

CURRENT THEOLOGY

DIALOGUE IN ECCLESIOLOGY

Dialogue is a "magic" word today. Dialoguing is going on everywhere, within and without the Catholic Church, within and without Christianity, within and without the ranks of believers. Still more important is the fact that dialoguing is experienced not only within and without the groups just mentioned, but also between them. Gaps are being bridged, if not in order to eliminate difficulties, at least to assure objectivity in understanding the basic positions of those who happen to have taken a different stance from one's own concerning important historical facts, traditionally accepted structures, or texts of primary importance.

In ecclesiology, which is a rapidly growing field of theological investigation, dialoguing has perhaps been more instrumental in effecting important changes and in bringing about deeper understanding of and interest in the ecclesiological framework of the different Christian Churches than any other factor responsible for development in contemporary theology. It is the purpose of this survey to study some of the results of the dialogue in reference to the theological concept of the Church.¹

CHURCH AS HISTORICAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL REALITY

In a lecture delivered at St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas, Feb. 28, 1967, Carl E. Braaten of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago made some very pertinent observations.² He not only recognizes the fact that ecclesiology is the most underdeveloped dogmatic area of theology today, but also questions the prevailing images and attitudes toward the Church among both Catholics and Protestants. And he does so in view of some important facts generally admitted today. The following may suffice for the purpose of this study.

First, the New Testament does not offer any dogmatic definition of the Church; "instead, we have a plurality of images that give flashes

¹ Dialoguing is not the result of Vatican II. The Council merely served to promote it as a fruitful method of theology in this ecumenical age. As a matter of fact, Yves Congar's *Chrétiens désunis* (Paris, 1937) can be looked upon as the starting point of theological dialoguing on the Catholic side. As the first volume of the *Unam sanctam* series, it clearly signified a totally new orientation in theological perspective. On the official level, Paul VI's *Ecclesiam suam* (Aug. 6, 1964) used the concept abundantly. The entire third section of the Encyclical is devoted to dialoguing.

² "The Church in Ecumenical and Cultural Cross-Fire," *Theology Digest* 15 (1967) 283-94.

of insight into the mystery of the Church."³ Second, due to this plurality of images there are many ecclesiologies. In fact, "doctrinal pluralism *may* serve as a sign of the depth and the fulness of the mystery of the Church."⁴ Consequently, looking at the same reality from the opposite point of view, "the ecumenical movement has foundered on the attempt to develop an over-arching conception of the Church as the basis for unity."⁵ Third, while dogmatic uniformity may be objected to, the Christian conscience must certainly be troubled by the fact that what we actually face today is not a plurality of ecclesiologies but contradictory ones. And as such they cannot be equally true. Then he adds the following significant passage:

Up to Vatican II, most Roman Catholic theologians—and we shared that view—imagined that if anywhere there existed a dogmatically precise and fully developed concept of the Church, it was in Roman Catholicism. We have been surprised to observe the degree of sheer flux, even lively debate, on the doctrine of the Church in contemporary Roman Catholic theology. I believe the quest for the true nature of the Church, its essential marks and functions, is now as much a subject of inquiry among Roman Catholic as among Protestant theologians. Protestant^s, of course, have been used to flux and even chaos in doctrinal inquiry. This is the price they have had to pay for the freedom of radical questioning. They derive some comfort from the fact that more and more Roman Catholic theologians are willing to join in paying that price. For freedom of honest inquiry is a basic presupposition in reaching a consensus on the Church that will pioneer the way to reunion.⁶

Whether or not consensus on the Church and subsequent reunion are realistic possibilities remains to be seen. It is, however, absolutely clear that the hopes and efforts, the mutual esteem and sincere interest, the penitent spirit and *rapprochement* of today's theology and theologians would never have been possible without the creative spirit of the dialogue. For it was the dialogue, first and foremost, that helped the theologian understand the fundamentally historical and eschatological nature of the Church. It was the dialogue that ended for good the one-sided approach to theology, and replaced it with a plurality of approaches forcing the searching mind to contrast the different views

³ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 285. He also says: "What we are experiencing at the present time is a profound struggle for an adequate (true) doctrine of the Church comparable to the decades, even centuries, of conflict in the ancient Church for the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the God-manhood of Jesus Christ. What is rather surprising is that it has taken the Church twenty centuries to come around to the question of a true definition concerning itself. I do not suggest that the doctrine of the Church has been a sign of weakness. It may well be, on the contrary, a symptom of health" (p. 284).

⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Ibid.*

and possibilities before drawing any conclusions of lasting value. And it was the dialogue, most of all, that shed light on the Church both as one of the deepest mysteries of Christianity and as a historical and eschatological reality the understanding of which depends not only on its past but also on its future. For it is true that "the quest for a fully developed doctrine of the Church can be satisfied only when theology is recast in an eschatological mould, only when it thinks from the end toward the present, from the coming kingdom of God to the Church by way of the world."⁷

Congar's Pioneering Concept of Universality

If this ecclesiological outlook is a far cry from the triumphalist concept of the Church, its realization was slow and painstakingly agonizing in the Catholic Church. It may be recalled, however, that while the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ was reaching its climax in the late thirties and early forties, creating the impression that Catholic ecclesiology was perhaps entering its final and permanent stage of development, some theologians were just beginning to work in the opposite direction by stressing the historical and eschatological elements of the Church in applying to it the biblical concept of the People of God.

Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., was a pioneering giant in this regard. In his *Chrétiens désunis*, published in 1937,⁸ he reached the conclusion that the Mystical Body is not coterminous with the visible unity of the Church.⁹ This conclusion was made possible by Congar's understanding of the catholicity of the Church, not as geographic and temporal extension of the Church to all men of every country, but first and foremost as universality of truth, universality of redemption, and universality of spiritual goods, virtues, and gifts. And only in view of these can one speak of the Church's universality in time, meaning by it her extension in history from the first just man Abel to the end of time, and even beyond it.¹⁰

One can see immediately that this concept of universality, in-

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁸ Cf. also the following works of Congar: *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'église* (1950), *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (1953), *Sainte église* (1964); cf. also *La Tradition et les traditions* 1: *Essai historique* (1961), and 2: *Essai théologique* (1963); *La Tradition et la vie de l'église* (1963). Congar has also published many articles on the subject.

⁹ Cf. *Chrétiens désunis*, pp. 280, 282-83.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 117. The following lines are particularly important: "La catholicité de l'Eglise, considérée comme propriété de son être, est l'universalité dynamique de son unité: la capacité qu'ont ses principes d'unité d'assimiler, de combler, d'exalter, de gagner à Dieu et de réunir en lui tout l'homme et tous les hommes, tout valeur d'humanité" (p. 117). For the qualitative and quantitative use of universality, see note 1 on p. 116.

cluded in the very essence of the Church's catholicity, made it mandatory for Congar to envisage the Church as a historical and eschatological reality that embraces all cultures and temperaments, all values and experiences. For it is her duty to assimilate and to consecrate diversity by incorporating the manifold human values into herself under the dynamic concept of unity.

One can, of course, object to Congar's theological method, basically analytic and scholastic; but one can never deny the value of his pioneering work in Catholic theological circles. Pressing all the time for a thorough study of history and for a return to the sources, he not only banned simplistic solutions, a priori and abstract reasoning, and amateurish enthusiasm from his ecclesiological research, but on biblical and historical grounds he conceived the Church as essentially a community that receives and lives on the gift of God.

For this very reason she can only be understood as an eschatological reality. In fact, in the end she will be nothing else but the gift of God without any need of institutional elements in her service. At present, however, as an in-between creation between the Incarnation and the fulness of Christ, the Church must be both the gift of God and an institution, but in such a way that word and sacrament come first, and visible society second. For only in this way is it made absolutely clear that the Church must always remain entirely relative to the two foci of her existence: Christ incarnate and the Christ of the Parousia.¹¹ In this essential relativity of her nature the Church can really function as a vast sacrament that prolongs the mediative mission of Christ in the Spirit for the world.

Chrétiens désunis is hardly relevant today. Yet without it contemporary Catholic ecclesiology would not have started on a new path as early and as effectively as it actually did. But even in its outmodedness its basic value remains intact: it has brought back to the Church her essentially historical and eschatological nature, and made a tremendous effort toward establishing a theologically creative dialogue with the separated Christian Churches.

ECCLESIAL NATURE OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES

The second most important outcome of the ecclesiological dialogue is concerned with the ecclesial nature of the non-Catholic Christian communities. The problem is posed in this way, naturally, from the Catholic point of view. Not because it is the only legitimate one, but because the problem has always been more burdensome for Catholics than for other Christians. It is a known fact, for example, that up to Vatican

¹¹ Cf. Jean-Pierre Jossua, O.P., *Le Père Congar* (Paris, 1967) p. 105.

Council II¹² official Roman Catholic documents never referred to the Protestant communities as Churches. Since Vatican II they have. And they have done so in the new understanding of their ecclesial nature and operations spelled out especially in the Decree on Ecumenism. The following passage is particularly meaningful:

The brethren divided from us also carry out many of the sacred actions of the Christian religion. Undoubtedly, in ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community, these actions can truly engender a life of grace, and can be rightly described as capable of providing access to the community of salvation.

It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects already mentioned, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.¹³

This text, coupled with number 15 of *Lumen gentium*, seems to indicate a possible new orientation toward the non-Catholic Churches in Catholic theological reflection. While in past efforts the only criteria for their Christian character were found in the so-called *vestigia*, in the elements of the Church retained from the common heritage even after their separation from the Catholic Church and taken quantitatively, the above texts seem to suggest that besides the *vestigia* the promptings and operations of the Holy Spirit, manifested in the different Christian Churches, must be given very serious consideration. In this regard, *Lumen gentium* is particularly indicative:

Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood. In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this goal.¹⁴

It is naturally understood that none of the statements of Vatican II quoted here can or should be considered in isolation. In the documents they are always found in connection with the *vestigia*.¹⁵ Yet they

¹² Cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, nos. 3 and 4; also *Lumen gentium*, nos. 8 and 15.

¹³ Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1966) p. 346.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, no. 15 (*Documents*, pp. 33-34); *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 3 (*Documents*, pp. 345-46).

might bring the Catholic theologian closer to his Protestant counterpart in the fundamental concern of how to "locate" the Church, how to formulate her unity, and what kind of unity to look for. Is it the unity already possessed in Christ or is it the external, visible manifestation of the internal unity that should be the decisive factor in discovering the sanctifying presence of the Spirit of Christ in the Church?¹⁶

The theological dialogue has brought about salutary developments also in reference to this problem. While Protestant theologians have clearly recognized the principle of institutionalization as an essential element of the Church, Catholic theologians have stressed the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the instrumentality of the institutional aspect in His operations. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

Fries: Stress on Reintegration

Heinrich Fries,¹⁷ after having described the Church as the gift of salvation [having its origin in divine revelation], as the mediator of salvation [handing on word and sacrament through instituted ministry], and as the fruit of salvation [the *congregatio fidelium*], sums up the Protestant understanding of the Church by stating that while the gift- and fruit-aspects are clearly retained in Protestant ecclesiologies, the Church as mediator of salvation is generally rejected in them. Consequently, what was originally intended by Protestantism as merely corrective of the Church became constitutive of something new.

Where, then, does the solution lie? Fries finds it in the distinct idea of reintegration. While return or reunion may sound too one-sided and overly negative to Protestant ears, reintegration has the distinctive characteristic of contributing something original to the restoration of Catholic plurality in unity. In addition to preserving the *vestigia*, the Protestant Churches will be in the position of contributing to the reintegrated whole their own understanding and development of the retained elements, based on the sociological, psychological, and cultural factors of their own human history.

¹⁶ Cf., e.g., Albert C. Outler, *The Christian Tradition and the Unity We Seek* (New York, 1957); Nils Ehrenstrom and Walter G. Muelder (eds.), *Institutionalism and Church Unity* (New York, 1963).

¹⁷ "The Ecclesiological Status of the Protestant Churches from a Catholic Viewpoint," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964) 195-212; cf. also his *Aspects of the Church* (Westminster, Md., 1966) pp. 111-35.

Baum: Emphasis on Institutional and Communal

One can see immediately that, though Fries tries very hard to recognize the ecclesial nature of the Protestant Churches, actually he does not go beyond the traditional concept of the *vestigia ecclesiae*. But Gregory Baum does.¹⁸ He even resents Vatican II's seemingly quantitative approach to the interpretation of the *vestigia* in reference to the ecclesial nature of the Churches. In fact, he clearly distinguishes between the Church as an institution and the Church as communion. Ideally, these two aspects belong together; in reality, however, one of them can be overemphasized to the detriment of the other. And history bears witness that such overemphasis has taken place quite often.

What to say, then, about the Protestant Churches? Baum answers unhesitatingly that the institutional aspect as the criterion of the ecclesial nature of the Protestant Churches is certainly incomplete. But this is just one part of the answer. This institutional incompleteness can be counterbalanced by the communion aspect of the Church in the concrete and working fellowship of those who make up the local community of the Body of Christ. Baum even indicates that this new understanding is due to the operations of the Holy Spirit, though the text of Vatican II which he cites hardly supports his interpretation.¹⁹

Mühlen: Emphasis on Sanctificatory and Consecratory Aspects

Baum's idea that both the institutional and communal aspects must be taken seriously for the ecclesial character of any Church has been carried further in the vein of creative dialogue by Heribert Mühlen. The fact that he has built his whole ecclesiology on the Holy Spirit in his very original and richly promising definition of the Church as the mystery of the identity of the Holy Spirit in Christ and Christians, or as one Person in many persons,²⁰ has enabled him to take a most satis-

¹⁸ "The Ecclesial Reality of the Other Churches," in *The Church and Ecumenism*, ed. Hans Küng (*Concilium* 4; New York, 1965) pp. 62-76; cf. also his article "The Constitution of the Church," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 2 (1965) 1-30; "What Are the Other Churches?" *Ecumenist* 2 (1963) 1-4.

¹⁹ He actually refers to no. 14 of *Lumen gentium*, which reads: "They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and through union with her visible structure are joined to Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops" (*Documents*, p. 33). This text states nothing beyond the fact that the Holy Spirit's presence is absolutely necessary for incorporation into the Church.

²⁰ Cf. *Der heilige Geist als Person* (2nd ed.; Münster, 1966); *Una mystica persona* (Munich, 1964); "Das Verhältnis zwischen Inkarnation und Kirche in den Aussagen des

factory stand in reference to the ecclesial nature of the Christian Churches. Standing firmly on biblical grounds²¹ and subscribing fully to Vatican II's analogy between the Incarnation and the Church,²² he considers the Church not as the continuation of the Incarnation, but rather as the continuation of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit.

Now Christ's anointing had two distinguishable aspects: the sanctificatory and the consecratory. While the former sanctified His assumed sacred humanity, the latter placed Him in His messianic office.²³ These two functions also prevail in the life of the Christian. In view of sanctificatory anointing, he is the recipient of the Holy Spirit for his own salvation, while consecratory anointing makes him a mediative instrument of the grace of God for the sake of others. Accordingly, as the continuation of Christ's anointing, the Church must faithfully preserve both the sanctificatory and the consecratory functions. While the first could be taken care of even in an invisible Church, the realization of the second always requires visibility and some structure in the Church by the very nature of her messianic office and of her sacramental character.

In view of this, Mühlen can conclude that there is no need for the Catholic Church to enumerate quantitatively the *vestigia* preserved by the separated Churches when these Churches too understand themselves as being valid representatives of the whole of Christendom. One should rather say that the unity of the one Church of Christ will be realized to the extent that the visible, historic concreteness of the sending of Christ's Spirit is recognized, is believed in, and is materialized. And he adds immediately that the measure of the realization of this visible concreteness of the sending of Christ's Spirit, willed by Christ, is in no way attained even in the Catholic Church, although there the concreteness itself is basically recognized and accepted in faith—in contradiction to the other Churches.

Consequently, *all* the Christian Churches are still on the road toward the eschatological manifestation of the sending of Christ's Spirit. But while this marching still goes on, the visible nature of the spiritual offices installed by Christ can help the Christian foretaste to a certain extent the expected eschatological event. And this visible concreteness

Vaticanum II," *Theologie und Glaube* 55 (1965) 171-90; "Die Kirche als die geschichtliche Erscheinung des übergeschichtlichen Geistes Christi," *ibid.*, pp. 270-89; "Der Kirchenbegriff des Konzils," in J. C. Hampe (ed.), *Autorität der Freiheit* 1 (Munich, 1967) 291-313.

²¹ Cf. *Una mystica persona* 8.01-8.43.

²² Cf. *Lumen gentium*, no. 8 (*Documents*, p. 22).

²³ Cf. *Una mystica persona* 9.75-9.103.

remains actually the only criterion for the ecclesial nature of the Churches, owing to the fact that the Spirit Himself is one and the same in all of them.²⁴ Mühlen, therefore, combines the visible and the invisible elements of the Church beautifully, attributing pre-eminence to the Holy Spirit in such a way that even the handing on of the word, the office, and the sacraments is made possible only by the very presence of the same Spirit through the Church in history. His conclusion constitutes a real example of fruitful dialoguing in ecclesiology.

The introduction of consecratory anointing looks especially promising for further theological understanding. Not only does it offer plausible answers to the questions concerned with the difference between the "anonymous" Christian and the baptized Christian, by pointing out that only sanctificatory anointing is available to the first, while the second partakes of both the sanctificatory and the consecratory functions; it also offers solid biblical argument on behalf of the "divine" origin of ecclesiastical offices without requiring any specific act of direct institution on our Lord's part. The mere fact that the Church is the continuation of His anointing, of His consecratory function, makes it mandatory for the Church to be recognizable as an anointed and sacramental community.

What does this mean concretely? Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that it means what the Reformers wanted to express by saying that the Church exists where the word of God is truly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered.²⁵ The words "truly" and "rightly" refer by their very nature to a measuring rod, to a norm that would determine the constitutive elements of true preaching and of valid sacramental operation. Where could this norm be found if not in the consecratory anointing of the Church effected by the Holy Spirit for the continuation of Christ's messianic office on behalf of mankind?

Without such a norm, the Church would be given undue "divinization" for her own sake. With it, the same Church is presented to mankind as a vast sacrament in the hands of the Holy Spirit to promote, to help bring about, the eschatological fulfilment of Christ's consecratory anointing. Word and sacrament, then, require that the consecratory function too be recognized as fundamental and essential to the nature and operation of the Church. Neither office in itself nor word in itself

²⁴ Cf. "Die Kirche als die geschichtliche Erscheinung des übergeschichtlichen Geistes Christi," *Theologie und Glaube* 55 (1965) 289.

²⁵ Cf. art. 7 of the *Augsburg Confession*; Calvin's *Institutes* 4, 1, 9; art. 19 of the *Thirty-nine Articles*; cf. also Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York, 1965) esp. pp. 98-102.

can function as an autonomous and self-sufficient norm for the Church. The two are joined, together with sacrament, in the consecratory anointing of the Church and mandate the recognition of their mutual interdependence by Christianity as such.²⁶

VISIBLE STRUCTURE: MEANING AND FUNCTION

In view of what has been said, two consequences must be quite clear. First, the usual question, whether any particular visible structure of the Church is the result of God's direct instituting will or simply a matter of human expediency, is not relevant at all. As a matter of fact, nowhere in the Bible can one find a univocal presentation or interpretation of Church office. But neither can one simply and totally reject it because of the lack of such a univocal concept. The Bible leaves no doubt concerning the fact that the foundation of the Church is located in the mission of Christ.²⁷ And this mission is precisely the fulfilment of His messianic office, or, to return to the concept of this essay, the concretization of His consecratory anointing with the Holy Spirit.

It is perhaps worth while noting on this point that when Vatican II spells out the analogy between the Church and the mystery of the Incarnate Word, it pointedly sets up the parallel between Christ's humanity and the communal structure of the Church as living instruments of salvation: "Just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the communal structure of the Church serve Christ's Spirit, who vivifies it by way of building up the body (cf. Eph 4:16)."²⁸

This analogy indicates the similarity of the relationship between the divine Word and His human nature on the one hand, and between the communal structure of the Church and the Holy Spirit on the other. It does not intend to spell out the Church's relationship with Christ. Christ's humanity and ecclesial communal structure are, then, essential notes of consecratory anointing, and this is perhaps sufficient for the "divine origin" of ecclesiastical office.

Biblical Basis of This New Concept

If these lines seem to say possibly too little in regard to the origin of office in the Church from the traditional Catholic point of view, another statement of Vatican II could offer assistance and light to the inquiring mind. Writing about political authority in the Pastoral Con-

²⁶ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ministerial Office and the Unity of the Church," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964) 42-57.

²⁷ Cf. Jn 20:21; 17:18; Mk 1:22-27; cf. also Ratzinger, *art. cit.*, p. 46.

²⁸ *Lumen gentium*, no. 8 (*Documents*, p. 22).

stitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council fathers say in particular: "It is therefore obvious that the political community and public authority are based on human nature and hence belong to an order of things divinely foreordained. At the same time the choice of government and the method of selecting leaders is left to the free will of citizens."²⁹

If one can speak of political authority as "divinely foreordained," although it is directly rooted only in created human nature, to speak of the "divine origin" of the communal structure of the Church is much more meaningful and justified because it rests on the solid biblical notion of consecratory anointing and not only on human expediency. As a matter of fact, it is precisely consecratory anointing that completes the scattered findings of the Bible in reference to office and sheds light on the "very different elements which stand obscure and unresolved next to one another."³⁰ It is the biblical notion of consecratory anointing that validates J. Ratzinger's summation of the New Testament findings in the following three succinct statements:

1. Word does not exist without Office. It is bound to witness and further to that Deputization in Power and to Mission. A hypostaticized, autonomous Word is not found here.

2. Office and Unity are very closely linked together by virtue of the fact that church unity is itself linked to the unity of apostolic Deputization in Power; outside of that apostolic context no church can exist.

3. Within the diversity of Offices we come upon the commission of Paul to the Gentiles on one side; on the other side the obvious meaning of Jerusalem for Jewish-Christianity appears. Peter, as the bearer of the special commission of first witness going back to Christ Himself, emerges then as the connecting element between the two groups.³¹

Consequences of Neglecting This New Concept

If Carl Braaten is right in saying it is dubious that even "Roman theologians have yet achieved a fully developed consensus on the legitimating basis and function of the hierarchy,"³² the doubt is caused by a position which tries to tie the problem of the communal structure of the Church directly to the instituting will of God, instead of studying it in the light of the consecratory anointing of Christ and the Christian that requires it simply and convincingly. Neglecting or eliminating the importance of this consecratory anointing would only

²⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, no. 74 (*Documents*, p. 284).

³⁰ Ratzinger, *art. cit.*, pp. 52-53. ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³² "The Church in Ecumenical and Cultural Cross-Fire," *Theology Digest* 15 (1967) 287.

perpetuate the Protestant objection that "the Catholic case for its papal and episcopal *doctrines* is lacking any direct and clear biblical foundations."³³

But it would also be a painful reminder to Protestants that not to recognize the elements of "early Catholicism" in the New Testament would be a fateful mistake and would go directly against what Christianity is supposed to be, i.e., the living continuation of Christ's anointing. Neither Protestant nor Catholic theologians can turn to the Bible on this point and argue on behalf of their positions merely by quoting texts. What needs to be understood by them is the biblical testimony to the Holy Spirit's anointing of Christ and of the Christian in the same way and for the same purpose. If and when this is done, the road is open again to the grasping of the analogy between Christ's humanity and the communal structure of the Church. Consecratory anointing will bridge the gap in such an illuminating way that both Catholic and Protestant theologians will be able to say:

Ultimately we may come to see that the idea of apostolic succession expresses what is common to the various Churches rather than what divides them: the succession, not only of the apostles, but also of the prophets and the teachers, and, finally, of all the charismatic functions as the expression of the will of all the Churches to remain true to the Gospel and to let the apostolic message be expressed anew every day. Then orderly apostolic succession will express the will of all the Churches to live by the message of the apostles and their Lord, not as an anarchical, self-opinionated, autonomous and merely incidental agglomeration of different people, but as the orderly, obedient, faithful and serving community of Jesus Christ. The manner in which this is worked out will show how faithful every Church is to the Gospel. This is bound to have its effect on the brotherhood of the individual Churches. All the Churches have to face this eminently critical issue of how to be apostolic through succession.³⁴

Reciprocal Character of Witness (Office) and Word

But recognition of the communal structure is just one of the two conclusions one must reach in view of consecratory anointing. The second one is as important as the first, and has already been indicated to some extent in the above quotation from Hans Küng. It can be deepened as follows.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

³⁴ Hans Küng, "Preface," in *Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity* (*Concilium* 34) p. 2; cf. also Küng, "What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" *ibid.*, pp. 28-35; Johannes Remmers, "Apostolic Succession: An Attribute of the Whole Church," *ibid.*, pp. 36-51; Avery Dulles, "The Succession of Prophets in the Church," *ibid.*, pp. 52-62; Arnold van Ruler, "Is There a Succession of Teachers?" *ibid.*, pp. 63-73.

It is a basic biblical truth "that there exists a reciprocal relationship in the connection of Witness and Word."³⁵ Communal structure as the instrument of the Holy Spirit's operations is intended to guarantee the first leg of that relationship, i.e., the binding of the word to the witness.

But for the protection of the second half of the whole—the binding of Witness to Word—there has been no such guarantee, no such concern. Here lies a decisive task—if ever the Catholic concept of the Church is to become actually [and not only theoretically] credible. We mean the task of securing again in clear fashion the authoritative character of the Word itself, not just that of the Witness, i.e., of the Office. There can certainly be little doubt that the improper autonomy and isolation of that obligation of the Witness toward the Word through neglect of the other side of that bond would comprise in itself no smaller heresy than that of the autonomous Word, which, as a matter of fact, became the actual historical counter-blow against the preponderance of Office over Word in the Church of the late middle ages.³⁶

On the Catholic side, this is precisely the salutary result of the dialogue in reference to the nature of office. It should never be considered in itself, for its own sake. If it is, a kind of idolatry could easily develop by magnifying it out of proportion and by investing it with a kind of "divinization." In a historical and eschatological Church, however, such a thing can never take place, because relativity is in some way built into it. Consequently, office must be constantly checked, re-examined, and corrected. And the only medium of checking is the word; not in the sense of whether office is needed at all or not—for consecratory anointing bans a negative answer to the question for good—but in order to remain conscious of the purpose of office and of its changeable and unchangeable aspects. For office and word belong to the same reality. Their role in it, however, is not exactly the same. Ratzinger explains it in this way:

... the third of the three components, Sacrament-Word-Office, is unlike the other two. The first two *establish* unity, the Office *witnesses* it. In scholastic terminology one would say that the first two are *causes* of unity and the Office is the *condition* for it. The Office is rather the manner, the way in which the two pillars of the Church's being—Word and Sacrament—exist. It is not quite of the same dignity or rank as the other two. Above all, the Office is not there to exercise dominion over Word and Sacrament. It is there instead to perform a service to them.³⁷

³⁵ Ratzinger, *art. cit.*, p. 56. ³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* For this reason it is very hard to subscribe to George A. Lindbeck's suggestion that visibility, therefore, the communal structure of the Church, be treated as one of the "accidental differences" of the different Churches. The variety of forms can and should be looked upon as such, but some basic core of the communal structure must be

It would be a costly mistake to put office ahead of the word or to emancipate it from its service. Continued dialoguing is helping both Catholics and Protestants to realize the close relationship between them and to work out better theological insights of their respective meanings and functions.³⁸

CONCEPT OF VALID MINISTRY

Visible, communal structure can hardly be discussed meaningfully without due consideration of the concept of ministry. It is, then, only natural that dialoguing about the first has already shown its beneficial influence in reference to the second. This does not hold good merely insofar as the validity of Anglican orders is concerned,³⁹ because a positive answer in this specific case would not really answer the point in question. The perspective must be much broader and deeper. It must touch the very nature of ministry in the context of the nature of the Church as the consecrated community on behalf of mankind.

George Lindbeck proposed the problem, from the viewpoint of the principle of emergency, in this way: "When there is a break in the regular ecclesiastical order because of a dire emergency, does God bridge the gap and legitimize the new order? . . . Does God ever allow an emergency to arise which is serious enough to justify a break such as occurred at the Reformation; and, if so, was the Reformation

preserved as absolutely essential to the understanding and functioning of consecratory anointing. Cf. his article "A Protestant View of the Ecclesiological Status of the Roman Catholic Church," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964) 243-70.

³⁸ Cf. Richard N. Johnson, "Styles of Ecumenism in the United States," *Unity Trends* 1 (May 1, 1968) 3-8. The presentation of the paper was followed by discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 8-12, in the course of which Johnson proposed the following revised definition: "Ecumenism is the discovery and renewed articulation of the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its manifestation in structures of the Church which serve and make visible His oneness, His presence, and His work of reconciliation in and for the world."

³⁹ Cf. C. Garbett, *The Claims of the Church of England* (London, 1947); Gregory Dix, *The Question of Anglican Orders* (London, 1944; revised, 1956; reprinted, 1963); J. Dart, *Anglican Orders and the Papal Decree of 1948 [sic] on the Matter and Form of Holy Orders* (London, n.d.); Francis Clark, *Anglican Orders and Defect of Intention* (London, 1956); *id.*, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (Westminster, Md., 1960); *id.*, *The Catholic Church and Anglican Orders* (London, 1962); John Jay Hughes, "Recent Studies of the Validity of Anglican Orders," in *The Sacraments in General (Concilium 31)* pp. 135-46; *id.*, "Two English Cardinals on Anglican Orders," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 4 (1967) 1-26; *id.*, "The Papal Condemnation of Anglican Orders, 1896," *ibid.*, pp. 235-67; "Goodbye to *Apostolicae curae*?" *Herder Correspondence*, March, 1968, pp. 92-93; Henry Chadwick, "The Discussion about Anglican Orders in Modern Anglican Theology," in *Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity (Concilium 34)* pp. 141-49; Hilaire Marot, "The Orthodox Churches and Anglican Orders," *ibid.*, pp. 150-60.

emergency really that serious?"⁴⁰ Or, to put the question very simply, is the Reformation justified in its separation? Is its ministry valid?

These questions indicate already that instead of receiving a simple "yes" or "no" answer, they have to be explored in the light shed on them by the Church as an eschatological community. In Carl E. Braaten's words:

The doctrine of the succession of bishops is not prior to, apart from, or constitutive of the succession of the Church as the people of God. Instead, it presupposes the succession of the Church and its faith, and exists to represent and promote it. The same thing can be said of the infallibility of the papacy; it is an infallibility only representatively for the whole Church. What is infallible is the promise of God by which the whole Church lives daringly toward the future.⁴¹

Very interestingly, Braaten in the same study made it very clear that "the reunited Church of the future will choose wisely to continue both papal and episcopal offices, not because this is the only imaginable way for the Church to perform its mission, and certainly not because we have a set of blueprints handed down to us from a divine architect . . . but because these structures may best serve as representative signs of the continuity of the Church with Jesus Christ and the apostles and as special agencies to attend to the self-identity of the Church through the discontinuities of the historical process."⁴² He calls them "hermeneutical vehicles, along with others, such as the canonical Scriptures themselves, the councils of the Church and its dogmatic decisions, the rites of the liturgy, etc., all of which must be concerned with the one task of transmitting the tradition of the gospel to every new generation of the people of God."⁴³

But what is most interesting in Braaten's position is his way of arguing in the name of "eschatological consciousness." The nature of the Church is not determined exclusively by its past. Its future too must be taken seriously.

It is both my hope and my prediction that the movement toward the reunion of the churches will leap forward only when all Christian communities take seriously their eschatological mission to the world, when they think of themselves not merely in terms of dialogue with contemporary culture, but think back to their past and their present in light of that absolute future which God

⁴⁰ "A Protestant View of the Ecclesiological Status of the Roman Catholic Church," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964) 245.

⁴¹ "The Church in Ecumenical and Cultural Cross-Fire," *Theology Digest* 15 (1967) 290.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 289. ⁴³ *Ibid.*

has promised and for which the Church is called to prepare the world. For this mission the Church will need structures, as she has in the past. The most important question to ask, however, is not whether these structures will be true to the past—that is our traditional ecumenical style—but whether they will open faith up to the future. For in the day of God's judgment, the Church will not be asked how successful she was in sticking to the past, but how she prepared mankind to be ready for the future of history in the kingdom of God.⁴⁴

What is revealed in this theological reflection if not the vision of the Church as the consecrated community of the anointed ones who must exercise their function as Christians on behalf of the world? One can perhaps disagree with the concrete needs envisioned by Braaten, but not with the validity of his fundamental insight. For if the Church is the continuation of Christ's anointing, it is evident that the purpose, the end result, of the anointing has much to do with the successful functioning of the messianic mission. The perspective of this mission must, therefore, prevail even if it requires structural changes; for structures must serve consecratory anointing and not vice versa.

In a different context this point has also been stressed recently by Gregory Baum. In reference to a re-examination of the question of Anglican orders, suggested by some Catholic theologians and objected to by Baum, one of his main arguments was the following:

It seems to me, therefore, of great importance that, instead of dealing with the question of Anglican Orders, the Catholic Church reflect, in general, on the role and meaning of the ministry in other churches. Since Vatican II has acknowledged the ecclesial reality of those churches, it is possible for the Catholic theologians to affirm that the ministry of these churches is [a] divinely called and [b] exercises its service in power. . . . From the Catholic viewpoint these ministries are defective. . . . [but] it seems to me that only within the context of a general doctrine on what Christ does through other ministries should the Catholic Church attempt to define how she regards Anglican Orders.⁴⁵

The role and meaning of the ministry depends to a great extent on the nature of consecratory anointing. The fruitful continuation of the latter requires the former as its operative instrument. Accordingly, the whole process of re-examination of the ministry in general from the viewpoint of consecratory anointing should precede the re-examination of the validity of any particular ministry. For only in this way can it be seen that authentic ministry belongs to the very heart of any

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴⁵ "Reopen the Question of Anglican Orders?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 4 (1967) 717, and "The Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Orders," *Unity Trends* 1 (May 15, 1968) 4.

ecclesial reality enabling it to celebrate the postbaptismal sacraments and to form and sustain authentic local churches.

Study by van Beeck

But how to do it? Besides the many Protestant efforts in this regard, on the Catholic side the greatest credit goes to Frans Josef van Beeck, S.J.,⁴⁶ for delving into the problem objectively and creatively. He has examined and rethought such vital issues as the concepts of validity and invalidity, the role of the Church and Church doctrine, the competence of the minister, the essence of the sacrament of order and its canonical shape; he has thus been able to revitalize the problem even for Catholics by reshaping the role of the Church according to the concept of consecratory anointing, although he never actually uses the term itself. The following citation may serve as a good indication of his theological orientation:

It has been recognized that the massive identification of the *Corpus Christi Mysticum* with the Roman Catholic Church presents the visible Church in too eschatological a fashion, and this has again led to a great awareness of the provisional character of many structures which *Mystici Corporis* had too hastily carried away into the eschaton. The Church is also the People of God on its way; it may stop at nothing nor settle anywhere, and its ordinances *ad intra* as well as its limits *ad extra* are always indefinite and sliding. It is also on its way to its unity, and it has to realize that every fixation of limits and competences (understood as fixation of salvation) must be provisional, and must never be presented as the eschatological judgment of God, who alone pronounces the final "Come, you blessed" and "Depart from me, you cursed." The moment the Church were to rely completely on its limits and ordinances it would harden in its pilgrim state and thus refuse to submit to God's final judgment.⁴⁷

Standing, then, firmly on the ground of the eschatological mission of the Church, van Beeck has succeeded in recognizing the separated Christians as Churches of good faith in which the sacraments can be celebrated, according to the principle that "where there is Church, there is sacrament."⁴⁸ And though it is the entire community that celebrates the sacraments, the presence of the minister as the crystallization point of the Church is a service to the community and is

⁴⁶ "Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Sacraments," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 3 (1966) 57-112; cf. also Daniel J. O'Hanlon, "A New Approach to the Validity of Church Orders," *Worship* 41 (1967) 406-38; Harry J. McSorley, "Protestant Eucharistic Reality and Lack of Orders," *Ecumenist* 5 (July-August, 1967) 68-75; Robert McAfee Brown, "New Perspectives on the Problem of Ministry and Order," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 4 (1967) 479-84; Eugene Osterhaven, "Are Catholic and Protestant Clergy Moving toward Intercommunion?" *Christianity Today*, Sept. 29, 1967, pp. 8-10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

organically integrated into it. Accordingly, after a thorough study of the history of the sacraments and of the concept of the competency of the minister, van Beeck has reached these conclusions:

First, just as dogma never replaces the kerygma and orthodoxy can never be a substitute for faith, thus the *Ordo* never replaces the Church. . . . Dogma and *Ordo* are essentially provisional; they may never be allowed to tie salvation down to themselves in a univocal way. . . .

Second, the kerygma has never gone without dogma, and in the same way the Church has never gone without *Ordo*. . . . The *Ordo* is . . . *in* the Church as its principle of order, and is in its turn kept from sclerosis and juridical fixation by the *Ecclesia*, just as dogma exists in the kerygma as a principle of orderly profession of faith, and is in its turn kept from dogmatism by the vital forces of the kerygma.⁴⁹

In this structure as a whole the continuation of the *Ordo* remains related to the *diakonia* rendered to the community. In other words: the *entire* structure, the community with the *Ordo* contained in it, reproduces itself through history, so that the Apostolic Succession is to be defined entirely with reference to the Apostolic tradition, of which it is the ministerial concretization.⁵⁰

Consequently, both postbaptismal sacraments and the ministry in Protestant Churches may be recognizable on these grounds.

CONCLUSION

The four topics presented here as indications of the direction and of the immediate outcome of the dialogue in ecclesiology are far from exhaustive. Other topics, such as the theological understanding of the position and function of the laity in the Church, the meaning of the priesthood of the faithful, the nature of the sacraments, etc., could have been chosen as well. In order to manage somehow the vast material available to the theologian, a selection had to be made; and it was made in view of what the Catholic Church can offer as its best contribution in the ecumenical dialogue.

It seems to me that exploring the biblical concept of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit, and understanding the Church as the continuation of that anointing, can be more profitable in the ecumenical dialogue than anything else previously tried. It can help us understand the Church in its true nature as both a historical and an eschatological community, held together and tied to Christ by the Holy Spirit for the sake of mankind. Seen in this light, it is presented to all those who are truly interested in its unity, not as a stumbling block, but as the visible uniting force for the anointed ones.

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⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.