pope John Paul II asked you to write the meditations for the Way of the Cross on Good Friday in Rome.<sup>2</sup> What would you say about this experience?***

**MdV**

It was really unbelievable! I was in Rome for the Synod on Religious life and Mgr Marini asked me if I was ready to do it. My presence at the Synod was already an

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<sup>1</sup> *Vers une gratuité féconde*, pp. 174, 179.

<sup>2</sup> Published as *Chemin de croix* (Ed. de Grandchamp, 1995).

extraordinary event, I had been sent by the World Reformed Alliance. I was an official representative of my Church. When Mgr Marini spoke to me about the project, I was moved and bowled over. I said to myself: 'They are taking us seriously'. It was a strange reaction, as if we needed to be taken seriously by them! And yet it was a very important step toward my Church. Before me, a woman had already written the meditations for the Way of the Cross, but the Patriarch of Constantinople was my immediate predecessor.

At the Synod I was seated just in front of the Holy Father and I must say that, after his request, I looked at him in a different way. As Protestants, we are often suspicious about Rome. While I am very open, I inherited this suspiciousness, the fear of being taken over by this powerful institution which is the Catholic Church. After the Pope's approach to me, I must recognise that something opened within me. I was invited to take part in the Way of the Cross on Good Friday and to receive the Cross from the Pope, but it is my duty to be in my community on Good Friday so I sent a Sister instead. After I accepted the Pope's invitation to write the Way of the Cross, a Protestant minister asked me: 'Why on earth did you accept this invitation?' I answered: 'How could I have refused a hand of friendship?' A hand was held out to my community and to my Church. When I saw the celebration on television I was very touched by it.

**TM** *According to you what is the main obstacle to Christian unity?*

**MdV** Has it to do with original sin? There is, within us, this tendency to take ourselves too seriously, this desire to become God. Let us remember the disciples and their question: 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' (Mat. 18:1) It is difficult for us to let go of our pretensions. We are always tempted to become self-centred. The challenge addressed to us is a challenge to come out of ourselves. I think that humility is the antidote. It is difficult for us to be humble, to welcome the other as

Christ. We must try to understand what is the driving force in other Christians, what is their desire, what is life-giving in their tradition. Too often, we do not listen to others because we want to impose on them what we have, what we know.

What is the mission of the Church? It is to give answer to God's word of love, to incarnate it and to show it to the world. 'See how they love one another' because they welcome and forgive one another. John Paul II knew how to ask for forgiveness. In the Czech Republic, he was able to say that what John Huss suffered was unfair. Here, there was a time when we did not talk about the St Bartholomew Day's Massacre (1572), we did not want to hurt anybody. It is important to remember; but the wound must not be used as a reason to remain divided. We have to move on because the world cries out for and longs to know God's love.

**TM**

***What would you like to say to Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants?***

**MdV**

Who am I to say something? We are all tempted to be stuck in what we possess, to think that we are better than others. The point is not to regain the well-being, the glory or the influence we had in the past, but to open ourselves to God's love, to God's intention for us, for the world, and the whole creation which has been entrusted to us. We are called to bear witness to the hope which is in us. How can we do that in a credible way? By living it! We must leave the Spirit free to work within us, he must be the driving force of our witness.

There is nothing more beautiful for a Catholic and a Protestant to discover that they can sing and pray together. They do not need to define themselves in opposition to the other, they can be a gift for one another, at an ecclesial and personal level.

We have to be careful not to take for ourselves what we have received from the Lord's generosity. Like my grandfather who because of his election in Christ saw

himself as Israel among the nations, a Protestant among Catholics.

**TM** *Did you meet this grandfather?*

**MdV** Yes I did. When his farm burnt down, he bluntly said: ‘Catholics started the fire’. It was like a sickness. Particularly at the end of his life, he needed Catholics in order to explain everything which went wrong in his life. The reality was that as we had nothing left, our Catholic neighbours accommodated us.

**TM** *It is reassuring to have an explanation for all that is wrong.*

**MdV** There are people who cannot see anything good in others. The young woman who prayed with me, to whose prayer I answered ‘Amen’, wrote me a letter when I was a postulant in Algeria: ‘I really regret my role as an instrument in your meeting with the Lord because now you are with Catholics’ — she considered the Sisters of Grandchamp to be Catholic. I answered: ‘Who do you think you are? I am grateful for your role in my journey, but you have only been an instrument, it is the Spirit who did his work’.

**TM** *Could you speak about your presence in Algeria? How do you see the dialogue with Islam?*

**MdV** When I went to Algeria for the first time, I never entered a mosque. My main concern was with the poor who surrounded us. I had a lot to discover. We were in contact with popular Islam. Later when I was the prioress of Grandchamp, I visited Algeria regularly and thanks to the presence of our Sisters, to our relationship with the monks from Tibhirine, our friendship circle has grown considerably. After my first visit to Algeria, I went to Lebanon, while I did not meet a lot of Muslims, I studied with a Dutch Professor at the American university who helped me to discover the Muslim tradition. After Lebanon, I studied the origins of Palestinian monasticism in Jerusalem. There I met with a Muslim man whose father was an imam. This man was a holy man, always to

be seen at prayer at the entrance of the El Aksa Mosque, wrapped in God.

In Switzerland, following the results of the last referendum on the minarets (in 2009, a majority voted against their presence), we have to say that the population is afraid. I had an uncle who was afraid of the communists, then when there was no longer any reason to be afraid of them, he took fright of the Muslims. It is so comforting to believe that we know who and where the devil is. I tried to explain to him that I had a positive experience of Muslim people, he did not want to listen.

One day, a Muslim friend brought us a small piece of wood on which is engraved the name of God in Arabic: the Merciful. I kept it in my office, then it was hung in our chapel. Some time later we welcomed a group of Christians from Syria and we visited the chapel. They were horrified by the presence of this gift which was for them a pagan object, they said to me: 'It's Muslim, it should not be there!' However when our Muslim friends from Algeria visited us, and were present at our time of prayer, they would sit just below where the name of God hangs in the chapel.

I think that the merciful God, this reality which is beyond everything we can imagine, calls us to open ourselves and to engage in dialogue.

**TM**

***As Christians what do we have to say to Islam?***

**MdV**

We are called to bear witness to our love, called to welcome the stranger. I think that we have too many negative thoughts about Islam. It is possible to go to God together, each one according to his or her tradition, with mutual respect. Our mission is less to say something than to be a witness to Christ who makes us brothers and sisters. It seems to me that the time of the great campaigns for their conversion is over. I am aware that what I have just said must sound a heresy to many evangelicals.

For me Christ really is the way, the truth and the life. He gave me life and established me in a real, tender and

trustful relationship with the Father. This is a mystery which is beyond my understanding. I strive to walk in peace and I feel very close to all those who walk on the same path. I would like to share it with my relatives who do not know Christ anymore.

**TM** *In your book, you write ‘I am at the evening of my life’.<sup>1</sup> What is death for you?*

**MdV** For me death is real. I do not know when it will happen. I have still many things to do, many things to tidy up in my life, but I do not know. Many times I was confronted with death: during the war, there were the bombings, then in recent years I had cancer. I believe that I am journeying toward the face to face. What was a thirst, a desire, will become a reality, what was partial will be complete.

When I became a committed Christian, once while I was walking on the snow, I asked myself: ‘if I could fall asleep here, I would be in heaven and I would take part in the great choir of praise?’ I wrote a poem, ‘Being on the top of a dune, from afar I see some lights, I know that there is one for me, where people are waiting for me, I am needed there. It is so good to be alive, a human being, capable of love, reaching out to others.’

At the moment I am still well. I had a long life, every day I thank the Lord for the new day which begins. I pray a lot with the Name of Jesus, this name will be in me on the last day. I am convinced that it will be beautiful. I know that all shall be well but I do not know how I will cross the threshold.

Ultimately, I do not know and yet I trust. Trust, this is the first and the last word.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vers une gratuité féconde*, p. 14.

## ECCLESIAL THOUGHT AND LIFE TRAJECTORIES

### PART 2. OLIVIER CLÉMENT AND PAUL EVDOKIMOV: *DEUX PASSEURS*

**Stefanie Hugh-Donovan\***

*Olivier Clément, French Orthodox lay theologian, historian and author, gained recognition as one of the significant pioneers of the renewal of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century. The Russian Diaspora brought Eastern Orthodoxy into a fresh encounter with the West, enabling Clément, a young atheist, to discover Christ. He was baptised into the Russian Orthodox Church in Paris in 1951. The ecclesiology, theology and ecumenical thought of Paul Evdokimov was a major influence in leading Clément to this decision, and resulted in a lifelong friendship and fruitful theological and literary collaboration. Part 1 of this study, on Clément and Thomas Merton, appeared in One in Christ, vol. 45 no.1.*

**Olivier Clément (1921-2009)<sup>1</sup> and Paul Evdokimov (1900-70)**

Born in a ‘dechristianised’<sup>2</sup> area of southern France, Olivier Clément experienced no familial or ecclesial encounter with Christ in his early

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Clément published some thirty books and numerous articles especially in the theological journal *Contacts*, with which he had editorial involvement from 1959. He has written introductions and forewords for books written by many other Orthodox authors, among which, Paul Evdokimov’s *Les âges de la vie spirituelle* (Paris: DDB, 1964), translated by Sr Gertrude SP as *The Struggle with God*, (Paulist Press, 1966) and by M. Plekon, *Ages of the Spiritual Life*, (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998); *The Sacrament of Love* (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001); *L’Art de l’icône: théologie de la beauté* (DDB, 1970); *Orthodoxie* (DDB, 1979), trans. J Hummerstone, *Orthodoxy* (New City Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The aim of ‘dechristianisation’ was the eradication of Catholic religious practice and Catholicism itself; see Frank Tallett, ‘Dechristianizing France: The Year II and the Revolution Experience’, *Religion, Society and Politics in*

years. As a young man he struggled with the philosophies of contemporary nihilism that characterised an atheism that was 'no longer the privilege of an enlightened minority'<sup>1</sup> but a norm that had permeated all classes of society. Almost at the point of suicide,<sup>2</sup> he believed the presence of Christ drew him to Christianity. He was twenty-seven years old when this metanoic conversion dynamically changed his thought and life-trajectory. His Christian formation developed under the guidance and friendship of Paul Evdokimov and other theologians of the Russian Diaspora, émigrés of the Bolshevik Revolution who had settled in Paris around the time of Clément's birth, and founded the Orthodox Theological Institute of Saint Sergius in 1924, historical events regarded by Evdokimov, and later by Clément as providential.<sup>3</sup> In the tragedy of the Russian Revolution they saw the resurrection that follows the cross: an opportunity for Orthodoxy to come out of isolation and stand together with the Western Churches.<sup>4</sup> After baptism at the age of thirty into the Russian Orthodox Church Clément continued to live and work in the West, where for many years he taught at the Saint Sergius' Institute and the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Paris. Clément's profound understanding of both the East and the West enabled him to become a *passeur*, a term he chose affectionately for two men he considered to be his 'masters and friends': Vladimir Lossky<sup>5</sup> and Paul Evdokimov.<sup>6</sup> In

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*France since 1789*, eds. Frank Tallett & Nicholas Atkin (Hambledon Press, 1991), 1-28. See B. Plonger, 'La déchristianisation, a-t-elle une histoire?', *Science religieuses*, 16 (1987), 205-20.

<sup>1</sup> Evdokimov, *The Struggle with God*, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Massignon underwent a similar experience of near suicide and 'Presence' which resulted in his conversion to Christianity. See Ian Latham, 'The Conversion of Louis Massignon in Mesopotamia in 1908', *Aram*, 20, (2008), 249-251.

<sup>3</sup> A view shared by Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, Orthodox theologian and ecumenist and close friend of Fr Sergius Bulgakov, Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clément. Concerning the encounter of Christians of East and West see Olivier Clément's Préface in Olga Lossky's *Vers le jour sans déclin: Une vie d'Élisabeth Behr-Sigel (1907-2005)*, (Cerf, 2007), 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Plekon, *Living Icons* (Notre Dame, 2002), 105.

<sup>5</sup> See Nicolas Lossky, 'Orthodoxy and the Western European Reformation tradition: a memoir', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 10/2-3 (2010): 90-97.

<sup>6</sup> See O. Clément, *Orient-Occident: Deux Passeurs* (Labor et Fides, 1985).



this ecumenical context, Jean Claude Noyer describes Clément as a ‘stroller between two shores, a man of dialogue and unity’.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand he sought to establish unity among Christians of Eastern and Western cultures and traditions, engaging particularly with contemporary patriarchs and leaders of the Churches of East and West, on the other, he presented a powerful Christian message to a contemporary society, and a compelling answer to atheistic nihilism which has been the significant contemporary context for the Orthodox Church in Russia and in its diaspora.

Clément’s book *Orient-Occident: Deux Passeurs* was written as an act of homage and gratitude to Vladimir Lossky and Paul Evdokimov. Both were born in Russia and as forced émigrés<sup>2</sup> became lay theologians in France; Evdokimov departed with the defeat of the White Army and Lossky left Russia during the expulsion of intellectuals, writers and artists by Lenin in 1922. Nicolas Berdiaev, Léon Chestov<sup>3</sup> and Sergius Bulgakov, great intellectual Russian philosophers and theologians, all born between 1870–1880, and also expelled by Lenin, settled in France but with the hope of returning to Russia, continued to write in Russian for Russians, whereas Lossky and Evdokimov, arriving in their twenties, engaged fully with the French milieu, its literature, art, thought, Christian and humanist traditions, continued their studies and wrote in French, a fact which enabled Clément’s rapprochement with them. These two men, key influences in Clément’s life at that time, were Russian and European, but anti-Soviet. Clément believes Orthodoxy gave them the inner freedom to explore everything essential to enable them to become witnesses to their faith where God had led them.

Evdokimov’s concerns included faith and culture, the spiritual life, liturgy, eschatology, freedom and authority and, like Clément, he was deeply aware of the struggle for faith in contemporary society in a

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<sup>1</sup> See his introduction to his book of interviews with Clément, *Mémoires d’espérance* (DDB, Paris, 2003), 12.

<sup>2</sup> See also N. Lossky, ‘La Présence orthodoxe dans la “diaspora”’, *Irénikon*, tome LXV (1992): 352-362.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Chestov, 1844-1936, born in Kiev, eldest son of a Jewish family, married an Orthodox Christian and worked in Italy under the pseudonym, Lev Shestov. He returned to Russia and met many philosophers and writers, among whom were Bulgakov and Berdiaev, before settling in Paris in 1921 where he lectured at the Sorbonne.

time of totalitarian ideologies and contemporary atheism. Evdokimov's dialectical position challenged the meaning of past and contemporary events. In his essay on sanctity, he argues that struggle, not resignation lies at the heart of the spiritual life; a characteristic of Clément's own life narrative.<sup>1</sup> He soon belonged to a creative group of Russian Orthodox thinkers who are considered outstanding: Berdiaev, Bulgakov, Gillet, Afanasiev<sup>2</sup>. With them, Evdokimov believed that by sharing and living its tradition in the West, the renewal of Orthodoxy could bring new life to all the Churches, while the Eastern Churches would benefit from a new recognition of the diversity and unity that this renewal embodied, bringing them out of a long isolation resulting from historical events and nationalism.<sup>3</sup> His reference to the Fathers was not simply to quote them but to 'incarnate their spirit in our time and for our future', enriching it from the perspective of Russian religious philosophy of the early twentieth century, its 'prophetic intuitions, its Pentecostal understanding of the modern world, and its vital eschatology.'<sup>4</sup> Both Clément and Evdokimov are scholars and poets, and the 'liturgical, patristic and iconographic richness' of Evdokimov's theology<sup>5</sup> resonated deeply and authentically with Clément, who characterizes Evdokimov as 'a "witness to beauty", a perceptive interpreter of the liturgy's poetry, of the icons' shimmering light and colour, a riveting narrator of the Church's teaching'.<sup>6</sup>

Evdokimov's theology is both intellectual and a celebration of joyful ecclesial praise. He saw himself as a Russian in exile who had become a witness for the universal church: he remained rooted in the patristic

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<sup>1</sup> Plekon notes that Clément judged *Les âges de la vie spirituelle* to be Evdokimov's masterpiece. See Plekon, *Living Icons* (Univ. of Notre Dame, 2004), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Afanasiev (1893-1966) was the only Orthodox theologian cited in the preconciliar *acta* of Vatican II. His theological focus was the rediscovery of the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the early Church. His major work *The Church and the Holy Spirit* portrays the early Church's charismatic character. See H-J Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy*, (Et New York, 1986), xix-xx.

<sup>3</sup> See Kallistos Ware, 'Catholicity and Nationalism: A Recent Debate at Athens', *Eastern Churches Review*, 10/1-2 (1978), 10-16.

<sup>4</sup> Clément, Preface to Evdokimov's *Orthodoxie* (DDB 1979), trans. J. Hummerstone (New City Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Plekon, *Living Icons*, 104.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 105.

and Byzantine Russian tradition, but provided a universal service to the Church from the perspective of an ecumenical renewal. Interpreting Orthodoxy within a contemporary context, Paul Evdokimov was a theologian both of the church and the world. The Church, he writes, ‘*ecclesia*, translated from the Hebrew *qahad*, emphasizes the organic unity of the people of God ... from the beginning the Church was a communal church and its unity was a “Christophany”, a revelation, a visible manifestation of Christ.’<sup>1</sup> According to the early Fathers, ‘Birds fly, fishes swim and men pray’: Evdokimov is remembered as a man whose faith was as natural to him as breathing. He had been formed by dramatic early experiences and the faith of his mother. Born in St Petersburg, the most European city of Russia, into an aristocratic family, he was caught up in the traumas that followed the revolution of 1905. His father, a colonel in the Army, was assassinated. Paul Evdokimov, aged seven, and his twelve year old brother travelled alone to central Russia to rejoin their mother. The glimpse of the face of his dead father, who he knew to be a man of duty, goodness and sacrifice, remained with the child into manhood.

Evdokimov, much influenced by the writings of Dostoevsky on the sombre and sometimes tragic outcomes of human freewill, unsurprisingly perhaps after this childhood experience and those he endured through death-inflicting cavalry charges as an eighteen year old conscript, chose to ponder freewill in his first philosophy book, *Dostoevsky and the problems of evil*.<sup>2</sup> Clément judges that psychoanalysis does not reduce mystery, but rather shows that through our destiny, mystery attracts us to Him. It would seem it introduced Evdokimov to the great theological themes of which he often spoke during the last years of his life, years which Clément perceives to have been his most fruitful: that of the sacrificial love of the Father, and ‘the smile on the face’ of the Father which we would have all eternity to contemplate.<sup>3</sup> Clément recalls that in his later years Evdokimov radiated an interior freedom, serenity and optimism;

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<sup>1</sup> Evdokimov, ‘Christ and the Church’, *Tradition Alive*, ed. Michael Plekon (Bowman and Littlefield, 2003), 177.

<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov, *Dostoïevski et le problème du mal* (Paris: DDB, 1961) cited by Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction* (Continuum, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 106. See also, ‘Paul Evdokimov and Eschatology’ in Aidan Nichols, *Light from the East* (Sheed and Ward, 1995), 194-204.

he observed that ‘after having announced the death of God, it seemed the world entered into the silence of the great Sabbath’,<sup>1</sup> of silence and hope, Clément notes, ‘in which the thought of Moltmann was for Evdokimov a sign’.<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov believed the roots of the student riots in Europe and America and Third World revolutions had spiritual origins, a view which Clément shared in his commentaries on the student uprisings in Paris. Evdokimov came to understand that in its roots the Russian Revolution was a spiritual phenomenon that could only be overcome by a spiritual renewal.<sup>3</sup>

### **Atheism**

The atheist considers the spiritual life to be ‘a useless object hampering him, fit only to be stored in the attic of history’.<sup>4</sup> Evdokimov judges the atheism that claims autonomy for the individual in its denial of all dependency is typical of the West, while the militant atheism of the Communist Soviets is more consistent and radical: ‘it is centred on only one historic negation: Christ is not risen.’ Evdokimov cites St Isaac the Syrian who lived in the seventh century: he composed a synthesis of patristic thought and wrote a phenomenology of sin judging the ‘unique’ sin was ‘to be insensible to the resurrection’; prophetic words perhaps concerning Soviet atheism?<sup>5</sup> According to Evdokimov this lies at the very heart of atheism and is the source from which arises the Freudian complex of universal guilt: the death of the Father, and the inclination of a being towards death, *Todestrieb* and Heidegger’s formula, *Sein zum Tode*.<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche, who identified himself as ‘crucified’ in his last moments, and was recognised as a friend by Russian religious philosophers, put this question: ‘Where is God? I am going to tell you. We have killed him.’ To have no concept of sin and of its opposite, holiness, is a functional disorder, a form of spiritual madness. Pilate’s question remains to be answered by us all: ‘What is truth?’ For the believer,

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<sup>1</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 123, cites Evdokimov, *L’amour fou de Dieu et le mystère de son silence* (Éd. de Seuil, 1973), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Clément, *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See also *Civilizational Dialogue and World Order*, eds. Michalis S. Michael & Fabio Petito (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>5</sup> Evdokimov, *The Struggle with God*, 65.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

'nothing is comparable to the truth of the Gospel offered and lived in the Eucharist.'<sup>1</sup> God calls Christian thinkers to creatively interpret the precious heritage of the past into a harmony that speaks to contemporary humanity, which has lost the rhythm of a past organic life to urbanised modernity.

Evdokimov reflects on Psalm 13: 1, 'The fool is free to say in his heart: There is no God', but the meaning of negation changes according to the 'depth of suffering in the one who denies, because "*Perfect atheism* (perfect here means lived even to suffering) is at the top of the ladder, on the second last step before perfect faith", so Dostoevsky affirms in Confession of Stavrogin, in *The Possessed*'.<sup>2</sup> This atheism is intensely different from rejection caused by the indifference of the lukewarm, so distasteful to Christ. Atheism and faith 'can meet together above senseless talk in the silent combat of the angel with Jacob, and of grace with despair'.<sup>3</sup> An atheism that deeply experiences suffering 'knows its own paradoxical cross'; the experience of Clément and Bulgakov, I believe, but not of Evdokimov. Atheists too can criticise materialism but attain a grandeur in their concern for human dignity and rights. According to Jules Lagneau there exists a purifying atheism: 'That salt which hinders belief in God from corrupting itself',<sup>4</sup> and in this way the atheist becomes a true brother of the Christian, acting as a safeguard cooperating with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Evdokimov judges, 'that is why the Christ of the "Legend" of Dostoevsky is silent, and kisses the face of the Great Inquisitor contracted with suffering'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Landmarks on the road**

The young Evdokimov received a military education in accordance with the aristocratic tradition of his family, but spent time with his mother on retreat in monasteries during the holidays; he was thus formed by two disciplines: soldier and monk. In 1918 he studied theology in Kiev, but was soon mobilised into the White Army, surviving the death and tumult of cavalry attacks, a time of which he rarely spoke. Arriving in Paris in 1923 Evdokimov enrolled at the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Sorbonne, and the Institute of Saint Sergius where Fr Sergius Bulgakov<sup>1</sup> and Nicolas Berdiaev were decisive influences, which Evdokimov notes in *Quelques jalons sur un chemin de vie*,<sup>2</sup> and confirmed for him the prophetic mission of Orthodoxy in the West and the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world. Clément recounts that as priest and professor Bulgakov inspired in Evdokimov ‘the “Orthodox instinct”; the need to dive into the thought of the Fathers to live the liturgy; “to consume the Eucharistic fire”; discover the icon.’<sup>3</sup> Berdiaev however appeared to ‘unveil’ deep intuitions: ‘the weakness of God before the tragic freedom of man’, ‘the antinomy of the abyss and the cross’, ‘a renewed understanding of the Trinitarian mystery’, ‘an apophatic anthropology of man as *microcosm* and *microtheus*’.<sup>4</sup>

Evdokimov recalls the eschatological character of Berdiaev’s theology, and that the face of Berdiaev was unforgettable, bestowing dignity on the one on whom he looked. Clément judges Evdokimov’s position to be closer to Berdiaev’s, but that his writing and thought was more ecclesial, in the manner of Bulgakov; and herein, for Clément, lies Evdokimov’s genius: an ability to synthesize and in so doing to go beyond his masters.<sup>5</sup> Evdokimov commenced writing around the time of their deaths, Bulgakov (1944) and Berdiaev (1948). Choosing not to enter into the criticism levelled by some of his contemporaries, among whom was Vladimir Lossky, at the previous generation of Russian philosophers, he has attempted to reply in the spirit of the Fathers to the ‘Fathers of modern thought’, such as Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and to speak creatively to the very heart of contemporary cultural crisis, from the perspective of transfiguration

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<sup>1</sup> See Aidan Nichols, *Wisdom from Above: A Primer in the Theology of Fr Serge Bulgakov* (Gracewing, 2005); Nichols, *Light from the East*, 1. Bulgakov was considered by many to be the most creative and important theologian of the renewal, and brought the Church’s tradition into dialogue with modernity: see Michael Plekon, ‘The Russian religious revival and its theological legacy’, 204. See also Rowan Williams study, *Sergii Bulgakov*, (T & T Clark, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Evdokimov, ‘Quelques jalons sur un chemin de vie’, *Le buisson ardent* (Lethielleux, 1981), 15. This collection includes most of Evdokimov’s articles; see also *Orient-Occident*, 109, 192.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Quelques jalons’, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 109-10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 110.

in the Holy Spirit and an active eschatology.<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Matzneff exclaimed in a television discussion, that a book such as Evdokimov's *Les âges de la vie spirituelle*, can turn the destiny of a young person around as much as a meeting with Nietzsche. As noted above, Clément considered this book to be Evdokimov's masterpiece; it would seem to be a work for him, where 'heart speaks to heart'. Evdokimov sought to recover for people caught in contemporary modern materialistic society thoughts that embraced the value of silence, prayer and contemplation. He describes the spiritual route of ascesis, experienced by Clément and described in his own spiritual autobiography, *L'autre soleil*, by dividing *Les âges de la vie spirituelle* into three stages—Encounter with God; Obstacle and Struggle; Charisms of the Spiritual Life—interpreting the sayings and writings of the Desert Fathers and the early founders of monasticism in a synthesis with astonishing insights into the characters created by Dostoevsky. 'If Freud and Jung professed their admiration for the psychological insight of Dostoevsky, it was because he had been nourished on the works of the great spiritual writers.'<sup>2</sup>

While studying at the Sorbonne Evdokimov worked at night in the Citroen factory, cleaned rail wagons and served in restaurants, as many did during this inter-war period. Evdokimov remained a lay theologian, firmly believing in 'the universal priesthood of the laity'<sup>3</sup> and the value of their service. He married Natacha in 1927 and they had a daughter Nina and son Michel in 1928 and 1930. They were joined by Evdokimov's mother and lived at Menton; sadly in 1936 Natacha was diagnosed with cancer. In 1940 Italian troops occupied Menton, Evdokimov again became a refugee and after a brief sojourn at Prades,<sup>4</sup> they passed the remainder of the war at Valence. Clément recounts that during this time, while Evdokimov cared for his ailing wife, the children and their home, he prepared a philosophical thesis which viewed Dostoevsky through the prism of Russian religious philosophy, and understood him as announcer of a Christianity renewed by the experience of atheism, who as a 'pneumatophore',

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov, *The Struggle with God*, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Merton's birthplace, 1915. See part 1 of this study.

carrier of the spirit,<sup>1</sup> explores all the dissociations of the contemporary person to flash the loving and silent light of Christ in these 'underground passages'.<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov wrestled with the question posed by the apocalyptic events of the twentieth century: if the world is a theophany (as he knew it to be since childhood and from the sophiology of Bulgakov) what explanation is there for evil throughout history? His response lies in the kenosis of God that preserves the free-will and choice of humankind. In this work Clément believes Evdokimov identified the driving force of his own destiny: that of Aloïcha Karamazov sent into the world by his staretz to witness to a *monachisme intériorisé*,<sup>3</sup> that did not negate life but transfigured it, that did not reject woman, but found a meeting place there beyond all moralist notions, in 'the sacrament of love',<sup>4</sup> a phrase taken from St John Chrysostom, and used in the title of Evdokimov's next book, *Le Mariage, sacrament de l'amour* (1944).

His mother died in 1942, Germans occupied the 'free zone', and in 1945 his wife died of cancer. Evdokimov worked in the Resistance and with protestant friends in CIMADE,<sup>5</sup> an organisation which helped young displaced refugees from Europe and the Third World. Resistance for him was non-violent and had the aim of saving lives. Clément sees Evdokimov's true calling was as an exile himself, living out the text of Leviticus 19: 33-34, that calls us to care for the stranger and commands that 'you will love him as yourself, because you were strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt.' In a certain sense we are all 'displaced persons', refugees, and exiles from paradise: *homo viator*. The poor have been given a 'privilege': to show the face of Christ and the figure of the Poor one, who had nowhere to lay his head, walking through our world; He has given to refugees a special destiny, the astonishing grace to trace the image of God coming on earth.<sup>6</sup>

Caring for refugees, displaced people and students after the Second World War, increased Evdokimov's conviction that 'the broken

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<sup>1</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 201.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 111. Clément's analysis of the importance of Evdokimov's thesis, later published as *Dostoïevski et la problême du mal*.

<sup>5</sup> Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès des Evacués.

<sup>6</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 112.



condition of the world and society demanded a “social ecclesiology”. He called for a unified Christian witness to an “ecumenical epiclesis”,<sup>1</sup> together calling down the Holy Spirit. Evdokimov followed the teaching of Bulgakov,<sup>2</sup> by living the principles of social ecclesiology. He and his close collaborator Maria Skobstova,<sup>3</sup> who died in a concentration camp and was recently canonised by the Orthodox Church, worked with the poor and persecuted: their lives were ‘celebrations of the liturgy *after* the liturgy, the service of God in the service of the neighbour outside the church building.’<sup>4</sup> Mother Maria, Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clément were all active in the resistance during the Nazi occupation of France.

### **Ecclesial ‘knowledge’ and monasticism**

In notes for a joint paper in 1970, which was not completed before Evdokimov’s death, Clément and Evdokimov discussed the possibility of an Orthodox call to the Church for an ecumenical council. They jointly proclaim<sup>5</sup> the Church is *the Church of the Trinity*; in its deepest ecclesial existence it is a real participation in the Trinitarian existence, source of a love at the same time ontological and personal. The Church is the *Church of Christ in the Holy Spirit* and identifies herself in the Eucharist; one and holy as a Eucharistic community. At the

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<sup>1</sup> John A Jillions, ‘Orthodox Christianity in the West’, *Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, eds. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 287.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Michael Plekon’s paper, ‘Living Tradition—Social Theory working with theology: the case of Fr Sergius Bulgakov’, Institute for Ecumenical Studies, Ukrainian Catholic University, Second Conference: *Radical orthodoxy: a Christian answer to Post-Modern Culture*. Also Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology* (Continuum, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Maria Skobstova (1891-1945), took monastic vows and rented a house in Paris, her ‘convent’, where she sheltered refugees and helped Jews during the German occupation. Her spiritual director was Fr Sergius Bulgakov. She was sent to Ravensbruck and died in 1945, when she took the place of a Jewish woman. She was canonised in 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Plekon, “The Sacrament of the Brother/Sister”: The Lives and Thought of Mother Maria Skobstova and Paul Evdokimov’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* (49/3, 2005): 313-334. See also Christopher P. Klofft, ‘Gender and the Process of Moral Development in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov’, *Theological Studies* (66/1, March 2005): 69-89.

<sup>5</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 201.

celebration of the Eucharist the laity as the universal priesthood prays with the ordained priest at the level of imploration, while the relation of the priest to Christ can be seen in the theology of the icon: the priest is not identical with Christ, he is his *typos*, his icon. The Church is the *Church of the Holy Spirit in Christ*.

Evdokimov describes the progression of martyrdom and monasticism during the early Christian era; once the Church was recognised by Emperor Constantine the witness of Christian martyrdom was no longer necessary, but the witness of the monk became profoundly necessary in a Church which had allowed its identity to be defined by history, the State and society. Evdokimov and Clément were deeply interested in the great Russian authors; Dostoyevsky's thoughts express this liaison of Christianity with Power: 'It is not the Church that ought to be turned into a State, as from a lower to a higher form, but, on the contrary, the State ought to end by being worthy to become only the Church and nothing else'.<sup>1</sup> There is a need for 'the universal priesthood of the laity' to be open in the modern world to 'the universal vocation of "interiorised monasticism"'.<sup>2</sup> They recognised the staretz as a prophetic image for our times, achievable as *monachisme intériorisé*, not merely 'an interior life for a layman,' but carrying the notion of a 'lay-monk' who penetrates to the 'ontological roots, the mystical essence, of the monastic life on an ecumenical and transconfessional level'.<sup>3</sup> They see the role of the monk in the world is to be a visionary witness, that can be the vocation of all believers, 'that allows the Spirit to illuminate life and make it fruitful'.<sup>4</sup> Christ came in order that all could be drawn in him towards the Father and could become '*porteurs de l'Esprit*', '*pneumatophores*'.<sup>5</sup> Freed of all totalitarian temptation, reinvented for the man of the 'technopolis', in an asceticism of healing and integration, the monastic vocation today is, more than ever before,

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, 'Bread in the Wilderness', 177-8, cites Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, book II, chapter 5, trans. David Magarshack, Penguin Classics, vol. 1, 69.

<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov, *Les âges*, 113.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 118. The direct quotes are cited by Thomas Merton and taken from an article by Léon Zander, 'Le monachisme-réalité et idéal-dans l'oeuvre de Dostoïevski', in *Le Millénaire du Mont Athos* (Chevetogne, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> Clément, *Orient-Occident*, 201.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 200.

vitaly essential; the prayer of the reunified heart and intellect, columns of prayer which support and bring peace to the universe, lifting fallen humankind that has forfeited its rights, witnessing directly to the meaning of all being. The Church must not be a separated society, cut off from the world, but bring to life the dialectic of unity and diversity, as the source of light and life for all life.<sup>1</sup> ‘Since its advent, monasticism has been an integral part of the Church, because it expresses a spiritual norm that is *universal*, a normative value for *every* believer.’<sup>2</sup> Monks ‘take seriously the call to the “one thing needful” of which the Gospel speaks .... In his Rules,<sup>3</sup> St Basil compares the monks to the “violent ones” of the Gospel, who “lay hold of the Kingdom,” and thereby give expression to the maximalism of the Christian life.’<sup>4</sup>

### **Ecclesial Art**

Clément found poetry and beauty in Orthodox liturgy and art. He characterises Evdokimov as ‘a witness to beauty, a perceptive interpreter of the liturgy’s poetry, choreography and music, of the icon’s shimmering light and colour.’ The ‘liturgical, patristic and iconographic richness of Evdokimov’s theology’<sup>5</sup> was always faithful to church tradition. In 1995 Clément, as editor of *Contacts*, the French theological journal, published a special edition commemorating ‘*Paul Evdokimov, Témoin de la beauté de Dieu: Vingt-cinq ans après*’ (no. 171, 195).

The veneration of holy images or icons was formulated as a dogma of faith by the seventh Ecumenical Council; the Orthodox church, its architecture, frescoes and mosaics represent in space what the spoken liturgy represents in time: the reflection and the anticipation of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The icon par excellence is Christ himself. For the Orthodox Church the first and fundamental icon is the face of Christ: Christ is

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love: The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., *Sermo de renunciation saeculi*, PG 31:632.

<sup>4</sup> Evdokimov, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Plekon, *Living Icons*, 164.

<sup>6</sup> See Clément, *L’Eglise orthodoxe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 98.

not only the Word of God but his image. The mysterious movement of love and unity of the Trinity is symbolised in Roublev's great icon showing the hospitality of Abraham receiving three angels.<sup>1</sup> According to the seventh Council, the one who honours the image also honours the one who is represented by it. In an eschatological perspective the icon suggests the true face of man or woman, an eternal face, a secret face that God contemplates and which it is the vocation of man to realise. The whole church constitutes an icon of the kingdom, with Christ Pantocrator in the centre of the cupola. Evdokimov writes in *L'Art de l'Icone*,<sup>2</sup> 'earthly culture is the icon of the heavenly Kingdom'. Clément believed that all people and cultures are rooted, either knowingly or unknowingly, in the fundamentals of Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tradition and Ecumenism**

Evdokimov and Clément's ecclesiology stems from their acceptance of the self-identification of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the Early Christian Church, that in spite of errors which have occurred within its ecclesial ministry and portrayal of identity during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, it yet holds on to the true apostolic faith. The two theologians became part of the re-articulation of the patristic renewal and *ressourcement*<sup>4</sup> which enriched Christian Churches during the twentieth century and fostered a real and new spirit of ecumenism between Christian confessions. Paul Evdokimov was committed to ecumenism, working especially at first with Reformed Christians,<sup>5</sup> particularly in CIMADE; but after being invited to attend Vatican II as an observer, his contacts and collaboration with the Catholic Church increased, especially with the contemplative orders.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *L'Art de l'Icone: theologie de la beauté*, (DDB, 1970); *The Art of the Icon: a Theology of Beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Oakwood Publications, 1990). 'Beauty will save the world': words from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, trans. Constance Garnett (Bantam, 1981), 370.

<sup>3</sup> Clément, *L'Autre Soleil*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Clément, *Sources: les mystiques chrétiens des origines* (Stock, 1982; reprinted DDB, 2008). Trans. Theodore Berkeley, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary* (New City, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> John A Jillions, 'Orthodox Christianity in the West' *Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, 287.

Evdokimov sees that modern man needs rest, ‘the discipline of regular periods of calm and silence’, rather than severe fasts and mortifications; the fast could then be the renunciation of the superfluous, his sharing with the poor and his smiling equilibrium. How right it is, he notes, that when the world is bowed down under the weight of care, ‘St Thérèse speaks of spiritual childhood, traces her “little way”, and invites all to sit down at “the table of sinners”’.<sup>1</sup>

Clément judges there is no longer a place today for a Church that dominates. The Christian presence must essentially be a witness to the life that is lived in Christ; it is the face of the person that radiates this truth and light. Clément judges John Paul II had such a presence.<sup>2</sup> The Church must remind people that Christian tradition formed our sense of personhood; the person in communion is the fundamental Christian theme, a theme of hope. Clément has devoted his Christian life and corpus of work to a ‘renewed understanding of the human person in the light of our relationship to God’<sup>3</sup> and a life-long quest not only to further and encourage dialogue between Eastern and Western Christians but with all cultures and peoples. Like Clément’s contemporary and compatriot ‘Simone Weil, Evdokimov appeals to a saintliness that is both kenotic and creative, humble but capable of radiating life into all the complexity of history.’<sup>4</sup> And Evdokimov tells us, the art of humility does not consist of becoming this or that, but of *being*, in the exact measure proposed by God. In Clément’s view, Evdokimov expresses the fruitful creativeness of the Russian diaspora in its meeting with both Christian and atheist West. Clément concludes his Preface to *Orthodoxie* with this assessment: Evdokimov ‘appeals to the ecumenism of the contemplatives, of people of prayer, of all who desire not accommodation between churches, whether diplomatic or whatever people are willing to settle for, but “the centre where the lines converge”’. Today this appeal still shows us the way.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evdokimov, *The Struggle with God*, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Clément, *Petite boussole spirituelle pour notre temps*, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Michael C. Jordan, ‘Preface’, *Logos*, vol. 6,4, Fall, 2003, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Clément, ‘Preface’, to Evdokimov’s *Orthodoxie* 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECULAR CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THINKING

**Herman Teule\***

*Against the background of some of the resolutions adopted at the Special Synod for the Middle East (October 2010), this article describes the complicated situation of Christians in Iraq. The Christian minority (about 1 or 2 percent of the total population) is not only divided along traditional ecclesiastical lines, but also politically and because of different views on their ethnic identity. This raises the question of a secular Christian leadership, defending some form of ethnic-Christian identity as a way for survival in Iraq, as opposed to the opinion of some bishops for whom the exclusive emphasis on ethnicity would marginalize Christians and prevent them from playing a role in the wider society.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Christianity in Iraq is threatened in its very existence. Since the overthrow of the Saddam regime in 2003, the number of Christians has dwindled from between 800,000 and 1,000,000 to probably no more than 300,000 (on a total population of about 30 million). The reasons for this situation are not difficult to find: the many attacks on Christian persons and institutions and the incapacity of the authorities to give adequate protection to the Christian minorities have triggered a large scale emigration to other countries in the Middle East, mostly Jordan, Syria and to a lesser extent Turkey. Since

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<sup>1</sup> This is the reworked text of a lecture given at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt. A more elaborate description and analysis of Christian politics in Iraq, with full bibliographical references, is forthcoming in the German periodical *Der Islam* (Fall, 2011).

a few months Lebanon, has replaced Syria, itself plagued by political unrest and insecurity. The only desire of these Christian refugees is to apply for political asylum in a 'Christian country', be it Europe, the United States, Canada or Australia and to turn their backs for good on the Muslim Arabic world of the Middle East. Only a minority, mostly those who have no family abroad or the financial means to travel to Europe, await an improvement of the situation in order to return to their country.

Despite this situation, many Christian leaders, both ecclesiastical and secular, try to prevent the day that Iraq will be totally devoid of its Christian population. They still see a future for Christianity in the country, because after all Christianity is not just a small and insignificant minority, but rather constitutes the autochthonous population that in the course of history has substantially contributed to creating a multi-religious and multi-ethnic Iraq.

The intention of this article is to describe how Christian lay politicians and religious leaders formulate different answers to the problem of the future of Iraqi Christianity. It will be seen that the differences in answer do not necessarily coincide with the borderline between religious and secular leadership.

### **Christian participation in Iraqi political life**

Active Christian participation in political life started in 1991, when after the first Gulf War Kurdistan received a de facto form of autonomy with the approval of the international community and was no longer under the control of the regime of Saddam Hussein. At the ensuing elections, as a recompense for their participation in the struggle against Saddam in the eighties, Christians were offered five seats in the new parliament out of a total of 105 seats. The 100 non-Christian seats were equally divided between the rival political factions of, on the one hand Barzani and his Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), and of Talabani and his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) on the other. This put Christians in a comfortable position and allowed them to exercise a certain influence which exceeded what one could expect for a group which after all was then a small minority of probably no more than 50,000 persons. Four of the five seats went to the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), in Syriac the Zow`a Dimoqrataya Atoraya (often known as the Zow`a). The ideology of this party is that the label Assyrian should not be limited to one

specific ecclesiastical denomination, the Assyrian Church of the East (in the past the members of this Church were called 'Nestorian'), but should become the common name of the five Christian communities in Iraq which use Syriac as their liturgical or literary language.<sup>1</sup> In this way a common ethnic name would put an end to the traditional ecclesiastical divisions. In addition, the 'Assyrian' label would be understood as a reference to the glorious past of the pre-Christian Assyrian civilization of which present-day Assyrians would be the Christian continuation.

As one can imagine, initial reactions on the part of some religious leaders were not very enthusiastic.

The one remaining seat went to the Union of the so-called 'Christians of Kurdistan', at the time a small and unknown party, which was in favour of a strong alliance with the KDP of Barzani. This party was led by an extremely capable politician, Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo, who however kept a low profile during the next few years.

In the following period, several Christians held ministerial posts in various Kurdish governments and were capable of taking a number of important initiatives basically in the cultural field (such as recognition of Christian holidays, and of Syriac as language of instruction in a number of schools). A major event was the acceptance in December 1996 by the Kurdish Parliament—not without fierce debate—of 7 August as an official national holiday, commemorating the massacres in Semel. Semel is the name of the village where after the independence of Iraq in 1933 a terrible massacre of Assyrian and Chaldean Christians took place, an event which triggered the departure of the Assyrian Patriarch from Iraq. According to some present-day Assyrians, this constitutes an implicit recognition by

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<sup>1</sup> Namely: the Assyrian Church of the East—the Old Church of the East (a separation in 1968 from the Assyrian Church of the East, officially for liturgical, but de facto also for tribal reasons)—the Syriac Orthodox Church—and two Eastern Catholic churches: the Chaldean Church, which split from the Assyrian Church of the East; and the Syriac Catholic Church, which split from the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Next to these five Churches which use (or pay lip service to) the Syriac language during their liturgies, there are some other Christian communities in Iraq: the Armenian-Orthodox and Armenian-Catholic Churches, a Latin community, different traditional protestant and some successful modern evangelical fundamentalist communities.



Kurdish leaders of the legitimacy of a form of Assyrian nationalism in Kurdish territory. Some other Christian Feasts were also recognized as official holidays along with the first of April (*Kha b-Nissan* in modern Syriac), the Assyrian New Year.

Basically, this Kurdish experiment was positive, and one could say that for the first time in history Christians became a sort of established or recognized entity within a Kurdish society.

Twelve years later, with the overthrow of Saddam in 2003, the whole situation changed dramatically. Kurdistan was reunited with central Iraq and doing politics at a federal level now became an option.

A bit surprisingly, this was the step taken by Zow`a, ADM, the party which so far had cooperated so closely with the Kurds, which moved its headquarters to Baghdad. Its president, Yonadem Kanna, a former minister in the Kurdish Regional Government, became a member of the Iraqi Parliament (List al-Rafidayn) in 2005 and was reelected in 2010.

In 2003, at the initiative of Zow`a, an important Christian meeting was organized in Baghdad to discuss a common name which would allow Christians to speak with one voice during discussions concerning the position of the Christian minority in the new Constitution. After long debates between members of the political parties and representatives of the churches, a sort of compromise was reached: the new name would be Chaldo-Assyrian: 'Chaldo' as a concession to the Chaldean Church, the most important Christian community in the country, and 'Assyrian' as a recognition of what was achieved by the politicians of Zow`a. Anticipating the protests of the Syriac-Orthodox,<sup>1</sup> the language of Christians would be called 'Syriac' and not 'Assyrian'. It is this name of *Kildo-Ashuri*, approved by all Christian communities, that one can find back in article 53d of the draft constitution which mentions the cultural and political rights of a sole Chaldo-Assyrian minority. However, a few weeks later, the

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<sup>1</sup> For the Syriac Orthodox community, which defends a specific miaphysite Christological position (in Christ there is only one divine-human nature), the label Assyrian sounds too Nestorian'. In the past, the 'Nestorian' Church, defending a strict dyophysite Christological doctrine, and the Syriac Orthodox Church often accused each other of heresy because of their divergent Christological views. Moreover, from an ethnic point of view, the Syriac Orthodox consider themselves as Aramaic rather than Assyrian. The normal designation for their Syriac language in Arabic is Suryânî, not Ashûrî.

Chaldeans retracted their approval of the new name. The result is that in the final text of the constitution, adopted in October 2005, the Chaldeans and the Assyrians are mentioned as two separate minorities along with other minorities such as the Turkmen. Opposition to the name Chaldo-Assyrian is not only religious, out of fear of the dissolution of a certain ecclesiastical identity, but also ethnic: some Chaldeans, even among the bishops, claiming a distinct ethnic identity for the Chaldeans, who in their eyes are also ethnically not Assyrians.

In the light of these discussions, it was to be expected that at the national parliamentary elections of December 2005 Christian politicians would present different lists. Only one Christian party (the List 'al-Rafidayn') obtained a seat in the new parliament of 275 members. Significantly, a few Christians were elected as members of the so-called Kurdish alliance, a conglomerate of several Kurdish parties.

This already makes clear that the step taken by Zow`a did not spell the end of Christian-Kurdish cooperation. In fact, Zow`a has not disappeared from the north and continues to play a role in regional Kurdish politics. It is still represented in the Kurdish parliament, though there is a certain tension between the Barzani clan and the ADM leadership. However, since 2005, the real protagonist of Kurdish-Christian cooperation is Mr Sarkis Aghajan (former leader of the 'Christians of Kurdistan') who, with the approval of KRG Prime Minister Necirvan Barzānī, succeeded in setting up an important housing project, which allowed for the return of thousands of Assyrian, Chaldean and Armenian Christians to Kurdistan, escaping the violence of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. This programme was extremely successful. About 120 Christian villages were built or reconstructed in the region of Dohuk; several more in the neighbourhood of Zakho or in the Irbil area. At the same time, Aghajan financed the construction of churches, schools, orphanages as well as residences for bishops of all denominations, including a new patriarchal residence for the Chaldeans in 'Ankawa and one for the Assyrian Patriarch, who is invited to return to the Middle East. The idea is clearly to suggest that the future of Iraqi Christianity is in Kurdistan and no longer in central Iraq. The result was that since 2006 the number of Christians in the KRG region has probably more than doubled and presently consists of between 100,000 and 120,000

persons. Ankawa near Irbil, an exclusively Christian town of over 20,000 persons became the de facto capital of Christians in Kurdistan.

Sarkis Aghajan was also aware of the importance of unity among the different Christian factions. For this reason, he took the initiative to create a so-called *mawtba 'amaya*, a Popular Council, an umbrella organization giving shelter to a more or less representative range of different political parties and cultural associations both from Iraq and in the diaspora. Initially, the response was positive, the first meeting in March 2007 being attended by no less than 1200 persons. One of the first sessions was devoted, of course, to the problem of a common Christian name. Realizing that this issue would bring more disunity than unity, the steering committee proposed to make a combination of the three traditional names of the Syriac Christians in Iraq, and the Council was baptized the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian (CSA) Popular Council.

Unfortunately, the initiative failed to bring unity since the important ADM-Zow'a refused to participate. The reasons were twofold: firstly, the in their eyes too close relationship between the Council and the Kurdish authorities; and secondly, divergent views about creating an autonomous Christian homeland in the Plain of Niniveh, an idea launched by different political parties after the promulgation of the Iraqi Constitution (see next section, below).

As a matter of fact, the Council gradually developed into a political party itself instead of an umbrella organization and participated as such in the federal legislative elections of 2009, with the result that a number of parties or societies mostly with an outspoken Chaldean profile such as the Chaldean National Council decided to go their own way and left the Council. Again an attempt at unity that failed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that several Christian leaders are suspicious about this 'Kurdish experiment'. They point to the long history of tensions between Kurds and Christians. The fact that since the last elections Mr Aghajan has disappeared from the public scene seems to put them in the right. One can however not overlook the fact that thousands of Christians from the south found safety and shelter in the Kurdish region. In this sense, the experiment should be given a chance. One of the remaining problems is that on account of the general economic situation, many of the Christian refugees do not find work, and for this reason also try to emigrate.

## A Christian Homeland

As mentioned above, one of the reasons for the ADM to part company with the CSA Popular Council is its different interpretation of the idea of autonomy for the Christian minority, one of the main objectives of the Council's programme. What is this idea of autonomy about?

Article 121 of the Federal Constitution mentions the 'administrative (*idāriyya*), political, cultural and educational rights of the various nationalities (*qawmiyyāt*) such as the Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians and all other constituents'. According to the ADM's interpretation, this article allows for a form of self-administration (*idāra dhātiyya*) as a first step to a possibly more complete self-governance or autonomy at a later stage. Its implementation in the Plain of Nineveh, north-east of Mosul—homeland (in Syriac designated as the Atrā, the Land) of an important minority of Christians of different denominations, especially the Chaldeans, the Syrian Orthodox and the Syrian Catholics—is one of its core objectives. Various Christian organizations, both in the diaspora as well as in Iraq itself, go a step further and want full autonomy or self-governance (*hukm dhātī*). Sarkis Aghajan is one of the most outspoken representatives of this idea. For him, autonomy implies the creation of a parliament and a council of ministers with legislative or executive powers; the autonomous region should have full authority, not only in personal matters, but also over territorial issues, which in the case of self-administration would remain under the authority of the competent federal Authority. Autonomy also implies the right to a fair share of the national budget, not just in the form of subsidies, as well as to its own police and security forces. In personal matters, the Christians living outside the Autonomous Region would also fall under its authority. The CSA Popular Council finds support for Aghajan's ideas in Section V of the Constitution, where articles 112-7 offer the possibility of forming new regions with the right to exercise executive, legislative and judicial powers.

The idea of autonomy is strongly opposed by some Chaldean bishops. In their eyes, such a homeland would bring the risk of ghettoisation and isolation, reducing Christianity to an ethnic community, whereas in their eyes the vocation of Christians should be to play a role in the life of the nation. In this respect, they point to the long history of cooperation and living together with Arabic Muslims as well as to the development of a Christian Arabic theology in the

ninth century, by which Christian theologians attuned the Christian message to the needs of new times and tried to make it relevant or at least understandable to the non-Christian world. The Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk, Mgr Louis Sako, who was recently (2010) awarded the international Pax Christi Peace Prize,<sup>1</sup> has published a small book containing the texts and reports of a number of historical Christian-Muslim dialogues in order to show that the history of Christian-Muslim interaction is not only characterized by antagonism or enmity.<sup>2</sup>

The Chaldean Bishops find some support for their vision in the text of the *Lineamenta*, the preparatory document for the Special Assembly for the Middle East held in October 2010 and which, in the footsteps of a famous book by the French-Lebanese Melkite priest, Jean Corbon,<sup>3</sup> emphasized the recognition by Christians of the importance of the Arabic culture and the Arabic language as well as the development of Christian Arabic theology as a strategy for survival in the world of the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

### Concluding remarks

One of the tragic characteristics of the Christians in Iraq is their extreme dividedness. Their divisions exist along different lines.

Firstly, ecclesiastical: there are different churches which do not always cooperate together and which do not necessarily have the same vision about their future in Iraq. In the case of the Eastern Catholic churches, the emphasis on their individual specific liturgical and theological tradition is sometimes an impediment to local catholicity, for example in the field of theological education. The importance of

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.paxchristi.net/international/eng/news.php?id=614&wat=show>>

<sup>2</sup> L. Sako, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue. Theological Approaches in the Arabic Language in the 'Abbāsīd Period*, Kirkuk, 2009 (in Arabic).

<sup>3</sup> J. Corbon, *L'Eglise des arabes*, Paris, 1977 (reprinted, with a new preface by G. Hachem, Paris, 2007.)

<sup>4</sup> This emphasis is already much less outspoken in the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Unfortunately, proposition 21 of the final document, entitled 'The Arabic Language', only highlights the importance of the Christian Arabic heritage because of its contribution to 'the theological and spiritual thought of the universal Church'. The three texts can conveniently be consulted through the official website of the Vatican. On the Synod, see especially A. O'Mahony & J. Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the contemporary Middle East. Studies for the Synod for the Middle East* (Sawbridgeworth: Melisende, 2010).

cooperation and unity, in the first place among the Catholic communities, but also with the Orthodox Churches, is strongly emphasized in the final propositions of the Synod as well as in the preparatory documents. Proposition 28 mentions mistrust as an obstacle to unity.

Secondly, the tension between ethnic and ecclesiastical identity, as explained in the previous paragraphs. However, it would be too simple to say that ethnic identity is only the concern of lay politicians. The Syriac Orthodox and the Assyrian Church of the East both defend a strong ethnic profile ('Aramaic' versus 'Assyrian'). Despite the emphasis on a Christian Arabic profile defended by some Chaldean bishops, feelings of ethnic identity are also found within the Chaldean community and approved of by some Chaldean bishops. Unfortunately, the issue of the relation between ethnic and ecclesiastical identity was not thoroughly discussed during the Synod.

Thirdly, how to define this ethnic identity? Is it Assyrian or Syriac or Chaldean? Is it possible to speak of one common ethnic identity of the different communities, apart from the question which appellation (Assyrian, Chaldo-Assyrian, Syriac) is the most appropriate or practical one? Or are there different ethnic identities coinciding with the traditional ecclesiastical communities?

Fourthly, the emergence of secular Christian political parties, the existence or at least the autonomy of which is not always respected by the ecclesiastical leaders. As a matter of fact, it seems that apart from Lebanon (*mutatis mutandis*), the existence of regular secular Christian parties makes the situation of the Christians in Iraq rather unique. In other countries of the Middle East, Christian politicians seem to prefer to cooperate with larger, non-Christian parties.

## HISTORY AND HOPE: TOWARDS A COMMON DATE OF EASTER

**Demetrios Charbak\***

*This article pleads for the removal of the scandal of Christians celebrating the Resurrection of their one Lord on different dates. It is an evangelical requirement, especially in the Middle East.*

### Introduction

As this article discusses the date of Easter we should not overlook the fact that determining the date of Pascha has been an issue for the Church since its earliest days. Celebrating Pascha on two different dates is becoming an increasingly bitter and agonizing issue for all Christians, who are now appealing to their churches for, at least, a common annual celebration of Easter, even if these churches are unable to overcome their doctrinal differences, and issues of religious jurisdiction.

Considering that one calendar for the Christian feasts cannot be a rock on which the unity of the churches is to be built, the date of the Pascha has to be fixed by consensus; since no one has yet established a definitive, scientific date for Jesus's Crucifixion, Resurrection or even Nativity. That is why the date of Pascha can only be considered as an approximate date, as a remembrance day representing the real event.

In spite of Jesus's commandment, that they may be one, this difference in Easter celebration between Christians serves as a constant reminder of their schism—a bitter and distressing situation.

For two years now, Christians worldwide have happily celebrated one Easter, rejoicing in the One Resurrection, after many years of separate celebrations. This has been due to the fact that the Gregorian and Julian Calendar dates coincide every now and then, by chance. How glad we would be if these two calendars always coincided in this

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\* Fr Charbak is Antiochean Greek Orthodox Bishop of Safita, Syria. This paper was prepared for the East-West meeting in Minster Abbey, 2011.

way, allowing us all to grieve and rejoice together; for he whom we mourn and exult over is One!

It is the norm that every human body has but one head; anything else is abnormal. The same applies to Christians. Can we not see that this schism between us Christians cannot go on! It is wholly unnatural!

Is it really acceptable that some Christians are celebrating the Resurrection while others are still in Passion Week? Is it acceptable that Easter should come twice in our interfaith families? Yet this is what happens; and it is unacceptable. What has become of our will to witness to Christ, our one Head, that we permit this intolerable situation to continue? We should not rest until the scandal of our two calendars is overcome. Are we true Christians? We must face up to the fact that we are all to some degree lacking in humility, deficient in the spirit of sacrifice and mutual sympathy, in faith and in love.

### **The Jewish Passover**

First, it should be noted that our observance of the Resurrection is related to the Jewish Passover, historically as well as theologically, but that how we calculate the date of Easter does not depend on how present-day Jewry fixes the date of Passover.

The Old Testament specifies that Passover is to be observed on the 14th day of the first month (alternately known as Aviv or Nisan; see Deuteronomy 16: 1-7). Being a fixed day in the old Hebrew calendar, it could fall on any day of the week.

According to the Law of Moses, the people of Israel have to offer God the Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb on the eve of the Passover, along with the various observances of the feast.

But what was so significant about the 14th day of Nisan (April) in the lunar month?

First: On the 14th day the moon is full, giving light at night for travelers, enabling them to come and attend the feast. Also, on 16 Nisan the people would bring their first cereal crop as an offering to the Lord. Once the ears of grain are full, it's time for Passover!

### **The Date of Easter in the Early Church**

The early Church in the East continued to celebrate Easter on 15 Nisan, according to the Jewish Calendar, which meant that the Resurrection could fall on any day of the week. Others, believing that the Resurrection happened on a Sunday, celebrated it on the first



Sunday after the 17 April, of the lunar month. Yet other Christians continued to observe the Jewish Feast on 14 April of the lunar month, taking into consideration the traditions of the newly Christianized Jews.

### **The Council of Nicaea**

The situation was getting messier as there was no way for Christians to plan a united observance of the most holy feast. Finally, the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, 325 AD, convened and addressed the problem with a unanimous statement on how to determine the date of Easter, and simply set down the following rule: *Pascha must be celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon on or after the Vernal Equinox, 21st of March.*

Note that full moon is always on the 14th day of the lunar month (the lunar month begins with the new moon). This is called the ecclesiastical full moon; the astronomical full moon may fall a day or so after the ecclesiastical full moon.

Since the best scientific observatories were located in Alexandria at that time, the Council assigned to the bishop of Alexandria the responsibility for sending out a letter to the whole Church, year by year, announcing in advance when the Resurrection would be celebrated that year.

Did that rule set a fixed day for celebrating Easter? Not at all. As a result of adopting the formula of the Nicaea council, based on the Julian Calendar, the dates of Easter started to vary between 22 March and 25 April, giving a variation of 35 days.

### **The two Calendars**

In brief, the Julian calendar, named after Julius Caesar (45BC), has a regular year of 365 days divided into 12 months with a leap day added to February every four years. The Julian year is, therefore, on average  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days long.

The *raison d'être* for most calendars is to fix the number of days between the recurrent seasonal cycles, for example from one Spring equinox to the next, so that the calendar could be used to work out times for planting and other seasonal activities. The cycle of seasons, or tropical year, had been known since ancient times to be about  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days long.

But in fact the tropical (or solar) year is actually about 11 minutes shorter than  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days. These extra 11 minutes per year in the Julian

calendar caused it to gain about three days every four centuries, when compared to the observed equinox times and the seasons. Consequently, Easter had to fluctuate and vary in time.

Later, this problem was dealt with by dropping some calendar days, in order to realign the calendar and the equinox times. Subsequently, the Gregorian calendar drops three leap days, every four centuries.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar, otherwise known as the Western, or Christian calendar, which became the internationally accepted civil calendar.

### **The Orthodox world after 1583**

Pope Gregory contacted all the Orthodox patriarchs, urging them to follow Rome and adopt the reformed calendar. In 1583 the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem met together and rejected Pope Gregory's request.

Two further assemblies took place, in 1587 and 1593, the first attended by the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, who were joined in 1593 by the patriarch of Antioch, who had been travelling in Russia at the time of the earlier assembly. Again, the patriarchs resolved not to adopt the Gregorian calendar.

The difference between the two calendars was then 13 days. And the gap between the two worlds—Orthodox and Catholic—was widening. However, the Russian, Greek, Bulgarian and Yugoslav churches, albeit affiliated to the Orthodox Church, favoured the new calendar, which was becoming accepted in the Orthodox world for civil purposes, even though the date of Easter was still being determined according to the old calendar.

### **The Orthodox World today**

This partial adoption of the Gregorian calendar within the Orthodox world has resulted in a number of problems which can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, in the Orthodox world of today there are two groups, each celebrating Easter on different dates. This anomaly becomes especially obvious in America and western Europe, where one can find two Orthodox churches following different calendars. For example, while some Orthodoxies celebrate Christmas on 25 December, others in the same town may wait until 7 January. Moreover, this issue becomes especially poignant for a large number of interfaith families who celebrate Easter and Christmas twice, on two different days! Such a

disparity must call into question the unity of a given church, to say nothing of the negative impact on the faithful.

Secondly, those churches which follow the Gregorian calendar occasionally miss the Feast of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. The churches which celebrate Easter according to the Julian calendar commemorate the glorious and highly-praised apostles Peter and Paul on 29 June as per the Gregorian calendar, i.e. 13 days prior to its date according to the Julian calendar. When Easter falls after 3 May, the fast of the Apostles gets left out.

Thirdly, the partial adoption of the Gregorian calendar indicated above has led some Orthodox communities within the churches of Greece, Romania and Bulgaria to break away, establishing their own religious groups. Such groups, active today especially in Europe and America, consider adoption of the Gregorian calendar to be some kind of unnecessary rapprochement and an unjustified giving up of traditions.

It should be noted that recently such groups are growing in number and attracting many dissatisfied members of the Catholic, Protestant and Anglican Churches, because of their rigid adherence to the letter of the law to the extent that they adopt anti-papal attitudes, rejecting any dialogue with non-Orthodox churches, and focusing exclusively on getting Christians back to Orthodoxy.

In Greece, for example, the followers of this group are growing despite the many attempts at repression carried out by the Greek government at various times. They have established their own council and their bishops maintain contact with each other worldwide.

*How does the difference between the two calendars affect Easter?*

The difference between the two calendars is either one week or five weeks—it depends.

When the feast occurs in the same lunar month, either all Christians celebrate Easter together, or the Orthodox wait one week for the moon to become full.

On the other hand, if the feast falls on the month following the Spring (April) full moon, then the Orthodox celebration takes place at the first May full moon. The difference then is five weeks.

For example: If there is a full moon on Saturday, 22 March, then the next day (23 March) is Easter Sunday. However, following the Julian calendar, we should have to wait another 29 days, i.e. until the next

full moon. Consequently, 29 April becomes Easter Sunday, with a differential of five weeks. This was the case for Easter 2011.

Again, if the full moon following the vernal equinox falls on 8 April, and happens to be a Sunday, then Easter Sunday is the Sunday after (15 April). In this case, there is no difference between the two calendars and all Christians celebrate Easter together.

### *How can this dilemma be resolved?*

We can make the following observations:

- 1) Over a considerable period of time, many church organizations, national and international, have attempted to find a formula which would prove acceptable to all concerned parties. One suggestion was that all churches adopt one calendar, either the Julian or the Gregorian. Unfortunately, this has not worked.
- 2) Just because the question of unifying the calendars is particularly crucial here in the Middle East, more so than in the West, the Vatican permits its affiliated churches, each in their own country, to celebrate Easter with the Orthodox churches, following local agreements. Thus, Easter is now celebrated together in Jordan, Jerusalem and Egypt—but this is not the case in Syria and Lebanon.
- 3) Meanwhile, many unsuccessful attempts have been made, nationally and internationally, to reach an agreement about a common date.
- 4) In 1997, the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches organized a consultation in Aleppo, Syria and proposed a scientific updating of both calendars as the compromise most likely to find favour:

By celebrating this feast of feasts on different days, the churches give a divided witness to this fundamental aspect of the apostolic faith, compromising their credibility and effectiveness in bringing the Gospel to the world. ... Despite differences in the method of calculation, the principles of calculation in the churches of both East and West are based on the norms set forth at Nicea. ...

In the estimation of this consultation, the most likely way to succeed in achieving a common date for Easter in our own day would be

- (a) to maintain the Nicene norms (that Easter should fall on the Sunday following the first vernal full moon), and
- (b) to calculate the astronomical data (the vernal equinox and the full moon) by the most accurate possible scientific means,

(c) using as the basis for reckoning the meridian of Jerusalem, the place of Christ's death and resurrection.

## **Conclusion**

While the church in the West adopted the new Gregorian calendar, the church in the East continued to follow the Julian calendar, with its 13 day differential, which it is set to continue with until 2100. One can say that regrettably most people, especially in the East, know nothing (and possibly care less) of the method by which the day of Easter is determined. Such indifference may be put down to Eastern Christians' desire to achieve a common date for Easter Sunday. Unlike in the West, unity of the Easter date is increasingly becoming a critical issue for the Christians of the Middle East, for a number of reasons (demographic, existential, ethical, moral, mixed marriages ...). This demand for unification is becoming more and more pressing, so much so that all Christians—Catholic and Orthodox alike—see it as the principle first step towards the unification of the churches. The church authorities would then no longer appear in the same light, as barriers to unity.

'Since the Vatican agrees,' argue the Orthodox, 'why don't Catholics join with the Orthodox so that we can all celebrate Easter together?'

It should be noted that during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Syria in 2000, Patriarch Gregorios Laham, patriarch of the Roman Catholics in Syria, gave permission to celebrate Easter with the Orthodox, but subsequently the council of the Catholic Bishops did not agree and the action was suspended till further notice.

Finally, it must be stressed that finding a common date for Easter, and securing a single celebration for Christians the world over, and most especially in the Middle East, does not mean the end of the search for church unity. But in order to demonstrate our mutual love, as well as to witness to our Christianity, celebrating Easter together is still the great hope for which every eastern Christian prays.

## REPORTS & EVENTS

### THE REIMS STATEMENT: PRAYING WITH ONE VOICE

*The English Language Liturgical Consultation gathered together some twenty liturgical scholars in Reims in August 2011 to discuss possible future collaboration and sharing in the development of the Lectionary and common texts in the liturgy in the English speaking world. We reproduce here the fruit of their deliberations. For further information, see the Consultation's website: [www.englishtexts.org](http://www.englishtexts.org).*

The Reims Statement is the result of several years of reflection by the English Language Liturgical Consultation on the future of the work that has already produced the common texts shared in the liturgy of many of the English speaking Christian churches and the Revised Common Lectionary that has spread now into other languages.

Praying the same words together and sharing the same scriptures in the liturgy is a powerful expression of the unity that we have achieved over recent decades. Liturgical revision, however, has meant that churches have decided in different ways to depart from the common texts. With the new English translation of the Roman Missal (3<sup>rd</sup> edition emended) coming into force for so many Catholic Christians in Advent 2011, the divergence is ever more pronounced.

This move away from what we shared sets us a challenge for the future. The Reims Statement is our response at this time, looking to see how we can move forward, seeking to find new ways of discovering unity through common texts, and hoping that we can achieve appropriate convergence through sharing in the way the lectionary develops.

#### Prologue

Common work for our life in Christ is a response to Christ's prayer for unity<sup>1</sup>. We believe that what has been achieved in ecumenical common liturgical texts and lectionary is the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of this work point to the power of the Spirit working in and among Christians, providing abundantly more than we could have

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<sup>1</sup> See John 17.

asked or imagined,<sup>1</sup> to the glory of the One God. Our statement celebrates what has been accomplished thus far and looks toward the future with hope.

### 1. Liturgy and Ecumenism

The ecumenical and liturgical movements of the twentieth century, bringing together biblical and historical studies, fed a steady stream of ecumenical liturgical renewal. Today we enjoy the fruits of this harvest.<sup>2</sup> Notable among these are common liturgical texts and the Revised Common Lectionary. They are experienced in real and immediate ways in the life of the churches and in contexts of ecumenical worship. They enrich ecumenical relationships in a mutual evangelical spirit. We celebrate the sense of being at home in one another's churches that comes with praying the same texts and hearing the same scriptures in the Sunday liturgy.

#### *We believe*

- that these achievements give us a great hope, which is a gift of God for the life of the church
- that this work is essential and deserves the full support and nurture of the churches
- in the power of the Spirit, who strengthens and guides the future work on common texts and the lectionary

### 2. Common Texts<sup>3</sup>

For the first time in history, Christians in the English speaking world are using common liturgical texts. In the process of coming to agreed common texts, scholars from different Christian traditions agreed on principles for the translation from the earliest sources. This in itself has been a gift. Despite only having been in existence for a relatively

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 3:20-21

<sup>2</sup> See Walter Cardinal Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits – Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> See *Praying Together. Agreed Liturgical Texts prepared by ELLC 1988* (at [www.englishtexts.org](http://www.englishtexts.org) and [www.commontexts.org](http://www.commontexts.org)).

The ELLC Common Texts are: The Lord's Prayer; Kyrie Eleison; Gloria in Excelsis; The Nicene Creed; The Apostles' Creed; Sursum Corda; Sanctus and Benedictus; Agnus Dei; Gloria Patri; Te Deum Laudamus; Benedictus; Magnificat; and Nunc Dimittis.

short time, these texts have been adopted freely by an ever increasing number of churches.<sup>1</sup> We celebrate this. They are being experienced as a gift, a sign and a way to Christian unity in our diversity. As the churches continue to discover the riches of these shared texts, we believe further revision is inappropriate at the present time. We invite all who have not yet explored these texts, and those who have departed from their use, to join us in prayerful reflection on the value of common texts and careful consideration of the texts themselves. Prayed together, shared common texts become a part of the fabric of our being. They unite the hearts of Christians in giving glory to God as we undertake the mission of the Gospel.

***We encourage***

- ongoing creation of resources for ecumenical and liturgical formation through praying common texts
- furthering of scholarship which is faithful to tradition whilst seeking a language which is inclusive and just
- continuing ecumenical reflection on core symbolic actions and gestures, the ordo and shape of liturgy

**3. The Revised Common Lectionary<sup>2</sup>**

The Revised Common Lectionary has been widely adopted by churches in and beyond the English speaking world.<sup>3</sup> Its regular use has broadened and deepened our engagement with scripture in worship, Bible study, catechesis and personal devotion. We celebrate the possibilities offered by sharing the same scripture readings across the churches and the production of related materials in all forms to support the liturgical experience. The strengthening of ecumenical relations among clergy and lay people and the renewed appreciation for the rhythm of the church's year are among its blessings.

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<sup>1</sup> See list on ELLC website : [www.englishtexts.org/survey.html](http://www.englishtexts.org/survey.html)

<sup>2</sup> *The Revised Common Lectionary* was published simultaneously in 1992 in Canada, England, and the United States. The Revised Common Lectionary was developed from the Roman Catholic *Ordo Lectionum Missae* (1969). See [www.englishtexts.org](http://www.englishtexts.org) and [www.commontexts.org](http://www.commontexts.org)

<sup>3</sup> Churches in Scandinavia, Hispanic speaking areas, Korea, Japan, Netherlands, Venezuela, Polynesia, South Africa (including Afrikaans speaking churches), are among those who have adopted the RCL and many more are expressing interest.



***We commend***

- continuing promotion and awareness of the worldwide use of the Revised Common Lectionary
- all initiatives to complement the Revised Common Lectionary for worship and church life
- continuing attention to the concerns about lectionary developments raised by scholars and local users
- continuing attention to implications for the lectionary coming from scholarship
- continuing efforts toward the realization of a truly common lectionary<sup>1</sup>

***Participants***

Eoin de Bhaldraithe *RC, Ireland*  
 Ronald Dowling *Anglican, Australia*  
 Michael Driscoll *RC, USA*  
 Tom Elich *RC, Australia*  
 Martin Foster *RC, GB*  
 Mark Francis *RC, USA*  
 B. Gordon-Taylor *Anglican, GB*  
 Fred Graham *United, Canada*  
 Hugh Graham *Reformed, GB*  
 K. Griffiths *Anglican, South Africa*

David Holeton *Anglican/Old Catholic, Czech Republic*  
 Donald La Salle *RC, USA*  
 Gordon Lathrop *Lutheran, USA*  
 Kevin McGinnell *RC, GB*  
 Nathan Nettleton *Baptist, Australia*  
 William Petersen *Anglican, USA*  
 Gail Ramshaw *Lutheran, USA*  
 Eileen Scully *Anglican, Canada*  
 Geoffrey Wainright *Methodist, GB/USA*  
 K. Westerfield Tucker *Methodist, USA*  
 Thomas Whelan *RC, Ireland*

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church: Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops*, 2008. Final Proposition no. 16: 'The Lectionary—The revision of the Lectionary could be made in dialogue with those ecumenical partners who use the common Lectionary.'

## FORTY YEARS OF WALKING TOGETHER: ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE IN CANADA

**Bruce Myers\***

The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada turned forty years old in November. Many individuals who reach that milestone find it a felicitous occasion to look back and celebrate past accomplishments, as well as to look ahead and consider future directions. So, too, did the current members of ARC Canada.

Celebrations centred on an ecumenical service of Vespers held at Saint Joseph's Oratory in Montreal on November 13. Presiding at the liturgy together were the Right Reverend Barry Clarke, the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, and the Most Reverend Thomas Dowd, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal.

All of the elements of the bilingual liturgy were intended to highlight and celebrate the fruits of the four decades of dialogue between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in Canada, as well as internationally. Before each liturgical act, lectors read a brief preface drawn from *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, the 2006 document issued by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission.<sup>1</sup>

The liturgy began with a remembrance of baptism with aspersion, prior to which the assembly was reminded that Anglicans and Catholics 'regard our common baptism as the basic bond of unity between us, even as we recognize that the fullness of eucharistic communion to which baptism should lead us is impeded by disagreement concerning some of the elements of faith and practice which we acknowledge are necessary for full, visible communion.'<sup>2</sup>

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\* A member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada since 2009, Archdeacon Bruce Myers is the Anglican Church of Canada's newly appointed Coordinator for Ecumenical Relations

<sup>1</sup> The full text of the liturgy can be found in the summer 2011 issue (no. 182) of the journal *Ecumenism*. It may also be found online at <http://www.anglican.ca/faith/worship/resources/>. The liturgy can be adapted by local communities wishing to commemorate Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in their own context.

<sup>2</sup> *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 Years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 2007), 38.

The proclamation of the word focused on the story of two disciples meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). This biblical account gave the celebration its theme, 'Forty Years of Walking Together,' and a focus for its preacher, the Most Reverend François Lapierre, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saint Hyacinthe and ARC Canada's co-chair.

In his homily, Bishop Lapierre acknowledged that the past forty years of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue have not always been easy. 'Each church has made decisions that the other found difficult to understand,' he admitted. 'Begun in the enthusiasm after Vatican II, the dialogue is now experiencing more difficult moments.' Like the two disciples who met the risen Christ on the Emmaus road but did not recognize him, he said neither do our two churches always see Christ clearly. Nevertheless, said Bishop Lapierre, we continue to walk, talk, and pray together.

A common profession of faith was made using the Apostles' Creed, the creedal statement professed at baptism, a further acknowledgement that 'our full recognition of one another's baptism is itself the basis of the growing communion between us.'<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the singing of the Song of Mary and the censing of the altar, lectors recalled that, 'Catholics and Anglicans recognize the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate, observe her festivals and accord her honour in the communion of saints. We agree in recognizing Mary as a model of holiness, obedience, and faith for all Christians and for the Church.'<sup>2</sup>

There followed a litany of thanksgiving prefaced by a common expression of repentance and regret: 'We have not always been open to the leadings of the Spirit. We gather today knowing that still more could have been possible. We seek pardon from God, and from each other, for not reaching out more generously in love, not listening more attentively, not imagining more creatively, not trusting the Spirit's work in each other with greater confidence.'

Having acknowledged with regret what might have been, past and present ARC Canada members then shared in expressing thanksgiving for what Anglican-Roman Catholic relations have accomplished over the past forty years. The litany included thanks for the witness of

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<sup>1</sup> *GTUM* 11.

<sup>2</sup> *GTUM* 89.

pioneering dialogue members such as Jean-Marie Tillard and Eugene Fairweather, for inter-church families whose pastoral needs the dialogue has attempted to respond to, for the joint addressing of several social and moral issues, for shared theological faculties, and for the common lectionary and liturgical traditions the two churches share. The litany concluded with the Lord's Prayer being prayed in each one's own language.

The forty years of dialogue were compared in the liturgy to a 'decades-long exchange of gifts between our two traditions.' As an outward expression of this, a young person from each church exchanged symbolic gifts on behalf of their respective communions. The Anglicans' gift was a four-hundredth anniversary edition of the King James Bible, while the Catholic gift was a copy of the gospels from the illuminated Saint John's Bible. The choice of gifts called to mind the churches' common affirmation that 'within Tradition the Scriptures occupy a unique and normative place and belong to what has been given once for all.'<sup>1</sup>

The liturgy's dismissal was prefaced by *Growing Together in Unity and Mission's* exhortation to give living expression to the theological agreement the two churches have achieved: 'Genuine faith is more than assent: it is expressed in action. As Anglicans and Roman Catholics seek to overcome the remaining obstacles to full, visible unity, we recognize that the extent of our common faith compels us to live and witness together more fully here and now. Agreement in faith must go beyond mere affirmation.'<sup>2</sup>

The co-presiding bishops then led the assembly in a concluding reaffirmation of commitment in which those gathered promised, with God's help, to 'carry forward our commitment to the full, visible unity for which Christ prayed,' and 'to seek to deepen our relationship with one another in life and mission, and to further build on the communion we share.'

After recommitting to these things in prayer on Sunday, the members of ARC Canada met together the following day to discuss how they might be achieved. For this discussion on future directions for Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, they were joined by members of the Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic bishops' dialogue, and

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<sup>1</sup> GTUM 29.

<sup>2</sup> GTUM 96.

members of the Commission for Christian Unity of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Such a joint meeting was without precedent.

The gathering received an update on the work of the newly inaugurated third phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III). Bishop Linda Nicholls, a member of ARCIC and the ARC Canada bishops' dialogue, and Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, who staffs ARCIC as the Anglican Communion's Director of Unity, Faith, and Order, each offered reflections on ARCIC III's first meeting last May in Bose, Italy. Both women are former members of ARC Canada.

The pair reminded the gathering of ARCIC III's mandate to engage with the concept of the church as communion, local and universal, and the related question of how in communion the local and universal church comes to discern right ethical teaching.

They indicated that 'receptive ecumenism' had been adopted as ARCIC III's methodology. The approach invites parties in a dialogue to move beyond the question of, 'What do others first need to learn from us?' to instead ask, 'What do we need to learn and what can we learn, or receive with integrity, from others?'

The national ARC dialogues have in the past responded to—and contributed to—the work of the international commission, and it was suggested that this should continue to be the case with ARCIC III. It was noted that ARC Canada might be in a particularly unique position to support this current round of ARCIC, since the Canadian churches are already wrestling with some of the moral and ethical questions the international commission has been mandated to address.

More specifically, five potential areas were identified where the national ARC dialogue might support the international commission:

1. Undertaking a theological project on primacy;
2. Formulating a case study on ethical or moral discernment based on the Canadian context;
3. Encouraging the reception of the documents of ARCIC II;
4. Encouraging the reception of the recommendations found in *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*;
5. Undertaking a project aimed at demonstrating how the receptive ecumenism model might be adapted and lived out locally.

In this way ARC Canada could endeavour to both increase an awareness of ARCIC's past agreed statements, as well as create an interest in the international commission's current work.

As important as contributing to ARCIC III could be, members of the national ARC dialogue are also acutely aware of the limited degree to which their churches have received the practical recommendations to be found in *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*. Many around the table expressed a desire to work more intentionally to help our churches 'live and witness together more fully here and now.'

A recent Canadian example of such an initiative is the covenant entered into in 2011 by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina and the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle. Signed by both diocesan bishops, the covenant commits them and their dioceses to nineteen different engagements. The commitments include ensuring regular occasions of common prayer, issuing joint episcopal statements on matters of public pastoral concern, arranging joint baptismal preparation, seeking together reconciliation with aboriginal peoples, and working together in mission.<sup>2</sup>

As one bishop around the table observed, 'Until the fruit of *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* actually takes root in our communities, we remain in the realm of thought rather than practical expression. The dialogues' discussions need to be "brought down" to the local, community level.'

To this end it was agreed that the ARC Canada theological dialogue and the national bishops' dialogue should meet together again, perhaps regularly. In doing so it is hoped that theological reflection and pastoral practice might better inform one another, so that the two dialogues' work is not carried out in isolation.

Evangelism was identified as a possible area to begin such collaborative work between the two dialogues. How can Canadian Anglicans and Roman Catholics together engage fruitfully with the predominantly secular reality in which both churches now exist? How do we reflect on this theologically in a way that can inform our common pastoral response?

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<sup>1</sup> *GTUM* 96.

<sup>2</sup> The full text of the covenant can be found at:  
[http://archregina.sk.ca/sites/default/files/ecumanism/documents/Covenant\\_Letter\\_20110123.pdf](http://archregina.sk.ca/sites/default/files/ecumanism/documents/Covenant_Letter_20110123.pdf).

Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Canada recognize that there are still fruits to be harvested from the past forty years of dialogue, and that there still remain gifts to be exchanged between our two traditions. What November's anniversary celebrations and discussions have revealed is an ongoing interest, steadfast willingness, and firm recommitment by both churches to continue to engage in those efforts. The road to full, visible unity may have proven longer than first thought. Nevertheless, Canadian Anglicans and Roman Catholics remain committed to journeying down that road together.

## **CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCT**

### **Preamble**

*Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.*

*Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.*

*The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.*

### **A basis for Christian witness**

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).
2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.



3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).
4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).
5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).
6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).
7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

### **Principles**

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

1. **Acting in God's love.** Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).
2. **Imitating Jesus Christ.** In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).
3. **Christian virtues.** Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to

overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

4. **Acts of service and justice.** Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

5. **Discernment in ministries of healing.** As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

6. **Rejection of violence.** Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

7. **Freedom of religion and belief.** Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. **Mutual respect and solidarity.** Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

**9. Respect for all people.** Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

**10. Renouncing false witness.** Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

**11. Ensuring personal discernment.** Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

**12. Building interreligious relationships.** Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

### **Recommendations**

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation

to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and

other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. **encourage** Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. **pray** for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

### **Appendix: Background to the document**

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC- IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/WCC-IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994-1997), Interreligious Prayer (1997-1998) and African Religiosity (2000-2004). This document is a result of their work together.

2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians

too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and WCC-IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.

3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in May 2006, was entitled “Assessing the Reality” where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: “We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others’ rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith.”

4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in August 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.

5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-28, January, 2011 and finalized this document.

## CATHOLICS AND PENTECOSTALS: SIXTH ROUND OF CONVERSATIONS

**Press Release: Rome, 10-16 June 2011**

The International Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Some Classical Pentecostal leaders and Churches has inaugurated the Sixth phase of its conversations in Rome, June 10-16, 2011. The general theme for this quinquennium is *Charisms in the Church: Their Spiritual Significance, Discernment, and Pastoral Implications*.

The dialogue, begun in 1972, is not seeking to establish structural unity. Its goal is to promote mutual respect and understanding in matters of faith and practice. Genuine exchange and frank dialogue concerning the positions and practices of the respective traditions have informed and guided the conversations, which include daily joint prayer services.

Co-Chairs of the dialogue are the Most Reverend Michael Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh, NC, USA and Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Professor of Church History and Ecumenics, Fuller Theological Seminary, Assemblies of God, Pasadena, CA, USA. Bishop Burbidge declared: 'I am truly honored to have been appointed Co-Chair of the dialogue. Our work and conversations this week have led Catholics and Pentecostals to a deeper understanding and appreciation for some common ground we share regarding charisms of the Holy Spirit. As we continue the dialogue in future years, we are renewed in our commitment to discuss respectfully the challenges that face us as we seek and pray for unity as brothers and sisters in Christ.' Rev. Robeck affirmed: 'The International Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue has opened the way for many other conversations and dialogues involving Pentecostals. Ecumenism has moved from the level of fear and animosity to one of respect and openness among several Pentecostal groups. This round, focused upon various gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit, should go far in pointing out our areas of common ground in life and ministry.'

The topic of this first session was: 'Charisms in the Church: Our Common Ground'. A paper on the Catholic perspective was presented by Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi, Associate Director of the Centro Pro Unione and Professor at the Pontifical University St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome). A Pentecostal perspective was offered by Rev. Keith Warrington, Vice-Principal and Director of Doctoral Studies, Regents Theological College (UK). Other topics on the agenda for the Sixth phase are: Discernment (2012), Healing (2013) and Prophecy (2014). It is expected that the Final Report will be ready by 2015.

Participants appreciated the warm and open atmosphere and rejoiced in the significant amount of common ground that was identified despite the

differences between the two traditions. Both Catholics and Pentecostals recognize the abundance of gifts given freely by the Holy Spirit, and that the Church has a discerning role to play concerning their exercise. The teams examined the biblical foundations of the charisms and were also provided with a historical and theological overview of the subject. Issues such as the spontaneity or permanence of gifts, their ordinary or extraordinary character, and the roles of clergy and laity were addressed. Reference was also made to the actual situations in our respective Christian communities in different regions of the world. The Dialogue will begin its work next year studying the role of discernment in identifying and exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This year's session was hosted by the Catholic team. Participants worshiped together on Pentecost Sunday at the Holy Mass presided over by the Pope Benedict XVI at St. Peter's Basilica. Undoubtedly, as the Pope underlined during his homily, 'the Holy Spirit animates the Church. She does not derive from the human will, from reflection, from human's ability and from his capacity to organize, because if this were the case, she would have already been extinct for some time, just as every human thing passes. She is rather the Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit'. During the General Audience on June 15, 2011, the Pope acknowledged the presence of the Dialogue participants, saying 'I welcome the members of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue and I offer prayerful good wishes for the next phase of their work'.

Other delegates from the Classical Pentecostal churches included: Rev. Nino Gonzalez, Southeastern Spanish District Council of Assemblies of God (USA); Rev. S. David Moore, Executive Director of the John Perkins Center for Christian Community Transformation Patten University (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, USA); Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost and President of Ghana Pentecostal Council; Rev. Joseph Suico, General Secretary and Director of World Missions for the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines; Rev. Paul van der Laan, Verenigde Pinkster Evangeliegemeenten (The Netherlands); and Rev. David Cole, Open Bible Churches (Canada), who serves as Co-Secretary. Observers at this year's session were Dr. Daniel Ramirez (University of Michigan, USA) and Mrs. Karen Jorgenson Murphy (Assemblies of God, USA).

Other delegates from the Catholic team included: Dr. Ralph Del Colle (Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA); Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A. (Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, China); Rev. Fr. Marcial Maçaneiro, SCJ (Faculdade Dehoniana, Brazil) and Mgr. Juan Usma Gómez (PCPCU, Vatican City/ Colombia), who serves as Co-Secretary.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

*Anglicans et Luthériens en Europe: Enjeux théologiques d'un rapprochement ecclésial*, Franck Lemaître OP (Paris: Cerf, 2011, *Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia* 55), 356 pages.

This is an important and hopeful book. In his preface to it, Canon Jean Gibault sees it as pointing beyond the so-called 'ecumenical winter' towards a possible Spring. The aim of the author, who is Director of the Ecumenical Service of the French Catholic Bishops' Conference, is to draw the attention of the francophone world, and particularly of his own church, to the recent achievements of Anglicans and Lutherans in ecumenical rapprochement. He feels that Catholic theologians have given far too little attention to the developing Anglican-Lutheran relationship.

The title of the book suggests a rather narrower focus than is actually the case. Fr Lemaître is certainly concerned to explore thoroughly the three key Anglican-Lutheran accords in Europe—the Porvoo Common Statement, the Meissen Agreement and the Reuilly Common Statement—and their differences. He does so against the fullest possible background in Lutheran-Anglican relationships, giving very thorough treatment to the international dialogue since its beginning in 1970. He notes developments in the bilateral relationship in other parts of the world, particularly in to the United States and Canada where there are now full communion agreements between Anglicans and Lutherans, albeit on bases that differ in detail from the Porvoo Communion but which also deliver full interchangeability of ministry. The interface between the regional dialogues that led to the agreements in both continents and the global dialogue is well illustrated. Quite properly some attention is also given to questions of reception and follow-up within the context of the three different European relationships. Here, Lemaître points to some imbalances, many of which relate to sociological factors rather than purely theological ones. Thus, linguistic competence means that more German and Nordic pastors are able to share in English parish life and ministry than is the case in reverse.

Lemaître is quite right to see the developing Anglican-Lutheran relationship as significant for other ecumenical partners, particularly in terms of dealing with the thorny problem of the historic episcopate. He shows how, aided by the international dialogue and the *Baptism*,



*Eucharist, Ministry* study of the WCC (1982), it has been possible, at least in Northern Europe and North America, to reconcile the Anglican stress on the episcopal succession as a gift of God that they would wish to share, with the Lutheran stress on apostolicity as fundamentally a matter of loyalty to the apostolic faith rather than to any one form of ministry. Following Mary Tanner, he sees Porvoo as enshrining a balanced view of apostolicity, allowing both communions to modify but not abandon their previous emphases. The succession of bishops is seen as 'sign, but not guarantee' of apostolicity. It is given a real value in terms of unity across the ages and continents but without the 'unchurching' of those who previously lacked it which had characterised some earlier Anglican ecclesiology. Equally, those Swedish Lutherans who had in former ages sometimes said that they 'had the succession as though they had it not' are now able to give it a fuller value whilst still maintaining their Lutheran view that apostolic doctrine is alone indispensable. However, there remain problems in agreement on the subject with the German and French Lutherans, the former having an historic aversion to the memory of corrupt medieval prince-bishops. In both cases also, their close relationship with the Reformed with their historic reservation over episcopacy needs to be taken into account.

Lemaître envisages the possibility of the development of an 'evangelical Catholic' communion of Lutherans and Anglicans, perhaps also including the Old Catholics. He feels that such a communion might be a valuable bridge between the Catholic and Orthodox churches and the more Protestant communions. I think he is right in believing that that could be the case; in England, the Church of England has played a 'bridge church' role which has helped to facilitate a particularly wide chain of relationships, from radically independent free churches through to Catholics and Orthodox. I am less sanguine that his hopes for such a communion will be realised. Cardinal Kasper has pointed to the two different styles of Lutheranism in Europe with one, in Scandinavia and the Baltic states, being far more accommodating to the historic episcopate than the other in much of the rest of Europe. In America the 'Word Alone' movement, which feared that acceptance of the historic episcopate might impugn the purity of reliance on faith alone, held up the final agreement on Anglican-Lutheran communion. Many, but very far from all, Lutherans are ready to embrace the sign of the episcopal succession in

ways recommended for consideration both in the dialogue with Anglicans and in the recent (2007) LWF study on episcopacy.

I feel Lemaître's book would have benefited from a wider perspective on ecumenical developments in Europe since the setting up of the Leuenberg Fellowship (now the Conference of European Protestant Churches: CPCE) in 1973. Originally this established 'pulpit and altar' fellowship between most Lutherans and Reformed in Europe. British and European Methodists joined it in 1994. The Anglican churches were also invited to join. So far, they have held back whilst being willing to engage in theological and ecclesiological dialogue with the CPCE. As a result of the setting up of the CPCE, the three Anglican-Lutheran agreements and some Lutheran-Methodist pulpit and altar agreements in Scandinavia plus the more recent Anglican-Methodist Covenants in England and Ireland, there is now a complex of relationships between Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed and Methodists across Europe. The (Lutheran) Church of Norway, for example, is in communion through CPCE and other accords with Anglicans, Reformed and Methodists. Lemaître is anxious that Lutheran-Anglican unity should not be seen as an end in itself but as a key step towards even wider unity. This means that the widest possible context should be taken into account. There is much for the four communions mentioned, all of which confess the apostolic faith of the historic creeds, to give to and receive from each other in deeper unity. All have now conferred a *degree* of churchly recognition on each other but full communion in some cases and, even more significantly, mutually accountable synodality in all cases, are still lacking.

Despite the above reservation, I welcome this book warmly. It is well and clearly written, an invaluable guide to the international dialogue and the three European Anglican-Lutheran agreements.

David Carter, Methodist local preacher, Bristol

*Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: Ut Unum Sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity*, Adam A. J. DeVille (Chicago: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 280 pages.

This book aims to give an Orthodox response to the papal request expressed in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (*UUS*, 95) in which John Paul II asked for the help of Church leaders and theologians 'to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing

what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation'. The author argues that potential unity between the Catholic Church and the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches requires distinguishing the patriarchal role of the bishop of Rome from his papal office. For this purpose he proposes a new ecclesiastical reorganisation of the Catholic Church in which the Orthodox Churches would feel themselves welcome. He constructs his response in six chapters.

In the first brief chapter the author situates *UUS* in the historical context of the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. He then sketches an overview of its content and focuses on the aforementioned papal request. Finally, he gives the reasons for the lack of reaction from Orthodox circles.

In Chapter II, the author reviews the major Orthodox (oriental and eastern) literature on papal primacy particularly from the 1960s onward. (A large part of this chapter was previously published in *One in Christ* 42/1, 2008.) Here, he summarises the position of twenty-four Orthodox authors. Eminent ecclesiologists as well as lesser known names lead him to define six 'areas of consensus and agreement' (p.44). He underlines first that 'Orthodoxy endorses a certain primacy of Rome as an indubitable fact of history'; second, that 'several Orthodox theologians recognize not only the historic reality of Roman primacy but the present necessity of it, not least in view of the jurisdictional chaos of Orthodoxy'; and third, that '[t]he bishop of Rome, for most Orthodox theologians, would not be a toothless titular head of the Church but would have real responsibilities ...' (p.45). After these positive consensual assertions, the author points out three aspects of the current papal office that Orthodox reject: first, universal jurisdiction, for '[t]here is not, and cannot be, any supreme *juridical power* or *domination* by one bishop over the other bishops'(ibid.); second, the juridical and extra-sacramental way of exercising the papal office independently from a synodal office; and third, any paradigm of primacy different from 'the episcopal, metropolitanical and patriarchal office' (p.46).

In the third chapter the author proposes a way of renewing patriarchal structures within the Latin Church. As a starting point, he defends the ecclesial and ecumenical importance of the title 'Patriarch of the West', recently abrogated by the Vatican. Then he lists and summarises the position of eighteen Catholic thinkers who defend the

distinction between the papal and patriarchal offices (Joseph Ratzinger being the first among them). Given that Orthodox and Catholic agree on this point, the author aims to define the patriarchal office, drawing on Catholic and Orthodox practice and opinion. From an analysis of the Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches, he sketches the patriarchal office in the Catholic Church. The author takes this opportunity to underline two Catholic deviations: the subordination of the patriarch to the Roman Pontiff and 'the Latinizing and "papalist" tendency ... toward "concentration of power in the person of the patriarch" at the expense of genuinely synodal government' (p.77).

Orthodox perspectives on the patriarchal office are the subject of the fourth chapter where the author reviews the structure and functioning of ten Orthodox patriarchates: ancient and modern, eastern and oriental. In this chapter, the author does pioneering work. Because of the lack of data and the rarity of studies in this field, he has to find the material for his research on the official websites of the patriarchates.

This research confirms that 'there is no one single model of patriarchate but rather a wide diversity of models of patriarchal leadership' (p.78). There are many 'styles' of structure from the very centralised to the very decentralised. Yet, he is able to distinguish three common features of the patriarchal office: first, a patriarch never governs alone, his power is balanced or checked by the synod; second, jurisdiction is over a defined territory; and third, '[s]election of hierarchs ... is not the exclusive "gift" in the purview of some sovereign authority' (p.116).

In the two last chapters the author comes to the heart of his thesis. In Chapter V he proposes the creation of six continental patriarchs within the 'Latin Church'—but in fact he means within the Catholic Church encompassing all *sui iuris* Churches (see p.133). Each patriarch is to be assisted by a permanent synod, as well as by a full synod. Calling for historical cases, the author believes that these synodal structures are not foreign to the polity of the Latin Church, but have operated, if under different names (for example the College of Cardinals). These patriarchates with their synods would be able to take over almost all the functions currently performed by the Roman Curia (especially the election of new bishops).

The final chapter responds to the question of how the Pope is to exercise his office in this restructuring. Relying on *UUS* 95 which

declares that papal responsibilities 'must always be done in communion', the author proposes the creation of a permanent 'ecumenical synod' headed by the pope. The members would consist of the six patriarchs. All papal responsibilities, six in number according to *UUS* 94, including *ex cathedra* declarations, are then exercised in relationship with this permanent synod. Nonetheless the pope according to the author remains the chief administrative officer of the full, permanent ecumenical synod, 'the global spokesman for Christianity' (p.157) and the sovereign head of the Vatican City that guarantees remaining above 'ethno-nationalist narrowness' and 'political entanglements' (p.159).

The author has taken the decision to put forward a concrete vision of an ecclesiastical structure of governance, for the day when Orthodox and Catholic accept to live in one Church. He has refused to be satisfied with a theoretical discourse. In consequence, he is confronted with many problematic issues of church governance: the origin of papal power, the territoriality of jurisdiction, the overlapping of many jurisdictions, the relation between apostolicity and power in the Church, participation of lay people in the election of their pastors, and the relationship between ecclesiastical and civil structure of governance. One might criticize the author for developing his vision of the Church with an overwhelming number of details, which occasionally leads him to hastily adopt positions on matters of secondary importance for his thesis.

His approach, resisting the temptation to manipulate concepts, definitions and theories (cf. p.117), is laudable, since the question is how ecclesiastical institutions would function, in the event of Orthodox and Catholic being united in one Church. However the author neglects to ground theologically the patriarchal office that he so highly recommends. At least from the Catholic point of view, his proposed ecclesiology, promoting an intermediate ecclesiastical body between the 'universal' and 'particular' church, appears dubious. The recommended 'humanly instituted' patriarchal office, appears to threaten the role of the two 'divinely instituted' offices, of diocesan bishop and pope (see for instance *Apostolos suos*, 13). Theological work remains to be done in this area.

In his project of distinguishing the patriarchal office from the papal one, there was no methodological need to divide the Latin Church into six patriarchates. It would have been enough to introduce a form

of permanent synodal governance of the *sui iuris* Churches, headed by the pope. In so doing, he would have clearly distinguished the Latin Church from the Catholic Church, and the patriarchal office from the papal function, without running the risk of 'Byzantinising' the Latin Church. He is aware of this risk, but fails to avoid it.

Finally one must underline the ecumenical spirit in which the author deals with a controversial question, loaded with polemical issues. He is aware of the weaknesses and strengths of ecclesiastical polity in the Catholic and in the Orthodox Churches, and tries to conjugate them in a complementary manner, paying due respect to universality and diversity, as well as maintaining a proper balance between personal and synodal power. Chapter II, and especially chapter IV, are of great theological utility, and provide theologians with the material to develop an ecclesiology grounded in concrete ecclesial experience.

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*Communion, Diversity, and Salvation: The Contribution of Jean-Marie Tillard to Systematic Ecclesiology*, Brian Flanagan (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 176 pages.

Jean-Marie Tillard's articles often appeared in the pages of this journal, and his name is surely well known to readers. The book by Flanagan, a version of his doctoral thesis, draws together the key theme of 'communion' from Tillard's writings, and tries to locate and devise a systematic ecclesiology.

There is obviously a difficulty in writing about the Church: does this refer to the whole Christian Church, the specific Roman Catholic part of it (and what of the non-Roman parts of the Church which also acknowledge the Pope)? Also, what is examined: the internal relations within part of the church (Pope and Bishops) or the overall structure of the Church? Flanagan, and obviously Tillard, have a Roman Catholic perspective, but generally refer to the whole Christian Church.

The first chapter, on 'Methods, Images, and Systematic Ecclesiology' is a basic introduction to systematic ecclesiology, and bears all the hall-marks of the thesis: clearing the ground, and showing that the author has done his basic research. The second, on 'Communion in Ecclesiology' moves on to the use of Communion in both ecumenical discussions and documents, and also in Roman Catholic theology of

the twentieth century. The work of Tillard is indicated in the ecumenical documents, and also the influence of his Dominican confrères Congar and Hamer are noted. There is an interesting but short note on the document of the CDF of 1992 on the Church as communion (p. 42). Crucially, Flanagan defines six themes in communion ecclesiology, which make clear different emphases to be found within communion ecclesiologies. By using the distinctions one can make some sense of the theories. It is useful to give these, as they can help to clarify current debates (p.45). The emphases are: a concern for unity and diversity; an emphasis on the 'ecclesiality' of the local church; the connection between the church as an institutional reality and as a theological reality; the interrelatedness between, on the one hand, the vertical relation of Christians and churches to God, and on the other, the horizontal relation of Christians and churches to each other; a Eucharistic and/or sacramental understanding of the church; a connection between the communion of Christians and the Trinitarian communion. They are obviously inter-related, but without making distinctions confusion will reign.

Flanagan carefully and necessarily locates Tillard's ecclesiology in Christology, specifically soteriology, and underlines the importance of the relationship of the individual with the paschal mystery of Jesus, which is communion with God and with others (pp. 6iff). Sin breaks this communion. Having established this crucial point Flanagan then moves on to explore the position of the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, and other key concepts.

The last two chapters are the central point of Flanagan's thesis, in which he looks at Communion and Reception, and then proceeds to an evaluation of Tillard's ecclesiology. He draws together the themes of the earlier chapters, and explores Tillard's thought in more detail. He writes that Tillard's use of 'communion' throughout his works is able to be construed in a systematic way, because it is related to his exploration of other theological themes, and is contextualized in relation to other ecclesiological concepts, and is also able to resolve questions concerning the unity and diversity of the church.

The most intriguing section of the last part of the book is the one in which Flanagan admits the weaknesses of Tillard's theology when it comes to analysing conflict in the church (pp. 129 ff). Did Tillard try to argue for 'peace at any price'? Is the use of communion in theological language able to be manipulated by the powerful in the church to

preserve the power structure? This part could have profitably been developed in an examination of the theologies of the local church and the theology of the papacy in Tillard's writings. Certainly, the current controversy over the imposition of a translation of the Roman Missal indicates that this is still a crucial topic in the life of the church. Tillard, who wrote on both the Papacy and the local church still has a lot to contribute to the contemporary church. As the Vatican tries to adjust itself to a life without a long-lived charismatic pope, theological reflection on the work of the Pope and his Curia and its relationship to the various local churches is vital for the whole Church.

This is a short book, a mere 138 pages of text (including foot-notes), presumably edited down from the longer Ph.D. thesis. It bears trace of its genesis in the footnotes, and the extensive list of secondary works. Given that not all readers may have access to university libraries containing all the works and journals cited it would have been helpful to have had more information about the sources. For example, there is a brief mention of Cardinal Journet's work (p.33). I presume it is his *L'Église du Verbe Incarné* which is intended), but Journet's name does not appear in the bibliography. It is significant that Journet and Congar were writing about the church at the same time, but with very different viewpoints and styles. This was at the time when Tillard was starting out as a theologian—this could have been explored in the work.

Given the scope of Tillard's writing over the forty years of his intellectual life, it is inevitable that much is lost in the synthesis in this short work. Although Tillard explored his ecclesiology in his books and articles, some of his important work was in his contribution to ecumenical documents: BEM, ARCIC, etc. These are mentioned, but they are crying out for a deeper analysis, and discernment of Tillard's influence. Unfortunately Flanagan was not given access to Tillard's papers—he tells us this, but the reason for the refusal is alas not disclosed.

This book offers an introduction to Tillard's work, and brings together, not uncritically, the various strands of his understanding of the Church as a communion as systematic theology. It puts this in the context of Christology, which is important. It should lead the reader to a re-reading of Tillard's works and articles and thus a reflection on the life of the Church as a communion.

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*Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category*, Paul M. Collins & Barry Ensign-George, eds. (London/New York: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2011) hb. x + 180 pages.

Back cover blurbs inevitably praise a book's contents. *Denomination* includes these two: 'Essential reading for all involved in ecumenical conversations' (Mary Tanner, WCC President); 'A quiet, conversational but brilliant essay in comparative ecclesiology that no course in ecumenism can neglect' (Roger Haight sj). Very high claims indeed—and this reviewer agrees.

This is a remarkable book, less than 200 pages but opening out what might seem an unpromising, even threatening topic. It arose from a 2008 session of the *American Academy of Religion*: an opening chapter 'proposes' denomination as an ecclesiological category, after which nine essays from particular Christian traditions largely 'dispose' of it! Amid the wide variety of these responses, however, the sharp *theological* challenge comes through of what Christian unity means for the varied *social-political* contexts of the twenty-first century in which God's people seek to follow Christ, especially in the consumerist 'West'.

'Denomination' originated in the seventeenth century as ecclesial bodies 'other' to the established churches of England and Protestant Europe. Yet as 'an ecclesiological category' the notion was largely native to the USA, arising from the post-1787 political settlement between co-existing Christian societies. Denomination is thus at root a socio-political category with modern, Western and Protestant origins—and is now inseparable from 'globalisation', subsisting in a 'church as business' culture. But this summary is getting ahead of the book.

The opening essay by Barry Ensign-George 'sketches an assessment', claiming that while church historians and sociologists have studied 'denomination' extensively, systematic theologians have largely ignored the concept. His proposal is that it offers 'a structure for a living disagreement in matters about which faithful Christians may disagree' (p. 6). This is spelled out in terms of five acutely nuanced structural categories: 'contingent' (i.e. not a necessary pattern), 'intermediary' (between local congregation and universal Church), 'interdependent' (a denomination can only exist alongside others), 'partial' (none is the full embodiment of the church universal) and 'permeable' (none can make total claims on adherents: people can join

and leave). Ensign-George notes the growing recognition of diversity in the New Testament churches, and the importance of taking 'finitude and creatureliness' seriously. Amen to that—but there is no discussion of sin, to my mind a flaw which fatally undermines his conclusion that 'denomination as a category embodies an affirmation that church may be pluriform without undoing its unity' (p. 16).

Paul Avis opens with an 'Anglican' response, noting the importance of tolerance for the emergence of denominations. But here's the rub: 'To tolerate is to relativize, and to relativize is to privatise'. So 'we cannot be complacent ... to acquiesce in denominationalism is to confess failure; to glory in it is a sickness' (p. 27). Avis goes on to consider the Church of England, arguing that it does not view itself as 'denomination' but 'public church', understanding 'member' not in terms of club loyalty, but as being part of Christ's body. 'Partial' among Ensign-George's categories is here to the fore.

Steven Harmon takes up the topic from a USA Southern Baptist 'Co-operating Baptist Fellowship' context—a 'fellowship' of ecclesial bodies within yet not happy with its denominational location. In an honest and insightful manner he uses this to suggest that Baptist congregationalist polity and emphasis on freedom offer ecumenical possibilities: the inter-dependence of churches in this polity readily encourages the exchange of gifts: interestingly, he is the only contributor who mentions 'receptive ecumenism'.

In the German language, and for the German Evangelical Church, the very concept of 'denomination' is hard to explain, notes Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen: in contrast, US Lutherans are found in parallel denominations, and so immersed in its ethos. Drawing on Luther and Jaroslav Pelikan, she points up the consequences involved: adapting to business and corporate assumptions, 'church shopping' and theological vagueness about ecclesial boundaries. Even so, 'intermediate' and perhaps 'inter-dependent' categories may have some use for regional ecumenism, she suggests. The Methodist tradition is taken up by Russell E. Richey, again concentrating on the USA and the problems of being church in a market-place society. His analyses of 'connection' and 'Zion'—two features of the 'catholic spirit' of Methodism—are stimulating contributions grounded in scriptural reflection.

Elena Vishnevskaya, writing from an American Orthodox perspective, robustly dismisses the whole notion of denomination:

'the Orthodox is the One Church of Christ'. Yet such an apparently absolutist claim is far from totalitarian: her emphasis falls on the necessity of a *theological* view of Church, one shared by other contributors. The significant shift of basis upon which the Orthodox agreed to join the WCC illustrates this stance for truth, while the discussion of 'autocephaly' among the variety of national Orthodox churches intersects with Ensign-George's emphasis on unity in diversity.

'Classical' Pentecostal perspectives also rejected the idea of 'denomination', argues Wolfgang Vondey, in favour of 'movement'. Its 'eschatological' experiences of the Spirit undergird the rallying cry, 'back to the New Testament'. The mid-twentieth century emergence of Pentecostal denominations took place as 'movements' shifted towards 'becoming' church. While their great diversity is problematic, 'denomination' is seen as a useful '*historical* descriptor' (his emphasis) which may encourage a 'multicultural ecclesiology', albeit a 'transitory' or 'liminal' one.

Ann K. Riggs takes readers away from the West to East Africa, and the Quaker tradition. She argues that the move from 'mission' to 'local church', even for Quakers, means that in Kenya 'denomination' is closely associated with 'independence', whether national (as post-colonial) or ecclesial (particularly in cultural terms). Analysing the emergence of different 'meetings' for Kenyan Friends, she employs the concept of 'agency' to link theological and sociological approaches. This essay shifts the discussion sideways, to the benefit of all.

'Presbyterianism' is articulated by Amy Plantinga Pauw as open to denominationalism due to its 'self-relativizing' ethos of church as *semper reformanda* (though that slogan is not cited). She argues that the Reformed churches' 'functional' approach to polity is significant here, as is the *contextual* notion of making theological 'confession'. Pauw's approach is closest to that of Ensign-George (also a Presbyterian), but she is the first contributor to take seriously the 'peccability' of the church, a category he does not take up. His notion of denomination as 'intermediate' structure only applies to mediation between local congregation and the church national, she argues, and so compounds the 'sin of national idolatry'. Strong stuff!

Roman Catholic ecclesiology would seem at first sight to be utterly inimical to the notion of denomination, notes Peter de Mey (of Leuven, Belgium). His opening point, however, is that 'the model of

unity to be pursued' shapes ecumenical reflection: where this is a 'fellowship or communion of churches' then denominations have an important role; if 'organic unity' is the goal, however, 'then the sacrifices for the denominations will be bigger'. He returns to this theme in the final part of the essay, but meanwhile reflects on the changing situation of the Catholic Church in the USA: it has never accepted the description 'denomination', yet tends to emphasise what is distinctive about 'American' as distinct from 'Roman' Catholicism, alongside its transnational, multi-lingual identity. What then can Catholics learn from 'the denominations'? Positively, the formative focus on the congregation and its mission—and also 'potential tensions between the denomination and the Church at large', with some acute comments about the Episcopal and Lutheran traditions, and ARCIC's work. De Mey's most creative contribution, however, is his theological analysis of 'episcopal conferences' (*Lumen Gentium*, 23) as a neglected, yet increasingly contested 'intermediate' instrument to engage in a theologically appropriate manner forms of 'national church'.

Kirsteen Kim rounds out the collection with a short chapter gathering up from the essayists the significance of both geographic and 'trans-national' factors in denominational identity. She notes Evangelical 'non-denominational' congregations (thus far unmentioned), among which denominational variety may be seen as a good thing, offering more market choice! Kim also points up the significance of internal denominational differences, as exemplified among Anglicans of Korean culture, and—most importantly—that '*oikoumene* has to do with more than ecclesial relations: it concerns "the whole inhabited earth".' Her summary of much of this book is worth citing: "denomination" itself is revealed to be a construct of a particular part of the church, the result of historical circumstances in a particular part of the world, and a perception that is not shared by others' (p. 172).

The particularity of each contribution invites reflection about one's own situation. I am an Australian Anglican now located in a regional diocese where ecumenical co-operation is unavoidable: this book made me think. Australian churches arrived via government-paid chaplains (Church of England, Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist). Each of these traditions had a 'parish' rather than 'gathered' ethos, seeing all the souls in a region as 'theirs'—but the outcome was

competition and harsh sectarianism which tainted church-society relations until a generation ago. Other traditions later joined them, including every variety of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, and more recently Pentecostal, Chinese and Korean congregations. Today Christian allegiance is fading, rural areas are in decline, local churches are mostly 'gathered', Sydney Anglicans have gone for new congregationalist forms, and the shifting cultures of modern technology stirs division between generations! It is the diverse particularity of the essays in this book which stirs theological reflection on our varied 'down under' contexts.

As the blurb states, this book will indeed be a text for my next course on 'Unity in Division'. It offers challenging perspectives on bringing theological perspectives to the social realities which shape many churches in today's western world—and beyond.

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*Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, Minna Hietamäki (T & T Clark International, 2010), 272 pages.

This book's subtitle clearly states the author's purpose. While the average reader may think that what 'consensus' means is obvious, Hietamäki examines how the term has been used in the various ecumenical dialogues.

She examines in particular three groups of bilateral dialogues: Lutheran-Roman Catholic; Anglican-Roman Catholic; and Anglican-Lutheran, following them from the earliest conversations to where they are now, and how the mutual relationships have grown through the conversations. The work is based on her Ph.D. thesis, in which she maintains that the process is as important as the end result. She also shows that the idea of consensus is the form in which the truth is perceived by those who share in the dialogue. She describes dialogue as meaning that truth is perspective (seen from different points of view) thus truth transcends individual understandings.

Thus the book is not an easy read, moving between historical theology, linguistics, and ecumenical theology. The interested reader will be provoked to reflect on what, in absolute terms, is the end of ecumenical dialogue. If the answer is 'consensus' then further probing will be needed to examine what is meant by that word. However, the

book's roots in a Ph.D. thesis become evident at this point. We know what we mean by 'consensus' but do we have to be able to articulate this and define it down to the last point? Nevertheless, it is clear that woolly thinking, and writing, are not uncommon in ecumenical discussions, and the book is a corrective to that tendency. Thus, there could be consensus which is described as having an extent: substantial, or extensive. This is defined as quantitative. Or there is consensus which is essential, or basic, or fundamental. This is described as qualitative.

The sections in the book on the three batches of dialogues are an interesting historical survey, not only of the dialogues themselves, but also of the ecumenical method which each used. This is fascinating, for although there are common partners in the dialogues the methodology was different for each. Also of significance is the fact that the documents in each dialogue are considered in their relationship to each other, so that one gets the wider view. The author also uses complementary national dialogues as well as the international ones in order to clarify the growth in understanding between the churches. This is particularly helpful in the section on the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues, and the agreement on Justification. The linguistic analysis which Hietamäki uses leads her to summarise the Joint Declaration on Justification as a gradual shift from partial (basic) agreement to an agreement on the basics (that is, what is fundamental). She concludes that there are varying shades of consensus between Lutherans and Catholics.

On the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogues she draws attention to the change in ARCIC I's agenda to a more practical one, away from the theology of inter-communion. She describes the Responses of the two denominations to the Report as diverging: the Catholic one lacked differentiation between the substance of faith and its expression, but the Anglican response held that the report was 'consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans.' The nuances which the author examines are exemplified by a comment expressed by Christopher Hill, who was part of the dialogue, who is quoted as saying that the Catholic response evaluated the report's identity with Roman Catholic teaching more than its consonance with Roman Catholic faith. The chapter on ARCIC has an interesting section on the concept of 'reception ecumenism' [*sic*] and mentions the freedom that this can

bring—in being the Christian community in each new and changing situation.

The section on the Anglican-Lutheran dialogues is the shortest, but does explore the growing together of the two churches and how agreement was sought on what was considered essential. She describes how the American Lutheran-Episcopal dialogue used the double criterion of consonance with the Gospel and compatibility with the teaching of the other church, reaching the notion of 'sufficient consensus'. There is also an interesting section on how Eucharistic sharing precedes full communion. The Porvoo Statement is also examined, with some critical comments on the way the concept of 'sign' is used.

Her concluding section on consensus and diversity is the most challenging part of the thesis, moving between linguistic theory and theology. She examines how consensus and dialogue can coexist and suggests that this is the great contribution of ecumenism to theology: that there can be unity without uniformity. She also looks at how there can be legitimate diversity in essentials and identifies four hermeneutical approaches to this. Moving on she sees how post-modern theories of epistemology can also contribute to the various understandings which are required. She reminds the reader that there is no common theological view as to how far Christian understanding of truth is conditioned by history or the 'socio-linguistic contexts.' Her conclusion is that ecumenical consensus should be able to accommodate differences; however, consensus as usually understood, cannot accommodate the diversity which is the essence of the Church founded on the Trinity.

This book is helpful on various levels: it provides good summaries of the bilateral conversations which are described, and also clarifies their objectives and methods, noting the differences and similarities. Further, it develops an awareness of the use of the differing understandings of the 'consensus' which is sought in ecumenical dialogue, using post-modern theories to illustrate this.

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