

ARTICLES

How can this Man give us his Flesh to eat? <i>Gabriel Daly</i>	181
Looking for the Church: Reflections on 'Towards a Common Vision'. <i>Susan Durber</i>	193
'That wonderful and sacred mystery.' A reflection on 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision. + <i>John Hind</i>	210
Milestones on the Road: 'From Conflict to Communion'. <i>Sandra Gintere</i>	226
The Body of Christ is Impaired by Division. <i>John Bradley</i>	237
Rowan Williams: an Interview with <i>Thierry Marteaux osb</i>	245
Staying Together on the Ecumenical Journey: a Story of Bridge-building between East and West. <i>Mary Tanner</i>	257
'Love of God' as Revelation in the Mysticism of Bar Hebraeus. <i>Jennifer Griggs</i>	272

DOCUMENTS

Catholics and Pentecostals Sixth Round of Conversations, Baltimore, 13-19 July 2013:	282
A Catholic Perspective on Healing. <i>Mary Healy</i>	285
Healing: A Pentecostal Perspective. <i>Opoku Onyinah</i>	311

REPORTS

To hear God's Word: A new ecumenical translation of the Bible. <i>Juris Kalitis & Anda Done</i>	340
Christians Cope in Kurdistan. <i>Erica C.D. Hunter</i>	347
Christianity in Iraq X Seminar Day.	354

BOOK REVIEW	356
--------------------	-----

EDITORIAL

A number of noteworthy events, recent and forthcoming, feature in this issue, including the publication of two documents: 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' (*Durber, Hind*), and 'From Conflict to Communion' (*Gintere*) which itself looks forward to the fifth centenary of the Reformation in 2017; and the publication in Latvia of a new ecumenical translation of the Bible (*Kalitis, Done*).

Our opening article (*Daly*), in considering Catholic eucharistic inhospitality, sounds a note of warning about 'gesture' ecumenism. The empty gesture may be media-friendly, but it is the polar opposite of the prophetic act, which costs, and is apt to open eyes and ears, have consequences, and redeem a situation.

Our publication of two papers (*Healy, Onyinah*) from this year's meeting in Baltimore of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue, continues this journal's particular concern for this dialogue, from its inception.¹ Their treatment of healing in the two traditions is grounded by a personal reflection on bodily disability, in ecumenical context (*Bradley*). Our book review (*Michener of Studebaker*) gives further evidence of the contribution of Pentecostal theology.

We include witnesses both to the continuing trauma of many Eastern Christians (*Hunter*) and to the enduring insight of their mystical traditions (*Griggs*). And we read the story of an initiative which helped ensure continuing Orthodox involvement in the WCC (*Tanner*).

An interview with Rowan Williams (*Marteaux*) combines appreciation of the value, symbolic or otherwise, of a number of ecumenical events, with lapidary theological analysis e.g. of the rationale for ordaining women.

¹ See issues 10/1 (1974), 10/2 (1974), 12/3 (1976), 12/4 (1976), 13/1 (1977), 21/1 (1985).

HOW CAN THIS MAN GIVE US HIS FLESH TO EAT?

Gabriel Daly*

The Catholic Church's prohibition of sharing the Eucharist with other Christians is an abuse of institutional power, issuing from a habit of saying 'No'. The widespread misrepresentation of transubstantiation as essential doctrine, synonymous with real presence, rather than philosophical term, remains damaging. Wholesale condemnation of 'sacrament as symbol' is mistaken. Eucharistic devotions, helpful to many Catholics, can obscure the fundamental reality of Eucharist as Meal. In this matter, as in others, ecumenical dialogue should be an adventure of rediscovery of essential truths. Using the Eucharist as an instrument of exclusion and punishment stands condemned by the 'Yes' which is Jesus.

In the quest for Christian unity no topic clamours for agreement more than the Eucharist. Division over the Eucharist is especially deplorable, because the Eucharist is designed to be a celebration of love, unity and reconciliation with God and with our fellow human beings.

This fiftieth anniversary of the major ecumenical conference in Ireland is an occasion for celebration and rejoicing; but it is also an occasion for regret. Although we have made remarkable theological progress in ecumenical understanding at meetings like this one, little institutional progress has been made at governmental levels in the Catholic Church. I hope that I am not introducing too negative a note into an occasion for rejoicing; but I found that I could not avoid wondering why the institutional Catholic Church is still so

* Gabriel Daly OSA has taught and published widely in theology. Following his PhD thesis on Catholic Modernism (see *Transcendence and Immanence*, OUP, 1980), he lectured at the Irish School of Ecumenics as a founder member, and subsequently at Trinity College Dublin (1975-2002), of which he is now an honorary fellow. The publication of his new book, *The Church: Always in Need of Reform*, and the reprint of *Asking the Father*, both with Dominican Publications, is imminent. This paper originally given at the Glenstal Ecumenical Conference, June 2013.

ungenerous in its approach to celebrating the Eucharist with other Christians. There is no convincing theological support today for institutional negativity about sharing the Eucharist.

In general, in all aspects of Christian unity, we seem to be satisfied with gestures rather than actually making substantive progress. For example, the Pope meets the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the media seize on the occasion as a significant moment in church unity. No doubt it makes for good television, but it's of no great significance unless something happens on a universal and practical level in the church. Gestures cost nothing and can easily give the illusion of ecumenical progress.

Throughout this talk I will occasionally be critical of my own church, because criticism, like charity, begins at home, and because I can make critical remarks about my church which Protestants and Anglicans might find it inappropriate to make in an ecumenical setting like this. I may offend traditionalists in my own church, but that is a risk that all ecumenists must take. It would be unfortunate if we avoided questions of reform because, for reasons of ecumenical tact, we were afraid to give offence. I appreciate that members of other churches can be bored by our domestic Catholic problems with authority, but I ask them to recognise that an ecumenical gathering offers a forum that is not yet provided within our own church. Ecumenism needs to be practised within a church as well as between churches. Church unity is inseparable from internal domestic reform, where reform is needed. Church governance unfortunately pervades every aspect of church life and theology. It matters, from the standpoint of church unity, *how* our different churches are governed. As we shall see later, Alexander Schmemmann, the distinguished Eastern Orthodox theologian, makes the point that attitudes to the Eucharist are influenced by how a church is governed.

On the whole, Protestants and Anglicans practise a more generous eucharistic hospitality than we Roman Catholics do. We are still a church characterised by restrictive laws and suspicion of hopeful initiatives. St Paul challenged this negativity in a remark he made to the Christians of Corinth: 'For the Son of God, Jesus Christ ... was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes"' (2 Cor. 1:19). This could be an encouraging text for all who are dedicated to the movement for Christian unity. Too often our authorities seem primed to say 'No' to initiatives that many ordinary Catholics, and especially

ecumenical conferences like this one, would like to see put into practice. This negativity is often combined with a serious abuse of power, especially when power is allied to hidebound conservatism, and when the ecumenically unconverted have the power to say 'No' to some basic initiative like a shared Eucharist.

This is why we simply have to be vocal about what needs to be done about reform in our church. One deeply conservative faction has power in the Catholic Church and is using it to suppress legitimate opposition to its attitudes and actions. We have a new pope who seems to bear some resemblance to Pope John XXIII; and that gives us hope that he will be able to bring about some badly needed institutional reforms.

We are still acting as if ecumenism means finding out how far other churches measure up to *our* requirements, even when those requirements are themselves in need of far-reaching change.

To some extent we are all prisoners of what happened in the past. We did not cause the divisions. We have inherited them; and it is our duty to do what we can to heal them. A sense of history prompts us to remember that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were an age of *dedicated division* and controversy between Catholics and Protestants. Christians caused schisms among themselves and actually considered it virtuous to be different from each other in matters that are central to our common Christian faith! (I am old enough to remember the time when we were told that it was a sin even to enter a Protestant church!)

There was little or no hunger for unity among divided Christians then. Each tradition institutionalised the differences that divided them; that is, each defined its own beliefs consciously in terms that rejected the beliefs, or supposed beliefs, of the other. Each made a *virtue* of differing from the other. Thank God many of us have moved on from that depressing and unpromising situation; but it remains as an unhappy inheritance from the past, and it can be exploited by comfortable traditionalists who see no need for change and who like to speak dismissively of *à la carte* Catholicism when their co-religionists do not share their convictions. They believe in *table d'hôte* Catholicism where the menu is prescribed by them.

If ecumenical dialogue is not an honest *search for truth* and for new insights, it becomes an exercise in what professor John Macquarrie, in a memorable phrase, has called 'ecclesiastical joinery'. (Macquarrie has

been described as ‘unquestionably Anglicanism’s most distinguished systematic theologian in the second half of the twentieth century.’¹) Although he was a committed ecumenist, Macquarrie was quite prepared to speak of the ‘many dangers in ecumenism’, especially ‘the danger of submerging legitimate differences, and thereby impoverishing the body which is enriched and strengthened by these differences. ... *The genuine diversity-in-unity of the body of Christ needs to be defended against uniformity just as much as against divisiveness*’.² Macquarrie is here making an immensely important observation, which applies to all our churches. If we struggle for Christian unity at the expense of legitimate diversity, the enterprise is not worth the effort.

One might interpret Professor Macquarrie’s robust attitude to ecumenism as a warning against promoting unity at the expense of truth—being ecumenical with the truth, as it were. His phrase ‘diversity in unity’ neatly summarises the situation as it ought to be. When are we going to appreciate the difference between unity and uniformity? Christianity is a big enough religion to welcome the sort of diversity that enriches rather than threatens its unity. To put it bluntly, I would not want to belong to a united church that did not welcome legitimate diversity. We Catholics have to put up with too much of this kind of thing in our own church!

Let me turn now to an event of some relevance to the quest for Christian eucharistic unity. In September 1965, three months before the end of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical letter, *Mysterium Fidei*, on the Eucharist. It seemed like a voice from the past, and it was in vivid dissonance with much that the council was trying to bring about. It was a profoundly reactionary document that condemned some of the ideas about the Eucharist, such as ‘transignification’ and ‘transfinalisation’, that were circulating as a result of new thinking released by the council. I have no difficulty in accepting that some of those ideas were open to criticism; but they were a significant contribution to healthy church life and thought.

¹ Timothy Bradshaw, ‘John Macquarrie’ in Alister E. McGrath (ed), *The SPCK Handbook of Anglican Theologians* (London: SPCK, 1998), p.168.

² J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London, 1977), 403-4. My emphasis.

Pope Paul's encyclical dismissed them out of hand and inflexibly reaffirmed the unreformed tradition.

The encyclical was especially critical of the role that the new thinking on the Eucharist gave to symbolism. It claimed that emphasis on symbolism amounted to a defective idea of the *reality* of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, as if acceptance of symbolism amounted to a watering down of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Suspicion of symbolism has been a pronounced feature of official Roman theology since the condemnation of Modernism in the first decade of the twentieth century. At the centre of that suspicion lay the word 'transubstantiation', which is still causing widespread problems in ecumenical dialogue. I believe that it is important enough to merit a fairly close look.

The term 'transubstantiation' is still being treated as indispensable to Catholic theology of the Eucharist. That is worrying; for as long as this remains the case, there will be little progress in moves to unity with respect to the Eucharist. 'Transubstantiation' has proved to be a most contentious word among Christians. Protestants have always rejected it. For example, Baptists in the seventeenth century judged that the Catholic view of the Eucharist was 'carnal and corporal'; in other words, that it was disturbingly physical and lacked a spiritual and biblical dimension.

Anglicanism, in spite of its general attempts to preserve a mediating position between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, was as dismissive of transubstantiation as Protestantism was. The Anglican view, expressed in article 28 of the 39 Articles, says that the doctrine of transubstantiation cannot be found in sacred Scripture, and that it has given rise to many superstitions. Both of these contentions are quite true and can be immediately conceded by Roman Catholics, without any infidelity to their theological principles.

'Transubstantiation' is a highly technical term that ought never to have been brought into everyday usage. It should have remained in the studies of theologians, where it was first conjured up in the twelfth century. The powerful influence on Christian theology of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, in the thirteenth century, shaped the subsequent scholastic era during which the word 'transubstantiation' entered into formal and conciliar use by the church.

Today it is bandied about as if its meaning is self-evident—which it most certainly is not. One cannot '*believe in*' transubstantiation, which

is a philosophical term. You can't 'believe' in philosophical positions—you either accept them, modify them or reject them. They do not belong to the substance of faith; they are ways of giving cultural relevance to what Christians believe; and when cultures change, they may become obsolete and even misleading. The Catholic Church has said that it is not competent to impose any philosophical system in the name of faith; though it *can* say that a particular philosophy 'fittingly', or 'aptly' expresses a doctrine, as the Council of Trent did with the philosophical notion of transubstantiation. Trent does not say that Catholics *must* use the term, only that its use was 'apt and proper' in the sixteenth century. After all, the church got on without the term for over a thousand years; therefore it follows logically that it cannot be an indispensable part of Christian teaching. Rather, it is a theological development that is valid only in its own highly specialized culture. Tradition cannot legitimately add to the substance of Christian faith; it can only clarify its meaning in terms that are culturally appropriate.

I appreciate that many people are bored with what they regard as theological niceties; but those who use highly technical theological terms like 'transubstantiation', cannot reasonably avoid attending carefully to the theology involved. If they misuse the term—as often happens—they may cause needless confusion. Catholics sometimes use the term 'transubstantiation' as a synonym for 'real presence'—which it is not. Real presence is an essential element in Catholic doctrine, though it begs the philosophical question of what the words 'real' and 'presence' actually mean. We need to recognise that symbolic presence can be real presence. (In my teaching days I used to advise students not to use the phrase '*only symbolic!*')

Some of the most important gestures in everyday life and art are symbolic. Think of the political significance of displaying flags in Northern Ireland or marching in certain places at certain times of the year. Think of the significance of bringing to New Ross in Ireland, with full military honours, a light from the Eternal Flame of the tomb of President Kennedy in Arlington National Cemetery in America. It's not the action in itself; it's the meaning that the action is intended to carry symbolically, especially when it links a great President with the sad history of poverty and emigration.

The Eucharist was symbolic from the first moment of its creation in the upper room on the evening before the passion and death of Jesus.

It linked the Last Supper with the suffering of the next day. That the Eucharist is a meal, is primary and indispensable to its symbolic meaning. This is a truth that had been obscured in the Roman Catholic Church, largely because of its preoccupation with what happens to the elements of bread and wine after consecration.

For Catholics, the importance of the Eucharist as a symbolic meal has also been obscured by the various eucharistic devotions that concentrate on the reality of Christ's presence in the consecrated bread, rather than on the meal in the upper room on the evening before his passion and death. We have to admit that it is not easy to reconcile the fact that the Eucharist is a meal with such devotional uses of it as exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, or Benediction. Please note that I am in no way repudiating Benediction or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. They are legitimate, but not compulsory, developments that occurred in a later age, and they are in no way necessary to the integrity of Catholic faith.

Many Catholics, however, have found eucharistic devotions helpful to the living out of their faith and prayer, and there has been a strong and persistent tradition of eucharistic piety in the church based on the conviction that Christ remains present in the bread and wine after the liturgical celebration is over. There is, however, the possibility that people can come to think that eucharistically inspired prayer is superior to other forms of prayer. This is not so.

The fact is, that believers can be inspired to prayer by great art—a consideration that is appropriate to remember here in Glenstal with its famous icon chapel. Examples are endless, and personal experience determines what each one finds to be transcendental in everyday life. One cannot prescribe particular occasions as transcendental for others; they must find their own.

Because music happens to be the art that speaks most powerfully to me, I find that, for instance, a symphony by the Austrian composer Anton Bruckner creates a mystical atmosphere that inspires prayer. Others may find Bruckner's music long, dense and uninspiring. Bach's B minor Mass is one of the greatest artistic monuments to Christian faith in all music. Atheists can be moved by the sublime music; but a Christian who loves the music can find that it raises the mind and heart to God.

John the Evangelist does not describe, in his gospel, the institution of the Eucharist in the upper room on the eve of Jesus' passion and

death; but chapter 6 of his gospel makes it very clear that Jesus employs the symbol of eating his flesh to refer to the *total* attitude of believers towards him as Messiah and Son of the Father. Jesus spoke through parable and metaphor as if challenging his listeners to use their imaginations in order to appreciate the full thrust of what he was saying. He was an artist and a poet as well as an inspiring teacher; and his artistry is inseparable from the revelation that his Father had sent him to bring to the entire world.

The Eucharist, then, is a symbolic liturgical expression of a *comprehensive* act of faith in Jesus Christ, and not simply of his presence in the elements of bread and wine. In many respects, focusing attention on the bread and wine was, and remains, a regrettable direction to take in our Christian consideration of the Eucharist, though it has had a long history in Catholic piety and especially in relations between Catholicism and Protestantism. Whenever the focus has been upon what happens to the elements of bread and wine, there has been disagreement and dissension, both between Protestants and Catholics and also between Protestants themselves. (Martin Luther and the Swiss reformer Huldreich Zwingli could never agree about what happens in the Eucharist.)

It is possible to be a perfectly orthodox Catholic and never use the term 'transubstantiation'. In fact, it has become culturally unwise to use it today, since people today normally think in terms of physics and chemistry rather than of substance and accidents. Transubstantiation, which is a strictly metaphysical term, often seems to be given a physical meaning. Unfortunately it is also sometimes used as a thoughtless and divisive slogan 'Catholics believe in transubstantiation' (with the implication that it is this that makes them different from Protestants).

Speaking in Dublin a while ago, Richard Dawkins, the well-known professional atheist, remarked in his familiar and magisterial fashion: 'If they don't believe in transubstantiation then they are not Roman Catholics'.¹ So there: now you know. The atheistic magisterium, which often has a poor grasp of reputable modern Christian theology, has spoken and defined how Catholics should think about the Eucharist! The fact that an intelligent man like Dawkins can make an *ex cathedra* pronouncement of this kind is a warning of how easily popular

¹ As reported in *The Irish Times*, Thursday, June 7, 2012, p.13.

misconceptions can become dogmas in the minds of even intelligent people like Professor Dawkins, whose desire to attack religion sometimes overpowers his understanding of it.

Let's use our imaginations as well as our minds. Let's envisage the scene as the evangelist, Mark, describes it. In the course of his last meal, Jesus took a loaf, broke off pieces of it and distributed them to the disciples, saying 'this is my body'. Then he took a cup of wine and gave it to them to drink, saying 'this is my blood' (Mk. 14: 22-25). Both offerings were a clearly symbolic gesture to illustrate his union with them. *We cannot imagine that any of them wondered what had happened to the bread and wine that he had just shared with them.* They were focused upon the meaning of the *entire* occasion, including his washing of their feet (which was plainly sacramental and symbolic in the deepest possible sense, though it was never officially designated as one of the sacraments).

St Paul, reflecting theologically on the significance of the Last Supper, adds that Jesus exhorted his disciples to 'do this in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'. Thus Paul links the supper with the sacrifice of Jesus' life that was to occur on the next day (1 Cor. 11:23-26). It was a daring thought, and it opened up a valuable direction for eucharistic theology; but it was also one that was later to prove needlessly contentious, because there were Protestants who believed that Catholic doctrine proclaimed that every celebration of the Eucharist was a *new* sacrifice; and Catholics did little to disabuse them of this belief.

Speculation about the meaning of sacrifice would follow in the later church; and it would become another cause of utterly needless division between Catholics and Protestants. The eucharistic liturgy is not a separate, *new* act of sacrifice each time it is celebrated. It is a liturgical *re-presentation* of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice of himself on Calvary. 'Do this in memory of me', Jesus said at the last supper with his disciples, thus leaving them a symbolic memorial of his passion and death.

It cannot be said too often that true ecumenism is not a matter of bargaining: it is a joint voyage into fresh understanding of truths that are ever ancient and ever new. Those truths have to be lived with imagination and rediscovered in every age of our lives. Dialogue

between the churches is, or ought to be, always an adventure; and adventure is an aspect of faith that deserves greater attention than we, perhaps, usually give it. Nineteenth century Catholic theology was preoccupied with the intellectual certainty of faith, rather than seeing it as an adventure. We need to return to what faith meant to Abraham, who was prepared at God's bidding to set out on a journey 'not knowing where he was going' (Heb. 11:8). The notion of adventure can help to keep our Christian faith lively and protected from the deadening effect of mindless routine.

As a result of joining in the ecumenical movement, many Roman Catholics have found that they have to take the Reformation seriously, and not simply to think of it as a regrettable occurrence that divided Western Christianity in the sixteenth century. It raised issues that are still with us and need to be pondered afresh.

A notable instance of how such issues can be reconfigured is *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the text produced by the conference organised by the World Council of Churches in 1982 in Lima, Peru and comprising a large number of theologians from most of the Christian churches. It is a justly famous text, and it gives us a splendid view of the meaning and scope of the Eucharist both in the church and in the world. I would draw your attention to two major points in the text. One of its statements offers a neat resolution of a long-standing problem. It says that while Christ's real presence in the Eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required. That admirably concise statement should go far to remove both Catholic and Protestant anxieties.

The statement goes on to emphasise that members of the Christian church are there not simply for themselves, in a cosy enclave separated from the world. When we take part in the Eucharist, we are performing a ritual celebration of what a redeemed *world* would look like *ideally and globally*. St Paul, in the wonderful eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans, speaks of all creation groaning in labour, waiting for redemption (Rom. 8:22). Paul also observed that with Jesus it was always 'Yes'. Everyone, without distinction, was welcome to his table. It was his post-apostolic followers, quite early in the church's history, who made rules and regulations about who could, and who could not, share in the Eucharist. To use the Eucharist as an instrument of exclusion and punishment is a deplorable misuse of a sacrament that

is all about unity, love, acceptance, understanding and forgiveness. It is appalling to hear some priest or prelate excluding, with apparent relish, this or that person from receiving Holy Communion. In an age when people are leaving the church in disturbingly large numbers, and when the treatment of clerics who have abused children has brought obloquy upon the church, it is incongruous that its leaders should be wielding a big stick by refusing the Eucharist to anyone.

If you had been able to approach the apostles a few days after the last meal that Jesus had eaten with them, it is safe to say that you would have heard nothing about what had happened to the bread and wine after Jesus had identified them symbolically with his body and blood. Nor would you have heard anything about conditions of validity in the celebration of a sacrament. Power-driven bureaucracy, linked to bad theology, can destroy the simple and straightforward thrust of the Gospel. What worried St Paul were the stories he had heard about the behaviour of the Christians in Corinth. Paul is remarkably down-to-earth: in his first letter to the Corinthians he says, 'when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ... When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk' (1 Cor. 11:18, 20-21). Paul has to tell the Corinthians to have their ordinary meal at home, before assembling for the Eucharist. At least they got it right about the Eucharist being a meal.

Having considered what Protestants and Catholics have contributed to our thinking about the Eucharist, I turn in conclusion to a distinguished Russian Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, who was born in Estonia and spent much of his life in the United States. The Eastern Orthodox have a remarkably integrated approach to church, to theology and to liturgy. Schmemmann virtually identifies eucharistic celebration with the church itself. In other words, he says that if you want to know what the church is there for, look at its celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the church in action.

In an age like ours that quite properly emphasises the need for social and political action in favour of the poor, the hungry, the victims of persecution, refugees and of those who are suffering the inequities of life, we westerners may need to remember the mystical element in the church which the Orthodox take so seriously and which can be

neglected by Christians who are taken up exclusively with action in the world; though some do indeed combine the two, thus giving witness to the full meaning of the Christian Gospel.

Schmemmann makes a fascinating point when he claims that a theology of church in which institutional absolutism predominates, promotes spiritual individualism and what he calls a 'subjective' religious life. In other words, a church that places disproportionate emphasis on authority and on hierarchical rank has the effect of making its members turn inward to a form of prayer that is purely private. Thus we lose a sense of the church as an integrated community of equals, in which authority is seen as a service, and not as an opportunity to lord it over its institutionally powerless members. A sense of 'them' and 'us' impairs its unity. There is no 'upstairs/downstairs' in the Christian church—a fact that Pope Francis is making clear by his behaviour, which has symbolic as well as domestic relevance. We can only hope that he also manages to reform the bureaucrats who claim to act in his name and with his authority! Let me be candid at the risk of appearing subversive: the appearance and behaviour of an autocratic and intolerant magisterium can destroy the eucharistic nature of the church. It's a disturbing claim; but I put it before you in all seriousness and conviction.

Excommunication and censorship of men and women who are trying to bring Christ to a troubled and uncertain world is a denial of everything the Eucharist stands for. Ecumenical attitudes are needed not merely *between* churches but also *within* churches. Roman Catholic authorities should be doing a great deal more about the disaffected in their church, instead of trying to rule by aggressive tactics and by the fear that those tactics are designed to cause.

Let me finish on a tranquil and uncontroversial note with a direct quotation from Schmemmann that sums up what I have been trying to say: 'It is in the Eucharist that the Church ceases to be "institution, doctrine, [and] system" and [instead] becomes Life, Vision, [and] Salvation. [I]t is in the Eucharist that the Word of God is fulfilled and the human mind is made capable of expressing the mind of Christ.'

LOOKING FOR THE CHURCH: REFLECTIONS ON *TOWARDS A COMMON VISION*

Susan Durber*

The Church: Towards a Common Vision wrestles with the unresolved ecclesiological issues impeding the journey towards the visible unity of the church. There is much honest wrestling with the classical issues, and how they are being reframed in today's church and world: but there is still insufficient account taken of the difference which recognizing the church as 'the people' makes. Many engaged in ecumenical multi-lateral dialogue recognise we are at a turning point and that theological tasks like this one need to engage those from the global South—and those who come with burning questions of justice—in new ways, and from the word go.

Context

I first became directly involved in the praying, discussing, consulting, reflecting and drafting that led to the production of texts on the way to this important convergence text in the first year of the new millennium. As a (then) plenary commissioner of Faith and Order, I was invited to a joint meeting of the Council of European Churches and WCC Faith and Order, in Armenia, in 2001. I found myself in what was to me a strange, fascinating, but hospitable country, both literally and metaphorically.

The meeting in Armenia took me to a place, a people and a church which I had not encountered before and it opened up to me many landscapes of which I had been unaware and even naïve. I found a people who were living very much still in the aftermath of the end of the Soviet period. The evidence of a newly free, but impoverished,

* Revd Dr Susan Durber is a member of the Standing Commission for Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. She is a minister of the United Reformed Church in the UK, a former Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge and presently works as Theology Co-ordinator for Christian Aid. She is a biblical scholar with an interest in preaching and communication and has written and edited collections of sermons and prayers.

Armenia was clear to see, from the moments when our minibus veered across the road to avoid the potholes, to the moment when I joined the meeting in a cold basement, unredeemed (to my eyes) by beauty. In the Armenian church, that year celebrating and taking pride in its long and unique history, I found a community being restored, and monasteries which had been silenced for decades now resounding to the deep voices of the singing of monks. In a celebration of Pentecost in Holy Etchmiadzin, I experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit's presence with the people of the church. And I saw the beauty of Armenian texts, written in a distinctive and God-given language and decorated with great skill and beauty. I lay in my bed at night, in a hotel built originally for Soviet athletes, listening to the unfamiliar sound of the howling of wolves in the forests and by day I enjoyed the hospitality of a people who had little of this world's wealth, but were full of graciousness and generosity. And during the days there I heard in a way I had not before of the suffering of the Armenian people and the great wound at the heart of their modern history.

The strangeness, to this woman from the United Reformed Church in the UK, of the landscape and the culture, was echoed in the discussions too. Though I was not unfamiliar with ecumenical texts, and had grown up absolutely shaped by the insights and wonder of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, I was surprised by much of the discussion and disoriented by the things that seemed core passions and concerns to many there. Though I could say that I am generally articulate and well versed in what one might call 'ecclesiology' I found it, at first, a difficult discussion to enter into or contribute to. I felt that I was in a strange place in terms of the discussion and the task before us and it was as uncomfortable in its way as the cold basement room and the jolting minibus. It seemed as though I wasn't able to speak with my usual language, despite being one of the privileged few for whom the discussions were in their mother tongue! Of course, I soon recognized, as one must, that this was almost certainly happening for everyone to a greater or lesser extent, and indeed that ecumenical dialogue and discussion must always involve a loss of familiarity and security for everyone involved if it is to be truly ecumenical.

I have, since that first encounter in Armenia, been involved in many discussions about this text, and was among those who sang to God's

praise in Penang when we realized we had made the final amendment, and have become so familiar with its words that some parts I could almost recite from memory. But that sense of strangeness has never left me (and indeed nor should it), and so it deserves some explanation and greater reflection. I have been aware of the temptation to live with a split in myself, and to cope with the dissonance between this text and my local context in the United Reformed Church in the UK, by living, as it were, separate lives; finding a WCC Faith and Order self and a URC in the UK self. But that cannot be a helpful way forward, because if texts like this one are to make any impact they have to be able to sound clearly at 'home' as well as in the strange places where they are (inevitably) wrought and written. I have found myself having to resist the temptation to say to my friends in my own church that the parts they find strange belong to someone else other than me, and that 'of course, I wouldn't have said it quite like that'. As a member, now, of the Standing Commission I need to take responsibility for the whole of the text (neither pointing out phrases I might have contributed nor washing my hands of others) and to enable others who live at home with me to understand it and engage with it.

In the United Reformed Church in the UK at the moment, there is a lot of talk about what it means to be the church, or even, more commonly, to 'be church'. And I do not mean that people in our churches are discussing Calvin's marks of the church or reflecting on the insights of early Independents for whom the locally covenanted group of church members was really what church was and should be. The most potent discussions now often begin with what is being experienced as the decline of some of our forms of church, and a strong sense that we need to find new cultural forms for living the life of the church in faithfulness to Christ, for the sake of the world. There is also a strong sense that those outside the church now often despise the church or criticize it (the effect, in part, both of the weakening of the social power and influence of the church and of many high profile cases of the sexual abuse of children within church institutions or by its priests and ministers). So much energy and discussion is being invested, in the church I know best, in finding ways to re-shape the church and to re-form it. The United Reformed Church has become part of a movement called 'Fresh Expressions' (a movement that originated in the Church of England) which, as the name suggests,

seeks to find faithful and effective ways, in terms of mission, of being the church in the culture in which we live in the UK today. Phrases like 'café-church' are much spoken and a 'pioneer minister', rather than a traditional minister, is the kind of minister to be. Church communities are meeting in 'third places', church communities of all kinds are challenged to be 'missional' and there is a pervasive, if not always clearly articulated, sense that traditional church has had its day. 'Mission' has become the all-important word in terms of judging whether a church project is appropriate or should be funded. Ecumenism is sometimes, perhaps often, regarded as a movement that has run its course, and which is only really appropriate when it can assist the mission of the church. The church's leaders, priests and ministers are judged pre-eminently by their effectiveness in communicating in a media-saturated culture. There is, perhaps, something of a sense of collective panic about the future of the church and a reaching after new ways of connecting the church with the contemporary world. In a context like that, the kinds of questions that seem at first sight to dominate *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* can seem distant and irrelevant, as strange as a text in a foreign language that few people round here speak, discussing issues that do not concern us any more.

Though I know that there will be many in my 'home' context who will be frustrated on reading *The Church*, and indeed that there are many who will not read it at all, I do believe that there are profound connections with our own struggles, needs and context, and indeed resources here for addressing them anew. The text *The Church* may seem to be as far from the churches I know best as the rather faded glory of a former Soviet hotel in Armenia, but actually there is a conversation to be had and one in which we might actually learn or re-learn something of our own story. It will take some effort to get there. And indeed I do believe that *unless* any of us in the church, wherever we are in the world or the landscape of different traditions, take the time to listen carefully to what the whole of the church is saying, or what different voices in the church are saying, about what it means to be the church, we are in danger of losing hold of what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. Because, whatever it might mean to re-shape the church within and for a particular culture, we shall need to return to the biblical witness and to the deepest foundations of the church, as well as to insights learned over the ages in order to be

faithful and indeed missional, in the sense of participating in the mission of God. We might know what a 'fresh expression' is, but what we need to know is whether it is a fresh expression of *church*. And to know that we do need to know whether we are in, a proper sense, in continuity with the apostles, faithful to the Scriptures, in 'communion' with our brothers and sisters in the church throughout the world, and in touch with the movement of the Holy Spirit.

So, what I hope to do is offer some commentary on *The Church* that might reveal how it can speak to a church like my own, in which, in many quarters at least, it will not find a ready readership and in which it will be met often by puzzlement. And I offer such commentary because, of course, I sympathize with the immediate sense that this text comes from a strange place and is written in an unknown tongue, because I have shared that experience, even as I have been part of the discussion, the drafting and the redrafting. And I am sure that in many other churches there will be those writing in a similar way, addressing puzzled and uncomprehending readers who will be saying, 'But who on earth thinks the issues are *those*?' or, 'How could anyone think x anyway?'. For all of us the task of reception of such a text is a complex one, requiring patience, imagination, empathy, and the conviction that I cannot know Jesus Christ until I have seen him in a face that is quite unlike mine.

Text

The first thing I want to say is that there is much to celebrate about what we already share in our understanding of what it is to be the church. Documents like this one tend, of necessity, to focus on those things on which we do not agree or on which there remain complex, long-held and deeply embedded differences, rather than on the things that are now firmly held in common. So, for example, almost any reader from my own context will probably immediately reflect that there is far too much in this document about ministers, priests and bishops, and even primacy, and nothing like enough about the *laos*, the people, of the church. Shouldn't the document say much more about how the church is formed as Christ calls people into the church and as the baptized worship God, serve in the world and engage in God's mission? Isn't this something that all our churches now understand more fully? And wouldn't it be true that in churches like ours, there would be many who think that ministers (whatever their

title or role and however good and holy they are) are not actually necessary to the being of the church at all? So how come discussion of them takes up so many pages of *this* text, whereas the *people* of the church are, in comparison, barely mentioned? And while I would agree quite strongly that the text does indeed seem not to give enough reflection to the importance of the members, the people, of the church, or perhaps sound that note with sufficient passion and conviction, I can also suggest that the explanation lies (partly at least) in the comment in the introduction that *The Church* seeks to address the *difficult* issues which present the remaining obstacles to our living out of the gift of communion. I have to admit to not being entirely persuaded by my own argument on this particular matter, as I do find it frustrating that there is such a disproportionate discussion of church leaders when, for me, the heart of the church is in the whole of the people of God. Still, I think it is helpful to keep in mind that in a document like this, much of the ecumenical progress that has been made is now so profoundly received that it has become almost unremarkable, and thus it is unremarked upon. But it should not therefore be ignored. This is one way in which this document could seem somehow 'skewed'. Though it draws on the insights of bi-lateral dialogues and conversations since *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, it does not always convey a profound enough sense of wonder and gratitude for what has been achieved and what has become all but taken for granted. The discussions and new agreements about the meaning of justification by faith would be one such example. Some of the wounds of our past have actually begun to be healed, and this is worth celebrating. So we need to remember that there are some things that are not discussed at great length here, because they do not need to be any more.

The converse of this is that there are some discussions here that will strike many who read *The Church* from my context as simply peculiar and surprising. Understanding the church as 'sacrament', for example, may be an entirely new idea to some of the potential readers I know, and the debate about whether or not the church can sin will take some time to enter into without recourse to an 'obviously...'. There are some issues which few will actually care deeply about in my context (primacy?) and some issues which will take a long time to tune into. And, there will be some issues that will seem to be skated over in too few words, like the challenges of being faithful in a culture dominated

by religious pluralism—or others which might not seem to be taken seriously enough, like the call to mission, or the imperative to work for global economic justice. There will be a sense, perhaps, that the voices of the poorest people of the world are not heard strongly enough or that apparently small issues are given large paragraphs while the needs of the poor are paid lip service. There might well be a feeling (and this would be a commonly made critique of such ecumenical documents in my own context) that the *The Church* is too abstract, too much dominated by what looks a classical rather than contextual model of doing theology. And again, while recognizing the force of some of these critiques, and in some part agreeing them, I would suggest that there is space for dwelling with this text with patience, so that the real import of some of the issues presented and explored might come to the surface, in the hope and expectation that some of its very strangeness might speak to the difference and particularity of our context, however unlikely that might seem at first. There is need for a certain humility in reading this text from a Western Protestant church and a need to recognize that some of what looks to us like ‘classical’ theology (and therefore by some to be dismissed as non-contextual) is actually deeply rooted in what are very different contexts from our own and is addressing issues and concerns that may be different from ours, but are no less immediate and real. In reading this text, as with much else in life, the most immediate and felt reaction may not be the truest. That does not mean at all that argument and critique are inappropriate, but it might mean that they need to wait awhile, at least until we have wrestled hard and long enough to hear the deep passions behind the parts of the text we find obscure or abstract and at least until we have listened for what wisdom even the most apparently obscure part of the text might yet have to reveal to our own context, in which the search for how to be the church has a particular shape.

Chapter 1

The document begins, in Chapter 1, with a clear statement that the church is the design, and indeed the gift, of God. It affirms that the beginning of the church is rooted in the plans of the Triune God for the salvation of the world. It also sets out clearly the real and deep connection between the Church, as the body of Christ, and his life-giving mission in a ministry that takes part in God’s work of healing a

broken world. So, the church has given itself to the proclamation of the good news of salvation, to celebrating the sacraments and forming Christian communities. This has always been done, from the beginning, in the midst of the challenge of widening horizons and different cultures. The document wants to say both that the church is the design and gift of God, and that its life is lived out always in particular contexts and circumstances. In a sense, as I reflect on this from within my own culture and context, the challenges some face today are by no means new. The church has always been seeking to proclaim and live the Gospel with faithfulness in new cultures and the variety of cultural expressions of church leads, no less now than in the earliest days of church, to a situation in which visible unity must be searched for so that we can continue to recognize in one another, even in our diversity, the authentic presence of church, which is the gift and design of God.

Much reflection about the church in my context would choose to begin from the lived experience of being part of the church, and to ask what God is saying to us given our experience. And the experience is often one of decline or frustration or dislocation from culture, often one in which there is critique of the church as institution and its participation and collaboration with such things as patriarchy, colonialism and class structures. But perhaps that discourse deserves to be radically challenged by the kind of trust, expressed right at the beginning in *The Church* that the church is God's creation and gift, so that our sense of what is possible and indeed already being made is transformed. We, in my context, may need to learn to begin our reflection anew from the primary conviction that there is a sense in which the church, as God's design, *cannot* be 'in decline', that the church is more than a social institution, or a cultural phenomenon or historical entity, but is part of God's design for creation. The church, as the body of Christ, is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and is much more than, infinitely more than, the statistics that map its shape in the post-modern world. It is part of the wonder and grace of the ecumenical movement that the encounters that lie behind the production of this text open for us the possibility of seeing the church in a new way, and of recovering, in my own case, a new sense of the church as God's creation more than human institution. This, I would suggest, is the most significant thing about this first chapter for those whose thinking about the church is dominated by the sense of it as an

institution under threat. The question remains to some extent, for all of us, how to hold together both the origin of the church in God's generous grace and its incarnation in our local contexts. How can we hear and appreciate the significance of both of those discourses and hold them together well? The Holy Spirit works, and the Holy Spirit works in history. How do we discern when the Spirit is working outside of our historical, contextual and institutional expressions of the church, and when our understanding is being limited and defined by those expressions? If the church is indeed God's gift, how do we know when that gift reaches beyond and outside our lived, particular reality of church? The language of church as God's creation reminds us that the church is not only what we see or what we know, even though the sense of church as visible reality is also important, for God is made known among us in all our fleshly, local and contextual messiness. I don't think that my own church has any difficulty, in reality, in recognizing that other churches are indeed church, but we are sometimes in danger of forgetting that the church is more than the sum of our historical institutions. This chapter, and the work that led up to it, revived for me a deeper sense of the church as God's creation and design.

Chapter 2

The second chapter begins with the scriptures (though the title of the chapter roots the development of ecclesiology in the doctrine of the Trinity) and, as a Christian from the Reformed tradition, I am on more immediately familiar ground and in a more natural starting place. There is a clear recognition in the text that the New Testament offers a wide variety of ecclesiological insights, but that this variety is still compatible with Christian unity. But perhaps the text does not dwell long and patiently enough on reflection on those images and what they suggest for today's church. The chapter skips too quickly over the scriptural images only to land on some of the classic questions that the church has debated, rather than searching for the gift, in the scriptures, of a possible renewed sense of unity. And the text also moves (it strikes me now) all too quickly to discussing the *ministry* of the church, when, truth be told, the scriptural images and witness do not suggest that this is nearly as significant an issue as that swiftness implies. It is hard to read from the pages of the New Testament something quite like the traditions of ordination which many of us

have inherited and indeed celebrate. They may be good and holy traditions, but I don't think it is as obvious that these are rooted directly in the scriptures as *The Church* suggests. The text tells us that there is widespread agreement among churches about the vital place of ministry, though this assertion seems, in some ways, both to be protesting too much and too eager to find its place very soon in the argument. There is really not sufficient attention given to the ways in which a rediscovery of the significance of the *laos* of the church, or the church as 'body' and fellowship, have raised questions about the place and purpose of ordination. From my own context there remains something of a sense that the text at this point has just not taken seriously enough the 'turn', even perhaps since *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, towards an understanding of church as 'all the people'. Is there not more to say about how this has transformed all our churches to some degree?

There are, however, some striking and inviting passages in this chapter, particularly perhaps the discussions of the relationship between continuity and change, of the church as sign and *servant* of God's design for the world, and of legitimate diversity. There is a key passage in italics which suggests that both those in the church who call for continuity and those who call for change may, after all, be united by a common intention to be faithful and obedient to God. This is certainly, I would suggest, a living issue *within* churches as well as between them and the call for a new approach here is surely right. If we could find ways to honour each other and to deconstruct this very harmful division we might indeed learn from one another and see more of that unity to which Christ is calling us. The language of church as sign and *servant* (in contrast to the former customary language of church as sign and *instrument*) also offers much to thought. It suggests firmly that the church serves *God's* mission rather than its own, but it also offers a new way of framing what the image of 'Church as sacrament' (vocabulary not at all common in my tradition or context) might suggest. To speak of the church as 'servant' suggests something much more relational, personal and carried in humility than the language of 'instrument'. Some text in italics offers us the hope that there might be ways of understanding the unity between those who talk of 'church as sacrament' and those who want to preserve the language of 'sacrament' for individual sacraments alone. No Christians want to deny that the church is an effective sign of

God's presence and action, even if not everyone wants to use the language of 'church as sacrament'. My own encounters with this particular question moved from ignorance to a deeper understanding, but only as I worked at it in discussions over several years. I had to keep on asking what it meant and what it implied to talk of church as sacrament. It is related to the question of whether or not the church can sin (of which more later), and to the understanding that the church is God's creation before it is a human institution, an insight that I think I was in danger of forgetting. This chapter also considers the question of what has come to be known as 'legitimate diversity', and observes that there is lack of common criteria for establishing what might be such, as well as common structures so that we might use them effectively. But this is, perhaps, simply to re-state the challenge of the broken church. The text calls us to find ways to make common discernment possible. And of course it would need to be a process of discernment that would have some authority. Faith and Order has been doing some key work on the sources of authority for faith, and also on the ways in which we seek discernment on moral issues. This work moves slowly, and sometimes painfully, but it is clearly key to our journey to visible unity.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 dwells on the church, growing in communion, and it reflects from the beginning on the tension between the church as already the eschatological community that God wills (receiving and sharing the faith, celebrating the sacraments, serving the world, proclaiming the good news and working for justice and peace) and the church as a historical reality. This chapter goes early into that particularly difficult question, the relationship between the church and sin. For some, the church as body of Christ cannot sin. For others it makes sense to talk of the church as affected by sin, because sin may be systemic as well as being about individual choices. This whole discussion, of course, takes place, for many of us, in the context of revelations of abuse and corruption and amidst a growing understanding that cultures of secrecy and denial have been strong amongst Christians. For some, suggesting that the church cannot sin simply sounds like a theological justification for a refusal to face up to truth. For others, to describe the church as sinful is almost to suggest that Christ himself is not without sin. The text draws a distinction

between holiness and sin, but the issue is by no means resolved, and indeed it is part of what is a crucial 'rift' in the text, and in the churches, between those who think first of the church as God's creation, and those who think first (or at least as the starting point for reflection) of the church as a gathering of people, in all their human complexity, whom God has called together and as an historical and contextual institution. This rift keeps on opening up within the text and is, not surprisingly, unresolved. From my own context there weighs heavily the sense, particularly with our colonial history, that the church, as institution, has sometimes been corrupt and unjust, destructive of life and culture. We could not speak of the church as being sinless in our context without so many qualifications that it would be hard to be heard. And yet, we also know that we need a renewal of that profound sense of the church as a holy community in which and through which God is working, and against which not even the worst sin, not even hell itself, can prevail.

The third chapter continues by naming those things which are required for full communion within a visibly united church: communion in the apostolic faith, in sacramental life, in a mutually recognized ministry, commonly honoured structures of decision-making and common witness and service to the world. The text then summarizes some significant achievements in unity of faith, both through the work of the WCC and through bilateral dialogues. It also celebrates the way in which the reception of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, and indeed further work since then, has shown that there is significant agreement about the meaning of the sacraments. However, the text reveals that there is still much work to be done before we can find unity in our understanding of ministry and that seeking unity on issues about ordained ministry must therefore be a priority. The text goes on to say in effect that, though there is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament, the threefold pattern (of bishop, presbyter and deacon) emerged early and became 'the generally accepted pattern'. The text points out that *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* suggested that the threefold pattern 'may' serve as an expression of unity, but then asks whether the churches might be ready to achieve consensus now about whether the threefold ministry is part of God's will for the church on the way to unity. Thus this text challenges the churches to move forward (in a particular direction) on this question. I come from a church which has, as part of its story, a

rejection of personal episcopate, and thus of bishops, preferring to hold to its conviction that the oversight, care and decision making of the church is most faithfully enacted as God's people gather in meetings, congregations and councils. However, in one of my church's responses during the process that produced this text, we said that 'we have been able to embrace more positively, in recent times, the potential of personal episcopate as a gift to the Church', with the understanding that this is held within an understanding of the collegial, the communal and the personal for all forms of ministry, including the ministry of oversight. This suggests that we have been able to understand anew our own convictions about ministry, particularly as we see other churches recognising the collegial and communal in relation to ministry. This mutual sharing of insights *does* mean and indeed has meant that movement towards unity is possible. Reframing understanding has shifted something and this deserves to be celebrated. This doesn't mean that we have simply 'changed our minds' and adopted the threefold ministry exactly as practised in other traditions, but we have been able to change something in our practice and, perhaps most important, to understand our own patterns of ministry as in continuity in a new way.

There is a long section in this third chapter on the question of authority in the church and it is interesting that a title within the text frames authority as a 'gift', interesting because it is precisely the idea of authority which has come under severe scrutiny and question in the modern and postmodern world. Authority, far from being conceived as gift, has often been seen as threat or as rooted in the inappropriate and dangerous exercise of power. *The Church* spends a high proportion of its words in reframing authority as that which is rooted in Christ and as service which nourishes the life of the church without domination, and within a relationship of mutual love and dialogue. I come from a culture in which the very word 'authority' has become a very difficult one and in which there is far more talk of resisting authority, in the name of some higher good, or of the collapse of traditional sources of authority, than any kind of positive language. This is in part at least a way in which people are seeking to take a proper and mature kind of responsibility for their own lives, but the shadow side of that is a feeling that nothing can any longer be relied upon, that the search for truth is always deferred and that there is no secure ground left on which to stand or think. The text of *The Church*

here does not simply seek to shout out loud in defence of old forms of authority, but seeks to suggest ways in which we might find places of truth and authenticity (a much more friendly word in the postmodern world than authority, though one that has similar roots) together and in a new context. Do the conversations (dialogues) that we have with each other have some kind of authority? Has the ecumenical movement actually enabled us to see the authentic presence of Christ in each other and therefore given those who are 'other' than us a kind of authority for us? Are there ways in which together we might be able to witness to new forms of authority in a world which has lost a sense of rootedness and sureness? All this is a very important discussion for all our churches. However, as the text is shaped, it could be quickly lost in what seem to be discussions of some of the more commonly worked issues over the years between us about authority: personal episcopate, the authority of the ecumenical councils, and primacy. Perhaps the key is that the 'bigger' and more general discussion about authority needs to set the frame for those more specific matters. For example, in my own context, it is much more possible to think openly and creatively about the authority of bishops if the context in which personal episcopate is to be exercised is to be truly transformed by that reframing of authority that is made at the beginning of the argument. And indeed even the question of primacy (for a Reformed woman) might begin to look different in a global church in which ecumenical councils (and not only the early Ecumenical Councils) are held to be a source of authority for the churches. I found myself attracted by the idea of a ministry that fosters and promotes the unity of the church at the world level, and expressed and lived like that, within a context of a church which could really love and learn from all its members, the idea of primacy might be completely renewed. But I venture that there is far more to do on the wide and deep question of authority, particularly in listening more patiently to the voices of those who have suffered at the hands of the powerful in the church. How does this issue seem to those who have been excluded from the church's usual expressions of authority, or those who have met such authority expressed in sword and colonialism? Has the church to face much more radically the challenge to have 'the mind of Christ', before it can successfully reframe the notion of authority?

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 concerns the church 'in and for the world', and affirms that the church is not created by God for its own sake, but for the transformation of the world. The Church's mission is to proclaim the good news; through evangelization, and through bearing witness to God's reconciling and transforming love through the promotion of justice and peace. The chapter reflects on the issues surrounding evangelism within a plural world, though the context in which Christianity is a minority faith seems more to the fore in this discussion than contexts, like my own, in which any kind of faith is likely to be real for only a minority of people. In ecumenical discussions amongst Christians from around the world I am powerfully reminded that my own context is but one among others, and that for many of my sisters and brothers in Christ, a quite different context is real. However, the questions raised about truth, about faithfulness, and about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ are real for all of us. For me, they must be worked out in a postcolonial context and in a multicultural society, for others they are being worked out in a context where persecution of Christians may be a reality. This both reframes my own sense of what can sometimes be an abstract issue, and reminds me of the need to support and understand what others are living in other places. I am also increasingly aware of how my actions and those of Christians like me, in the more comfortably plural West, might impact in a very direct way on Christians elsewhere in the world. Perhaps like never before are we aware of how we live in one world community.

This chapter reflects too on the moral challenge of the Gospel and on the ways in which moral questions have, in some instances, become divisive among us. While we have become, in many ways, more united on matters of faith, new divisions among us have begun to open up, on moral questions. The text invites the churches to think further about how we might discern together what it means to follow Christ with faithfulness today, and attention is drawn to key work that is already being done on this issue. This section lays before us what is undoubtedly true; that the major threats to unity now come not from division over doctrine so much as division over moral questions. So the challenge of mutual discernment on such issues and of how to hold together in unity even if we cannot agree on such issues is indeed pressing. These divisions often lie within churches as much as

between us, and there are threats and fears of such division within many of our communions and confessions.

There is also a section on the church in society, which affirms that the church is called to respond to the needs of the world, to the economic inequalities that characterize the human family and to the need for peace. The text clearly says that the church is called not only to bring relief to the suffering, but also to work for transformation of the world, so that poverty may one day be history. However, the text turns away from saying that the church is called to be a 'church for the poor' saying that both rich and poor are in need of the salvation that only God can bring. There is also a call to share in the work of healing what is broken in the relationship between humanity and creation.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, there is a reference to John Chrysostom's wisdom about two altars, one in the Church and one among the poor; and the document ends on a note of eschatological hope, looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. But the reference to Chrysostom, intended to be reconciling and unifying, draws attention once again to a fundamental rift in this text. Throughout the process of producing it there came into the discussion the voices of those who wanted to speak first about the church not from what some would call the 'classical' ecumenical agenda, but from the experience of the church in places where the needs of the poor and the challenges of global injustice and poverty are felt with an urgency that must frame and shape any talk of God and of the Gospel. There were many moments when all those engaged in the task saw that there could be other ways to speak about the church, and other places in which to begin the discussion. The document as it is represents the results of a determined effort to speak also of the church as the servant God's mission in the world bringing good news to the poor, and to add that insight to the discussion. The ecumenical movement today is really no longer divided as it once might have been between powerful voices from the North and more tentative voices from the South, between academics and practitioners, between classical theologians and contextual ones. But perhaps we are at a kind of crucial moment, when the theological language of the ecumenical movement is on the cusp of a decisive change. The next time we write together about the church, we will *begin* from a different place and the vocabulary, and

the nature of the discussion, might be changed. This does not mean that the present issues will disappear, but they might be reframed and recast. We are on the edge, I think, of a new paradigm, in which the concerns of chapters 1 and 4 of this document will become much larger than some of the issues of chapters 2 and 3.

I suspect that almost every reader of this document will find it strange, as I, even as one of those involved with its production, have found it. But that is right, because I now recognise that what I find 'normal' needs radically to be challenged. I have found myself challenged already by some of the theology and thinking expressed here, and, I would say that my own assumed theology of the church has been shaken and opened and reframed. I have learned so much from seeing, and looking at carefully and patiently, the strangeness of others. But, as a Christian from a United and Reformed church in the global North, I expect that, as other voices in the ecumenical movement and in the churches of the world become stronger, I shall find myself more radically challenged yet, as I, who live, inevitably, among the rich, hear clearly the voices of the poor, and the voices of those who live in places, cultures and churches where the Gospel is alive with colour, passion, danger and hope. And as the church in its many forms, throughout the world, comes to terms in a new way with the significance of its location amongst the people, God's own *laos* and also the people of the world that God loves, then the shape and preoccupations of the search for unity in our understanding of the church will surely change.

**‘THAT WONDERFUL AND SACRED MYSTERY.’
A REFLECTION ON *THE CHURCH: TOWARDS
A COMMON VISION***

+ John Hind*

This essay reflects on The Church: Towards a Common Vision (FO Paper 214) in the light of the history of Faith and Order, and especially reactions to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (FO Paper III, the ‘Lima text’), many of which called for a more explicit treatment of the Church. The author argues that unity is central to ecclesiology and that agreement about the Church is central to the quest for unity. He considers that the goal of full visible unity needs reasserting. He pays tribute to Bishop Brent, one of the founding fathers of Faith and Order, who closely linked church unity with mission and social justice.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery, and by the tranquil operation of your perpetual providence carry out the work of our salvation: and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being raised up and things which had grown old are being made new and that all things are returning to perfection through him from whom they took their origin, even Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

Introduction

At first glance, the recent Faith and Order text on the Church (henceforth *The Church*) has a fairly straightforward title, but then, on closer examination, the apparent absoluteness of ‘The Church’ is

* John Hind retired in 2012 as Bishop of Chichester and Chairman of the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England. From 2000 to 2008 he was a member of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations. He has been a fraternal delegate at meetings of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. He remains a vice-moderator of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

¹ The original prayer is for the second reading at the Easter Vigil in the Gelasian Sacramentary. The latest version of the Roman Missal uses it for the seventh reading. In the Church of England, it appears in the Prayers of Intercession (Solemn Prayers) for Good Friday and is commended for use on other occasions.

qualified by a more modest, or even hesitant, subtitle, 'Towards a Common Vision.' The Faith and Order Commission starts from the 'given' of 'the Church', but recognises immediately that in the present state of ecumenical dialogue it is not possible to produce an agreed statement of what the churches believe about the church (ecclesiology) or even to claim that they are irrevocably on a convergent path.

This might suggest the rather gloomy conclusion that despite the many years this work has been in preparation, it is still a fairly preliminary document, to some extent a setting out of the *status quaestionis*. To some extent that is true, but even this is a significant achievement, because if the separated churches are able to recognise their own concerns in the issues identified in the text, a substantial foundation will have been laid for future progress not only towards a common vision, but, God willing, towards greater closer convergence and even, ultimately, consensus, with potential implications for the quest for unity.

The aim of the Commission, set out in the Introduction, is 'to offer a convergence text, that is, a text which, while not expressing full consensus on all the issues considered, is much more than simply an instrument to stimulate further study.' This presupposes that 'to pray that the Lord's will be done necessarily requires a wholehearted endeavour to embrace his will for and gift of unity.' This is a strong assertion that challenges the integrity of all Christians and their communities which use the Lord's Prayer.

Ecclesiology as an ecumenical issue

Among the obstacles to the churches' 'living out the Lord's gift of communion' the Commission acknowledges that many consider 'our understanding of the nature of the Church itself' to be the most difficult. Part of the difficulty about the doctrine concerning the Church is that, as with some other areas of doctrine that evidently divide churches, for example justification and atonement, there are no definitions of universally acknowledged ecumenical councils or any consensus among the Fathers to which appeal may be made. This suggests that the main task of the Faith and Order Commission is to help the churches understand one another better and identify those aspects of the matter that are in practice church-dividing, and why.

Without spelling out the meaning of the terms, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, acknowledged and used liturgically by most churches and respected by many others, professes faith 'in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.' The 'oneness' of the Church, with implications of both unity and uniqueness, was a consistent aspect of the teaching of the Scriptures and the Fathers from the beginning.

It must not be forgotten that the member churches of the WCC and all who have members on the Commission on Faith and Order have already committed themselves 'to call one another' to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world and to advance to that unity in order that the world may believe'. This is a high ecclesial aspiration. It does however leave open the question of how far this unity and fellowship already exist (and whether they may be identified with any particular ecclesial community or confessional family) or are yet to be achieved.

It should now be a matter for rejoicing that Faith and Order has been able to agree a text that neither indulges in mere comparative ecclesiology, nor proposes some new 'negotiated' picture of the Church, but which can reflect back to the churches what their own members have brought from the lived experience of the Spirit in their own communities, rooted in the Scriptures.

To the extent that the separated churches are able to recognise their own faith in this text, and to speak 'as if' the unity of the Church is both given and yet still to be received or realised, *The Church* will be an earnest of hope for the future.

In their Preface, the Director and Moderator of the Commission explain that the text is directly related to the call to visible unity and point out that this goal 'necessarily entails a mutual recognition of each other as churches, as true expressions of what the Creed calls the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church."' This is no small challenge, because this is not the case at present. Even among churches that use the Creed not all agree how they understand this article, and therefore what they believe about the Church or even whether or the extent to which they acknowledge each other as churches. What would be

¹ This phraseology makes it clear that it is the member churches that commit themselves to this mutual invitation. The WCC is the servant and instrument of its member churches.

necessary to enable such mutual recognition and how far would theological agreement on ecclesiology help?

Not the least important question is, therefore, what do we mean by 'the Church'? Do we even agree about what we are talking about?

When the mass media and the contemporary 'cultural despisers of religion' speak of 'the Church', they are usually thinking of an historical institution which may be criticized for its shortcomings, and, more rarely, praised for its positive achievements, but which should, at all events, be treated like any other social organisation. They are right to do so. To the extent that as Christians we claim a public and identifiable character for our 'society', we cannot complain when others subject it to the criteria of evaluation that apply to any other human organisation. So whenever we say things like 'The Church teaches...' or the Church 'stands for' this that or the other, indeed whenever we claim a voice in the market place of a pluralist society, we are inviting precisely this kind of scrutiny.

Surely, however, this is not what (or at least not all that) Christians mean when they confess their belief in 'one holy catholic and apostolic church.' Anyone who says the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed must mean more than that he or she believes in the existence of a worldwide association of those who own the name of Jesus. So, while in no way denying the publicly accountable character of 'the Church' as a society in history, this present text is concerned rather with this 'more' implied in the Christian profession of faith, and seeks to help the churches represented on the Faith and Order Commission, and indeed all member churches of WCC, to think through what this 'more' may be.

It is also hoped that it may help those who do not instinctively see the Church first of all as a 'wonderful and sacred mystery' to appreciate that for many ecclesiology is primarily theological (that is to say, it is about God, about God's eternal purposes and about their outworking in the world) and that sociology, however important for understanding and evaluating the terrestrial form of the Church, can never penetrate its inner reality. The question of course of the Church as mystery is precisely one of the areas needing further exploration.

Evidently, Christian communities (and their members) have a variety of understandings both of their own churches and of their relationship to the *Una Sancta*. For some the church is primarily a terrestrial institution, the body of those who have responded to the

call of Jesus and who, albeit called to an eternal destiny, should be understood above all as a community *in via*. For others, what emerged from the saving work of Jesus Christ was a community which, despite the evident failure of its members and institutional structures was and remains the bride of Christ, prepared for the time when she shall be presented pure and unspotted.

According to their particular theological convictions or preferences, Christians tend either to emphasise the holiness of the Church because of the holiness of the Head or, mindful of the sinfulness of its members, to concentrate on the Church's need for reform and renewal. Although most agree that, as long as this world endures, the Church on earth is marked both by the holiness of the Head and the sinfulness of the members, where the emphasis should lie, and the relationship between the observable community and the body of which Jesus Christ is the head are among the differences that complicate ecumenical discussion about the Church.

Other ecclesiological aspects of the ecumenical challenge lie in the very title of the World Council of Churches itself. The words 'council' and 'church' are both problematic.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to consider the history or theology of church councils or synods, but it should be remembered that for some Christian communities a council presupposes communion, whereas for others the term suggests a meeting between representatives of divided communities. For the former the convening of a council is a sign of unity (however hot the debates may be), for the latter it is evidence of disunity (however much its participants aspire to overcome their differences.)

Although the role of the World Council of Churches is to serve the churches in their aspirations and efforts for unity, the very name could suggest either that 'the Churches' already constitute a unity able to meet 'in council' or that, as a 'Council', the WCC is already some kind of anticipation of the unity sought by its members. While some Christians are quite content with one or other of these interpretations, others find them theologically unacceptable. There needs to be a gracious allowing of mutual space in which the use of the term 'council' is accepted, but in which its meaning is defined by the limitations of its own Constitution and Rules and in no way claims an authority apart from or above that of the member churches. (This is

particularly necessary in view of the binding authority of 'General Councils' recognised by most historic churches.)

Just as many problems surround the use of the term 'church'.

Although Rule 1 of the WCC states that 'the term "church" as used in this article could also include an association, convention or federation of autonomous churches,' and its Constitution lays down various criteria for membership (including faith, commitment to unity, size and stability), nowhere is the term 'church' defined. The omission is significant, and the reason for it was addressed directly in the introduction to the previous text *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. 'To participate in a council of churches ... does not imply that all members regard all other members as churches in the same way in which they regard themselves ... Such courtesy is not merely pragmatic, but can contribute to a spiritual encounter between different communities in which as trust grows it becomes possible to face the theological issues together.'

Not prejudging the question of what constitutes a church 'in the strict sense'¹ therefore allows 'each other space to use their own language to describe themselves'. This enables dialogue to take place without anybody being required to sacrifice principle either by denying what they believe about themselves or by affirming more about the status of others than their theological convictions permit.

It is in this context therefore that the Faith and Order Commission hopes that *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* will help Christians of different confessions find better ways of understanding each other as communities and, if possible, move towards some common understanding and expressing what it means to be 'the Church.'

It should therefore be clear that *The Church* is not an abstract or theoretical study of an area of doctrine which may be of interest to specialists, but a document of practical importance for all who are concerned that Christians should answer the Lord's own prayer that his disciples might be one² and how this might be so.

¹ Cf. *Dominus Iesus*, 17.

² John 17:11, where the prayer is for the Twelve (now Eleven after the departure of Judas) and 17:21, where the prayer is also for those 'who believe in me through their word' (v.20).

In an essay (2005) entitled ‘Why ecclesiology is important for the future of the ecumenical movement’,¹ Mary Tanner suggested a further reason why the ecclesiological work of Faith and Order is especially necessary today. After outlining the history of the study and its connection to the unity statements which have been made by most Assemblies of the World Council of Churches, she wrote about the challenges currently facing the ecumenical movement in the light of conflicting visions of the goal of unity and observed that: ‘There will be no sensible, or effective reconfiguration, unless some honest answer, however provisional, is given to how churches understand the goal, or the goals of the ecumenical movement.’

The goal of unity

The question, therefore, of the goal of unity—what it is, what it means and how far the churches are committed to it—is today one of the most vital ecumenical issues.

Over the past half century, the member churches of the WCC have taken for granted, officially at least, the vision of unity expressed in the statements of successive assemblies. By general consent, a high point was that of the statement of the New Delhi assembly in 1961, envisaging a unity whereby

all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.

This statement was far from uncontroversial even among those who agreed with its essential components, but its identification of those essential components has guided the ecumenical movement ever since.

In response to some criticisms of the earlier statement, the Nairobi assembly of 1975 refined the vision:

¹ In *Cracks in the Walls: Essays on Spirituality, Ecumenicity and Ethics: Festschrift for Anna Marie Aagaard*, eds. Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen & Johannes Nissen (Frankfurt: Peter Lank, 2005).

The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith, and therefore recognises the others as belonging to the same church of Christ and guided by the same spirit. As the New Delhi assembly pointed out, they are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same Eucharist; they recognise each other's members and ministries. They are one in their common commitment to confess the gospel of Christ, by proclamation and service to the world. To this end, each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling.

Disappointment at slow progress towards unity has led some to question the goal implied in these statements. Moreover the accession to the WCC of many new churches, especially those of an evangelical or Pentecostal background means that many committed to the unity of Christ's disciples are questioning the way in which this has traditionally been expressed. It is therefore necessary for the Faith and Order Commission to help the WCC and its member churches of Churches renew their commitment to the goal of visible unity.

'The Church: Towards a Common Vision'—an ecumenical tool?

The titles of the four chapters of *The Church* suggest a way of thinking about the Church that may enable readers to recognise both the progress that has already been made and the questions that remain, some of which may be church dividing. By highlighting mission (chapter 1), the Church as Communion, rooted in the reality of God's own being (chapter 2), and by describing how that communion can grow (chapter 3) and arguing that the Church on earth always exists for the sake of the world (chapter 4), it is hoped to identify areas in which both agreements and disagreement can be recognised.

In previous documents, different ways have been used to draw attention to outstanding areas of difficulty in a variety of ways—for example by commentary in the margin (*BEM*) or by 'boxes' (in the two previous versions of this ecclesiological text). During the preparation of *The Church*, long discussions took place about continuing areas of tension. 'Getting material out of the boxes' became a kind of catchphrase to sum up the efforts to overcome them. Eventually it

was decided to remove the boxes altogether, instead incorporating outstanding questions in a different typeface in the body of the text, inviting the churches not to concentrate on these issues as divisive problems, but as issues to be further explored together. In this way, it is hoped to encourage readers not only to be realistic about the problems, but also to be hopeful for their resolution.

An historical note at the end of the document sets out the process that led to the publication of FO 214. This explains how the essential themes in the text have been the preoccupation of the Faith and Order movement from the outset. Indeed, one of the sections of the Report of the First World Conference on Faith and Order, held in Lausanne in 1927, was entitled "The Nature of the Church."¹

To understand *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* in the wider context of the ecumenical movement and the development of Faith and Order is interesting in its own right, but being aware of this story also helps build confidence in the potential of the text to enable churches to gain in mutual understanding and even, in some cases, to be encouraged or enabled to take some practical steps towards unity.

If agreement in faith is necessary for unity, and if belief in the Church is an aspect of Christian faith, the question of the Church is vital for the ecumenical movement. At the same time, given that almost all churches embrace some variety of understandings, it must be asked how high a level of agreement on ecclesiology and its philosophical and sociological expression is necessary for full ecclesial communion?

All this is reflected in the questions addressed to the churches in the Introduction to the text. The questions are important in themselves; but no less significant is to whom they are addressed. The questions are carefully formulated in order to enable a wide range of ecclesial traditions to respond to the text. Most of the questions are of a reflective character, but one in particular is an invitation to action: 'How far is your church able to form closer relationships in life and mission with those churches which can acknowledge in a positive way the account of the Church described in this statement?'

¹ See the Final Report of the First World Conference on Faith and Order, Lausanne 1927 in L. Vischer (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order movement, 1927-1963*, (Bethany Press, 1963).

This question echoes one of those posed by *BEM*, asking the churches what 'consequences your church can draw from this text for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith'?

Like *BEM*, *The Church* is primarily a text for the churches, and it is from them that responses are sought above all. This is not meant to discourage others, such as councils of churches, theological schools and individual theologians (as well as friendly or critical observers from outside the Christian community) from contributing, but the most important thing is to know how the churches as such see the text. This is itself ecclesiologicaly important. It is not for the WCC or the Faith and Order Commission to propose theological statements to the churches, but rather to help the churches recognise what they can of their own faith in the faith of others.

In the Baptism section of *BEM*, it was asserted that

Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity. 'There is ... one baptism, one God and Father of us all ...' (Eph. 4:4-6). When baptismal unity is realized in one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship. (Baptism, paragraph 6)

As the churches responded to *BEM* it quickly became apparent that the text itself had ecclesiological implications even if, as was often observed, it contained no explicit doctrine of the Church. Among those who discerned an implicit ecclesiology in the text, there was, not surprisingly a mixture of praise and criticism

Many churches whose own experience made them particularly conscious of the way in which disagreement about the sacraments can lead to and sustain divisions responded quickly and comprehensively to the Lima text. This obviously meant especially those communities most directly concerned by the disputes highlighted at the Reformation that have divided western Christians ever since.

This also includes questions of what activities different churches acknowledge as sacraments (or even sacramental in a wider sense).

The very fact that ministry was considered alongside baptism and the eucharist was difficult for some, illustrating not only differences about the sacraments themselves, but also about authority and the understanding of the Church.

There were however many others from whom responses were sought who did not reply, some of whom thought the text already revealed an ecclesiology too 'high' for their own engagement. The whole question of the sacramentality of the church remains one of the *Schwerpunkte* of the quest for unity and hence of the ecclesiological studies of the Faith and Order Commission. This issue is addressed in paragraph 27 of *The Church*.

Hesitation was also felt by some churches in the 'two-thirds' world, especially of the Global South on whom historic western divisions have been visited as part of their colonial past, and by newer churches and Christian communities, particularly of an Evangelical or Pentecostal character, for whom ecumenical and even ecclesiological and sacramental categories have not generally been central to their preoccupations.

Even among those churches most aware of the intimate connection between the sacraments and the Church, not all appeared to find it easy to respond to *BEM*. This was particularly true of some of the Eastern churches. One reason for this may be that, arising as they did in the context of the existing separation of East and West, the divisions between western Christians did not originally impinge directly on Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches.

Some of the Reformation questions do however touch the very roots of Christian faith and have inevitably to be addressed by all churches within the single ecumenical movement.

Against this background, it is hoped that the present text *The Church* will help Christians in various different communities to consider (or if necessary reconsider) how their own understanding of the Church relates to that of other Christians. For some it may even awaken the question whether there may be an emerging Christian mind on these matters and whether such a common view among believers (*consensus fidelium*) might be evidence of an underlying *sensus fidei* (the supernatural gift of faith uniting all the baptized.)

An Anglican perspective

I have been asked to write this essay from the particular perspective of a member of the Faith and Order Commission, who is a priest (and since 1991) a bishop in the Church of England and who remains deeply committed to the goal of full visible unity.

I shall not conceal my despondency at the difficult present ecumenical situation, to which Anglican as well as other churches have contributed. After two generations during which hopes for progress towards full visible unity were high, there now seems a cooler atmosphere. Although this may be in part due to a more realistic assessment of the obstacles in the ecumenical path, it seems also that some of the earlier commitment has been lost and that despite significant progress at the level of mutual theological understanding, few churches have been willing to take practical steps towards unity even when no essential principles are at stake. More people are speaking about practical collaboration rather than sacramental and ecclesial communion as the goal. I cannot believe that this is a sufficient response to the Lord's prayer that 'they may all be one.'

I am however grateful for the significant role played over the years by Anglicans in the Faith and Order movement, but perhaps especially at the beginning by Bishop Brent,¹ and for the rounded way in which he saw the central place of ecclesiology in the quest for Christian and human unity.

Seeds of the Faith and Order movement were sown at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910² at which he played a leading role.

In an address on 'The Sufficiency of God' given on 22 June 1910 to the Conference, in which only Anglican and Protestant churches participated, Bishop Brent spoke of 'our ideal as it is in our minds to achieve a perfect unity, not merely the unity of those various portions of Christendom here represented, but the whole of Christendom.'³ In

¹ Charles Brent, 1862-1929, missionary, and bishop successively of the Philippine Islands and Western New York (Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA).

² The conference was held 'To consider missionary problems in relation to the non-christian world.' Its proceedings are digitally available at quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=genpub;idno=1936337.

³ In the proceedings of the Conference, vol. IX, p.334.

Commission VIII of the same Conference, on Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity, he spoke specifically about the need to reach out to the Roman Catholic Church which at that time stood aloof, and in that context said 'in any scheme, practical or theoretical, for unity, we must take into our reckoning the Roman Catholic Church, which is an integral part of the Church and of the kingdom of God.' He stressed that when facing the things that divide them, the churches ought not to behave in the manner of worldly conflict. He declared that, 'There is such a thing as Christian controversy,' and urged 'let us be sure that we do not commit that most grievous of all sins, slandering another Church. Slander is always an evil in any cause, but for one Church to be guilty of slandering another is a double sin in the sight of God.'¹

The Edinburgh Conference was a meeting of missionary societies and was specifically convened to address the problem of competitive (Protestant) activity. Unlike some earlier, smaller conferences there was a significant Anglo-Catholic presence at Edinburgh. This had been made possible by agreement among the organisers that the conference would be based on mutual respect between the denominations and not on a principle of 'non-denominationalism'. It was also agreed that 'questions affecting the differences of Doctrine and Order between the Christian bodies shall not be brought before the Conference for discussion or resolution.'²

This was not because these matters were thought unimportant. Exactly the opposite. It was rather because they were regarded as vital questions for the churches as such, and not for a conference, that a different forum had to be created which would enable the churches themselves to discuss these matters, however indirectly.

While it would not have been appropriate for the Edinburgh Conference to discuss or resolve such matters, they were in fact fundamental not only to the unity of the Church but also to the missionary endeavour itself. Nothing less than a united Church could present the unique Gospel to the world. This was the 'new vision [that] has been unfolded to us ... new responsibility ... [and] fresh

¹Vol. VIII, p.199

² Letter from Bishops Talbot and Gore to the Standing Committee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 3 November 1908 in R. Rouse and S.C. Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 1 (1517-1948)*, p.406.

duties', as Brent himself put it in his address on the 'Sufficiency of God'.

This vision was reflected in the introduction to the report on Committee VIII of the Conference: 'Besides the problem of organisation, there is a deeper problem presented by the ecclesiastical divisions of western Christendom ... The divided state of the church is a source of weakness in its work ... It represents a grievous falling short of the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ for his Church.'¹ This important ecclesiological statement asserts that disunity is both pragmatically and theologically problematic: it is a 'falling short' as well as a 'weakness.'

Throughout his ministry, Bishop Brent was insistent on both the theological and the missiological imperatives to unity and on their inseparability. He was no rarefied 'ecclesiologist'. Already in a series of papers published in 1899 under the title, *With God in the World*, he showed how closely the aims of what would become the movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work and the International Missionary Council belonged together. He also set out some of his own guiding principles in an address to Howard University in the same year as the Edinburgh Conference:

In my life in the far East, certain words, very wisely written long years ago, constantly come to my mind, and the more I think of them, the more profoundly am I convinced of their truth. 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth.' That is to say, God's intention for mankind is that it should be a wonderfully diversified family, a family at unity with itself. Fortunately it is a diversified family. It would be a most unfortunate thing for all of us if we were all cast in exactly the same mould; if we all had the same temperament, the same characters throughout. But personality is so rich in its diversifications that even in a tribe or in a family, you find distinct characters, characters that are not antagonistic to each other, but each one supplementing the rest, and what applies to the individuals in a family or in a tribe is equally true of nations and peoples and races.

Charles Brent was a true ecumenist.

While Brent was instrumental in persuading the bishops and the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of USA to take the initiative towards the convening of a world conference on Faith and Order, the preparatory work largely fell to other hands,

¹ Vol. VIII, p.8.

because he was fully stretched in his responsibility as a missionary bishop and as first president of the International Opium Commission.¹

It was a fitting tribute to the foundational role played by this great slum priest and missionary bishop whose evangelistic zeal and commitment to unity were combined with a pastoral, moral and political commitment to the common good, that one of the first acts of the First World Conference on Faith and Order (1927) should have been to elect Brent as President—and how appropriate that his grave should be in Lausanne!

I am also glad at the historic commitment of the Church of England to the vision of unity which, faithful to the Scriptures and the great tradition of the Church, has been articulated by the Faith and Order movement, has been expressed by assemblies of the World Council of Churches, and has now inspired *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

Conclusion

It remains to be seen, of course, whether and how far *The Church* 'scratches where the churches itch'. But I count it a privilege to have been able to participate in the production of the text (at least since 1999) which, while not touching all aspects of the doctrine of the Church (it does for example have a tendency to speak of the Church apart from Christ, as if the whole Christ were not both Head and members), nevertheless provides a tool for divided Christian churches and ecclesial communities to reflect on what they themselves believe to be essential faith as regards the Church and what degree of consensus may be required for unity.

As a member of the Church of England, I appreciate the insistence on the goal of full, visible unity, and the determination of the Commission to keep the preoccupations of Faith and Order inseparable from those of Life and Work within the perspective of a Church which is missionary by nature. While church unity must grow out of bi-lateral encounters, the multi-lateral character of Faith and Order enables churches to see their mutual relations in the widest context and helps them to ensure coherence between their various ecumenical relationships. In Church of England terms, this is

¹ Brent had been the chief commissioner for the USA to the Commission held in Shanghai in February 1909.

sometimes described as 'all-round ecumenism,' with the aim that 'all who profess and call themselves Christians' may be one flock with one shepherd.

The goal is moreover to be realised 'at every level.' Wherever one may speak of 'the Church', be it at the smallest domestic level of the individual cell or house-church or that of the universal Church, and every intermediate level, the challenge to be of one heart and mind is the same.¹

Finally, full visible unity can be (and can only be) realised by stages. This is because there are different reasons both for the original separation between Christians and for their continuing divisions. The longing for separation to be overcome also emerges at a different pace in different communities. Despite the difficulties and many setbacks on the path, the very process of travelling together is itself a sign of unity.

It would be wonderful if *The Church* were to awaken the same enthusiasm as greeted *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to which it owes so much.

¹ Christian communities differ as to what they regard as the norm or typical application of the word 'church'—parish, diocese, national, regional or universal Church.

MILESTONES ON THE ROAD: *FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION*

Sandra Gintere*

This paper presents From Conflict to Communion, the document prepared by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, to provide guidelines for the joint commemoration of the fifth centenary of the Reformation. The events and factors which have made such a commemoration possible are examined: previous commemorative documents, Vatican II, as well as recent Luther studies, especially those highlighting the value the Reformer attached to the Church.

Not only Biblical scholars, but also every attentive reader of the New Testament has noticed that Jesus in the High Priestly prayer prayed for the unity of the Church, unity of Christians, unity of all those who believe in Him. At the same time divisions in global Christendom and among different branches and denominations are a constant source of confusion for the followers of Jesus. The difference between what Jesus prayed for and the reality of the Church comes particularly sharply into focus when significant anniversaries, jubilees and celebrations of the Christian faith are celebrated. The approaching 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation is no exception. This anniversary calls us anew to think about Christian unity.

In 2009 the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Vatican established a new working group of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. This commission consists of ten Lutheran and ten Catholic Theologians, and a few experts from each side. From the very beginning there were two main objectives for the work of this commission: to work out guidelines for the common commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and to prepare a joint statement on Baptism by 2017.

* Dr Sandra Gintere is professor at the Luther Academy, Riga, Latvia and a member of the working group of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity which prepared the document, *From Conflict to Communion*.

After three years of intensive work, in October 2012 the document entitled *From Conflict to Communion* was sent to all the member Churches of the LWF and to the Roman Catholic Church. These guidelines of how to commemorate together (*Gedenken*) the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation in the Western Church are now being used in many churches to get ready for this jubilee. In fact, together with the Reformation another important event in Western Church life will be celebrated in 2017, namely 50 years of ecumenical dialogue between the LWF and the Vatican. The publication *From Conflict to Communion*, as well as promoting the joint commemoration of the Reformation's 500th anniversary, is a result, fruit, or gift of 50 years of dialogue.

By now the expression 'From conflict to communion' has become a well-known term in ecumenical circles. Exactly the same title (*From Conflict to Communion. About Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue*) was used by Dr Theodor Dieter, director of the Strasbourg Ecumenical Institute, for his report to Pope Benedict's meeting with his former students, on 1 September 2012 at Castel Gandolfo. Dr Dieter is also a consultant of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and contributed greatly to the 2017 commemoration guidelines.

1. A special commemoration of a special event

Commemorating events that have influenced the religious, social and cultural environment of modern Western society is a familiar experience. Therefore it is logical that such a major event as 500 years since the beginning of the Reformation needs to be well prepared, which also means jointly prepared. The Reformation movement which started on 31 October 1517, is without doubt one of the essential and influential factors for the development of Western culture and society. It has not lost its meaning or its impact to this very day.¹

Even though today most scholars doubt that Luther really nailed the 95 Theses to the door of Wittenberg Palace Church, on the eve of All Saints day, this date has a symbolic meaning. Luther had prepared 95 Theses for the discussion about indulgences, as he stated in his foreword to the Theses, and originally sent them to the archbishop of

¹ See Thomas Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Frankfurt am Main: 2009); also Bernd Hamm & Michael Welker, *Die Reformation: Potentiale der Freiheit* (Tübingen: 2008).

Mainz, Albrecht and to his local bishop, Hieronymus Schultz. During his lifetime Luther never mentioned nailing the theses to the door of the Palace Church, but rather spoke about this date as the beginning of his resistance to indulgences.

Every year on 31 October, the beginning of the Wittenberg Reformation, most Protestant Christians commemorate and celebrate the genuine efforts of Dr Martin Luther (1483-1546) who under the political protection of the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, wanted to correct the mistakes of the late medieval Catholic Church, to accord with the Gospel testimony of Holy Scripture, especially the somewhat blatant 'buying' of forgiveness through the practice of selling indulgences.

The joint or common commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is the result of a long and complex road but it is precisely this long journey that makes the celebration all the more significant. It is one of the characteristic features of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that the way to Christian and Church unity is being sought at many different levels, as well as being actually lived out at a practical level, for example by the Taizé Community, and the *Groupe des Dombes*. One of the most important preconditions for the celebration of 2017 has been the experience of celebrating together other ecumenically significant events. For example, in 1980, the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession opened the way for, and provided opportunities to develop, a common understanding of basic Christian truths, pointing to Jesus Christ as the living center of faith.¹ The 1983 celebration of Luther's 500th birthday was marked by the publication of the document 'Martin Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ', which had been worked out in intensive Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. In this document several Luther themes that he held particularly important were addressed, and Luther himself was often referred to as a 'witness of Jesus'. This document states that due to the complexity of political, ecclesial and theological conditions and their interaction/collision, Luther's attempt to reform

¹Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 'All Under One Christ: Statement on the Augsburg Confession 1980,' in *Growth in Agreement I: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1972-1982*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lucas Visser (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 241-7.

the Church led rather to the greatest split in Western Christianity ever, which was in no way Luther's purpose. It was also stated that 'neither Protestants nor Catholics can ignore the person and message of this man'.¹

Each centenary up until the 500th has only been celebrated by Lutherans or Protestant Christians, not by Catholics.

In 1617, the first centenary of the Reformation was celebrated just a year before the devastating Thirty Years War. This celebration manifested the deep disagreements among Protestant Christians themselves, namely between Lutherans and the Reformed or Calvinists (this was particularly the case in Brandenburg). In February the Protestant League under the initiative of Frederick V, Elector Palatinate, celebrated the centennial in Heilborn on the basis of a sharp anti-Catholic tone, praising Luther as the one who freed the Church from bondage to Rome. At the same time Saxony, Luther's native country, did not join this League but rather celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Reformation separately with Wittenberg university as the center, stressing its Lutheran identity and naming their celebration *Primus Jubilaeus Lutheranus*.

During the celebration of the 200th Anniversary in 1717, the main focus was on Luther's personality. The tercentenary was marked by the dominance of Prussia and Friedrich Wilhelm III who wished to establish unity among Lutherans and Reformed. He used the celebration as the occasion for Lutherans and Reformed to celebrate the first Eucharist service together and form the Church of Union. However, the Reformed and Lutherans outside this Union continued to strongly, even vehemently emphasize denominational identity. The celebration of the 400th anniversary was disrupted by World War I. Only smaller, local celebrations took place, Luther being primarily praised as the great German national hero.

In 2017, 31 October will be commemorated by Lutherans and Catholics together for the first time in 500 years. And there will be every reason for joy and thanksgiving at 50 years of the ecumenical

¹ Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 'Martin Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ' I.1, *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982- 1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros FSC, Harding Meyer and William G. Rusch (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 438.

movement and all that has been done towards the fulfillment of Jesus' High Priestly prayer, 'That all may be one' (John 17).

2. What makes a joint commemoration possible

There are two major developments in Western Christianity that have made such a common commemoration of the 500th anniversary possible. Firstly, Vatican II and its promulgations and decisions, particularly these which made the Catholic Church more open to its brothers and sisters in other Christian denominations, was a major breakthrough. And secondly, since the 1950s, there has been a considerable amount of new research on Luther, his personality and theology (*Lutherforschung*) mainly from Lutheran theologians. In this research many features of Luther's thoughts have been brought to the forefront that earlier were in the background. This new research and new perspective is significant for the ecumenical movement as it highlights aspects of Luther's thought that are more conciliatory. They also help smooth out some of the sharp polemical formulations and their subsequent interpretations, which gave them added polemical weight, during the turbulent years of the Reformation.

Even though the public participation of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in the ecumenical movement only began in 1965 thanks to Vatican II,¹ there had been much ecumenical reflection within the RCC prior to Vatican II. The fresh approach to other denominations taken by Vatican II profoundly influenced the further development of Western Christianity.

For the ecumenical movement the most important document of Vatican II is the decree published on 21 November 1964, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR). In the second part of chapter III of this decree ('Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See'), the section entitled 'Separated Churches and ecclesial communities in the West,' it is stated that '... some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church' (paragraph 3). The decree

¹ Wolfgang Thönissen. 'Konsolidierung und Institutionalisierung der Ökumene. Die Aktivitäten des Paderborner Erzbischofs Lorenz Jaeger in den fünfziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts', in J. Ernesti/W. Thönissen (eds.), *Die Entdeckung der Ökumene. Zur Beteiligung der katholischen Kirche an der ökumenischen Bewegung* (Paderborn/Frankfurt, 2008), 159-176.

uses such terms as 'the brethren divided from us' who have 'a life of grace' and speaks of their faith and worship as 'capable of giving access to the community of salvation.'

The critical move here is the use of the plural for 'Churches' and the recognition that Christians outside the RCC have access to the 'community of salvation.' It is of utmost significance that UR recognizes that the Spirit of Christ also works through separated Churches and Communities as 'means of salvation'.² According to Theo Dieter, the Fathers of the Council came very close, with these statements, to recognizing the sacramentality of other Churches.

In 1966, a year after Vatican II, the ecumenical tasks facing the RCC were formulated by Joseph Ratzinger, then professor at Tübingen, in the speech he delivered at the Lutheran-Catholic theological conference organized by the Strasbourg Ecumenical Institute. He pointed out that one of the most significant accomplishments of the Council was the use of the plural 'Churches', 'that had been almost lost to Catholic Theology during the past centuries, even the past thousand years'.³ He also recommended that the possibilities opened up by the new formula should be sought out and exploited. And so it happened.

3. Recent Luther studies

The research done on Luther's theology during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is the next, very important precondition for a common commemoration of 2017. It allows us to have a fresh look at

¹ UR I, para. 3: 'The brethren divided from us also use many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. These most certainly can truly engender a life of grace in ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community. These liturgical actions must be regarded as capable of giving access to the community of salvation.'

² Ibid. 'The separated Churches and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church.'

³ Joseph Ratzinger, 'Theologische Aufgaben und Fragen bei der Begegnung lutherischer und katholischer Theologen nach dem Konzil', in: *Oecumenica*, 1969 (251-270), 253.

his ideas and their potential. Thanks to this research, both Lutherans and Catholics have gained new insights into the Reformer's theology. For Lutherans, these insights were significant because they opened the door to a more fruitful ecumenical dialogue with the RCC. Roman Catholics, for their part, have acquired a new perspective on Luther as renewer of the Church and reforming Catholic. Today Lutherans and Catholics together can appreciate Luther as witness to the Gospel, teacher of the faith and champion of spiritual renewal. A few of these central insights are:

1. The Reformation understanding of the Outward Word as *promissio*—as the promise, that creates what it promises, creating, awakening and increasing faith that responds in trust.

2. Luther's understanding of the Church as Mother: 'In the first place, [the Christian] has a unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which the Holy Spirit reveals and proclaims, through which he illuminates and inflames hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.'¹ And again in his sermon from 25 December 1522: 'the one who must find Christ, should find Church first ... who wants to know anything about Christ, should go to Church.'²

In the sermon 'About worshipping the Sacrament of Christ's Holy Body' (1523), Luther stresses the Church as Body of Christ.³ In his *Lectures on Genesis*, given between 1534 and 1545, the older Luther states that the true Church had never existed apart from the outward signs of baptism and Eucharist. These examples serve to underline what Luther had already written in his 1520 *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, namely that the Church does not exist only as an unseen entity but that it is a profound unity of both the visible and invisible. When God works salvation God uses all peoples in this process. This is clearly seen in Luther's understanding of baptism. 'We cannot accept baptism from human hands other than believing that Christ Himself, in fact God himself with his hands works in baptism.'⁴

¹ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p.436.

² Weimarer Ausgabe, 10 I/1; 140,7-13. Author's own translation.

³ *Ibid.* 11; 440,33-441,4.

⁴ *Ibid.* 6; 530,22-31. Author's own translation.

3. Luther's stress on 'pro nobis' in the Creed does not exclude but includes the faith of the Church in a quite unique way. Luther's introduction to his *Invocavit Sermons* highlights this important aspect. Luther unites the most individual of events—a person's death, with the faith of the Church. He writes: "The summons of death comes to us all, and no one can die for another. Everyone must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone. We can shout into another's ears, but every one must himself be prepared for the time of death, for I will not be with you then, nor you with me. Therefore every one must himself know and be armed with the chief things which concern a Christian."¹

On the basis of these and many other statements by Luther, which recent studies have brought to our attention, Theo Dieter has shown that the original Luther has a much deeper ecumenical potential than perhaps was previously thought or as the neo-protestant interpretation of Luther assumed. At the same time, it is necessary to free Luther's original insights from the harsh polemic and bitter expressions so that his constructive ideas and insights may be valued.

In ecumenical dialogues about Luther it is very important to keep in mind how Luther's theology is situated in relation to the teaching of the Catholic Church. Ecumenical dialogues serve the purpose of clarifying this relationship, freeing it from misunderstandings and correcting wrong interpretations. Dialogues encourage questions, especially the exploration of context: are our consultations still defined by the controversies of the sixteenth century, are sixteenth century solutions binding or have conditions changed? We do not have to be slaves to the past or repeat its mistakes (as John XXIII pointed out when he opened Vatican II). In this way, Luther's contribution to the universal church and to Christian mission can be better appreciated.

Dr Professor Wolfgang Tonissen,² the director of Adolf-Müller-Ecumenical Institute in Paderborn, has identified some essential points in Luther's theology that are very important for the RCC and

¹ Luther Works (LW) 51:70.

² Wolfgang Tönissen, 'Reformation, katholische Reform und Konfessionalisierung', in Michael Kappes, Christhard Lück, Dorothea Sattler et al., *Trennung überwinden. Ökumene als Aufgabe der Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), pp. 7-56.

for ecumenical dialogues. He stresses in particular Luther's call to daily repentance for each Christian and every Church. Dr Tonissen points out that the center of Luther's reforms was based on the spirit of the renewal of theology through Holy Scripture. In its deepest sense Luther's reform program was a program for freedom that centers around the priesthood of all believers and a call for all Christians to serve the Church. Dr Tonissen also points out that Luther re-discovered the Bible for his time. In the midst of his insecurity and temptations, Luther discovered God's mercy, and he sought to express this infinite mercy appropriately! Thus arose his famous distinction between Law and Gospel that belongs to the hermeneutical keys of Luther's theology and also helps to make clear the focus of his reform. Dr Tonissen is also aware that from the very beginning the Reformation was, in addition, a political phenomenon. Although Luther wanted to renew Church and theology, his desire for change and reform spread out into broader society and into all spheres of societal life.

4. Conclusion

The Joint Declaration on Justification (JDDJ)¹ is also a major step towards the 500th Commemoration in 2017. Already before that Declaration, John Paul II, in his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* paragraph 81, stated that the difference between the 'deposit of faith and the formulation in which it is expressed' should be methodologically distinguished. JDDJ speaks of 'differentiated consensus'—the consensus that reflects what is common to Catholic and Lutheran teaching and what is allowed to be different'.²

Despite these many steps forward in ecumenical discussions between the RCC and the LWF, there remain some critical differences. Perhaps one of the most urgent to be resolved is on the question of ministry and the sacramentality of that office, of ordained ministry.

¹ 'Lutherischer Weltbund/Päpstlicher Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen, Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre. Gemeinsame offizielle Feststellung.' Anhang (Annex) zur *Gemeinsamen offiziellen Feststellung*, Frankfurt/Paderborn 1999.

² H. Meyer, 'Die Struktur ökumenischer Konsense,' in: *Versöhnte Verschiedenheit. Aufsätze zur ökumenischen Theologie I* (Paderborn/Frankfurt 1998), pp.60-74.

Along with the theoretical or theological preconditions that produced the document *From Conflict to Communion* and make possible a common Lutheran-Catholic commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, practical preconditions also have their significance. One of the most important of these has been the experience of celebrating together other ecumenically significant events: for example, the 450th celebration in 1980 of the Augsburg Confession and the document published in connection with it, *All under one Christ*. As we have mentioned, during the long process of preparation, a common understanding about basic Christian truths was developed with, most importantly, the recognition that Jesus Christ is the living center of faith.¹

The LWF-Vatican Document *From Conflict to Communion* which gives guidelines to the Churches on how Lutherans and Catholics can commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation together is again the result of a long process of ecumenical dialogue, working groups, and consultations on the part of individuals and communities deeply committed to the call for unity. It has opened a way for Christians to implement this call to unity in their everyday lives. The grass roots, local communities are called to find ways of deeper cooperation among neighboring communities as a step towards making communion possible now. And Church leaders are equally called by the document to seek ways of reconciliation rather than focusing on issues that divide. The publication of *From Conflict to Communion* is but one step that now has to be lived out on all levels of church life.

Ecumenism itself—the desire, the ideas, the discussion, the growing relationships—is already a manifestation of the Holy Spirit today. It is an important way through which Christians have come together, or better said, through which the Holy Spirit has brought them together. But it is important to know where this road leads and what is the goal. For the present time the exact formulation of the goal is perhaps the most difficult task.

¹ Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 'All Under One Christ: Statement on the Augsburg Confession 1980,' *Growth in Agreement I: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1972-1982*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lucas Visser (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 241-7.

The biggest obstacle on the ecumenical way would be the different goals and different understandings of church unity that the participant Churches have. Dr Theo Dieter has formulated the main question for today's ecumenical movement as follows: 'Is it possible for—in our case—the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Churches to formulate an objective in which they can both recognise themselves, without each feeling consumed by the other?'¹ Can the gifts of each ecclesial body be mutually recognized? Can a road be opened towards ecclesial identity that both respects the place of origin of individuals and of denominations, but that also and always strives towards an ever-deeper bond?

UR remains as important as it was before:

Although the ecumenical movement and the desire for peace with the Catholic Church have not yet taken hold everywhere, it is our hope that ecumenical feeling and mutual esteem may gradually increase among all men.²

¹ Theodor Dieter: 'Die ökumenische Meisterfrage lautet daher: Lässt sich eine Zielvorstellung finden, in der sich—in unserem Fall—die katholische Kirche und die lutherischen Kirchen wiederfinden, ohne dass sich die eine von der anderen vereinnahmt fühlt?'

² *UR* III, II, para.19.

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS IMPAIRED BY DIVISION

John Bradley*

Body language, as used by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, has been central to the ecumenical journey and is also essential to theological reflection on disability. Most biblical instances of a person with a disabling condition conclude with their cure. Exceptions are Mephibosheth and St Paul's own 'thorn in the flesh'. The relation of suffering to sin can be addressed through the story of the man lowered through the roof in Capernaum. Different Christians and Churches need 'connective tissue' to work together leading to bodily growth.

Paul's use of 'body' language to describe the Church (1 Corinthians 12)

To describe a group of people as relating to one another as the various organs of the human body work together was not original to Paul but he used it in an original way. For him, the body was not a city or a state but the whole Church. His emphases were that Christ is the head of the body on whom the whole Church thereby depends and that no member is dispensable or worthless because each has a vital role. The evident diversity among the members of the body makes clear that the aim is not uniformity but dynamic unity.

Another significant, but more recent, change in body language has been in the way people with disabilities are described. At one time people with impaired mobility were called cripples and those with cerebral palsy were called spastics. Whether or not these terms were intended to be derogatory or patronising, that is how they felt to those so described. So other terms were used instead, though still with the risk that today's euphemism might become tomorrow's term of offence. People like me used to be called 'cripples' but now we are 'disabled', apart from in the USA where we are still 'handicapped'.

* Revd John R. Bradley is a Methodist minister, working on the staff of Churches Together in England since 2001, who has lived with multiple sclerosis for 20 years and reflected theologically on the experience of disability.

What does that mean? Is it that among the horses at the start of the Race of Life we are the ones with an extra weight in our saddlebags? Or in golf, having a handicap is a positive thing! Though it may not be true that 'handicap' means 'cap in hand', there remains a taint that those so described are classed as always being in need of charitable support. The term has even been exported so that in France people with impairments are referred to as *les handicapés*! More recently there has been a change from 'disabled' to 'impaired'.

But the most important shift is from the impersonal, indefinite terminology of 'the disabled', 'the blind', 'the deaf', etc. to 'people with ...' Although this may appear more cumbersome, it makes the vital affirmation that we are first and foremost people and not to be defined impersonally by a medical condition or impairment which we happen to have. There has been a long debate between medical and social models of disability. Is my disability caused by something defective in me or by the ways in which my environment disables me? Where is the problem: in me or in society?

Paul's analogy of the members of the body clearly affirms each one to be of intrinsic and inalienable value whatever they can or cannot do. There are no worthless members of the body of Christ; 'each one has received a grace-gift according to the measure of the giving of Christ'¹ and so has a ministry to use it to build up the whole body. Tragically there are many who have never realised that and so never used their gift in their ministry.

Two areas of theological reflection which use body language are ecumenism and disability. How are they related? Both address situations where some people may be despised or rejected because of their significant differences from the majority. What difference does faith in God make?

Ah, Mephibosheth! (2 Samuel 9)

In most cases when a person with an impairment appears in a Bible story, the result is that they are cured. Here is a rare example of someone who remains impaired. King David, now established in his kingdom, looks for someone of Saul's family to honour. Ziba, one of the servants of Saul's family, tells the king that there is one but he is a cripple. He doesn't refer to Mephibosheth by name; to Ziba he is only

¹ Eph. 4:7—my literal translation.

a nameless ‘cripple’. We can sense also that to Ziba he was just a burden and a disappointment. Were it not for his crippled legs, Mephibosheth would have been a royal prince and Ziba might have been Chief Assistant to the Assistant Chief! But he is just a cripple, hidden away in the backwoods out of sight. Mephibosheth might have expected the king to reject him also but instead, David calls him by name. Even though there was no cure for his lameness, there is healing in the way David treats him as a person of intrinsic value. When Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint David as king he was told not to look at the outward appearance but to look at the heart. Ziba looked at Mephibosheth’s outward appearance and saw a cripple; David looked at his heart and saw a person to honour.

Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12)

Like Mephibosheth, the Apostle Paul was also not cured. He doesn’t tell us what his disabling condition was but it seems to have been connected with his eyes. He had prayed for the healing of others and they had been healed but, although he prayed for healing three times for himself, God’s answer was ‘no’. For some, this cast doubt on his authority and his claim to have been commissioned as an Apostle by the risen Christ. They had grown up with the Greek ideal of a perfect human being as young, strong, male, muscular, clean-shaven and fair-skinned. The further a person was from this ideal—whether weak, female, dark-skinned or an unshaven ‘barbarian’—the less they were to be regarded and respected. We have no idea what the apostle Paul looked like but someone once asked Martin Luther what he thought. “I think he was a scrawny shrimp,” said Luther “like Philip Melanchthon!”¹ To the sophisticated philosophers of Athens Paul was no more than a ‘seed picker’,² maybe because he had a strong Cilician accent! Paul takes this ideal and reverses it completely. It is ‘those parts of the body which seem to be more frail than others [which] are indispensable’.³ So instead of being a burden on the charity of the

¹ See Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Hendrickson, 2009), p.92. Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) was a reformer, a close collaborator of Luther and a major theologian of the Reformation. [For a reproduction of Cranach’s woodcut of Melanchthon, see *OiC*, 45/2, p.223. *Ed.*]

² *Spermologos* (Acts 17:18), meaning someone who picks up ideas here and there but has nothing original to say.

³ 1 Cor. 12:22.

Church, people with disabilities—impaired pilgrims¹—are indispensable to it. We make visible by our impairments the incomplete nature of this life. God's power will 'transfigure our humble bodies and give them a form like that of his own glorious body'.² However great a burden these impairments may be in this life, they are a 'slight momentary affliction' when compared to the 'eternal weight of glory beyond all measure' for which we are being prepared.³

Through his impairment, Paul learnt the strength of weakness and the sufficiency of grace. He could even boast gladly of his weaknesses because they revealed that what he did could only be by the power of Christ in him. If he had been physically strong and conformed to the Greek ideal image of a civilised man, some people might have been drawn to him because of his outward appearance. He might even have thought that the effectiveness of his ministry was in some measure due to his own strength. But in his weakness he could have no doubt that the power was all of God.

It was his condition that led him to go to Galatia.⁴ If Paul had not gone there at that time, the church would not have been planted there then; and if that church had not had problems, he would not have written his letter to them. How impoverished we would all be without Paul's great letter to the Galatians which would not have been written were it not for the stab of his 'thorn in the flesh'! So just as God uses the 'foolish things to shame the wise',⁵ God also uses the weakness of 'pilgrims with impairments' to shame the strong. We should not swing from discrimination against people with impairments to idolising them as evidently more godly than able-bodied people. Many thorns in the flesh are painful and pain, whether acute or chronic, shouts at the person suffering it as if to drown out the needs of all others. It's harder to not be self-centred when you're in pain!

So what does this say to the body of Christ which is the Church? The Church also has its thorns in the flesh. It has often been at times of apparent weakness that the Church has best reflected its Master. One

¹ See Peter Cole, Mary Grey and Donald Eadie, *The Faith Journey of Impaired Pilgrims* (Sarum College Press, 2007).

² Phil. 3:21

³ 2 Cor. 4:17

⁴ Gal. 4:13

⁵ 1 Cor. 1:27

such time was when we prepared to mark the advent of the third millennium. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to remind the world that 'Jesus is the reason for the season' and challenge people to make a new start by following him. I wondered why God had allowed His Church to be so weak at such a momentous time. Then I realised that if we had been strong, we might have thought that we could do this in our own strength. In our weakness, we knew that we were totally reliant on the power of God. Thorns in the flesh can be painful and chronic pain is wearisome but our very vulnerability makes us enabled, rather than disabled, to be channels through which God's grace reaches its goal.

Through the roof (Mark 2:1-12)

There is a clear connection in the miracles of Jesus between healing and faith. In this story, we know neither the name of the healed man nor those of his friends.¹ We don't know if the paralysed man himself had faith in Jesus but he clearly trusted his friends not to drop him! In fact, he must have exercised faith daily in those who cared for him and took him to and from his begging pitch. He may have heard about Jesus but been unwilling to get his hopes raised again in case this was just another firebrand who would command him to jump up and then berate his lack of faith if he failed to do so.

Seeing that the entrance to the house was made inaccessible by the crowd, the man on the stretcher might have suggested that his friends give up and take him home again, but they were not so easily dissuaded. As the dust fell down and the light streamed through the new hole in the roof, Jesus saw their faith and responded to the man's condition. Again, we do not know whether or not the man himself had faith in Jesus but his friends certainly did; he was surrounded by a community of faith.

The problem of the house in Capernaum was one of access. First, the man on the stretcher and his friends could not get near Jesus because of all the other people who presumably thought they had more right to be there than he did. After all they, the able-bodied ones, were able to contribute to the life of the community by their labour whereas the disabled man was a 'useless eater', a net drain on the economy.

¹ Is that because they were not well known in the Church when the Gospels were being written while others, whose part is less significant, were?

Judging by what the religious leaders were about to be found thinking, the crowd might also have thought that the man's disability was a sign of judgement, a consequence of some sin which he, or possibly his parents, had committed. If it was the case that he had fallen off a roof and broken his back while trying to break into someone's house, we too might regard his disability as a direct consequence of his sinful act, but in all probability it was not. Perhaps he himself thought that he was out of favour with God and not worth forgiving whatever he may have unwittingly done wrong. In any case, Jesus spoke forgiveness through the clouds of dust, lathe, plaster, prejudice and ignorance and the man's life was totally changed. Through the roof came the bed carrying the man; out of the door went the man carrying the bed!

Buildings can be among the most visible signs of the disunity of the Church and the most difficult to overcome. I once heard a well-known Archbishop¹ suggest that each diocese should have, as well as a Diocesan Architect, a Diocesan Arsonist! I must admit there is something attractive about the idea of a really efficient arsonist. An industrial town in the North of England once had six Methodist Chapels on the same road! Each was built by a different mill-owner for the use of his factory workers and vied with the others in the expression of its patron's generosity. The text 'some preach Christ out of rivalry'² comes to mind! Unsurprisingly, they are all now closed. The Methodist Church Union of 1932 brought together three Churches which had had a long struggle to overcome their divisions. There followed a 'rationalising' of buildings³ as former rivals had become partners. This was fine for the committed core members, who in general embraced the change with enthusiasm, but it was not so with many of the outer circles of adherents whose attendance at worship was regular but infrequent. "They've closed our chapel," they said, "so we're not going to their chapel!" Yes, it was small-minded and it was ignorant but a consequence was that thousands lost what little remained of their tenuous connection with the community of faith.

As a wheelchair user, I also have a rather negative attitude to pews, even when a chunk has been bitten out to allow access for people like

¹ ... who shall remain nameless!

² Phil. 1:15.

³ I remember three Methodist Chapels backing onto the same village green!

me.¹ I confess to a somewhat Franciscan attitude to the ministry of Brother Woodworm who does the Lord's work in his own peculiar way!

The breakthrough in this area came through the *Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969*. When it was introduced as a Bill into the House of Lords, the bishops stressed that this was more to do with being economical than being ecumenical but nevertheless for the past forty years it has been one of the cornerstones of visible unity. The text of the Act, which I call our 'dear dinosaur', reflects a largely bygone age when two congregations would do no more than smile at each other as one left and the other arrived to worship in their shared building. Today there are hundreds of places where a shared building is a mission resource for Christians who are serving their local community together, not allowing their differences to divide them.

Conclusion

Whenever an appeal is made for Christian unity, the cry often goes up '... but we don't want uniformity!' I don't know anyone who does want uniformity! One of the weaknesses of the Church today is too much uniformity, particularly that it often only reflects a minority culture. The problem is not diversity or difference, but division. The way forward is in changing how we hold our differences: in conversation rather than in conflict or contradiction. We may not always agree with each other but we will respect each other if we really love one another. More visible unity should mean more diversity, not less. The aim is not uniformity but reconciled diversity. A recent example of this has been the 'Fresh Expressions' movement. Archbishop Rowan Williams endorsed it as part of the 'mixed economy' of the Church. I support it and thank God for it, recognising that it reaches people who are never touched by the traditional Church. But at the same time I have to acknowledge that what gets me out of bed on a Sunday morning are not fresh expressions of the emerging Church but fusty expressions of the receding Church!

¹ 'Cripps Corner' for 'people like that'; do they mean me? I often find that church buildings which are new or reordered are often accessible for wheelchair users to join the congregation but not to rise to the dais from where the worship is led. So wheelchair users are welcome to join the congregation but not expected to contribute to leading worship?

In the Church, as in a human body, there can be healing without a cure, as in the example of Paul's 'thorn in the flesh'. Permanent impairment may remain uncured but there can still be healing in right relationships with faith, hope and love.

Notice



**22nd INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ON
ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY**

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

**Monastery of Bose
3-6 September 2014**

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9). The announcement of this evangelical beatitude, so often repeated in the Divine Liturgy, unceasingly interrogates the conscience of every man and the practice of the Church.

The 22nd International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality desires to listen to the Gospel of peace, which asks the Churches to be a ferment of reconciliation and of peace among today's men and women. The hope of peace announced in Christ is not a utopia extraneous to a world dominated by the logic of power and of conflict, but is an event in history, incarnated in every age in men and women of peace and reconciliation.

Conference Secretariat:

Monastery of Bose, I-13887 Magnano (BI)
Tel. +39 015.679.185, Fax +39 015.679.294
convegna@monasterodibose.it
www.monasterodibose.it

ROWAN WILLIAMS: AN INTERVIEW

Rowan Williams (Lord Williams of Oystermouth) was born in 1950. He was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford before becoming Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop of Wales. In 2002, he was appointed as the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury. He stood down in December 2012 and became Master of Magdalene College at Cambridge University in January 2013. Thierry Marteaux osb of Rostrevor Monastery interviewed him there in the summer of 2013.

TM *On 20th November 2012, before the vote on women bishops, you declared: “We are not deliberately overturning the historic Catholic consensus”. What did you mean by that statement?*

RW I was trying to address those especially in the Catholic wing of the Church of England who felt this is a betrayal. I have always believed that the theological grounds for ordaining women to the priesthood are rooted in the Catholic theology of priesthood, in the belief that the priesthood of Christ in his Church is shared in baptism, and then focused in a very special way in the ordained ministry. If women are baptised members of the Church I believe they can be candidates to ordination. That is why I believe that the main lines of traditional Catholic theology of the priesthood are respected by the decision to ordain women. Now I realise that it is not a view shared entirely across Catholic Christendom but in the lecture I gave in Rome a few years ago which touched on the subject, I said that in the ARCIC Statement about ordained ministry we were able to map out a very far-reaching consensus on the theology of ordained ministry. The question of the ordination of women, however, was relegated to a footnote as an unfinished business. In the last twenty years or so it has somehow come to the central stage and I am suggesting that maybe it is time to pay attention to the question.

TM *After the vote, you made a short statement in which you declared, “we as a church need to affirm our understanding of how the society around us sees these questions”; and on the*

following day, in your address to the General Synod, you twice expressed your concern about the loss of credibility of the Church of England in society. Why does this aspect of the problem seem so important to you?

RW I certainly did not wish to suggest that what society thinks ought to determine our decisions. I was very clear about that. At the same time, if we make a decision that is, quite clearly, very hard for people outside the Church to understand, we have an enormous evangelistic job, we have to try to explain our reasoning to people, we have to try to persuade them that this must not be a reason for writing off the Christian faith. That was my worry. I was very much aware that people would take this step. We do have a problem of credibility. I think it is one of the difficult things for the Church in the present world. In some areas we are bound to be out of step with majority opinion. The Church is out of step with majority opinion on other issues of ethics, and I am not just thinking of sexual ethics, but other matters too. That means that the Church has more work to do.

TM *Do you think that we are ready to do the work?*

RW I think at the local level, people will always see first what the Church does practically in that community, and they will not ask the big questions about the ordination of women or same sex marriage or whatever. They will see that the Church is credible because of its works of love, because of its prayer. But at national level, we are still struggling to find a way of communicating, especially with a national media which is pretty hostile to the Church in any case, and very ready to dismiss us.

TM *What do you see as the next step the Church of England needs to take?*

RW The next step is a prayer of patience, but I think that there is a great deal of work going on at the moment to see what could be brought back to the decision-making processes that might gain some more support. Nobody really wants delay on this, even those who are opposed want to see a settlement of some kind, because the longer this goes on as a matter of public controversy, the more people's energies are diverted. So I take

some comfort in the fact that everybody realises we cannot just put it off ... I know that my successor is now working very hard and I wish him every blessing with that.

TM *Do you think that it will be possible to keep the Catholic tradition in the Church of England?*

RW I think it is possible, I really do. Everything I have done in the last few years has been based on the assumption that this is possible and that we should be very much the poorer if we lost the people from that tradition. It is part of my own background, I cannot simply turn and say: "This element of the Church of England has had its day". I have seen lives of holiness and devotion there which I think enrich us all.

TM *In November 2009, Pope Benedict created Personal Ordinariates (Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus) for certain groups of Anglicans. In the Joint Statement you made with Archbishop Vincent Nichols, we read that the "Apostolic Constitution is one consequence of ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion"? Do you really believe that?*

RW I do believe that because without the whole process of ARCIC, without the drawing of Anglican sources into dialogue with Roman Catholic theology that ARCIC represents, I do not think that it would have occurred to the Vatican to say that there is a legitimate Catholic-Anglican legacy to embrace. So though I must be honest and say I think that the Ordinariate was a mistake, I accept the good faith of those who designed the idea and I really do believe that it was, in its way, an affirmation of how much closer we have come in conversation over these years. I think that the anxiety felt in Rome about Anglican developments shows the Roman Catholic Church and its leadership has taken us more seriously than it might have done 50 years ago.

TM: *Why was the Ordinariate a mistake?*

RW: Because it was based on the assumption that a lot of Anglican clergy would bring their congregations with them, that whole communities would transfer. I think if we had been asked, as Anglicans, we might have said: "Do not expect that, that is not how we work". I think that the result has been a

disproportionate number of priests for a small group of lay people. I think that these communities will have a problem to generate vocations and to have a real life on their own. Again, as I said, I respect the good faith of those who come by this path and I see why it is attractive but I suspect that, as I have said more than once, this is a pastoral solution to bigger problems, it is not in itself an ecumenical solution.

TM *In 2006, you established the Covenant Design Group to draft a covenant for the Anglican Communion. The final text was sent to the Provinces in late 2009. You declared very clearly that “the Covenant is not a kind of charter for inquisitions (...), that the Covenant is about a process by which we can talk to one another and discern together” (10.03.12) and that the 4th section, which seemed to be a difficulty for many “is not a disciplinary system” (05.03.12). Why was the Covenant rejected? Why did it generate such fear?*

RW In spite of everything that was said, a very large number of people, here and in the United States, regarded the Covenant as a licence for outside interference in the affairs of the local Church. Once this idea had become part of the general discourse, it proved almost impossible to overturn it. So part of it was that fear of being told what to do by somebody else, part of it I have to say in the Church of England was that quite a lot of people did not really know a great deal about it and were perhaps quite easily swayed by the language of ‘outside interference’ which was something quite new, and therefore suspect. Part of it was also that because it arose out of our debate on sexuality, people were very ready to say: “This is only about defending a conservative position on sexuality”, but I have said that we have to think of other issues which could divide us, for example the great pressure in one part of the Australian Anglican Church for lay presidency of the Eucharist, that seems to me to be the kind of topic on which we might very well have a coordinated international position. It is important for us to discuss with one another what response we make if a diocese would decide to go that way. My fear is that we leave ourselves with no means of resolving these issues. The Covenant itself does not say that anyone is expelled for disobedience, it says that if certain decisions are

taken which are deeply problematic, then some group has to sit down and work out what the consequences are, and it does not specify what these consequences might be but we have to work at it. So I am still deeply sad that we did not respond more positively to that, I hope there will be more to be said about it in the future. A significant number of Anglican Provinces (a third or a quarter of the total) have in fact signed the Covenant. So I do not believe that it is simply a thing from the past.

TM *You mentioned that fear of ‘outside interference’ has been a factor in the rejection of the Covenant. Is this just a matter of individualism?*

Moreover, in your address at the Abbey of Monte Cassino in 2012 you considered dependence as one of the two major counter-cultural themes embodied in the monastic paradigm. You declared: “We are repeatedly seduced by visions or promises of autonomy as the greatest imaginable human good”.

RW I think there is such a thing as ‘collective individualism’ for local Churches. The Church of England began, we might say, as a separate institution because of its desire not to be controlled from outside. At the same time when the Church of England was reformed, it saw itself as part of a family of Churches, of Reformed Churches and also still having a relationship to the Catholic Church, so it is not as if we began as a completely separatist movement, but the mixture of nationalism and individualism had a damaging effect on us and that is still an element. I think that connecting it with the monastic context for me was partly about that very strong emphasis of the Holy Rule on stability, you stay with the people God has given as companions to you, you do that as an individual in a community, you do that as a Church in a communion of Churches. You stay with the people God has given you. That does not make for a peaceful and easy life, but you do it out of the conviction that somehow God has brought you together, and you have to make something of that. Stability in community is not always easy.

I admit I was dismayed to see how strong was the element of individualism in the rejection of the Covenant. I was dismayed to see how very sharp the hostile reaction was. I did feel that I failed to make clear what it was about. Sadly people forgot that that text had been drawn up by a very diverse group of Anglican theologians, they were not all conservatives, not all Africans, not all Americans. It was meant to be a representative group and it worked very hard, and I still feel a great debt to the work they did, a great sadness that it was not accepted more trustingly.

TM *In 2006, you wrote: “The debate in the Anglican Communion is not essentially a debate about the human rights of homosexual people (...). It is a question about how we make decisions corporately with other Christians.”*

RW It is quite easy for some people on the very conservative side to say: “We must not be pressurised by a very western modern idea of human rights to change our doctrine” and I agree with them, however there are some theological positions which require a measure of common understanding behind them. Getting that measure of common understanding is the work we have to do together. I was concerned all the way through to keep as many people as possible in the conversation, on the grounds that if it is right to say “only the whole Church knows the whole truth”, it is quite risky for individual Provinces to say “we are absolutely sure that this is the way to go, never mind the rest”. I think it is implicit in the idea that we are more than just a local congregation.

TM *Today, what would you say about the unity of the Anglican Communion?*

RW It is still very fragile. Yet the fact that we have not actually had a schism in the whole body testifies to the fact that people still want to be together in some way. There have been one or two points when we came quite close to a breach. And there are bits of the Communion that are not actually in communion with each other and yet they are still prepared to join together in some kinds of work: the work of the Anglican Alliance for Relief and Development, the work of the Theological Education Commission. People have still wanted

to be part of that. And for me the most important sign of this was that, every year we used to have a training course for newly ordained bishops in Canterbury, and 30 or 40 new bishops have come every year. We would have people from Provinces who had great tensions with one another, yet they still wanted to come. Talking through the tensions with one another they would find ways, just for that time, of living and praying together, and they would go back with some sense that the unity might be fragile but it was not an empty and abstract thing. They were now bound to other bishops because they studied and prayed together. So, it is a picture with a lot of fragmentation and continuing tensions but also at the level of the networks of the Communion, formal and informal, there is still a great willingness to find ways of staying together. I do not despair, I think my successor has a real challenge there but I also believe that there is a lot of good will to try to make it work.

TM *In an interview with the Telegraph, regarding the relationship between the Anglican Communion and Rome, you declared that you doubt “that we’re any nearer institutional reconciliation” (8 September 2012).*

RW I think in the last half century, there have been one or two points, perhaps in the sixties and perhaps briefly in the early eighties, when it looked as if a slightly higher degree of recognition of the Anglican Church from the Roman Catholic side would have been possible. Many people had high hopes of Pope John Paul II’s visit in 1982. The fact was that already there were elements in the Anglican discussion which were moving away from some things that the Roman Catholic Church increasingly saw as central, especially women’s ordination, so perhaps those hopes were unrealistic. We have not advanced very much on the institutional level. At the level of symbols, at the level of visible signs, if it is not unity it is at least a kind of respectful acknowledgement of one another’s presence. In 2012, for the anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the Holy Father invited me to be there with him and the Ecumenical Patriarch; the fact that I am wearing a ring given me by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor on his retirement as a mark of friendship and

brotherhood, these symbolic things suggest that we are certainly not in a situation where the Roman Catholic Church regards us as impossible to talk to. No, I am not holding my breath for great institutional steps, and yet I give thanks to God for the symbolic growing together that happens and I give thanks to God for the very good and constructive personal relationships, marked by trust and affection, I had with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in this country.

TM *Canon David Richardson said recently that Pope Benedict and you “were quite capable of talking frankly of sources of contention between [you]”. Did you believe that you were heard and listened to?*

RW We talked personally quite a bit the last few years and we could talk about the problems we shared, we could talk about the problems in our Churches. It was a warm relationship. Pope Benedict was personally very supportive.

TM *And what about your relationship with the Orthodox Churches? Recently the communications service of the department of External Church Relations of the patriarchate of Moscow declared that “the introduction of the institution of female bishops will lead to the elimination of even a theoretical possibility of the Moscow patriarchate recognising the church hierarchy of the Anglican church” (2013).*

RW There are no surprises there. I do not think that any of us was expecting a hierarchical recognition. Many of the Orthodox Churches have already made known their position so I do not think that there is a great new policy declaration there. We know it is difficult for the Orthodox Churches and that is why, coming back to the very first question, we need more discussion of what the real essence of the theological question is. I know a great many Orthodox theologians who would say that they do not feel they have gone deeply enough in the study of the Tradition on the subject, many believe that they have more work to do.

TM *Is it possible for the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury to be humble?*

RW It is necessary to be humble. If it is necessary, it must be possible under God. I am certainly not saying that I knew how to be humble in my time as Archbishop but humility must mean, first of all, an awareness that you are under judgment, you are answerable to God and to God's people; second it means being aware, day after day, that you can only do your ministry because of the prayers, the wisdom, the companionship of the entire body that supports you, you are not isolated; third it means a willingness always to confront your own errors of judgment and work to move forward. Those are the bare bones of what humility has to mean. It is necessary to struggle to try to stay faithful to those things. I found it important to know that people were praying for me. I would sometimes have a letter or a postcard from somebody I have never met in a parish in Yorkshire, in Ireland, in the United States or in Kenya to say "I am praying for you" and it is the only thing which makes it possible to carry on. And when I was having very difficult periods as Archbishop, it was important for me to say, "Think how much worse this would be if people were not praying for you".

TM *In 2003, in your enthronement sermon, you asked yourself: "What do I pray for in the Church of the future?" I don't know if you remember the answer you gave at that time... but what would you say today?*

RW Above all, I pray for a Church that is grateful and joyful by which I do not mean a Church that is always euphoric but a Church which, by the way she talks and behaves, always brings into view the truth that God has done something extraordinary in human nature. My question is always, can we demonstrate that the gift of the Spirit to our human nature has enlarged, enlivened, deepened humanity so that we can look joyfully and gratefully at the work of Christ? That includes the moments of repentance when we admit in public how far we fall short of this, it also includes those moments of thanksgiving when we have been allowed to serve in some way.

TM *What is a Church leader, what is his mission?*

RW A Church leader has to begin with the Lord's words about service, meaning by that that the Church leader recognises that he or she is not there for their own ego, own success, own effectiveness. They are there to be a tool in God's hands for the wellbeing of the Church. The leader has to find ways of holding the Gospel up in public and say this is what you and I have been answerable to and to try to do that in a way that attracts, excites. I admit that I never much liked the word 'leader', it sounds a bit too much like somebody marching ahead with a walking stick, and everybody else behind. An apostle in the New Testament is a witness to the Resurrection, so we have to ask ourselves over and over: "Am I witnessing to the Resurrection? How do I find ways of making that news clear?"

TM *We have heard Anglican and Catholic Bishops in the UK speaking about Christianity being persecuted. Do you think that it is an accurate way to describe the situation?*

RW I do not like to use the language of persecution because I have seen what persecution really means in other contexts and I think it is just a little bit overdramatic to say that this is what is happening here. I talked to people in Pakistan, in the Middle East, I am thinking of the two bishops who were kidnapped in Syria, both of whom I know, I am thinking of our Church in Zimbabwe in recent years and that is persecution, lives are directly at risk. In this country we suffer from ignorance, contempt and sometimes a low level of hostility, however we can practise our faith freely, we are still guaranteed a voice in public discussion even if it is unpopular. I think there is quite a gulf between our situation and the persecution of others. We have to be just a little careful about overstating our problems. Ultimately, what do people need to hear from the Church? The louder we say we are being treated unfairly, the more people will say "Oh the Church is just a group of people complaining about their treatment". Whereas if we were able to say: "We rejoice in the privilege of carrying the Cross of Christ even in a small way"... maybe that would sound a bit less fearful, less anxious. There are times when,

during my ministry, I have had abuse shouted at me in the street and that is just a tiny, tiny, tiny little share of what some people suffer for the sake of the Gospel, I ought to be thanking God for the chance of just seeing a little bit of it.

TM *What do you think of the Establishment of the Church of England?*

RW While I do not think many Anglicans would say we start from there now, and I certainly would not; the reason I would defend the Establishment now is mostly because those who want to see it ending are those who want to see a more secular public sphere which I am not keen to see. People of other faiths, and to some extent even other Churches, say that they appreciate the Establishment of the Church because part of the role of the Church of England in the last half century has been to encourage, to support, to protect, and to stand alongside minority religious groups in this country and to try to give them a voice.

TM *In the funeral service of Margaret Thatcher we saw a great display of the Establishment of the Church of England. Is there not something challenging there?*

RW There is a dangerous proximity and it would be very unwise to forget the danger of the compromise. When we stand in St Paul's, in the Abbey, in Canterbury Cathedral, or in the House of Lords, somehow we have to connect this with Jesus crucified outside the city gates. We have to remember that we do not belong in the centre of things even if by some extraordinary historical facts we are given a share in this... this is not our native territory, there is another kingdom.

TM *It is always a bit dangerous to extract one verse from a poem, it does not respect the movement of the whole piece. However I am going to ask you two questions on four lines from your poem entitled *Dream*.¹ You write:*

One bearded,
articulate and reasonable, talking of victims,
tragedy, the pathos of God trapped in a world
of risks.

¹ *The Poems of Rowan Williams*, Perpetua Press, 2012.

Are you the bearded one? Is our “God trapped in a world of risks”?

RW

The poem is not an easy one, partly because it represents a real dream, the picture is exactly the picture of a dream. Psychoanalysis reminds us that in a dream, the dreamer plays all the parts, in a dream, all the voices are truly yours. That dream is about the temptation of being too ready to talk about the suffering God as a way of softening the suffering of the world. I do and I would talk about “the pathos of God trapped in a world of risks”. God commits himself in Christ to a world which is full of tensions, compromises and failures. I think we must be careful about not using that as another way of evading the reality of pain, the claim that it has on us. This poem is one of these dream images for which I found I had to seek words.

STAYING TOGETHER ON THE ECUMENICAL JOURNEY: A STORY OF BRIDGE-BUILDING BETWEEN EAST AND WEST¹

Mary Tanner*

The Orthodox were major players in the ecumenical movement from the beginning and participants at the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches. However, the fundamental difference in the understanding of the Church between members of the Council often led to misunderstandings and frustrations. Increasingly, the Orthodox felt marginalised. The story of the setting up of a Special Commission of half Orthodox and half other members of the Council to listen to the concerns of the Orthodox is an important story of bridge-building between East and West in the ecumenical movement, leading to a safer ecumenical space for all of us.

When I was invited to take part in an East-West Day here at Turvey Abbey it took some time to decide on a theme for my talk. Then a not well known story of a movement of reconciliation between East and West came to my mind: one that I was privileged to be a part of, which turned out to be for me one of the most fascinating ecumenical experiences of my long involvement with the ecumenical movement. We often learn more from stories than from 'disembodied' theological reflection and this is a story, I think, that is worth telling. But more than this I suspect that this story might contain a model of reconciling

¹ This is the text of a talk given at an East-West Day at Turvey Abbey, 20 July 2013. It is an updated version of an article previously published in *One in Christ*, 38/2 (2003).

* Mary Tanner has served as the President for Europe of the World Council of Churches and from 1992-8 was Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. She was a member of the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. From 1983-98 she was the General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity. She has been a visiting professor at the General Seminary, New York, the Tantur Ecumenical Institute and the Angelicum in Rome.

life that we can learn from and apply in other contexts, both ecumenical and secular. Today's broken world needs all the stories of reconciliation it can hear. Before I begin to tell the story, first some reflections on the Orthodox and the beginnings of the ecumenical movement, then an account of the growing anxiety—'agony' isn't too strong a word for it—of the Orthodox within the ecumenical movement, and finally the story of reconciliation itself.

The Orthodox and the beginnings of the ecumenical movement

In some ways the birth of the World Council of Churches in 1948 can be said to have been an Orthodox inspiration. In 1920 the Ecumenical Patriarchate in an Encyclical Letter addressed 'Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere', suggested the formation of a League of Churches to mirror the League of Nations. This suggestion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was made in the aftermath of the First World War. Already, in 1910 the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh had taken place and by the time the Patriarchate made its suggestion in 1920 preparations were already underway for the calling of a World Conference on Life and Work to consider issues of war and peace and the rebuilding of a Europe ravaged by war. Preparations were also in hand for a World Conference on issues of faith and order that had been the cause of division of the churches. By 1920 the ecumenical movement was gathering pace. The Faith and Order World Conference eventually took place in 1927 in Lausanne. The Orthodox fielded an important high-level delegation at Lausanne but felt compelled at the end of the meeting to issue a separate Orthodox Statement which set a precedent for many later ecumenical meetings.

From the beginning, the ecumenical movement can be said to have been truly an East-West movement, even if the largest church of the West, the Roman Catholic Church, was not fully involved, and still, sadly, is not a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) although after Vatican II it did become a full member of the Faith and Order Commission and now also co-operates closely with many programmes of the Council. The Orthodox Church was a presence in the most formative stages of the modern ecumenical movement. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, with other local Orthodox churches, was among the founding members of the WCC in 1948 at the Amsterdam

Assembly and was one of the churches that declared, “We intend to stay together”.

To understand the participation of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement in the years that followed the setting up of the WCC, it is important to understand Orthodox ecclesiology, that is the view of the Church held by the Orthodox, and indeed also by the Roman Catholic Church, as distinct from the other Western churches. Orthodox and Roman Catholics see their own churches as the *Una Sancta*, ‘the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’ of the Creeds, from which other Christian churches have separated. However, both Orthodox and Roman Catholics have struggled more recently in ecumenical conversations to define the boundaries of the Church in a way that does give some account of others: for example, some Orthodox acknowledge that some ‘elements’ of Church may be found in others; or say that the church ‘subsists’ here with us but a bit less over there; or Orthodox know where the Church is, but not where it isn’t. To quote Peter Bouteneff, a one-time staff member of Faith and Order: ‘we Orthodox are familiar with these formulations, which are meant to articulate the same complex conviction that the Church is us, but we’re not 100 per cent sure about the rest of you’.¹ This view is a very different view held by churches of the West that see themselves as parts of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This different ecclesiological understanding of who is Church and where the Church is to be found underlies differences over baptism and sacraments and often, whether partners recognise it or not, lies at the basis of difficult relationships and misunderstandings.

So, from the beginning of the ecumenical movement there was a fundamental underlying difference of ecclesiological outlook between the churches of the West and the East. Peter Bouteneff is fascinating musing on this difference. He writes:

Sometimes I muse that, if we Orthodox had to do it all over again, and if we were a more organized, coherent body, we would approach the WCC as the Roman Catholics have: on our own terms, as deeply committed observers, relying on our own mechanisms for ecumenical work. This would spare us the perennially awkward situation of an involvement that is alternatively engaged and estranged, while at the same time removing a

¹ Peter Bouteneff, ‘The World Council of Churches: An Orthodox Perspective’ in John Radano (ed.), *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism* (Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 15-23.

large cumbersome wrench from the workings of the WCC. But then again, had we approached the WCC in this way we would have missed a very great deal. And who is to say that 'smoother workings' are the ideal? We are Christians who know that the way forward is the way of the cross, which in turn entails countless crosses along the way, whose victories are not always immediately apparent.¹

We need to grasp this basic ecclesiological difference concerning who is Church and where the Church is to be found if we are to understand the history of relations between East and West within the ecumenical movement.

This difference became apparent only two years after the inauguration of the WCC in 1950. It led the Council to produce a policy statement aimed at clarifying the difference in understanding the Church that characterised the East and the West: The Toronto Statement.² The Statement made clear that while the WCC represented the coming together of church bodies into a fellowship, it was not to be understood as, itself, a Church or a Super-church in becoming—even if some of the members of the WCC might be tempted to see it as that. Toronto is honest and admits that some members do not even consider other members to be churches at all in the full sense of the word and it states clearly the ecclesiological neutrality of the WCC. The Orthodox misgivings ought to have been quelled by the Toronto Statement but for many in the Orthodox churches the 'look and feel' of things still seemed to suggest to them that the WCC regarded itself as a super-church model and that that was its vision. This may have been in part due to the apparent positions and expectations of some member churches in the West. The Orthodox could never subscribe to this. There was continued suspicion among the grass roots members of the Orthodox churches who had no first-hand experience of being together with other traditions in the fellowship of churches. There was suspicion also among some of the leaders of the Orthodox churches, even though they had experienced at first hand the life of the Council.

¹ Ibid. p.16.

² 'The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches: WCC Central Committee, Toronto, 1950' in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (eds.), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (WCC: 1996), pp. 463-68.

The growing discomfort of the Orthodox within the WCC

The Toronto Statement did not solve the underlying difference and in any case its contents and stated positions were quickly forgotten by succeeding generations. At conference after conference Orthodox representatives felt it necessary to make separate statements in which they indicated their discomfort with the ecclesiological suppositions of the Council, the apparent syncretism as they saw it of the Council's doctrinal work, the weakening of Trinitarian language, a departure from the basis of the World Council, and its lack of commitment to visible unity, expressed in Eucharistic communion. Although there was genuine concern about the life and work of the fellowship of churches, Orthodox public statements of distress at meetings might sometimes have been made for the consumption of the faithful back at home rather than being directly addressed to the delegates gathered in the meetings. There was always the possibility that some of the strongest statements of dissatisfaction, not least of all from those living behind the Iron Curtain, were made as what we came to call 'passport speeches'. This is not to minimise the growing discomfort and alienation felt by some Orthodox in the Council. There was in the 70s and 80s little attempt on the part of many from the West to understand the 'agony' of the Orthodox who felt compromised and whose participation was often criticised by their churches at home. The fellowship of churches that is the WCC was not a comfortable place for the Orthodox. Indeed it was not always a comfortable place for others of us. This was in part due to the way membership is reckoned. Although representing numerically the largest block of Christians in the WCC, the Orthodox felt marginalised and from the Assembly in Vancouver in 1983 onwards had only 25 per cent of places in the governing bodies of the Council. This, inevitably, meant that with the western parliamentary procedures used in the Council, the Orthodox voice could always be voted down and never be heard. It is amazing looking back to see how few understood this disadvantage of the Orthodox, which was built into the structures of the Council.

The growing Orthodox dissatisfaction surfaced sharply at the Canberra Assembly in 1993 when the Orthodox delegation felt compelled to raise alarms about the theological orientation of the Council as they perceived it and what they saw as a departure from the basis of the WCC. Their dissatisfaction came to a head in part as a

result of the opening presentations on the theme, 'Come Holy Spirit renew the whole creation'. A wonderfully deep and spiritual presentation by an Orthodox Patriarch was followed by a presentation by a young Korean woman feminist theologian, Professor Chung. Professor Chung presented the theme in dance and music, calling on the Hag-ridden spirits of her Korean context, identifying them, or so it appeared to some, with the Holy Spirit. The Assembly was divided in its reaction. Many women and participants from the global south were captivated by the sheer dramatic professionalism and beauty of the presentation. Others, the Orthodox, but not only the Orthodox, were scandalised seeing it as blatant syncretism, only confirming their worst fears about the direction the Council was moving in. There were issues too around the worship life of the Assembly with inclusive language for the community and for God which was used, and the use of indigenous instruments, music and cultural customs.

There were other developments in the 80s and 90s that disturbed the Orthodox. The Christian feminist movement had impacted the Council through its programmes on the Community of Women and Men in the Church and the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Although the Council took no official stance on the question of women's ordination, it was certainly a matter increasingly discussed. Similarly, issues of human sexuality and attitudes to homosexuality debated more and more in the Western churches were beginning to impact the agenda in terms of justice and inclusion, though again the Council itself adopted no official position on these issues. But the very fact that such matters were being discussed was disturbing for many Orthodox and could all too easily be misrepresented in their local churches. The fact that the Council committed itself at the Dresden Central Committee to moving towards 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men in its governing bodies and Commissions, this was hard for the Orthodox whose custom it was to send a high proportion of church leaders, necessarily men, as their representatives. It was not surprising that Eastern Orthodox churches should reach a point of demanding that the WCC create a special body, this time on the basis of a parity between East and West, with half Orthodox half other member churches, to assess in depth the crisis faced by the Council with regard to their continuing participation. The Assembly in Harare affirmed this and

gave a mandate to set up a Special Commission to assess 'the structure, style and ethos of the WCC'.

The timing of the creation of a Special Commission was in part in response to this growing dissatisfaction within the membership of the Council but it was also determined by the 'populist anti-ecumenism' which had emerged in some Orthodox churches in the nineties, especially in Eastern Europe. With the collapse of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe, public opinion in the newly free Orthodox churches became a serious factor in the life and decision-making of those churches.¹ Under the pressure of this public opinion, populist in its expression and anti-ecumenical in its orientation, the churches of Bulgaria and Georgia withdrew from membership of the WCC and a critique of the ecumenical structures was growing in the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church of Greece and it began to be echoed among the Orthodox in North America.

This is the background against which to understand the escalating dissatisfaction and alienation felt by Orthodox. It also helps to illustrate some of the difficulties that were built into the structure of the WCC from the very beginning and which made life in the Council hard, if not impossible, for some Orthodox. This negative view, however, ought not to overshadow the many positive experiences in the fellowship of churches. There has been a genuine exchange of spiritual gifts between East and West. The Orthodox had contributed much of their understanding of the Trinity and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Rublev icon of the Trinity was often the centre of Council prayer life and one of the most memorable presentations at the Vancouver Assembly was a meditation on the Rublev icon. The work of the Faith and Order Commission on faith, sacraments and ministry had been enriched through the understanding of the Church that the Orthodox brought to the table which is not hard to detect in the report, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Some leading Orthodox were major players in all of this: a young Bartholomew, now His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Professor Nikos Nissiotis, Professor Nicholas Lossky, His Holiness Aram Keshishian among them.

¹ Cf Leonid Kishkovsky, 'The Orthodox Churches, the WCC and the Ecumenical Movement' in *Grace in Abundance: Orthodox reflections on the way to Porto Alegre* (WCC: 2005), pp. 107-11.

The story of the Special Commission

All of this is background to the work of the Special Commission. The Special Commission met for the first time in 1999 in Geneva with 50 per cent Orthodox (Eastern and Oriental) and 50 per cent others from Western churches. 'Never before in its fifty years history had the WCC taken its Orthodox member churches so seriously';¹ this was the 'first time in the history of the WCC that the two main Christian traditions of East and West had engaged in dialogue on an equal basis'.² No longer were the Orthodox only 25 per cent of the group.

I have served on many commissions, Anglican and ecumenical and for me the Special Commission was one of the most significant, both in terms of its ethos, its fellowship as well as for the important conclusions it came to. However, it was by no means clear that this would be the case when we gathered for our first meeting and listened to our Orthodox Co-chairman, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus, review the reasons that had led two Orthodox churches to leave the Council and others to be nearing that point. He referred to 'certain developments in some Protestant members of the Council'. I felt some Orthodox eyes fixed on me as some provinces of the Anglican Communion had ordained women to the priesthood and some to the episcopate and a man living in an openly gay relationship had been consecrated bishop in the Episcopal Church in the USA. Moreover, in the work of the WCC there was a lack of theological discussions and the present structure of the Council made it increasingly difficult for Orthodox to participate and contribute their view. His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, Moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC, explained that the task before us was an urgent one because the Orthodox had not been able to integrate their concerns into the ecumenical agenda. While the Orthodox could not afford to retreat into parochialism, neither could the Protestant Churches afford to impose an ecumenical agenda on the Orthodox that may sooner or later lead to the disintegration of the Council. It was as serious as this. There was much plain speaking. Aram I challenged the group: 'Let us reshape and restructure the Council by re-defining our perceptions and re-articulating our vision more clearly, and by setting the kind of decision-making procedures and

¹ Konrad Raiser. See Minutes of the First Meeting of the SC.

² Aram Keshishian, *ibid.*

working agenda that respond to the expectations and needs of our churches.’

Although at that first meeting there was no question of sitting on opposite sides of the table facing one another, the atmosphere was tense at the opening session. What became clear, even at this first meeting, however, was that not all the Orthodox were of one mind on issues any more than the others were. For example, the Russian Church brought a proposal that the Council should be restructured with 25 per cent Orthodox, 25 per cent Roman Catholics and 50 per cent other churches. But not all the Orthodox agreed, though a number of the others, including the Anglicans found this an attractive suggestion. Differences of opinion came to be seen as going across the two groups. We had to learn at that first meeting just who was around the table. We had to learn to let others describe themselves rather than identifying them with our own false stereotypes of them. We had to avoid putting words into their mouths. For example, as an Anglican, I bristled every time I was simply lumped together as Protestant. I wanted to identify myself as both catholic and reformed. And when the Russian delegate berated the Anglican Communion for consecrating women to the episcopate and approving homosexual relations I wanted to say: ‘hold on, it isn’t quite like that, we haven’t foreclosed the issue for all time. It’s in an open process of reception’. The whole group needed to learn the ecumenical lesson of listening to one another and letting others identify themselves. We had to learn to nurture creative imaginations to see things through other’s eyes and to understand their language. We had to let go of the false stereotypes that we brought to the meeting of one another and of one another’s opinions. There was some hard speaking and some tears shed. We did retreat into two groups at that first meeting but there was also the beginning of a real listening to one another and the beginning of moving to see things from the perspective of the other. For me a breakthrough came at the moment when the Coptic Bishop, Metropolitan Bishoy, said gently and, I suspect, as much to his fellow Orthodox as to the rest of us that the Orthodox should not veto the discussion, for example, of topics like the ordination of women to the priesthood, even though it is not and will never be on *their* agenda. What they should insist upon is that their view is heard, that it is written into any published report on the subject and not simply airbrushed out.

Even at that first meeting it became apparent that it was not simply a matter of them and us, there was a range of opinion on most issues which hardly ever followed two lines of thought, theirs and ours. And, although the Commission had been set up to listen to Orthodox concerns about the Council, its agenda, its style of working, its imbalance of membership, in fact many of those concerns were shared by others around the table. As an Anglican, I was grateful that some of the matters placed on the table by the Orthodox included those which Anglicans themselves had often raised. It was not only the Orthodox who could feel marginalised and trampled on by the processes of the Council.

It is impossible to talk about the ethos of the meetings without referring to the opportunities the Commission was given to meet in a number of different Orthodox contexts which enabled us to experience and appreciate at first hand the life of different Orthodox churches—Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Belarus and Armenia. In all of these places we were welcomed by local congregations and received with immense generosity. This experience opened up for many of us a window into Orthodox spirituality, theology, and faithful Christian witness in the local church. It helped us to get hold at a deeper level of some of the theological and organisational concerns that were being raised around the table. Increasingly as meetings progressed we found enough security in our growing life together to speak the truth as we saw it in love and for it to be received in love.

Let me turn now to some of the outcomes of the Special Commission. We came to see that we all needed a ‘mind shift’ in understanding just what the WCC is and is not, if it is in the future to function for us all. There were two things in particular:

- First, the Council has to be understood by all of us and, not least of all by the staff and officers of the Council, as a fellowship of churches and *not* as some independent organisation standing over against the churches. It is a fellowship of churches that, at the heart of all it does, seeks the visible unity of the Church. Moreover, it is the churches themselves that teach and make doctrinal and ethical decisions and not the Council over against the churches. It is the churches that proclaim doctrinal consensus or ethical decisions and not the Council. This is easier to say and more difficult to live out. This is a lesson we in the British Isles had to learn, when the BCC came to an end and the new

ecumenical instruments, 'Churches Together in England' and 'Churches Together in Britain and Ireland', were born.

- Secondly, the Council is an instrument that gathers and holds churches in 'ecumenical space', where the churches can decide their common agenda, undertake activities of all sorts together, and through dialogue break down barriers that divide them. It is not a structure which undertakes its own agenda or activities apart from the churches. Again this is easier to say than to put into practice.

When we had grasped these two fundamental points we could see that they had huge consequences for addressing all of the concerns raised by the Orthodox. We identified four major areas where we needed to understand one another better and which needed creative thinking.

- **The Church**

First, we had to focus on the recurring issue of how we understand the Church. Even if there is no common understanding yet we need to understand where the other is coming from. So we put sharp questions to one another. To the Orthodox we asked: 'Is there room in your understanding of the Church for other churches?' This question puts its finger on the question many non-Orthodox want answered, namely, whether the Orthodox regard themselves as the only true Church, or whether they are able to recognise at least some form of ecclesial reality, some elements of Church, in others. But there was also a question that the Orthodox wanted to press on the rest of us: 'How do you understand, maintain and express your belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church?' And we asked one another: 'How do we each understand the call to visible unity that lies at the centre of the Constitution of the Council and how can we claim and receive together all the work we have done together on the Church and its unity since 1948?' The Special Commission did not answer these questions. but they were now clearly articulated and on the table.

- **Social and ethical issues**

Secondly, in spite of the major concern of the Orthodox over social and ethical issues we came to agree that the WCC is an important space in which member churches can, indeed should, explore such issues together. There was no suggestion that the agenda of the Council should be limited or censored by some members. The tone of

that reconciling speech at the opening session by Metropolitan Bishop had won the day. There was no problem in discussing the controversial issue of women's ordination or divisive ethical issues as long as the Orthodox perspective was heard and any report reflected that perspective rather than appearing to adopt only one position on the matter. What was asked for was that Holy Scripture *and* the Church's Tradition should both be taken more seriously in approaching ethical issues, that there should also be greater clarity on the methodology used in approaching such issues, and that space should be given for all voices around the table to be heard and diverse opinions registered. Further, it should always be made clear that it is not the WCC that takes decisions in moral and ethical issues but the member churches themselves. Authoritative decisions remain with the churches. The function of the WCC is to provide a unique forum in which views can be exchanged, insights gained from the experience of others, and opinions formed in dialogue with others.

- **The prayer life of the fellowship**

When we reflected on the prayer life of the fellowship this turned out to be the most sensitive aspect of the Special Commission's work and, not surprisingly, has proved the most controversial. The Commission affirmed that prayer is essential to the ecumenical movement and must continue to be the foundation of the ecumenical endeavour and the lifeblood of ecumenical relations. And yet this is where we so often hurt one another most. As we listened to the Orthodox express their concerns something very basic emerged. When we describe what we are doing when we gather for prayer as 'ecumenical worship', this is immediately problematic for Orthodox. The term 'worship' for the Orthodox refers to the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. So, to hear that the Orthodox had participated in ecumenical worship sounds to those not at meetings as if it were a shared Eucharist, which is neither intelligible nor canonically permissible. Further, to refer to ecumenical worship makes it sound to the Orthodox as if there was some special form of worship that can be branded as 'ecumenical worship'. Whereas, worship belongs to a particular ecclesial community: it has an ecclesial location. A clarification was put forward. We agreed that in the ecumenical fellowship of churches we remained committed to praying together and we should do this in two ways. First, it is important that we offer to one another the riches of our own tradition, using the Anglican, or Methodist, or Orthodox, or

Quaker traditions of prayer. In such cases the prayer would be led by the appropriate person in that tradition—a man or a woman, lay or ordained, according to the custom of the particular tradition hosting the prayer. On such occasions one tradition might actually choose to celebrate a Eucharist, applying its own discipline of Eucharistic hospitality. It would need to be made clear that the celebration was a part of the living tradition of a particular church which was being offered for all to experience. This would not be an ‘ecumenical liturgy’ but the liturgy of a particular ecclesial tradition to which others were invited to take an appropriate part, according to the discipline of their own church. The experience of the prayer life of other traditions is an important experience in the ecumenical movement. We came to recognise that the tendency in the past has been to move too quickly away from offering the experience of our own authentic ecclesial traditions in favour of a mixed and impoverished experience of ‘lowest common denominator worship’. In addition to offering the riches of our particular traditions for all to experience, the Commission also recommended that in ecumenical gatherings elements from different traditions might at times be brought together in what is termed ‘inter-confessional prayer’. The drawing up of guidelines for ‘inter-confessional prayer’ the Commission left as a delicate task for the future.

The careful distinction of two types of common prayer that might be used in ecumenical contexts avoids the use of the term ‘worship’. It also avoids the notion that the ecumenical community is after some new type of worship, trying to model a new form of worship for a super-Church ‘in becoming’. It has been very hard to get this recommendation understood. Despite this difficulty, in major ecumenical events such as the Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre, the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, the Faith and Order Commission Plenary in Crete and the Peace Convocation in Jamaica, the proposals and spirit of the Special Commission were implemented and the prayer life of all these meetings was well received by participants. It will be interesting to see how it is worked out in the prayer life of the Assembly in Busan.

- **Consensus decision-making**

The fourth recommendation of the Special Commission was that the WCC should move from a parliamentary style of debate and voting, where simple majorities carry the day and minorities are over-ruled,

to a process of discerning the mind of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in which the views of all are taken into consideration. In consensus decision-making different views are carefully heard and recorded. Under skilful chairmanship the mind of a meeting is discerned and drawn out. This is not the place to describe in detail how consensus is drawn out of a meeting by the use of colour cards which test out the emerging responses to an issue. It requires skilful chairmanship. When it works it is infinitely preferable to the old parliamentary style of voting. Consensus is reached where unanimity on an issue is established, or where the minority agrees to go with the majority, or where it is agreed by all to take no action, or where a consensus statement records all opinions faithfully and leaves the matter open for future reflection. Consensus-working never rules a minority out of court. Moving to a model of consensus-forming requires skilled chairmanship as well as an understanding by the community of what consensus decision is and the processes that it entails. It is a way of discernment that requires a new ethos and culture, a change of attitudes to one another. I think it is true to say that the Special Commission experienced something of this way of consensus discernment in its own style of working which convinced the Special Commission that it is possible to move away from a parliamentary style of decision making. The last ten years have seen some positive results of a consensus methodology which has taken tension and opposition from meetings. But there is still some way to go.

Final reflections

The work of the Special Commission may seem at first sight to be a luxury, Christians looking inwardly at their own narrow concerns. I do not believe that this is so. For the way we live together as we move from separation towards visible unity is a sign of the sort of unity we believe God is calling us to live together. It is the manifestation of God's own life of communion and a sign to the world of its own possibility. The emphasis of the Special Commission on the qualities of life together in a praying and discerning community, seeking consensus on some of the most divisive issues of the church and the world may just help the fellowship of churches to be a more prophetic community both in what it discerns and the way it goes about that

discernment. The Church is prophetic both in what it says and also in the way it handles complex issues of faith, justice and peace.

I am grateful to the Orthodox for having raised hard questions which I believe did open up for all of us new creative possibilities of living together in the one ecumenical movement. It did increase our understanding of one another. In a world of frightening divisions and tensions, East and West need each other if we are to convince the world of the Gospel of reconciliation entrusted to us. The work of the Special Commission was a story of reconciling life across deep divides. It has enabled us to go on living as a fellowship of churches that brings together East and West giving us hope that one day we shall be one—so that the world may believe.

‘LOVE OF GOD’ AS REVELATION IN THE MYSTICISM OF BAR HEBRAEUS

Jennifer Griggs*

In this article, I examine the mysticism of Bar Hebraeus according to the metaphysical positions taken within the academic study of mysticism, positions which reveal the different schools of thought within that field of study. I further consider how the mystic discourse of Bar Hebraeus can offer a corrective to such presuppositions. Thus, Bar Hebraeus drew on the Syrian monastic spirituality of the ‘love of God’, to critique the scholastic metaphysics of Aristotelian philosophy that had risen to prominence in the Avicennan tradition of Islamic philosophy; a critique which is also relevant for contemporary conceptions of the metaphysics of mysticism.

Introduction

I have found that generally two approaches have been taken in scholarship on the Syriac mystic tradition. The first of these approaches was to take contemporary categories that are common to the discourse on mysticism, such as mystic experience, mystic union, ecstasy, love of God, and then to look for these in the mystical traditions they were studying. On the other hand, another group was looking for categories internal to the tradition they were studying. However, those who were looking for internal categories were often unconsciously corresponding those internal categories with contemporary categories of mysticism, so that what was amiss in both these approaches was a reflexive understanding of the scholar who was doing the academic study of mysticism. I have tried to remedy that in my approach, and I have firmly located my work within the study of religion in general and within the academic study of mysticism in particular.

* Jennifer Griggs is a PhD candidate at SOAS, working on Bar Hebraeus’ mysticism as ‘love of God’, and is also a Research Associate with the Samvada Centre for Research Resources.

In this article, I will be reconsidering a text that has been considered one of Bar Hebraeus' mystical works, the *Book of the Dove* (*Ktōbō d-Yawnō*), in an attempt to be faithful to the author's internal categories. Therefore I have adopted a critical, dialogical approach, which entails a two-way process, on the one hand, I can't help but use the categories within the contemporary study of mysticism that inform me and provide me with the lens to look at Bar Hebraeus' texts. However, even as I enter into the world of Bar Hebraeus, I not only learn his language, both linguistically and conceptually, but use his internal categories, to critique the categories of the academic study of mysticism. Therefore, my research on Bar Hebraeus is not only a contribution to Syriac mysticism, but is also making Syriac mystical thought, particularly that of Bar Hebraeus, relevant to the contemporary debates within the study of mysticism. While mysticism has been seen as an irrational form of religion by the classical theorists of mysticism, in Bar Hebraeus' mysticism, there is a change in paradigm and the discourse is about love.

What the contemporary study of mysticism is unable to see is its metaphysical foundations and its ontotheological conceptions of God, which makes it perceive mystic discourse as irrational. However, a study of mystic discourse such as that of Bar Hebraeus, reveals that mystics are reacting against the metaphysics of scholasticism and forging a new language of love with a view to talk about God, though this is generally missed within the contemporary study of mysticism, as this contemporary study itself understands God in metaphysical terms. Therefore one of my key arguments is that mystic discourse such as that of Bar Hebraeus, since it refutes scholastic metaphysics, can be legitimately used to critique the contemporary study of mysticism, and thus provide us with a language which is academically rigorous to texts and experiences that Michel de Certeau refers to as the tradition of the mystics.¹ In the following section, I will demonstrate how Bar Hebraeus' understanding of the love of God critiques the metaphysical God of scholasticism, as represented by the tradition of Aristotle, following Ibn Sīnā (c. 980-1037 CE) and his successors. In my final section, I will show how this critique applies equally to the metaphysical presuppositions that have been retained

¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, vol. 1, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16.

within the academic study of mysticism, and thus has relevance to the contemporary understanding of mysticism. If Ibn Sinā is understood as a classic example of scholastic metaphysics, then Bar Hebraeus' critique of Ibn Sinā's conception of God is not only relevant for thirteenth century mystical thought but can be used to critique contemporary conceptions of mystical thought.

Before entering into more detailed discussion of Bar Hebraeus' mysticism in dialogue with Islam, it is worth giving some background to the literary and ecclesiastical career of Bar Hebraeus. This thirteenth century bishop belonged to the Syrian Orthodox Church, becoming known to the West under his Latin name Gregory Bar Hebraeus, but Bar 'Ebrōyō in Syriac, and in his Arabic writings, Abū al-Faraj.¹ Bar Hebraeus was born in 1226 CE in Malatya, then under the Saljuqs of Rûm, and died at Maraghā in Persia in 1286; a Mongol capital that was also the centre of the library and observatory founded by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201-1274 CE).² In 1260 he was appointed to oversee the church at Aleppo, during which he was to see the fall of that city under the Mongol invasions.³ Bar Hebraeus became considerably involved in political events as bishop or rather 'Maphrian' of the East from 1264. I mention his career as a church leader, to give a brief background about his social role, even as I focus on his literary interests. These interests reflect the renewed Syrian interest in Aristotelian philosophy in the Syrian Renaissance period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,⁴ which can be seen in the Syrian

¹ Herman G. B. Teule, 'Gregory Barhebraeus and His Time: The Syrian Renaissance,' *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 3(2003): 22-24. Teule states that even a poly-linguist like Bar Hebraeus, familiar with Arabic, Persian and possibly Armenian, seems to have had no knowledge of Greek, as was typical amongst the West Syrians.

² Ibid. 25-6.

³ The biographical details are taken from Hidemi Takahashi's entry on 'Barhebraeus: Gregory Abū al-Faraj'. See Thomas Hockey et al., *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers [Electronic Resource]*, Springer Reference (New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media, 2007), 94-5.

⁴ N. Peter Joosse, 'Expounding on a Theme: Structure and Sources of Barhebraeus,' in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G. B. Teule, *Eastern Christian Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 140-1. Although the Syrians already possessed Syriac-Greek translations of Aristotle, Joosse argues that these were

translations of Aristotelian philosophy proceeding from Ibn Sīnā. John Watt describes the West Syrians of this period like Bar Hebraeus and his predecessor Bar Shakko (d. 1241), as engaging with 'the current of post-Avicennan Arabic Aristotelianism'.¹

Bar Hebraeus' mysticism in dialogue with Ibn Sīnā

I would like to consider the contribution of Bar Hebraeus to Syrian mysticism, in terms of his engagement with both the Syrian spiritual tradition and with medieval Islamic philosophy. Scholars in Syriac Studies have questioned whether Bar Hebraeus himself can really be considered a mystic, when even his mystical texts resemble more an encyclopaedic compilation of other such works belonging to the Islamic and Syriac Christian traditions, rather than an original account of his own personal religious experiences.² However, as Herman Teule has frequently argued, the approach and thought of Bar Hebraeus was unique both in his own time and within the Syrian tradition, and that especially in his mystical works, Bar Hebraeus was much more than just a compiler.³ Bar Hebraeus' understanding of the 'love of God' (*rhemtō alohoytō*), developed a significant theme in the writings of Syrian monasticism by such as Evagrius Pontikos (346-399 CE), Isaac of Nineveh (d. c. 700 CE) and John of Dalyatha (c. 690-780 CE);⁴ a tradition which Bar Hebraeus brought into dialogue with the renewed interest in Aristotelian philosophy in the Syrian

considered defective and that Bar Hebraeus wished to engage more fully with the Arabic and Persian tradition of philosophy.

¹ J. M. Watt, 'Graeco-Syrian Tradition and Arabic Philosophy,' in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G. B. Teule, *Eastern Christian Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 133.

² Hidemi Takahashi and Gregory John Bar Hebraeus, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography*, 1st Gorgias Press ed. (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), 39.

³ Teule, 'Gregory Barhebraeus and His Time: The Syrian Renaissance,' 25-27. Teule lists the main influences on Bar Hebraeus as follows, in his compendia of Greek philosophy, Bar Hebraeus made use of Ibn Sīnā, in astronomy and related physical sciences he was familiar particularly with the work of Naʿīr al-Dīn al-ʿĪsī, and in his books on religious ethics and mysticism, he borrowed from al-Ghazālī.

⁴ Herman G. B. Teule, 'L'amour De Dieu Dans L'oeuvre De Bar 'Ebroyo' (paper presented at the Actes du Colloque VIII Patrimoine syriaque, Antélias-Beyrouth, 2002), 266-67.

Renaissance. The period called by scholars the ‘Syrian Renaissance’, witnessed the translation of the Greek philosophy via its reception in the Islamic world from Arabic into Syriac, particularly the rediscovery of Aristotle through Avicenna (or Ibn Sīnā),¹ and the incorporation of Aristotelian sciences such as the books of physics and metaphysics.² Indeed, Bar Hebraeus’ major encyclopaedic work on philosophy, *The Cream of Wisdom (Hēwat hekmtō)*, depends for its ‘superstructure’ on Ibn Sīnā’s *The Book of Healing (Kitāb al-Shifā’)*, along with additional material from the Syriac versions of the Greek sources on Aristotle, such as the commentaries of Nicholas Damascenus (b. 64 BCE).³

Bar Hebraeus inherited particularly the Avicennan legacy of thinking about God as the necessary being of metaphysics, a tradition which he greatly admired and engaged with, including the discussion of Avicennan philosophy conducted in the intellectual circle of al-Ṭūsī in Maraghā.⁴ In this tradition, ‘God’ had become equated with the

¹ Aristotle and Daniel King, *The Earliest Syriac Translation of Aristotle’s Categories : Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus, (Leiden: Brill, 2010). The Syrians already possessed Syriac translations of the Greek Aristotle, the *Categories* was first translated in the sixth century.

² Mauro Zonta, ‘Syriac, Hebrew and Latin Encyclopedia in the 13th Century: A Comparative Approach To Medieval Philosophies,’ in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? = Qu’est-ce que la Philosophie au Moyen Âge? = What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?: Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l’étude de la philosophie médiévale*, 25. bis 30. August 1997 im Erfurt, ed. Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Medievalia* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1998), 922-5. Both Bar Hebraeus and Severus Bar Shakko produced Syriac ‘philosophical-scientific encyclopaedias’, in 1270 and 1230 respectively, using similar models for defining and dividing philosophy, following Plato, Aristotle and Avicenna.

³ Watt, ‘Graeco-Syrian Tradition and Arabic Philosophy,’ 125-6. Watt comments that while the overall structure of the *Cream of Wisdom* is clearly based on Ibn Sīnā’s *Shifā’* (though the books of practical philosophy depend more on the work of al-Ṭūsī), Bar Hebraeus also often supplements this with paraphrases of Aristotle’s teaching taken from the Syriac sources.

⁴ Herman G. B. Teule, ‘The Transmission of Islamic Culture to the World of Syriac Christianity: Barhebraeus’ Translation of Avicenna’s ‘*Kitāb Al-Iṣārāt Wa Al-Tanbihāt*’. First Soundings,’ in *Redefining Christian Identity*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse

necessary cause of contingent being, that is created beings were caused by the divine being. In Ibn Sīnā's phrase, the necessary being, or rather 'the necessary existent due to itself' (*wājib al-wūjūd bi-dhātihī*), is that 'whose truth or reality cannot be shared with anything else' and is that 'which is ontologically other'. However, as el-Bizri argues, the Avicennan Necessary Existent is neither 'epistemically prior to being nor is it beyond being'.¹ In the discussion of 'God' in philosophical texts, God became an adjunct of physical being, and scholastic metaphysics incorporated this reasoning into its understanding of God.² Thus, God came to be defined through the Aristotelian science of being, metaphysics, for the scholastic discourse of ontotheology.

Bar Hebraeus does not dismiss metaphysical speculation altogether,³ but in the *Ktōbō d-Yawnō* he offers a critique of approaching God solely as an extension of created beings, to make rational conclusions about God based on metaphysical speculation about the nature of the causality of being. It is the lower way of knowing God, of ascertaining his essence from his creatures, that every contingent being must have its prime cause, which is God.⁴ While Bar Hebraeus accepts the division of 'Creator' from 'created', he suggests two ways of knowing that Creator. The first is more difficult, to know the Creator from Himself, a knowledge which then teaches of the created, while the second way of knowledge is to know the Creator through creation,

Studies, 2005), 169. In the books of the practical philosophy, Teule suggests that Bar Hebraeus makes 'important literary borrowings' from the Persian *Book of Ethics*, by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

¹ See Nader El-Bizri, *The Phenomenological Quest : Between Avicenna and Heidegger* (Binghamton: Global Publications, Binghamton University, 2000), 107-9.

² For the scholastic development of Aristotle's metaphysics, see Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics : World, Finitude, Solitude*, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 43. Heidegger views scholastic metaphysics, as becoming solely concerned with the supra-sensuous order of divine being that lies above other beings.

³ See for example, Gregory John Bar Hebraeus and A. J. Wensinck, *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove : Together with Some Chapters from His Ethikon* (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1919), 79, Sentence 94.

⁴ *Ibid.* Sentence 73.

and this is the easier way.¹ The former position is the knowledge of the Initiated, and he quotes the sayings of monastics, on this manner of knowing which he characterises by the 'faith' (*haymanūthō*) in 'revelations' (*gelyānē*). This revealed knowledge is given by the illumination of the mind through the love of God, whose roots have been nourished in the hearts of the righteous ones.² In the chapter on the love of God in the multi-volume work on righteous living, the *Ethicon* (*Ktōbō d-Ithikon*), Bar Hebraeus states that: 'It must be known, that no single believing heart is devoid of the root of the love of God. But as to the growth of the tree of the love of God, the splendour of its flowers and the burden of its fruits, of these things many faithful are devoid.'³ It is only by this tree of love, that the Creator reveals the 'splendour' of creation to the Initiated, and thus knowledge by revelations is the fruit of the love of God.⁴

In the third chapter of the *Book of the Dove* (*Ktōbō d-Yawnō*) on the perfection of the monk through the love of God, he describes the soul as it burns by the fire of its love for the dove (the dove, *yawnō*, within the title of the book itself, a familiar symbol in Syriac literature for the Holy Spirit). The attachment of the soul to the world is burnt away in the fire of love, because the object of its love, the dove, shows itself to be outside of the created things of this world. The lover of the dove desires neither of the two created worlds, neither human existence on earth nor the divine abode of heaven.⁵ The dove retreats from both abodes, only to appear momentarily 'as a flash of lightning' in the mind of the lover, who is so captivated by desire that 'everything, even itself becomes to it as if not existing'.⁶

Here, Bar Hebraeus seeks to withdraw from the principle of ontological difference, 'the metaphysical gap' between the divine Creator and the finite created that was typical of scholastic doctrines.⁷

¹ Ibid. 55, 95.

² Ibid. 94.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. 47-8.

⁶ Ibid. 46.

⁷ This principle is discussed by Marilyn McCord Adams, 'Reviving Philosophical Theology: Some Medieval Models,' in *Was ist philosophie im Mittelalter?* 62-3. See p.276 n.2.

For Bar Hebraeus, God does not proceed solely from the necessity of causality but gives himself freely in divine love, and thus human existence is best understood as the gift of life, that is given by the Spirit.¹ The gift is always beyond full conceptualisation, because it is given from beyond existence, through the Spirit, and thus the natural response to the gift is not to reason its cause, but to take delight in what is given.² The gift of truth is given to those who listen and believe the Spirit of truth, not to those who pursue the divine cause by syllogistic reasoning.³ Bar Hebraeus states that after his own despair of pursuing the truth through the study of Greek wisdom,⁴ the love of God came to him as revelations of the dove.

Implications for the Academic Study of Mysticism

Therefore Bar Hebraeus' critique of scholastic metaphysics demonstrates how mystic discourse can make a contribution to the study of mysticism in providing a corrective to the way that the category 'mysticism' and its governing theme, the 'love of God', have been approached. The classical scholars of mysticism have interpreted the love of God in mystic texts in terms of their own metaphysical presuppositions, derived from medieval scholasticism. However, mystic discourse speaks of the love of God precisely to critique such presuppositions. This deconstructive aim of mystic discourse is directed against the scholastic metaphysics of divine being, in the manner of the writings of the German mystic Meister Eckhart (1260-1327 CE).⁵ However, this deconstructive enterprise was not an end in itself, but was necessary because of another insight, namely, that

¹ Bar and Wensinck, *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove : Together with Some Chapters from His Ethikon*, 67, Sentence 31. 'Now the word, being hidden in the rational, is revealed as it were by being born from a womb. Life however reveals itself in the living as long as it lives.'

² Ibid. 53.

³ Ibid. 78, Sentence 90.

⁴ Ibid. 61. Bar Hebraeus states that he read all that was necessary concerning every branch of the Greek sciences, including: 'logic, physics and metaphysics, algebra and geometry, science of the spheres and of the stars'.

⁵ See Don Cupitt's discussion of interpreting Meister Eckhart as a medieval deconstructionist, with reference to John D. Caputo and Jacques Derrida. Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity* (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 95-7.

scholastic metaphysics had occluded from the discussion of God any principle that was not governed by the efficient causality of being. The path of the mystics is what Bar Hebraeus calls 'the struggle of love',¹ one that surpasses the demarcation of divine names as a metaphysical reality, for God may only be found in the site of destruction of such affirmative modes of knowing God.²

Indeed while Bar Hebraeus' mysticism critiques scholastic metaphysics, it does not resort to another kind of Neo-Platonic metaphysics, in which the hyper-essential One is beyond being. This kind of metaphysical understanding has often been presumed in the classical study of mysticism, whereby a monistic definition for mystical love is posited as the ultimate aim of the mystics. For example a classical theorist of mysticism, Evelyn Underhill, presumed that mystical love referred to the innate erotic desire within the soul to return to its Source, the fundamental reality of the One.³ However, for Bar Hebraeus, love is the gift from the beyond which is therefore given in revelation and not emanated from an ontological source.

I would argue that Bar Hebraeus deconstructs the metaphysical God of divine being, in which God is reduced to the Being of beings, in order to reaffirm his faith in what is revealed in the love of God. In the *Ktōbō d-Yawnō*, Bar Hebraeus contrasts the scholastic mode with the 'faith founded on revelations', which demands for Bar Hebraeus quite a different path to knowing God,⁴ to retreat from the sensory world into solitude and silence (*šelyō wa-štoqa*), in order to hear what the Spirit gives in the revelations of divine love.⁵ Knowledge of this God, rather than the divine being of scholastic metaphysics, cannot be explained or described, and can only be reached in the path of love.⁶

¹ *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove*, 81, Sentence 99.

² *Ibid.* 96.

³ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993), 88-9.

⁴ *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove*, 65, Sentences 19, 20.

⁵ *Ibid.* 79, Sentence 95. 'When you wish to give rest to your mind from attaining profound questions by syllogistic intricacies, and you will acquire solitude and silence with steady labours, then be patient, and be not dejected in your way...'

⁶ *Ibid.* 75-76, Sentences 80-81. Here, Bar Hebraeus recounts the words of a blessed Initiated about his experiences of the love of God; Sentence 80 closes in this way: 'Hear me, hear me and be silent. But say not to me: explain and describe.'

Bar Hebraeus' mystic discourse on the love of God intends to bring the initiated towards the darkness of the divine 'cloud' (*'arfelō*), to approach God in a manner that is un-thought, but once there, the mystic has no further need of even the nomination of love and affection.¹ This is not however, an irrational state, but the un-thinkable, in which the dichotomy of rationality and irrationality is not in operation. The study of mysticism, which looks at mystic discourse as irrational, because it is being interpreted according to the Enlightenment categories within which the study of mysticism is entrenched, is thus unable to find internal categories for mystic discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mystic discourse of Bar Hebraeus seeks to speak of God beyond the mind's very conception of being, not only to overcome scholastic metaphysics, but also to provide an opening for an understanding of God that stems from the love of God. Therefore Bar Hebraeus' discourse on the love of God may contribute to a rethinking of the metaphysical presuppositions in the contemporary study of mysticism, in order to do justice to the reading of the mystics, and to find an appropriate language that resonates with mystic discourse's intent to critique scholastic metaphysics.

¹ *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove*, 48-50.

DOCUMENTS

CATHOLICS AND PENTECOSTALS SIXTH ROUND OF CONVERSATIONS: BALTIMORE, 13-19 JULY 2013

The Third Session of the Sixth Phase of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue took place in Baltimore, MD, USA, July 13 through 19, 2013. The Dialogue is between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and some Classical Pentecostal churches and leaders. The general theme for the present phase of Dialogue is “Charisms in the Church: Their Spiritual Significance, Discernment, and Pastoral Implications”. The topics discussed at the past two sessions were Charisms—Our Common Ground (2011) and Discernment (2012). The topic for this year’s session (2013) is Healing.

Begun in 1972, the Dialogue does not seek to establish structural unity. Its goal, rather, 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 two traditions have been guiding principles of the conversations, which include daily prayer services that are led alternatively by Catholics and Pentecostals.

The Pentecostal Co-Chair of the Dialogue is Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA (Assemblies of God). The Catholic Co-Chair of the Dialogue is the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh, NC, USA.

During the third session, Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost (Ghana) presented the paper “Healing: A Pentecostal Perspective” and Dr. Mary Healy, Associate Professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary Detroit, MI, (USA) presented the paper “A Catholic Perspective on Healing.”¹ According to the agreed agenda, the Dialogue expects to devote the 2014 session to “Prophecy.” The 2015 session is dedicated to writing the Final Report

The members of the Dialogue were pleased to meet in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the first Catholic Diocese in the United States, established in 1789. The participants attended Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the

¹These two papers published below.

Blessed Virgin Mary with the Most Reverend William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore, Principal Celebrant; Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, principal concelebrant and homilist; Bishop Denis Madden, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore and chairman of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), also a principal concelebrant. After the Sunday Mass, the members of the Dialogue met with Archbishop Lori and toured the Cathedral, an impressively beautiful and spiritual space, described by Pope John Paul II as “a worldwide symbol of religious freedom.”

Rev. Robeck noted, "Healing is a subject on which Catholics and Pentecostals have much in common. While many people may view the healing ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ with skepticism, or dismiss it altogether, Catholics and Pentecostals believe that God continues to heal and perform miracles. As a result, Catholics and Pentecostals affirm together that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever' (Hebrews 13: 8). With such common ground, we are optimistic that we will be able to produce a document that will prove to be useful within our communities."

According to Bishop Burbidge, “This year’s Dialogue has provided a wonderful opportunity for members of the Catholic and Pentecostal teams to renew our common faith in the healing power of Jesus, the One who continues to demonstrate His love and miracles in our midst. The Dialogue has helped us to focus on how the charism of healing is understood, expressed and celebrated in our churches and faith communities. We have acknowledged that our theological understanding of the charism of healing requires further exploration. In addition, we noted that the context and supervision of healing ministries within our churches and faith communities will also benefit from further study and discussion. The Dialogue benefitted greatly from the expertise and wisdom of the participants. Our conversations were carried out with great respect and were always rooted in prayer asking the Lord to bring the completion the work we have carried out in His name.”

The members from the Classical Pentecostal churches are: Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA (Assemblies of God), Co-Chair; Rev. David Cole, Liaison to the Greater Christian Community Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, Vice President for Student Development and Pastoral Care,

Briercrest College and Seminary, Canada (Open Bible Churches), Co-Secretary; Rev. S. David Moore, Incoming M.G. “Pat” Robertson Professor, The King’s University, Van Nuys, CA, USA (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, USA); and Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana. Mr. Jelle Creemers, Th.M. at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium attended as an observer.

The members of the Catholic team are: Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh NC, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez, Bureau Chief of Western Section, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary; Dr. Mary Healy, Associate Professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, MI, USA; Rev. Lawrence Iwuamadi, Catholic Professor, Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland/Nigeria; Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A., Professor, Pontifical Faculty Auxilium, Rome and Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, China; Rev. Marcial Maçaneiro SCJ, Professor, Pontifical University of São Paulo and Dehonian Faculty, Brazil; and Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi, Associate Director, Centro Pro Unione and Professor, Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rome, Italy.

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON HEALING*

Mary Healy

In the November 2012 edition of *First Things*, a journal of religion and public life, a fascinating column by sociologist Peter Berger appeared under the title ‘A Friendly Dissent from Pentecostalism.’¹ In this column Berger describes what he regards as a fundamental belief shared by Pentecostals and Catholics—namely, a supernaturalist view of the world, in which God is expected to do miracles regularly—and explains why he as a Lutheran disagrees with it. Berger sees this supernaturalist view as exemplified in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which regards the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as a miracle that occurs at every Mass. He also sees it as manifested in the belief in biblical inspiration and inerrancy held by both Pentecostals and Catholics (though in different forms), and in the Catholic doctrine of infallibility. On all counts, Berger claims, the Lutheran view sharply differs, in that it understands God as present throughout the entire created universe, working ‘*in, with, and under* natural processes’; thus ‘There is no need for additional miracles; the universe itself is the primary miracle.’²

Berger’s observation provides a fitting starting point for dialogue on a topic on which Pentecostals and Catholics hold more in common than is often realized. Curiously, the newest stream in world Christianity, which traces its origins to the beginning of the twentieth century, is in many ways closer to the most ancient Church than are the historic Protestant communions that originated in the sixteenth century.³ Of course there are also profound differences of perspective,

* Paper presented at the third session of the sixth phase of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue meeting in Baltimore, 2013.

¹ *First Things* (November 2012), 45-50.

² *Ibid.* 49. Italics in the original.

³ The journalist John L. Allen lists some of the commonalities: ‘on some key issues that formed the fault lines of the Protestant Reformation, Pentecostals are arguably closer to Catholics than to the Evangelicals. While classical Protestants stress the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, that the Bible alone is the only guide to faith, Pentecostals believe in on-going revelation through the Spirit. Similarly, classical Protestantism believes in salvation through faith

which this dialogue has the task of examining and discussing, but they rest on a deeper foundation of unity.¹ Despite his ‘friendly dissent,’ Berger articulates a real insight in recognizing that a supernaturalist view of the world—a view that expects God to intervene miraculously in history and in human lives—is foundational to both Catholicism and Pentecostalism. One way in which this view is manifested is in the theme of this year’s dialogue: prayer for and experience of supernatural healing.² In this essay I will reflect on the theme of healing under the following four headings:

1. healing as presented in the New Testament;³
2. healing in the history of the Church;

alone, while many strains of Pentecostalism believe in a faith manifested in holy living and the fruits of the Spirit—in other words, both faith and works. Pentecostals and Catholics also tend to see grace and nature as complementary, unlike classic Reformation theology which sees a radical discontinuity. Pentecostalism has a sensual, earthy spirituality similar to some forms of popular Catholic devotion. For these reasons, Harvey Cox has dubbed Pentecostalism “Catholicism without priests,” meaning an expression of folk spirituality without the Roman juridical system or complicated scholastic theology. Despite strong tensions between Pentecostals and Catholics, these structural parallels suggest a basis for long-term dialogue. They also may help explain why so many Catholics in various parts of the world have found Pentecostalism congenial, since it’s not entirely foreign to their own religious instincts.’ Allen, *The Future Church* (New York: Image, 2009), 382. One might add to this list the fact that in prayer for healing many Pentecostals make use of blessed handkerchiefs, oil, and other material items in a manner analogous to Catholic sacramentals—a practice that many other Protestants regard as superstitious.

¹ As John Paul II wrote in *Ut Unum Sint* (20), quoting John XXIII, ‘With regard to other Christians, to the great Christian family... “What unites us is much greater than what divides us.”’

² This paper will necessarily be limited to reflection on miraculous healing, although much could be said about the Church’s ministry to the sick by means of ordinary medicine, which throughout Church history has been a remarkable sign of Christian love in action and a motive for the conversion of many.

³ A complete treatment of the biblical basis of healing would also need to take into account the Old Testament, especially its themes of the link between sin, sickness and redemption; God’s compassion toward the sick and suffering; and healing as one of the prominent signs of the coming messianic age. Due to space limitations this paper will address only the New Testament.

3. the place of healing in Christian faith from a Catholic theological perspective; and
4. healing as it is experienced in various Catholic contexts today.

These reflections will necessarily be brief and limited. My aim is of course not to provide a thorough or comprehensive exposition of a Catholic understanding of healing, but simply to offer a starting point for our discussions this week.

I. Healing in the New Testament

The Gospels present the healing of the sick as an integral dimension of Jesus' public ministry, inseparably linked to his preaching of the kingdom.¹ Jesus' healings visibly manifest the presence of the kingdom, bearing witness to the truth of the message he proclaims.² They function not merely as external proofs of his divinity but as the *embodiment* of the good news itself: the Messiah has come to set people free and overthrow every kind of evil. Jesus identifies himself as the 'physician'—a divine title (Matt. 9:12; cf. Exod. 15:26)—and describes his mission as that of healing/saving the lost (Luke 19:10; cf. John 3:17; 12:47).³ In response to the messengers from John the Baptist inquiring whether he is truly the Messiah foretold by the prophets, Jesus points to his healings as the evidence (Luke 7:20-23; cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7; 61:1-2). The Synoptic Gospels summarize his activity under the twofold aspects of teaching and healing: 'he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing [Greek *therapeuō*] every disease and every infirmity among the people' (Matt. 4:23; cf. 9:35; Luke 9:11). The primitive apostolic preaching as recorded in Acts even describes his public ministry primarily in terms of healing: 'he went about doing

¹ This section is partly based on *Guidelines on Prayers for Healing*, 5th edition (Rome: International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, 2012), co-authored by the present author.

² Just as physical ailments are symbolic of the various forms of spiritual infirmity that afflict fallen humanity, such as spiritual blindness, deafness or paralysis, so physical healing is an outward sign of the interior restoration that occurs through forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:14).

³ The Greek term *sōzō* encompasses the meanings of both 'to heal' and 'to save.' Two other verbs commonly used for healing in the New Testament are *iaomai* (make whole, restore, heal) and *therapeuō* (treat, cure, heal).

good and healing [*iaomai*] all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him' (Acts 10:38; cf. Acts 2:22).

Sometimes Jesus effects a cure by his mere word; at other times he uses the laying on of hands or a therapeutic means recognized at the time, such as saliva or clay.¹ Even the fringe of his garment can be a vehicle of his healing power (Matt. 9:20-22). In some cases Jesus himself takes the initiative to heal, although more often he responds to a request brought by the sufferer or by a parent or friend. It is not coincidental that every healing initiated by Jesus himself takes place on the sabbath.² Jesus' preference for healing on the sabbath—despite the ire it provokes among the religious authorities—is a sign that he, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:19), has come to inaugurate the new creation by which humanity is restored to the fullness of life that God intended from the beginning.

Jesus invariably meets with compassion the sick and infirm who besiege him wherever he goes (Matt. 14:14).³ In no case does he instruct a person simply to bear the suffering assigned to them. He invariably treats illness as an evil to be overcome rather than a good to be embraced. The only demand he makes, on several occasions, is for faith as the disposition that makes healing possible (Matt. 9:2, 28; Mark 2:5; 9:23; Luke 5:20; John 4:48). Conversely, a lack of faith inhibits the exercise of his healing power (Matt. 13:58; Mark 6:5-6). The Gospels frequently mention healings in conjunction with deliverance from evil spirits, suggesting that demonic influence underlies some illnesses.⁴ In continuity with the Old Testament, Jesus also affirms the fundamental link between sin, sickness and

¹ Matt. 9:29; 20:34; Mark 6:5; 7:33; Luke 13:13; John 9:6; see also the disciples' use of oil in Mark 6:13.

² These include the man with the withered hand (Matt. 12:9-13); the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17); the man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-4); the lame man at Bethesda (John 5:1-9); and the man born blind (9:1-14). There is also a sabbath exorcism: Mark 1:21-26.

³ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith notes that 'The Lord welcomes their requests and the Gospels contain not a hint of reproach for these prayers' (*Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, I, 2).

⁴ Cf. Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 10:1; Mark 1:32; Luke 6:17-18; 7:21; 8:2; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 10:38; 19:12.

redemption.¹ Physical healing is an outward sign of the interior restoration that occurs through forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9:1-8; John 5:14). However, Jesus also makes clear (as does the book of Job) that it is illicit to interpret illness or infirmity as a direct consequence of personal sin (John 9:3).²

The New Testament frequently refers to Jesus' healings, together with exorcisms and other miraculous works, as 'signs and wonders.'³ This phrase signifies two related dimensions. First, healings are 'signs' because they are a revelation of Jesus' divine identity and messianic mission. They visibly manifest his love and compassion for suffering humanity and his definitive victory over sin and death. Second, healings are 'wonders' because they elicit a response of awe, wonder, praise and gratitude.⁴ It is clear, however, that physical healings are not an end in themselves; the accounts of the ten lepers and of the woman with a hemorrhage, for example, suggest that healing is only complete when it has drawn the recipient into a relationship with Jesus in which he is recognized and worshiped for who he is (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 17:11-19; cf. Mark 10:52).

The Gospels indicate that the Lord's works of healing and deliverance, as anticipatory signs of his full work of salvation, took place at the cost of his own bodily sacrifice. Matthew, after noting that 'they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,' explicitly links this messianic activity with the sufferings he bore as the Servant of the Lord: "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matt. 8:16-17).⁵ The Gospels frequently use the word 'raised up' or 'rose' for

¹ Cf. CCC 1502. The Old Testament affirms that although bodily suffering is contrary to God's intention for humanity, it is one of the evils that afflict human beings as a consequence of sin. In particular, sickness is prominent among the punishments threatened by God for his people's infidelity to the covenant (Deut. 28:21-35; cf. Pss. 32:3-5; 38:2-18; 39:8-12; 107:17).

² See John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 15.

³ John 4:48; Acts 4:30; Rom. 15:12; 2 Cor. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4.

⁴ Mark 5:19-20; 7:37; Luke 13:13, 17; 18:43; 19:37-39; John 9:38.

⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 16-17.

those healed by Jesus, hinting that every healing is a foreshadowing of the resurrection on the last day.¹

In commissioning the apostles to continue his saving mission, Jesus reaffirms the intrinsic link between healing and the proclamation of the gospel. He commands the Twelve: 'preach as you go, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons' (Matt. 10:7-8). This charge is repeated in the commission of the seventy-two: 'Whenever you enter a town and they receive you... heal the sick in it and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you"' (Luke 10:9-10). After his resurrection, Jesus broadens the authority to heal, listing among the signs that will accompany believers: 'in my name they will drive out demons,... they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover' (Mark 16:17-18).

Luke records the early Christians carrying out this commission in the numerous healings worked by the apostles (Acts 2:43; 3:1-8; 5:12) and by other disciples such as Stephen (Acts 6:8), Philip (Acts 8:6-7) and Ananias (Acts 9:17-18).² For the apostolic Church, evangelization was inseparable from these supernatural charisms, signs and wonders through which God himself bore witness to the spoken message and convinced the hearers of its truth (Mark 16:20; Acts 4:29-30; 8:6; 14:3; Rom. 15:18-19; Heb. 2:3-4). Luke narrates that when Philip evangelized a Samaritan town, 'the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did' (Acts 8:6). Peter's raising of Tabitha from the dead 'became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord' (Acts 9:42). As Paul and Barnabas preached in Iconium, the Lord 'bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands' (Acts 14:3). In his letters Paul often reminds the early Christians of the miracles they experienced through the power of the Spirit at the time of their conversion (1 Cor. 2:4-5; Gal. 3:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:5).

The New Testament epistles give us a glimpse into the exercise of charisms in the early Church. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to healings as a particular charism given by the Spirit in greater measure to

¹ Matt. 8:15; 9:5-7, 25; Mark 1:31; 3:3; 5:41; 9:27; 10:49.

² On some occasions the apostles are obliged to take pains to clarify that it is the risen Jesus who heals, not they; they are merely his instruments (Acts 3:12; 8:18-20; 14:8-18).

certain individuals (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30). This is evidently a gift for obtaining healing for others through faith and prayer. The Letter of James speaks of prayer over the sick as a sacramental action carried out by the elders of the Church; in the same context, however, James notes the efficacy of prayer for the sick on the part of any Christian: 'Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will heal/save [sōzō] the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed [iaomai]' (Jas. 5:14-16).¹

The New Testament affirms that complete healing/salvation (*sōtēria*) of the whole human person, body and soul, will take place only at the resurrection on the last day (Rom. 8:18-23; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Until then, the kingdom retains an aspect of incompleteness and hiddenness. Although at several points the Gospels state that Jesus healed all the sick who came to him (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 14:35-36; Luke 4:40; 6:19), there are other indications that Jesus did not heal everyone on every occasion.² The New Testament nowhere directly affirms that God's will is to heal every sickness and infirmity in this life.³ Jesus instructs his followers not only to heal the sick but also to 'visit' them (Matt. 25:36). Paul's letters refer to cases where sickness remains, at least for a time, despite the apostle's charism of healing (Gal. 4:13; Phil. 2:26-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20).

II. Healing in the History of the Church

1. Healing in the Patristic Era

For the early Church, Jesus' healings were not a peripheral benefit but the theme that sums up the very heart of the economy of salvation, flowing from Christ's paschal mystery and continued in the life of the

¹ Catholic tradition regards the rite described here as the origin of the Anointing of the Sick (CCC 1510).

² John 5, for instance, mentions the 'large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled' at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:3), but records only the healing of one lame man. It seems likely that Jesus had seen but not healed the well-known crippled man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple (Acts 3:2; cf. 3:10). The numerous healings recorded in Acts imply that there remained many sick and infirm people in Jerusalem subsequent to Jesus' ministry.

³ The *Catechism* notes that Jesus 'did not heal all the sick' (1505).

Church. The image of Christ the Physician was ubiquitous in early Christianity, 'from apologetics to the pastoral preaching of bishops, the exhortations of monks and the texts of the liturgy and piety.'¹ In fact, 'There is no image that is as profoundly engraved in the early Christian tradition as that of Jesus the great miracle-working physician.'² As in the New Testament, Jesus' therapy was regarded as inseparably physical and spiritual: the miraculous healing of sick bodies was the outward sign of his healing of the soul.

A glance at the works of the Fathers demonstrates that, at least in the first three centuries, miraculous healings and exorcisms were viewed as a normal part of the Christian life. As George Montague and Kilian McDonnell have demonstrated, the receiving of supernatural charisms, including the charism of healing, was considered integral to the process of Christian initiation. Healings and other miracles were frequently worked by ordinary believers, particularly in the context of evangelization. Historian Ramsay MacMullen contends that exorcisms, healings and other miracles were in fact the most significant factor in the growth of the Church in the first four centuries.³ Such was the frequency and efficacy of Christian exorcisms that St Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), for example, regarded them as incontrovertible evidence for the truth of Christianity:

Jesus was born by the will of God the Father for the salvation of believers and the destruction of demons. And now you can learn this by what you see with your own eyes. For throughout the whole world and in your city [Rome] there are many demoniacs whom all the other exorcists, sorcerers and magicians could not heal, but whom our Christians have healed and do heal, disabling and casting out the demons who possessed them in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.⁴

¹ Bishop Francesco Tamburrino, 'Healing and the Sacraments,' in *Prayer for Healing: International Colloquium* (Rome: ICCRS, 2003), 123.

² Ibid. quoting A. Oepke, 'ἰάσομαι,' in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, III, 204.

³ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing The Roman Empire A.D. 100-400* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1984), 27-28. Cf. Adolf Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, ed. James Moffatt, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1:132; www.ccel.org/ccel/harnack/mission.html (accessed June 28, 2013).

⁴ Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, 6.5-6; see also Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4.

St Irenaeus (c. 115-202) speaks of supernatural works done by believers as a common motive for conversion to Christ:

Those who are in truth his disciples, receiving grace from him, perform miracles in his name so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe in Christ and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophecies. Still others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yes, moreover, the dead have even been raised up, and remained among us for many years.¹

St Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258) mentions the power to heal the sick as part of the normal equipment given to baptized believers, enabling them to share in the Church's mission:

By that grace [of the Holy Spirit, received in baptism] we are given power in all purity to heal the sick, whether of body or of mind, to reconcile enemies, to quell violence, to calm passions, to reprimand demons and force them to disclose their identity, punishing them with sharp blows until, with loud shrieks and struggles, they flee in terror.²

St Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300-368) likewise sees healing as a charism that is bestowed in baptism and that grows through exercise:

We who have been reborn through the sacrament of baptism... are able to prophesy and speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope and receive abundant gifts of healing.... These gifts enter us as a gentle rain. Little by little they bear abundant fruit.³

In the fourth century, however, the Church began to witness a decline in the manifestation of supernatural charisms. By the late fourth century St John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) could assert that 'the gifts... have long since ceased.'⁴ Some reasons for this decline will be

¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II.32.4.

² *Treatise to Donatus on the Grace of God*, paraphrased by Anne Field in *From Darkness to Light. What It Meant to Become a Christian in the Early Church* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1978), 191.

³ Hilary, *Tract on the Psalms* 64.14-15 (CSEL 22.246).

⁴ *On 2 Thessalonians*, 4. Basil, in speaking of the charisms, seems to presuppose their relative rarity: 'As the art is potentially in the artist, but only in operation when he is working in accordance with it, so also the Spirit is ever present with those that are worthy, but works as need requires in

explored below. Here I will simply mention that although some Fathers felt compelled to provide a theological reason for the cessation of charisms, they did not regard such a situation as optimal. Chrysostom, for example, views the age of charisms nostalgically: in the apostolic age 'whoever was baptized at once spoke in tongues... many also prophesied; some performed many other wonderful works.'¹ But 'The present church is like a woman who has fallen from her former prosperous days. In many respects she retains only the symbols of that ancient prosperity.'²

St Augustine's views on healing are particularly noteworthy. As is well known, Augustine (354-430) initially held the view that miracles were needed only for the initial growth of the Church in the apostolic age, and had ceased once the church had reached maturity.³ But after reading Athanasius' *Life of Anthony*, and then witnessing abundant healings in his own cathedral in Hippo, especially through the relics of St Stephen, he changed his mind. In a sermon he exhorted his congregation, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ restored sight to the blind, raised Lazarus to life.... Let no one then, brethren, say that our Lord Jesus Christ does not do those things now and on this account prefer the former to the present ages of the Church.'⁴ In his greatest work, *The City of God*, Augustine recounts many of the striking healings he witnessed and explains why he instituted the practice of recording them:

I realized how many miracles were occurring in our own day... which were so like the miracles of old and how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these miracles of divine power to perish among the people.... It is only two years ago that the keeping of records was begun here in Hippo, and already, at this writing, we have more than seventy attested miracles.⁵

prophecies, or in healings, or in some other actual carrying into effect of his potential action' (*On the Holy Spirit*, XXVI.61).

¹ *On 1 Corinthians*, 29.

² *On 1 Corinthians*, 36. See Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1994), 286-289.

³ Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, 25.47.

⁴ *Sermon 38.2*.

⁵ *The City of God*, XXII.8.

Augustine even reprimanded members of his congregation who had kept silent about their healings.¹ Why? Because such miracles give glory to God, show forth the power of Christ's resurrection, and lead to praise and thanksgiving. On one occasion, when a brother and sister were miraculously healed of terrible seizures, he describes the reaction of his congregation: 'Such wonder rose up from men and women together that the exclamations and tears seemed as if they would never come to an end.... They shouted God's praises without words, but with such a noise that our ears could scarcely stand it.'²

In his *Retractions*, completed in 426, Augustine wrote:

It is indeed true that the sick are not always healed... But what I said should not be taken to mean that no miracles are believed to happen today in the name of Christ For at the very time I wrote... a blind man in the city [of Milan] was given back his sight; and so many other things of this kind have happened, even in this present time, that it is not possible to know all of them or to count up all those we do have knowledge of.³

Even in the late patristic age, when healings were no longer common among ordinary believers, many of the Fathers wrote of such supernatural works as having a crucial role in evangelization. The historian Socrates of Constantinople (born c. 380) writes that St Gregory the Wonderworker (c. 213–270), 'while still a layman, performed many miracles, healing the sick, and casting out devils... insomuch that the pagans were no less attracted to the faith by his acts, than by his discourses.'⁴ Pope St Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) wrote his *Four Books of Dialogues on the Life and Miracles of the Italian Fathers and on the Immortality of Souls* to record the miracles done in his time, which he considered indispensable for the conversion of pagans and Lombard heretics. Gregory is careful to document his sources, usually eyewitnesses.⁵

¹ *The City of God*, XXII.8..

² *Ibid.*

³ *Retractions*, I.13.7.

⁴ *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.27; see also Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 74.

⁵ For instance, Gregory tells of miracles performed by St Benedict as recounted by four of his disciples, and reports that St Augustine of Canterbury and his companions had such great miracles accompany their preaching in England that they seemed to imitate the powers of the apostles. Gregory, *Letters* 3.61; 8.29 (CCL 140 and 140a, pp. 209–211, 550–553); *Moralia in Job* (CCL 143b, p. 1346); *Homilies on Ezekiel* (CCL 142, p. 254–55). See Stanley M. Burgess,

2. Healing in the Middle Ages

Following the Christianization of Europe, healings continued to be a common feature of Christian life, although no longer primarily in an evangelistic context. Medieval Christian literature abounds with accounts of healings and other supernatural phenomena, often at shrines such as Santiago de Compostela where the sick came to pray for divine favors. According to the historian Benedicta Ward, 'Events called *miracula* permeated life at every level... [they were] closely woven into the texture of Christian experience.'¹ Historians have often dismissed medieval accounts of miracles because they tend to be mingled with legends or pious exaggerations. However, at shrines it was common for clerics to take sworn depositions, often with intense cross-examination, of those who claimed healings and those who witnessed them. In recent decades scholars have discovered and begun to publish thousands of these depositions, making it more difficult to dismiss all accounts of healing as entirely fictional.²

Miracle accounts were especially abundant in connection with the Franciscan revivals of the thirteenth century and the building of the medieval cathedrals. The following description of the building of the Cathedral of Chartres illustrates the tenor of such accounts:

Who ever saw, who ever heard, in all the generations past, that kings, princes, mighty men of this world... should bind bridles upon their proud and swollen necks and submit them to wagons which, after the fashion of brute beasts, they dragged with their loads of wine, corn, oil, lime, stones, beams, and other things necessary to sustain life or to build churches...? ... When they were come to the church, then the wagons were arrayed around it like a spiritual camp; and all the following night this army of the Lord kept their watches with psalms and hymns; then waxen tapers and lights were kindled in each wagon, then the sick and infirm were set apart, then the relics of the saints were brought to their relief, then mystical

'Proclaiming the Gospel with Miraculous Gifts in the Postbiblical Early Church,' in Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer (eds.), *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1993), 285.

¹ Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 1-2.

² See Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*; Isabel Moreira, *Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2000); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

processions were made by priests and clergy, and followed with all devotion by the people, who earnestly implored the Lord's mercy and that of his blessed Mother for the restoration to health.... Soon all the sick and infirm leap forth healed from wagon after wagon, casting away the staff whereupon they had hitherto leaned their crippled limbs, and hastening without support to render thanks at her altar. Blind men see, and thread their way with ease; the dropsical are relieved of their grievous load and lose their fatal thirst.... Why should I enumerate one healing after another, when they are innumerable and more than man can tell?¹

Accounts of healings also abound in the lives of saints such as Anthony of Padua, Gertrude the Great, Catherine of Siena, Vincent Ferrer, and Francis Xavier, and continuing up to our own time through John Bosco, John Vianney, Pio of Pietrelcina, André Bessette, and innumerable others; and in association with relics of the saints and prayers to the saints, especially the Blessed Virgin Mary.

3. Reasons for the decline in healings and other supernatural charisms

Despite the ubiquity of miracles of healing throughout Church history, it is undeniable that, as mentioned above, the late patristic period witnessed a decline in the exercise of supernatural charisms, and that the modern period has seen a further decline in the expectation and experience of healings, except at shrines such as Lourdes or in connection with the process of beatification and canonization, and more recently, in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Following are some reasons for this decline.

- *The reaction to Montanism.* Montanism began in Phrygia in the late second century as a spiritual revival movement. Its founder, Montanus, claimed to have received a series of apocalyptic revelations from the Holy Spirit and urged his followers to fast and pray to receive similar inspirations. Montanism tended to place exaggerated emphasis on prophecy and other charisms, and to downplay the role of the ecclesial hierarchy. As a result of these

¹ Abbot Haimon of St Pierre-sur-Dives, translated by G.G. Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: MacMillan, 1931), vol. II, 18-22. Coulton (ibid. 18) comments that 'The substantial accuracy of Haimon's description, apart from obvious exaggerations, is proved not only by brief notices under the year 1145 in French and English chronicles, but also by a contemporary letter from Hugh, Archbishop of Rouen, to Thierry, Bishop of Amiens, printed by Mabillon in his *Annales Benedictini*, t. VI, p. 392.'

and other excesses the movement was condemned, first by Asian synods, then probably by Pope Zepherinus in 200 AD.¹ Because supernatural charisms were closely associated with Montanism there was a kind of ‘guilt by association,’ and orthodox Christian writers and pastors began to distance themselves from charismatic manifestations. As early as the second century, however, St Irenaeus warned against an overreaction to Montanism: ‘They are truly unfortunate who, realizing there are false prophets, take this as a pretext for expelling the grace of prophecy from the church.’²

- *The growth of an empire-approved Christianity.* The legalization of Christianity in the fourth century led to a new situation in which the Church received an influx of converts of varying degrees of sincerity, with a consequent lowering of the standards for baptismal preparation. At the same time, the practice of infant baptism—which the Church recognizes as a great good in itself—inevitably led to a separation between the rite of baptism and the personal appropriation of the grace of baptism by faith.³ It was no longer common to expect the bestowal of supernatural charisms, including healing, as a normal effect of Christian initiation.
- *Latent Manichaeism.* Throughout Christian history ‘Manichaeism’ or ‘Gnostic’ strains of thought that tend to denigrate the body have regularly appeared, partly due to the influence of Platonism and Stoicism, which viewed the body as a prison that confines and weighs down the spirit.⁴ Even where not formally heretical, such views lead to a negative attitude toward the body that is in conflict with biblical revelation.⁵ These influences are manifested, for example, in a de-emphasis on physical healing, in an

¹ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 119.

² *Against Heresies* 3.11.9 (SC 211.170.172); cf. McDonnell and Montague, 120.

³ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 95. In the Catholic understanding, the practice of infant baptism is essential because it recognizes two indispensable truths: the utter gratuity of God’s grace and the intrinsically communal nature of Christian faith (CCC 1250, 1253).

⁴ See Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1974), esp. 64 and 73.

⁵ Paul was already compelled to warn against such views: Rom. 14:6; Col. 2:16; 1 Tim. 4:3.

exaggerated emphasis on asceticism and severe mortification of the body; in a disparagement of marriage as an imperfect form of Christian life; and in a disembodied portrayal of heavenly life.¹

- *A growing tendency to identify supernatural charisms with special sanctity.* Gifts and graces that in the early centuries were widely experienced among the people of God gradually became more associated with special sanctity and with monastics who practiced strict asceticism. As a result, for ordinary lay people to pray for miraculous healing came to be considered a sign of presumption and pride. The New Testament, however, firmly rejects the assumption that supernatural charisms are proof of holiness. Jesus warns, ‘Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?” Then I will declare to them solemnly, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers”’ (Matt. 7:22-23). After Peter’s healing of the cripple at the temple gate, he admonishes the bystanders, ‘why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety?’ (Acts 3:12; italics added).
- *A confusion between charisms and extraordinary mystical phenomena.* Catholic spirituality in the modern period has tended to classify charisms in the category of extraordinary mystical phenomena—gifts that are private, given by God solely for the benefit of the individual.² ‘If theologians mentioned [charisms] at all, they were considered only in terms of their contribution to personal spirituality and were attributed no ecclesiological importance or value.’³ Contemporary works of spiritual theology thus tend to warn against desiring or praying for charisms,

¹ Another example of the influence of such views is that in biblical thought salvation is understood as salvation of the whole person, body and soul, but Christian theology came to speak almost exclusively of the salvation of souls (although without denying the resurrection of the body). Whereas Scripture speaks of the *body* as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), traditional spirituality came to speak almost exclusively of the *soul* as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

² See Yves Congar, ‘Pneumatology Today,’ *American Ecclesiastical Review* 167 (1973), 439.

³ Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105.

including the charism of healing.¹ This view differs markedly, however, from the biblical and patristic understanding, which regards charisms precisely as *ecclesial* gifts, bestowed for the sake of building up the Church and thus to be desired and sought. St Paul exhorts, ‘earnestly desire the higher gifts’ (1 Cor. 12:31; cf. 1 Cor. 14:1, 39; Eph. 4:11-12). Tertullian urged catechumens, ‘ask your Father, ask your Lord, for the special gift of his inheritance, the distributed charisms, which form an additional, underlying feature [of baptism].’² St Cyril of Jerusalem likewise instructed those preparing for baptism, ‘My final words, beloved ones, in this instruction are words of exhortation, urging all of you to prepare your souls for the reception of the heavenly charisms.’³

- *Enlightenment rationalism.* Christian life in the last three centuries has been profoundly affected by the Enlightenment, which rejected claims of divine revelation and authority in favor of reason alone. Enlightenment rationalism led to a widespread loss of the sense of the transcendent, with the result that many Christians are living a practical Deism, believing that perhaps in some sense God exists, but he does not intervene in human history, nor does he act directly in human lives. Rather, the universe is a closed system in which everything can be reduced to physical or biochemical processes; science will eventually explain everything. Such a worldview obviously hinders people from expecting or believing in supernatural healing.
- *The demythologization of the New Testament.* One of the most far-reaching consequences of Enlightenment rationalism has been the split between biblical exegesis and faith, exemplified in the tendency of modern biblical criticism to dismiss the Gospel accounts of miracles as myths invented by the early Church. As Pope Benedict stated in *Verbum Domini*, ‘The lack of a hermeneutic of faith with regard to Scripture entails more than a simple absence; in its place there inevitably enters another hermeneutic, a positivistic and *secularized hermeneutic* ultimately based on the conviction that the Divine does not intervene in

¹ See, for instance, Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (Sheed and Ward, 1987), 423.

² *On Baptism* 20.

³ *Catechetical Lectures*, 18.32.

human history. According to this hermeneutic, whenever a divine element seems present, it has to be explained in some other way, reducing everything to the human element.” It is difficult to overestimate the impact of decades of such misguided exegesis on theology, catechesis, preaching, and the faith of ordinary believers. If Jesus did not truly heal the sick or perform miracles in first-century Galilee, how can we expect him to do so today?

- *Fraudulent healers.* Finally, a major factor contributing to doubt and suspicion of miraculous healing in every age has been the existence of charlatans, fraudulent healers, healers using occult practices or other spiritually illicit methods, and healers exercising their ministry for the sake of self-promotion or personal gain. The early Church was no stranger to this problem, and Jesus warned of it in his eschatological discourse: ‘False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect’ (Mark 13:22; cf. 2 Thess. 2:9). As St Paul cautioned, the existence of false charismatic phenomena ought not to lead to the suppression of all charismatic phenomena (1 Thess. 5:20-21; cf. 1 Cor. 12:1-3). The many abuses of charisms are undoubtedly part of Satan’s strategy to make the faithful neglect the gifts of the Holy Spirit altogether.

III. The place of Healing in Christian faith from a Catholic theological perspective

Catholic tradition has always recognized that Christ’s redemption can be described as a work of healing.² In his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict XVI writes that ‘Healing is an essential dimension of the apostolic mission and of Christian faith in general’; it can even be said that Christianity is a “therapeutic religion”—a religion of healing (*Einweisung*). When understood at a sufficiently deep level, this expresses the entire content of “redemption.”³ Salvation in Christ is ultimately a healing of humanity’s deepest wound: the wound of our

¹ *Verbum Domini*, 35b.

² See CCC 1503-1505. As mentioned above, the intrinsic link between Christ’s work of salvation and healing is evident in the New Testament use of the verb *sōzō*, which means both ‘save’ and ‘heal,’ and the noun *sōtēria*, which means both ‘salvation’ and ‘healing.’

³ *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 176, quoting Eugen Biser.

sin and consequent alienation from God. Conversely, the fullness of healing is forgiveness of sins, restored communion with God, and ultimately the resurrection of the body and eternal life in union with the Holy Trinity and all the redeemed. The Catholic theology of healing seeks to understand all miraculous healings within this broader context.

This section will touch on three areas that are especially significant for the Catholic understanding of healing: the sacraments, the theology of suffering, and the new evangelization.

1. Healing and the Sacraments

Catholic tradition recognizes the sacraments as the privileged setting in which Christ's work of salvation and healing is continued in the Church. The *Catechism* teaches that just as Jesus touched and healed the sick during his earthly ministry, 'so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.'¹ The Church 'believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St Paul suggests is connected with bodily health.'² The healing power of the sacraments is manifested particularly in the two 'sacraments of healing,' Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick.³ But in a sense all the sacraments can be understood as sacraments of healing, since all are efficacious for the healing of fallen human nature.⁴ It is preeminently the Eucharist, the radiant center of the Christian life and the privileged place where we encounter Christ, in which the act of love in which he died for us is signified and made present and available for us, that we experience his healing power. The Eucharist is the 'medicine of immortality.'⁵ Thus the response of the faithful immediately before receiving Holy Communion is an act of faith in Christ's healing: 'Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be

¹ CCC 1504.

² CCC 1509.

³ CCC 1421.

⁴ CCC 457, 798, 1129.

⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians*, 20.

healed.¹ The prayer before Communion in the Eastern liturgy even includes physical healing: 'May the communion of Thy holy Mysteries be neither to my judgment, nor to my condemnation, O Lord, but to the healing of soul and body.'²

The sacramental economy rests on the principle that God uses the body and matter as vehicles of his grace, and that Jesus' work of salvation involves the whole human person, soul and body. The profound respect for the body taught by Scripture scandalizes some who would prefer that God act on a purely spiritual plane, or who regard the use of physical objects for spiritual purposes as a form of superstition. Yet Catholic teaching has always rejected an artificial division between the soul and body, as if God is concerned only with the soul. Tertullian, a third-century Father, wrote eloquently about how it is through our flesh that Christ mediates his grace:

The flesh is the hinge of salvation.... The flesh is washed so that the soul may be made clean. The flesh is anointed so that the soul may be consecrated. The flesh is signed so that the soul may be protected. The flesh is overshadowed by the laying on of hands so that the soul may be illumined by the Spirit. The flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ so that the soul too may be filled with God. [Flesh and spirit] cannot, then, be separated in their reward, when they are united in their works.³

Although the sacraments are privileged occasions for healing, the Church recognizes that they are not the only contexts in which Christ's saving grace is at work in the Church. Rather, the Holy Spirit 'distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank,' including charisms of healing, which 'are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.'⁴ The rediscovery of the charismatic dimension of the Church—that dimension in which the Holy Spirit works

¹ In the Roman Missal there are also numerous post-Communion prayers asking for healing, particularly during Lent, 'with this New Testament ambivalence of asking for salvation not only for the soul, and not only for the after-life, but also for the salvation of the body, in the here and now.' Cf. Albert de Monléon, 'Healing in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal,' in *Prayer for Healing*, 207 n. 2.

² Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

³ Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Flesh* 8; cf. CCC 1015.

⁴ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 12.

spontaneously and unpredictably at his own initiative—was one of the most notable fruits of Vatican Council II, as John Paul II observed:

Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements.¹

Vatican II laid the doctrinal foundation for a return to a truly biblical understanding of the role of charisms in Christian life. It is no coincidence that the half century since then has witnessed the distribution of supernatural charisms in a superabundance not seen since the patristic era. This rediscovery has, however, only begun to have its full effect on theology and on every aspect of the Church's life and mission.

A brief word should be said about the Anointing of the Sick, which over history has evolved in a way that partly mirror the changes in the Catholic understanding of healing. As the *Catechism* observes, 'Over the centuries the Anointing of the Sick was conferred more and more exclusively on those at the point of death. Because of this it received the name "Extreme Unction."² Although the sacramental rite never ceased to include prayers for healing, the emphasis shifted to an almost exclusive focus on preparation for a holy death. People actually dreaded the appearance of a priest to administer this sacrament, because it was seen as a herald of death! Vatican Council II called for a revision of the rite to restore its original character as a sacrament of healing, both by reinstating its former name and by directing that it is for all the seriously ill, not only those in danger of death.³ The revision, completed in 1974, changed the essential form of the sacrament to more strongly emphasize healing.⁴ The prayer for

¹ John Paul II, Address at the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, Rome, May 30, 1998. In the same address the pope also affirmed, 'The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People.'

² CCC 1512.

³ Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 73.

⁴ Cf. CCC 1520.

blessing the oil to be used in the sacrament is especially explicit: 'May your blessing come upon all who are anointed with this oil, that they may be freed from pain and illness and made well again in body, mind, and soul.' Many priests attest to having witnessed miraculous healings through this sacrament. Yet a low expectation of bodily healing is still the norm.

2. Healing and the Theology of Suffering

It is perhaps in the theology of suffering that the differences between Catholic and Pentecostal approaches to healing are most pronounced. Catholic spirituality, illustrated in the lives of so many saints, is deeply marked by the words of Jesus: 'whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me' (Mt 10:38; cf. Mt 16:24). Catholic tradition views suffering as having a unique capacity to transform a person and configure him or her more deeply to Christ. Even more, in light of Christ's words, afflictions of every kind are recognized as having inestimable value as a participation in his paschal mystery (Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13).¹ When suffering is lovingly embraced in union with the suffering of Christ, it has a salvific power and significance: it is not only a means of preparing the individual for eternal glory (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:4-5), but also a mysterious source of grace for others (2 Cor. 1:6; 4:10-12).² The mystery of redemptive suffering is expressed especially in Paul's words: 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col. 1:24; cf. 1 Pet. 5:9). As John Paul II noted, this affirmation does not mean that the redemption achieved by Christ is incomplete.³ Rather, 'Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special *particle of the infinite treasure* of the world's Redemption, and can share this treasure with others.'⁴ Not because of any lack but because of the Lord's overflowing generosity he gives us the privilege of participating in his work of redemption by uniting our sufferings to his.

It is important to recognize that Jesus' statements about suffering in the Gospels primarily refer to the trials associated with persecution for

¹ Cf. CCC 1505.

² John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 25.

³ *Ibid.* 24.

⁴ *Ibid.* 27. Italics in the original.

the sake of the gospel (Matt. 5:11; Luke 21:12-19; John 15:18-21; 16:33). Likewise the sufferings Paul speaks of are those resulting from apostolic labors and persecutions.¹ However, Catholic tradition has always regarded it as legitimate to extend the theology of redemptive suffering to bodily ailments and every other kind of suffering.² A question that calls for further theological exploration is to what degree a distinction ought to be made between physical illness, to which Jesus invariably responded with healing, and adversities suffered for the sake of the gospel, which Jesus called his disciples to embrace.

A conclusion often inferred from the spirituality of suffering is that every Christian should simply accept in faith all the sufferings that arise in life. Thus although Catholics have no hesitation in seeking healing through medical means, ironically, many are hesitant to ask God for miraculous healing. Catholic ministry to the sick entails an immense array of hospitals, clinics, hospices, and other ministries to alleviate suffering, but (with some recent exceptions in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal) has not customarily included ministries of healing through faith and prayer. The abundance of supernatural healings in our own time raises important questions about the Christian response to sickness. It is a challenge to recognize sickness as an objective evil and to be purified from attitudes of passivity before it.³

3. Healing and the New Evangelization

As stated above, for Jesus and the early Church evangelization was inseparable from the signs and wonders by which God confirmed the truth of the gospel and disposed people's hearts to believe in it. As the Church today summons all Catholics to a 'new evangelization,'⁴

¹ 1 Cor. 4:11-13; 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:8-11, 14; 11:23-29; Gal. 2:19-20; 6:14; Phil. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:12; cf. Acts 14:22.

² Cf. *Salvifici Doloris*, 26-27.

³ Cf. *Ibid.* 30.

⁴ Pope John Paul II first called the Church to a new evangelization in an address to Latin American bishops in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on May 9, 1983. He subsequently repeated the call numerous times, particularly in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), 3, and his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), 40. Pope Benedict made the new evangelization the topic of the World Synod of Bishops in 2012.

especially in the secularized post-Christian societies of the West, there is no reason to think that people are any less in need of the 'demonstration of the Spirit and power' (1 Cor. 2:4) than in the first century. In a world that has largely abandoned Christian faith and lost a sense of the transcendent, charisms of healing manifest once again that God is the living God who acts in history and in human lives. At the same time, supernatural charisms remind the Church that evangelization relies less on human plans and projects than on the sovereign initiative of the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of evangelization.¹ In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* John Paul II emphatically affirms the importance of such charisms for the new evangelization:

At the heart of the new evangelization... there is *the Spirit of Christ*, the principle and strength of the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church. As Pope Paul VI reminded us: 'Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.' ... it is the Holy Spirit 'who confirmed the hearts and minds of the disciples, who revealed the mysteries of the Gospel... having in themselves the gifts which this same Spirit bestows and directs like jewels to the Church, the Bride of Christ It is in fact he who raises up prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, guides tongues, works wonders and healings, accomplishes miracles, grants the discernment of spirits, assigns governance, inspires counsels, distributes and harmonizes every other charismatic gift. In this way he completes and perfects the Lord's Church everywhere and in all things.'²

IV Healing as experienced in Catholic contexts today

1. Healing and the Veneration of the Saints

Healing in Catholic tradition has been closely linked to veneration of the saints, and is often associated with relics of the saints, such as the relics of St Stephen in Augustine's cathedral or the relics of St Thérèse which have traveled around the world in our own time.³ Miraculous healings are particularly important to the process of canonization as evidence of the individual's intercessory power and thus of his or her

¹ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 75. See Avery Cardinal Dulles, 'The Charism of the New Evangelizer,' in Doris Donnelly (ed.), *Retrieving Charisms for the Twenty-First Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 40.

² *Veritatis Splendor*, 108, quoting Novatian.

³ A biblical precedent for healing through relics of the saints is found in the story of the dead man raised to life by contact with the bones of Elisha in 2 Kg 13:21.

union after death with God. According to the process established by John Paul II, one miraculous healing is required for beatification, and a second for canonization. The healings claimed as part of this process are investigated according to stringent medical criteria to verify that they cannot be attributed to natural causes. In a similar way, the Lourdes Medical Bureau and the International Lourdes Medical Committee investigate healings reported to have occurred at the shrine to determine whether such cures are medically inexplicable. As Bishop Albert de Monléon points out, these criteria 'are so stringent and restrictive that when a miracle is recognized it really is a miracle and it has more of the nature of a 'wonder' in the biblical sense of the term, than of a sign.'¹

The emphasis on these strict criteria can have the unfortunate consequence of seeming to imply that healings that do not meet the criteria are not acts of God at all. De Monléon goes on to point out that the way healings are experienced in the Charismatic Renewal today, in contrast, 'is as a "sign" of the compassion of God welcomed in joy and thanksgiving, rather than as "wonders" or miracles, whose medically inexplicable and apologetically indisputable character is emphasized.'² This development suggests the need to renew the theology of healing such that rigorous medical investigation, while fulfilling an important function in certain contexts, is not overemphasized. A return to the biblical and traditional understanding would recognize God's acting miraculously in wide variety of ways, even where secondary causes are also involved.

2. Healing in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Since the emergence of Catholic Charismatic Renewal following the Second Vatican Council, the experience of supernatural healing through faith and prayer has become more common in the lives of many Catholics.³ Prayer for healing has become a regular part of

¹ De Monléon, 'Healing in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal,' in *Prayer for Healing*, 204-205.

² Ibid. 206.

³ The Renewal is estimated to have touched some 120-140 million Catholics. See David Barrett, George Kurian, and Todd Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University, 2001); see also the 2011 Pew Forum report on Global Christianity, <http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-exec.aspx>.

prayer meetings, conferences, and retreats; and some Catholics have developed full-scale ministries of healing, focusing on either physical or inner healing or both.¹ The Church today is witnessing the flourishing of supernatural charisms on a scale not seen since the early centuries.

This development has also inevitably led to certain imbalances and abuses (such as the infamous case of Archbishop Milingo), creating a need to ensure that healing ministry is exercised in full accord with Catholic faith. For this purpose, in 2000 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) published a document titled *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*. However, following the promulgation of this instruction there were reports of bishops or priests in various parts of the world closing down healing events and ministries based on an overly strict interpretation of the document. In response, the Pontifical Council for the Laity organized an international colloquium on healing in collaboration with the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), which took place in 2001. This colloquium led to a proposal for the ICCRS Doctrinal Commission to develop practical guidelines for prayer for healing based on the *Instruction*. These guidelines were finalized after several years of dialogue and consultation with the CDF.²

The high level of personal woundedness in contemporary society resulting from the breakdown of the family and other social dislocations, as well as the physical suffering of immense numbers of people despite modern medical advances, point to the need for healing ministry to become a regular and normal dimension of the Church's work of evangelization and pastoral care. Such a development would represent a reawakening of a dimension of the Church's mission that was present in the early centuries, though not in precisely the same form. At the same time prudent pastoral oversight and discernment is needed, particularly for newer forms of

¹ Examples include the Divine Retreat Center in Kerala, India, run by the Vincentian Fathers; Christian Healing Ministries in Florida, USA, founded by Francis and Judith MacNutt; and the international ministries of Sr Briege McKenna, Fr Richard McAlear, Damian Stayne, Neal Lozano, and Bob Canton.

² International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, *Guidelines on Prayers for Healing* (Rome: ICCRS, 2012).

healing such as healing of memories, intergenerational healing, and healing of the land.

Conclusion

At the world Synod of Bishops in 2012, Cardinal Donald Wuerl warned of a 'tsunami of secularism' that is engulfing the Western world. Precisely at this time of crisis, God is revealing his presence and power anew with abundant supernatural charisms resembling those of the apostolic Church. This is reason for both Catholics and Pentecostals to rejoice together, and to collaborate in seeking to more deeply understand, prudently discern, and gratefully welcome the action of the Holy Spirit, praying in faith for a 'tsunami of healing' that will once again manifest the reality and presence of the Kingdom. I would like to conclude by quoting a homily of Pope Francis:

Miracles still happen today. But in order to allow the Lord to carry them out we must pray with courage to overcome that 'feeling of disbelief' that dwells in the heart of every man, even in men of faith. A prayer that calls for an extraordinary action must be a prayer that involves all of us, as though our very life depends on it.... A courageous prayer, that struggles for that miracle. Not like those prayers of courtesy: Ah, I will pray for you! Followed by one Our Father, a Hail Mary and then I forget. No! It takes a brave prayer like that of Abraham who was struggling with the Lord to save the city, like that of Moses who prayed, his hands held high when he grew weary.... not a polite prayer, but a prayer from the heart.... Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief.¹

¹ Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae (*L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 29 May 2013).

HEALING: A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE*

Opoku Onyinah

Introduction

Pentecostals believe that all of the spiritual gifts, including the ‘miraculous’ gifts continue to operate within the Church in the present age. Healing is believed to be one of the most important aspects of the gospel. Pentecostals’ understanding of healing has been progressive. Just as there may be significant differences regarding belief of an issue within the same denomination, so also there are significant differences of belief among Pentecostals about healing. Yet, Pentecostals generally consider Jesus among other things as Healer, alongside Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and Soon Coming King. Some of the reasons given by Pentecostals are that healing is reported in the Bible, Jesus’ healing ministry is included in his atonement or put another way, healing is part of salvation. It is believed that sin led to suffering, and God has alleviated human suffering through the death of Christ. The restoration does not only result in spiritual healing but also bodily healing. Pentecostals hold the view that holistic healing (both spiritual and physical) serves as a foretaste of the state of the redeemed ones upon the second coming of Christ, when his people will be completely delivered from all the consequences of the Fall.

Nevertheless, not everyone receives divine healing through prayer. It is believed that through his sovereign will God determines who he heals or does not heal. Some of the widespread reasons offered on why some are not healed include the fact that healing is not always immediate, healing may not be God’s will for the individual, there may be a lack of faith on the part of the individual, God may be teaching the individual a lesson through suffering, and there may be personal sin in one’s life. Yet it is held that not all illnesses are caused by personal sins (John 9: 1-12).¹

* Paper presented at the third session of the sixth phase of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue meeting in Baltimore, 2013.

¹ For examples see: Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979);

Against this backdrop, this paper discusses the development of Pentecostal healing practices. It begins by attempting to link them to the ancient and biblical worldview and then shows how Jesus came to fulfil the Messianic expectations of the Old Testament (OT). To bring out the practices of healing ministry within Pentecostalism, it offers a brief history of the development of the doctrine and practice of healing within Pentecostalism across the globe. Then it explores the various responses from Pentecostal scholars and pastoral reflections on the same.

Ancient World and Old Testament Concept

After the fall of humankind, people have continued to battle with diseases and misfortunes on the earth, and ultimately surrendered to the relentless power of death. It is natural then that, as earliest records of civilization have shown, there have been various responses to these afflictions, some spiritual and others natural. The spiritual responses to these forces and diseases were prayer and appeasement to spirit forces or deities. The natural reaction took the form of basic medical care, such as treating wounds and attempting to diagnose the illness, and the use of various herbs. Often, both the spiritual and natural approaches were more than interrelated, and the desired success of the natural treatments was tied into the imagined efficacy of the spiritual method employed. Disease was therefore perceived to be more than a merely biological process; it was viewed as an attack by a higher power akin to a bodily wound.¹ Therefore, faith was put in deities who could heal and provide protection from other powerful ones. The deity who could heal and protect was the powerful one and at the same time viewed as healer, saviour and deliverer.² Thus among

Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1977); William K. Kay, *Inside Story: A History of British Assemblies of God* (Mattersey: Mattersey Hall Publishing, 1999); *The Apostolic Church: Its Principles and Practices* (Bradford: Apostolic Publications, 1937).

¹ This belief is still held in many parts of the world. See Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Exorcism in Ghana* (Blandford: Deo Publishing, 2012), 31-86.

² Michael L. Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 53.

the ancient Near East and biblical writers, there was a strong link between faith and healing.

In addition, they did not clearly separate the spiritual from the physical. The Lord (or deity in question) was expected to be powerful enough to meet the needs of his or her devotees, offering them forgiveness of sins, the ability to produce adequate food and water, as well as good health (e.g. Exod. 23:25-26). A deity who could not heal or protect the worshippers would not be considered powerful and as such worthy of its name. Some deities who were praised for their healing and protective deeds among the Babylonians and Assyrian pantheon were Marduk, the lord of life, and Gula, the lady of life. Asklepios was the most prominent healing deity in ancient Greco-Roman pantheon.¹ Thus among the ancient people, there was a strong link between faith and healing.

In the light of this, the OT use of the term *Yahweh-Rapha* (Exod. 15:26) is very significant. Yahweh was a powerful deity who made a covenant with his people. The condition of the covenant shows the very nature of the Lord as a powerful healer to those who obeyed him. His promise was holistic: 'he would keep Israel well',² or put in another way, he would restore to health and sustain in health (Exod. 15:26, cf. 23:25-26).

Consequently, in the OT, the Lord revealed himself as healer in many ways. The Lord healed barrenness and infertility; examples of these are Sarah (Gen. 21), Samson's mother (Jud. 13) and Hannah (1 Sam. 1). Again, in the OT, dead people were brought to life. Examples are the widow's son in 1 Kings 17 and the resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son in 2 Kings 4. Furthermore, physical diseases such as leprosy were healed. By means of the testimony of an Israelite maidservant, Naaman was healed of leprosy and converted to the belief in the God of Israel (2 Kgs. 5:17-18). Thus, power was associated with the servants of the Lord; they could bring the power of God to heal barrenness, physical illnesses and restore dead people to life. A demonstration of power in human affairs is, therefore, evident in the execution of God's redemptive plan in the Old Testament.

Generally, in the OT, the primary requirement for healing and health was covenantal obedience, with emphasis on loyalty to Yahweh

¹ Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, 55, 60.

² *Ibid.* 78.

alone (e.g. Exod. 23:24; Deut. 7:1-16), keeping his commandments (e.g. Exod. 15:25-26), and walking in godly fear and humility (Prov. 3:7-8). Obedience resulted in divine blessing, not the least, good health and long life (e.g. Deut. 28:1-14), while disobedience resulted in curses, such as terrible sickness and premature death (e.g. Deut. 28:15-68).

The disobedience of the covenanted people sent them into captivity. The prophets began to speak of the restoration of Israel and the establishment of the kingdom of God. The imageries that the prophets used were significant (e.g. Isa. 5:25; Jer. 14:19, Ezek. 5:14-15 cf. Dan. 9:16). They longed for the time that the Lord would bring healing to his people.

The beginning of the restoration and the coming of the Kingdom of God were to begin with the coming of the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah. The passages concerning the Kingdom of God and the Servant of the Lord, such as Isaiah 35:4-6; 42:6-9; and 61:1, indicate that outstanding miracles of healing, unprecedented throughout the OT times, were anticipated with the coming of the Messiah. Thus, the Messiah was to be a more powerful person than any servant of the Lord.

Signs that the Messianic age had begun

The New Testament (NT) brings into focus the beginning of the fulfilment of the OT hopes. The Messianic age had begun. The kingdom of God had broken into human history, and was bringing about miracles, powerfully displacing demons, and healing diseases. The early ministry of Jesus was often summed up in terms of preaching, teaching and healing (Matt. 4: 23-24; 9:35; Mark 1: 21-23; Luke 6:6-11). The eschatological jubilee was proclaimed, announcing liberty from bondage to sin, Satan and sickness (Luke 4:18-19). Consequently, there were many acts of healing, exorcism, and miracles performed by the Messiah in the gospels (e.g. Matt. 15:21-28; Mark. 5:1-20; Luke. 8:41-6; John 1-12). In response to John the Baptist's question as to whether he was the Messiah, Jesus sent the messengers back to inform John that the blind, lame, deaf, and lepers were healed, the dead were raised, and the good news was being preached (Matt. 11:4-5, cf. Isa. 35:6). Thus, here, the mission of Jesus was directly linked with the power demonstrated in his healing and other miraculous activities.

Healing and miracles continued to be a feature of the ministry of the disciples of Jesus. The author of Acts shows his intention of writing: 'In my former book [Luke], Theophilus, I wrote about what Jesus began to do and to teach' (Acts 1:1). One of the implications of this statement is that the reader will continue to encounter what Jesus began to do and to teach throughout the ministry of the Church. Accordingly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of empowerment for witnessing about Jesus (Acts 1: 8). And Jesus was active in the missionary activities of the Church (e.g. Acts. 16:7).

Besides Acts, there is no direct link between missions and healing in the New Testament literature. However, some texts such as 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 15:19 indicate that the ministry of healing or signs and miracles were an on-going part of the ministry of the Church. James 5:14-16 clearly indicates that prayer for healing of the sick was the heritage of the early believers. Thus healing ministry was one of the characteristics of the early Church.

Decline of divine healing ministry

It has been said that a healing ministry was one of the traits of the missionary activities of the early Church. However, scepticism towards 'divine healing' began during the Enlightenment.¹ Scientific medicine began to strictly consider all illness as a result of physiological malfunctioning and offer other scientific explanations for various human sufferings. Thus, there was no room for divine healing or intervention.

Although throughout the centuries, within the Church, there have always been some healing ministers; apparently, Protestant Christians mainly resorted to scientific healing, neglecting almost completely prayer for physical healing. The mission of the Church was in a way separated from prayer and miraculous interventions. It is against this background that the Pentecostal approach to healing begins.

¹ What the Pentecostals call 'Divine Healing' is what others label as 'Faith Healing'. Divine Healing is a process through which a person is restored to physical, mental, or spiritual health by what is believed to be the direct intervention of God through prayer.

Development of Pentecostal healing praxis

Precursors

Serving as a precursor to the Pentecostal movement, with its emphasis on Spirit baptism and healing, was the Holiness movement, which was itself based on a particular interpretation of the teaching of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703-91) and that of Wesleyan theologian John Fletcher.¹ Revivalists who contributed, along Wesley's position from various angles, included Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody and Reuben Torrey. The Wesleyan position was that 'entire sanctification' or 'perfect love' was the 'second blessing' or 'baptism with the Spirit.' The position was sharpened by the Keswick Convention, which began in 1875, with yearly meetings in the English Lake District. The Keswick position was that the baptism with the Spirit was an enduement of power for service. By the end of the nineteenth century the baptism of the Spirit as an enduement of power for service was prominent in most of the ministry of the North American revival preachers. Consequently a third position emerged, called the 'third blessing'. This 'third blessing' advocates held on to both the 'second blessing of sanctification' and a 'third blessing of baptism with fire'. The third blessing of fire was also considered an enduement with power.² It was these preparations that set the ground for the birth of modern Pentecostalism.

Healing Homes

Alongside this trend came the development of healing homes in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe and America by ministers such as Edward Irving in Britain (1830), Johann Blumhardt in Germany (1843), Dorothea Trudel in Switzerland (1851), Otto Stockmayer in Switzerland (1867), and the following from the USA: Carrie Judd Montgomery (1880s), Charles Cullis (1880s), Adoniram Gordon (1882), Alexander Dowie (1888-1907) and Charles Parham (1898-1900).³

¹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 25

² *Ibid.* 29.

³ For the development of healing movements and approaches to healing in Pentecostalism, see Paul Chappell, 'Healing Movements' in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee, eds., (Grand Rapid: Regency Reference Library, 1988), 353-74; D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in The*

Classical Pentecostalism

It was at Parham's healing home and Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, USA that the re-emergence of the Pentecostals' experience of the Holy Spirit baptism took place on 1 January 1901. Modern worldwide Pentecostalism, however, is traceable to the events marking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Azusa Street revival led by an African American and former student of Parham, William J. Seymour (1870-1922) in April 1906.¹ The adherents of this revival, Pentecostals, claim to preach the full gospel: Justification by faith in Jesus alone; Sanctification as an on-going work of grace and the Holy Spirit; Healing through the atoning work of Christ on the cross; the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Although early Pentecostals emphasized that the gifts of the Spirit should accompany the baptism of the Spirit, speaking in tongues and healing were particularly singled out. Cecil M. Robeck reports that during the Azusa Street meetings, people 'began to be delivered from various habits such as tobacco or liquor, and others began to be healed, they left their crutches, braces, old smoking pipes and the like, against the walls'. He rightly observed that 'these souvenirs or testimonies to deliverance and healing became staple fixtures in Pentecostal churches that would follow'.² Some well-known individuals who carried out a healing ministry during this early period included Aimee Semple McPherson, who established the Four Square Gospel Church, and Smith Wigglesworth of the UK, who travelled around the world preaching and praying for the sick. Wigglesworth is claimed to have raised several people from the dead in the name of Jesus.³

Development of Pentecostal Thought (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 115-86; Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 115-41; Morton Kelsey, *Healing Christianity: A Case Study*, 1973, 3rd edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995), 188-92.

¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Tennessee: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2006), 66-75.

² *Ibid.* 73

³ Stanley Howard Frodsham, *Smith Wigglesworth: Apostle of Faith* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1948).

The British sociologist, Stephen Hunts, observes that ‘the growth and appeal of deliverance has come with the expansion of the “classical” Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.’¹ At this period, the emphasis was on speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and also a powerful weapon for evangelism. But healing and exorcism were to accompany the Holy Spirit baptism. During this period the emphasis was not on an individual who was gifted in healing to pray for a sick person, rather it was believed that healing would follow the prayer of any believer.

In fact, some early Pentecostals opposed those who attempted to make healing and deliverance a specialty. This trend was to change when the Latter Rain movement emerged in 1949.

The Latter Rain Movement

The Latter Rain Movement, which emerged in the mid twentieth century, bore many similarities to the early Pentecostal Movement that originated at Azusa Street. Yet, as observed by Richard Riss, the movement emerged with the aim of revitalising Pentecostalism, since, for those who embraced this revival, Pentecostalism had become increasingly institutionalized and experiencing dryness of faith.² The Latter Rain movement believed in the restoration of the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4: 11-12). They also believed that the laying-on of hands by apostles and prophets follows the baptism of the Spirit and manifestation of spiritual gifts and other supernatural occurrences.³

¹ Stephen Hunt, ‘Managing the Demonic: Some Aspects of the Neo-Pentecostal Deliverance Ministry,’ *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13, no. 2 (1998): 216.

² M. Richard Riss, ‘Latter Rain Movement’ in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee, eds. (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1988), 532; Richard Riss, ‘Latter Rain Movement of 1948,’ *PNEUMA* 4 (1982): 32-45.

³ Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (Santa Rosa Beach: Christian International, 1981), 263; Riss, ‘Latter Rain Movement,’ 533; Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal: Origins and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 26; James E. Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain: With a Breviate of Its Early Missionary Endeavours* (Thorndon: Julian Literature Trust, 1991), 292.

The Latter Rain movement also laid emphasis on deliverance and was opposed to the establishment of 'human organisations.' Consequently the churches influenced by them were independent local churches with little or no central organisation. Other features of the Latter Rain movement were the praise dance, fasting and prayers. Still others include the 'New Thing' in Isaiah 43:19 (and Acts 17:19-21) which, for them, centered on revelation, and the Feast of Tabernacles.¹ The Latter Rain ministers did not only hold to these beliefs, but, as have been shown by Riss and Bill Hamon, the crusades of some of the key leaders of the movement, such as William Branham, Gordon Lindsay, T. L. Osborn and Oral Roberts were characterised by reports of healing and other miraculous phenomena.²

Tele-evangelists and Healing

William Branham's preaching and healing ministry came primarily in tent meetings. Oral Roberts began his ministry in tents as well, but Oral Roberts' successful use of the television as a medium to preach and pray for the sick gained a wider audience, which led others to follow suit. Other well-known ministers who followed included Kathryn Kuhlman, A. A. Allen, Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Pat Robertson, and Benny Hinn. These preachers claimed to preach the full gospel and prayed for the sick to be healed.

The teachings that were coming out of these healing ministers were that healing the sick makes the gospel complete. Healing is part of the atonement. This doctrine originated from the 'double curse' and 'double cure' teaching which was preached by the Holiness revivalists in the late nineteenth century in the United States. The double curse

¹ Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain*, 292; Hocken, *Streams of Renewal*, 26. For further reading on the movement, see Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain*, 292. For other beliefs of the Latter Rain such as the Feast of Tabernacles, and further reading on the movement, see M. Richard Riss, 'Latter Rain Movement of 1948,' *PNEUMA* 4 (1982): 32-45; Riss, 'Latter Rain Movement,' 532-34; M. Richard Riss, *A Survey of 20th Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 105-24; Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, 238-68; Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain*, 290-310; Hocken, *Streams of Renewal*, 25-29.

² Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, 246; Riss, *20th Century Revival Movements*, 105-12.

from Genesis 3 refers to spiritual death and physical death. The double cure has to do with the work of Christ that provides for eternal life and physical healing (e.g. Isaiah 53:4-6 and Matthew 8:16-17). The doctrine is a product of Wesleyans teaching on 'entire sanctification', which engendered among his followers a quest for post conversion crisis experience that would eradicate the 'inbred sin'. Some Holiness people reflecting on the intimate tie between sin and sickness in the Scripture concluded that since sin has been dealt with once and for all in the atonement, so has sickness. The believer's part was to receive healing by faith just as they had received forgiveness of sins by faith.¹ It was believed that Jesus wants the body to be whole as the soul is whole; healing takes place as a result of one's faith; and the lack of faith on the part of the individual may lead to failure to be healed. Personal sin in one's life may also cause failure to heal. Healing will take place as a result of a person's anointing or unction.² The 'anointing' is one term that is often used in the Pentecostal circles yet without proper understanding. Generally, the anointing is supposed to be the Holy Spirit's power upon the life of a person that causes him or her to perform miracles or work extraordinarily.³

The ministry of the Pentecostals impacted the then existing churches, giving rise to the charismatic movements, which also emphasized faith and healing.⁴ This trend brings to existence once again the relation between prayer, divine healing and miracles.

¹ Pavel Hejzlar, *Two Paradigms for Divine Healing: Fred F. Bosworth, Kenneth E. Hagin, Agnes Sanford, and Francis MacNutt in Dialogue* (BiblioBazaar, 2011), 59; see books.google.com/books?isbn=054999885.

² For example, Oral Roberts, *Expect a miracle: my life and ministry* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson, 1990); Benny Hinn, *Good Morning, Holy Spirit* (Nashville, Tennessee, Nelson Books, 1990); David Edwin Harrell Jr. *Pat Robertson: A Life and Legacy* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010).

³ Yet, often the term is misunderstood as indicating a person who is loud, captivating, or passionate in preaching.

⁴ Matthew and Dennis Linn, *Deliverance Prayer: Experiential, Psychological and Theological Approaches* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981), 267 pp.; Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974), 333pp.; Francis MacNutt, *The Power to Heal* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1977, 1979), 212 pp.; Francis MacNutt, *The Nearly Perfect Crime: How the Church almost Killed the Ministry of Healing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2005), 248 pp.

In Asia

While these things were developing in the West, the manifestation of the Spirit to heal the sick had been prominent in the lives of some persons in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In Asia, for example, Hwa Yung established that the Pentecostal phenomena existed long before the arrival of modern Pentecostalism, beginning from the twentieth century.¹ Nevertheless, the Azusa Street revival had great impact on some Asian countries, such as India, China, Indonesia, Philippines and Korea.² Healing was considered a very important aspect of the Spirit's work.

In Latin America

The first recorded Pentecostals in Latin America were the Chileans, whose revival was said to predate Azusa Street.³ The origin of the Chilean revival is associated with Willis Collins Hoover (1858-1938), an American, a former medical doctor, and the then pastor of the largest Methodist church in Chile. He later led a separate church, which was named as the Methodist Pentecostal Church.⁴ Other countries such as Brazil and Argentina (and Chile) have the largest Pentecostal churches on this continent. Most of these were directly or indirectly linked with the revival that broke out at Azusa Street.⁵ As usual Jesus the Baptizer of the Holy Spirit and healing feature much in these nations too.

¹ Hwa Yung, 'Pentecostalism and the Asian Church' in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.), *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum, 2004).

² Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 123-43.

³ Juan Sepúlveda, 'Another Way of Being Pentecostal,' in Calvin L. Smith, ed., *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism*, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* 6 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 37-61.

⁴ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 65.

⁵ For example, as Luigi Francescon, who had already caught the fire, in William Durham ministry in Chicago in 1907 went to Sao Paulo to preach the baptism of the Holy Spirit and power to heal to Italian Presbyterians, he was expelled from the church. He began the first Pentecostal denomination in Brazil, called the Christian Congregation (*Congegação Crista*). Durham went to Azusa Street and caught the Pentecostal fire in February 1907. See Robeck, *Azusa Street Mission & Revival*, 91.

In Africa

Before the advent of classical Pentecostalism in Africa, the manifestation of the Spirit to heal the sick had been prominent in the lives of some persons, often referred to as 'prophets', and churches that sprang up from the historic churches. Those prophets often emerged from the lower strata of society with little or no formal education, whose experiences of the Christian faith might be different from those in the mainline churches.¹

Prominent among these prophets were William Hade Harris of Liberia,² Joseph Babalola of Nigeria³, Simon Kimbangu of Congo,⁴ and Joseph Appiah of Ghana.⁵ The inevitable result of the prophetic movements was the establishment of the Africa Initiated Churches (AIC).⁶ For Anderson, 'The Spirit Churches have much in common

¹ As recognized by many scholars, many of them were catechists, elders, chapel keepers, or ordinary church members. Southon, *Gold Coast Methodism*, 114; Hans W. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and Its Effects on the Akan Tribes*, 1959 (Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot Ltd, 1961), 144; Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 1948, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 121.

² Gordon Mackay Haliburton, *The Prophet Harris: A Study of an African Prophet and His Mass-Movement in the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971).

³ Christopher Olubunmi Oshun, 'Apostle Babalola: The Making of a Contemporary Prophet' in *Christian Presence and West African Response Through the Years*, S.O. Abogunrin, ed., (Ibadan: West African Association of Theological Institutions, 1983), 238-55; Robert Cameron Mitchell, 'The Babalola Revival: A Non-Arrested Prophet Movement' (Ph. D. Diss., Northwestern University, 1970).

⁴ Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church*, trans. D. M. Moore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 58-9.

⁵ Baëta, Christian Goncalves Kwami, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of 'Spiritual Churches'* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), 6-7.

⁶ Various terminologies have been ascribed to these churches, however, as Pobeë and Ositelu have interestingly highlighted in the acronym AIC, terminology to cover this type of churches accurately is difficult. These include African Initiated Churches, African Initiatives in Christianity, African Indigenous Churches, African Instituted churches, African Independent

with the classical Pentecostals and their history is inextricably tied up with them'.¹

It was in the midst of the struggle to settle down in structure and theology by the AICs that classical Pentecostalism got to Africa.

The classical Pentecostal churches came out as a result of the mission work begun by a number of independent Pentecostal missionaries, who had been touched or commissioned by the Azusa Street Mission, followed by missionaries who were sent by newly emerging Pentecostal denominations. Such denominations included but were not limited to the Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Four Square Gospel Church and the Apostolic Church of the UK. Individuals whose efforts resulted in establishing churches included John Lake, a former elder of Dowie's ministry, who took over the church in Johannesburg, calling it Apostolic Faith Missions (AFM) and James McKeown who came to the Gold Coast on the ticket of the Apostolic Church but later established the Church of Pentecost. As with other Pentecostals, Spirit baptism and healing were the primary attraction.² It is the emphasis on healing and Spirit baptism that has contributed to the growth of the Church of Pentecost.

Two trends developed within African Christianity during the 1970s and 1980s, which were also a reflection of what were going on in the Asian and South American Pentecostal community. These eventually contributed to an emphasis on healing and deliverance in world

churches. See John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu 11, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 4; also David A. Shank, 'African Independent Churches, African Theology and Western Co-Workers in the *Missio Dei*' in *Ministry in Partnership with African Independent Churches: Papers Presented at the Conference on Ministry in Partnership with African Independent Churches, July 1989 Kinshasa, Zaire*, David A. Shank, ed. (Elkhart: Mennonite, 1991), 4; Richard B. Saah, 'African Independent Movements,' *African Christian Studies* 7, no. 3 (1991), 46-77.

¹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 105.

² David du Plessis (1905-87) who became the pioneer Pentecostal minister in ecumenism was the General Secretary of AFM from 1936 to 1947. See Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 106-7, and Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana: 3000 Churches in 50 Years-The Story of James McKeown and the Church of Pentecost* (Chichester: New Wine Press, 1989).

Christianity. The first of these were the books and audio recordings from some Western preachers who had been influenced by the Latter Rain ministers, especially, Oral Roberts, T. L. Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and later Benny Hinn, which were used to enhance the preaching of many ministers. It is significant to note that while most of these preachers identified with one or another Classical Pentecostal denomination in their earlier years, all of them subsequently left those denominations to form independent ministries.

However, many sermons by some Pentecostal pastors in Africa were derived from materials drawn from these ministers, especially Robert's 'Seed Faith' principle, which is centered on prosperity, and Hagin's 'faith healing'. The second trend, during the latter part of 1980s, was the interest in books and recordings (both video and audio), which sought to increase peoples' awareness of demons and how to exorcise them. Prominent among these materials were the books and recordings of the independent Charismatic teacher and not a classical Pentecostal, Derek Prince, who visited some African countries including Ghana and Nigeria.¹

Prince asserts that a person can be a Christian, baptised in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, yet may still have demons, generational (ancestral) and other curses in one's life; the presence of a curse in someone's life may cause acute disturbances, financial failure or cause chronic illness that cannot be cured by medicine or prayer, until the Holy Spirit reveals them to be dealt with. He offers reasons for this theory. For example, on demons, Prince states that demons might be in a person before he/she became a Christian. Moreover, demons might enter a person after he/she has become a Christian. He uses such passages as 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Corinthians 11:3, and Luke 19:27 to support this claim. On ancestral curses, Prince bases his assumption on Exodus 20:5, which shows that God visits the 'iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of

¹ Derek Prince is a Briton who was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He held a fellowship in Philosophy at Cambridge from 1940 to 1949. His books includes: D. Prince, *Blessings or Cursing* (Milton Keynes: Word Publishing (1990); *From Cursing to Blessing* (Lauderdale: Derek Prince Ministries, 1986); *They shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know about Demons-Your Invisible Enemies* (Harpenden: Derek Prince Ministries, 1998).

them that hate me' (KJV). Prince uses lots of scriptural passages to support his view on other curses; these include Deuteronomy 27:15-26; Jeremiah 17:5-6 and Zechariah 5:1-4.¹

Dwelling heavily on Matthew 11:12, among other quotations, Prince argues that casting out a demon or renouncing a curse can be a lengthy process, and it is only forceful men who can lay hold of it. Prince's stance is similar to those of Basham, Dickason, Kraft, Koch, Bubeck, Wimber, MacNutt and Wagner.² It is important to note that none of these figures was ever identified with classical Pentecostalism. Their views are significantly different from the classical Pentecostal viewpoint that refuses to accept the possibility of a Christian being possessed by a demon.³ Since Prince's theory appeals to the African worldview, however, some Pentecostal as well as some other Christians accepted it. Consequently, some Christians, both intellectuals and non-intellectuals began to reinterpret these teachings in culturally relevant ways and put them into practice. A brief review of African literature on 'demons' indicates that the belief was entrenched in Africa south of the Sahara.⁴ It attracted some

¹ For examples, Prince, *They Shall Expel*, 158, 162-3; *Blessing or Cursing*, 16-25; *From Curses to Blessing*, 22-6.

² For example, see D. Basham, *Can a Christian Have a Demon?* (Monroeville: Whitaker House, 1971); C. F. Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); C. H. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels* (Kent: Sovereign World, 1993); K. Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970); *Demonology Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, 1973); M. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); and cf. J. Wimber and K. Springer, *Power Evangelism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, new edition 1992), 168-9, 176-7; *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); F. MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirit: A Practical Manual* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995); C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura: Regal, 1991); *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura: Regal, 1996).

³ See, for instance, the position paper 'Can Born-Again Christians Be Demon Possessed?' available at: http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_4176_possested.pdf.

⁴ Symons Onyango, *Set Free from Demons: A Testimony to the Power of God to Deliver the Demon Possessed* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1979); Heaven U. Heaven, *How to Cast Out Demons or Evil Spirit* (Lagos: Heaven and Blessing Books, 1985); Kaniaki and Mukendi, *Snatched from Satan's Claws: An Amazing Deliverance by Christ* (Nairobi: Enkei Media Service, 1991); Iyke Nathan Uzora,

Christians in the West as shown in the teachings of Prince and the ministers cited, as well as other Pentecostals in Asia in Latin America. For example, one Pentecostal minister who has stood out in Asian Christianity is Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho of Korea, who is accredited with having the largest single congregation in the world. Cho has not lived in isolation but has networked with other Pentecostal and Charismatic ministers and also interacted with other ministers and scholars through reading. The works of Vinson Synan and Thomas K. Matthew have clearly demonstrated that Cho had some influence from Oral Roberts and Kenneth Hagin.¹ Consequently they show some similarities as well as dissimilarities.² Robert Schuller's foreword to what is possibly Cho's most popular book, *The Fourth Dimension*, is an indication of Schuller's influence.³ Cho, like other pastors, reads and extracts information from books. This does not necessarily mean that he has been singing the songs of all such writers.⁴ Cho is not ashamed to state clearly the sort of relations and influences that he has from

Occult Grand Master Now in Christ (Benin City: Osabu, 1993); Sunday Adekola, *Understanding Demonology* (Ibadan: Scripture Union, 1993); Leonard Umunna, *Victory Over Temptation Part 1: Origin of Temptation and the Way Out* (Lagos: WordPower Communication Int'l. Co., 1999); Zacharias Tanee, *Delivered from Demons* (Yaounde: IGH, n.d.); E. O. Omoobajesu, *My Experience in the Power of This World Before Jesus Saved Me* (Lagos: Omoobajesu, n.d.); Victoria Eto, *How I Served Satan Until Jesus Christ Delivered Me* (Warri: Christian Shalom Mission, 1981).

¹ Although Anderson says that he did not find a connection between Kenneth Hagin and David Yonggi Cho, his use of the two different Greek terms for the 'word' of God—*logos* and *rhema*—could be an indication of Hagin's influence. Anderson, 'The Contextual Pentecostal Theology', 303; David (Paul) Yonggi Cho, *The Fourth Dimension*, Third Edition (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 1979), 98-9.

² Vinson Synan, 'Roots of Yonggi Cho's Theology of Healing' in *Dr Yonggi Cho's Ministry and Theology 1*, (Seoul: Hansei University Logos, 2008), 263-284; Thomson K. Matthew, Oral Roberts and David Yonggi Cho, in *Dr Yonggi Cho's Ministry and Theology 1* (Seoul: Hansei University Logos, 2008), 287-310.

³ See Foreword to *The Fourth Dimension*. Schuller sees himself as a person who has been blessed by Cho's ministry. Cho, *The Fourth Dimension*, 5-6. Dr Cho says he has preached at his church several times. Cho, *My Church Growth Stories*, 36.

⁴ David Yonggi Cho, *Salvation, Healing & Prosperity: Our Threefold Blessing in Christ* (Altamonte Springs: Creation House, 1987), 104-5. Here Cho cites an example from Norman Vincent Peale.

other people.¹ Cho's teaching on faith and healing is similar to many Pentecostal preachers across the globe who stress on simple faith in the Bible that leads to miracles.²

However, Cho brings the balance in some of his writings. He shows that in his church the bothersome problem of one being healed and others not, occur. He observes that when Christians, on the pretext of faith, take the word of God literally and do not know when God is speaking to them individually through the general knowledge of the word, there is bound to be a disaster.³

Territorial Warfare

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the trend changed from demon possession to levels of Spiritual Warfare. Two scholars who have propounded this concept are Charles Kraft and Peter Wagner. Kraft is more concerned about the ground level, which according to him, deals with evil spirits that inhabit people.⁴ Wagner is concerned about the cosmic level, which he calls strategic level warfare.⁵ It is held that strategic level spirits are in charge of ground level spirits by assigning them to people and supervising them as they carry out their various assignments. Therefore, to break the powers of these spirits is to be involved in real 'Spiritual Warfare', that which Wagner calls

¹ Cho, *My Church Growth Stories*, 36; Cho, *Salvation, Healing & Prosperity*, 105; Anderson, 'The Contextual Pentecostal Theology', 303.

² Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 151-4; Robert Owens, 'The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America' in *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 39-68. David Yonggi Cho, *Use Your Faith Energy* (Seoul: Seoul Logos Co, 2004), 30-1. See also Cho, *My Church Growth Stories*, 227.

³ Cho, *The Fourth Dimension*, 98-101.

⁴ Charles H. Kraft, *Defeating the Dark Angels* (Kent: Sovereign World, 1993); idem, *Christianity with Power* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1989).

⁵ C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura: Regal, 1991); C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God's Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura: Regal, 1992); C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura: Regal, 1993); C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura: Regal, 1996). Peter Wagner was a former Professor of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary.

strategic level warfare.¹ At the heart of this warfare is a threefold approach, proposed by Wagner: discerning the territorial spirits, dealing with the corporate sin of a city, and engaging in aggressive warfare against the territorial spirits.² This approach has been expounded by advocates of this ministry. The first, discerning the territorial spirits assigned to the city, was expounded by George Otis Jr.³ The technique used here is called 'spiritual mapping'. This technique is used to discern and identify the spirit over the territory as a step towards developing strategies to combat and defeat them. The second, dealing with the corporate sin of a city or an area, was promoted by John Dawson, who coined the expression 'identification repentance,' to illustrate the need of repenting and then confessing of these sins as a means of effecting reconciliation, thus breaking Satan's grip.⁴ Wagner remarks that, 'no aspect of warfare prayer is more important than identification repentance'.⁵ The third, engaging in aggressive warfare against the territorial spirits, was heightened by Cindy Jacobs.⁶ This is a period where the business of warfare is done by 'casting down strongholds', 'binding the strongman', 'evicting the

¹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*. Wagner presents the comprehensive detail of this strategy in this book. See also Gwen Shaw, *Redeeming the Land: A Bible Study on Dislodging Evil Spirits, Breaking the Curse and Restoring God's Blessing Upon the Land* (Japer, Arkansas, 1987). The publication of this book preceded Wagner's, yet they shared similar ideas.

² C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura: Regal, 1996).

³ George Otis Jr. is the president of Sentinel Group and co-coordinator with Wagner of AD 2000 & Beyond Movement's United Prayer Track. He heads the Spiritual Mapping Division. See George Otis Jr., *The Last of the Giants: Lifting the Veil on Islam and the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 1993), 32; George Otis Jr., 'An Overview of Spiritual Mapping' in *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Prayers More Strategic, Effective, and Targeted*, C. Peter Wagner, ed. (Ventura: Regal, 1991), 85.

⁴ See John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spirit Strongholds* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1989), 183-9.

⁵ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 249-50.

⁶ Cindy Jacobs is the president of Generals of Intercession, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Cindy Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy: A Training Manual for Militant Intercession* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 1994), 245-6; Cindy Jacobs, 'Dealing with Stronghold' in *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*.

ruler of the city', 'storming the gates of hell', and 'taking dominion in Jesus name'.

This sort of teaching fell on fertile soil among many people with a 'primal world-view'. For example, in Africa if a person is ill and goes to the hospital and isn't cured, the person would like to find out from a 'spiritually powerful person', about the supernatural cause and the cure for the illness. This process of going to find out the cause of a disease is called divinatory-consultation or stated literally, 'enquiry' with the intention of having an answer. Normally, it is perceived that if the illness was of natural cause, the administration of the medication would have cured the person. Formerly such consultations were done at the traditional shrines. The technique of 'spiritual mapping' which is used to discern and identify the spirit over the territory as a step towards developing strategies to combat and defeat them is similar to the tendency to find out the cause of a disease and to deal with it. This is an example of a situation where 'Christianity' becomes the interface between traditional practice (or culture) and scripture. Apparently, the technique of spiritual mapping (and the whole concept of territorial warfare) derives its strength from postmodernity, where the traditional religion and Christianity can coexist as a coherent 'theology'.¹

The rise of postmodernity is a possible way of explaining the seeming acceptability of the deliverance type of healing and the breaking of territorial spirits within the contemporary praxis of

¹ This assertion becomes apparent if various analyses of postmodernity by some scholars are taken into consideration. For example, Lyotard highlights fantasy as a major feature, and Barnes sees myth as having an acceptable place in this concept. Thus deliverance with its fantasies and mythologies clearly has its strength from post-modern philosophy. Jean-François Lyotard, 'What is Postmodernism?' in *Art in Theory: An Anthropology of Changing Ideas*, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1990), 1009; Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Art in Theory*, 687-93. Furthermore, writing of current anthropologists such as Geschiere, Jean & John Comaroff show that ambiguity, which is neither African or European, features prominently in modern African witchcraft beliefs, see e.g. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, 5; Jean and John Comaroff, 'Introduction,' xii; Peter Geschiere and Cyprian Fisiy, 'Domesticating Personal Violence: Witchcraft, Courts and Confessions in Cameroon,' *Africa* 64, no. 2 (1994): 323-41; Colson, 'The Father as Witch,' 333-58.

healing. Exorcism had been featuring prominently in the history of the Church, yet after the Enlightenment it had not gained much attention. Nonetheless, within the postmodern world, where 'homogeneous plurality within fragmentation of cultures, traditions, ideologies, forms of life, language games, or life worlds,'¹ is a key feature, in which 'deliverance ministry' with all its contradictions is welcomed. Viewed from this angle, therefore, the desire of these 'Pentecostal followers' can better be associated with what Harvey Cox calls 'primal spirituality,' which he explains as the 'largely unprocessed nucleus of the psyche in which the unending struggles for a sense of purpose and significance goes on.'² Cox observes that this is found in Pentecostalism worldwide and also underlies original biblical spirituality.³ A nuance of Cox's assertion, 'the sacred self,' is what Thomas Csordas proposes as the centre of charismatic healing and deliverance ministry in North America.⁴ Thus Csordas sees an inquiry into the sacred and the search for meaning as the underlying factors of charismatic healing and deliverance ministry.

Consequently this concept has gained growing popularity among Christians worldwide. The growth of the church in Latin America has partly been associated with this trend. Examples are that which Frank Dawson and Edgardo Silvano report about the growth of the Church in Argentina as a result of adopting a spiritual warfare approach.⁵ Many of the contemporary practices of healing among Pentecostal and Charismatic community are derived from this background.

Healing Beliefs and Practices

The beliefs and practices, which resulted from and are practiced by various Pentecostal and Charismatic groups vary. In many places the approach is to pray for sick people until they are delivered or not.

¹ Philip Sampson, 'The Rise of Postmodernity' in *Faith and Modernity*, Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), 41.

² Harvey Cox. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), 81.

³ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 213, 228, 243.

⁴ Thomas Csordas. *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 15-24.

⁵ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God*, 20. Tommy Lea, 'Spiritual Warfare and the Missionary Task' in *Missiology*, John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, Justice Anderson, Eds, (Nashville: Broadman, Holam, 1998), 628-9.

Others attempt to break generational/ancestral curses or evil spirits believed to be behind diseases; the process can be short or long. Various churches and ministries have established groups, such as 'Prayer Force' and 'Deliverance Teams', to handle this issue. Some of their ministries are shown or advertised on the television. Furthermore, residential healing centres akin to healing homes or traditional shrines have emerged within some of the churches in Africa to accommodate the sick. In such centres, the so-called witches, or demon possessed people are sometimes chained until they are 'healed' or otherwise.

Healing can be received either through a mass deliverance or a personal deliverance session. In mass deliverance, confessions are made; often those who make such confessions are self-declared witches and demon possessed people. Prayer is said simultaneously to 'bind', cast out demons that are felt to be behind diseases and 'break' curses. Repeated appeal is made to the 'blood of Jesus' and/or 'the name of Jesus' to rebuke diseases and/or demons. Sometimes people fall down and are seen to make 'struggling' movement on the ground. These incidents are often interpreted as an indication of possession by evil spirits or witchcraft thereby receiving special attention from the leaders. Sometimes, during mass prayers, leaders give 'words of knowledge' concerning people's lives and the causes of their sufferings.

For those who report chronic diseases, the personal approach is adopted. After an individual has gone through an intensive interview by the leader, a prayer of deliverance follows. The person who goes through deliverance may vomit or urinate in the process. These are considered to be portents of deliverance and healing. Many people testify about their healing at these centres. Those who are not healed are sometimes perceived as not having enough faith to warrant a touch from God. This ministry is what is termed as 'witchdemonology'.¹

¹ For more on 'Witchdemonology', see Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 171-231; and also the article, Opoku Onyinah, 'Contemporary "Witchdemonology" in Africa' in *International Review of Mission*, vol. 93 nos. 370/371, July/October 2004, pp. 330-45.

Responses from Biblical Scholars, Theologians and Pastoral Implications

This sort of approach to healing does not only attract the attention of the public but also some Pentecostals. The concerns of some Pentecostals are many, and they include the extent to which preaching by these preachers is centred on the Devil, healing and deliverance. This ministry reinforces the 'primitive animistic' belief system that keeps communities in servile fearfulness, and hampers progress; everything is centred on the 'Devil who made me do so'. The process of healing, which often involves 'breaking links with the past' which includes families, eventually promotes individualism in a negative manner and divides, for example the African and Asian traditional extended family system. Interpreting failure to be healed as lack of faith on the part of the seekers puts a lot of stress on the seeker and makes him/her feel hopeless. It undermines the power of salvation. The sovereignty of God and the work of Christ are left out, making suffering appear as punishment from God. It makes healing appear as if it is the effort of people who are able to generate faith. Another issue of great concern is the stigmatisation attached to the 'self-confessed witches' or those accused of demon possession.

Consequently some Pentecostal (and Evangelical) biblical scholars and theologians responded to these practices and beliefs. These scholars include Keith Warrington, Graham Twelftree, Christopher Thomas, and Gordon Fee.¹ The works of such Pentecostal theologians and pastoral reflection on them form the basis of contemporary Pentecostal healing praxis.

¹ Keith Warrington, *Jesus the Healer: Paradigm or Unique Phenomena* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000); *Healing & Suffering: Biblical and Pastoral Reflections* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005); Graham H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985); *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993); *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (InterVarsity Press, 1999); Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Paternoster, 1994); John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Also Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Exorcism in Ghana* (Blandford: Deo Publishing, 2012); *Spiritual Warfare: Centre for Pentecostal Studies Short Introduction* (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT, 2012).

Significant to the issues raised by these scholars is the need to consider the purposes of Jesus' healing and exorcisms seriously. Here the work of Keith Warrington, a minister of the Elim Church in the UK, stands out. From his analysis of the gospels, he points out that the healing and exorcisms of Jesus were intended to highlight the authority of Jesus.¹ They were to bring to the surface the mission of Jesus. His mission was to reinstate the outcast² and also to initiate the Kingdom.³ The healing and exorcism by Jesus also gave people the opportunity to believe him and his claims.⁴ Furthermore, the healing and exorcisms also gave him the opportunities, among others, to teach about faith⁵ and also about obedience.⁶

Warrington squarely posits that Jesus' healing ministry was intended to establish truth about himself rather than to act as a healing model.⁷ This position goes directly against the view of Pentecostals who not only believe that Jesus has delegated his healing powers to believers but also that they can 'do greater works' (Jn 14:12). Warrington, does not end here, he continues that 'Those who advocate that Jesus has delegated authority into his followers, to function as he did, must take into consideration the above distinctive, as well as be aware of the dissimilarities between the healing ministry of Jesus and that of contemporary believers'.⁸ Yet Warrington does not deny the possibility of divine healing taking place today, his concern is to point out that 'it does not achieve the same unique purpose as the ministry of Jesus'.⁹ The importance of such biblical analysis of the healing

¹ For example: (Matt. 8:16-7; 8:28-34 and par.; Matt. 9:32-4; Matt. 12:22-9 and par.; Matt. 15:21-28; Matt. 17: 14-21 and par.; Mark 1:23-8 and par.; Mark 1:39; Mark 9:38-41 and par).

² For example: Matt. 8:2-4 and par.; Matt. 9:20-2 and par.; Matt. 15:21-8 and par.; Luke 7:11-7; Luke 13:10-7; Luke 17:11-9.

³ For example: Matt. 4:23-5; Matt. 9:35; Matt. 10:1, 8 and par.; Matt. 11:4 and par.; Matt. 12:22-9 and par.; Mark 7:31-7 and par.

⁴ For example: Matt. 12:12-29 and par.; Luke 13:10-7.

⁵ For example: Matt. 8:5-13 and par.; Matt. 17:14-21.

⁶ For example: Matt. 7:21-3; Matt. 8:2-4 and par.; Matt. 12:43-5 and par. Warrington, *Jesus the Healer*, 1-29.

⁷ Warrington, *Jesus the Healer*, 1.

⁸ *Ibid.* 141.

⁹ *Ibid.* 151.

ministry of Jesus is that it brings balance to the praxis, and then takes off the pressure from people who claim that they must be able to have healing powers as Jesus did, and by this depend upon the sovereign will of God.

This brings into the discussion the issue of the sovereignty of God, which has been undermined in some healing practice. In the Bible, the Lord is the one true God, with overall supremacy over all spiritual powers (e.g. Deut. 6:4; Deut. 33:2; Neh. 9:6; Job 38:7; Ps. 89: 5-8; Ps. 148:2; Eph. 4:4-6). Other spirits or the gods of the nations, sometimes addressed as 'the host of heaven,'¹ are depicted as 'the courtly retinue that enhances the unique majesty of Yahweh.'² Satan is simply one of these spirits (Job 1:6-7). The spirits, whether good or evil, remain under God's sovereignty. They can tempt or afflict one by only divine permission (Job 1:12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7).

Attention has been drawn to the fact that many of the symptoms of illnesses, which are considered as spirit possession or witchcraft possession can be explained away by medical sciences. From his analysis of Jesus' exorcisms, Graham Twelftree, a former Vineyard pastor, identifies the following signs of demonic presence: extraordinary strength, indifference to the pain of the sufferer, vocalisation of distress when confronted by Jesus, and a change in the sufferer's voice.³ These signs are similar to what Robeck reported

¹ Neh. 9:6; Ps 148:2, cf. the holy ones (Deut. 33:6; Ps. 89:5-8), sons of God (Job 1:6; Job 38:7). Some of these phraseologies in the Old Testament make it appear that the gods of the other nations were considered the holy ones, who could not be compared with the Lord God. Paul, for example, uses the word 'angel' or 'messenger' when describing the agents of Satan (2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Cor. 12:7). Thus to describe the gods of the nations as the host of heaven, or the holy ones may not be strange. Cf. Dunn and Twelftree, 'Demon-Possession and Exorcism,' 215.

² James G. Dunn and Graham H. Twelftree, 'Demon-Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament,' *Churchman* 94, no. 3 (1980): 210-26; Dennis F. Kinlaw, 'The Demythologization of Demonic in the Old Testament' in *Demon Possession*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery, 29-35 (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 34.

³ Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*, 70; Twelftree, 'The Place of Exorcism,' 32-3. See also John Richards who tries to show distinction between possession state and others. John Richards, *But Deliver Us from Evil: An Introduction to the Demonic Dimension in Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, 1974), 91-118, 156-9;

about what the Archbishop of San Jose, Costa Rica reported were the signs of demon possession when he was asked what they might be.¹ Nevertheless, currently psychiatrists show that these symptoms can almost all be explained in some naturalistic way.² While this does not rule out the possibility of demonic presence in some cases, it shows that many cases which people consider demonic may have natural issues. For example, seizures may be symptoms of epilepsy. Personality changes can result from psychological malfunctioning or mental disorders, such as hysteria, schizophrenia or paranoia. Habitual behaviours, such as sexual desire, anger tantrums, and extreme quietness may be temperamental traits or associated with past memories. In such cases repeated exorcisms or deliverance may worsen the person's condition.³ Therefore, arriving at a decision of demonic possession should not be made lightly.⁴

On the role of faith, which has attracted lots of criticism, there is a balanced theme on the role it plays in the NT. Sometimes, a miracle occurs where there was little or no faith in order to instil belief in Jesus, as the Son of God (e.g. Matt. 8:26). Faith was frequently spoken of as the result, rather than the precondition, of the healing power of

John Richards, *Exorcism Deliverance and Healing: Some Pastoral and Liturgical Guidelines*, 1976, Third Edition (Nottingham: Grove Books Limited, 1990), 12-3.

¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. 'Specks and Logs: Catholics and Pentecostals,' *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (Fall 1990), 78. 'The Catholic Church speaks of three signs by which one may "suspect" that a person has been demon possessed and these are: That they speak or interpret a tongue which they have not studied or know, that they are able to discover hidden and occult things, and they show a strength superior to their physical condition and age.'

² E.g. Gary R. Collins, 'Psychological Observation on Demonism' in *Demon Possession*, 245; John White, 'Commentary on Psychological Observation on Demonism' in *Demon Possession*, 253; David Brewer, 'Jesus and the Psychiatrists' in *The Unseen World*, 138; Langley, 'Spirit-Possession and Exorcism and Social Context,' 250.

³ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 274-80.

⁴ This position was expressed clearly in the report of the International World Alliance of Reformed Churches-Pentecostal Dialogue, 'Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice,' Section III, paras 73-116, especially paras 100-2, 111. This statement is available online at: www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/WARC_2011d.html

Jesus (cf. Matt. 9:18, 22; Matt. 15:31). Dickinson observes, 'while it is said that Jesus 'could do no mighty work' in at least one place 'because of unbelief,' nowhere is anyone's failure to be healed upon the word of Christ attributed to a failure of faith either in nature or degree on the part of the individual sufferer.'¹ This means that while it is essential for us to have faith in God and his ability to heal, healing is solely the sovereign will of God; it can take place whenever, and through whatever vessel the Lord may choose. It does not necessarily depend upon the person's faith. Believers are not to seek greater faith but to find out the sovereign will of God in particular situation and pray in line with it.

Furthermore, in the Bible, not all prayer for healing was answered the way people expected. Jesus was selective in his healing as in the case at the pool of Bethesda (John 1:11). Again, he created the impression that the sick would always be around and would need the assistance of the healthy; for one of the criteria for judgement will be, '... I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me' (Matt. 25: 43, NIV).

There are indications in the NT that in the presence of the apostles not all people were healed. When Epaphroditus came to visit Paul, he had an illness that had almost led to death (Phil. 2:27). Although eventually he was healed, the lesson here is that he was not healed immediately. Paul told Timothy to stop drinking water and use a little wine for the sake of his stomach and frequent illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23). Again, Paul 'left Trophimus sick in Miletus' (1 Tim. 4:20). Both Peter and James have words of encouragement for those who were going through suffering of different kinds (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:19; Jam. 1: 2-4).

All these examples show that God does not always heal as we expect him to do. But what should be done when God does not act as we expect? Whatever Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was, it serves as an example of what God does when he chooses not to cure. When Paul prayed, his prayer was not answered the way he expected it to be. God allowed it to remain with him and rather said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:8). This seems to suggest that human weakness also provides an opportunity for God to display his power. In other words, sickness can draw people

¹ Robert Dickinson, *God Does Heal Today: Pastoral Principles and Practice of Faith-Healing* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 14.

closer to God and increase in them obedience to God's will. Healing in this case becomes a process whereby the individual is restored to spiritual and mental health and is accepted wholeheartedly within the community. It is however the grace of God that provides the strength. What is this grace?

John Christopher Thomas, a minister in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) has shown that grace in 2 Corinthians is that which the Lord gives to believers in order that they make application of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice for their sins (2 Cor. 5:21- 6:1); minister to others financially (2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:14); and be provided with those things which they need (2 Cor. 9:8).¹ It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that enabled him who was rich to become poor so that believers might through his poverty become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). It is this same grace that would enable Paul to withstand his condition. The idea that can be conveyed to the Christian is that when the Lord does not heal, he grants the strength to the person involved to cope with the situation. That is, the ability or strength to cope with afflictions becomes the grace or healing here.

On the issue of stigmatisation of so-called 'demon possessed' people, it is apparent in the gospels that the substantial part of the healing ministry of Jesus was directed to the people of lower stratum of society and marginalised people (e.g. Matt. 8:1-13; Luke 4:16-31), including women (e.g. Luke 7:36-50; 8:1-3; Luke 10:38-41; Mark 5:21-43), the Gentiles (e.g. Mark 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 7: 31-37), and ritually unclean (e.g. Mark 1:40-45). Warrington concludes that the 'Gospel miracles are to be understood as records of Jesus' meeting the marginalized and dispossessed, providing hope for the hopeless and help for the helpless.'² Thus here, the healing ministry could follow that of Jesus who confronted the traditions of the people that had crippled and sidelined people of lower stratum of society, and restored them.

The issue of public and graphic confession of people is also addressed. There is no graphic description of the activities and

¹ John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 71.

² Keith Warrington, *Jesus The Healer: Paradigm or Phenomenon* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 6.

confession of the demoniacs in the Bible as in deliverance services. The demons are reduced to secondary causes in the accomplishment of God's supreme purpose.

In the gospels, there is no detailed ritual and techniques applied in the course of the exorcism. Some expressions and practices in the act of exorcism, such as emphasis on prayer language, the role of repetitive and intensive prayer, the need for fasting, and the demand for confession, make exorcisms appear like techniques more comparable to magical formulae than to those presented in the synoptic gospels. As to the techniques or methods of exorcism, preferably those used by Jesus are encouraged. Jesus' main method of exorcism is a simple word of command (e.g. Mark. 1:25; Mark. 9:25). On one occasion, however, he appears to have engaged in a dialogue by asking the name of the demon, but the whole scenario shows that Jesus is in control from beginning to end (Mark 5:1-21).

The Bible rarely speaks of demons as the source of sinful behaviours. For Jesus, the heart is the source of sinful thoughts (e.g. Mark 7:21-23; Matt. 15:18-20). Similarly, Paul sees 'sin' as power in itself and the 'flesh' as that dimension of the Christian's personality where evil thoughts are manifested. Paul sets the flesh against the Spirit (Rom. 7:7-25; Gal. 5:19-22). Thus here again it is 'the flesh' and not the demonic which opposes the Spirit. Believers are therefore encouraged to walk in the Spirit, instead of performing routine deliverance on them.

Conclusion

In sum, Pentecostals maintain that prayer for healing must not be neglected or stopped as a result of some of the weaknesses of the practitioners. Healing must be seen as part of the means of dealing with a variety of manifestations of evil in human life. The ministries of Jesus and those of the disciples in the NT encourage Pentecostals to pray to God for healing, and then to continue to trust him to bring good out of every situation, whether he cures or not. The methods used in prayer should be simple to show trust in the power of Jesus, whose death has given the believer the authority to exercise this kind of ministry. Too much ritual may show a lack of spiritual power on the part of the minister and, in a way, the authority, that is, Jesus, to whom the minister appeals for healing. The focus should always be on Christ and what he has done for humankind.

The place of suffering in the Bible needs to be brought to bear on the healing ministry. The biblical concept of the Fall implies that the whole human race fell as a result of the fall of Adam.¹ Therefore, the whole creation has 'been subjected to frustration (Rom. 8:20),' making suffering and death exist as an inevitable part of life. Yet creation has a hope of being 'liberated from its bondage to decay' (Rom. 8:20-21). The death and resurrection of Christ mark the beginning of the end, which means 'God's final (eschatological) saving of his people has already been effected by Christ.'² As Moltmann explains, 'the resurrection does not evacuate the cross [suffering],' but it provides hope for God's final triumph over evil.³ Thus, since the believers' final redemption has not yet been fully realised, redemption is in the future. Fee puts it this way, 'believers, therefore, 'live between the times' of 'the already' but 'not yet'.⁴ The outcome of this eschatological tension is that Christians are still exposed to physical afflictions, including any type of suffering. Suffering, therefore, does not necessarily mean that the devil has attacked; neither does it mean that the person has sinned. It can just be the result of an aspect of the fallen humanity. There is the need to accept the fact that God allows Christians to relate to all suffering in a way that brings good, so that experiencing suffering becomes for them a valuable way of life (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:7-10).

¹ Paul R. Sponheim, 'Sin and Evil' in *Christian Dogmatics, Vol. One*, Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 433-4; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 810-2. See also T. Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 73-92; Johannes Van Bavel, 'The Meaning of Suffering and Attempts at Interpretation' in *God and Human Suffering*, Jan Lambrecht and Raymond F. Collins, eds. (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), 121-36.

² Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Paternoster, 1994), 804. In other words, through the death of Christ, the future condemnation which humans deserve has been transferred from the future to the past. E.g. Eph. 1:7; Eph. 2:8.

³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974), 182.

⁴ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. cit., 805, 799, 805.

REPORTS

TO HEAR GOD'S WORD: A NEW ECUMENICAL TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

October 2012 in Latvia saw an event of great historical and cultural significance—the publication of a new translation of the Bible into Latvian. Both the Old and the New Testament, together with the Deuterocanonical books (including those used by Roman Catholics, as well as the Orthodox) were translated from the original languages into Latvian and published in a single volume. It was very important that the translation was not made from other translations but from the original languages, using as a source the collection of manuscripts that are nowadays considered the most authentic. The translation commission began its work in Latvia in 1995. In 1999 a first volume containing ‘Gospels and the Acts’ was published, to be followed by ‘The Poetical Books of the Old Testament’, and in 2001, ‘The Letters of the New Testament and the Book of Revelation’. In 2005 were published all the Deuterocanonical books. These successive publications made it possible for people to start to read the new translation, and send in their suggestions. The translation work was finished in 2012. In the following year the Lutheran Synod of Latvia approved its use for liturgical use. People of different denominations, as well as people who have never read the Bible before, have shown great interest in the new translation.

*The translation process involved language specialists as well as representatives from different denominations. The coordinator of the translation commission was **Dr Juris Cālītis**, a theologian and pastor of the Anglican Church, who also provides a home for children with no parents. The following is the translation of a conversation between Dr Cālītis and **Anda Done**, editor of the Latvian ecumenical journal, *Kas mūs vieno?* (What unites us?) in which this article first appeared (1/2012 [10]).*

AD *It is said in Holy Scripture, the word of God is alive and powerful. Can a new translation affect the vitality and strength of the word of God?*

JC First of all, the word is alive not because it's written in a book somewhere. The word is alive when it lives in our consciousness, and in our life and behaviour. Martin Luther considered, along with other things, that the word becomes meaningful only when revealed from faith to faith. In the Bible we read about the warning sound of a trumpet: if it is not heard, who will prepare for battle? It's the same with the word: it must be clear. That's why it's so important for the translation to be as com-prehensible as the translators can make it. At the same time, we must remember that a language is not just a matter of rational content, appealing to the mind. A language also comprises beauty, and aesthetic elements.

It's important to bear in mind that there are about a million or more different manuscript readings that go to make the original text of the Bible. We don't just have one original. The translators all agreed to use the collection of texts and manuscripts that is considered to be the most complete and accurate. Unfortunately, this agreement was not always followed. There are some passages that are like a thorn in the flesh. For example, in the gospel of Mark there is the story about Jesus coming down from the mountain of Transfiguration and finding the disciples unable to cope with a healing. Jesus heals the sick boy and the disciples ask Him why they could not do it. Jesus answers that it can be carried out only by prayer. In previous translations we also hear about fasting. All contemporary scholars have eliminated the word 'fasting' because it is a later addition, inserted by someone who thought it was called for. Unfortunately our translator put in 'and fasting' through force of habit, even though the word is not to be found in the agreed text. There are also other places where the manuscripts differ.

But that is why we always pray that the Spirit of God will help us in our reading. Otherwise we will not understand the word of God, for there are major obstacles preventing us from hearing it. Our life is not open to the word of God; we do not

want to hear it; or we want to hear it in a distorted way, so that it conforms to what we think it ought to say. Our thoughts and works frequently fail to comply with the will of God, hence we are not eager to hear His word. It is really a wonder when this word breaks through our incomprehension, indisposition, and our inability to hear it. That is why we have to be much more humble, much more honest. Each week we have to confess our violations, but not only the moral and ethical ones; they are secondary. We must also confess our unwillingness and incapacity to hear what God is saying to us. I am glad that the new translation pushes me to catch the word more directly, and to see that which by nature I am loathe to accept.

AD *How did the process of translation work?*

JC The translation process went through several stages. First, translators were asked to choose texts to translate from the Old and New Testament. Next, the first drafts were handed over to the translation commission. The New Testament drafts were read three or four times, and the Old Testament texts somewhat less, owing to the volume of work. In the third stage, we reread the drafts together with representatives of the different denominations. The Roman Catholic Church representatives were very active in this process, as were the Baptists and Adventists. Several Lutherans were already the members of the translation commission. The situation regarding the Orthodox Church representatives was less straight-forward as they had their own pre-conditions which did not conform to the accepted translation principles. For example, they considered that every word in the original had to be carried over into the translation. In many cases this is not natural or even necessary. For example, with regard to the word 'and': originally, the text would have been written without any breaks, spaces, or punctuation marks. So this small word, which can also be translated as 'but' or 'however', was used to separate the sentences. If all these small words were kept, the text would become very clumsy and difficult to read. There are also other, more significant instances, because the Latvian language is very different from Greek. Sometimes we have to use two words in the translation instead of one in

the original, or vice versa. Some very gifted Orthodox translators took part in our work, but they were not the official representatives. In the fourth stage, many individual suggestions were considered: some of the books of the Bible had already been translated and published, so people could read them and send in suggestions. In the fifth stage, the specialists worked so that the results of all the discussions could be incorporated into the final text. For example, in the New Testament there are numerous quotations from the Old Testament, which are printed in italics. Also, specialists compared all the Synoptic texts, so that passages which were identical in the original, are also identical in translation.

AD *How did you manage to agree a text in those cases where opinions were substantially divided?*

JC Agreement was sometimes difficult, for two reasons. On occasions we spent several hours discussing a single word. In some places it was difficult to understand the meaning of a word. Other times we had very useful discussions about denominational nuances, especially in the case of the Roman Catholic Church which is used to the Latin Vulgate translation. We tried to respect this tradition in so far as it provided an accurate translation. One example was the word of blessing in the Sermon on the Mount. Previously the word 'blessed' was always used, even though most translators are aware that the word used in the original is not religious, but a very ordinary word, with no religious overtones. The Latvian word for 'blessed' has a very strong religious aura. So we changed this word, used for centuries, to 'happy'. It was not easy, but we managed it.

In the translation we had one major problem: to find a single Latvian word that would correspond most closely to a word used in the original. This is difficult for two reasons. First, we can only have a vague idea of how the original word resonated in the mind of a hearer, at that moment in history. And sometimes the Latvian language simply possesses no equivalent single word.

There were also difficulties arising out of our agreement that neither the first Latvian translation of 1689, nor the 1965

version¹ should form the basis of the new translation. However, the translators knew these texts too well, for we know the gospels and most of Paul's letters more or less by heart; and it is very difficult to forget the things we know by heart. I understand that the translators tried, but the result is that there are quite a few places where the familiar version is retained, even though it differs from the original. Some readers will probably be happy with this approach; but in many places it would have been possible to find another phrase, rather than the old familiar expression. For example, regarding the word 'soul'. Jesus says, 'What if you gain the whole world, and lose your soul?' Did the people who first heard this saying of Jesus hear 'soul'? In my opinion it is certain that they did not hear (what we understand by) 'soul'. The initial meaning of the word in the original is life. To talk about the soul could suggest that the body is not important, that it is only the soul that is in danger. But Jesus was probably referring to the situation in which the whole person is on the way to perdition—your whole life is being lost, not just your soul. If the word 'psyche' is interpreted strictly, it can indeed be translated 'soul'. But it is by no means certain that those who heard the original word in first century Palestine understood this word as we understand it nowadays. In my opinion, the translators could have been more courageous in such cases.

AD *How do you see the interaction between this complex work of translation and the action of the Holy Spirit?*

JC It is a pity but we do not want to hear when God speaks to us. I don't know why people think that we receive the word of God very willingly. Yes, the gospel is good news: but the word of God comes as a two-edged sword, as it is written in the letter to the Hebrews, cutting sharply, separating spirit from flesh and bone from skin. Who would want to be opened up like that, and feel the immediate word of God? We can live for

¹ Published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1965. The translation of the New Testament was made by the Latvian theologians in 1937, the translation of the Old Testament was made later abroad as Latvia was incorporated in the former Soviet Union.

centuries with a false understanding of the content of Holy Scripture. I fervently hope that the basics are as clear now as they were two thousand years ago; but even so, it's not always that simple when we're in a concrete situation. The word of God goes against what pleases us. The Gospel is joy, it is health and salvation, but only when we abandon our old way of seeing and, more importantly, our old way of living, our upside-down view of the world. We know that people have used Bible texts to justify dreadful acts of cruelty and injustice. Happily, the Bible continues to speak, with the power to strip us bare. But we can resist for ages, using it for example to justify slavery, racial prejudice, or more recently, the practice of judging between the good and the bad, between those who are right and those who are not, between believers and unbelievers. Does the Bible give us this mandate? This is our presumption our sin. God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. And Jesus adds, do likewise! So why don't we? Why don't we learn from God? God says, pray for your enemies, for those who hurt you. That is how to rid our hearts of the hatred and violence that disfigures the human world, God's world.

AD *I remember reading that Bible translators were once burnt at the stake. Did this really happen?*

JC Quite a few were burnt. What the people who burnt them were afraid of, I don't know. At that time there were no translations, just the one standard Latin Bible, translated by Jerome in the fourth century. The fact that the fifteenth century saw the first Bible translations is perhaps the most important and radical achievement of the Reformation. We must remember that initially there was not one basic text with all the most important manuscripts gathered together.

AD *Was the new translation influenced by denominational points of view?*

JC If there was any influence, it was indirect, not direct. More important were the decisions we took right at the start about the level of language we would use; for it is possible to translate at various levels. Firstly, we decided to use the

vocabulary of a person who has done secondary education—that is, above primary but below further education. Translation depends on your target readership, be it children or highly educated people. So it would be much easier to produce a translation aimed at specialists in antiquity. Secondly, we decided on a translation that is not intended for churchgoers. People who go to church read the Bible and live with these texts. They will understand the texts and be able to use them anyway. On the contrary, people who don't go to church won't be able to understand the essence of the text or take delight in the word of God if we leave the text unchanged, simply because it's what we're used to. These were two important decisions.

AD *In John 5:39-40 it is written: 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.' Why did Jesus say this?*

JC This passage is very important. Paul also says that the letter is dead, the Spirit gives life! Jesus says the same thing about those who search the scriptures but who in fact do not want to live what is written, do not want to see life in God. I greatly enjoyed this process of translation but it is of little importance if you do not go 'beyond', if you do not choose to live the word, to open your eyes to what you understand, and what you don't, to what you can and can't do, in the place God gives you the opportunity to live your life.

CHRISTIANS COPE IN KURDISTAN

Erica C.D. Hunter

Dr Erica C.D. Hunter, Senior Lecturer in Eastern Christianity, SOAS, wrote this after a visit to Kurdistan in September, 2013. We are also indebted to her for the images. All images © Erica C.D. Hunter.

The situation in Iraq after 2003 has led to more than half of the Christian population (estimated 900,000) leaving for the prospect of security in other countries, believing that they have no future in their ancient homeland, which they had inhabited for two millennia. Some have left for Syria and Western countries, other have opted to live in the *Kurdish Regional Government* (KRG) region of northern Iraq where the authorities have been keen to promote a policy of religious tolerance and have offered ‘right of return’, with a Kurdish sponsor acting as a guarantor.¹

Of the various Christian ‘centres’ in the KRG region, the largest is at Ainkawa, five kilometers north-east of Erbil, which has developed into a bustling city. It has grown



enormously, as many of the estimated population of 25,000 are new arrivals.² Between a third and a half have come in the last six years. The main hub of Christianity in the KRG region, Ainkawa features

¹ US. Dept. of State. Report for Iraq 2010 (8 April 2011).

² J. Pontifex, ‘IRAQ. Christians clinging on to hope in Ankawa as numbers triple’ (3 October 2011) <http://www.acnuk.org/news.php/274> (accessed 20.vii.2013). The Finnish Immigration Service, *Fact Finding Mission* (23.10 – 3.11.2007), p. 28 gives the figure 22,000–25,000.

numerous well-maintained churches, including St Joseph's Chaldean Cathedral which is also the seat of the Archbishop of Erbil (*pictured above, p.347*). The *Pontifical Babel College for Philosophy and Theology*, which had been established in the 1980s by the Chaldean Catholic Catholicos-Patriarch Raphael Bidawid in Dora, a suburb of Baghdad relocated in 2010 following militant Islamic offensives. This move of the premier Christian tertiary institution indicates some recognition of the relative security and safety of Ainkawa, but it must also be pointed out that there was no other secure place within Iraq to which it could relocate.

As well as developing as a hub of Christianity in the KRG region, Ainkawa has seen spectacular commercial growth. However, the explosion of bars, restaurants and clubs has led the city to be dubbed 'Iraq's red light district'. Some Christians have protested about the location of bars and nightclubs within very close proximity to churches.¹ The consequent undesirable connotations of profligate and unsocial behaviour (drinking, gambling and prostitution) has led to sporadic attacks against Christians at grass-root levels in various cities in Kurdistan. In 2012, a liquor-store owner in Suleimaniya was beheaded during Ramadan for selling alcohol.² In December 2011, several liquor stores, 3 casinos and a Chinese massage parlour in Zakho were attacked.³ Leaflets were put on the walls of the burned-out premises threatening the owners with death if they re-opened their businesses.⁴ There have been attacks on liquor stores in Erbil in 2012.

On a day-to-day level, the cost of living presents huge challenges. Rental tariffs, particularly in Erbil and Ainkawa, are on par with London. With no public health service, many people cannot afford medical care as private health care, although of high calibre, is

¹ A. Hawaz, 'Christian's future in Iraqi Kurdistan', *The Kurdistan Tribune* (25 March 2012):

<http://kurdistantribune.com/2012/christians-future-iraqi-kurdistan/>

² Oral communication to the author by British expatriate in Suleimaniya (September 2013).

³ 'Muslim Kurds Attack Assyrian Businesses in North Iraq-Attempts Land Grab', <http://www.aina.org/news/20111203152712.htm> (Posted 12-3-2011).

⁴ Aid to the Church in Need, *Christians and the Struggle for Religious Freedom, with Persecuted and Forgotten? 2012 Update*, (Aid to the Church in Need, Sutton, Surrey: 2012) ed. J. Pontifex and J. Newton, p. 51.

extremely expensive. Food prices are steep. Rates of unemployment amongst the Christian communities are as much as 50%. Many hold educational certificates and diplomas from Iraqi institutions and universities, but often these are not recognised by the KRG. Christians cannot take up employment as civil servants if they are not Kurdish speakers.¹ Many are obliged to work as traders or manual labourers, often competing for low paid, daily-hire manual work, with local residents or third country nationals. Some women have resorted to prostitution to try to make ends meet.²

People without an income manage to 'get by' due to the fact that most have family or some type of social network in the local community that offers them support. In all events, the major onus of responsibility falls on the various churches and donations made by various overseas charities and the expatriate communities. The *Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organisation* (ACERO) has recently completed the construction of 3 blocks of apartments at Dohuk to provide homes for 24 families. The apartments have a custom-built medical facility and doctor's surgery.³ In January 2011 the Archbishop of Erbil received local government support to secure two plots of land to build a 100 bed hospital and a university.⁴

The KRG has returned land at Zakho that was lost by the Christians in the 1960's, although much of it is agriculturally inferior and difficult to irrigate.⁵ Despite these initiatives by the KRG, attempts at land

¹ M. Lalani, *Still Targeted: Continued Persecution of Iraq's Minorities. Report* (Minority Rights Group International 2010), p. 26 n. 198 citing the Christian organization *Open Doors International*.

² Hawaz, (25 March 2012) <http://kurdistantribune.com/2012/christians-future-iraqi-kurdistan/>. Assyria Council of Europe. *Human Rights Report on Assyrians in Iraq. The Exodus from Iraq 2010* (May 2011), 8 reports that 'prolonged stay in exile and no formal means of social and financial security have aggravated their impoverishment ... [i]n order to make ends meet, many refugee girls and women are forced into prostitution'. Ed West, 'Time is Running Out for Iraq's Christians, Says Archbishop': www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2011/03/18.

³ http://www.theacero.org/dohuk_housing_project.php

⁴ J. Pontifex, (3 October 2011). <http://www.acnuk.org/news.php/274>.

⁵ Aid to the Church in Need, *Christians and the Struggle for Religious Freedom*, 2012, 49. See also, 'Iraqi Kurdistan without blinders': <http://www.aina.org/news/20120322154420.pdf> (Posted 3-22-2012).

appropriation continue to be a problem.¹ Most recently, in June 2013, armed men, purportedly belonging to the al-Zebari clan, attacked Rabatki, near Aqra in the Dohuk province, attempted to claim parts of the village, leading to confrontation. The attack stopped only when police were called. Rabatki has been fending off land grab attempts since the early 1990s. In 1992, Kurdish tribesmen contested a court ruling, stating that the village and its lands belong to its Christian inhabitants. In 2006, the American Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Dohuk concluded that the Kurds' ownership claims were invalid.²

Undoubtedly, the new opportunities that have emerged for the Christians to develop their vernacular languages: Neo Syriac (Sureth) and Armenian, has led to a cultural renaissance. In contrast to the Ba'athist era when all printing in Iraq was controlled by the government, numerous private presses in the KRG region of northern Iraq churn out publications from school-primers to major scholarly works. Magazines and newspapers are also being published in Neo-Syriac. The media has also embraced these initiatives; several TV and radio stations broadcast in Neo-Syriac. Proposals for a Syriac language department to open at the University of Dohuk are being considered.³ These developments certainly have embellished an innate sense of identity in the Syriac-speaking communities, but at some cost to the large numbers of Christian IDP's who are primarily Arabic-speakers.

All Christians are affected by the vicissitudes in the relationship between the KRG in Erbil and the central Iraqi government in Baghdad, which is one of the major concerns affecting Kurdistan and will be one of the thorniest questions to resolve. With the responsibility for their welfare being shuttled between Baghdad and Erbil, with no immediate resolution in sight, the Christians are caught in this *impasse* and 'are increasingly becoming pawns in a power

¹ M. Fagotto, 'Iraq's Christians still searching for a home', *The Toronto Star* (2 February 2013):

http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/02/02/iraqs_christians_still_searching_for_a_home.html citing 2011 reports by *International Organisation for Migration* [IOM].

² 'Kurdish Mob Attacks Assyrian Village in North Iraq':

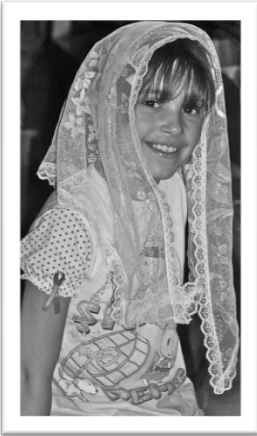
<http://www.aina.org/news/20130613170234.pdf>. (Posted 6-13-2013).

³ Lalani (2010), p. 25, n. 185.

struggle between an Arab-dominated central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government'.¹ Differences have emerged between the communities, with some supporting the initiatives of the KRG, whilst others show preference for Baghdad. This pattern reflects the culture-religious divide since the Chaldaean Catholics, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholics have overwhelmingly hailed from without the KRG region; from Baghdad and Mosul, the Jezirah and the Tur 'Abdin. They are also primarily Arabic-speakers. John Joseph has aptly summed up the different stances between the communities:

[o]pposed to the nationalistic pretenses of Zo'a and other 'Assyrian' political organizations are non-Assyrian fellow Christians, such as the Chaldaean Catholics, the Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholics, who together form the vast majority of Christians in Iraq.²

The *Assyrian Democratic Movement* (ADM), which was founded in 1979 and joined the armed Kurdish struggle in 1982, has strong ties with the KRG and holds 4 of the 5 parliamentary seats.³ These close ties have distanced the party from other Christian groups, such as the *Assyrian Patriotic Party* (Gabba Atranaya Atouraya).⁴ The ADM actively campaigns for 'Assyrian recognition in the Iraqi constitution, full cultural rights and equal treatment' and also for promotion of the 'Nineveh enclave'.⁵ The latter is an issue that is the subject of lively debate by the various communities.



Left: young worshipper at Al Qosh

¹ *Amnesty International*, (April 2010) 'Iraq Civilians Under Fire', Index: MDE 14/002/2010, 16.

² J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East. Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists and Colonial Powers* (Brill, Leiden: 2000), p. 221.

³ Otherwise known as Zo'a, the ADM was perceived as being sympathetic to the Kurds; the Ba'athists executed several of its leaders.

⁴ Joseph, pp. 220-1.

⁵ <http://www.refworld.org//3deeob564.html> citing Minority Rights International 1997, *World Directory of Minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group International, p. 346.

Levels of support range from total independence (which few seem to advocate) to an autonomous governorate in the Nineveh Plains area to the north and east of Mosul, attached either to the Baghdad administration or to the KRG. Others speak more vaguely of a 'safe haven' for the Assyrians and other Christians.¹ Although the diaspora communities in the West have tended to embrace vigorously the concept of the Nineveh plains' enclave as a safe haven, by contrast many Christians in Kurdistan and Iraq remain unconvinced of its viability.

In spite of the intense lobbying by the ADM and other groups, it seems unlikely that either Baghdad or Erbil would allow a truly autonomous political unit to emerge in such a strategic border area. However, should such an enclave to emerge it could act as a cushion or buffer zone between the Arab and Kurdish territories but in such a situation, the communities in such a 'ghetto' would be very vulnerable were future troubles arise. The Nineveh plains' enclave is still the subject of a vigorous dispute between Iraq and the KRG—the latter has invested large sums of money into its development. How the Nineveh plains' enclave will be realised remains to be seen.

Concluding comments

Almost one hundred years after the 'year of the *Seyfo*', the KRG region offers the possibility for Christians to live with a greater sense of security and relative (but not absolute) security than anywhere else in



Our Lady of the Seeds Monastery, Al Qosh

¹J. Healey, "'The Church across the Border": The Church of the East and its Chaldean branch' in *Eastern Christianity in the modern Middle East*, ed. A. O'Mahony (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 52.

the Middle East. However, with a blood-spattered history, punctuated by forced displacement and exile, many Christians are unable to feel secure. Others hope that Kurdistan will develop as a sample of democracy, offering a paradigm of ethno-religious tolerance to other countries in the Middle East. Bashar Warda, Archbishop of Erbil, has urged Western support for 'this young and unique experiment to build a democratic and civil entity in contrast to all Islamic, extremist, and Salafi orientation that is sweeping the area [the Middle East].'¹ Whilst some Christians are actively pursuing political agendas, many others are reluctant to do so; some of the reasons being an overriding sense of marginalization and historic memories of persecution. They simply want a stable and secure life for themselves and their families.

It is, of course, difficult to predict what will happen in the future in Kurdistan, but at present, the signs for Christians are optimistic and encouraging.²



Celebrations on the feast day of St Matthew at Mar Matti monastery (pictured above) were attended by throngs of people and dignitaries, including the Metropolitan of Mosul. Refurbishment at Rabban Hormizd monastery indicates that plans are afoot for the monastery. Churches are prominent and are well maintained, sometimes in contrast to housing and other facilities. The Christians currently wield only minimal political power, but this

¹ Wisdom, 'Iraqi Kurdistan' (14 January 2013), www.virtueonline.org (posted 2013/1/20).

² H. Gee, 'Christians in Iraq celebrate Christmas in Kurdistan' (www.english.rfi.fr/middle-east/20121215): Ninos Mishu, a priest at the Assyrian Church of the East, St John Baptism Church, in Ainkawa who fled from Dora in 2007 during the cleansing of Christian residents by Islamic militants, graphically expressed his thanks at being able to practise his faith openly and without hindrance.

situation should not be construed as a 'lack of existence'. With a Christian presence in Kurdistan, stretching back almost two millennia it is a compelling *desideratum* that this ancient, indigenous component should contribute politically, culturally economically and spiritually in the current development of the KRG region of northern Iraq.

CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ X SEMINAR DAY, 11 MAY 2013

The Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London was the venue for the *Christianity in Iraq X Seminar Day* on Saturday 11 May 2013. Held under the aegis of the Centre for Eastern and Orthodox Christianity, Department for the Study of Religions, SOAS where Dr Erica C.D. Hunter is Senior Lecturer in Eastern Christianity, the day addressed the topic of 'Mysticism in the Iraqi Church: Forging new boundaries'. With all the strife currently characterizing Iraq and Syria, it is difficult to envisage how 'ways forward' can be forged. However, the historic profile and interaction of mysticism in both Eastern Christianity and Islam may be one point of contact, allowing fruitful dialogue and discussion in the modern time.

Dr Hunter welcomed guests and, on behalf of the Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association, outlined the society's involvement with the various churches of the Middle East, including Iraq. Dr Mark Altaweel, on behalf of The British Institute for the Study of Iraq drew attention to its diverse interests and in particular highlighted the on-going programme of bringing Iraqi scholars to England and Scotland for training. This has been very successful in fostering practical and on-going training. Dr Cosimo Zene, current Head of the Dept. for the Study of Religions, outlined its wide range of activities, as well as the appointment of two new lecturers.

The morning, as is custom, was devoted to academic papers that largely focused on the mystical dimensions of Christianity in Mesopotamia. Dr Grigory Kessel (Marburg), *God speaks to you through reading: A Syriac monk's library* emphasized the importance of mystical literature in the monastic repertoire. Miss Nadira Khayyat (Baghdad and Paris), *The Syriac Mystics of the 7th and 8th century*, pointing out the fertility of the mystical expression in Mesopotamia and the Gulf during the Abbassid era. Miss Jennifer Griggs, drew upon

her doctoral research to consider *Divine Love as Revelation in Gregory bar Hebraeus*.¹ Here she detailed the intersection between Islam and Christianity—both of which drew on a common heritage. The final paper in the morning, delivered by Dr Sebastian Brock, *Crossing Boundaries: S. Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian) and his Boundaries*, showed the impact of Isaac within the Chalcedonian Orthodox tradition. Dr Cosimo Zene (SOAS) chaired the papers.

After luncheon in the Brunei Gallery, the afternoon session, chaired by Dr Suha Rassam, explored the Christian-Muslim mystical dialogue in its modern context. This was the subject of the paper by Dr Anthony O'Mahony (Heythrop College), *Louis Massignon on Mysticism Christian and Muslim*. Thereafter were presentations under the heading, *Ten years on: what are the prospects for Iraq* by various charities concerned with the situation of Iraqi Christians, both in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Dr Suha Rassam, *Iraqi Christians in Need*, gave a detailed appraisal, while Dr John Newton, *Church in Need*, also spoke about the current difficulties Christians are facing, in no small part due to the Syrian problems. The atrocities of the last decade have traumatized the Iraqi Christian communities, leading large numbers to flee either to Syria or to Kurdistan. The task of helping these large numbers of displaced persons largely falls on the shoulders of various church authorities and diaspora charities.

Dr Layla Al-Roomi, representing the Mandaean communities whose numbers have plummeted some 90 per cent in Iraq since 2003 graphically recounted the overwhelming difficulties that the refugee communities in Syria are currently experiencing. They are caught 'twixt a rock and a hard place'.

The interest generated by the Seminar Day, which was attended by around seventy people, including Iraqis, was most gratifying. Financial assistance by The British Institute for the Study of Iraq and The Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association has helped meet the considerable costs involved in organizing this day and made its success possible.

To celebrate this 10th anniversary of the *Christianity in Iraq Seminar Day*, a series that was inaugurated in 2004, participants enjoyed baklava with their afternoon tea.

¹ Published above, pp. 272-81, as 'Love of God' as Revelation in the Mysticism of Bar Hebraeus.

BOOK REVIEW

From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology, Steven M. Studebaker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 281 pp.

Studebaker's book does nothing less than provide us with an impressive *tour de force* in contemporary Pentecostal Trinitarian systematic theology. This work is the sixth contribution to the series *Pentecostal Manifestos* edited by James K.A. Smith and Amos Yong, demonstrating diligent academic scholarship and theological insight in today's cultural climate. Studebaker rigorously mines the resources of historical theology, biblical exegesis, and systematic theology to renew an appreciation of the Holy Spirit as a divine person of the Triune God. He believes the Spirit has often been relegated to the sidelines in both doctrine and practice, with traditional Trinitarian formulations implicitly subordinating the Spirit to Christ. But Studebaker's goal is persistently ecumenical instead of parochial (p.10); consequently, he does not wish to replace previous Trinitarian theological traditions, but to supplement their work 'by recognizing the unique identity and work of the Holy Spirit in the economic and immanent Trinity' (p. 166).

Methodologically, as the title indicates, Studebaker begins with Pentecost, as he submits this 'gives it ecumenical potential to speak to other Christian traditions' (p. 9). This also becomes highly relevant for his soteriological challenges presented in his provocative chapter six on the theology of religions, that we will address shortly.

In the first chapter, Studebaker lays out Spirit baptism as the key theological framework for a Pentecostal Trinitarian theology. Rather than holding that Pentecostal theology is merely about experience rather than theology, Studebaker suggests that religious experience (primarily collective, yet including individual experience as well) should 'inform Pentecostal theology' (p. 12). He acknowledges the differences in what Spirit baptism is in particular, but generally asserts that it is a biblical metaphor that expresses the work of grace subsequent to conversion (pp. 15-17). He astutely points out from both tradition and Scriptural texts that 'experience' has a long history of influencing and shaping our interpretation of Scripture. Rather than seeing experience as some sort of external 'tack-on' to doctrine, it is interrelated with our doctrine and practice. For example, Studebaker points to how Peter's experience with Cornelius (Acts 10), presented at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, demonstrates how experience influenced the forthcoming theology of this early church.

Additionally, Studebaker cites the work of both Kenneth Archer and Reinhard Hütter as examples of theologians working in contemporary theological hermeneutics who have contributed to this perspective.

On this point of the interrelationship between experience and theology, Studebaker claims that this is an area where evangelicals had some significant differences due to 'differing views on spiritual gifts and hermeneutics.' Although we can readily appreciate that to which Studebaker is referring, especially perhaps among more fundamentalist, cessationist strains of evangelicalism, it does not seem that useful to think of Studebaker's position as a Pentecostal as anything other than robustly 'evangelical' in its more contemporary, broad theological context. This is obviously debatable, but since Studebaker brings this up, we believe it requires further exploration.

Chapter two argues from an exegetical-theological perspective for the three characteristics of the Spirit of Pentecost: the liminal, constitutional, and the consummative that 'reveal the Spirit's role and identity in the Trinitarian God' (p. 53). These various roles refer to the Spirit's connection to both creation and redemption. For Studebaker, creation and redemption must not be regarded as disconnected activities, but 'two modalities of a unified work' of the Spirit (p. 67). In fact creation itself is 'the first act of divine deliverance and redemption' (p. 72). As is typical throughout this book, the arguments are cogent, well organized and developed, all leading up to Studebaker's major point for this chapter: The Holy Spirit is a divine person in relationship with the Father and the Son—not simply the facilitator between the Father and the Son (p. 100).

Studebaker considers various historical and contemporary theologians with respect to Trinitarian theology in chapters three through five. Chapter three includes the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, Aquinas, and Richard of St. Victor, followed by contemporary expressions in John D. Zizioulas and Thomas G. Weinandy. Throughout the chapter, he points out important theological highlights, distinctions, clarifications, and problems. In this, he considers the *filioque* clause, the mutual-love model of the trinity, and the vocabulary of the 'processions' of divine persons. His summary point once again highlights his ecumenical purpose in seeking doctrinal enhancement to, rather than displacement of traditional doctrinal formulations. As he puts it: 'a theology of processions needs supplementation with the Spirit of Pentecost' (p. 146).

Chapter four examines Trinitarian theology in the tradition of Reformed evangelicalism. Studebaker looks toward Jonathan Edwards, Donald Bloesch, Millard Erickson, and Myk Habets. Here the book finds its limits by stating it remains within the North American context of evangelical theology. However, when he uses the term 'Reformed Evangelicalism' more clarification in this context is needed. For example, Studebaker lists 'premillennial eschatology' as one of the beliefs that often characterize evangelicals (again, *in* the North American context) as premillennialism (p. 148). Certainly, this would not be a characteristic of such notable evangelical 'Reformed' scholars as J.I. Packer (who is Anglican and amillennial). This brief section simply begs for further nuanced clarifications.

Studebaker looks in chapter five to the place of Trinitarian thought among Pentecostal and charismatic theologians themselves, considering the strengths and weaknesses of the work of D. Lyle Dabney, Kilian McDonnell, Frank Macchia, and Clark H. Pinnock. He affirms, as he has consistently done throughout the book, that his purpose is to provide his own proposal alongside of and in concert with other contributions in this conversation. As we see, this chapter was his attempt to do this alongside of other Pentecostal theologians (p. 207).

Perhaps Studebaker's most provocative and insightful chapter is his second to the last (chapter 6): 'The Spirit of Pentecost and Theology of Religions.' Based on his work outlined in his previous chapters, he presents both a summary of current approaches to the theology of religions among other Pentecostal and charismatic theologians, while also presenting his personal perspective in view of the Spirit of Pentecost. Studebaker acknowledges that his work is similar to that of evangelical Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong; but where Yong's emphasis is more on interreligious dialogue, Studebaker's is focused on soteriology (p. 215).

Studebaker draws upon the missional theological insights of David Bosch, seeing mission as a basic activity to the Trinitarian God in which we are participants, rather than a peripheral activity of the church (p. 216). Since the Spirit has been poured out upon all people, the Spirit then works among all people even though not all people have submitted themselves to participation in the Spirit (p. 219). He is careful to say that his view does not result in universalism. He does this by distinguishing between, on the one hand, the Spirit's work at Pentecost 'providing universal access' of grace, and on the other, the human appropriation of that grace (p. 222). Although the redemptive

work of the Spirit remains the same throughout history, this work is 'always in continuity' (p. 236). Studebaker invites his readers to consider that various world religions may play a part in providing a context for God's grace, as the Spirit seeks to bring people more and more into the 'fuller experience of the Spirit of Pentecost' (p. 239). Certainly, as he notes, this requires discernment according to revelation in Scripture. This is certainly to be commended. Such discernment, however, becomes quite complicated when it comes to specific application. In our opinion, working out the implications of biblical discernment in this regard needs much greater development than Studebaker provides (see pp. 237-239).

The seventh and final chapter (followed by an epilogue) is also a creative application of Studebaker's theological proposals for a robust Trinitarian Pentecostal theology. He draws upon theologian David Coffey's Augustinian appropriations of Trinitarian theology to argue for a 'pneumatological theology of creation,' leading up to his own proposal of the 'unity of the Spirit's work in creation and grace' (p. 253). For Studebaker, the Holy Spirit's work must not be reduced to intrinsic or extrinsic categories—as the Spirit is included in all of creation (p. 258). Moreover, the entirety of creation is included in God's overall plan of redemption, so we must ask ourselves how we may participate proleptically in the Spirit's redemptive work through the care of creation today (p. 267). Again, Studebaker asks the right questions, but this chapter is only briefly developed and needs further theological connections and clarifications to adequately supplement Studebaker's previous chapters.

Steven Studebaker's book presents a rigorously defended Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit. It is extremely well documented with copious footnotes. He consistently and carefully defends and articulates why he makes the moves he does. He remains well balanced and irenic in his arguments and disagreements with other theologians. At times highly and refreshingly provocative, he is careful to defend his positions as finding their place in Christian orthodoxy. This book is highly recommended not only for students of Pentecostal theology, but for theological students, seminarians, and professors from various ecumenical traditions seeking to understand and critically appropriate insights on the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in the life and thought of the Church and the world at large.

Ronald T. Michener, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Word Made Love: The Dialogical Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, Christopher S. Collins SJ (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013).

Wounded Visions: Unity, Justice, and Peace in the World Church after 1968, Jonas Jonson, trans. Norman A. Hjelm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

Hope of Unity: Living Ecumenism Today. Celebrating 40 Years of the Ecumenical Institute Tantur, ed. Timothy S. Lowe (Berlin: AphorismA, 2013).