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ABOUT ST AUGUSTINE COLLEGE OF SOUTH AFRICA

The idea of founding a Catholic university in South Africa was first mooted in 1993 by a group of academics, clergy and business people. It culminated in the establishment of St Augustine College of South Africa in July 1999, when it was registered by the Minister of Education as a private higher education institution and started teaching students registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

It is situated in Victory Park, Johannesburg and operates as a university offering values-based education to students of any faith or denomination, to develop leaders in Africa for Africa.

The name 'St Augustine' was chosen in order to indicate the African identity of the College since St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) was one of the first great Christian scholars of Africa.

As a Catholic educational institution, St Augustine College is committed to making moral values the foundation and inspiration for all its teaching and research. In this way it offers a new and unique contribution to education, much needed in our South African society.

It aims to be a community that studies and teaches disciplines that are necessary for the true human development and flourishing of individuals and society in South Africa. The College's engagement with questions of values is in no sense sectarian or dogmatic but is both critical and creative. It will explore the African contribution to Christian thought and vice versa. Ethical values will underpin all its educational programmes in order to produce leaders who remain sensitive to current moral issues.

The college is committed to academic freedom, to uncompromisingly high standards and to ensuring that its graduates are recognised and valued anywhere in the world. Through the international network of Catholic universities and the rich tradition of Catholic tertiary education, St Augustine College has access to a wide pool of eminent academics, both locally and abroad, and wishes to share these riches for the common good of South Africa.

Preface

In 2005 St Augustine College hosted a conference celebrating the 10th anniversary (25 May 1995) of the papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (May they be one).¹ This edition of St Augustine Papers contains conference presentations from a wide spectrum of Christian community perspectives on the place of *Ut Unum Sint* ten years after proclamation.

In this encyclical, John Paul II, following the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel according to John (17:21-22), addressed ecumenism more directly and radically than any previous Pope. He dealt with the relations with the Orthodox Church and other Christian churches. He maintained that '[t]he ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptised'.² The document reiterated that the unity of the Orthodox and Catholic churches is essential for the Church 'must breathe with her two lungs.'³ There must be further dialogue and unity, too, with the Protestant churches.

This reconciliation has typically hinged on theological concerns, interpretations and differences between the major Christian communities. In section 79, John Paul II considered the most important of these issues, the understanding of which is critical to bring about unity: relationship between Scripture and tradition; the Holy Eucharist; the three-fold ordained ministry; the teaching authority of the Church and the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Model of the Church.

The Pope also addressed the position of the Bishop of Rome and his special ministry of unity. He addressed the exercise of that ministry in the first millennium (before the schism of the Eastern and Western churches) and suggested that this model might be applicable in a future visibly united Church.⁴ Finally, he invited all Christians to make a contribution to how the role of the papacy should be exercised in a re-united church.⁵

NOTES

¹ John Paul II (1995) *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference).

² John Paul II (1995:#77)

³ John Paul II (1995:#54)

⁴ John Paul II (1995:#55)

⁵ John Paul II (1995:#95)

Ut Unum Sint

BRUCE BOTHA

INTRODUCTION

Let me begin by saying that I personally incline towards an eschatological perspective when it comes to the unity of the Christian Churches. I believe it is something that we should pray for, work towards and even suffer for, even though it is an ideal that will most likely be achieved only at the eschaton. This is not meant to be a bleak or pessimistic assessment, yet given our human nature the perfection, which is true and complete unity, will always remain beyond our grasp. Despite this, it is our Christian obligation to work for it in the here and now. It is something that you and I make together, in the speaking and in the listening. Having said that, let me sketch out for you what I see as the most significant obstacles to unity, and then look briefly at possible ways forward. I hasten to add that there is nothing original in what I say, and that I am wholly dependant on the work and words of men like Avery Cardinal Dulles and Archbishop John Quinn.

OBSTACLES:

I see two significant obstacles facing us: the first is the institutional ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church and the subsequent interpretation adherents of this model make of the four marks of the Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

The second obstacle is the state of the Roman Catholic Church itself. It is need of reformation. Before we can invite sister churches into collegial relationship we need to demonstrate that we ourselves adequately live that collegiality that we invite them to.

INSTITUTIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY¹:

Let me acknowledge at the outset that it is simplistic to say that the Roman Catholic Church operates only under the institutional model. To varying degrees it also uses a variety of other models; yet I think those other models are subordinate to the dominant chord of the institutional. Vatican II and *Lumen Gentium* dispelled the notion that the one true church of Christ was the Roman Catholic Church. It said that the church of Christ, constituted and organised in the world as a society, subsists in the Roman Catholic Church. It said “subsists in”, not co-extensive with. This was a big breakthrough, because it meant that, at least officially, other Christian churches could also belong in some way to the Church of Christ. Since then I think the unfortunate

attitude of the Roman Catholic Church has been that while other Christian churches share in being part of the Church of Christ, they do so in a lesser way. The inclusive institutionalism of Vatican II is in practice limitedly inclusive. Those who have drunk from the heady well of the monarchical institution often find it difficult to practice the true humility of the sons and daughters of God. The mindset of the institutional still characterises the Roman Catholic approach to ecumenism in practice, no matter what our documents say.

Under this model, **unity** is understood as the subordination of all the faithful to one and the same spiritual jurisdiction and to one and the same magisterium. **Catholicity** was understood as being highly visible and measurable in terms of geography and statistics. In combination with unity, catholicity means that the church, spread out over the whole world, has the same creed, worship and system of law. **Holiness** was seen as something characterising the Church as a visible society. Visible holiness was more important than the interior union of the faithful with God. **Apostolicity** was seen as something belonging to the institution as a means of salvation. Chief importance was attached to the apostolic deposit of doctrine, sacraments and ministry. With this understanding of what it means to be church, the unity of the churches is understood to be a Romanisation of all other ecclesial communities. In some ways, in some minds, ecumenical dialogue is the Trojan horse of conversion.

A CHURCH IN NEED OF REFORM:

I shall touch but briefly on those areas of the Roman Catholic Church that many theologians think need reforming. I do so not just to serve the cause of unity by being seen to practice the collegiality and subsidiarity it invites other churches to enter into, but even more importantly, so that we can live with integrity the vision of Church that Vatican II called us to. These reflections are taken from Archbishop John Quinn's book, *The Reform of the Papacy*.² While he locates the locus of reform in the papacy, I think it goes deeper and wider than simply the papacy. A monarchical papacy can only come into being in an ecclesiology that is institutional and hierarchical. It is our entire way of being church that needs to be reformed, not just the particular way authority, power and jurisdiction are exercised in the church. Quinn touches on 5 broad areas:

- A need for the church to be open to criticism, in a spirit of humility;
- The papacy and collegiality of bishops. Are bishops, shepherds and pastors of their flocks or are they subservient administrators appointed by a centrist power?
- The appointment of bishops. Is this done in such a way so as to preserve and consolidate power or does this serve the needs of the local church?

- The reform of the papacy and College of Cardinals;
- The reform of the Roman Curia. One gets the impression that the curia thinks the church exists for it to administer, and not the other way round. The tail is wagging the dog. In addition, the practice of ordaining someone bishop just so that they can serve some administrative function calls into question the whole theology behind the episcopacy.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

What we need to do is actually believe and live the teaching of Vatican II in documents like *Lumen gentium* and the Decree on Ecumenism. This means moving away from the institutional model to something like a community model of church.³ Under this model the Church is no longer exclusively identified with any one society or institution, but is seen as a mystery operative both within and beyond the borders of any one organisation. Under this model the Church will not fully realise itself till the end of history and so the attributes by which it is defined remain partial and tendential. The **unity** of this model is the interior unit of mutual charity leading to a communion of friends. The **holiness** of the community model is primarily the lived holiness of an interior communion with God, and its **catholicity** is not one of geography and numbers but of a love that reaches out to all and excludes none. The **apostolicity** that is of interest in this model is not that of the proper juridical succession of duly ordained prelates but the enduring magnanimity of the Spirit that was poured out on the Church at Pentecost. Its apostolicity keeps it faithful to its origins, without merely being backwards looking.

Adherents of this model do not approach unity between the different Christian churches as a business merger but as a mutual rediscovery of brothers and sisters who have never lost their kinship. The unity that Christians pray for is a coming to consciousness of the unity we already possess, if only in germ, thanks to the oneness of God our Father, Christ our Saviour and the Spirit who is their mutual communion with each other and with us.

The method⁴ of ecumenism described in *Ut Unum Sint*, as viewed through the prism of communion ecclesiology might be something like this: build on the elements that all communities have in common; explore the potential that these common elements have as a basis for closer unity; identify limitations and distortions in each ecclesial community; and reflect on the diverse gifts of each community and how these might be harmonised in the Church of Christ that is greater than any one church. The aforementioned process is the very beginning of a spiral of deepening relationship. In the process each ecclesial communion discovers who it is more deeply, who it is in relationship with God and with each other.

This *communio* model is not without its deficiencies. Stephen Sykes, a Bishop of the Anglican Communion had this to say about the model:

Scholars have long realised that the *koinonia* model is christologically and pneumatologically oriented. What is missing from it is in fact the perspective of creation: that the powers that are exercised in the church in virtue of the victory of Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit are still ambivalent so long as the church is *in via*.⁵

What he is getting at here is that power comes in many forms and can be used for both good and bad. We need to somehow reconcile the fact of abuse of power within and by churches and the language of service and grace that churches and ministers of churches cloak their exercise of power with. A subject that we in the various churches need to devote time and energy to is the theology and practice of power within the Church. Can there be unity without authority? And can we have a moral or spiritual authority, however limited, without some exercise of jurisdiction? While the churches might prefer to be held together by bonds of love and charity, I think Rome fancies something a little stronger, like steel.

NOTES

- ¹ Avery Cardinal Dulles (2002), *Models of the Church* (New York, New York: Image Books/ Doubleday): 118-121.
- ² J. R. Quinn (1999), *The Reform of the Papacy* (New York; The Crossroad Publishing Company).
- ³ Dulles (2002:138-139).
- ⁴ Dulles (2002:232).
- ⁵ Sykes, S. W. (2001), "The Papacy and Power: An Anglican Perspective." in C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans): 71.

Ut Unum Sint – An Anglican Perspective and Response

DUNCAN BUCHANAN

INTRODUCTION

I think it is only fair, as I start what I want to say, to declare where I am coming from. I was brought up an Anglican, and went to an Anglican school, which was catholic in orientation. So we had High Mass each week, and I loved the ritual and the smell of incense, and when decades later I became Visitor of that school, a particular joy for me was to return there from time to time to celebrate. Little had changed except the words of the liturgy and as a result, the mass settings. But it was the association of sight, sound, smell and memories which reminded me of a real sense of God's presence throughout my life. My local parish church was also a place where I felt I belonged, and as you know, when you belong, it also allows you to criticise that which you love. I am very critical of mother Church, but in those days it was automatic for me simply to assume that God was an Anglican.

It was only when I went to Rhodes University that I met people who were passionate about the Christian faith as it was expressed in the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational traditions. This was at first a shock, and then a wonderful liberation as they showed me so much more than I had ever even conceived of. Those years were so full and stimulating and during that time I guess I was converted. I do not know how else to describe the process of having all that I had been brought up with and loved bundled up and given new meaning in a more mature and very enthusiastic re-commitment to our Lord Jesus. That enthusiasm has never left me, but has grown and matured over the years. Because of this enriching experience, I get angry when as Christians we pit ourselves against each other and play church power games—in the process forgetting the Gospel and the gospels, and even worse, abandoning the unifying love of Christ in favour of competition and rivalry. I was horrified a few

months ago to see a poster with Ray Macauley's picture on it encouraging people to abandon meaningless ritual, and, presumably, join his church.

I had the privilege, after leaving Rhodes, to go to a theological college in Oxford, where I indulged my passion and true religion—rugby. I played for a team called The Mongrels—the only completely ecumenical activity in which I have ever participated. The club consisted of all the theological colleges in Oxford, from Baptist to several grades of Anglican to several orders of Roman Catholic. Because of that very strong Roman Catholic presence, and the fact that I captained the club in my second year, I became very friendly and involved with the Jesuits, Benedictines and Dominicans playing in the club. I soon discovered that while we all shared a love for rugby, there was no great love lost between the different orders. Yet, again I learned much and was hugely enriched by the experience.

When a few years later I was made rector of a parish on the South Coast of Natal, it was natural for me to get involved with the local clergy. Within a short while we had started a regular lunchtime meeting, and that group consisted of Methodists, Baptists, Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Again the fellowship and the things I learned were real blessings. In the process we initiated the South Coast Feeding Scheme, which was a really Godly effort involving all the churches of the area and which seemed to me to be at least one way we could express our common commitment to Christ. Very much later I was elected Chairman of the Church Unity Commission and held that position for about 12 years.

All that I am trying to say here (and I have left out a number of other very important ecumenical involvements especially during the 20 years we spent in Grahamstown) is that I am passionate about Christian unity which by definition must translate into church unity. I do not think we have done very well on the ecumenical front, and ecumenism is certainly not high on the agendas of most of our churches. We are, it seems to me, to be very comfortable in our boxes of various sizes, and we have no huge pressure to go through the energy sapping and painful processes of seeking genuine unity. So Christ remains dishonoured in our disunity and right at the hearts of all our churches is a paralysis caused by our indifference and pride. Forgive me if that sounds harsh, but I am speaking from the painful experience of trying to get more than a nominal commitment to ecumenism from my own church.

Now let me spend the rest of the time allotted to me, interacting with *Ut Unum Sint*. Let me say right up front that ten years on, I do not find it as exciting as it was clearly regarded by many people and traditions when it was first published, being variously described as “superb,” “prophetic,” and “encouraging”. I confess that I did not read it at the time that it was published, and have come to it fresh over the last few months.

Part of my of disappointment is that while *Ut Unum Sint* expresses many really good things, ten years on, in my perception the Roman Catholic Church has still not built on the Ecumenical Decree of Vatican II, and in many ways the prophetic vision of *Unitatis Redintegratio* seems, to me at least, to be being systematically dismantled. In the wake of Vatican II as Pope John Paul II mentions, a number of really exciting inter-church initiatives, and at the same time a number of bilateral talks, were put in place. Rome, it seemed, was genuinely wanting to throw open the windows and allow the fresh air of the Spirit to blow through the church. In the process the Anglican Church felt that wind blow through us and we were grateful to God for the initiative of that most saintly of men, Pope John XXIII. In the Anglican Communion many local bilateral conversations were set up with the blessing of the local Catholic and Anglican Bishops, and at the same time the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) started to produce some marvellously helpful documents on Ministry, the Eucharist, Authority, Ordination and more recently, one I have not yet seen, on Mary. These have been a real blessing, opening the way to discourse and dialogue, and at least at the theological level to a real belief that we were, in spite of the ordination of women to the priesthood, moving closer to each other. So it was a shock to discover just before the start of the Lambeth Conference in 1998 that Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Bertone had published a Papal document called *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, effectively reminding all and sundry of the 1897 declaration of Pope Leo XIII that Anglican orders are invalid. Worse still neither Cardinal Hume nor Cardinal Cassidy, at that time President of the Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, had any prior notice of the release of Ratzinger and Bertone’s document. Hume was told of it by the Archbishop of Canterbury. I remember the shock of hearing that, and remember too the embarrassment of Cassidy as he brought greetings from the Holy Father to the Lambeth Conference.

Equally a really creative international meeting of English speaking churches on Liturgy was brought into disarray in 2001 when the Roman

Catholic participants were told by Cardinal Ratzinger that they could no longer participate in ecumenical events. The present Chairman of the Roman Catholic body, who apparently calls himself a “Latinist” has set about dismantling, at least for the Roman Catholic Church, all the internationally agreed common texts, setting back that particular ecumenical initiative nearly forty years. Equally, the Roman Catholic Airport Chaplains were told by Ratzinger not to participate with other denominations in the persuasion of their ministry. You must at least understand my personal feelings of huge dismay at the election of Pope Benedict XVI. I am not confident that *Ut Unum Sint* will be a starting point for ongoing ecumenical activity during his papacy. I mention all of this, not to point fingers but to remind us all that ecumenism is a fragile blossom, often at the mercy of dogmatism and a certain hubris which too easily cuts across initiatives which are wonderfully Godly and intended for the building up of the Church.

I want now to turn to three areas which as Anglicans we would want to discuss in the light of *Ut Unum Sint*. These are *Authority in the Church*, *Anglican Orders* and *the Role of the Bishop of Rome*.

AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

I must start by saying that no binding decision may be made in the Anglican Church without some sort of synodical backing. Synods may devolve authority to the bishop to perform certain functions, or to make decisions without continual reference back to the Synod but on the whole authority within the diocese is exercised by the Bishop in Synod. If Synod believes the bishop is acting outside the authority given to him, it has every right to question his actions, and in extreme cases—as has happened recently in the Diocese of Recife—start proceedings which will lead to his deposition. In even more extreme cases that process can lead to the removal of his orders. Obviously that is extreme and very rare, but the mechanisms are there for that to happen. The important thing is that no decision which is binding on the church can be achieved without the approval of the bishop, clergy and laity all deciding together. They may confer apart, but the decisions must be made together. So again our Synod of Bishops may make no binding decisions unless authority has been given them through the Provincial Synod by way of the Canons, or the Constitution, or a resolution requesting them to act in a particular way. The Bishops can recommend and give guidance, but the only decisions which are

binding, come eventually from the whole church meeting together. It is up to each individual diocese to decide how these recommendations will be put into practice.

The same is true with the appointment of bishops. Archbishop Quinn in his really insightful book *The Reform of the Papacy* expresses the fear that elections could lead to either a popular priest being elected, or to some sort of electioneering.¹ My experience in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa is that neither of these has much bearing on the end result. There is a splendid perversity in an elective assembly that allows the Holy Spirit to ignore those who have promoted themselves, and causes the popular person to be appraised very carefully, and often rejected. The result has been that we have had on the whole good caring bishops who know that they are not only local, but also represent the whole church. We have also had some disasters, but at least the Diocese can only blame itself. For a person to be elected to the episcopate in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa he or she requires a 2/3 majority of the clergy and of the laity, voting separately. Other Provinces in the Anglican Communion use different methods of electing, but they all involve the laity. The sole exception is the Church of England, where the Queen appoints on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. There are historical reasons for this but they are not very convincing. It involves being an established church. There is no such thing as a perfect system, and we have our share of imperfections.

For this same reason the Lambeth Conference which meets every 10 years (for the past 30 years at the University of Kent at Canterbury) and brings all the bishops of the Anglican Communion together in a three week conference, is not a decision making body. It meets to discuss and dialogue about issues facing the church and the world. It is not a Council in the way Vatican II was a council with a church-changing agenda. In our tradition, the church cannot be represented by the bishops alone. There were people who tried to suggest at the last Lambeth Conference that a resolution on human sexuality was in fact binding on the whole Communion, but that cannot be the case. It would take a communion-wide synod to make that the case, or in the case of the ordination of women to the priesthood, for a majority of diocesan synods throughout the communion over several years to agree on a specific course of action. There are several dioceses which have either not raised the issue or who for various reasons will not ordain women to the priesthood. The reality is that when the

issue is dealt with by a sufficient number of local synods, this constitutes a universal majority. Even then the issue cannot be forced on any local synod, not even when the Provincial Synod has approved.

Just as importantly, what we as Anglicans seek to achieve is a sense of belonging in a communion where we live in communion with the See of Canterbury. This makes the Archbishop of Canterbury a nominal head of the Communion but he is no more than a *primus inter pares*. He has no juridical powers. We call ourselves a world wide Communion, which is described in the Windsor Report as “expressed by community, equality, common life, sharing, interdependence, and mutual affection and respect. It subsists in visible unity, common confession of the apostolic faith, common belief in scripture and the creeds, common baptism and shared eucharist, and a mutually recognised common ministry.”² *The Windsor Report*—or more properly The Lambeth Commission on Communion—was set up to look at the question of authority within the Communion as a result of the ordination of a priest living with a same sex partner to the episcopate in the United States, and also the decision by a number of Canadian dioceses to bless same-sex unions. Africa and much of the global south were up in arms about this and the ensuing furore has and is still threatening to tear the Anglican Communion apart. Yet we must recognise too that an edict from on high does not make the problem go away. So for Pope Benedict XVI to say that gay ordinands will be weeded out of the seminaries does nothing more than create the potential for a witch hunt. It solves nothing. The issues are essentially over how one interprets the scripture to which we are all committed. Significantly the *Windsor Report*, which does a really good job of analysing the nature of Communion, does not suggest that we solve our problems with some sort of top-down authoritarian structure, but rather by proposing a universal Covenant to which each province in the Communion would commit itself. My own belief is that that will not fly but it is worth perhaps adapting and using in conjunction with some sort of Communion-wide synod. That idea was proposed by Bishop Gray of Cape Town at the first Lambeth Conference in 1867.

So we have to ask ourselves wherein lies true authority. There is no doubt that that must involve a teaching responsibility, and the need to hold fast not only to the faith once committed to the Apostles but also to preserve and protect it. But that authority and office is to be achieved by careful consultation and agonising as to how the faith can and must be legitimately expressed in the

early 21st Century. Because of our history, Anglicans may well be accused of being theologically wishy-washy, and I would accept that criticism, but we are allowed to think and doubt without fear of censure or inhibition. We can and must disagree; despite of the best efforts of Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria who is leading the charge in the homosexual debate, we must preserve that ability to hold different positions. We must not be forced into a rigid doctrinal mesh which forces us into conformity and does not allow for genuine debate and dialogue. We cannot inhibit the expression of the Christian faith, for while there are certain parts of our doctrine which are absolute, we must be clear as to what those parts are, and even then they require constant re-interpretation to meet different times and cultures. They must be able to stand under the scrutiny of the scriptures and reason. We must also remember that Christian doctrine is but a relatively feeble attempt to articulate the inexpressible wonder of the mighty acts of God. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into radically new ways of thinking and expressing doctrine and church practice without fear of inhibition.

ANGLICAN ORDERS

I personally have over the years been angry at the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church as to the question of Anglican orders and on occasion been deeply hurt by it. But then why should I be angry when for centuries we Anglicans have treated the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, to say nothing of the Lutherans, in exactly the same way? We have arrogantly assumed that their ministries are invalid, and have treated these churches with a degree of contempt which makes me squirm with embarrassment. Nevertheless the Papal Bull of 1896, *Apostolicae Curae*, is by any standards a very thin and politically orientated document, which was answered by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York with a good deal more substance.³ The realities of the Anglican orders cannot simply be dispatched in a two-page encyclical.

The Anglican Church is a strange hybrid animal born out of political expediency as well as the desire by many in England to espouse the teaching of the reformers. All of this was helped by the wilful determination of Henry VIII to have a son as heir to the throne. His belief that England after the Hundred Years War needed a male heir and his determination to get rid of Katherine of Aragon who unwisely kept begetting girls may have been the spark that caused

the schism. Henry was determined to keep England Catholic, as witnessed by the Prayer Book of 1549. Inevitably, this led to tensions within the church which in one way or another remain to this day. In the process however, a church and now a worldwide Communion came into being. You may want to argue about all of this, but Anglicanism does have its own integrity and it was at great pains to preserve, as did a number of Lutheran churches, the apostolic succession, in order to ensure that they could never be simply reduced to what Vatican II and Pope John Paul II refer to as an ecclesial community. *Apostolicae Curae* tried to make an argument that Anglican orders were invalid because the apostolic succession was broken. Because this argument was so weak, it ultimately invalidated the orders on the grounds of intention, also a very poor and nicely improvable argument. So their question remains an untouched subject in *Ut Unum Sint*. However there are sufficient inferences in the encyclical to warrant taking the matter further.

Anglicans are clear that the historic episcopate is essential to the life of the church. In all our dealings within the Church Unity Commission that has been an essential part of the discussions. We believe that it is the sign of the church's intention to be true to the teaching and mission of the Apostles. But it does not stop there. It is not a guarantee of upholding of the apostolic faith. The real basis of it is summed up well in a quote from the *Porvoo Common Statement*, the statement between the Anglican and Lutheran Churches, which has led in the Northern Hemisphere to a closing of the gaps between the Church of England and the Lutheran Churches. It goes like this:

In the consecration of a bishop the sign is effective in four ways: first it bears witness to the Church's trust in God's faithfulness to his people and in the promised presence of Christ with his Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to the end of time; secondly it expresses the Church's intention to be faithful to God's initiative and gift by living in the continuity of the apostolic faith and tradition; thirdly, the participation of a group of bishops in the laying on of hands signifies their and their church's acceptance of the new bishop and so of the catholicity of the churches; fourthly, it transmits ministerial office and its authority in accordance with God's will and institution. Thus in the act of consecration a bishop receives the sign of divine approval and a permanent commission to lead his particular church in the common faith and apostolic life of all the churches. The continuity signified in the consecration of a bishop to

episcopal ministry cannot be divorced from the continuity of life and witness of the diocese to which he is called.⁴

This last point is important. It makes no sense to have a bishop consecrated to fulfil an episcopal role in a non-existent diocese simply so that he may have a title, and then work in some sort of administrative office. The apostolic succession is not a sort of magical cord spanning the ages, but is surely an attempt to ensure the holiness of all God's people through the apostolic teaching, and that includes the clergy and the bishops. It was a former Archbishop of York who, addressing a group of young clergy, assured them that God had called them to the ordained ministry because that was the only way that God could think of saving them. I think it also important to say in passing that by apostolic teaching I do not mean some of the doctrines which have accreted around the person of Mary and the office of the Pope. I believe that if the Roman Catholic Church is serious about unity, then it has serious work to do in those areas.

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP OF ROME

In the first Anglican Prayer Book of 1549, the Litany contained a verse:

From the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities—Good Lord deliver us.

Now that took a century to be removed, but it does say something as to how the Bishop of Rome was viewed in those days, and I have little doubt that there are certain so-called Christians who still think like that. I doubt whether one would have to go beyond Northern Ireland to find some such. On the whole we have come a long way in that regard, but history has constantly reminded us of the dictum of Lord Acton, written about the papacy: "Power corrupts, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely." The papacy has not been without its faults and corruption. Parts of the history of the papacy do not make pretty reading. The reality is that when the church gets involved in the affairs of nations and when it owns property and great wealth, it takes the shape of the world, and Christ is forgotten, or brought in as a useful tool to justify the actions of those who enjoy power. Having said that I must insist that what I have said about the papacy is as true of other denominations as well. A quick look at the history of the Church of England reveals bishops as devious as anybody else in history, and as corrupt. Our own recent history has revealed how the N.G. Kerk⁵

became effectively the established church, with a corruption which was rather more subtle as it gave theological and spiritual credence to apartheid.

The universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome is potentially not such a huge stumbling block to Anglicanism. We are happy to debate and enter into dialogue about the primacy of the Pope. We are not frightened by the possibility of the Pope becoming the *primus inter pares* in a universal church, where he is the sign of unity, and where we are held together by bonds of affection as is the case with the Archbishop of Canterbury. We could live with the idea of the Pope being the symbol of unity for the whole church, but we would have grave doubts if, as *Ut Unum Sint* suggests, acceptance of the Papacy is an essential requisite of a full and visible community. I personally have no huge problems with the papacy as I have described it, but I do have huge difficulties with the way it is exercised at present, even with an increase in the so called collegiality with the bishops (I say “so called” because it seems that in fact the Synods which Pope John Paul II put into place are not particularly collegial. While the bishops may speak and recommendations are made it is entirely up to the Pope as to how those recommendations can be used. Often they have been edited by the curia anyway and do not necessarily represent what has been said). I am terrified by the curia, and the awesome power it seems to exert. I find nothing to suggest that the cardinals who work in the Vatican and the curia in general are a logical part of the Petrine ministry. In fact I cannot see that the biblical interpretation of Peter’s role in the earliest church and the development of the papacy have any logical sequence. My worry about the papacy as it is today is that with the reality of human sin (and I hope no one is going to suggest that the pope is sinless) the papacy is inevitably subject to the prejudices of the incumbent and the strong people who surround him. This can be seen in the influence which Cardinal Ottaviani exercised on Pope Paul VI in relation to contraception and the eventual publication of *Humanae Vita* and the perceived anti-Semitism exercised by Pope Pius XII. Leadership in whatever form has to be under authority; if it is not, it is incapable of really being a servant to all. The clear prejudices of successive popes show to me at least the flaws in the present system. Equally no one person, be they never so saintly or perceptive is capable of making all the decisions. I know that the Pope works through the various Congregations, but with few exceptions the people in those Congregations are like-minded appointees of the Pope who are likely to reflect what he wants. If we really want to know the will of God, then we must encourage and value

dissent and disagreement. Then, if through dialogue and careful listening to each other we arrive at consensus, or even a common mind, the reality is that we are much more likely to know and follow the will of God for us. If however one person can disregard the consensus and go unilaterally in another direction, it seems to me that that is godless. Insofar as Paul VI disregarded the strong recommendations of his Commission on contraception, to my mind he was being godless.

From our perspective the papacy, as it is at the moment is so flawed, as to be a stumbling block for the unity of the Church.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a wonderful passage in *Ut Unum Sint* at paragraph 82.

The Catholic Church must enter into what might be called a “Dialogue of conversion”, which constitutes the spiritual foundation of ecumenical dialogue.

Only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians, and for that constant reform of the Church insofar as she is also a human and earthly institution, which represent the preconditions for all ecumenical commitment.⁶

He carries on in that vein in Paragraphs 83 and 84 in what I believe is the very best part of the whole document. It is profound and moving, enshrining the reality of the holiness which we are all seeking. Earlier in the encyclical he has laid great stress on the Cross. And this is where I want to end. The nature of the Cross is in line with our understanding of the Incarnation. Both are the signs of the reality of God’s risk taking. God gives everything in his coming amongst us as a human. God keeps giving all on the Cross so that we may enter into the holiness of the salvation, which is God’s great gift to us. I am convinced that what Pope John Paul wrote to the Roman Catholic Church in the quotations above is as relevant to the other churches as it is to the church to whom he wrote. As Jesus gave all on the Cross so I believe that we must be prepared to shed all of our past encumbrances and present prejudices in order to achieve the unity for which he prayed. But it goes further than that. It is not just giving up our prejudices and encumbrances, it means giving up our certainties as well. Kneeling at the Cross in humility we seek not to hold on to those things of which we are certain, but to be open to the scarifying and saving judgement of God which enables us to gladly give up that which we think is most precious

and most essential. It is the nature of the Cross that we are only important as we hand our pride, our securities, our comforts, our status, our little achievements to Jesus on the Cross and acknowledge that we are the children of our heavenly Father. We are called to live in obedience to him as we glorify him in our words and actions, as we have respect and compassion for others, and as we hold fast to the vision of Christ enshrined in all our traditions. Paul reminds us that we are to die daily to self, and that must surely involve our ecumenical endeavours as well. Only then is it possible that we will be ready to seek the unity which Christ demands. Anything less is mere words and game playing.

NOTES

- ¹ J. R. Quinn (1999), *The Reform of the Papacy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company): 127 –128.
- ² Lambeth Commission on Communion (2004), *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office): #49.
- ³ See Leo XIII (1896) *Apostolicae Curae* in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (1996/1997)/198ff, and the reply of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (Church of England (1977) *Saepius officio : the reply of the English archbishops to the bull Apostolicae curaе of Pope Leo XIII concerning Anglican ordinations : addressed to all the bishops of the Catholic Church in the year 1897* (London : Church Literature Association)).
- ⁴ Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England (1993), *The Porvoo common statement: conversations between The British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches* (London: Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England): #48,49.
- ⁵ *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, or The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa.
- ⁶ John Paul II (1995), *Ut Unum Sint*, #82.

Ut Unum Sint – A Methodist Reflects

DONALD G L CRAGG

There is no doubt that the publication of *Ut Unum Sint* in 1995 was a significant event for relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christians. However, it is questionable whether it has had much impact outside ecumenical circles. My own denomination, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, has never responded officially and I doubt whether the average minister has heard of it or knows what it is about. As far as I am aware there has been little response from wider Methodism apart from a number of articles by Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, the co-chairman of the Catholic/Methodist bilateral conversations¹ and a couple of other ecumenists. I therefore value this opportunity to reflect on the encyclical from the point of view of a South African Methodist with a life-long commitment to the ecumenical endeavour.

The reaffirmation of the ecumenical principles of the Second Vatican Council is most welcome, as is the recognition of the role of dialogue and the obvious commitment of the late Pope to future progress towards Christian Unity. Regrettably the positive impact of the encyclical was marred by the publication at a later date of *Dominus Jesus*. While this document did not go back on the principles of Vatican II, it made no reference to the achievements of the bilateral dialogues of the past forty years and, more distressingly, showed little or any sign of the irenic and positive spirit of *Ut Unum Sint*. In view of this it is not surprising that the election of the present Pope was viewed with reserve by many non-Catholic observers. It is also distressing that the Roman Catholic Church has recently withdrawn from the English Language Liturgical Consultation in which it has been a major player since 1968.²

The emphasis in *Ut Unum Sint* on the need for repentance, renewal and reform is a challenge to all Christians. Methodists need to face that challenge. But the same applies to the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope acknowledged that, like other Christians, the Catholic Church and its members are guilty of mistakes, misunderstandings and prejudices which have to be rectified, but he reaffirmed an assertion of Vatican II which, in the view of many Protestants, needs serious reconsideration.

Lumen Gentium asserts that the Church of Christ “subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.” The encyclical goes to great lengths to affirm the “elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian communities” and affirms that these are the basis of an imperfect communion.³ But it asserts that these elements are “found in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities.”⁴ We acknowledge that Methodists may lack or undervalue certain aspects of the apostolic tradition which are manifested in the Catholic Church, and trust that the Holy Spirit will use the ongoing dialogue to make us aware of this. But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Rome must be open to the leading of the Spirit no less than Constantinople, Canterbury, Wittenberg or Epworth! Moreover, I am not alone in believing that no Christian Church or community may lay claim to “fullness of communion” as long as Christians are divided. This applies no less to Rome than to any other body: the fullness of its communion is impaired by its separation from other churches and Christians. It is disappointing that the encyclical did not move in this direction, for such an acknowledgment would have contributed greatly to healing and reconciliation.

A similar problem exists in the area of doctrine. Methodists would agree with John Paul II that unity cannot be achieved at the expense of truth and that a “‘being together’ which betrayed the truth would...be opposed both to the nature of God... and to the need for truth found in the depths of every human heart.”⁵ However, Methodists would dispute the assumption which underlies the encyclical that the Roman Magisterium is the ultimate arbiter of what is truth and how it is to be formulated. If we are to realise Christian Unity, the quest for truth must be ecumenical and its definition enjoy the assent of the whole Christian body and not simply the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him. Professor Wainwright may offer a way forward in a personal response which he made in 1997 to the Pope’s invitation to dialogue on the Petrine Office. He suggested that the Bishop of Rome

...should invite those Christian communities which he regards as being in real, if imperfect, communion with the Roman Catholic Church to appoint representatives to cooperate with him and his appointees in formulating a statement expressive of the Gospel to be preached to the world today. Thus the theme of the “fraternal dialogue” which John Paul II envisaged would shift from the theory of the pastoral and doctrinal office to the substance of what is believed and preached. And the very exercise of elaborating a

statement of faith might—by the process of its launching, its execution, its resultant form, its publication, and its reception—illuminate the question of “a ministry that presides in truth and love.” Solvitur ambulando.⁶

Professor Wainwright was not contemplating the drafting of a doctrinal statement but there is no reason why this process should not be followed to formulate such statements for consideration by the teaching authorities of the various churches.

Christian Unity will not be achieved by the return of separated brethren to the Roman fold but by a coming together in love and truth of the scattered people of God who are saved by grace and united by baptism and a common faith. Doctrinal agreement is clearly essential for this and I shall return to that issue later in this paper. Before doing that, however, I want to consider two matters raised by John Paul II which are fundamental to any growth towards communion in faith and life and can easily be sidelined by our preoccupation with doctrine.

“Love,” wrote the Pope, “is the great undercurrent which gives life and adds vigour to the movement towards unity. This love finds its most complete expression in common prayer...Even when prayer is not specifically offered for Christian unity, but for other intentions such as peace, it actually becomes an expression and confirmation of unity.”⁷ We need to hear this loud and clear!

The Pope referred specifically to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.⁸ This is something near to my heart. As Secretary of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) from 1990 to 2004 I was responsible for adapting and distributing material for this observance in South Africa. As far as I can judge, the impact was minimal and the Week was observed in very few parishes. I concede that quantity alone is no judge of the effectiveness of prayer, but the poor response indicates that concern for Christian unity does not rank high in the priorities of South African Christians.

I believe that the Week of Prayer should be the focus of a far wider and ongoing movement of local ecumenical prayer groups whose members are personally committed to pray both privately and with each other, not only for Christian unity but also for the mission of the Church, locally and more widely, and for the needs of their communities, the nation and the world. Moreover, these intercessors should receive regular topics for prayer, relevant information and biblical teaching through the Internet or other available means. I suggest

that the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) and the CUC be asked to give serious consideration to this possibility.

When Christians share together in committed prayer the issue of intercommunion is sure to be raised. I understand and have learned to respect the Catholic and Orthodox position which regards eucharistic communion as the goal and seal of Christian Unity. But I well remember the pain and even anger that I used to feel when I could not receive communion with my Anglican colleagues on the Student Christian Movement (SCM) Staff in England and in the early years of the CUC. Exclusion left one with a sense of rejection and the feeling that one was not regarded as authentically Christian. On the other hand, when the table was opened after 1974 it engendered a sense of acceptance and trust that enhanced our search for union. I accept that an open table can lead to complacency but wish that the canonical provisions could be modified to allow Catholics and Protestants who are praying and working together ecumenically—and the spouses in mixed marriages—to receive communion together.

“Relations between Christians,” writes the Pope, “...presuppose and from now on call for every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels: pastoral, cultural and social, as well as witnessing to the Gospel message.”⁹ Christian leadership in South Africa worked together in the struggle years and cooperation continues at a national level in the Church Leaders’ Forum and through the South African Council of Churches. Following a consultation in 2003, representatives of the CUC and the SACBC were mandated to explore common action in the spheres of HIV/AIDS, poverty, corruption and education. This has led to plans for an anti-corruption campaign and a measure of consultation in the other areas. This is good—but not good enough.

In 1982 the member churches of the CUC covenanted together “to work together for the spread of the gospel, for justice, peace and freedom, and for the spiritual and moral well-being of all people.”¹⁰ This undertaking has been honoured more in the breach than observance. Has the time not come for them to commit themselves afresh to this undertaking and for its scope to be widened to include the Roman Catholic and other Churches which were not then involved? Such a commitment should involve intentional consultation, joint planning and, wherever possible, ecumenical implementation in all areas of Christian mission, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, education, relationships with the state and evangelism and witness. Cooperation should not be limited to the

national level. The Covenant also committed the churches “to pursue means whereby, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our churches in each place may act together in worship, witness and service.”¹¹ Should our churches not be challenged actively to encourage and facilitate meaningful cooperation between parishes as they seek to bear witness to Christ in an increasingly secular environment?

The encyclical goes on to say, somewhat optimistically, that “unity of action leads to the full unity of faith.”¹² The South African experience warns us that this does not happen automatically. There was considerable cooperation and a real sense of unity in the struggle against apartheid but doctrinal issues were ignored. Indeed, bodies such as the CUC which tried to keep doctrinal discussion alive were often dismissed as irrelevant. However, once the common enemy had been removed, cooperation declined, the cracks reappeared and denominationalism enjoyed a field day! Prayer and practical cooperation are indeed essential aspects of the quest for full communion but, as the Encyclical insists, they have to be undertaken in tandem with the search for doctrinal agreement.

The Encyclical deals extensively and positively with the process of dialogue which was initiated after Vatican II. This is described as an undertaking of partners who desire reconciliation in unity and truth. “Dialogue is...a natural instrument for comparing different points of view and, above all, for examining those disagreements which hinder full communion between Christians.” It must be undertaken in “a spirit of charity to one’s partner...and humility with regard to the truth which comes to light and which might require a review of assertions or attitudes.” Full communion “will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth...Hence all forms of reductionism or facile ‘agreement’ must be absolutely avoided.”¹³

It is fair to say that the bilateral dialogue between Roman Catholics and Methodists has been conducted in that spirit. This began in 1967 and has produced reports to coincide with the quinquennial meetings of the World Methodist Council. The reports which have been prepared since 1977 have dealt systematically with the following fundamental issues:

- Towards and Agreed Statement on the Holy Spirit (1977-1981);
- Towards a Statement on the Church (1982-1986);
- The Apostolic Tradition (1986-1991);
- The Word of Life - A statement on Revelation and faith (1992-1996);

- Speaking the Truth in Love (which focused on teaching authority) (1996-2001).¹⁴

These reports reveal an impressive measure of agreement on matters fundamental to the Faith. They have also highlighted repeatedly a number of important disagreements which will have to be resolved before full communion can be attained. These include:

- The nature of the Petrine Ministry, including the Pope's universal power of jurisdiction and infallibility in defining doctrine;
- The location of teaching authority in the Church;
- The threefold ministry;
- The nature and exercise of episcopate and succession in episcopal office;
- The Mariological dogmas.

The situation is summed up as follows in the 1996 Report:

Obviously Roman Catholics and Methodists share a common concern regarding the Church universal as an expression of communion in Christ. But they differ widely in their beliefs about the means which God has given to attain or preserve this goal. These differences may be the greatest hindrances on the way to full communion.¹⁵

A further Report will be published in 2006. According to a press release after the 2004 meeting of the Dialogue Commission,

The text will draw on the dialogue's previous work on ecclesiology, identifying the extent to which Catholics and Methodists have been able thus far to set forth a common understanding of the Church. The report will then name the ways in which each dialogue partner can recognize in the other the one Church of Jesus Christ, then proceed to signal areas where each sees the other as lacking and potentially gaining from an 'exchange of gifts' in order to more fully be the Church Christ calls us to be. Finally, the commission hopes to propose possible steps which could be taken to advance our relationship, in order to better correspond to the extent to which we share a common understanding of the Church and its mission in the world.¹⁶

This seems to indicate that future dialogue will tackle the really divisive issues and seek to discern whether Roman Catholics and Methodists can find unity "by the adherence of all to the content of the revealed faith in its entirety."¹⁷

Although the Roman Catholic/Methodist Dialogue has not led as yet to any breakthrough on disputed issues, it is possible that Methodists may enter into an agreement achieved in Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue. On 31 August 1999 representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the

Pontifical Council for Christian Unity signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Methodist Churches throughout the world have been asked to consider a statement which will “declare that the common understanding of Justification as it is outlined in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ 15-17) corresponds to Methodist doctrine,” and outlines the distinctive aspects of Methodist teaching which emphasizes “the deep connection between forgiveness of sins and making righteous, between justification and sanctification (which) has always been crucial for the Methodist understanding of the biblical doctrine of justification.”¹⁸ This will be before the World Methodist Council at its meeting in 2006.

The Pope stated that “far from being the responsibility of the Apostolic See alone, (it) is also the duty of individual local or particular churches” to engage in ecumenical dialogue.¹⁹ In the early stages of Roman Catholic/Methodist dialogue an attempt was made to involve groups in various parts of the world. There was a positive response from Britain, the USA and Australia but, as far as I am aware, nothing happened in South Africa. The experiment was abandoned in subsequent discussions. But the Pope’s words should not be ignored. Earlier in this paper I referred to the suggestion of Professor Wainwright that the Pope should engage with representatives of other Christian Communion to draw up a statement expressive of the Gospel to be preached to the world today. Should not the Churches in South Africa which are ecumenically committed take up that suggestion? Should they not consider the formation of such a group to explore the gospel message that we should be preaching in the particular circumstances of this country and sub-continent, and the manner in which we may proclaim it together?

Finally, some reflections on the doctrinal issues which, in the view of the Pope, still need to be resolved on the way to full communion.

First, there is “the relationship between sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and sacred tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God.”²⁰ Professor Wainwright describes this “as the best formulation of the question since the sixteenth century.”²¹ It certainly moves away decisively from the stance of pre-Vatican days and brings Scripture and Tradition into a dynamic relationship, but the exact nature of the relationship has yet to be clarified. Methodists, with other Protestants, insist that no doctrine may be regarded as necessary for salvation which cannot be clearly established from Holy Scripture. This is obviously a point at issue between

Catholics and Protestants in the light of the Mariological dogmas. However, Catholics may well challenge Methodists (and others) about their approach to moral and ethical issues on which they differ. Following John Wesley, Methodist theologians rely upon scripture, tradition, reason and experience.²² Some argue that the inclusion of reason and experience allows modern knowledge and insights to modify the standpoints of tradition and even of scripture which were shaped in a different context and did not have the benefit of modern knowledge. The debate on same-sex relationships which is currently taking place in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has highlighted the fact that there are different approaches to the authority and interpretation of Scripture. On the one hand, traditionalists insist that the Pauline condemnations of homosexual behaviour are binding simply because they are scriptural. The Church can never countenance homosexual relations. On the other hand there are those who argue that modern research has shown that sexual orientation is not normally a matter of choice, that Paul is condemning homosexual promiscuity, that Jesus himself did not pronounce on the matter and that, in the light of all this, Christ's command to love implies that we should accept and affirm same-sex relationships that are committed, life-long and monogamous. The debate has revealed a deeper problem and lends support to the view of the Commission for Faith and Order which recognizes that there is a need for a ministry of oversight in respect of hermeneutics which is shared by churches that are not yet visibly united.²³

Secondly, "the Eucharist, as the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, an offering of praise to the Father, the sacrificial memorial and real presence of Christ and the sanctifying outpouring of the Holy Spirit."²⁴ The Eucharist was highly valued by the Wesley but, for various reasons, its importance declined in later years. In South Africa it has always been treasured by Black Methodists and has become more central in white congregations in the past fifty years. Some suburban congregations have a weekly celebration, not necessarily at the main service, but Methodism's heavy dependence upon local preachers means that most rural and township congregations only receive the sacrament once a month, or even quarterly. Ironically, the heightened appreciation of the Eucharist has led to pressure for dispensation to administer the sacraments to be granted, not only to probationer ministers (as at present) but also to deacons and lay pastors. Positive pastoral concerns are in tension with traditional theological considerations!

The most recent doctrinal statement from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa reflects the influence of the Lima Document.²⁵ The Eucharist “is a sacrament of praise... (and) the memorial (anamnesis) of the crucified and risen Lord which proclaims and makes effective in the present the one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice by which we are forgiven and reconciled to God.” It is made effective by the Holy Spirit. Christ is present “in the word of Scripture, in the community of the faithful and in the elements of bread and wine.” Following a statement of the CUC it says that the elements “are the body and blood of Christ not in the sense that they cease to be bread and wine but in that they receive a new meaning as representing the person of Christ who has given himself on the Cross and now meets with his people.”²⁶ This reflects a large measure of agreement with the Encyclical and the possibility of fruitful dialogue. However, a major impediment from the Catholic side is the question of orders to which we now turn.

The Pope listed, as the third matter for discussion, “ordination, as a sacrament, to the threefold ministry of the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate.”²⁷ Methodists practice ordination by the laying on of hands with prayer and, in doing so, intend to set aside persons to a ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Church of God and not simply in the Methodist Church. In 1995 the member churches of the CUC recognized this by mutually accepting one another’s ordained ministries. Although sacramental in nature, ordination is not designated a sacrament, a term which in Methodism is limited to the dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion. The Methodist ministry is not threefold. South African Methodism ordains deacons to a ministry of Word and Service. This is a permanent ministry and is not a necessary step towards the presbyterate to which the term “ministry” is usually applied. Women are ordained to both the diaconate and the presbyterate. Methodist ministers are representative persons but “hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord’s people, and have no exclusive title to the preaching of the Gospel or to the care of souls.”²⁸ As mentioned above, the ministry of the sacraments is in principle limited to presbyters, although probationers are given dispensation for pastoral reasons.

Since 1988 the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has elected and inducted bishops, but they are not regarded as a separate order and resume presbyteral status when they leave office. American Methodist bishops are elected for life but also do not form a separate order. Bishops and

Superintendents exercise their functions of oversight as representatives of Conference which is the ultimate episcopal authority within the church.

There is at present a strong “democratic” strain in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa which is suspicious of episcopal - and even ministerial - powers. This is in large measure a reflection of historical memory and the current populist ethos in South Africa. It is also a reaction to the perceived abuse of power by bishops, not simply in Methodism but also in other episcopally-ordered churches. Theologically Methodists remain open to dialogue on the subject of ministry and are not averse to many elements in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.²⁹ They will, however, insist that theirs is an authentic ministry given and used by the Holy Spirit, and that the gifts that may be received through other traditions will enrich and enhance that ministry but not give it a divine commission which it does not already possess. There is clearly a need for dialogue in this area!

Fourthly, “the magisterium of the church, entrusted to the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him understood as a responsibility and authority exercised in the name of Christ for teaching and safeguarding faith.”³⁰ I have already questioned this exclusive claim. Whatever the situation may be in a future united church, Methodists cannot acknowledge the sole right of the Roman Magisterium to determine the faith for the universal Church and to do so infallibly. The need for a magisterium is not in doubt and the Bishops in communion with the Pope fulfil this role within Roman Catholicism. For Methodists the final authority in matters of doctrine rests with the Conference which consists of both ministers and laity. Conference receives the advice of theologians, takes account of the sense of the Methodist people and acts in terms of the Laws and Discipline which states: “The Methodist Church throughout the world confesses the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledges the Divine revelation recorded in Holy Scripture as the supreme rule of faith and practice, rejoices in the inheritance of the Apostolic Faith and loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic Creeds and of the Protestant Reformation.”³¹ Its statements are made responsibly and in reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit but do not claim to be infallible or irreformable. This is a serious obstacle on the way to full communion, especially in view of the fact that the role of the magisterium is regarded as an essential part of “the whole teaching of the Church (which) constitutes an organic unity” and must be believed by its members.³²

Another obstacle is the fifth topic listed by the Pope: “the Virgin Mary, as mother of God and icon of the Church, the supernatural mother who intercedes for Christ’s disciples and for all humanity.”³³ This has received little attention in the Methodist/Roman Catholic Dialogue but is discussed constructively by Professor Wainwright in the Marquette Lecture for 2000.³⁴ He points out that Methodists should have no difficulty with the Theotokos understood as a confession of Christ’s Incarnation. Charles Wesley wrote and Methodists sing:

Being’s source begins to be
And God himself is born.³⁵

Wainwright suggests that Protestants might approve her designation as “icon of the Church” by regarding her as an exemplary disciple of her Son, and that her intercession for Christians and all humanity may be viewed in the context of a growing appreciation of the Communion of Saints among Protestants and the notion that: “the prayer of the righteous availeth much” (James 5:16). However, even if Methodists embraced these views, fundamental problems remain. They are unable to accept as founded in Scripture the dogmatic definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the description of her as “mediatrix of all the graces” and the desire of some Catholics for her to be declared co-redemptrix. Any developments in this direction will make an already difficult situation more difficult still.

Finally the Pope welcomed the decision of the Fifth World Conference of the Commission on Faith and Order to begin a new study on the question of a universal ministry of Christian unity and invited church leaders and their theologians “to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea ‘that they may all be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (John 17:21).”³⁶ The opportunity for such a dialogue with John Paul II has passed and it remains to be seen whether his successor is open to it. If so, it is an invitation which cannot be ignored.

The invitation itself reflects a positive attitude but we dare not underestimate the immensity of the challenge. It is more than a case of “painful recollections”³⁷ on the part of separated brethren but will involve a serious

reconsideration of papal powers and claims, and especially the issues of universal and immediate jurisdiction and infallibility.

The Roman Catholic/Methodist Dialogue gave special attention to the Petrine Office in its 1986 Report, *Towards a Statement on the Church*. This examined the role of Peter in the New Testament and the historical development of papal primacy and concluded “that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is not established from the Scriptures in isolation from the living tradition. When an institution cannot be established from scripture alone, Methodists, in common with other churches which stem from the Reformation, consider it on its intrinsic merits, as indeed do Roman Catholics; but Methodists give less doctrinal weight than Roman Catholics to long and widespread tradition.”³⁸ It further stated that “Methodists have problems with (the) Roman Catholic understanding of infallibility, especially as it seems to imply a discernment of truth which exceeds the capacity of sinful human beings...Methodists always accept what can clearly be shown to be in agreement with the Scriptures. The final judge of this agreement must be the assent of the whole People of God, and therefore Methodists, in considering the claims made for Councils and the Pope, welcome the attention which Roman Catholic theologians are giving to the understanding of the reception of doctrine.”³⁹ It continues, “Methodists have further difficulty with the idea that the Bishop of Rome can act in this process on behalf of the whole Church.”⁴⁰ However, an earlier Report had observed that “the general idea of a universal service of unity within the Church, a primacy of charity mirroring the presence and work in the Church of the Spirit who is love, may well be the basis for increased understanding and convergence.”⁴¹

A Methodist approach to a primatial ministry would emphasise the pastoral role of the office and the importance of its holder as a servant and focus of unity in the Church. It would accord to that holder a primacy of honour but have serious reservations about universal jurisdiction and infallibility, certainly as presently understood. In pre-colonial Africa, the chief listened patiently to the views of his people as expressed in the tribal council where any tribesman was entitled to speak, and then summed up the debate and expressed the consensus that had been reached. Methodists might be responsive to an analogous role for a universal primate in matters of doctrine and moral judgment.

This survey of doctrinal differences makes it clear that there is a long, hard road ahead as we seek a relationship of full communion between the Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches. But this must be viewed in the light of the progress already made and the conviction that “for men it is impossible, but not for God; everything is possible for God” (Mark 10:27 REB). Methodism was born in song, so I close with the words of a well-loved hymn:

‘Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that’s to come.”⁴²

NOTES

- ¹ Wainwright, Geoffrey (1999) “‘The gift which He on one bestows, We all delight to prove’: a possible Methodist approach to a ministry of primacy in the circulation of love and truth” in J. F. Puglisi (ed.) *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: “Towards a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue” A Symposium Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Society of the Atonement, Rome, December 4 – 6, 1997* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier): 59 – 82; Wainwright, Geoffrey (2000) *Is the Reformation over?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press); ‘*Ut Unum Sint* in light of “Faith and Order” – or “Faith and Order” in light of *Ut Unum Sint?*’ in C. E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.) (2001) *The Papal Office and the Unity of the Church: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II’s Encyclical ‘Ut Unum Sint’ (That All May Be One)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans): 76-97; Wainwright, Geoffrey (2004) ‘Unitatis Redintegratio in a Protestant Perspective,’ a Keynote Address delivered at an international symposium organized by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Vatican Decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (electronic text, as yet unpublished in English); Wainwright, Geoffrey (2003) ‘A primatial ministry of unity in a conciliar and synodical context,’ *One in Christ* 38 (October 2003): 3 – 25.
- ² Report by the Rev Dr Ian Darby to a meeting of the Central Committee of the Church Unity Commission, 4 November 2005.

3 John Paul II (1995), *Ut Unum Sint* (UUS), #10.
4 UUS #14.
5 UUS #18.
6 Wainwright, G (1999) in Puglisi (ed.) 1999.
7 UUS #21.
8 UUS #24.
9 UUS #40.
10 Church Unity Commission (1982) *In Touch* (October)/ 29.
11 Church Unity Commission (1982) *In Touch* (October)/ 30.
12 UUS #40.
13 UUS #36.
14 World Methodist Conference (1981) ‘Towards and Agreed Statement on the Holy Spirit’, *Proceedings of the World Methodist Conference* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House); World Methodist Conference (1986) ‘Towards a Statement on the Church’, *Proceedings of the World Methodist Conference* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House); World Methodist Conference (1991) ‘The Apostolic Tradition’, *Proceedings of the World Methodist Conference* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House); World Methodist Conference (1996) ‘The Word of Life - A statement on Revelation and faith’, *Proceedings of the World Methodist Conference* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House); World Methodist Conference (2001) ‘Speaking the Truth in Love’, *Proceedings of the World Methodist Conference* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House). These Reports were distributed in pamphlet form and are included in the appropriate Proceedings of the relevant World Methodist Conference.
15 World Methodist Conference (1996) ‘The Word of Life’: #130.
16 Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (2004) *Information Service*, IV/62-63.
17 UUS #18.
18 World Methodist Conference (2004) ‘The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.’ Draft included in Agenda of WMC 2004 Executive Meeting.
19 UUS #18.
20 UUS #79.
21 Braaten, C. E. and Jensen (2001:89).
22 This was once described by Professor Albert Outler as “the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”

He later regretted the description as it was wrongly taken to imply that the four sources were of equal importance! Wesley is quite clear about the primacy of Scripture.

23 Braaten, C. E. and Robert W. Jensen (2001:89).

24 UUS #79.

25 General Regulations of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2000), in *Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*, 10th ed. (Methodist Publishing House, n.p.): 69-71.

26 ‘The Word and the Sacraments’, (1972) in *A Plan of Union—First Draft*, (South Africa: Church Unity Commission): #38.

27 UUS #79.

28 *Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (2000: #1.9.5).

29 See Commission on Faith and Order (1982) *Baptism, Eucharist and ministry*, Faith and order paper no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches).

30 UUS #79.

31 *Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (2000: #1.6).

32 World Methodist Conference (1996) ‘The Word of Life’: #116, cf. #120.

33 UUS #79.

34 Wainwright, G, *Is the Reformation Over?*

35 *Hymns and Psalms* (1983) (Methodist Publishing House, n.p.): 101.

36 UUS #96.

37 UUS #88.

38 *Towards a Statement on the Church*, (1986: #55).

39 *Towards a Statement on the Church*, (1986:para 72).

40 *Towards a Statement on the Church*, (1986:para 73).

41 World Methodist Conference (1981) ‘Towards and Agreed Statement on the Holy Spirit’: #36.

42 *Hymns and Psalms* (1983:277).

Ut Unum Sint – An Evangelical Perspective

CLINT LE BRUYNS

The task before me in this session is to critically assess the impact of this encyclical on the drive towards Christian unity with the constituency of contemporary evangelicalism in mind. In order to reflect a more measurable component in the assessment, I will focus on the extent to which this encyclical has positively impacted the evangelical dialogue on the Petrine ministry.

I was introduced to *Ut Unum Sint*¹ in 1998 in a Masters degree course on contemporary ecumenical issues by a Pentecostal professor at a prominent evangelical seminary in the United States. It was beyond my wildest imagination that the meaning and content of this encyclical would come to occupy so much of my theological attention in the years ahead. Since that first encounter I would go on to commence and complete a doctoral project on the Petrine office in response to Pope John Paul II's invitation to engage with him in a patient and fraternal dialogue on the papacy. During this time I would present papers in national and international settings on this new ecumenical discourse and follow through with several publications in various theological journals. Later I would serve on ecumenical structures on behalf of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa as a specialist on Roman Catholic ecumenism and the papacy.

The golden thread of dialogue discernible within the encyclical was clearly what lay behind my ecumenical interest and development. Pope John Paul II underlined continually the important methodological role of ecumenical dialogue in forging a new and progressive relationship between different churches in the ecumenical movement, while urging the continuing and deepening of these dialogues for the ongoing journey towards visible communion. In unprecedented fashion, he extends what subsequently became a most famous invitation to dialogue on the papal office: "Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this

subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea ‘that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn. 17:21)?”²

The Eighth Report of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (1999-2005) contains a study document *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*,³ which refers to dialogue as a gift to the churches. It talks about how a “culture of dialogue”⁴ emerged through the establishment of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement, which in time became “a key instrument for ecumenical progress.”⁵ The participants highlight the organised dialogues at local, national and international levels that facilitated substantial achievements between the churches, clarified positions, forged consensus on critical matters of division, and identified continuing obstacles to unity.⁶ “Dialogue,” they assert, “has encouraged churches to understand one another, and has helped to shatter stereotypes, break down historic barriers and encourage new and positive relationships.”⁷ Moreover, insights from such dialogues among different churches have even fostered renewal and change in their life, teaching and patterns of worship.⁸

These positive remarks notwithstanding, to what extent is dialogue a worthwhile venture on the road to church unity? Writing already during the early eighties as Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Nikos Nissiotis acknowledged the “measure of uneasiness, doubt and fatigue” that was becoming evident in ecumenical circles, and enquired: “What is the use of theological study and discussion for restoring visible church unity amongst the divided church communions?”⁹ Attention to traditional issues of ecclesiology was being subjected to criticism by many ecumenists who “challenged its relevance in the face of the more urgent need of the churches to act together in addressing contemporary socio-political problems.”¹⁰ Reflecting more recently on the shape of the future Church, Cardinal Walter Kasper expressed a similar concern about the way in which “the ecumenical endeavour aimed at visible unity among divided churches” had become jettisoned to a “spirit of resignation.”¹¹ He lamented the widespread conviction “that traditional differences are irrelevant for the majority of people today and could be simply overlooked,” since “ecumenism is only for a small circle of theologians and church ‘insiders,’ who are, moreover, reined in by the

institutions of the Church.”¹² Closer to home, theologian Steve de Gruchy posits that because “the church struggle against apartheid was [ironically] ... an ideology of apartness and exclusion [that] provided the churches in South Africa with a sense of unity and cohesion,” “the end of the all-embracing apartheid system [has led] ... on the one hand to the emergence of denominational myopia and internal ecclesial concerns, and on the other hand to a diffusion of focus in regard to the witness of the church in the face of a plethora of concerns in the public arena.”¹³ His point, in other words, is that attention to ecumenical dialogues could be construed as myopic and internal preoccupations that distract the churches from what really matters in society.

To question the value of undertaking theological dialogues is valid and necessary for safeguarding the integrity of the ecumenical enterprise, but to suggest that its value is questionable is nothing less than theologically flawed and short-sighted. The reality exists that churches are divided. The JWG notes “it is clear in every part of the world that the gospel of reconciliation cannot be proclaimed credibly by churches which are themselves not reconciled with each other. Divided churches are a counter-witness to the gospel.”¹⁴ In *Ut Unum Sint* the penetrating question is raised: “How indeed can we proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without at the same time being committed to working for reconciliation between Christians?”¹⁵ While in some ecumenical circles the dialogue encounters have become more of a political ‘ping-pong’ encounter or somewhat stuck because of various theological and other factors, the conclusion must never be drawn that dialogues themselves offer no ecumenical import. The new and developing relationship between evangelicals and Roman Catholics in recent times is a classic case in point of the impact of the dialogical component in ecumenical life.¹⁶ Dialogues overcome hostilities in a step-by-step encounter of exchange.

In a broader research project on “The papacy as ecumenical challenge: Contemporary Anglican and Protestant perspectives on the Petrine ministry,”¹⁷ I explored how these churches were talking about the papacy in the post-Vatican II milieu—its past and continuing problems for the churches, its potential benefits for the churches, whether a communion with the pope was in mind by these churches, and what these churches expected of the Petrine office as far as its reform was concerned. The study, which analysed and interpreted numerous official ecumenical texts and theological literature, revealed the following

findings:¹⁸ (1) The papacy as an ecumenical subject had increasingly received attention among the ecumenical churches in recent decades; (2) the ecumenical churches were presently at different stages insofar as their ecumenical participation in the Petrine dialogue and their theological convergence on the Petrine office were concerned; and (3) the ecumenical churches were saying that while the papacy featured as their greatest ecumenical challenge, it could possibly be recognised, in varying degrees among the different ecclesial traditions, as a legitimate and propitious structure of Christian ministry, though not in its present form and manner of exercise. The evangelical constituency was included in these findings.¹⁹

Regarding evangelicals and the first thesis – The papacy as an ecumenical subject has increasingly received attention among the ecumenical churches in recent decades.

Ecumenical conversations between evangelicals and Roman Catholics proceeded through two formal international dialogues: Firstly, *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission* (ERCDOM) Report of 1985 that reflected a substantial measure of theological convergence on mission and consensus on the possibilities of common witness;²⁰ secondly, the World Evangelical Alliance 2002 Report on *Church, Evangelisation and the Bonds of Koinonia* that had as its purpose “to overcome misunderstandings, to seek mutual understanding of each other’s Christian life and heritage, and to promote better relations” between them.²¹ National ecumenical discussions include the notable North American dialogue known as the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) project, which has progressed since 1992 with such themes as Christian mission,²² salvation,²³ Scripture and tradition,²⁴ and the communion of saints,²⁵ that have sought to promote common witness between evangelicals and Roman Catholics as a fruit of their unity in faith.

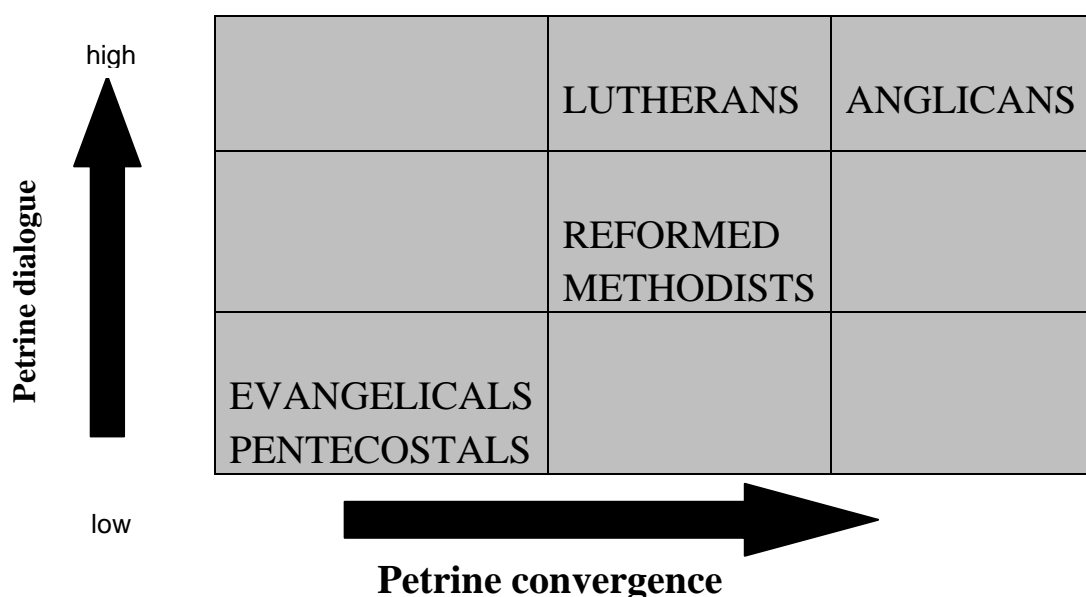
These consultations and texts revealed some Petrine references of both positive and negative concern, reflecting the broader trend of the papacy’s increasing attention among the non-Roman Catholic churches:²⁶

- Concerning Pope Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (ERCDOM);
- Concerning the role and authority of the magisterium (ERCDOM);
- Concerning Pope Paul VI’s *Marialis Cultus* (ERCDOM);
- Concerning the social encyclicals of recent popes (ERCDOM);
- Concerning the magisterium (ECT);

- Concerning Pope John Paul II’s ministry for religious freedom and human rights (ECT);
- Concerning Pope John Paul II’s role in defending historic Christian teachings (ECT);
- Concerning Pope John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio* (ECT);
- Concerning the pope as a bond of communion (WEA);
- Concerning the papacy of the sixteenth century (WEA);
- Concerning Pope Pius XII’s *Mystici corporis Christi* (WEA);
- Concerning Pope John Paul II on reconciliation and witness (WEA).

Regarding evangelicals and the second thesis – The ecumenical churches are presently at different stages insofar as their ecumenical participation in the Petrine dialogue and their theological convergence on the Petrine office are concerned.

This can be illustrated with the diagram below:



What are the points of disagreement and concern in this dialogue? Discussion with the evangelicals revealed that they continued to struggle with certain aspects of the doctrine and praxis of the papal institution. These included the following:

- The high interpretive status attributed to the pope as magisterial authority within Roman Catholicism, especially vis-à-vis the infallibility claim;
- The existence of some prevailing perplexing teachings of the papacy, such as those that attributed to Mary a distinctive status and role in salvation;
- The high regard for visible structures, such as the office of the Bishop of Rome, as a bond of communion in the church;
- The perennial concern with the manner of the exercise of the papacy.²⁷

Implicit here were the broader problems of the ministerial authority of the pope, the relation between Scripture and Tradition within the schema of the papal institution, and the role of the Bishop of Rome in respect of the nature of ecclesiality.

What are the points of agreement and affirmation? The dialogue with the evangelicals also revealed that they were increasingly talking about the office and work of the pope in more positive terms. These included the following:

- The pope as one who cares deeply about the evangelisation of the modern world;
- The pope's theological writings as insightful and resourceful in aiding evangelicals to find with Roman Catholics theological convergence on mission as well as a new impulse for common witness;
- The pope's theological teachings as particularly helpful in better equipping evangelicals to understand their social and prophetic witness as they wrestled with how to confront the contemporary world with the good news of salvation;
- The pope as one who practised what was preached in the public domain, especially concerning issues of religious freedom and human rights;
- The pope as one who took seriously the integrity of the Gospel, especially in defending historic Christian teachings against various external threats.²⁸

The evangelical constituency, compared to the other churches, was positioned at the far end of the ecumenical spectrum regarding participation in the Petrine dialogue and theological convergence on the Petrine office.

Regarding evangelicals and the third thesis – The ecumenical churches are saying that while the papacy features as their greatest ecumenical challenge, it can possibly be recognised, in varying degrees among the different ecclesial traditions, as a legitimate and propitious structure of Christian ministry, though not in its present form and manner of exercise.

Given their location at the far end of the ecumenical spectrum, the evangelical struggle with the Petrine office is essentially of an ecclesiological nature:

- Evangelical ecclesiology is less sophisticated than that of Roman Catholicism, and seems unable to procure accommodation for the complex ecclesiastical structure of the papacy;
- Evangelical ecclesiology does not include the Petrine see as a primary constituent for its ecclesiality, which is in contradistinction to the Roman Catholic strict ecclesiology that categorically demands communion with the Bishop of Rome for legitimacy;
- Evangelicals share a more ‘instrumental’ ecclesiology as opposed to that of Roman Catholic sacramentalism, and see the church as a vehicle for witness rather than the church and its papacy as a vehicle of grace;
- Evangelicals and Roman Catholics also wrestle with one another on the legitimacy of the papal office in the church by virtue of their differing views of revelation.²⁹

At the same time, however, there is some openness toward the papacy on the part of some evangelicals. The renowned evangelist Billy Graham is a noteworthy case in point of how some Evangelicals regard the pope more seriously than they tend to admit.³⁰ Graham has on numerous occasions commended recent popes such as Pope John XXIII as one who “brought a new era to the world,” Pope John Paul II as “the greatest religious leader of the modern world, and one of the greatest moral and spiritual leaders of this century” who “bases his work and messages and vision on biblical principles.” Another example is found in the Pentecostal ecumenist Cecil M. Robeck. Recalling Pope John Paul II’s visit to Israel and Palestine in 2000 during which he highlighted the plight of Christians in the Middle East as well as the church’s past sins against both Jews and Muslim, Robeck remarks: “I think that only the Pope could have done what he did in that region, and in that moment, I am proud to think of him as standing as *my representative to those people*.”³¹

For such reasons, not a few evangelicals are becoming increasingly open to a new future in conversation with Roman Catholics concerning the promise of the Petrine office for evangelical life and ministry. They refer to their need to still learn much in the area of social witness and to engage together with Roman Catholics in united witness in response to different public challenges, and then underline the value of a single prophetic voice that could speak for both Protestants and Roman Catholics in the light of complex societal needs such as justice and peace, sanctity in marriage, family well-being, human rights and religious freedom, and so on. Given their appreciation for the role of the popes in social matters, evangelicals have possibly identified an important and critical role of the pope that they might be open to affirming and recognising as an acceptable and propitious ministry.

To what extent has *Ut Unum Sint* positively impacted the evangelical dialogue on the Petrine ministry?

In the first place, it is an elusive question. Given the multifaceted nature of evangelicalism, we are dealing with a constituency that evades conclusive definition. “With no formal structure uniting those who share evangelical faith, with evangelicals strewn across multitudes of denominations, with no institutional voice presuming to speak for or to all evangelical Protestants, with deep theological, ecclesiastical, and social differences dividing evangelicals from each other,”³² it is nothing less than “presumptuous to speak casually about a common evangelical attitude to Catholics or to anyone else.”³³ To assess the impact of something, moreover, requires a quantitative analysis, which was beyond the scope of this paper. Also, there is the matter of a minimal number of submissions to the PCPCU in response to the papal invitation. In the second place, it is a premature question. The Petrine dialogue is still at a tender and fragile stage and, with evangelicals positioned at the far end of the ecumenical spectrum, the pace and extent of any impact will be far slower than the ecumenical churches. This, however, should not be taken to mean that no impact has been exerted on the evangelical camp by the encyclical.

And so, in the third place, it is a question with a modest answer. According to the JWG, “Dialogue is not negotiation towards a ‘lowest common denominator,’ but a search for new entry-points in order to discover the way forward together.”³⁴ If the dialogue was about the former, there would be

nothing to gain from the encyclical. However, because the dialogue is about the latter, important foundational ground has been laid and prepared for the journey between evangelicals and Roman Catholics. The encyclical contains several strategic entry-points through the notion of the Gospel that could potentially help evangelicals appreciate Roman Catholic believers as fellow servants of the Gospel and Roman Catholic structures—such as the papal office—as potential mechanisms or vehicles for witness. To the extent that they come to understand and experience these believers and structures accordingly, the journey toward ecumenical reception, deeper communion and common witness would appear more in view.

According to Cardinal Walter Kasper, these churches have become particularly significant to the Roman Catholic Church and its ecumenical sojourn.³⁵ He underlines the vitality and growth of contemporary evangelicalism, coupled with their striking commonalities and sense of commitment with Roman Catholicism in various doctrinal and ethical matters, notwithstanding prevailing ecclesiological difficulties:

These communities are growing very fast whilst the traditional Protestant churches world-wide are shrinking. In ethical questions they are often nearer to us than to the historical Protestant churches and to the WCC. Often they are committed Christians who take seriously the Biblical message, the Godhead of Jesus Christ and the commandments of God. With some of them we have good dialogues and firm friendships, or at least positive and promising contacts. To be sure, in terms of ecclesiological questions they are distant from us. So necessarily these dialogues have quite a different character Their goal is not the unity of the church but the overcoming of misunderstandings, better mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation where that is possible.³⁶

For now, the former pope has offered good reason for trust as a starting point through his acknowledgement of the papal office as a stumbling block in ecumenical relations, his confession on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church for the painful memories associated with this office, his request for forgiveness and commitment to repentance, and his invitation to all churches and their theologians to a dialogue of conversion and reform vis-à-vis the Petrine office. Trust as the first ground rule in ecumenical dialogues undergirds the process of encounter in place of hostility and suspicion. Evangelicals could capitalise on the achievement of this starting point, ultimately trusting the Spirit to lead them on the right path in fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21.

NOTES

- ¹ John Paul II (1995) *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference). Hereafter referred to as UUS.
- ² UUS, #96.
- ³ See the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (2005) *Eighth Report (1999-2005)*, Appendix D (Geneva: World Council Churches): 73-89. Hereafter referred to as JWG (2005).
- ⁴ JWG (2005), #1.
- ⁵ JWG (2005), #3.
- ⁶ JWG (2005), #4.
- ⁷ JWG (2005), #5.
- ⁸ JWG (2005), #8.
- ⁹ Nissiotis, Nikos (1983) 'Preface' in Max Thurian (ed.), *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 116 (Geneva: WCC): vii.
- ¹⁰ Nissiotis, Nikos (1983) in Thurian (1983:vii).
- ¹¹ Kasper, Walter (2004) *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity* (London: Burns & Oates): 1.
- ¹² Kasper, Walter (2004:1).
- ¹³ de Gruchy, Steve (2004) 'From Church Struggle to Church Struggles', in John W. de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy (eds.), *The Church Struggle in South Africa, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition* (London: Student Christian Movement): 223.
- ¹⁴ JWG (2005), #17.
- ¹⁵ UUS, #98.
- ¹⁶ This is widely referred to as reflecting a "new situation" in contemporary ecumenism. See Walter Cardinal Kasper, 'Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement' in *Information Service* 109(I-II)/13. The growing body of literature concerning their relationship attests well to their ever-increasing importance in the ecumenical realm. According to World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) secretary, George Vandervelde, the emerging relationship between these two traditions in recent decades is nothing less than "startling" insofar as these "mark a 180 degree turn from the hostile stance that characterised earlier periods (and continues in many sectors of Evangelicalism today)." See George Vandervelde (2002) 'Evangelical-Roman Catholic Relations' in Nicholas Lossky et al. (eds.),

Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed. (Geneva: WCC): 440-441. Baptist thinker Ian Randall refers to the strongly anti-Romanist mood in earlier Protestantism as a critical factor in giving birth to evangelical bodies for the very purpose of countering Roman Catholicism as a ‘non-Christian’ church and its papacy as an apostate structure. See Ian Randall (2003), ‘Unity in the Gospel’: Catholic-Evangelical Relationships’ in *One in Christ* (January 2003), 38(1)/16.

17 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004) *The papacy as ecumenical challenge: Contemporary Anglican and Protestant perspectives on the Petrine ministry*, Dissertation (ThD), University of Stellenbosch.

18 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:190-209).

19 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:25-50).

20 See ‘The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission’ in William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros (eds.), *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1998): 427-478.

21 See ‘Church, Evangelisation, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*: A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993-2002)’ in *One in Christ* (April 2004), 39(2)/67-94. Hereafter referred to as WEA (2004).

22 See ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium’ in Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (eds.) (1995), *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Dallas:Word): xv-xxxiii.

23 See ‘The Gift of Salvation’ in *First Things* (January 1998), 79/20-23.

24 See ‘Your Word is Truth: A Statement by Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ in Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (eds.) (2002), *Your Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans): 1-8.

25 See ‘The Communion of Saints’ in *First Things* (March 2003)/26-32.

26 See Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:32-40).

27 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:194-195).

28 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:196).

29 Le Bruyns, Clint (2004:42-47).

30 The following website refers to Billy Graham’s remarks about the pope, albeit in derogatory terms and with intentions of defaming his name and credibility as an evangelical leader and representative. This notwithstanding, it is quite resourceful. See Walid (2003), *Billy Graham love affair with the Pope*. Available at

www.bycovenant.com/billy_graham_love_affair_with_pope.html. Accessed 3 February 2003.

31 Cited in Le Bruyns, Clint (2001) 'A Pentecostal and the Pope' in *Today* (February)/62.

32 Noll, Mark A. (1995) 'The History of an Encounter: Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals' in Colson and Neuhaus (1995:104).

33 Noll, Mark A. (1995:104).

34 JWG (2005), #54.

35 See Walter Cardinal Kasper (2002:13-14). For a general selection of recent literature on Evangelical-Roman Catholic relations - whether apologetic or ecumenical in tone – see the following books: John Armstrong (ed.) (1994), *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us* (Chicago: Moody); Keith A. Fournier, with William D. Watkins (1994), *A House United: Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century* (Colorado Springs: NavPress); Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie (1995), *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids: Baker); Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (eds.) (1995), *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas: Word); James S. Cutsinger (ed.) (1997), *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue* (Downers Grove: IVP); Thomas P. Rausch (ed.) (2000), *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share A Common Future?* (New York: Paulist); Dwight Longenecker and John Martin (2001), *Challenging Catholics: A Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue* (Cumbria: Paternoster); Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (eds.) (2002), *Your Word is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans); Leonardo De Chirico (2003), *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism*. Religions and Discourse, Vol. 19 (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang). See these articles: World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission (1986), 'An Evangelical Perspective of Roman Catholicism' in *Evangelical Review of Theology* (October 1986), 10(4)/342-364; 'Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches' in *Christianity Today* (May 1994), 38(6)/16-17; Peter Hocken (1994), 'Ecumenical Dialogue: The Importance of Dialogue with Evangelicals and Pentecostals' in *One in Christ*, 30(2)/101-123; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (1996), 'Relationships with Evangelicals' in *Information Service* 91(I-II)/44; O.C. Edwards, Jr. (1996), 'The Far Horizon of Ecumenism: Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and

Pentecostals as Potential Partners with the National Council of Churches' in *Ecumenical Trends* (February 1996), 25(2)/7-29; Thomas P. Rausch (1997), 'The Los Angeles Catholic / Evangelical Dialogue' in *Ecumenical Trends*, 26(6)/93-95; George Vandervelde (1999), 'Ecclesiology in the Breach: Evangelical Soundings' in *One in Christ*, 35(1)/ 27-50; Jeffrey Gros (2000), 'Evangelical Relations: A Differentiated Catholic Perspective' in *Ecumenical Trends* (January 2000), 29(1)/1-9; Daniel P. Moloney (2000), 'Evangelicals in the Church of Mary' in *First Things* (December 2000), 108/13-16; Thomas P. Rausch (2001), 'Catholics and Evangelicals in Dialogue: A Catholic Perspective' in *Ecumenical Trends*, 30(1); Richard J. Mouw (2001), 'The Problem of Authority in Evangelical Christianity' in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical Ut Unum Sint* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans): 124-141; J. Augustine DiNoia (2004), 'The Church in the Gospel: Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation' in *Pro Ecclesia*, XIII(1)/ 58-69.

36

See Walter Cardinal Kasper (2002:13).

Denominationalism – A Moral Defeat of *Ut Unum Sint*?

SIMON S MAIMELA

It is with some embarrassment that I read a paper on denominationalism rather than on the holy catholic and apostolic Church at a conference at which we have solemnly gathered to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the *Ut Unum Sint*. The presupposition behind the choice of this topic is the acute awareness that, in fact, there is at present no such thing that can in conviction be called the Church or Christian Unity. Rather, we have to deal with numerous fragmentations of the Church of Jesus Christ that are correctly labelled denominations. Indeed, denominationalism thrives on the fact that the Church, by which we mean the fellowship of all believers in Jesus Christ, has miserably and regrettably to become one holy, catholic and apostolic church, and thereby failing to live up to the hope and prayer that Christ had for it (John 17:20-21). Not only has it dismally failed to become what it ought to be, but also the church refused to heed St Paul's plea that, as the one body of Christ, it should have the unity of mind and thought, thereby avoid divisions within itself.¹ Put somewhat differently, denominations exist as creatures of sinful disobedience to the expressive will of God and prayer of Jesus for the church. It is with profound sorrow and penitence that we should talk denominationalism rather than the church.

Denominationalism, as the term shall be used throughout this paper, can broadly be defined as the human sinful tendency towards the fragmentation of the church into religious "sections" or "denominations", and the maintenance of those divisions based on an adherence to some separate principles and organizations. It raises the following questions. Why, for example, did some Christians take and continue to take such radical and sinful steps of contravening an expressive prayer and will of their Lord and, by so doing, split the One Body of Jesus Christ into religious sects and denominations? Why did the fellowship of believers in Christ take active part in splitting into conflicting and often contradictory factions and unhappy divisions and continue to do so?

What sorts of forces are at work, precipitating and maintaining these fragmentations or denominations, thereby undermining Christian Unity?

The traditional explanation for the split of Christian Unity into various denominational groupings attributes this to doctrinal reasons. Put differently, it is popularly assumed that *the division of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church, which we confess in the third article of Christian creed, arose from a single-minded loyalty to the biblical truths and obedience to the Word of God*, because some Christians felt that the official church was no longer faithful to the teachings of the gospel. In support of this thesis, some theologians would point to the theological disputes about an innocuous phrase that was added to the Nicene creed, (such as the Holy Spirit proceeding both from the father *and the son (filioque)*), or about the use of the unleavened bread in the celebration of the Eucharist as examples of the doctrinal reasons why Christian Unity split into East and West churches in 1054. The further fragmentation of the western church during the Reformation is also explained on the basis of doctrinal differences. The sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church, for example, that was grounded on the semi-Pelagian views of sin and grace is mentioned, along with Luther's rediscovery of the christocentric doctrine of sin and justification by faith alone which could not be reconciled with the medieval cult of the veneration of Mary, who, as the Queen of Heaven and together with the saints, are intercessors before Christ for the fallen and sinful humanity.²

The split between Lutheran and Reformed denominations is explained in terms of doctrinal differences on such issues as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, predestination, ethical practices, etc.. Put more crudely, on the basis of theological differences one could go on and on to explain why further fragmentations of Christian Unity became necessary. One can always find something in theological documents and the Bible which cannot defend or speak for itself to tell people why we have Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Zion Christian Church and other religious groups.

From a purely doctrinal explanation, denominationalism appears as a victory of the truth of the gospel over human heresies. Indeed, taken at their face value, theological justifications for the splitting up of Christian Unity are weighty and persuasive. For if it meant that some Christians were forced to choose between the unity of the church for the sake of unity and the biblical truth which was in danger of being lost or distorted through the teaching of "heresies", then it was better to fear God than human beings.

However, while it is crucially important to trace and give due acknowledgement to doctrinal emphases and theological differences that gave rise to the fragmentation of Christian Unity, it is my thesis that we should equally recognize that beneath the surface there were other weightier factors that were not necessarily theological. *Those factors, however, played a greater role in splitting up the Church into the numerous fragments it has become.* My plea therefore is that without ignoring theological differences, we should examine what I would like to refer to as *the real sources and causes of division among Christians.* In support of my thesis, I refer to studies by sociologists of religion which are making it increasingly clear that, while religious convictions many have given sectarian movements the energy and push toward the splitting up of the Christian Unity, doctrinal explanations for denominationalism *are more often than not the rationalizations for causes of divisions,* causes that have to do or are connected with the socio-cultural ordering of society.³ This is especially evident when, after a religious group has splintered on a doctrinal issue, one party unites with some previously separated group with which it had - until reconciliation - doctrinal differences. This demonstrates that theological differences in themselves are not insurmountable obstacles to Christian Unity, but they are used to justify and legitimize sectarian lifestyles and activities, especially of the leadership and theologians of those religious groupings or organizations.

Given the fact that theological explanations of the origins of denominationalism tell us only half the truth, we ought to be grateful to the sociologists of religion, beginning with the seminal socio-historical studies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, who have built up persuasive cases. In my view, their work offers a more adequate interpretation of the root causes of religious sectarianism. With deep insight, they point out that Christians are humans who live, act and interact with their fellows in society whom they wish to influence through the preaching of the gospel and Christian social ethics, perspectives, thinking and value preferences. Conversely, the same Christians are themselves in turn influenced, shaped and moulded by cultural forces in such a way that theological formulations themselves are grounded and coloured by socio-cultural conditions and problems of their age and time. This dynamic and dialectical relationship between the human situation and the gospel on one side and their mutual influence of each other on the other is a necessary one. For if the Word of God is not to remain a general theory, it must be related

concretely to the human situation in such a way that it could become not only the word incarnate, (God-become-man in Jesus) but also, as divine word among us. Jesus had another role: to shed some light on our human situation, as God is being interpreted in the light of the specific human problems and questions that arise from that human situation.⁴

In view of the above, therefore, any explanation of the causes of Christian Unity into various sects or denominations remains inadequate and incomplete until the socio-historical and economic determinants of theological or religious groupings are also examined. For in religious sectarianism we do not merely have to deal with neutral and abstract truths or ideas but also with systems that represent the interests, hopes, dreams, struggles and ambitions of particular sections of society, which for one reason or another have felt themselves not accommodated socially, economically and religiously in the status quo.

It is important to remember that in the last analysis men and women do not embrace Christ and the values of His religion primarily for the sake of its content or for the sake of the truthfulness of religion itself. This is particularly the case for the laity who follow church leaders and theologians whose abstract theological debates and squabbles they do not always understand. Rather they embrace religion primarily because they expect to gain, through religion, certain benefits and, in consequence, find meaning for their concrete life situations. Moreover, because humans embrace religion not for the sake of religion itself but because they truly believe that religion is useful in procuring what makes for life, it is to be expected that the dominant and ruling classes in society would often want to hijack and co-opt the existing religious institutions, so as to make them their allies in the promotion and legitimization of their social, political and economic interests.⁵ To ensure that the unequal distribution of material resources remains unchallenged, the co-opted religion teaches that God has established different classes in every society. This God has willed some to be poor and some to be rich and, importantly, this natural order demands obedience to the authority of both the church and state.⁶

It is my second thesis that, what makes men and women quarrel and struggle over religious issues is not so much that they have something at stake in the abstract truths of the gospel. Rather what drives Christians into this struggle is the acknowledgement that whoever controls religion controls those forces that ultimately determine critical issues. Since in this struggle it is the ruling classes that often win, the underdogs would often suffer disadvantages

and deprivations. The consequences are that the latter would ultimately be alienated from the values of the dominant culture, thereby bringing them into conflict with the religion that legitimated it. Failing to change the *status quo*, socially disadvantaged groups are themselves forced to reinterpret their socio-cultural and economic position by evolving new patterns of religious beliefs to justify and accommodate themselves to the existing or emerging material relations. The concomitant result of this process leads to the formation of what sociologists refer to as a sub-culture. Warner Stark, commenting on the causal relation between social divisions and the origin of denominationalism, writes with deep insight:

when a group cannot feel happy and home within its social matrix, when its position is depressed and its life-experience depressing; then it will strive to withdraw from the mental matrix of the surrounding society, and *especially from its basic metaphysical and religious assertions and assumptions* [italics added]. Rejected, it will reject - what could be more logical? What is easier to understand?⁷

Agreeing with Stark and expressing the same point from another angle, Richard Niebuhr, notes that religious denominationalism:

Is the child of an outcast minority, taking its rise in the religious revolts of the poor, of those who were without effective representation in church or state and who formed their conventicles of dissent in the only way open to them ... For denominations, churches, sects, are sociological groups whose principles of differentiation are to be sought, in their conformity to the order of social classes and castes.⁸

In the light of their foregoing, it is clear that while the causes of denominationalism may also be religious in nature, the sociologists of religion have made a compelling case, namely, that the real causes for fragmentations of Christian Unity are of social nature. Religion is merely used to underpin and justify the unequal material relationships.

Viewing the origins of denominationalism from the socio-political conditions which Christians find themselves, it is clear that chief causes of religious sectarianism are to be found in socio-economic, cultural, nationalistic, colonial, racial and emotional imbalance and in vying for personal power and prestige—all of which might be clothed in and expressed in a religious verbiage and protests.⁹

Interpreting denominationalism in the light of these social causes, Niebuhr convincingly argued that even the first split into East and West churches in 1054 was caused more by cultural and personal ambitions and struggles for power between bishops of Rome and Constantinople than by struggles for the sake of truth, theological for its own sake.¹⁰ Niebuhr's conclusions are supported by a church historian, Larry Qualben, who argued that cultural and political factors as well as struggles of personality did not fail to exercise their divisive effect on this first split of Christian Unity.¹¹

However, it is above all the economic forces that have fuelled religious schism. Stark points out that as far back as the time of the Middle Ages we have had humans banding together to form sectarian groupings to revolt against social and economic deprivation of their group in society. This tradition of expressing revolt against material relations and the religious establishment supporting it surfaced in the sixteenth century through Thomas Muentzer and continues up to the present,¹² even though Martin Luther was vehemently against it, fearing that it would split up the church. Warning against the founding of a new splinter church he wrote to his followers and protested against the formation of a Lutheran church:

I ask that men make no reference to my name; let them call themselves Christians, not Lutherans, What is Luther? After all, the teaching is not mine [John 7:16], neither was I crucified for anyone [1 Corinthians 1:13]. I neither am nor want to be anyone's master. I hold, together with the universal church, one universal teaching of Christ who is our only master [Matthew 23:8].¹³

It is common knowledge that before Luther appeared on the scene the urban masses were against the religion of Rome and the feudal social order that it sanctioned.¹⁴ Therefore it was highly likely that these masses supported Luther and other Reformers out of their socio-economic self-interests, because they had hoped that the new religion would overthrow the unequal material relationships. This was apparent as soon as it became clear that the reformation movement of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin centred on changing the actions of kings, princes, and the educated urban classes, and not on providing relief for the peasantry and underprivileged. In light of this, new religious groups, distinct from those of the Reformers, emerged to champion the religious needs of the labouring classes, the disinherited, the economically vulnerable and the oppressed.

Therefore, since the sixteenth century we have had the Baptists, the Quakers, the Methodists, the Salvation Army and the Jehovah's Witnesses drawn chiefly from the ranks of the poor and socially disadvantaged classes in England.¹⁵ We have also seen similar patterns of religious schisms emerging in the United States, Latin America and South Africa, where reaction against structures of white domination and European paternalism and resentment about their assumed racial and cultural superiority led to the proliferation of religious sectarianism.¹⁶

The divisive effect of nationalism is also clearly discernible during the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It is my third thesis that without nationalistic and political ambitions of European kings and princesses who sheltered and gave succour to the Reformers it is highly unlikely that theological disputes per se over the sale of indulgences would have resulted in the splitting up of the Christian Unity of the western church. That the nationalist and ethnic factors had much to do with the division of the church is evident from the further fragmentation of Protestantism into national and politically supported religious establishments. It seems fair to conclude that the ethnic and political differences between Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were such that no amount of theological argument would have averted the split of Christian Unity into denominations. Indeed, as Niebuhr points out, the close identification of the Reformation religious spirit with, the cultural and political ethos of emerging European nation-states, whether intended or simply because the Reformation was hijacked by the prevailing nationalist sentiment, meant that Christian Unity was struck a mortal blow.¹⁷

By way of summary, the social causes of the fragmentation of Christian Unity are many and the list of those causes could be expanded endlessly. For our purposes, however, the above survey should suffice to make our point: that there were and continue to be profound socio-cultural and political factors that have worked and ultimately succeeded in giving rise to the fragmentation of Christian Unity. Those forces continue to be powerful factors that provided fuel for the maintenance of the denominational divisions, structures and theological justifications (rationalizations) that underpin them. For this reason an exclusively theological interpretation of theological schisms is merely a glossing over of the real issues that divide Christians. No wonder we are confronted by a multiplicity of churches and sects, each of which claims

to be an authentic representation of the "true church of Jesus Christ... in continuity with the essence of the church. No church has advertised itself as a false or pseudo-church. As it defined itself as orthodox and condemned others as heretics and sects, others split up ... and pressed to legitimize themselves in the face of each other ... appealing to the early Christianity and the Bible to defend its claims."¹⁸

Having outlined in detail some of these sociological forces, we should confront some of the questions. What, for example, are the implications of the divisions of the body of Christ for the church? Is denominationalism a bad or good thing? What does this fragmentation of Christian Unity entail for a divided society? I have already suggested that denominationalism could be regarded as a gain for the church if (and this is a big if which should not be made easily) one accepts the proposition that the fragmentation of Christianity Unity came about because men and women were not willing to have the truth of the gospel sacrificed to heretical teachings by the official church. This position is unfortunately the one which is always embraced by the founders and leaders of various religious sects or denominations. Many uncritically use it to justify their existence as religious groupings and in so doing defend their existence as the true church grounded on the solid rock of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From yet another angle, the fragmentation of the church into denominationalism could be seen as something good and positive. It can be seen as an evitable and natural consequence of a successful incarnation and enculturation of the gospel into the life and thought processes of a particular people who embody a particular culture such as Jews, Greeks, English, or Zulus. That is, denominationalism could be seen as a manifestation that Christianity has successfully appropriated the cultures and thought processes of the unbelievers that it had converted and, in so doing, adapted meaningfully to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically variegated humanity. In fact there is nothing novel here because consciously or unconsciously the process of cultural appropriation began in the early church with the pagan Greco-Roman society, continued with European conversions, and went further in lands colonized by Europeans. Since humanity displays a diversity of cultural differences, Christianity can meaningfully relate to them only when it is incarnated in the plurality of multicultural human manifestations. Therefore, denominationalism is nothing but the expression of human multicultural

diversity through which the incarnation of Jesus or the gospel had to manifest itself. This in no way implies that Christian Unity is denied. Just as much as there was a multicultural plurality of the congregations in the early days of the church in Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, among others, each with its own organizational structures, cultural manifestations and local theological emphasizes, there is no reason why we should not, in our time, have Christian Unity with a plurality of multicultural manifestations.

However convincing these comments might be, the existence of Christian Unity in denominational fragments should be viewed seriously as a negative development. The Church is supposed to have been the herald of peace, human fellowship and reconciliation and denominations represent sinful disobedience to the will of God for the Church. For the church as the body of Christ was intended to be the vehicle by which God had hoped to transform human lives both personally and socially through what happened to Jesus on the cross, thereby ushering a new humanity and new creation.. In the light of the fact that the church was supposed to be an exemplary existence of that new humanity whose purpose was and is to transform the fallen humanity into God's Kingdom, it has to be conceded that denominationalism implies a moral and theological defeat and a serious setback for the Church. As Niebuhr points out, denominationalism is a sinful sign and emblem that, instead of transcending the social conditions that give rise to divisions between human beings, capitulated and succumbed to the caste system that it was supposed to change and transform.¹⁹ That is, the church, instead of uniting humanity, has sold its birthright to the apparently unchanging and invincible economic, political, racial and divisive forces that militate against Christian Unity and new humanity.²⁰

Lest I leave you totally discouraged about the future of the Church Unity, let me conclude by saying that even in its fragmented existence, I believe there is lot that we can learn and talk about in ecumenical dialogues. Therefore they are not by any means a waste of time. For one thing (and this is my fourth thesis), the apparent moral defeat of and failure to achieve Christian Unity in the face of the social forces that promote fragmentation of the church teaches us that the church is not holier than the people that constitute it. Just as Christians are *simul justus et peccator* (justified and sinners at the same time), the Church is a sinful organization and holy at the same time like the people who constitute it. Indeed, it has not received the promise that as a social institution it will be

above the cultural, political and economic influences of its age and time, influences that might mislead it and distort its comprehension of the truth of the gospel and the nature of its vision and mission of Christian Unity. Therefore, because Christians remain subject to temptation and consequently might be misled, it is also necessary for them to remain vigilant at all times against the evil one.²¹

Christians should keep that mind that they live as justified sinners who have received the Lord's Prayer and promise and therefore are not left alone nor left to their own devices because the Lord is and will be with them until the end of the ages.²² In the light of the Lord's Prayer and promise we do not have to throw in the towel or despair as we proclaim the gospel in and through the sinful fragmented churches. On one hand, denominations should be regarded as an opportunity as Christians to pray for the body of Jesus Christ, the church,. On the other hand, the existence of the denominations ought to remind us that all earthly churches whose constituent members (as pointed out earlier) are *simul justus et peccator* have incomplete truth and therefore, are incapable of proclaiming the full gospel each in their fragmented multicultural manifestations. For while each earthly church has a ray of divine truth, Christians in each denomination need one and are urged, indeed are obliged, to enter into ecumenical dialogue because the gospel is greater than the sum total of doctrinal formulations that are found in one or more denominational groupings. Put somewhat differently, denominationalism should be understood as a challenge and invitation to enter into mutual dialogue, with a view to overcoming religious schisms and to the rebuilding of the fragmented Christian Unity which hopefully, may once again become, the one holy, catholic and apostolic church which we confess in third article of the creed, despite its manifestations in human multicultural plurality, in fulfilment of the prayer and hope of Christ for his Church.²³

For us to maintain the balance of the sort of the incarnational theology that I have advocated requires a highly dynamic and dialectical theological sophistication that is able to acknowledge divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ at the same time. Even though Christian Unity is given in Jesus Christ, its realisation through Christian ecumenical dialogue is merely a realization of this God-given fact of the double presence of Jesus Christ who died in his humanity but was raised up by God the Father, and now sits at his right hand, praying for his Church.²⁴ It is important to remind ourselves that the church as the body of

this risen Jesus Christ is present in history in an earthly form. In his divine form, Jesus Christ will appear with the coming God's Kingdom heavenly perfect glory.²⁵ Therefore, because the Church appears in history in earthly multicultural manifestations, it seems prudent to accept that *in our ecumenical dialogue the minimum we hope to achieve is the fellowship of the saints* in which the gospel is taught purely and sacraments are administered rightly.

In conclusion, I concur with Braaten that those who take ecumenical dialogues seriously should always remember what St Augustine and Martin Luther taught a long time ago, namely, to make a distinction between the visible and invisible church.²⁶ Engaging in ecumenical dialogue from that perspective, the ecumenical movement becomes a fruitful one because it aims at what is humanly achievable and, more importantly, supports a confession (*we believe in one, holy and apostolic church*), which is in itself a drive toward the eschatological future of the kingdom of God, without seeking any present embodiment of that future in the life of the church in history. As I have argued above, I believe that the church can still fulfil its mission in the world by reconstructing its new self-understood form of Christian Unity (*visible and invisible church, and/or the fellowship of the saints*) true to its essential nature as the only embodiment of Christ in history. Working from the understanding that Christian Unity is a God-given reality in the risen, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, Christians would not be disappointed because they would not be misusing the ecumenical dialogue to try to achieve the impossible. Put somewhat differently, Christians would not try to zoom into the air trying to catch the clouds or winds, hoping thereby to recreate a mono-cultural medieval church structure with which they would try to exercise the lordship Christ over the state and all believers.

NOTES

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.

² Kreitzer, B. (2004) *Reforming Mary: The Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press): 7-19

³ Niebuhr, H. R. (1965) *The social sources of denominationalism* (New York: Meridian):12-16.27; Stark, W. (1972) *The study of religion V* (London:

Routledge):4; Wilson, B. R. (1966) *Religion in secular society* (Baltimore: Penguin):221.

4 John 1:14, 8:12, 9:5, 12:36.

5 Niebuhr, H. R. (1956) *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper): 26, 31 -32; Stark, W. (1967) *The study of religion II* (London: Routledge): 60, 66; Wilson, B. R. (1966) *Religion in secular society* (Baltimore: Penguin):131.

6 Araya,V. (1987) *God of the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis): 27-28; Nelson-Pallmeyer, J. (1986) *The Politics of Compassion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis): 19. Stark, W. (1967:11-12).

8 Niebuhr, H. R. (1956:19, 25).

9 Hinchliff, P. (1968) *The church in South Africa* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge):90-94; Niebuhr, H. R. (1965: 9, 25, 106-111, 114-115, 236); Stark, W. (1967: 5-7, 37-46); Wilson, B. R. (1966: 221, 229f).

10 Niebuhr, H. R. (1965: 111-115)

11 Qualben, L. P. (1964) *A history of the church* (New York: Thomas Nelson):160.

12 Stark (1967: 7-15).

13 Luther, Martin (1522) *A sincere admonition by Martin Luther to all Christians to guard against insurrection and rebellion*, W.A. Lambert (trans.) in Walther I. Brandt (ed.) (1962) *The Christian in Society II*, Luther's Works vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press): 70-71.

14 Qualben (1964: 203-217).

15 Niebuhr (1965: 30-59); Stark (1967; 1, 5-16).

16 Hinchliff (1966: 90-93); Niebuhr (1965: 230); Stark (1967: 44-45).

17 Niebuhr (1965: 121-123).

18 Braaten, C. (1983) *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press): 49.

19 Niebuhr (1965:21-25, 265).

20 Niebuhr (1965:1-25, 265, 269-270 ,275).

21 Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Corinthians 7:5-6; 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

22 Matthew 28:26; Luke 22:31; Heb 11 -19.

23 John 17:20-21.

24 Acts 2:32-36; 5:30; Galatians 3:1:4; Hebrews 5: 7-10; 7:23-25; 8:1-7; 9:11-15, 24-27.

25 Revelation 21:27-22:1-21.

26 Braaten (1983:43).

The First Thousand Years: A Contemporary Model for Papal Primacy

RODNEY MOSS

INTRODUCTION

In the encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, one of the most important of his pontificate, John Paul II while acknowledging that the Petrine office belongs to the essential structure of the Church, suggested that the manner in which it is exercised is always subject to criticism and improvement.¹ He invited church leaders and theologians of other Christian churches to enter into dialogue with him about the manner in which his office is exercised and to recommend ways in which the primacy of the Bishop of Rome may be exercised in a manner conforming more faithfully to the Gospel.² John Paul II sees the first millennium as a guide to a new way of exercising primacy.³ Indeed, the first millennium is a contemporary model: a collegial exercise of the primatial and episcopal office.

In the first section of this paper the catholic (and indeed orthodox) *communio* model will be expounded as a key concept of *communio*-unity. This model, first elaborated in *Lumen Gentium* and *Redintegratio Unitatis*, will be discussed in relation to a letter from the Congregation of the Faith (1992). The second section will show how the exercise and understanding of the Roman primacy underwent a development during the whole of the first millennium. Communion was synodal and collegial at both regional and universal levels: communion of all the patriarchal churches with one another and in a special way with the Bishop of Rome. Thirdly, a brief survey of the second thousand years will follow: communion with the East was severed and Rome was increasingly seen as the Head of the Church on which the whole life of the Body depended. Growing centralisation began with the Gregorian reforms and culminated in the thirteenth century from the pontificate of Innocent III to Boniface VIII. The schisms of the fourteenth to the sixteenth century saw the

papacy as the criterion of the true Church. Later with the historical background of the French revolution, the Enlightenment and resulting Western liberalism, the papacy became a point of identity: the “stable rock” of the Church against the tempests of the times.⁴

Vatican II’s teaching on collegiality situates it within the doctrinal realities of communion and which will be developed in the fourth section. Primacy and collegiality co-exist in balance and two manifestations of collegiality are Episcopal Conferences and the Synod of Bishops. However, what ecclesiology is currently reflected in post-Vatican II developments? Section four will address the issue of whether we adopt the patristic ecclesiology of the Church as communion where the Church is fully realised as a communion with the local church in communion with the apostolic See of Rome or whether we adopt the more recent ecclesiology of a monarchical, sovereign papacy existing above the College of Bishops.

Section Five treats the papacy in the stage of imperfect communion, the transitional stage to full visible unity within legitimate diversity. I suggest that for the present Catholic Church the exercise of papal primacy could be something analogous to the Patriarchate of the West where primacy and collegiality are in mutual interdependence. Primacy in regard to Orthodoxy would function as a Neo-Pentarchy (with adaptations to the contemporary scene) dependant upon the model of the First Thousand Years. Primacy for the churches of the Reformation (where desired) could be as a universal spokesperson for Christianity and for the promotion of Christian unity. Thus the proposal for the future, then, is a multi-tiered primacy. In the conclusion a way forward toward the distant goal will be discussed.

COMMUNIO-UNITY

The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement, at least in Catholic understanding, is the full visible unity of the Church. “The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptised.”⁵ Since the Second Vatican Council Catholic theology has understood this visible unity as unity in plurality or as a communion of churches. Cardinal Walter Kasper states:

All the dialogues converge in the fact that they revolve around the concept of *communio* as their key concept. All dialogues define the visible unity of all Christians as *communio-unity*, and agree in understanding it—in analogy with

the original Trinitarian model—not as uniformity but as unity in diversity and diversity in unity.⁶

However, Ola Tjorham, a former research assistant at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, states that in the wider ecumenical movement there has been a decline in commitment to the goal of visible unity. He situates the reason not merely in theology but in the cultural currents where “an almost laissez faire-like pluralism appears to be the preferred ‘post-modern’ solution.”⁷ In what he terms German Continental Protestantism (G.C.P) he identifies five central factors running counter to visible unity: the church seen as invisible; the separation of the doctrine of justification from its ecclesiological-sacramental framework and from its christological-trinitarian basis; ecumenical theology is exercised on the basis of abstract ideas or an abstract foundation; the protection of particular or parochial identities and, most importantly, a static understanding of ecclesial identity as well as unity. There has to be a continuous growth in unity where communion can only be realised through steps and stages: a move through grades or degrees of communion (imperfect communion) to the goal of full visible communion.⁸ Further, he gives five reasons for visible unity: faith needs confession; Christian life is essentially sacramental, the church is a structured community in that unity is expressed through the ordained ministries of the Church; mission is to all creation and thus there needs to be unity in mission and service to the world; and finally love is the bond that unites and perfects.⁹

The centrality of visible unity leads back to *communio*. The Greek word for *communio* is *koinonia* which does not mean community in its original sense but *participation*: “to share, to participate, to have something in common.” The early Jerusalem Church constituted a *koinonia* in the breaking of bread and in prayer (Acts 2:42) and they held everything in common (Acts 2:44, 4:23). But the basis for this communion is the unity of the Father and the Son (John 17: 21-23) and this is expressed in the Eucharistic celebration: “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we partake of one loaf” (1Cor. 10:16ff). We have *koinonia* in the one bread which then becomes the source and sign of the unity (*koinonia*) in the one Body of Christ. Expressed slightly differently, the one Eucharistic Body of Christ is source and sign of the ecclesiastical Body of Christ.

The Eucharistic ecclesiology of the Eastern Churches sees the Church realised in the local Church gathered for the Eucharist. The local Church celebrating the Eucharist is then the Church gathered around the bishop. However, no local Church can ever be isolated, for every local Church is essentially in communion with all other local churches celebrating the Eucharist.

Where is *communio* or *koinonia* at the universal level? The universal Church, then, is a *communio* – unity of churches. The importance of the relationship of the local and universal churches is central to Catholic theology and the question of papal primacy. On the 28 May, 1992 The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (C.D.F.) issued a “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church understood as Communion.”¹⁰ The C.D.F. was concerned with what it termed “ecclesiological unilateralism” which it saw as an impoverishment of the concept of communion.¹¹ The C.D. F. claimed that the proponents of eucharistic ecclesiology have placed a one-sided emphasis on the principle of the local church in claiming that “where the Eucharist is celebrated the totality of the mystery of the Church would be made present in such a way as to render any other principle of unity or universality inessential.”¹² The C.D.F. insists that the local or particular church is part of the one Church of Christ having a relationship of mutual interiority “with the whole, that is, with the universal Church.”¹³ This means that in every local or particular church the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is both truly present and active. Thus the universal Church is “not the result of the communion of the churches, but in its essential mystery is a reality ontologically prior to every individual particular church.”¹⁴ The Ratzinger/Kasper debate which followed provided further clarification and the emergence of sharp theological differences.¹⁵

The issue of the local/universal Church emerges somewhat differently in the Reformed tradition. The Church is where the Word of God is proclaimed in all its purity and the holy sacraments administered according to the Gospel. Here again the Church becomes real in the worshipping community of the local congregation which lacks nothing of what is constitutive of the Church. However, even in the local congregation the question of the ministry of supervision will arise for the Church must realise itself on different levels: the local, the regional and the universal. David S. Yeago states:

But what applies to the worshipping assembly and to the communion of churches in a region must also apply to the church universal. Lutheran ecclesiology would seem therefore to imply that also the universal communion of the church can be historically actual if there is a universal pastorate, some form of ministry to speak the Word of God to the whole people of God on earth and so to “gather” the faithful into one concrete historical *communio*, as a foretaste of the great assembly around the throne of God and the Lamb.¹⁶

The ecclesiology of communion is the central fundamental idea of the Vatican II documents. Thus in order to give a more systematic presentation of Catholic *communio* ecclesiology in relation to the issues raised above we will need to refer to the Vatican II constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the document on ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* attempts to define what the Church is and where it is concretely to be found. The ecumenical issue arises with the famous “subsists in”. *Lumen Gentium* states that the Church of Jesus Christ is concretely real and present in the Catholic Church but that there are many essential elements of the Church of Jesus Christ to be found outside the institutional boundaries of the Catholic Church.¹⁷ Here we confront the problem of imperfect communion: that outside the Catholic Church there is no full realisation of the Church of Jesus Christ. This realisation refers to the sacramental and institutional means of salvation, not to holiness and to its subjective realisation. Only in the sacramental and institutional forms, then, can the council find a lack in the churches and ecclesial communities of the Reformation.¹⁸

The development of *communio* ecclesiology, especially as applied to ecumenism, opens us to a new understanding of the responsibility of primacy at the level of the universal Church: the fostering of unity among the Christian churches. This means that the Bishop of Rome has to take a central position in the service of movements toward Christian unity. Indeed, it can be safely asserted that in the gradual evolution of deeper communion, the ministry of the Bishop of Rome can be one of the great Catholic contributions. “Whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy.”¹⁹

As we live in a transitional period of imperfect communion, we need to find institutional forms and structures for it. Part of the understanding of *communio* relates to ministries in the church especially that of the episcopate and the future exercise of the Petrine ministry within the new ecumenical

situation. Indeed, imbedded in the doctrinal reality of collegiality is the question of the exercise of primacy. From the Orthodox and Reformed traditions which we have surveyed above the Catholic Church can learn how to integrate the episcopate and the Petrine ministry with synodical and collegial structures.

John Paul II holds up the first millennium as a guide in the search for a new way of exercising primacy. In looking back to the first millennium is to strongly suggest a collegial model of exercising both the primatial and episcopal offices in the church. The next section will survey the historical development of papal primacy during this period and show how gradually Rome emerged as the centre of communion of all the churches.

THE FIRST THOUSAND YEARS: COMMUNIO MODEL

Ut Unum Sint provides the rationale for an investigation of primacy and collegiality in the first thousand years:

The structure of the Church in the East and in the West evolved in reference to that Apostolic heritage. Her unity during the first millennium was maintained within these same structures through the bishops, successors of the apostles, in communion with the bishop of Rome. If today at the end of the second millennium we are seeking to restore full communion, it is to that unity, thus structured we must look.²⁰

John Paul II seeks to make a distinction between what is essential to the papal office and the way it is exercised. In other words, he seeks the minimal requirements required to serve unity while at the same time preserving diversity. The papal office can be exercised in different ways in different times and circumstances. In the first millennium a synodal model of the Church prevailed and thus required that primacy be exercised in a collegial way. Indeed, it would have been unthinkable for the Bishop of Rome to intervene in the affairs of other churches in normal times. In times of crisis major issues (*causae maiores*) would be brought to Rome. However, as Klaus Schatz, is quick to note:

In other words: it is the authority, not yet juridical, but religious, of the Roman Church, as the Church of Peter and Paul... Before the fourth century we cannot speak of the primacy of the Roman Church in juridical terms.²¹

However, Rome was increasingly seen as the touchstone of ecclesial communion and her bishop possessed a primacy within the communion of all the churches.²²

In the fourth and fifth centuries there is a re-reading of primacy occasioned by a new historical challenge. This process begins with Damasus (366-384) and culminates with Leo the Great (440-461). Papal authority is translated into juridical terms in reference to the *communio* of the church for the grave Trinitarian and Christological crises threatened the unity of the church and a new stronger exercise of primacy was necessary.²³ There is a striking tendency for the popes to identify themselves with Peter himself. Brian Daley expresses the change thus:

The bishops of Rome, presiding as successor of the “first” of the apostles in the place where the bones of the two founding apostles lay buried, now come to see themselves as meaning Peter’s promise from the Lord, carrying on Peter’s witness, and taking up Peter’s continuing pastoral concern for the Lord’s people.²⁴

Pope Leo the Great in the 440s proclaims:

There is a further reason for our celebration: not only the apostolic but also the episcopal dignity of the most blessed Peter, who does not cease to preside over our see and has obtained an abiding partnership with the eternal Priest. For the stability which the rock himself was given by that, Rock, Christ, he conveyed also to his successors, and wherever any steadfastness is apparent, there without doubt is to be seen the strength of the shepherd.²⁵

The exercise of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome makes it necessary to distinguish three quite separate “spheres of influence” in which popes understood their role in different ways: the Italian peninsula especially south of the Apennines (*the suburbicariae ecclesiae*) where he exercised a function less formal and less frequently exercised than the metropolitan bishop of the province but which formed the basis of the primatial function of the five great patriarchates or “pentarchy”; Europe west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, North Africa west of the Libyan desert and the Balkans west of Thessalonica where he exercised a wider but less clearly defined area of jurisdiction; and then a sphere in which his claim to the exercise of primacy was most vaguely defined, that is, the Syriac- and Greek-speaking East of the Empire.²⁶ However, even in this region a number of popes in the fourth and fifth centuries intervened with the imperial authorities on behalf of Greek bishops who had been unjustly deprived of their sees.²⁷ It was, however, in their relationship in general to ecumenical councils that the popes promoted best communion between the churches. Indeed, at Chalcedon Leo the Great

played a very active role. Herman Josef Sieben the great historian of the theology of the councils says that Leo saw the bishops' role as that of defining normative tradition in a binding form in language appropriate to the time. He saw the pope's role as not so much a definition as a proclamation of the long tradition that is to make contact with the church's memory as the voice of Peter.²⁸ Indeed, Petrine authority is above all the authority of Peter, witnessing to the ancient and authentic tradition of the Church.

What may we apply to our own times concerning the ministry of the bishops of Rome in the first thousand years? First papal ministry is about the promotion of communion and unity in touch with the witness of the apostles in our age:

For Catholic theology, papal primacy is a providentially established force within the much more complicated structure of the leadership of all the churches, aimed at keeping the rest of the structure in touch with the apostolic witness, the Scriptures in their original meaning, and the tradition that gives the Scriptures their continuity and relevance through the centuries.²⁹

Secondly, Pope John Paul II states that the search for unity must accept that the reality of Christian diversity is compatible with communion:

The Council made this acknowledgment in the conviction that legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission.³⁰

The acceptance of diversity is echoed in several passages in *Ut Unum Sint*:

Indeed, the element which determines communion in truth is the meaning of truth. The expression of truth can take different forms.³¹

They should remember that in Catholic teaching there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith.³²

In accordance with the hope expressed by Pope Paul VI, our declared purpose is to re-establish together full unity in legitimate diversity.³³

In this process [the journey toward necessary and visible unity] one must not impose any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary.³⁴

The acceptance of legitimate diversity means that all Christians would need to distinguish more clearly what is essential to the tradition of apostolic faith and life and what is merely personally and culturally enriching.

Thirdly, we will need to distinguish more clearly as was apparent in the first thousand years the diverse roles performed by the Pope: local bishop of Rome, Patriarch of the West and Universal Pastor. “Like the popes of the patristic period, he will have to develop procedures and conventions suited to the differing needs, styles and memories of all three of these sectors with the worldwide community of churches in communion with him.”³⁵ This vitally important consideration will be more fully developed in Section Six.

In concluding this section it should be evident that the key to the first millennium Church’s self-understanding lies in the word *communio*. This concept encompasses various dimensions: first of all, the communion in the local church is seen as a communion of believers with the bishop at the centre. Beyond that there is the regional and indeed, universal communion of faith uniting the churches with one another. But the universal Church does not become universal by being bound into a federation of local churches. Indeed, the universal Church is not the sum of local churches. Rather, the local church as elaborated in Section Two is the universal Church as it is present, operative and actualised in this particular place and culture. Expressed succinctly, this one Church, the universal sacrament of salvation for all humanity, is this communion of particular or local churches and it achieves actualisation only in and through these local churches. *Communio* advances the notion of “unity” into a much more dynamic understanding: unity conceived with an internal and rich diversity that “Catholic” implies. How, then, is primacy or the Roman See to be seen in such an ecclesiology? As in the first millennium, universal primacy is the centre of communion: the fostering of unity among the Christian churches and ecclesial communities. This means that the papacy has to take a central position in the movement towards Christian unity. *Ut Unum Sint* states clearly and simply:

Whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy...I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of Christian communities and in heading the request made of me to find a way of exercising, the primacy which, while in no way

renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nevertheless open to new situations.³⁶

Indeed, as will be evident in Section Six, diverse Christian communities are more open to the possibility of a universal primacy that would foster this extended *communio*. As communion deepens among Christian churches and ecclesial communities, the ministry of the Bishop of Rome will become more pivotal.

In the next section we will see how the separation from the Oriental Church and attempts to free the western Church from political and secular control led papal primacy on a path to increasing centralisation and ecclesial domination.

THE SECOND THOUSAND YEARS: TOWARDS PAPAL MONARCHY AND BEYOND

“Unfortunately, however, the gradual and mutual estrangement between the Churches of the West and the East deprived them of the benefits of mutual exchanges and cooperation.”³⁷ Indeed, after the separation from the Eastern Church, the papacy moved from being a centre of communion for all to the *Head of the Church* upon which the whole life of the Body depends. The centralising and interventionist policies initiated by the reform movement of the eleventh century under Leo IX and especially Gregory VII were indeed discontinuous with the history of the first thousand years. John Quinn laments that

The expansion of the role of the Pope in the West proceeded without the balancing influence of the Greek patristic tradition and without the ecclesiological tradition of the eastern Churches. Because of this both the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches experienced an impoverishment. A narrowing of consciousness took place. The great horizons shaped by a living communion of East and West had slipped away into the shadows.³⁸

The difficulties experienced by both Church and State in the West in the tenth and eleventh centuries called for strong leadership. The demands for reform in the Church required that she free herself from royal and civil control. Strong leadership on the part of the pope was required and the monarchical centralising and juridical ideas of the papacy proceeded apace with Gregory VII and his successors.

Against a background of ecclesiological splits and divisions from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries the pope becomes the *point of confessional*

identity or the criterion of the true Church.³⁹ According to Klaus Schatz it is in this period that the magisterium and developing papal infallibility take on an importance that they lacked earlier.⁴⁰

After Trent the papacy becomes a point of Catholic identity not only in relation to Protestantism but in relation to an increasingly secular world born from the dissolution of the *societas christiana*. The papacy bolstered by the developing concept of the magisterium becomes a bastion of security in an insecure world. Thus primacy did not develop in this period as a result of theological and ecclesiastical concerns alone but also through political factors and interests: the Roman legal concept of *princeps legibus solutus* raised the pope above positive law; the corporativist concept of society influenced conciliarists; papal authors of the fifteenth century used arguments that supported monarchy as the best form of government and Gallicans affirmed that while absolute monarchy may be the best form of government, the church needs to be governed by a different constitution. Even the ultramontanes who will triumph at Vatican I see the dogma of papal infallibility as running counter to the principles of 1789.⁴¹

Although the period from the First to the Second Vatican Council was the greatest period of centralisation in the history of the Church and the papacy reached the apex of its power and influence within the Church, there was a growing realisation that the dogma of papal infallibility had skewed the relationship between the pope and bishops at least at a popular level. There were early dissenting voices. Newman, while accepting the dogma, realised that the definition was incomplete as it failed to deal with the role of bishop in any developed way. He saw that its one-sided emphasis on the Head of the College of Bishops at the expense of the College itself would have to be balanced by a later council. He had noticed that the balancing of previous councils by later councils was indeed a pattern of history.⁴² Even Paul VI stated explicitly that Vatican II was necessary in order to repair, complete, or restore what was lacking in Vatican I.⁴³ The papacy and the episcopate both exist within the same reality, that is, the College of Bishops. Neither can stand alone for each exists in complete communion with the other. This is the Great Tradition rooted in the fathers and the history of the first thousand years. So Vatican II re-affirmed the dogmatic decrees of Vatican I but in terms of this tradition.⁴⁴ What was incomplete and one-sided was placed in dogmatic balance.

Vatican II balanced primacy with collegiality. First, the council addressed the question of the sacramentality of the episcopate by affirming that the episcopal office is conferred through a sacrament.⁴⁵ Thus the council teaches that one becomes a member of the College of Bishops through sacramental ordination.⁴⁶ Collegiality, then, is a property that arises from the sacramental nature of the episcopal office. John Quinn expresses the doctrinal implications thus:

Collegiality is imbedded in the two doctrinal realities of **communio** and **sacrament**. Moreover, as the Pope is a bishop through sacramental ordination he is irrevocably a member of the College of Bishops and can never be placed outside it. Indeed, should a person who is not a bishop be elected Pope, he is to be ordained immediately inside the conclave and does not have the powers of the Pope until he is ordained bishop.⁴⁷

Vatican I and Vatican II teach that the role of primacy is to defend and promote the role of bishop.⁴⁸ John Quinn relates primacy and collegiality so well:

It is not a question of whether the Church embraces and believes in the primacy of the pope and, at the same time, in the collegiality of the episcopate, but how these realities are to co-exist in a beneficial way without doing injury to each other. It is the question of the exercise of the primacy and the exercise of collegiality.⁴⁹

In the next section the exercise of primacy in the post-Vatican II era will be examined. An imbalance would occur when either primacy or collegiality is emphasised at the expense of the other. I would like then to raise some of the questions raised in the ARCIC document *The Gift of Authority*, paragraph 57. Issues facing Roman Catholics:

- Has the teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the collegiality of bishops been implemented sufficiently?
- Has enough provision been made to ensure consultation between the Bishop of Rome and the local churches prior to the making of important decisions affecting either a local church or the whole church?
- In supporting the Bishop of Rome in his work of promoting communion among the churches, do the structures and procedures of the Roman Curia adequately respect the exercise of episcopate at other levels?

POST- VATICAN II PRIMACY: WHICH MODEL?

In this section two manifestations of collegiality: episcopal conferences and the Synod of Bishops will be examined. Are they truly instruments for promoting collegiality or do they merely reflect views from the centre? Further, is the Roman Curia a stumbling block to Christian unity in resisting collegiality, subsidiarity, and legitimate diversity? Is the centralised appointment of bishops within the Catholic Church a stumbling block to ecumenism? Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant groups have considerable clerical and lay participation in the selection of bishops and other leaders. These issues will need close examination in order to assess whether ecumenical theology and praxis are in close accord. Concerns from other Christian groups should be noted:

Here it is worthwhile first to look at efforts within Roman Catholicism itself to renew the papacy. There has been some discussion of this in recent decades under the theme of “collegiality” and “subsidiarity.” However, this has not led to the reception of new ideas; on the contrary, one can identify certain tendencies to centralise in order to counter what is considered excessive pluralism: in the realm of jurisdiction through the new code of canon law (1983), and in the realm of doctrine through the universal catechism, the oath of faith and the definitive claims made for certain papal decisions, such as that on the impossibility of ordaining women to the priesthood.⁵⁰

The local church headed by the bishop must be always allowed to feel like a “catholic church”, totally free to run its own affairs as long as this does not interfere with the life of the other local churches. This is part of what it means to call... each particular church a full Church.⁵¹

By abandoning the *stabilitas loci* in Rome and by paying pastoral visits to one local church after the other, the popes have, in fact, given themselves in a new way the image of a universal bishop. They have offered themselves to the public as the personified image of a universal bishop... At the same time the role of the papal ministry for the internal unity of the Roman Catholic Church is being re-emphasised. After a period of relative freedom of episcopal conferences the authority of the pope over the whole Church is being more systematically recalled, primarily through administrative measures.⁵²

Turning attention first to the episcopal conferences it is noted that *Lumen Gentium* after speaking about groupings of churches such as patriarchates declares:

This variety of local churches, in harmony among themselves demonstrates with great clarity the catholicity of the undivided Church. In a similar way episcopal conferences can today make a meaningful and fruitful contribution to the concrete application of the spirit of collegiality.⁵³

Without question Vatican II does make a link between episcopal conferences and these patriarchates that are an acknowledged manifestation of collegiality from ancient times.

A controversy arose concerning the teaching authority of episcopal conferences which raised deeper theological issues:

- Are these collegial authorities in the Catholic Church intermediate between the College of Bishops and the individual bishop?
- Are episcopal conferences as groupings of local or particular churches analogous to patriarchal churches?
- Prescinding from the above do regional communions of churches owe their creation to ecclesiastical law or do they have a theological foundation in divine law?
- Is collegiality a prerogative only of the universal College of Bishops or are episcopal conferences an instance of real but partial collegiality?⁵⁴

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had stated in 1964 that

The collegiality of bishops signifies that there should be in the Church (under and in the unity guaranteed by the primacy) an ordered plurality. The bishops' conferences are, then, one of the possible forms of collegiality that is here partially realised but with a view to totality.⁵⁵

Yet, in 1984 he said, "We must not forget that episcopal conferences have no theological basis."⁵⁶ The *motu proprio Apostolos Suos* (The Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences) seeks to bring clarity to the issue. Episcopal conferences can teach and make doctrinal statements⁵⁷ but under restricting conditions: they must be issued by the conference in plenary session; approved by unanimous vote of all members present or by two thirds of the members having the deliberative vote and if not approved unanimously it must receive the recognition of the Holy see. Francis Sullivan notes that no council in the history of the Church (regional or ecumenical) has ever required that all its decisions be approved by unanimous vote.⁵⁸

It would seem that under these strict conditions the teaching authority in the Church belongs only to the individual bishops or to the College of Bishops under the Pope for either total unanimity or the recognition of Rome is consistent with this theory. Seeming negative policies on the part of Rome to episcopal conferences can only increase the perception of growing centralisation and thus dampen hopes for early Christian unity on the part of both Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

Is the Synod of Bishops fulfilling its role as set out in the *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church?*:" Acting on behalf of the whole Catholic episcopate, it (the Synod) will show that all the bishops in hierarchical communion participate in the care of the whole Church."⁵⁹ It was envisioned that apart from ecumenical councils, synods (and episcopal conferences) were to be a practical and effective manifestations of collegiality. However, since its inception, and indeed, in norms governing its functioning, the synod has been limited: the synod is convoked by the pope who determines its agenda; preliminary documents drawn up by episcopal conferences are not to be distributed to other conferences and not made public but are required to be sent directly to Rome; the synod is held in Rome; some curial members (Prefects) are members and the Pope may appoint directly in addition up to fifteen percent of the members; discussion and deliberation is in secret; the synod does not have a deliberative vote and the Pope drafts and issues the final document after the synod proceedings have concluded.⁶⁰

Here we have an extreme example of centralisation that diminishes both the authority and dignity of the episcopate. Should we not distinguish in keeping with tradition between the "habitual" and "substantial" functions of primacy: those that obtain in the normal exercise of papal responsibilities and those that obtain in extraordinary circumstances, for example, where other structures of leadership have broken down and episcopal communion is under strain. "Some of these powers are for the habitual and usual government of the Church and to be in play during any healthy period of the life of the Church, and others of these powers are provided for emergencies and crises when the more usual practices have collapsed and the Pope must intervene."⁶¹ Michael Buckley expresses these same concepts later using different images: the "fraternal" and the "paternal."⁶² The paternal applies when the church needs direction. However, the paternal aims ultimately at its own disappearance for if used when not required it can inhibit growth in the life of the local church. The

fraternal use of papal authority is the usual and preferred. Here the Pope exercises supervision, “keeping watch” for the common good.⁶³

Collegiality, according to Vatican II, is founded on the will of Christ, on the sacrament of Holy Orders and on the very nature of the Church as communion. Indeed, it becomes the key to understanding the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.⁶⁴

Has the Curia, the administrative arm of the Holy See supported collegiality, subsidiarity and legitimate diversity? Reforms called for at the Second Vatican council include: greater internationalisation, better communication and co-ordination between the Congregations and the participation of diocesan bishops and lay persons. John Quinn notes that in regard to internationalisation there has been some success but curial officials do tend to lose their national identity and become Romanised; moreover, appointments are often ad hoc with little consultation with episcopal conferences. Communication still remains a big problem.⁶⁵ The participation of diocesan bishops and lay persons has met with limited success: half the curial councils still have no lay members; lay persons are not members of any congregation and women are significantly absent from many curial roles.⁶⁶ John Quinn detects a restorationist direction in the curia and cites some examples: return to preconciliar liturgy encouraged (previously only a concession); curial decisions that run counter to Vatican II; translations of the Catechism; and the liturgy approved by episcopal conferences in various countries are at times rejected by the Curia.⁶⁷

In the appointment of bishops we have an even bigger problem. Appointment of bishops directly by the Pope is of recent practice. In the three hundred years until Pius IX most bishops were appointed by catholic kings and other civil leaders. Only a handful of bishops outside the Papal States were directly appointed by the Pope and few cathedral chapters retained the right to elect bishops.⁶⁸ Praxis and theology were in conflict: theological tradition since patristic times would support the position that normally bishops should be chosen by a process where a major role was given to the local church. Yves Congar shows how the participation of the whole Church in the election of its bishop is an apostolic tradition.⁶⁹ Indeed, in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, following the Byzantine tradition, a national assembly of clergy and laity meets regularly. Should a bishop need to be nominated, the assembly votes on three names. These are then submitted to the Metropolitan Archbishop and his Synod

of Bishops (or to the Patriarch and his Synod). The Metropolitan or the Patriarch can choose one of the three candidates or they can send the list back and ask for a new list from the assembly.⁷⁰

There have been some changes recently but the papal representative plays a central role and the ultimate decision rests with the Pope. While few would dispute the right of papal confirmation of episcopal elections, direct appointment from Rome does not reflect the ecclesiology of Vatican II: Church as communion, the universal Church fully realised in the particular Church in communion with the See of Rome.

In this section we have seen that the exercise of primacy within the Catholic Church falls short of the ideals of Vatican II and of *Ut Unum Sint*. In order that the Bishop of Rome may not be seen as an obstacle to Christian unity, the way in which primacy is exercised must be reformed so that "... a new way of exercising the primacy, which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nevertheless open to a new situation."⁷¹ There can be no unity without the reform of the papal office. Perhaps John Paul II offers a preview of a reformed papacy when he speaks of himself simply as successor of Peter, bishop of Rome and *servus servorum Dei* (servant of the servants of God).

In the next section the opinions of various Christian leaders and theologians will suggest that in the period of imperfect communion papal primacy should be multi-tiered: the papal office will serve various functions, as indeed, it did in the first thousand years.

THE FUTURE: MULTI-TIERED PRIMACY

In the last section we saw that there are needed reforms required in the exercise of primacy within the Roman Catholic Church: a model of communion rather than monarchical domination from the centre. In seeking a model within the first thousand years, the Patriarch of the West comes to mind. Although the title is somewhat archaic as the present Roman Catholic Church is now far from "Western" it captures the papal role within the ancient pentarchy. This would, however, allow us to understand the primacy of the Bishop of Rome within the present Catholic Church (the former patriarchy of the West) in the traditional sense of the Byzantine pentarchy. Here he is the primus only of the West (non-Orthodox hence Roman Catholic) with a more intense exercise of primacy acting within the framework of collegiality: in ordinary circumstances "habitually" (or fraternally) in extraordinary circumstances "substantially"

(paternally) but always in the spirit of *communio* – unity (See Section 5). This arrangement would seem to satisfy fully the Orthodox for it would appear to be a return to the Byzantine pentarchy from which the Orthodox claim Rome departed when she claimed universal jurisdiction.

What now of universal primacy? According to Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon:

“This would appear to be totally unacceptable to the Orthodox at first sight. And it *should* be unacceptable *unless it is fundamentally qualified*”⁷² First, then, primacy would not be a *primacy* of jurisdiction as this would mean interference in the affairs of the local church as each level is a full church. Secondly, in accordance with eastern tradition primacy belongs not to an individual but to the local church; orthodox bishops are members of an apostolic college above the local church but an integral part of each local church. Thirdly, primacy at all levels, local, regional and universal is exercised synodally. The primate must always act with the rest of the bishops on common matters outside the local church while in similar cases the bishops must always act with their primus. Fourthly, a universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome must, then, always be exercised in communion with the other patriarchs and heads of autocephalous churches.⁷³

In conclusion Metropolitan John states: “A universal *primus* exercising his primacy in such a way is not only “useful” to the church but an ecclesiological necessity in a unified Church.”⁷⁴

It is the current experience of the Anglican Communion perhaps best expressed in the *Virginia Report* of the Inter-Anglican Theological and doctrinal commission that asks the question whether a universal primacy may not be necessary for what has in effect become a universal Church.⁷⁵ The current experience of Anglicans as a world-wide fellowship of churches is pointing towards the need for a universal ministry of unity possessing a greater authority than that possessed by the personal ministry of the archbishop of Canterbury and other bonds of communion such as the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates’ Meeting. Concretely, it is at the level of province that the highest level of juridical canonical primacy is to be found. The principle of “dispersed authority” and provincial autonomy have been two overriding characteristic principles of Anglican ecclesiology over the past half century and perceived as strengths. However, these principles need to

be balanced in a primacy that can safeguard the identity of the one Church at all levels: local, regional and universal. The *Virginia Report* observes that

At all levels the theological reflection and praxis of the local church must be consistent with the truth of the Gospel which belongs to the universal Church. The universal doctrine of the Church is important especially when particular practices or theories are locally developed which lead to disputes. In some cases it may be possible and necessary for the universal church to say with firmness that a particular local practice is incompatible with Christian faith.⁷⁶

As Bishop Hind had noted

At all events, there appears to be an increasing for a greater clarity about the central doctrinal or dogmatic teaching of the Church, especially by bishops and theologians in Africa, Latin America and Asia resentful of what they see as the neo-colonialism of English and North American liberal power.⁷⁷

It would seem that the exercise of primacy is to “keep watch” over the life of the Church in its entirety in such manner as to safeguard communion in *unity* and *diversity*. The ARCIC document *The Gift of Authority* (Authority in the Church 111) 1998 thus notes, “Alongside the autonomy of provinces, Anglicans are coming to see that interdependence among local churches and among provinces is also necessary for fostering unity”.⁷⁸ The document situates the exercise of authority in synodality (the exercise of authority in communion), collegiality and conciliarity but stresses that the conciliar aspects of episcopate need to be realised at a universal level.⁷⁹ At this level the re-reception of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is a gift to be received by all churches:

Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth as an expression of universal primacy... Every solemn definition pronounced from the chair of Peter in the Church of Peter and Paul may, however, express only the faith of the Church. Any such is pronounced **within** the college of those who exercise **episcopate** and not outside that college. Such authoritative teaching is a particular exercise of the calling and responsibility of the body of bishops to teach and affirm the faith...In solemnly formulating such teaching, the universal primate must discern and declare, with the assured assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, the authentic faith of the whole Church, that is, the faith proclaimed from the beginning.⁸⁰

Attention will now turn to the Lutheran Church and reflection on the idea of a special Petrine Ministry. Lutheran concerns are essentially different from

those of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches: papal acceptance of legitimate diversity, collegial exercise of authority and a wide diffusion of responsibility within the Church.⁸¹ David Yeago discerns that the current ecumenical situation has changed dramatically.

The recognition at Vatican II that baptised Christians separated from Rome are nevertheless “in a certain communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect” (*Redintegratio Unitatis*, No 4) would seem to imply that such Christians, along with the churches and ecclesial communities in which they find access to salvation, are proper objects of the Pope’s pastoral concern, even though this relationship cannot presently be perfected.⁸²

Moreover, Vatican II’s stress on the shared reception of the apostolic tradition by pastors and people together⁸³ means for Lutherans that the declarations of the teaching office cannot claim *a priori* validity but need the recognition of the faithful. Nevertheless, the issue of a teaching authority becomes unavoidable as “Lutheran Reflections” discerns:

We share the convictions that decisions about the truth of the gospel have to be made for the gospel’s life in the world. Consequently, we affirm a ministry which has the responsibility of reformulating doctrine in fidelity to the Scriptures when circumstances require.⁸⁴

David Yeago accepts the reality that Lutheran and Catholic Churches stand in an imperfect communion and suggests that in this interim stage the existing bonds of communion should receive some kind of public recognition. He suggests “magisterial mutuality” as an intermediate stage. This would involve:

- Request as a regular practice the formal advice and counsel of the Holy See (with no *a priori* commitment to follow Rome’s advice)
- The Lutheran church could formally communicate the names of all ministers of oversight on the occasion of their election and request that prayer be offered on their behalf in Catholic liturgy.

Yeago ends with hope in the freedom of the Spirit: “... such an “imperfect” relationship would be capable of growth in unpredictable ways and directions.”⁸⁵

In concluding this section it is worthy of note that in Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant dialogue on the Petrine Ministry there is a growing realisation of the value and service that the office of the Bishop of Rome offers the whole Church. The value of a spokesperson for all Christianity is acknowledged. In this time of imperfect communion this office will need to be exercised in a

variety of ways for different Christian constituencies. It will be a multi-tiered papacy: Patriarch of the (West?) for Roman Catholics, *Primus inter pares* within the Pentarchy of Eastern Christianity, Universal Primate for Anglicans and universal spokesman for Christianity for those within traditions arising from the Reformation.

CONCLUSION

That the Church needs a universal pastor is obvious to most Christians today. Surely Pannenburg is right when he says that we should not set out to invent one. He concludes that we should acknowledge that the Church has been given such an office in the special role played by the Bishop of Rome in the world Christian community. We need to devote our energies to reforming the office so that it can fulfil its purpose more effectively.⁸⁶

David Yeago in a similar nuanced vein states: “Christian unity without the Roman Primacy would in a real sense be unity without reconciliation, a unity that evaded the burdens of history instead of confronting them.”⁸⁷

In *Ut Unum Sint* Pope John Paul II states:

... as I acknowledged on the important occasion of a visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva on the 12th June 1984, the Catholic Church’s conviction that in the ministry of the Bishop of Rome she has preserved, in fidelity to the apostolic Tradition and the faith of the Fathers, the visible sign and guarantee of unity, constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians whose memory is marked by such painful recollections. To the extent that we are responsible for these I join my Predecessor Paul VI in asking forgiveness.⁸⁸

Which way do we now go in faith?

It is necessary to pass from antagonism and conflict to a situation where each party recognises the other as a **partner** when undertaking a dialogue, **each side must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth.**⁸⁹

NOTES

¹ John Paul II (1995), *Ut Unum Sint* (UUS), #95.

² UUS, #96.

³ UUS, #95.

4 See Congar, Y. (1960) 'L'ecclésiologie de la Révolution française au Concile du
Vatican sous le signe de l'affirmation de L'ecclésiologie au XIX siècle', *Unam
Sanctam* 34 (Paris: Cerf):77-114.

5 UUS, #77

6 Walter Cardinal Kasper (2002), 'Present situation and future of the Ecumenical
Movement' in *The Catholic Church in Ecumenical Dialogue* (Washington, DC:
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops): 6

7 Tjorham, Ola (2000) 'The goal of visible unity: Reaffirming our commitment', in
The Ecumenical Review, (54:1-2)/163.

8 Tjorham, Ola (2000:164).

9 Tjorham, Ola (2000:166).

10 Congregation of the Faith (1992), 'Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on
Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion', *Origins* (June 25):
#22/108-112.

11 This is the conviction that the local or particular church is complete in itself, and that
"the universal Church is the result of a reciprocal recognition on the part of the
particular churches." 'Letter to the Bishops' (1992:108).

12 'Letter to the Bishops' (1992:108): #11/110.

13 'Letter to the Bishops' (1992:108): #9/109.

14 'Letter to the Bishops' (1992:108): #9/109.

15 Ratzinger uses the pre-existing mystery of the Church hidden in God from all eternity
and pre-existing in Israel according to the Fathers to assert the ontological priority of
the universal Church. Kasper insists that the pre-existing mystery is of the whole
Church both in its universal and local dimension. He thus denies the ontological
priority of the universal Church. See Kasper's reaction in Walter Cardinal Kasper
(1999) 'Zur Theologie und Praxis des Bischoflichen Amtes', *Auf neue Art Kirche
sein: Wirklichkeiten- Herausforderungen- Wundlungen* (Munich: Bernward bei Don
Bosco): 32-48; Ratzinger's response is found in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (2000)
'On the Relation of the Universal Church and the Local Church in Vatican II',
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Dec 22)/46; Kasper responds again in Walter
Cardinal Kasper (2000), 'Das Verhältnis von Universalkirche und Ortskirche:
Freund-schaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit Kritik von Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger',
Stimmen der Zeit 218/795-804; and Ratzinger's final response in Joseph Cardinal

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- Ratzinger (2001) ‘A Response to Walter Kasper: The Local Church and the Universal Church’, *America* (November 19) 185/7-11.
- 16 Yeago, D. S. (2001), ‘The Papal office and the Burden of History: a Lutheran View’ in C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson, (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans): 105
- 17 Vatican II (1964), *Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG)* #8, #15; Vatican II (1964), *Unitatis Redintegratio, Decree on Ecumenism (UR)*, #3.
- 18 UR, #22.
- 19 UUS, #95.
- 20 UUS, #55.
- 21 Schatz, K. (1999), ‘Historical Considerations Concerning the Problem of the Primacy’ in J. F. Paglisi, (ed.) *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press): 4.
- 22 Schatz, K. (1996), *Papal Primacy. From its Origin to the Present* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press): 59-60.
- 23 Schatz, K. (1999), ‘Historical Considerations’, 5.
- 24 Daley, B.E. (2001), ‘The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of the Churches’ in C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson (2001:44).
- 25 Giles, E., trans. (1952), *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority, AD 96-454* (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge): 280.
- 26 Daley, B.E. (2001:45-47).
- 27 Daley, B.E. (2001:45-47).
- 28 Sieben, H. J. (1979), *Das Konzilsidee in der alten Kirche* (Paderborn: Schoningh): 123-128. Leo’s Tome written to the Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople is referred to in Leo’s later letters as “expounding.” “explaining” and “preaching.” It is not a final resolution of the issue but the voice of Peter expounding the tradition.
- 29 Daley, B.E. (2001:54).
- 30 UUS, #50.
- 31 UUS, #19.
- 32 UUS, #37.
- 33 UUS, #57.
- 34 UUS, #78.
- 35 Daley, B.E. (2001:56).
- 36 UUS, #95.
- 37 UUS, #56.

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- 38 Quinn, J. R. (1999), *The Reform of the Papacy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company): 95.
- 39 Horst, U. (1978), *Papst-Konzil- Unfehlbarkeit. Die Ekklesiologie der Summenkommentare von Cajetan bis Billuart* (Walberger Studeien. Theologische Reihe) (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag): 10.
- 40 Schatz, K. (1999), 'Historical Considerations', 7.
- 41 Schatz, K. (1999), 'Historical Considerations', 9. It would be important to note that the history of primacy cannot be abstracted from a strong resistance at times to an increasing affirmation of primacy, i.e. the episcopalist, conciliarist and Gallican counter trends.
- 42 See Page, J. R. (1994), *What would Dr. Newman Do?* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press): 408-9.
- 43 Address of Paul VI (1963), Sept. 29th, *Acta et Documenta Summorum Pontificum* (Opening the Second Session of Vatican II) (online). Found at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1963/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19630929_concilio-vaticano-ii_lt.html. Accessed 25 October 2005.
- 44 LG, #18.
- 45 LG, #21.
- 46 LG, #21.
- 47 The Catholic Church (1983) *The Code of Canon Law in English Translation* (London: Collins): Canon 332. NOTE: The Bishop of Rome is a member of the "College", and the bishops are his brothers in the ministry. See UUS, #95.
- 48 Vatican I (1870) *Pastor Aeternus*, ch. 3, in Norman Tanner (ed.) (1990), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward): 813-15. See also LG #27.
- 49 Quinn, J. R. (1999: 101-102).
- 50 Frieling, R. (1997), 'Communion with, not under the pope', *The Ecumenical Review*, 49/33.
- 51 John (Ziziouslas of Pergamon) (1999), 'Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach' in Paglisi (1999:125).
- 52 Visker, L. (1999), 'The Ministry of Unity and the Common Witness of the Churches Today' in Paglisi (1999:145).
- 53 LG, #23.
- 54 Sullivan, F. A. (2002), 'The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences', *Theological Studies*, 63/476.

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- 55 Ratzinger, J. (1964), ‘The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality’.
Concilium. (Glenrock, N.J.: Paulist Press): 39-67.
- 56 Ratzinger, J. and V. Messori (1985), *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco:
Ignatius Press): 59-60.
- 57 John Paul II (1998), Apostolos Suos #22, in *Origins* (July 30): 28/156-57.
- 58 Sullivan, F. A. (2002), ‘The Teaching Authority’, 486.
- 59 Vatican II (1965), *Christus Dominus* (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the
Church), in A. Flannery, *Vatican II, The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*
(Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press): 5.
- 60 Quinn, J. R. (1999: 111).
- 61 Buckley, M. J. (1998), *Papal Primacy and the Episcopate* (New York: Crossroads):
64.
- 62 Buckley, M. J. (1998:65).
- 63 UUS, #65.
- 64 Quinn, J. R. (1999: 116).
- 65 Archbishop Quinn cites the embarrassment caused at the time of the publication of
the papal document *Ad Tuendum Fideum* . It gave as an example of definitive
teaching to be held, the declaration of Leo XIII (1897) that Anglican Orders were
invalid. Many Catholic bishops including Cardinal Hume were unaware of its
impending publication and heard of it from the Archbishop of Canterbury! See
Quinn, J. R. (1999: 164)
- 66 Reese, T. (1996), *Inside the Vatican*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard
University Press): 118.
- 67 Quinn, J. R. (1999:167-170).
- 68 Sweeney, G. (1977), ‘The “Wound in the Right Foot”: Unhealed?’ in A. Hastings
(ed.) (1977), *Bishops and Writers*, (Wheathamstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke
Books): 207.
- 69 Congar, Y. (1958), ‘Quod Omnes Tangit, ab Omnibus Tractari et Approbori Det’,
Revue historique de droit français et étranger, 35/210-59.
- 70 Quinn, J. R. (1999:125).
- 71 UUS, #95.
- 72 John (Ziziouslas of Pergamon) (1999), ‘Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox
Approach’ in Paglisi (1999:124). In accordance then with the synodal/conciliar
theology of primacy the Church cannot but be a unity of the one and the many at the
same time. The church is local and universal at the same time; episcopacy is a local

and universal ministry. The synodal system is a *sine qua non conditio* for the catholicity of the Church (through this system the catholicity of the local church is guaranteed and protected). The primacy is also a *sine qua non conditio* for the catholicity of the Church (the “one” and “many” idea which runs through the entire doctrine of the Church leads directly to the ministry of primacy: a bishop is primus at the local level, the metropolitan is of the region and the patriarch of a broader area still).

73 John (Ziziouslas of Pergamon) (1999:118-123).

74 John (Ziziouslas of Pergamon) (1999:125).

75 Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (1997), ‘The Virginia Report’ in J. M. Rosenthal and N. Currie (eds.) (1997), *Being Anglican in the Third Millennium- Panama 1996. The Official Report of the 10th. Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing): 223-88. See #3.54; 4.25; 5.20 and passim.

76 *The Virginia Report* (1997: #4.25).

77 Hind, J. (1999), ‘Primacy and Unity: An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue’, in Paglisi (1999:51).

78 Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (1999), *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (London: Catholic Truth Society): 53.

79 *The Gift of Authority* (1999:46).

80 *The Gift of Authority* (1999:47).

81 Yeago, D. S. (2001:110).

82 Yeago, D. S. (2001:111).

83 Vatican II (1965), *Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)*: #10.

84 ‘Lutheran Reflections’ in Empie, P., T. A. Murphy and J.A Burgess (1980), *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI* (Minneapolis : Augsburg Publishing. House): 66-67.

85 Yeago, D. S. (2001:120-122).

86 Pannenburg, W. (1998), *Systematic Theology*, Vol.3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans): 420.

87 Yeago, D. S. (2001:106).

88 UUS, #88.

89 UUS, #29.

Papal Ministry For Sale/To Let Ten Years After Ut Unum Sint

ENRICO PARRY

I would like to congratulate Dr Clint Le Bruyns and St Augustine College for giving us this opportunity to celebrate the 10th anniversary of, and to receive, or re-receive *Ut Unum Sint*.

In this brief intervention I would like to respond to one question, and react to a single statement. The second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in their Gift of Authority (ARCIC) put the question to the Roman Catholic Church: "Has the teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the collegiality of bishops been implemented sufficiently?"¹ The single claim or statement is that of John Paul II, who said in the encyclical we are celebrating: "The Bishop of Rome is a member of the college, and the Bishops are his brothers in the ministry."²

FOR SALE

Let me start to respond to the question by using a picture. My friend wants to buy a house. She is currently living in what Gautengers call a garden cottage, or servant's quarters in Cape language. Because of her intention, whenever I visit and we drive about the areas where she could afford to buy, I slow down at any house that has the sign posted outside, "For sale." Just the face of the house is usually enough for her to decide whether she is interested or not. It has been going on for four months now. The other day I wondered whether this was not a fitting description of what is happening with papal ministry. In 1995 John Paul II put it up for sale, in a manner of speaking. And while many have seen the sign, they are not interested unless this changes or that is taken away, or another thing is added, as normally happens in selling or buying a house. One thing I know for sure is that when you are selling, you have to redo the house to secure a good sale. And that is exactly what has not yet been done with the papal ministry.

For you see, a good indication of what other Christians could expect when they accept the papal ministry of the Bishop of Rome as a gift, to return to the

language of ARCIC II, is to see how the Bishop of Rome handles himself within the Roman Catholic Church with what he calls his brother bishops. And it does not look good.

VATICAN II TEACHING ON COLLEGIALITY

The college of bishops, as is taught in the constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium* (22), is the subject of supreme authority in the Catholic Church. This college consists of all bishops in the Catholic Church together with their head, the Bishop of Rome. In other words, all the bishops of the Catholic Church, together with their head and never without him, have supreme authority in the Catholic Church.

When does the college exercise this authority? According to the text, only in a council of all the bishops, including the Bishop of Rome.³ That is the clearest way. The second instance of collegial action is when all the bishops, dispersed over the whole world, unite in some action that is approved or accepted by the head of the college, the Bishop of Rome. This is a very vague description and has not been developed in the text itself or officially after the council. It is clear, nevertheless, that only with its head is the college of bishops the subject of supreme and universal power in the church. The college may never act without its head.

Vice-versa, however, this does not apply. The pope, as head of the college, may act independently of the college. Our very own Joseph Ratzinger, at the time a young theologian and one of the *periti* of the council, insisted that this is purely and simply juridical.⁴ While the pope may juridically act in this manner, namely independent of the college, he may never, from a moral point of view, do so, in other words, ignore the voices of the church and its bishops. In addition to this, bishops' conferences are a practical expression of the collegial spirit. But the text does not explain further this expression. And that is the genius of the text. It is, and I think deliberately so, vague and open. But that is its downfall as well, as we will now see.

OFFICIAL POST-CONCILIAR INTERPRETATION

After the council, official interpretation of conciliar teaching has consistently emphasized that collegial action is only realised or expressed in a council or by the head of the college. It has ignored the pope-approved dispersed action of the college, and it has downplayed all other forms of collegial expression, including

especially bishops' conferences; the latter so much that by 1985, twenty years after the conclusion of the council, bishops at synod of bishops made an urgent call for a further study of the place of bishops' conferences in the college of bishops.

At the synod, the ninth such gathering since Vatican II, no single body was deputed by the synod or by the pope to do the study. All the same, scholars in various places grabbed the opportunity, assembling the best minds on the issue, and produced various studies, from Salamanca, Spain and from the Woodstock Centre in the USA, among others.⁵ In the meantime, however, the Vatican also produced a document, after some study by a post-synodal commission that included (the by then) Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The document, an *instrumentum laboris* (working paper) was released in January 1988. Scholars were not impressed. As Thomas Reese stated, "The theological reasoning was one-sided, inconsistent, and lacked any historical sense." Many scholars considered it "so poorly done that they did not want to waste their time commenting on it."⁶

Bishops' conferences did respond, and their comments were put together in a second text, which was completed in 1990 but never published. In 1996 John Paul formally requested the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to study and develop the theological aspects of bishops' conferences. In 1998 he released these results *motu proprio* (at his own initiative) in the Apostolic Letter *Apostolos Suos* on the theological and juridical nature of episcopal conferences, in which he said that bishops can only act collegially - exercise their supreme authority as college - in council, or dispersed in unified action called for or accepted by the pope, and in no other way. "Equivalent collegial actions cannot be carried out at the level of individual particular Churches or of gatherings of such Churches called together by their respective Bishops." He stated emphatically that bishops in charge of particular churches "do not exercise pastoral care jointly with collegial acts equal to those of the College of Bishops." Thus, as far as bishops' conferences are concerned, they are not expressions of episcopal collegiality. In all these cases the bishops' actions "are strictly personal, not collegial, even when he has a sense of being in communion." Again, the actions of bishops in a bishops' conference, which is territorially based and not universal, never take on the collegial nature.⁷

I am reminded of another sign I saw recently driving about Johannesburg. This time it was a billboard advertisement for the SABC TV program, *Blow by*

Blow. It shows the photo of an empty boxing ring. Underneath is written: “One kraal. Two bulls.”

CONCLUSION

Coupled with John Paul's shamefully centralising papacy, and in the light of what I highlighted, only the tip of the iceberg, the answer to the question of ARCIC, "has the teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the collegiality of bishops been implemented sufficiently?" has to be an emphatic “No.” And my comment on John Paul's claim in *Ut Unum Sint* #95, that the Bishop of Rome is a member of the college, and the bishops are his brothers in the ministry, has to be a disrespectful "whatever!" My point: there is a lot of work to be done within the Catholic Church regarding papal ministry before John Paul's “For sale/ To let” sign can be taken seriously by anyone else.

In conclusion, ecumenical effort can be as easy as what is shown in another billboard advertisement for the SABC's Siyanqoba Campaign in support of the South African soccer team and in preparation for the soccer event of 2010. It says “blow your own trumpet!”; however, the word 'trumpet' is crossed out and replaced with another word so that the sentence reads, “blow your own *vuvuzela!*” But when it is worthwhile, it is a scary endeavour, because as Benedict XVI said in his address to an ecumenical gathering in Cologne on 19 August 2005, "it is the Lord who gives unity, ...we do not create it, ...it is he who gives it but...we must go to meet him." This may be scary, for we are not totally in control. Precisely because the Lord who is Love is the maker of this unity, we will be able, for the sake of unity, to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things.⁸

NOTES

¹ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (1999) *The gift of authority*. Available from www.usccb.org/seia/authority.htm.

² John Paul II (1995) *Ut Unum Sint*. Vatican translation (Boston: Pauline): #95.

³ Second Vatican Council, The. (1964) “*Dogmatic constitution on the church, “Lumen Gentium.”*” In A. Flannery (ed.) *Vatican Council II: the conciliar and post conciliar documents*, revised edition (Newport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company): 22.

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- ⁴ Ratzinger, J. (1965) ‘La collegialita: spiegazione teologica del testo conciliare’, in G. Barauna (ed.) *La chiesa del Vaticano II: studi e commeni intorno alia Costituzione dommatica ‘Lumen Gentium’* (Florence: Vallechi Editore): 748.
- ⁵ See Legrand, H., J. Manzanares, and A. Garcia y Garcia (eds) (1988) *The nature and future of episcopal conferences* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press) and Reese, Thomas (ed) (1989) *Episcopal conferences: historical, canonical, and theological studies* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press).
- ⁶ Reese, T. (1989:ix).
- ⁷ John Paul II. (1998) ‘Apostolic letter issued motu proprio on the theological and juridical nature of episcopal conferences, “*Apostolos Suos.*”’ *The Pope Speaks* 44, 2/#10, #12.
- ⁸ Second Vatican Council, The. (1964) “Decree on ecumenism, “*Unitatis Redintegratio.*” In A. Flannery (ed.) *Vatican Council II: the conciliar and post conciliar documents*, revised edition (Newport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company): 25.

Orthodox Ecumenical Dialogue

PETROS PARGINOS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper will be to address the background and underlying issues of the involvement of the Orthodox Church in dialogue. In doing so, I will be referring only briefly to the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, wherever relevant but will mostly address the broader context and content of the Ecumenical endeavour. I will briefly trace the impetus and first sprouts of contact by Eastern Orthodox in dialogue with western Christians in the early twentieth century. Secondly, I will examine some of the common challenges faced by Eastern Orthodox theologians in the ecumenical arena, after which I will discuss what the Orthodox mean by the terms “ecumenical” and “unity.” Then I will present an overview of the role which ecclesiology has played in ecumenical dialogue, with an emphasis on Eucharistic ecclesiology, and a subsequent related discussion of views among the Orthodox of communion and inter-communion. Finally, the Eastern notion of catholicity is shown to provide the necessity for dialogue and cooperation with western Christian traditions. I will conclude with some reflections.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ORTHODOX ECUMENISM

The beginning of Orthodox ecumenical outreach dates back to the early twentieth century with two encyclicals from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The first, in 1902 urged the Orthodox churches to dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox churches as well as the “Western Church and the Churches of the Protestants.”¹ The second, in 1920, was a call to all the churches to form a league of churches in fellowship for common action and witness, in order to see one another not “as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, as being part of the household of Christ, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ.” (Eph 3.6)² Father Emmanuel Clapsis, Dean of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, believes this 1920 encyclical continues to be relevant for understanding the Orthodox because it wisely recognizes that unity demands not simply overcoming doctrinal differences, but

“demands interchurch diakonia or ‘ministering’ and a common witness of God’s love for the life of the world.”³ This is a lovely thought and a worthy goal, but however much Christians work side by side in diakonia, (and they do!) it is ultimately the doctrinal differences which separate them.

With conciliatory seriousness and without fanaticism the Orthodox Church has entered into many different dialogues. Most important has been the dialogue with Rome, considering the fact that in 1054 the two communions had excommunicated each other. Though there were serious internal difficulties caused by those who smelled the danger of heresy behind every move toward reconciliation, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople has, since 1958, carefully pursued a dialogue of love which led Rome to prepare a mutual lifting on the 1054 excommunication. On December 7, 1965 at a festive session of Vatican II and at the cathedral of the Greek quarters in Constantinople a joint declaration was read simultaneously in which the mutual excommunication was lifted. The hope was also expressed that the dialogue of love may lead once again to a full communion of faith, brotherly harmony, and sacramental life as once existed during the first millennium. On November 30, 1979, John Paul II and Dimitrios I could announce in Constantinople that a joint Orthodox-Roman Catholic Commission had been formed to start a dialogue between the two communions. This commission, referred to in *Ut Unum Sint*, has had several sessions since that time and has tackled, among others, the thorny and divisive issues of papal primacy, conciliarity and the filioque clause. The call to dialogue, contained in *Ut Unum Sint*, was accompanied by sincere gestures of goodwill as Pope John Paul II called for a reevaluation of papal primacy, frequently recited the Nicene Creed in its original form, without the filioque, and took a less dogmatic stance with regard to Uniatism—a situation in which Eastern Churches are allowed to maintain their particular practices and rites while submitting to Rome—a formula of union rejected outright by the Orthodox Churches. For the Orthodox, if union is to take place, it will be union with Rome, and not under Rome.

Dialogue and communion between the two communities exists, I would argue, on two levels: firstly, on the official, theological and hierarchical one, and secondly, in the hearts and minds of the People of God. For restoration of Eucharistic fellowship to occur, dialogue and communion must take place on both levels. The official, theological, hierarchical one is certainly necessary since that is where the schism first took place, not in the hearts and minds of the

faithful but in the break of communion between bishops and theologians. Consequently, it is on that level that restoration of communion must begin again even when the faithful are not entirely ready for it. Theological dialogue and the fostering of an attitude of communion among theologians, clergy and bishops is necessary in and of itself, but it is also necessary in preparing for the restoration of communion at the second level, in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

Traditionally, it has been the faithful that have been guardians and protectors of the faith. Orthodox faithful very often view any Western overtures with suspicion and Western Christians are amazed that Eastern Christians have such an incredible, historical memory. The fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204 is still vivid in the mind of even simple Greek peasants.

The Council of Florence, an attempt at reunion in the 15th century, failed not only because of an inadequate grappling with the theological issues, but because the episcopate, agreeing among themselves for the most part, failed to carry the people with them. The restoration of communion had been achieved with paper and ink but not in the hearts and minds of the faithful. This is where a major front of the battle, then, must be fought.

It has been a bumpy journey as dialogue has often been frozen due to Orthodox concerns regarding Roman Catholic proselytism in traditionally Orthodox domain. Dialogue has recently been resumed and has received impetus by importance placed on it by the new Pope, His Holiness Benedict XVI.

One of the greatest concerns of Orthodox ecumenical involvement, especially in the World Council of Churches [WCC], is the issue of ecclesiology. Those Orthodox who believe that there should be no Orthodox participation in the WCC cite concerns that this “fellowship of churches” is becoming a super-church or world church, compromising the ecclesiological claims of Orthodoxy. But many cite the Toronto Statement of 1950 as providing an acceptable framework to allow the Orthodox churches to participate fully in the WCC. The Toronto Statement asserted that “...membership [in the WCC] does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.”⁴ Metropolitan John Zizioulas states unequivocally that the WCC has never been, and will never be a church with the marks of the *una sancta*, but that it still has

ecclesiological significance for the building up of the Church, as a privileged instrument of God's reconciling grace.⁵ The same applies to the dialogue between specific churches--it doesn't serve relativism, but is an instrument of reconciliation.

One might view similarities between Orthodox ecumenical relationships and the story of David and Goliath from the Old Testament. As did young David, the Eastern churches have stepped up to the ecumenical challenge of presenting the Orthodox Christian faith to the sizeable Roman Catholic and Protestant confessions. Also expected was for the Orthodox to "put on" the western "armor"--which they were distressed to realize included fundamental differences in methodology, terminology, and structure. This unfamiliar "armor", like Saul's poorly fitting armor on David, has proven to be a burden rather than a benefit. It simply does not "fit" the way the Orthodox have lived out the reality of the Church, and must be thrown off in favor of the "whole armor of God," as did David. For the Orthodox Churches, this "whole armor of God" can only be the Apostolic and Patristic understanding of Church. Although it has not been systematized, it can be presented within its own theological milieu, apart from the poorly fitting, primarily Augustinian concepts, and the theological method of Scholasticism, which have had virtually no impact on Eastern theologies. Almost without exception one finds references to frustrations in Orthodox ecumenical dialogue expressed from both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. While the Orthodox who participate in ecumenical dialogues have encountered many significant and diverse challenges, for our purposes, we may observe at least four categories identified here:

1) Questions and issues are formulated in Western terms

Orthodoxy's current ecumenical relationships can be traced back to the first dialogues in the 1920's (Stockholm, 1925, and Lausanne, 1927) where the Orthodox were first asked to not only state their ecclesiological beliefs, but explain them in consistent theological terms. At this point there appeared a major difficulty, which has continued to be the most significant difficulty in Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement. Dialogue always presupposes a common language and a shared understanding of the terms being used. In these first ecumenical dialogues, the Orthodox were faced with a situation in which they were being asked to provide the West, which

had been theologically autonomous for centuries, with answers to questions formulated in Western terms, and often conditioned by experienced and situations which were only pertinent to the west. In addition to dogmatic differences, which are genuine and significant, the “agony” of Orthodox participation in ecumenism, according to Father Alexander Schmemmann, is the real obstacle of dialogue that is “reduced to categories familiar to the West, but hardly adequate to Orthodoxy.”⁶ This situation has improved over the years, but is still a significant stumbling block to mutual understanding.

2) Lack of magisterium and the question of identity

Compounding the problem is the perception of inconsistency in the way Orthodoxy “speaks.” There is no magisterium, as in the Roman Catholic Church, by which or through which statements made by the Orthodox are considered to be definitive and final. This is predominantly because of the Orthodox theological paradigm that recognizes the limits of language, and led to the apophatic approach of the Christian East. Apophatic expression is as inseparable from the ontology the Church as it is of the mystical experience of the transcendent God, and further complicates the field of engagement with the West, which looks for concrete, affirmative, propositional statements. At the very least, what the west has realized from ecumenical encounters with the Christian East is that there is no one Orthodox approach. A Lutheran introduction to Orthodox theology considers that “Orthodox theology is neither as monolithic as it itself sometimes wants to be nor as monolithic as its critics claim it to be.”⁷

In Orthodox theology, truth can be expressed by an individual, or a group, or local church, but such an individual expression does not create dogma.⁸ Dogma always reflects an ecclesial consensus along the lines of the seven (out of the many) Church councils that were given the label “Ecumenical” (after the fact). As these Ecumenical Councils illustrate, doctrinal definitions by the Orthodox Church have had a primarily negative role--that of preventing the spread of error. The dogmatic statements of the Councils are in themselves expressions of the apophatic approach of the East. Their aim was not to “exhaust the truth or freeze the teachings of the church into verbal formulae or systems, but only to indicate the “boundaries” of truth.”⁹ Father John Meyendorff (1926-1992), who was an active participant in ecumenical dialogue, indicates that this lack of an

automatic, formal, or authoritarian way of articulating the Faith has caused embarrassment for the Orthodox theologians engaged in ecumenical dialogue, who look like subjectivists or liberals, but who on the other hand, out of their basic concern for truth and their unwillingness to surrender to doctrinal relativism, become associated with extreme conservatives.¹⁰

3) A fundamentally different Christian vision between East and West

The late father Alexander Schmemmann (1921-83) formerly Dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, relates a story from what he refers to as his "ecumenical baptism" at the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. He describes going through the typical registration process, during which he encountered a high ecumenical dignitary, who in a very friendly fashion informed him that all the Orthodox delegates would be seated to the extreme right of the hall, together with all the representatives of the "high churches" like Swedish Lutherans, Old Catholics and Polish Nationals. Father Schmemmann explained that while he certainly had nothing against those excellent people, he wondered who had made that decision. The answer was that it simply reflected the "ecclesiological makeup" of the conference, in the dichotomy of the "horizontal" and "vertical" ideas of the Church, and that Orthodoxy was certainly more "horizontal" wasn't it? Father Schmemmann remarked that in all his studies he had never heard of such a distinction between horizontal and vertical, and that the choice been up to him, he might have selected a seat at the extreme "left" with those whose emphasis on the Holy Spirit the Orthodox share (such as Quakers). His point for sharing this reminiscence in his chapter "The Ecumenical Agony" was to illustrate that Orthodoxy joined a movement whose basic terms of reference were already defined. Before they realized it, the Orthodox theologians were caught in Western dichotomies: Catholic vs. Protestant, horizontal vs. vertical, authority vs. freedom, hierarchical vs. congregational, all deeply alien to Orthodox tradition, but all requiring response. Father Schmemmann believes the differences between East and West are not fundamentally differences over a limited number of doctrinal disagreements, but a deep difference in the fundamental Christian vision itself.¹¹

As this story from Father Schmemmann illustrates, ecumenism was done by Western theologians on their own terms and when the Orthodox joined this movement, the basic terms were already defined. And while the theological language is understood by the Orthodox, and while there may be agreement at one level, the ethos and experiences of Orthodoxy at another level make frustrating the discrepancy between formal agreements and the “totality of the Orthodox vision.”¹² Father Schmemmann sees as the ultimate problem in ecumenical discourse resulting from the breakdown in the West of any understanding and ...experience of transcendence--or rather, the Christian affirmation of both God’s absolute transcendence and His real presence.¹³ Just as God’s transcendence can never be defined by human language, the apophatic totality of the Orthodox Christian vision can never begin to be addressed in cataphatic doctrinal statements.

4) A superficial view of Eastern contribution to ecumenism

In the early days of these encounters, the Orthodox wanted to discuss the West’s deviation from the once-common faith and tradition, believing such discussion to be the “self-evident and essential condition for any further step.”¹⁴ But the presupposition of the West was completely different. The West had long since forgotten any idea of being one-half of the Christian world. It remembered not its separation from the East, but its own separation into Catholic and Protestant camps, and used language of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. But Father Schmemmann points out that this does not mean Orthodox Christians were not greeted with genuine Christian love. Their presence as an “ancient” or “venerable” church with a rich liturgical tradition, became for the West and useful periodic infusion of the spiritual vitamins of liturgy, spirituality and mysticism.¹⁵ Orthodox Christianity continues to have a novel quality--as, for example a Thai food restaurant in Western city that will never really “fit into” the indigenous culture, but will always be regarded as an interesting, but essentially foreign experience.

WHAT DOES “ECUMENISM” REALLY MEAN?

In its best sense, it hopes to express the universal message of the Gospel and the capacity of the Christian Faith to be accepted by the whole world, regardless of race or language. In this sense, it is very close to Eastern Orthodoxy, and is the primary reason the Byzantine Empire and the Patriarch of Constantinople were referred to as “Ecumenical.” However, there is another form of “ecumenism” today which wants to gloss over all differences in faith and practice, to into what could be only characterized as “pretending” to be unified. This is an unacceptable model for Orthodox participation. There must be an understanding that there can only be one Truth, one incarnate Logos revealed to the world, not many, conflicting, equally valid ideas about Truth. In a speech on the topic of Ecumenism, Petros VII, the late Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa stated:

The Orthodox Church of Christ seeks and desires dialogue with all other heterodox Churches, based on equal conditions and provided it be conducted in the fear of God and the witness of the One Divine Truth...The Church does not hold a part of the Truth, but the whole Truth; because Christ, who is the Head of the Church, is the Truth.”¹⁶

Because the word “ecumenical” can be ambiguous, Father Schmemmann prefers instead to use admittedly “slightly outmoded” term “mission.” It is the “mission” of the Church, he says, to “make Orthodoxy known, understood and, with God’s help, accepted in the West.” This missionary task must be guided by two equally important and interdependent imperatives: “to emphasize Truth as the only genuine ground of all ‘ecumenical’ concern, and a real openness to Western Christian values.”¹⁷

WHAT IS THE ORTHODOX UNDERSTANDING OF UNITY?

The late Father Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), a pioneer in bringing the Orthodox Church into the ecumenical movement had in mind that the Orthodox Church would be the standard of Christianity reaching out beyond its own perimeters to touch the heterodox religious world. The ultimate desire of the Orthodox is the reconciliation of all Christians to Orthodoxy, but not as subject to jurisdiction or center of power;¹⁸ she merely “wishes to make each one understand.”¹⁹ Diversity is necessary for there to be true catholicity, and although orthodoxy may encompass different cultural patterns, many different ways of worship, and even varying outward polity, it cannot permit diversity in

“matters of faith.” In the words of Bishop Kallistos Ware, and consistent with the majority (if not all) contemporary Orthodox theologians involved in ecumenical dialogue, “before there can be reunion among Christians, there must first be full agreement in faith: this is a basic principle for Orthodox in all their ecumenical relations.”²⁰ Allied to this, is the recognition of each others’ ministries as integral to the Church and, in line with Apostolic Succession.

The Church as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit can only be one. Quoting Bishop Ware again, “The Orthodox Church in all humility believes itself to be the ‘one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’, of which the Creed speaks. There are divisions among Christians, but the Church itself is not divided nor can it ever be.”²¹ Throughout the history of the Church every division has been viewed as a separation from Christ’s Body. There have always been schisms in the life of the Church, but the Church always emphasized unity and advanced canons safeguarding such. In the third century, those who separated themselves from the communion of the *una sancta*, were according to Cyprian, entirely excluded from grace.²² Cyprian’s teaching: outside the Church there is no salvation meant that God’s saving power is mediated to humans in his Body, the Church. For Bishop Ware, this is a tautology, because salvation is the Church.

Although the Church never refuted Cyprian’s teaching on this issue, the practice of the Church has spoken otherwise. Father Georges Florovsky points out that there are occasions when “by her very actions, the Church gives one to understand that the sacraments of sectarians--and even heretics--are valid, that the sacraments can be celebrated outside the strict canonical limits of the Church.”²³ By this he means that in her practice, the Church has received adherents from sects by chrismation (without re-baptism) by which an ecclesiological judgment is made about the validity of the sacramental life of those other churches. Father Florovsky speaks of the “mystical territory” of the Church extending beyond “her canonical borders.” He describes certain bonds, such as “right belief, sincere devotion, the word of God, and above all the grace of God” which are still unbroken, even though there is schism. For Father Florovsky, there is something of God connecting every schismatic and heretical community with the life of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. What is valid in the sects, he says, is that which is in them from the Church.²⁴

In this understanding, Bishop Ware agrees. He notes that by God’s grace, the Orthodox Church possesses the fullness of truth but many people may be

members of the Church who are not visibly so. Despite outward separation, there may be invisible bonds.²⁵ Russian Orthodox theologian, Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), in his influential ecclesiological essay, *The Church is One* also refers to individuals connected to the Church by the “ties which God has not willed to reveal to her” and insists that the Orthodox Church should not stand in judgment of others--she acts and knows only within her own limits--and “only looks upon those as excluded, that is to say, not belonging to her, who exclude themselves.”²⁶

Most contemporary Orthodox theologians teach unequivocally that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, but few are so quick to call other Christian churches void of God’s salvific presence and action. Stated another way by Father Clapsis, “the communal consciousness of the Church never accepted the equation of its canonical limits with its charismatic boundaries.”²⁷

Irenaeus, the second century bishop of Lyons, said that where the Spirit is, there is the Church. Since the Holy Spirit blows where it wants, Bishop Ware insists that we can know where the Church is, but we cannot be sure where it is not. One who is not visibly within the Orthodox Church is not necessarily damned, as not everyone who is visibly within the Church is necessarily saved.²⁸

WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF THE CHURCH?

Metropolitan John Zizioulas writes that Orthodox theology does not yet have a solution to the problem of the limits of the Church. Even in his painstakingly complete treatment of Eucharistic ecclesiology, he suggests that is it baptism which creates the limits, and that “within this baptismal limit it is conceivable that there may be division, but any division within these limits is not the same as the division between the Church and those outside the baptismal limit.”

WHAT OF THE EUCHARIST’S PLACE IN ECUMENISM?

Eucharistic ecclesiology, such as that of Afanassief, Congar, and Zizioulas, considers the Eucharistic fellowship, at which the bishop presides is constitutive for the Church’s being, and has found a prominent ecumenical expression in the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue. It has been especially helpful in the Orthodox-Roman Catholic joint statement of 1982. But ecclesiology in general has not played such a significant role in the Lutheran-

Orthodox dialogue, as Risto Saarinen astutely observes. He calls “eucharistic ecclesiology” the “ecclesiological point of departure” of most Orthodox writers, as opposed to the proponents of “Orthodox School Theology” (such as that represented by Russian Orthodox) in which the episcopacy (bishops as successors of the apostles and thus are the canonical heads) is constitutive of the church. Saarinen laments that the Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue could have been more fruitful with the Eucharistic ecclesiological model, if not for the Russian participation. In fact, he observes that the strongest theologian (in the 1980’s) of the Russian delegation, Archbishop Mihail, “refused to affirm any specific ecclesiological doctrine”²⁹ because there is “no common, generally accepted and completely adopted definition” of the reality of the church.³⁰ Saarinen even asks whether there is an endemic “ecclesiological deficit” in Orthodoxy. He even cites what he has perceived as a “lack of interest towards developing concrete ecclesiology.”³¹ Of course, what Saarinen describes as problematic in these encounters is indicative of the same “agony” of Orthodox ecumenical dialogue as described by Father Schmemmann previously: the Orthodox feeling forced to use western models to circumscribe what is ultimately indefinable. Yet the Church is far more than any definition and even when a model is found to be helpful (such as “Eucharistic ecclesiology”) it is not the totality of Truth (Christ) as expressed in the Church.

CAN THE EUCHARIST BE USED AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ATTAINING UNITY OR UNION? IS THERE SUCH THING AS INTERCOMMUNION?

Generally speaking Eucharistic communion in Eastern Orthodoxy is the sign of the fullness of doctrinal unity, not the means to unity. Metropolitan Maximos Aghiorgoussis (now Metropolitan of Pittsburgh), in an article related to his bilateral Orthodox-Catholic dialogue on the topic of the Eucharist, notes that the acceptance or rejection of the sacraments of a given church depends on the acceptance or the rejection of its “ecclesiality”. With regard specifically to the Roman Catholic West, he states that it has not been the practice of the Christian East to condemn Roman Catholic ecclesiality nor to condemn their communion as invalid, but that dogmatic differences prevent inter-communion.

What Metropolitan Maximos considers the “realistic” position with regard to the Eucharist of other Christians is presented in the work of the late Father Nicholas Afanassieff, another Professor of Canon Law, who taught at the Saint Sergius Russian Orthodox Institute in Paris. He believes the same Eucharist is

celebrated on the Orthodox and Roman Catholic altar--the one Eucharist of the Church, the unbroken link which unites invisibly despite visible separation between the two churches. However, he does not suggest “intercommunion” due to the doctrinal and canonical problems which must first be resolved in order to become a visible and manifest reality. Metropolitan Maximus agrees with this position, but adds that this view should be extended to include all Christians who share in the one Eucharist of Christ along with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Since this particular article of his, is in regard to a specific bilateral dialogue, he cites the lifting of anathemas of 1054 between Rome and Constantinople in 1965. This prophetic act did not abolish the schism, but “put an end to whatever is the cause of that schism: mutual hatred and misunderstandings.”³² In other words, there was a mutual recognition of each other’s ecclesiality, and even further: Vatican II resulted in the official offering of the Roman Catholic communion to the Orthodox,³³ but there has been no such official stance from the Orthodox in regards to offering communion to Roman Catholics.³⁴

Metropolitan Maximus concludes with his hope that the primacy of Rome will move towards “universal service” (diakonia) not “universal jurisdiction” in order to pave the way for full communion. Again, my own observation is that however real our shared Christian diakonia is, the barriers to intercommunion remain primarily doctrinal. And as such, Metropolitan Maximus hopes that Rome will “undertake an in-depth study of the procession of the Holy Spirit and that eventually it will return to a pre-Augustinian theology and doctrine on the Holy Trinity.”

Bishop Ware also discusses and rejects the concept of “intercommunion” between separated Christian bodies for the same reason, citing that most Orthodox believe that “communion at the Lord’s Table....cannot be used as a means to secure unity in the faith, but must come as the consequence and crown of a unity already attained.”³⁵ He further qualifies the basic Orthodox standpoint by adding that there is no form of sacramental fellowship short of full communion. Either churches are fully in communion with one another, or they are not. This basic attitude is expressed in a variety of ways in actual practice. There are some who believe the Orthodox view of sacraments is too rigid and should move toward a more open policy. Most would disagree with this liberal approach and would allow exceptions based on pastoral judgment which might permit ‘intercommunion’ where a non-Orthodox might be allowed to receive

the Eucharist from an Orthodox priest with special permission from the Orthodox bishop.³⁶

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX MEAN BY CATHOLICITY? IN WHAT WAY IS THE CHURCH ‘CATHOLIC’?

Father Thomas Hopko, the recently retired Dean of St Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary, refers to the Orthodox Church as a “Theandric mystery” which “exists in space and time” as a sacramental reality, “a divine reality with a human form made divine by grace.” The human form is deified by the Holy Spirit of Christ, therefore becoming “adequate to God” through Christ and the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ In confessing itself to be the one catholic Church of God, it identifies itself with the one catholic Church in history and claims there is an absolute identity and continuity of this Church from the time of the apostles to the present day.³⁸ Because of this identity, which is both gift and calling, the Church, as treasury of the “whole truth” that is at all times universally valid, “affirms the legitimacy and necessity of its separation from all other Christian confessions on the basis of its inability to identify itself, and so the catholic Church of all ages, with these communions.”³⁹ Father Hopko agrees it is due to distortions and deviations in “essential doctrines and practices which block man’s way to perfect communion with God when they are accepted and practiced.” This perfect fullness, or divine catholicity, is exactly what the Orthodox Church claims about itself, and is concerned that members of other confessions will be frustrated in their search for perfect communion with God. In other words, says Hopko, there are “human forms” in other confessions which are “not adequate or proper to God.”⁴⁰

But it is exactly this catholicity of the Orthodox Church which forces it into sacramental separation because there is not an essential identity of Christian faith and life, which is the same factor compelling her to “affirm in other Christian bodies--and indeed when possible, in all religions and philosophies and in all human thoughts and actions--what is positively true and good in them.” The Orthodox Church is composed of sinful and unworthy persons who become participants in the fullness of God (Eph. 3.19, Col. 1.19) and the Orthodox Church must affirm the elements of the catholic fullness of God remaining in other Christian communities, whose members hunger and thirst for this same fullness. It is the same catholicity which necessitates sacramental separation which at the same time propels the Orthodox Church to

“recognize these bodies as originally of the catholic Church, possessing, practicing and preaching many things in common with it.”⁴¹ Therefore, the Orthodox must enter into ecumenical relations with other traditions, even though it is difficult and painful. It is God’s will to “restore them to the catholic fullness of the Church of the Most Blessed Trinity.”⁴²

WHAT DOES THE WAY FORWARD HOLD?

Pope John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*, uses the term “sister churches” which is becoming popular in the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue. The term “sister churches” was common in the earliest Christian centuries and even alluded to in Holy Scripture (2 John 13). It is a term that allows for interaction based on mutual love, a desire to share gifts, and a common familiar bond. It’s a relationship that allows for unity in diversity and a willingness to engage in long and emotional discussions which uncover and resolve misunderstandings, in order to be a unified and loving family.

Similarly, Khomiakov used the example of three brothers to make a point about the relationship of Orthodoxy to other Christian communities. The master departed and left the teaching of his three disciples. The eldest preserved the teaching without addition or subtraction. The second added to the teaching, and the third removed from the original teaching. When the master returned, he was not angry, but instructed the two younger brothers to thank the eldest, for without him, the truth would not have been preserved. He told the oldest to thank the younger two, for without them, he would not have understood the truth. The Orthodox, in all humility, see themselves as the eldest brother, entrusted with protecting the truth. The Orthodox have not been part of the debates of scholasticism; Reformation and Counter-Reformation have not been part of their language. There are many in western Christian circles who are recognizing the value of what Eastern Orthodoxy brings to the western Christian world, in her questioning of Latin forms of Christianity, and especially in what Orthodoxy believes is the preservation of the apostolic Faith in a visible, living Tradition. But this is only one side of the coin. There has been much that the Orthodox churches have learned from their western brothers and sisters in the way the Faith is to be lived in the world. Orthodoxy has better understood the Truth that she has faithfully preserved through the witness of western Christian churches.

What remains as a sensitive issue in ecumenical circles is the desire for shared Eucharist. In Orthodoxy, the vast majority believes this is not possible until doctrinal unity is achieved. While shared Communion is not possible now, it is inconsistent with Orthodoxy to deny all ecumenical contact, or to deny that the grace of the Holy Spirit works outside of her canonical boundaries. Following Bishop Ware, Metropolitan Zizioulas and Metropolitan Maximus, I would agree that Orthodoxy needs a better defined baptismal ecclesiology (reclaiming the Paschal and Pentecostal dimensions) perhaps only to balance the overemphasis on the eschatological dimension of the Church, as found in Eucharistic ecclesiology. Metropolitan John Zizioulas' work greatly aided both the bilateral Orthodox-Lutheran and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogues and statements, a better-articulated perspective on sacramental Baptism as the "limits" of the Church would be very beneficial in future dialogues with all Christian traditions.

It is undeniable that great progress has been made in ecumenical relations since the first formal Orthodox involvement in the early 20th century. Brotherly and sisterly understanding has increased on all sides. A sure sign of this is a significant move by the World Council of Churches in 1999 to assemble a "Special Commission" to undertake an in-depth examination of the crisis in Orthodox participation when it finally became apparent that the "Orthodox Problem" neither originates nor lies with the Orthodox, but is a fundamental problem in WCC structures. As WCC general secretary Konrad Raiser said at the Commission's inaugural meeting, "never before in its fifty years of history has the WCC taken its Orthodox member churches as seriously."⁴³

Issues that do not serve God too often divide differing ecclesial traditions unnecessarily. Often the root of these divisions is cultural, political, or nationalistic interests which create a type of fundamentalist "us versus them" exclusion. Any process of "ecumenical learning" must first begin with a critical look inward, and then must continue in brotherly and sisterly love. As Saint Paul reminded the Church at Corinth, "Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we." (2 Cor. 10:7) And so it is fitting to conclude with Bishop Kallistos Ware. The last sentence in his chapter entitled "The Reunion of Christians" in *The Orthodox Church* is most fitting admonition for brothers and sisters of all Christian traditions, and is simply: "We have everything to gain by continuing to talk to each other."⁴⁴

NOTES

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2. Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (1920). *Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to all the Christian Churches* [online]. Available at the website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople:
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Ut Unum Sint: A Theological and Ecumenical Orientation

SUSAN RAKOCZY

INTRODUCTION

We all have our stories of our personal ecumenical journey—the first time we attended a service in a church we had grown up hearing was full of heretics, the first time we engaged personally with a Christian who had decidedly different interpretations of the Scriptures, the first time we prayed with many people of diverse Christian communities.

I will only share the starting point of my journey so you can see how far I have travelled. I attended a Catholic primary school run by religious sisters who were mostly Polish immigrants to the United States. Some of the sisters taught us that all pagans, Jews, Protestants, etc went straight to hell and that only Polish Catholics went to heaven! What a surprise these nuns have had after death to find Irish Catholics and German Protestants on the same block in heaven.

In our neighbourhood, which was predominantly Catholic, there was a Baptist church with a big neon sign that said “Jesus Saves” which flashed at night. When I was about nine or ten, I asked my class teacher what that meant and she said, “Don’t worry about it. It has nothing to do with us. We’re Catholics.”

To speak of the theological and ecumenical background of *Ut Unum Sint* means not only to trace these strands, but also to help us identify the complex ecumenical history that we each have. The work of Christian unity—and inter-religious dialogue—is learned step by step, meeting by meeting, friendship by friendship, argument by argument.

This article will present some of the history of the ecumenical movement, the contribution of the Second Vatican Council to ecumenism, some insights from Karl Rahner on the possibility of Christian unity now, and an outline of the theological principles of *Ut Unum Sint*. It closes with attention to the bonds between feminism and ecumenism.

Brother Roger of Taizé whose life was devoted to ecumenism and reconciliation often said, “God is united to every human being without exception.”¹ This insight is the foundation of all ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

IMPORTANT FIRST STEPS

The ecumenical movement has been called a “reform movement within the Church,”² indeed a “Second Reformation” because it is changing all the Christian communities who participate in it. It is a mighty action of the Holy Spirit who labours for unity, reconciliation and peace—not division, disharmony and violence.

Because we have all been born into a fractured Body of Christ, it seems normal to us to have so many divisions, so much diversity, so much misunderstanding and sometimes hostility. We have lost the sense of horror at the divisions which began many centuries ago. Did not Christians mourn the mutual excommunications of 1054? Did no one weep when Western Christendom began to divide into multiple Christian bodies in the 16th century? Gradually the divisions became just were the way things are.

There were attempts at restoring East-West unity at the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439) but they did not succeed for a variety of reasons, one of which is that the Councils were general synods of the West, to which the East came and were asked to submit to Roman positions. A one-way conversation is not a dialogue searching for truth. Vatican Council I (1870-1871) discussed unity with the Byzantine Churches.

In the late 19th century two important pre-ecumenical events occurred. In 1888 the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in the United States and the Lambeth Conference called for unity under four themes: the Scriptures, the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, and the historic episcopate which meets the needs “of the varying nations and peoples called by God into the Unity of His Church.”³

The second event was the call by Philip Schaff, a Protestant historian, for a reassessment of relations between the churches in the light of the historical events which had led to the divisions.

But it was mission which led to the ecumenical movement. The scandal of a disunited Christianity trying to evangelise the peoples of Africa and Asia—complete with turf wars over territory—was very real. What must those early

African Christians thought of one part of the area being run by Methodists and 10 kilometers away by Catholics—each studiously ignoring the other if not hostile at times? How could their “Christ” be so different and so divided?

In a few years we will celebrate the centenary of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. The delegates were all Protestants and no Orthodox or Catholics attended. Anglicans urged that Orthodox and Catholics be invited to future conferences.⁴

Bishop Charles Brent (1862-1929), an American Episcopal bishop, told the delegates that more than cooperation in the mission field was needed to restore the unity of western Christianity and that questions of faith and doctrine had to be studied. In 1927 the first World Conference on Faith and Order met in Lausanne, Switzerland but without Catholic participation.

After Edinburgh, cooperation for the sake of mission led to the establishment of national missionary councils and regional council of churches. The first Conference on Life and Work, which focused on social action, met in Stockholm in 1925.

There were also early ecumenical efforts for peace. In 1914, an ecumenical conference was held in Switzerland to try to prevent the outbreak of war. Even as the gathering met, war was declared and the delegates had to return home. But “two of the participants, Henry Hodgkin, an English Quaker, and Friedrich Sigmund-Schulze, a German Lutheran, pledged to find a way of working for peace even though their countries were at war.”⁵ The Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded in December of 1914 in Cambridge, England and has been an effective ecumenical organization throughout its 91 years.

Gradually, a four-pronged ecumenical effort was taking shape in the first part of the 20th century: Faith and Order (theological issues), Life and Work (social action), the International Missionary Council for common proclamation of the Gospel and the World Council of Christian Education.

But more was desired. In 1920 the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople issued an encyclical urging the establishment of a permanent “fellowship of churches.” World War II slowed down the movement toward its establishment but in 1948 Faith and Order and Life and Work merged to form the World Council of Churches. The original constitution of the WCC described it as a “fellowship (*koinonia*) of the churches which accept Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.”⁶ Over three hundred churches belong to the Council, including Anglicans and all the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches except

the Georgian Orthodox Church. Many conservative Evangelical churches together with Pentecostal, Holiness, Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist and Anabaptists do not belong. The Roman Catholic Church is an observer.

SAYING NO BEFORE SAYING YES

The Catholic Church's first response to the new ecumenical bodies was negative. In 1919, when preparations underway for the First World Conference on Faith and Order, Pope Benedict XV received Bishop Charles Brent. The pope was interested in news of the conference but "declined that invitation to participate because he was convinced that Catholic ecclesiology would not allow it."⁷ At this point, Rome's perspective was that everyone should "return home to Rome."

Pius XI was very negative towards ecumenical endeavours. In 1928, in his encyclical *Mortalium animos* (On the Promotion of True Religious Unity), he severely criticised the ecumenical movement and forbade Catholics to participate in it since it was "founded on error and illusion."⁸ He was echoing what Leo XII had said in his encyclical *Satis Cognitum* (On the Unity of the Church) in 1896.

When the World Council was founded in 1948, several statements from Pius XII (5 June, 1948 and *Ecclesia Catholica* [The Catholic Church]) echo the same kinds of warnings. These meetings were no concern of Catholics; they were Protestant efforts and as the true Church, Catholics were to wait until all returned to Rome.

All was not negative, however. The Holy Office (forerunner of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) issued a statement in 1949, *Ecclesia Sua* (His Church), which said that the ecumenical movement "derives from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" and is a "source of holy joy in the Lord."⁹ Experts could participate in discussions of faith and morals with other Christians, "spiritual ecumenism" could be pursued and participation in the Week of Christian Unity was encouraged. Thirteen years before the opening of Vatican II in 1962 the ecumenical door on the Roman Catholic side was now slowly opening.

Even before 1949 there were small but important ecumenical events in which Catholics had participated. The Malines Conversations between Anglicans and Catholics (1921-1925) engendered mutual openness and respect. In 1934 Abbé Paul Couterier in Lyons, France (1881-1953) broadened the

Octave of Christian Unity into a “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.” Ecumenical conversations at the Swiss Trappist monastery of Dombes began in 1937 and continue today.

When on January 25, 1959, Blessed Pope John XXIII announced that he was calling a general council, he stated that one of the aims of the Council was to be Christian unity. As a means towards this goal he appointed Augustin Cardinal Bea, a German Jesuit, as the head of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. For the first time, there were Roman Catholic observers at the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in New Delhi in 1961, on the eve of the first session of the Council.

In the apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis* (25 December 1961), John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council. In his call for prayer for the Council, he invited “also all Christians of Churches separated from Rome, that the Council may also be to their advantage. We know that many of these sons are anxious for a return of unity and of peace, according to the teachings and the prayer of Christ to the Father.”¹⁰

DECREE ON ECUMENISM: UNITAS REDINGRATIO

The Council’s document on ecumenism, *Unitas Redingratio*, approved at the third session in 1964, set the Catholic Church firmly on the road of ecumenical dialogue and established the work of ecumenism as essential to Catholic life.

The *Decree* begins by establishing the basis of Christian unity in the Trinity: “The highest exemplar and source of this mystery (the unity of the Church) is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit”(#2).¹¹ The unity of the Christ’s church is possible because all Christians share in the life of the Trinity.

The historical divisions in Christianity are real and persist to this day, as we all know. But the Council takes a bold step to announce the underlying unity which all believers share:

But even in spite of them (divisions) it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers (sic) by the children of the Catholic Church (#3).

What we share as Christians is essential to faith: the Word of God, the life of grace, the gifts of the Spirit, liturgical actions which “most certainly can truly

engender a life of grace” (#3). The various Christian communities are, in and through the Spirit of Christ, “means of salvation” (#3) to their members

However, the reality of the lack of unity in Christ’s church is very apparent. The document has a certain triumphalism in its language when it states that “For it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.” (#3)

The work of ecumenism is described as a “sign of the times” and the Council “exhorts” all Catholics “to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.”(#4) Ecumenical work includes dialogue with other Christians, common prayer and an examination of one’s faithfulness to Christ which can lead to renewal and reform. The goal of ecumenism is Christian unity which the *Decree* describes:

The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning.(#4)

This was the vision of 1964. As we shall see in the examination of the perspectives of Karl Rahner, there are alternate ways to envision the unity of the Church of Christ.

While prayer and concern for other Christians (described as “separated brethren”) are vital for Catholics, the first item on the ecumenical agenda is to “make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself.” (#4) All Catholics are called to Christian perfection and the Decree acknowledges that such holiness is often sadly lacking in the Church.

Catholics are called to “recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood,” (#4) a theme which appears in *Ut Unum Sint*.

The second chapter of the *Decree* is focused on the practice of ecumenism which is a concern of the whole Church and extends to all believers. Thus ecumenism is not an optional hobby of a few professionals, but an activity at the heart of the Church. The Council described all the efforts at renewal of the Catholic church—the biblical and liturgical movements, preaching of the Word of God, the lay apostolate, renewal of religious life, the spirituality of married

life, and the Church's social teaching and activity—as having ecumenical implications.

“Spiritual ecumenism” is the “soul of the whole ecumenical movement.”(#8) It is built on continual conversion and holiness of life which witness to the power and presence of the Spirit. Private and communal prayer for Christian unity are essential and the Council departs from centuries of isolation from other Christians when it states that in prayer services for unity and other ecumenical gatherings “it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren.”(#8) Common worship is “not to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians”(#8) and here the bishops are of two minds. On the one hand, “the expression of unity very generally forbids common worship” but on the other “grace to be obtained sometimes commends it.” (#8) The solution of this dilemma is left to the prudence of the local bishop.

Study and knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other Christians are absolutely required in order that ecumenical dialogue can be based on the proper understandings of their beliefs. Theology must be taught from an ecumenical perspective. In mission countries, Catholics must know the beliefs of other Christians with whom they may live in close proximity.

Implicitly recognising how polemical the Catholic Church has been since the Reformation, the *Decree* urges that “The manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed should in no way become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren.”(#11) Catholic teachings should be expressed clearly and in ways understandable to others. At the same time, the Council acknowledged that there is a “hierarchy of truths” and that beliefs “vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.”(#11)

In summary, the *Decree on Ecumenism* was one of the most important of the documents of the Council. It placed ecumenism at the heart of the Catholic Church's life, thus to be engaged in by all, and gave concrete suggestions to make this possible.

FORTY-ONE YEARS LATER

1964 was a long time ago and much has happened ecumenically, much that we take for granted since it has become so much part of Christian life. The various international ecumenical dialogues, between Catholics and Anglicans (ARCIC), Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals amongst others, are well-established. In

1999 the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church celebrated the theological agreements which are stated in the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.” Ecumenical prayer is common in many places in the world. Cooperation in theological education, such as the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions here in South Africa, is often the norm. We “know” each other theologically and often have made deep friendships with colleagues of other Christian churches.

Common worship is no longer a rarity. We attend each other’s weddings, funerals and baptisms. And the question of Eucharistic sharing, hardly hinted at in the *Decree on Ecumenism*, is on the table. Is it to be the sign of an achieved unity (the Vatican position) or a means to unity (the viewpoint of many Catholics and other Christians)?

At the same time, for all the good that has been and continues to be achieved, there are significant problems. Cardinal Walter Kasper, current head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, speaks of the critical moment that ecumenism faces today. On the one hand, some say that ecumenism is only the concern for a small group of theologians who in any case do not have much theological room for change. Some speak of a “wild ecumenism” in which differences between churches are ignored. He states that the ecumenical movement is wrongly held responsible “for the development of relativism and indifference in questions of faith” and that the “sound ecumenism as defined by the Second Vatican Council, is the victim, rather than the origin, of this widespread apathy.”¹²

As we are well aware, the document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, issued in 2000, under the leadership of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, caused much stirring in ecumenical waters. Kasper comments that

Correctly interpreted, the content of this text is in its substance in line with the Second Vatican Council. However, the highly abstract and compact style of the document has given rise to doubts about the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church.¹³

Especially hurtful to many Christians was the statement that “The ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery are not Churches in the proper sense.”¹⁴

This document and the response to it clearly demonstrate that the central question of ecumenism is ecclesiology. Rather than seeing the document as erecting immense obstacles to unity, Kasper urges that ecumenical dialogue focus on these ecclesiological questions.

We need to ask ourselves what kind of unity do we desire and what is the impulse of God's Spirit toward unity? We do agree that a united Church cannot be a unitary church, with no room for pluralism and diversity. But what shape might it take?

Kasper contrasts the perspectives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation. The Catholic church "aims at unity in faith, sacraments and church ministries" while "the churches of the Reformation refer instead to the Augsburg Confession which states in article 7 that "the preaching of the Gospel in its purity and the administration of the sacraments according to the Gospel are sufficient conditions (*satis est*) for the unity of the Church."¹⁵

Central to any consideration of Church unity is pneumatology. The growth of the Pentecostal churches in the last one hundred years, many of which flourish in African soil, and the charismatic renewal in the Catholic, Orthodox and main-line Protestant churches in the last forty-five years have begun to restore to Christianity the central importance of the Holy Spirit in practical Christian experience.

The Spirit is the Spirit of unity (Eph 4:4-6). Pneumatology and ecclesiology are inseparable as we try to envision forms of Christian unity. An ecclesiology of communion, of union in the one faith in the Spirit, is a strong basis for ecumenical dialogue. Kasper describes this church of unity and diversity:

This leads us to envisage a church where the different roles and charismas cooperate in an open interplay, where, for example, the magisterium as its inalienable and irreplaceable role, but where also the *sensus* and the *consensus* of the faithful, the reception process, .the function of the magisterium of theologians, and .above all the testimony of liturgy, are not ruled out. In such an interplay the freedom of the Spirit works not beside but within and through the ecclesial communion, which is at the same time both institution and an ever-new charismatic event.¹⁶

KARL RAHNER: RECOGNISING THE UNITY WE ALREADY HAVE

In the work of Karl Rahner (1904-1984), one of the theological architects of Vatican II, we see a theological vision which can provide the dynamic for contemporary ecumenism. In his writings of the 1970s and early 1980s, he calls attention to the unity Christianity already experiences and judges that it is sufficient to begin shape some new juridical and institutional forms.

Rahner assesses the ecumenical progress of the post-Vatican years and finds that is much less than has been hoped for and expected. He diagnoses “the paucity of results” as stemming from the situation that

...the orthodox Roman theology is on the whole still a long way from having made the dogmas of this Church really intelligible to the average Protestant Christian. On the other hand within the Protestant Churches differences are to be found as to the most basic interpretation of Christianity...¹⁷

He observes a very strange phenomenon: “All speak of unity, declare their will to achieve unity between the Churches and their conviction of the duty to work for this unity...And yet as a matter of historical fact nothing or almost nothing ever happens.”¹⁸

But Rahner is an optimist and he looks beyond the documents of ecumenical agreement to assert that Christians already share a profound unity in faith because they recognise one another precisely as believers. This means that “we are convinced of the fact that the partners to the dialogue on both sides live in the grace of God, are truly

justified by the Holy Pneuma of God, and are sharers in the divine nature.”¹⁹

It is this common faith which is “the true basis and the ultimate condition for ecumenical theology and ecumenical dialogue.”²⁰ Because we already possess this unity at the level of God’s justifying and sanctifying grace, we must go forward to find ways to express it theologically and practically. This unity is a gift of God and one which we are only beginning to recognise.

What kind of visible unity amongst the Churches could express this unity at the level of grace and faith? Rahner argues that we must work toward an institutional form which is a unity in diversity:

...could we not form a Church which was single (sic) in institutional terms and in terms of religious sociology in which of course the plurality of creeds upheld by those maintaining theologically distinct doctrines would be recognized as legitimate within this institutional unity?²¹

How would this work in practice? On the level of dogma, Rahner posits that the “unity of the separated churches is conceivable, if no Church declares that a statement held to be binding by another Church is absolutely irreconcilable with her own understanding of the faith.”²² He judges that “a sufficient unity in faith may already have been achieved among the churches.”²³ What is needed at this time is not an assent now by Protestant Christians to many Catholic beliefs but rather a hope that over time these Catholic beliefs may be clarified and interpreted in such a way that Protestants can assent to them. We are to affirm the fundamental truths of Christian revelation as contained in the creeds which we already assent to and go forward.

Rahner is aware that his proposals sound utterly utopian, but he also argues that unless we want to say that unification of the churches is utterly impossible (which is forbidden by the sense of faith amongst Christians that unity must be achieved), then his interpretation of the basis of unity is legitimate.

What is the shape of this unity? Rahner rejects any position that sees the Protestant and Orthodox churches being amalgamated into the Roman Catholic Church which would remain as it is liturgically and institutionally. This united church of the future “will be characterized by a greater pluralism in the laws of individual churches, as well as in Christian life, liturgy and theology than had been allowed in the Roman Catholic Church”²⁴ as we know it today.

In his first message on the day he was elected Pope, 20 April 2005, Pope Benedict XVI clearly committed himself to the work of Christian unity.

With full awareness, therefore, at the beginning of his ministry in the Church of Rome which Peter bathed in his blood, Peter's current Successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers. This is his ambition, his impelling duty. He is aware that good intentions do not suffice for this. Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential, inspiring in everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress.²⁵

How does Pope Benedict understand this work for the “full and visible unity” of Christianity? And how will this happen? We shall watch events unfold.

THE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF UT UNUM SINT

I would like to outline some of its key theological themes of *Ut Unum Sint* which is the most important ecumenical document of the Roman Catholic Church since the Decree of Ecumenism of the Council.

The encyclical stresses the “the unity of all divided humanity is the will of God,” (#6)²⁶ giving a broad vision beyond ecclesial concerns to the search for unity. If humanity is one, then how shall its unity be expressed?

Ut Unum Sint stands in the tradition of the *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II in its emphasis that the ecumenical movement is a gift of the Spirit (#7) and that ecumenism is “an organic part of her (the Church’s) life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.”(#20) The unity for which all Christians are to strive is “constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and hierarchical communion.” (#9)

Ecumenism depends on the depth of conversion, both personal and communal, which is conversion to the Gospel and all its demands (#15). Such renewal of heart and spirit, together with public and private prayer for Christian unity, is the “soul” of the whole ecumenical movement.” (#21) Indeed, such common prayer helps people feel that “the goal of unity seems closer.” (#22)

The dynamic of common prayer must not obscure the need to work on doctrinal formulations, which must never be the fruit of compromise. They must be expressed in ways that are understandable to people; at the same time, the encyclical states that “the manner and method of expounding the Catholic faith should not be a hindrance to dialogue with our brothers and sisters.” (#36) One important question is whether the words in two different formulations on the same theme say the same thing (#38). This is a theological challenge to all those involved in the formal ecumenical dialogues who struggle to express our common faith in diverse ways.

The encyclical devotes considerable attention to the meaning and dynamics of dialogue. As a process of understanding each other, it is the quest for truth—together. It stresses that “Love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians.” (#36) Ecumenical dialogue is not only words but praxis, since “ecumenical cooperation is a true school of ecumenism, a dynamic road to unity.” (#40)

The encyclical evaluates the fruits of the ecumenical movement since Vatican II and gives a sense of historical perspective in its statement this is “the

first time in history that efforts on behalf of Christian unity have taken on such great proportions and have become so extensive.” (#41) In these years we have experienced other Christians no longer as strangers but as brothers and sisters (#42); we have worked together “in bold projects aiming at changing the world by inculcating respect for the rights and needs of everyone, especially the poor, the lowly and the defenceless.” (#43) We can certainly see this concretely in South Africa, from the days of the Struggle against apartheid to our shared commitment to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS—which is actually all of us. The encyclical makes a special plea that all of us will work for peace (#76).

The ecumenical movement has influenced the liturgical renewal of many Christian communities. The question and forms of Eucharistic sharing is before us, and people experience “a burning desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord.” (#45)

It is in *Ut Unum Sint* that Pope John Paul II described particular or local Churches as “Sister Churches” and said that this “traditional designation” should accompany us on our journey of unity. As we are well aware, the document *Dominus Iesus* called this term into question and caused a great deal of ecumenical distress.

The encyclical places before us a very important agenda of theological work: the relationship of Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the Eucharist and meaning of the Real Presence of Christ, ordination issues, the meaning and function of the Magisterium, and the role of Mary, Mother of Christ (#79).

The encyclical is probably best known for the Pope’s request for help in understanding his role as Bishop of Rome. John Paul II asked Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church...? (#96).

Perhaps this conference may give some help to Benedict XVI in this regard.

CONCLUSION

How do we go forward on this road to unity which is both a gift of the Spirit and the fruit of very hard work together? Again Rahner’s perspective is very helpful. He stresses that all Christians, in all churches, must become “more

intensively, more radically Christian.”²⁷ As we live the faith more radically, a greater unity in faith and belief will grow.

Secondly, since unity will take institutional forms, ecumenism must work with church authorities, and not against them. This is very difficult and requires much patience. What is hoped for and prayed for is not a “third confession,” some new unified form of Christianity, but the unity of all Christian churches. Here in Africa this poses very interesting questions when we consider the African Indigenous Churches and their beliefs which combine Christian belief and aspects of African traditional religion.

Rahner also proposes that “we get to know each other really well,” both as individuals and the beliefs of their churches and that “we should also rejoice on account of the unity that God has already bestowed on us.”²⁸

Speaking as a feminist theologian, it is very important to recognize how women in the Christian Churches are indeed “getting to know each other very well” in their common search for a way to live the Christian faith which affirms and supports their dignity as full human beings redeemed in Christ. Margaret O’Gara asks all of us to ponder the reasons for the “bond of passionate intensity amongst women, a bond that crosses denominational lines so effectively” and asserts that she believes “it is because, for feminists, the truth of the Gospel itself seems threatened by any theology or practice that legitimates a domination of men over women.”²⁹ In other words, the unity of the Christian Church cannot be achieved nor compromised by any efforts to maintain the historic ecclesial structures of oppression of women believers.

The unity that we see amongst ourselves may seem very small and weak, but we have already travelled a very long road since the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. The unity which we seek is both God’s gift and our own deep desire as Christians. Surely we can trust that it is taking shape today, here and now, in South Africa and in every place where Christians live, pray and work.

NOTES

¹ Roger, Brother (2005) *Letter from Taizé*, 244/1.

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- ²³ Rahner, Karl “Realistic Possibility” (1991:74).
- ²⁴ Rahner, Karl “Realistic Possibility” (1991:78).
- ²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI (2005) “First Message (20 April 2005)” [online]. Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/pont-messages/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20050420_missa-pro-ecclesia-en.html (accessed 7 November 2005).
- ²⁶ All quotations are from Pope John Paul II (1995) *The Call for Christian Unity (Ut Unum Sint)*. (Nairobi:Paulines Publications Africa).
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