

# CHURCH AND HISTORY IN VATICAN II'S CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH: A PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE

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**L**UMEN GENTIUM is a prominently significant statement of Vatican II. In fact, it can be regarded as the central pronouncement of the Council, since it evidently provides the foundation for the other fifteen documents.<sup>1</sup> To Protestants it appears of greater importance than the Decree on Ecumenism, in which the spirit of love and the desire for unity tend to reduce the ecclesiological differences to an indispensable minimum, though even here the true implications can be recognized if *Unitatis redintegratio*, especially chapter 1, is seen in the light of *Lumen gentium*. By turning immediately to that document, which spells out the teaching on the Church more clearly, the Protestant will spare himself the trouble of detours. He meets in this Constitution the heart of the ecumenical problem; for ecclesiology has come to be "the collecting vessel of all of our doctrinal differences and separating boundaries which seem wholly insurmountable despite all sincere efforts at a mutual understanding."<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically, the non-Catholic interpreter must be aware from the outset that his approach is guided by hermeneutical principles which necessarily constitute a heterogeneous canon of evaluation, since they reflect a different concept of the Church.<sup>3</sup> This need not imply, however, that an understanding cannot be reached. It is not the Protestant's task to attempt an interpretation from within the hermeneutical circle of the document by sacrificing his own pre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Albert Outler, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott, S.J., and J. Gallagher (New York, 1966) p. 102. This popular source book in translation places *Lumen gentium* rightly at the head of all the conciliar documents.

<sup>2</sup> Kristen E. Skydsgaard, in his address to Pope Paul VI on behalf of the Protestant observers, in *Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil: 2. Sitzungsperiode*, ed. A. Beckel, H. Reiring, and O. Roeggele (Osnabrück, 1964) p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> The interpretative principles which provide the guidelines for our analysis will, hopefully, become increasingly clear in our questions to the Constitution, and finally will be systematically presented in the third section of this essay. Despite the appearance of induction, this essay is basically deductive in method. The concept of "history" and "historicity" seemed the best touchstone in order to clarify the ecclesiological differences.

suppositions. His Catholic partner can accomplish much better such interpretation from within. It seems that a genuine rapport in their dialogue is sooner established by the mutual interpretation of the opposite position on the basis of one's own principles. Understanding arrived at by contrast rather than by synthetic patchwork is more likely to lead to that clarification of divergencies and identities which is the presupposition for the first steps toward rapprochement.

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE DOCUMENT

Until the promulgation of this Constitution, Roman Catholicism (as indeed also Protestantism) had produced no official definition concerning the nature of the Church. There are, of course, the traditional statements in the third article of the Apostles' Creed, an unreflected consciousness in the *fides catholica* of what the Church is, as well as various attempts at expressing it in the thought of many of the Fathers. Yet this implicit consciousness of faith was never lifted to the level of an explicit dogmatic statement of self-understanding. Since Vatican II had been called to reflect on the Church's nature, on her attitude toward non-Catholic Christians and other religions, and on her function in the modern world, it necessarily centered attention on ecclesiological problems. These considerations resulted at first in a preliminary schema *De ecclesia*, subsequently revised (more drastically than any other) some sixteen times before it finally satisfied the majority of the prelates so that it could be presented to the Pope for approval and promulgation.

As with all other documents of the Council, this Constitution has not received the highest rank of an infallible doctrine, the dignity of revelation itself. Nevertheless, as a dogmatic constitution, it bears in contradistinction to decrees and declarations a highly normative character, i.e., it comes to stand within the pyramid of truth on the level directly below that of an ultimate doctrinal pronouncement. The Pope and the Council evidently resisted any effort that may have been present to effect an infallible doctrine. This decision seems largely due to a growing awareness of the problem of the interrelationship between the living deposit of faith within and its once-for-all dogmatic formulation by the Church, which a Protestant may assess as an emerging "historical" consciousness. The question is: Can the

breadth and depth of an existential reality, experienced in faith, love, and hope in particular historical moments, be captured in a definition, equally valid at all times and secure from misinterpretation?<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, is the interpreter of such a statement, who does not participate in the consciousness of faith which produced it but in a different consciousness of faith, really capable of distinguishing between the essence, the ultimate, of the pronouncement and its accidental, historical, thus transient form? Where is the continuum of the catholic faith and where is its temporal expression? Not surprisingly, the problem of historicity, here in view of the temporality of a doctrinal statement, already poses itself to the Protestant as an indication of a more comprehensive question: the historicity of the Church.

In order to clarify the historical conditioning of *Lumen gentium*, we must look at both the more remote and the more immediate developments that led up to it. In particular the second chapter, "The People of God," seems to be a result of such developments bringing to the fore, as it were, a new dimension in the Roman Catholic teaching on the Church. To be sure, new perspectives in this direction resulting from shifts in emphasis had been opened already by the more progressive theologians and introduced into the ecumenical dialogue. Still, the significance given to the "People of God" motif, not only formally but also with regard to the content of the whole Constitution, is of primary interest for the non-Catholic who wishes to discover whether something essentially new happened at Vatican II.

The "People of God" motif was brought to such a prominent position on account of objections against the original draft of the schema, raised for instance by members of the German, French, Chilean, and Spanish episcopate. The dominantly conservative preconciliar commission had drawn up a schema containing four chapters in characteristic order: I. The Mystery of the Church; II. The Hierarchical Structure of the Church; III. The People of God and the Laity; IV. The Vocation to Holiness. This outline, reflecting largely the traditional arrangement of ecclesiological loci, had introduced the idea

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, S.J., "Selbstbesinnung der Kirche," address to the German journalists in Rome, Oct. 2, 1963, in *Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil: 2. Sitzungsperiode*, p. 120; also in Johann Christoph Hampe, *Ende der Gegenreformation?* (Stuttgart, 1964) pp. 147 ff.

of the "People of God," but obviously identified it with the laity, thus distinguishing it from and subordinating it to the ordained clergy. After several revisions, the chapter on "The People of God" was raised to second place, followed by the chapters on "The Hierarchy" and on "The Laity," which implied now that the "People of God" motif was made the inclusive concept, with both priests and laymen representing two functions of the same body, different not by the station before or the calling by God but by office and execution of service to man. The final version included then a chapter on "Religious," one on the eschatological attitude of the pilgrim Church (also a result of the accent placed on the "People of God" motif), and finally a chapter on Mary, the integration of which into this schema bears considerably upon ecclesiological and consequently on ecumenical significance.

Of course, the outcome of these revisions is at many points marked by compromises between the different interests involved, i.e., between the various currents in contemporary Roman Catholic theology. Therefore it is not surprising that the document advances no really revolutionary ideas and that its diction at times is ambiguous, intentionally vague, and fragmentary. Many pressures were exercised; too many suggestions had to be accommodated. *Lumen gentium* is not the polished product of one systematician revealing a final inner consistency, but the result of struggles between partisan groups. Consequently, the meaning of the statements may vary according to the persuasion of the reader, a circumstance which makes a Protestant analysis the more difficult. All the same, we have to assume some inner unity in this document; otherwise any attempt at interpretation is frustrated from the beginning.

On the other hand, we recognize in the style a conscious and not altogether unsuccessful effort to avoid scholastic terminology as well as abstract formalisms, and to replace these, above all, with scriptural language and imagery. Such an impression leads to the conclusion that the Church intended to be heard more in concrete, historical, narrative, exhortatory, and pastoral terms than in definitions, assertions, and condemnations. This attitude sheds a more pleasant light on the unevenness. Yet the Protestant may sense here also the problem of historicity with respect to language as a vehicle of an expres-

sion of faith. Does not the substance of the Church, Christian life in historical realities, become relativized when expressed by the accidents of language? To what extent can language become a sacrament, an "event," if used other than in proclamation and confession? Moreover, is Latin at all appropriate to express living realities? The problem of language as sacrament is an indication of the larger problem of the Church as a sacrament.<sup>5</sup> At any rate, as far as diction is concerned, the Council theologians, above all Msgr. Philip of Louvain, seem to have done the best possible work that could be expected under the circumstances. Although the Constitution seldom attains the height of contemporary Roman Catholic scholarship, it is an impressive statement that deserves careful scrutiny.

The shift of emphasis to the "People of God" concept is indicative of the modifications Roman Catholic ecclesiology has undergone in the course of history. Hence it provides its own example of historical conditioning. The Protestant historian may find—if permitted simplifications for the sake of brevity and clarity—mainly three stages in the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church after the period of inception and early growth. They can be roughly classified by the three successively prevalent ideas: "Perfect Society," "Mystical Body of Christ," "People of God."<sup>6</sup> It must be noted, of course, that the *fides catholica* more or less explicitly contained in any of these periods the two other motifs (and more) as well as the dominant one; yet the one seemed to express the nature of the Church in its particular time more adequately.<sup>7</sup>

The historical conditions after Constantine, and especially in the Middle Ages, moved the Church increasingly to expand on the Augustinian concept of the "City of God," so that she eventually could understand herself as God's state on earth, a worldly, even political

<sup>5</sup> Cf. n. 24 below.

<sup>6</sup> This is pointed out so often that it tends to become an ecumenical commonplace—for instance, by Edmund Schlink, "Von grundsätzlicher Bedeutung," address to the German journalists in Rome, in *Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil: 2. Sitzungsperiode*, p. 123; or by Kristen E. Skydsgaard, "The Church as Mystery and as People of God," in *Dialogue On the Way*, ed. George A. Lindbeck (Minneapolis, 1965) pp. 158 f., also in "Vom Geheimnis der Kirche," *Kerygma und Dogma* 10 (1964) 143 f.

<sup>7</sup> Were it possible, it would be interesting to determine to what extent the prevalence of any of these ideas is due to the Church's response to external, historical forces, and to what extent the result of an inner, spiritual development.

agent wielding spiritual power. The Aristotelian idea of the "Perfect Society," which to be sure had its own history from Thomas Aquinas up to the *Syllabus* of Pius IX, offered itself as the best expression of the Church's reality. The turbulent threats posed by the Reformation and by the modern secularized world—to which the Church reacted largely unsuccessfully with Counter Reformation and anti-Modernist measures—did not produce a new ecclesiological concept, but rather forced her to concentrate even more on her claims as an external, visible, and universal institution of salvation by emphasizing her juridical character and her absolute authority in the papal office.

Under the influence of Romanticism and German Idealism, which developed a man-centered philosophy of history employing concepts of evolution and continuity, the rigidity of the "Perfect Society" idea was extenuated by the introduction of a historical aspect into the understanding of the Church's nature. In the evolutionary ecclesiology of John Henry Newman, as well as the organic ecclesiology of Johann Adam Möhler and Karl Adam, an awareness of the dynamic development of the Church in her history took shape, which led to a new understanding of the "Body of Christ" concept made prominent above all by Adam.<sup>8</sup> Yet, out of dogmatic considerations these theologians and their followers saw themselves unable to submit to the subsequent trend taking place in secular historiography. This development was characterized by the gradual movement from the general recognition that the inner laws working in history are conditioned by accident and circumstance to different types of historicism, the most radical of which amounted to a complete relativism and, in consequence, to the renunciation of any philosophy of history.<sup>9</sup> The acknowledgment of historicity in man's individual and corporate life,<sup>10</sup> i.e., the admission of the relativity of truth and meaning, would

<sup>8</sup> Johann Adam Möhler, *Die Einheit in der Kirche* (1825); John Henry Newman, particularly *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845); Karl Adam, *Das Wesen des Katholizismus* (1924). It should be kept in mind that Adam was attracted early in his career to ecclesiological problems; cf. *Der Kirchenbegriff Tertullians* (Paderborn, 1907) pp. 225 ff.

<sup>9</sup> One type of this historicism has been applied in the punctiliar and subjectivistic ontology of existentialism.

<sup>10</sup> This was the dilemma which Wilhelm Dilthey and Ernst Troeltsch, each in his way, tried to overcome.

have been in flagrant opposition to Roman Catholic anthropology and ecclesiology.

The Encyclical *Mystici corporis* of Pius XII, however, lagged behind even their insights. The "Body of Christ" concept found here a characteristically modified expression in which the awareness of the Church's historical character was reduced by the combination of the aspect of her spiritual nature with that of her external, juridical, and institutional form. Interestingly enough, the Encyclical deals with the term "Body" first, and only then with the mystical nature of the Church. Pius brought the views of the Church's organizational form and of her spiritual organism into a synopsis, as, for example, in the identification of the limits of Christ's mystical body with those of the Roman institution.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the dialectic of visibility and invisibility, of form and spirit, of church organization and kingdom of God, came to the fore in the two-nature setting of this Christological, "Body of Christ" framework. Although the weight rested on the manifestations of the Church, this application of the "Body of Christ" concept could serve as a transition to a more genuinely historical understanding in ecclesiology.

Between 1937 and 1942, Catholic theologians ventured another step in historical thinking towards a clearer comprehension of the historicity of the Church. The Romanticist-Idealist features were shed, so that the historical development of the Church could now be seen less as a harmonious organic or evolutionary process in continuity, and more as a *curriculum vitae*, with the Church under the impact of various historical settings assuming different forms. Apparently, the idea of historicity had been cautiously adopted—at least to the extent that the continuity of the Church was primarily placed in her spiritual, invisible nature, whereas the historical life could be considered under the aspect of discontinuity, thus approximating Prot-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. among others: Ulrich Valeske, *Votum ecclesiae* (Munich, 1962); Wolfgang Dietzfelbinger, *Die Grenzen der Kirche nach römisch-katholischer Lehre* (Göttingen, 1962) pp. 47 ff.; Fritz Vierung, *Christus und die Kirche in römisch-katholischer Sicht: Probleme zwischen dem ersten und zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Göttingen, 1962); also Christof Bäumler, "Die Lehre von der Kirche in der Theologie Karl Barths," *Theologische Existenz heute* 118 (1964) 39 ff.

estant categories.<sup>12</sup> At any rate, this way of thinking gave prominence to the "People of God" concept, advanced above all by M. D. Koster and Lucien Cerfaux.<sup>13</sup> This contemporary view focuses on the Church not as a hierarchical world-institution and *societas perfecta*, but as a wandering, poor, even erring, but servant people which is subject to the ups and downs of historical influences. Yet precisely in its humility such a Church reflects the glory of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Yves Congar's book *Pour une église servant et pauvre* (1963) is the most representative example of this movement. The new concept certainly was not to replace but to transcend the notion of the juridical character of the Church; thus it could include, though with different emphasis, the concept of the "Body of Christ."

#### THE "PEOPLE OF GOD" MOTIF AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICITY

The prominence given to the "People of God" idea in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* introduces a strong emphasis on the historical nature of the Church, a shift in ecclesiological self-understanding that shows promise for future ecumenical dialogue. The Roman Catholic Church here seems to see herself not so much as an organizational institution of salvation, a static structure, reaching by its hierarchy as it were pyramidically into heaven, but as a dynamic movement, a community of living, historically conditioned human beings on the way toward a goal. In contradistinction to the original schema, the Constitution is marked by a tendency to check "clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism" (Bishop de Smedt), or, in the words of Hans Küng, "authoritarianism, centralism, and absolutism."<sup>15</sup>

Such a trend makes the Protestant ask questions that eventually touch the heart of ecclesiological differences: What kind of historical

<sup>12</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, tr. by M. A. Bousfield (London, 1939), originally published in French, *Chrétiens désunis* (Paris, 1937); cf. particularly chap. 2, "The Oneness of the Church."

<sup>13</sup> M. D. Koster, *Ekklesiologie im Werden* (Paderborn, 1940); Lucien Cerfaux, *La théologie de l'église suivant S. Paul* (Paris, 1942), tr. *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, by G. Webb and A. Walker (New York, 1959).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Yves Congar, "The Church: The People of God," in *Concilium* 1 (Glen Rock, N.J., 1964) pp. 11 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Kristen E. Skydsgaard, "The Church as Mystery and as People of God," *op. cit.* (n. 6 above) p. 146.



consciousness<sup>16</sup> underlies this modified ecclesiology, and does it alter the traditional Catholic teaching on the Church? Furthermore, does this new historical consciousness go so far as to include a recognition of the full historicity of the Church? To what extent is there an awareness of the historical relativity of the Church, and with what bearing upon her metaphysical claim of absoluteness? In what way, if at all, have the accidental, relativistic, and individualistic categories of modern historical thinking—which tend to particularize history in punctiliar instances—been brought into connection with the concepts of Catholic absolutist thinking, viz., institution, corporation, unity, universality, and continuity (both horizontal and vertical), categories wholly unsunderable if Roman Catholicism is to remain true to its traditional understanding of itself? Is the reality of history recognized as an independent power of influence, shaping the Church through milieu, circumstance, and contingency, or is it subordinated to a transhistorical reality? Is a transcendental reality superimposed on the horizontal reality of history—perhaps as *Heilsgeschichte*?<sup>17</sup> To use Christological terms, is the humanity of Christ in the historical reality of the Church (kenosis) taken as seriously as his divinity in the transhistorical reality of the Church, and in what way is this dialectic *communicatio idiomatum* seen?

Even with a superficial reading of the Constitution on the Church,<sup>18</sup> the frequency with which the pilgrim state of the Church—evidently the most characteristic aspect of the “People of God” concept—is

<sup>16</sup> In the present confusion about the meaning of the terms “history,” “historical,” “historic,” “historicity,” and of the German distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, Will Herberg’s article is helpful: “Five Meanings of the Word ‘Historical,’” *Christian Scholar* 47 (1964) 327 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Cullmann’s influence on Roman Catholic theologians seems to be in the ascendancy; cf. for instance *Mysterium salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, ed. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer, 1: *Die Grundlagen heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, unter Mitarbeit von Hans Urs von Balthasar (Einsiedeln, 1965); 2: *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, unter Mitarbeit von Hans Urs von Balthasar (Einsiedeln, 1967); Oscar Cullmann, “Die Reformbestrebungen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils im Lichte der Geschichte der katholischen Kirche,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 92 (1967) 9 ff.

<sup>18</sup> The Latin edition, *Sacrosanctum oecumenicum Concilium Vaticanum secundum, Constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia* (Vatican City, 1964), has been consulted. This is the same as the official text published in *Acta apostolicae sedis* 57 (1965) 1–67. We have tried to select representative passages; the English translation is taken from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, tr. Austin Garvey (London, 1965).

lifted up is striking. "The Church on this earth is at a distance from the Lord, in a state of pilgrimage. She has her being as it were in exile." Like Israel on pilgrimage in the desert, the Church is making her way through the present age in search for the city to come.<sup>19</sup> Yet a statistical survey of the "pilgrim Church" or the "People of God" passages shows that the number of those which represent this concept by itself is nominal as compared to those set in the context of the "Body of Christ" idea and in conjunction with the "Society" concept. The Church follows in Christ's footsteps, sharing his sufferings. "Our association with his sufferings is that of the body with its head." Therefore the pilgrimage is not a triumphal procession, but a migration through trouble and persecution, in humility and self-denial, in poverty, trial, and difficulties. More than once appearing but as a tiny flock, under the leadership of human shepherds, she does not seek earthly glory but heralds the cross and the death of her Lord.<sup>20</sup> "The Church proceeds on her pilgrim's course between the persecutions of the world and God's consolations." Wearing this age's fashion, a transient mode, spending her time surrounded by creatures who groan in travail, with sinners clasped to her bosom so that she is in constant need of cleansing, penance, and renewal, she reveals Christ's mystery in the world, albeit in darkness.<sup>21</sup>

If analyzed by themselves, i.e., without recognition of the full implications of the "Body of Christ" and even the "Society" context, these statements seem to indicate some awareness of the historicity of the Church.<sup>22</sup> Particular times with their tempers affect the life of the Church through the individuals who constitute her leadership and membership. The Council Fathers have indeed abandoned the attitude of triumphalism, which glorifies the high points in Church history by romantically escaping into past golden ages and climaxes of Catholic existence. Rather, in a confession of humility, they have directed their attention also to the periods of slump, failure, and inadequacy. They affirm that the Church exists to serve, not to govern, to give the glory not to herself but to God. Historical consciousness obviously generates realism.

<sup>19</sup> Constitution on the Church, nos. 6 and 9.      <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 5-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 8 (Augustine, *City of God* 18, 51, 2) and 48.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Congar, "The Church: The People of God," *op. cit.* (n. 14 above) pp. 23 f.: "Historicity Value." "Historicity" is here, of course, understood differently.

One may, therefore, be tempted to conclude that the Church has acknowledged her possible fallibility. But does she and can she really go so far as to dare confess actual fallibilities and errors, which, from a Protestant standpoint, would be the test of a full awareness of her historicity?<sup>23</sup> Will she admit an occasional apostasy from herself, and thereby certainly introduce the idea of discontinuity? Is there a recognition that, just as Christian man himself is bound up in his historicity such that his existence is marked not only by salvation by grace (*iustus*) but also by his constant falling from grace (*peccator*), so also the Church's history is characterized by her commission to represent the mystery of salvation in the world and at the same time by her inability to do so? Is it thereby recognized that whenever and wherever the miracle of the manifestation of the spiritual reality happens, it is God's and not the Church's work?<sup>24</sup> Is the idea of Christ's real presence in and identity with the Church seen in concomitance with his being over against and in distinction from the same Church which, by a unilateral insistence upon the identity, again and again tends to elevate herself to his place? Whatever the final answer, it is evident that the Constitution has injected a dialectic into the teaching on the Church. With the "People of God" motif, Roman Catholicism seems to acknowledge the "not yet" in some relation to the "already," the distinction in some relation to the identification between the historical, visible Church and the invisible, spiritual kingdom of God.

The penultimacy of the Church is also stressed by the frequent

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Skydsgaard's criticism of Congar, "The Church as Mystery and as People of God," *op. cit.* (n. 6 above) p. 161: "But never a word is said about the breaking of the covenant, of judgment, and of the wrath of God. . . . This is exactly the crossroads where our ways must part. We must ask whether silence on this important thought does not lead inevitably to an ecclesiology of glory."

<sup>24</sup> All of these questions, and especially the last two, are typically Protestant in character and reflect a difference in ecclesiological starting points. Protestantism develops its ecclesiology from the saint-sinner dialectic of a theological anthropology (cf. n. 49 below). In *Lumen gentium* the Church is identical with the People of God, but more of the passages place her between man and God as the "setting in which the communication between Christ's life to the believer takes place" (no. 7), as the "organ of salvation" (no. 8), as an "instrument of salvation" (no. 9), as a "visible sacrament" (no. 9). Therefore her *state* of holiness, despite her inadequacies, can be stressed over against the *call* to holiness for her members. The Church is removed from the saint-sinner dialectic and placed in a median position, which in Protestantism is held by word and sacrament. The Protestant senses here a deification in ecclesiology similar to that in Mariology.

statements concerning her eschatological expectancy as the characteristic attitude of the pilgrim Church. This hope motif has been given so much significance that it claims an entire chapter of its own (7). Again, as with the "People of God" motif, the aspect of hope, if seen by itself, seems to introduce a considerable shift in ecclesiology from the present to the future, thus permitting the present to appear as heavily relative to the future, the historical Church as in distinction from her goal. "The Church hopes and longs, with all her strength, to join her King in glory." She lifts her thoughts above, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God, until she shall be made manifest in glory with her husband. Her goal is the kingdom of God, which does not belong to this world.<sup>25</sup> Of course, this future good to which she stretches out in hope is already present.<sup>26</sup> But how much stress really falls on the "not yet" over against the "already" can be determined only when the eschatological motif is seen in its larger context of Pneumatology, just as the weight of the "People of God" and of the "pilgrim Church" passages can be finally determined only in their larger context of the "Body of Christ" and "Society" setting. The crucial question is: What are the relationships in this dialectic, horizontally between the present and the future, vertically between the spiritual nature and the historical manifestation of the Church?

The "Body of Christ" idea is the conceptual means to join together the "People of God" motif and the "Society" motif, which otherwise seem incompatible. As the Body of Christ, the Church is filled with the wealth of his glory, with his divine gifts, for she is his plenitude. From him she receives life, unity, motion, steadiness, and cohesion. The Church must not be thought of as two substances, but as a single complex reality, the compound of the human and the divine element. The brilliance of Christ shines on her face, for she is a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of unity for the whole human race. Through the apostles, martyrs, saints, and the Blessed Virgin, God makes his presence, his countenance, vividly manifest to men. The same holds true for the Church's sacraments.

<sup>25</sup> Constitution on the Church, nos. 5, 6, 9, and 13.

<sup>26</sup> The Church establishes and introduces this kingdom: *ibid.*, nos. 13, 5, etc.; cf. the following references.

The Eucharist gives reality to the unity of the faithful; baptism conveys the reality of association with Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>27</sup>

From this intermediate concept "Body of Christ" the transition to the societal, organizational aspect of the Church is possible. The Church not only proclaims the kingdom, but also establishes it among all nations, setting on earth the initial shoot of this kingdom's growth. The Church is a structure of God's design; in and from this visible framework the grace and truth is dispensed which Christ sheds over all mankind. The Church is a society equipped with hierarchical organs.<sup>28</sup> All these statements culminate in that formula generally regarded as coming closest in the document to a specific definition of the Holy Catholic Church, which in effect identifies "Christ's only Church" with the Roman Catholic Church: "This Church, founded and organized in this world as a society, has its existence in the Catholic Church under the government of Peter's successor and the bishops in communion with him, although outside her framework there are found many elements of holiness and truth, and they give impetus to universal unity, inasmuch as they are gifts which belong to Christ's Church."<sup>29</sup> Therefore she is Christ's only Church, whose unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity is confessed in the Creed.<sup>30</sup>

Hence we are led to conclude that the context given to the "People of God" motif, by itself historical in nature, modifies it to the point of compromising whatever quality of genuine historicity originally may have been attached to it. The state of the Church is not altogether seen historically in its humanity, but still from alien dogmatical presuppositions.<sup>31</sup> The more inclusive and historical concept of the

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 1, 3, 6-9, and 50.    <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, and 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 8. The exegetical crux of this sentence is in the verb "subsistit." For a Lutheran interpretation, cf. Wolfgang Dietzfelbinger, "Die Grenzen der Kirche nach der Dogmatischen Konstitution 'De Ecclesia,'" *Kerygma und Dogma* 11 (1965) 165 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Constitution on the Church, no. 8.

<sup>31</sup> A similar test of the degree to which a genuine understanding of historicity has been adopted is the use of the Scriptures in the Council documents. Vatican II has been assessed as a "return to the Bible," with cautious optimism also by Oscar Cullmann; cf. "The Bible in the Council," in *Dialogue on the Way* (n. 6 above) pp. 129 ff., and "Die Reformbestrebungen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils" (n. 17 above) cols. 9 ff. Despite the quantity of biblical references and the adoption of a dominantly *heilsgeschichtliche* terminology, the method of interpretation appears to the Protestant hardly historical-critical, but rather

“People of God” is interpreted on the basis of the two other concepts, “Body of Christ” and “Society,” which are more ontological, exclusive, organological, structural, and political in nature. The more static, vertical, and organizational mode of thinking still overshadows the historical frame of reference to the extent of replacing it. To be sure, the “People of God” concept needs to be supplemented at certain points by other concepts, because it does not contain all the features of the Church. Yet in the Constitution on the Church we find ultimately not a supplement but a replacement. The originally conservative schema has not been decisively altered by the apparent prominence given to the “People of God” idea. What appears to have been conceded and given with the one hand, is decidedly restricted or even taken away with the other. As in the case of *Mystici corporis*, the progressive theologians are well ahead of their Church. In fact, a Protestant is inclined to conclude that *Lumen gentium* has hardly superseded *Mystici corporis*, as far as the nature of the Church is concerned.

Consequently, the motif of eschatological hope loses much of its emphasis on the future when seen in its Pneumatological framework. The Church has been made manifest by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has his dwelling in the Church; he guides her into all truth, makes her one in fellowship and service, fits her out with gifts of different kinds, hierarchical and charismatic, and makes his fruits her adornment. By the power of the gospel, he gives the Church youth and continual renewal, and brings her finally safe to the consummation of union with her bridegroom. The activity of the Spirit renews the Church without intermission, so that she, through the strength of God’s grace, has the courage not to fall away from perfect loyalty through weakness in nature, but to persist as the bride worthy of her Lord.<sup>32</sup> Spirit and Church, as Christ and Church, are so intimately one that he never could step outside of her and stand over against her, challenging, criticizing, judging, and condemning.

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heavily determined by dogmatical principles. There is no differentiation between the historical levels of the texts. The passages still serve as proof texts of a dogmatical loci method. The Word does not stand over against the Church as a criterion, but is used as an instrument to interpret the existence of the Church. The Church is not seen in the light of the Word, but the Word in the light of the Church.

<sup>32</sup> Constitution on the Church, nos. 2, 4, and 9.

In this emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the direction toward the future, of course, is not eliminated. But it is stated in a characteristic manner. As the Spirit provides the Church with truth, unity, gifts, and constant renewal, so he guarantees her inner and external continuity towards the future which expresses itself in visible increase and growth in holiness. "The Church, or kingdom of Christ, now present in a mystery, enjoys, by the power of God, a visible growth in this world." She grows gradually on earth and sighs for the kingdom's full achievement. Her social framework serves the Spirit of Christ, her life-giver, for his bodily growth. Since this increase is external and visible, it provides also an uninterrupted continuity backward in the past.<sup>33</sup>

In contradistinction to these statements with regard to the visible increase of the Church, references to her growth in holiness are hard to find. To be sure, the spirit of penance and humility in *Lumen gentium* generally suggests that the Church at times has not lived up to the holiness given to her. But this confession never is stretched to imply an occasional lack or complete loss of holiness.<sup>34</sup> Growth in holiness of the Church is always understood as the realization of her given holiness, i.e., through the constant renewal by the Spirit her holiness is maintained without interruption. A concession of discontinuity is out of the question also with regard to the holiness of the Church: "She is believed to be unfailingly holy."<sup>35</sup>

As she is holy, however, so the individual believer in her, clergy and laymen alike, must *become* holy. They have a universal vocation to holiness, so that they gradually may grow up, in everything, into a due proportion with Christ.<sup>36</sup> The presence and manifestation of the future and of spiritual reality in this kind of Pneumatology, which

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 3, 5, and 8.

<sup>34</sup> Therefore reform cannot mean what Hans Küng's statement implies: "Warum dürfte eine Kirche, die nach allgemeinem katholischen Urteil irren kann, nicht auch zeigen dürfen, dass sie zu einer christlichen Konversion und Korrektion fähig ist?" (*Universitas*, 1966, no. 2, pp. 180 f.). Reform rather means renewal in the sense of an "Addition, Entwicklung und Ergänzung" of what is there and never has been totally lost (Gottfried Maron, in his excellent article "Der römische Katholizismus nach dem Konzil: Grundriss einer Analyse," *Materialdienst des konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim*, 1966, col. 3); cf. also Wolfgang Dietzfelbinger, in *Lutherische Monatshefte*, 1965, p. 578.

<sup>35</sup> Constitution on the Church, nos. 8 and 39.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 5; also no. 7.

emphasizes the state of holiness of the Church over against the movement toward holiness in the believer, seems characteristically Roman Catholic. Ecclesiology and anthropology are not as intimately interdependent as in Protestant thought.<sup>87</sup> For this reason, the ordained clergyman who by virtue of his office and ordination participates more in the "already" holiness of the Church, although in his own existence he is on the way of sanctification, is still distinguished from the lay people.<sup>88</sup>

The impression of an imbalance in the dialectic "not yet"—"already" toward the latter is not even removed by the "mystery" aspect of the Church, when seen in conjunction with the reality of the Spirit's presence in the Church and of her external growth. The whole of chapter 1 is devoted to "The Mystery of the Church," where ecclesiology receives its inner-Trinitarian foundation. As the category "growth" seems to express the teleological direction of the Church, so the category of "mystery" presents the pre-existent and supernatural origin of the Church. The "mystery" aspect is not abandoned when the Church is described as entering into and living through her historical existence, but is overshadowed by the emphasis upon the "Body of Christ," which qualifies the "People of God" motif. The Church is founded in the Father's free and secret plan of choosing, before time began, the believers to be assembled in the Church. She then enters a history of growing self-realization from the earliest foreshadowing, to the early manifestation in the Old Testament covenant, to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, until her glorious consummation at the end of the ages.<sup>89</sup> The mystery of salvation as revealed by Christ is mysteriously but really present in the Church, which enjoys a visible growth.

Therefore the Church, undergoing a gradual formation and re-

<sup>87</sup> See n. 24 above and n. 49 below.

<sup>88</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the "democratic" element of the "People of God" concept in chapter 2 is largely narrowed down in chapter 3, "The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church." The hierarchical pyramid is certainly not abandoned and consequently the difference between clergy and laymen cannot be merely functional but must be basic because of the different spiritual validity of the functions performed by these two classes. The laymen are ultimately still the passive receivers of the spiritual activity of the hierarchy, as illustrated graphically in the position of the Catholic lay delegates to the Council. There is evidently a difference not only in function but also in vocation and grace.

<sup>89</sup> Constitution on the Church, nos. 2 ff.



ceiving an increasing measure of revelation, is the rising shoot of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race because Christ has made her his saving instrument. While she expands all over the world throughout the ages, the Catholic Church is effective and constant in her aim to restore the whole of humanity under the head Christ in the unity of the Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Although the Church's origin lies in the inner-Trinitarian mystery, which remains with her on her way through history, she increasingly makes this mystery manifest in external growth and in the internal sanctification of her members, thereby reaching out universally to embrace all of mankind. Of course, she will not be able to manifest the kingdom of Christ on earth in fulness; yet she realizes it gradually and continuously.

To sum up, just as the "People of God" motif within the "Body of Christ" and the "Society" context, so also the "hope" and "mystery" aspects within the teaching on the Holy Spirit advance, in the final analysis, prevailingly the categories of unity, visibility, real presence, manifestation, universality, continuity, and institution, which provide the basis for the claim of absoluteness and exclusiveness.<sup>41</sup> The integration of the "historical" concepts "People of God" and "hope"

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 3, 7, 9, and 13.

<sup>41</sup> This claim becomes apparent if one takes the statements on the "boundaries" of the Church into consideration: cf. nos. 8, 13, and 14. At first sight, the limits of the Church seem extended beyond the borders of infused and renewed grace in the sacraments, ultimately valid only in the Roman Catholic Church, so as to embrace other Christians and even all human beings as potential members. This emphasis on the universality through general graces outside her limits seems to curtail the claim of exclusiveness. Hence the Church can now establish more positive relations with Israel, the non-Catholics, and even the nonbaptized. Certainly, the Church always has spoken of *gratia extra ecclesiam*, but now she seems to extend her reach to include this general grace and vocation for all as a function of herself. Our analysis, however, reveals that, despite this seeming extension of universality in terms of potential membership, the claim of exclusiveness of the Roman Catholic Church has not been, and could not be, given up. *Gratia extra ecclesiam* does not overrule *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Church and Roman Catholic Church are identical. Individuals may be latently connected with her, but Rome never acknowledged the fellowships of "separated brethren" as Churches, even potentially, but terms them "ecclesial communities." Although there is a real change in ecumenical attitude, Rome cannot alter its basic doctrinal position. The Roman Church now as ever considers herself in the center with concentric circles around her. The ecumenical movement must proceed from the respective peripheries to this center. There are, in the last analysis, no manifestations of the Body of Christ besides her. Cf. Wolfgang Dietzfelbinger, "Die Grenzen der Kirche" (n. 29 above), and Edmund Schlink, "Das Ergebnis des konziliaren Ringens um den Ökumenismus der römisch-katholischen Kirche," *Kerygma und Dogma* 11 (1965) 177 ff.

into their larger framework necessarily moves the stress from historicity toward continuity. The historical nature of the Church is dominantly understood in organic terms of growth into an ever-increasing, gradual, and uninterrupted manifestation of her internal, given holiness, as a process of outward realization of what she already has and is. The possibility that the Church at times reflects her own apostasy, i.e., demonstrates her inability and failure to represent what Christ is, is not adequately taken into account. This discontinuity between the mystery in Christ and its historical expression is compromised by the prevalence given to the category of unity between these two realities. Therefore the mystical, spiritual nature tends to become a possession of the institution, and is in danger of losing its character as a gift of grace, which becomes incarnate whenever and wherever God decides to verify and acknowledge the inadequate, external work of the Church. The Protestant would have to insist that the identity of the two realities is up to God's free, gracious decision, and not to the Church's manipulation and management, that it is therefore a matter of confession of faith rather than of historical demonstration.

The "already" still maintains the preponderance in the dialectic with the "not yet." Such an imbalance does not forcefully enough rule out the interpretation, wholly unacceptable for a Protestant, that the Church embodies Christ undialectically, viz., that, as the *Christus prolongatus*, she is the exclusive extension of the Incarnation. The externalization of Christ's divinity in the Church seems so stressed at the cost of his visible humanity that it encroaches upon his *exinanitio*. The invisible becomes successively realized in external forms of manifestation. Admittedly, Roman Catholicism, after the Encyclical *Mystici corporis*, displays a more ontological than juridical self-understanding, but the ontological is still a direct expression of the ontical, the penultimate character of the Church is still a demonstration of her ultimacy.

#### ECCLESIOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES

It cannot be our intention to show the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant teaching on the Church in their full extent and complexity. Such an attempt would meet with serious

impediments. For one, although the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church presents us with a rather clear expression of Roman Catholic ecclesiology, it is neither comprehensive, nor by all theologians considered as generally binding, nor does it take the full scope of present Roman Catholic thought on this subject into account. Furthermore, it is even more difficult, if not futile, to endeavor to reduce the varieties of Protestant beliefs concerning the Church to one common denominator. The diversity of conscious and unreflective convictions is at least in a direct, if not in a multiple, proportion with the shadings in the spectrum of Protestant denominations ranging from the Confessional Churches to Free Churches and Sects. Finally, a specific view of the Church is, in practice, never held universally within a given denomination, but rather a variety of ecclesiologies, running the gamut from an unrestrained liberalism to a rigid conservatism, can often be found within one church. A few Protestant theologians advance ecclesiologies even more strongly "Catholic" than the one held in *Lumen gentium*. The ecumenical fronts have broken open; there are Protestants whose thinking is more "Catholic" than Catholics, and there are Catholics who approximate a "Protestant" position. Denominational boundaries and theological differences are no longer necessarily identical.<sup>42</sup>

All the same, we can attempt to point out the basic differences and reduce the ecclesiological options to their principal alternatives if we disregard the multiplicity of modifying views and take the historical consciousness as a criterion. Such an attempt must remain, of course, sketchy and general.

Theology concerns itself with the interrelationship of two mutually exclusive, yet equally important realities which one may express in different categories, e.g., man and God, nature and grace, time and eternity, finitude and infinity, the horizontal and the vertical, sinner and saint, humanity and divinity, this-worldliness and other-worldliness, profane and sacred, existence and being, etc.<sup>43</sup> There seems to

<sup>42</sup> For that reason, we do not use in the following the terms Protestant and Catholic as designations of the two types of denominations, but generally in the connotation of two different modes of theological thinking.

<sup>43</sup> Philosophically, there are the corresponding two options of thinking this relationship in (Platonic or Aristotelian) realism and in nominalism; these are, epistemologically, the choices of Catholicism and Protestantism.

be a general agreement between Catholics and Protestants that these two realities are in a dialectical relation which is characterized by mutual exclusion and at the same time by a total unity, i.e., by a *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>44</sup> The unity and the distinction of these two realities must be thought and expressed, as they are lived, at the same time. In the teaching on the Church, as in all other areas of theology, this dialectic must be applied, here in the ecclesiological framework of the interrelationship between the spiritual kingdom of God as the *communio sanctorum* and the ecclesiastical organization as a historical and societal institution.

The theological or, in this case, the ecclesiological dilemma causing alternative options seems to arise out of man's inability to express the simultaneity of this dialectic. His limitation by time and space allows merely the juxtaposition and succession of what is to be thought, said, written, and what is lived, at the same time. Man may make his choice for the distinction first, although he must hasten to add the category of unity. Or he may select unity as his starting point, in which case the consideration of the distinction between the two realities can only be subsequent. Either way, the theologian, on account of his human limitations, unbalances the dialectic in favor of one of the categories, because that which is expressed first receives more emphasis and unavoidably qualifies the successive element.<sup>45</sup> Despite all desperate and ultimately frustrating efforts at constantly insisting that the subsequent statement is to be contemporaneous with the one he is making just then, the theologian's choice of categories in this moment determines the prominence of one side within the dialectic. He can say either "yes" or "no" at one time, although he wishes and intends to say "yes" and "no" at the same time. And it is precisely this *et* between *sic et non* as the indication of our historical, temporal, and spatial conditioning that causes the fundamental dilemma evident in the ecclesiological alternatives.

The Catholic option is characterized by the fact that it attempts to express unity first; therefore the distinction is involuntarily de-emphasized by the unavoidable subordination to the category of

<sup>44</sup> At least in Christology this dialectic is agreed upon, since Catholics and Protestants alike affirm the doctrinal formulas of the Council of Chalcedon.

<sup>45</sup> Nestorianism and Eutychianism are the constant dangers on the respective sides.

unity.<sup>46</sup> Such a point of departure has far-reaching implications—as indeed also the choice of the opposite starting point—in its application to the different areas of theology, especially in the teaching on the Church. Manifestation, demonstration, realization, fixation, and evidence of the transcendent reality in the ecclesiastical institution, in the sacraments, in the dogmas, in the ministerial offices, in personal life, in nature, and in history can be maintained as not only possible but actual—up to the point of an undialectical realization. There is, of course, an endeavor to preserve the dialectic in that Catholic theologians strive subsequently to bring the categories of distinction into play: in the Constitution *Lumen gentium*, for example, the categories of “People of God,” “pilgrim Church,” “eschatological hope,” and “mystery” are employed in order to stress the “not yet” of the real presence. Yet the Protestant suspects that the dialectic is tipped, because the category of distinction is circumscribed by the prevailing category of unity in a finally unbalanced synthesis. This one-sidedness becomes explicit in the idea of growth, continuity, and transformation. All of this then provides the ground for claims of absoluteness, universality, and exclusiveness.

The Protestant alternative originates with the reaction to this initial choice of unity. Consequently, it places the accent on “distinction,” without however wishing to lose thereby the category of unity.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, by its primal choice it is apt to place the stress on the difference, otherness, and discontinuity of the transcendent reality in its real presence, and on the relativity, penultimacy, and historicity of the immanent reality in relation to the transcendent. This way of thinking shows a greater appreciation for the temporality, finiteness, and conditionings of man, which is quite obvious in the Protestant teaching on the total depravity of man and, conversely, in the Reforma-

<sup>46</sup> Cf., for instance, Congar: “We have studied the Church ‘from above downwards’ . . . . But we have only to look ‘from below upwards’ and see the Church as we actually know her. . . .” (*Divided Christendom*, p. 89).

<sup>47</sup> A brilliant example of the Protestant approach is found in Gerhard Ebeling’s *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Kirche und ihrer Verkündigung als theologisches Problem* (Tübingen, 1954), tr. Grover Foley, *The Problem of Historicity in the Church and Its Proclamation* (Philadelphia, 1967). I have tried to show that this Protestant option underlies Rudolf Bultmann’s theology; cf. “Kerygma and History,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 33 (1965) 26, particularly n. 5.

tion "soleisms." In fact, Martin Luther's theology is most representative of the Protestant approach. Certainly, the Protestant theologian also tries to bring to bear the opposite side of the dialectic. Yet, because of his initial choice, he can express the unity in the distinction only as a *paradoxical* coincidence, which must of necessity be, in its time dimension, punctiliar in character: *simul iustus et peccator*.

For this reason, the Protestant will find it impossible to develop an ecclesiology on the basis of a median, sacramental position of the Church between God and man;<sup>48</sup> for such an approach would remove her too much from historical reality and, in consequence, would dangerously neglect the category of distinction in the dialectic. His ecclesiological point of departure must lie in the intersection where God's reality breaks into man's. This means that the structure of God's action in man's justification will have to be carried over from its existential, individual dimension to the communal, societal, and institutional dimension of the Church.<sup>49</sup> A Protestant ecclesiology thus grows out of a theological, not ontological, anthropology. The relationship between the invisibility and visibility of the Church, between kingdom of Christ and institutional organization, between present possession and future hope of salvation, and the like, will be seen in a structural analogy to the paradoxical coincidence of *simul iustus et peccator*, as "having" and "not yet having" at the same time, but stressing the latter and thereby seeing the "having" as a matter of faith, confession, and proclamation rather than demonstration and evidence.

Moreover, because of the prevalence of distinction in his view of the dialectic, the Protestant will not find himself able to reverse the relationship between the two realities. As the one direction of the relation, from "above" to "below," is characterized as unity, so the

<sup>48</sup> Cf. n. 24 above.

<sup>49</sup> That Martin Luther's ecclesiology is developed out of his understanding of God's relationship to man (which is basically a dialectic of gospel and law, and expresses itself in man's existence as the saint-sinner dialectic) has been shown beyond any doubt by Karl Holl, "Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirchenbegriff" (1915), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte 1: Luther* (Tübingen, 1948) 288 ff. "Denn auch an dieser Stelle sieht man sich wieder in den Mittelpunkt von Luthers Gedankenwelt zurückgeführt. Seine Rechtfertigungslehre war es, die unmittelbar auch seine neue Auffassung der Kirche hervortrieb" (p. 289).

other, from "below" to "above," irreversibly as distinction: Christ is the Church, but the Church is not Christ;<sup>50</sup> the future is present, but the present is not the future; the invisible is one with the visible, but the visible is not identical with the invisible. If the Protestant carries his method to its utmost consistency, he will finally forgo any idea of growth and continuity in favor of reflection upon radically punctiliar, paradoxical intersections of the two mutually exclusive realities.

Both the Catholic and the Protestant qualifications of the dialectic can be, and have been, stretched to their extreme, when the respective other side of the dialectic is repressed to the point of disappearance. Here looms the danger of heresy on both sides. Absoluteness and exclusiveness as the result of an undialectical stress on the unity of the realities mark the final immanentism of a rigid, extreme Catholic position. On the other hand, Protestant sectarianism is similarly absolute and exclusive in consequence of its undialectical emphasis on the otherness of the transcendent reality in the distinction, which becomes evident in an extreme transcendentalism, i.e., spiritualism and retreat from the world. Reformation Protestantism, last but not least, is in the heretical danger, as already indicated above, of absolutizing the aspect of distinction and discontinuity, despite its recognition of the equal importance of the two realities. Such an approach may lead eventually to relativism, pluralism, subjectivism, contextualism, and indifference.

Genuine Catholicism and Protestantism try to maintain a dialectic balanced as much as possible. But since they must qualify it by respectively prevalent emphases, they both are constantly apt to fall into a final distortion of their nature. Therefore both are in a perpetual need of reformation, *ecclesia semper reformanda*. Besides this "heretical" danger within each approach, there is at the same time also a very real "ecumenical" temptation, viz., that one becomes so profoundly aware of the impossibility of being genuinely dialectical in his own denominational preference that he moves over to the

<sup>50</sup> This irreversibility, due to the rejection of an *analogia entis* method, has been repeatedly pointed out by Karl Barth; cf., for instance, "The Concept of the Church" (a translation of "Der Begriff der Kirche," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 5 [1927] 365 ff.), in *Christianity Divided*, ed. D.J. Callahan, H. A. Oberman, and D. J. O'Hanlon, S.J. (New York, 1961) pp. 153 ff.; cf. also Christof Bäuml, *loc. cit.* (n. 11 above).

other side. In the ecumenical encounter—and this is one of its blessings—the Catholic as well as the Protestant becomes often so keenly conscious of the deficiency of his own dialectic that he stretches out to the emphasis of the other. Here the force of the original simultaneity of the two realities, which have been broken apart, is felt. Such a longing for the “lost paradise” seems more frequent with theologians who opt for the Protestant alternative, since they take the split in existence as more radically serious. Yet the Catholic theologian likewise must feel an attraction to the other side, because he will sooner or later come to realize that the historical, natural, and existential reality is not fully taken into account in his approach.

A conversion to the other alternative, however, will eventually expose the theologians on both sides, once again, to their respective opposite dilemmas, so that the ecumenical problem hardly is solved by giving way to these powers of attraction. Neither will the Protestant find an ultimate rest in Catholic security, nor the Catholic true historicity in the Protestant venture. It seems that short of an eschatological transitus, when the limits of time and space are removed, the endeavor of expressing in word and thought the simultaneity of the two mutually exclusive realities remains an impossible possibility. Absoluteness and relativity, identity and variability, unity and particularity, continuity and historicity, authority and freedom, tradition and progress—in short, a *theologia perennis* and a *theologia viatorum*—will always constitute a dialectical tension, offering two theological and ecclesiological alternatives of emphasis. As irreconcilable as they are in themselves, they could possibly be held without giving up their peculiarities in one overarching Church, if she could tolerate the coexistence of these two divergent yet mutually complementary theological approaches.