

A HALF CENTURY OF ECCLESIOLOGY

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THE PROTESTANT theologian Otto Dibelius made a prophetic statement when, in the title of a well-known book, he referred to the 20th century as "the century of the Church."¹ Although treatises on the Church had appeared sporadically since the 14th century, ecclesiology had not yet assumed the central position in Catholic theology that it has enjoyed in our own century. The foundation of *Theological Studies* in 1940 coincides with the first fruits of the ecclesiological harvest that has been continually increasing in bulk, if not always in merit, until the present day.

It will not be possible, in a single brief article, to avoid arbitrary selectivity. I shall concentrate especially on comprehensive works by Roman Catholics which represent creative contributions. I shall deliberately omit works of a more historical and reportorial nature, and I shall make no attempt to cover the literature on special questions such as ecumenical councils, the papacy, ministry, the priesthood, the laity, the sacraments, missiology, ecumenism, church-state relations, and the like. Even with these limitations, it will be impossible to avoid neglecting some important literature.

For practical purposes, one could divide the period under survey into two major parts: the 25 years to the end of Vatican II (1940–65) and the 25 years since the council (1965–89).

BEFORE VATICAN II

Neo-Scholasticism; Journet

Until Vatican Council II the neo-scholastic manuals of ecclesiology, in the tradition of Louis Billot and Joseph de Guibert, remained in full vigor. Timoteo Zapelena in 1950 published his *De ecclesia Christi: Pars apologetica*, a work that exhibits the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of the genre.² It holds that the Church of Christ, which is essentially a society in the proper sense of the term, constitutes the kingdom of God in its present form; that it was from the beginning a

¹ O. Dibelius, *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche* (2nd ed.; Berlin: Furche, 1927).

² Rome: Gregorian University, 1940, rev. 1950. Cf. also Zapelena's second volume, *Pars altera: Apologetico-dogmatica*, 1940, rev. 1950 and 1954.

hierarchical society, not democratic or charismatic; and that Peter received a primacy of true and proper jurisdiction. The Roman pontiff is by divine right the successor of Peter. All the notes of the Church converge to demonstrate beyond doubt that the Roman Catholic Church is the true and legitimate Church of Jesus Christ.

With some adaptation to the recent literature, authors such as Joaquin Salaverri³ perpetuated this tradition in their Latin manuals. Some of the later manuals, such as those of Francis A. Sullivan,⁴ differed in that they were structured more along the lines of the encyclical *Mystici corporis Christi*, which will be discussed below.

Generally speaking, these Latin manuals showed a predilection for juridical categories. Christ was seen as the founder of the Church; the Church was presented as a "perfect society" in which the officeholders had jurisdiction over the members; the pope, as vicar of Christ, was depicted as ruler of the entire society. The bishops were seen as deriving their jurisdiction from the pope. The functions of the Church were studied primarily under the rubric of power. Two powers were generally recognized: order and jurisdiction, with the power to teach being subsumed under jurisdiction. Some authors, such as Salaverri, argued that there were three specifically distinct powers: those of teaching, ruling, and sanctifying.⁵ Many of the theses in these manuals were polemically directed against Protestantism, and particularly against liberal Protestants who looked upon the Church as essentially invisible or charismatic.

Likewise in the scholastic tradition was the magnum opus of Charles Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe incarné*.⁶ By contrast with the manuals, which were neo-scholastic and juridical in tone, Journet's ecclesiology was more directly rooted in the older scholastic tradition, including both Aquinas himself and his great commentators of the baroque period. This ecclesiology was consequently more ontological in character. Like the manualists, Journet identified the Church with the kingdom of God; he also subsumed the magisterium under the power of jurisdiction. Concerned with the Church as presently constituted, he postponed eschatology to his last volume.

Journet's ecclesiology was constructed from above. It was a descending rather than an ascending ecclesiology, in the sense that it was based

³ Joaquin Salaverri, "De ecclesia Christi," *Sacrae theologiae summa* 1 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2nd ed., 1952; 5th ed., 1962) 497-953.

⁴ F. A. Sullivan, *De ecclesia: Tractatus apologeticus* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1961); *Tractatus dogmaticus* (ibid., 1962); both volumes revised 1963.

⁵ *La triple potestad de la Iglesia* (Comillas: Universidad Pontificia, 1951); excerpt from *Miscelanea Comillas*, no. 14, 1-84.

⁶ C. Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe incarné*. 3 vols. (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1941, 1951, 1969); ET of Vol. 1, *The Church of the Incarnate Word* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955).

more on dogma than on factual information; it was deductive rather than inductive. Unlike the manualists, Journet emphasized the organic more than the juridic. The Church for him was an organism of love, having charity as its "created soul." It was totally sinless; for sin, according to Journet, separates the sinner, to the extent that he or she is a sinner, from the Church.

Among the weaknesses criticized in Journet's ecclesiology is his lack of interest in empirical and historical data. He scarcely used the biblical sources except as proof texts, nor did he allow history to speak for itself. In favor of Journet one must say that, especially in his second volume (1951), he developed some interesting ecumenical reflections. While totally respecting the teaching of Pope Pius XII in *Mystici corporis* and *Humani generis*, he considered that dissident Christians in good faith were capable of being affiliated with the true Church in various ways.

Mystical Body Theology

During the 1940s many Catholics, especially in France, produced notable studies of the ecclesiology of the Fathers. Gustave Bardy in 1945 and 1947 published two volumes on the theology of the Church up to the time of the Council of Nicaea.⁷ Louis Bouyer in 1943 analyzed the ecclesiology of Athanasius,⁸ and in the following year Hubert du Manoir published in book form his previous articles on the ecclesiology of Cyril of Alexandria.⁹ Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, the editors of the series *Sources chrétiennes*, did further explorations in this field. As a result of their work many younger scholars, such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, were attracted to the Platonism of the Fathers, as exemplified in Origen and Augustine.

Closely connected with this return to the patristic sources was the revival of the theology of the Mystical Body. The historical studies of Emile Mersch contributed mightily to this development.¹⁰ Dissatisfied with the Western scholastic tendency to depict the relationship of Christ to the Church in terms of principal and instrumental causality, Mersch

⁷ G. Bardy, *La théologie de l'église de saint Clément de Rome à saint Irénée* (Paris: Cerf, 1945); *La théologie de l'église de saint Irénée au concile de Nicée* (Paris: Cerf, 1947).

⁸ L. Bouyer, *L'Eglise, corps du Christ, dans la théologie de saint Athanase* (Paris: Cerf, 1939).

⁹ H. du Manoir de Juaye, *Dogme et spiritualité chez saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Vrin, 1944). Pages 287-366 of this work reproduce four articles on Cyril's ecclesiology in *Gregorianum* 19 (1938) and 20 (1939).

¹⁰ E. Mersch, *Le Corps mystique du Christ: Etudes de théologie historique* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1933); ET, *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938); *La théologie du Corps mystique*. 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1944); ET, *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1951).

adhered to the Eastern patristic tradition, especially Cyril of Alexandria, who stressed the physical and organic union between the head and the members. The Church according to this view is a prolongation of Christ, who acts upon it from within rather than as an external efficient cause.

Sebastian Tromp likewise did important research on the theme of the Mystical Body in the Fathers.¹¹ His tendency, however, was to harmonize ancient Mystical Body ecclesiology with the more juridical approach current in Western Catholicism since Robert Bellarmine. Tromp emphasized that for the Fathers the Catholic Church is the Mystical Body. The Fathers, while speaking of the Mystical Body in a variety of ways, strongly insisted on visible unity. They excoriated heresy and schism. Thus the image of the Mystical Body, according to Tromp, should not be played off against the idea of the Church as a hierarchical society.

Reflection on the Church as Mystical Body made it possible for Pius XII to produce his 1943 encyclical *Mystici corporis Christi*, the most comprehensive official Catholic pronouncement on the Church prior to Vatican II.¹² The encyclical is generally attributed to Tromp as its primary writer. Drawing on the first schema of Vatican I and on the encyclicals of Leo XIII, the encyclical was by no means a repudiation of previous official teaching, but in many ways it was a welcome advance beyond the more juridical ecclesiologies of the manuals. It capitalized on the rich sources of renewal made possible by recent patristic studies and in turn stimulated further studies of the kind.

While espousing the image of the Mystical Body as the noblest and most sublime description of the Church, the encyclical warned against unhealthy exaggerations. With an apparent allusion to Karl Pelz's *Der Christ als Christus*,¹³ which had been placed on the Index in 1940, the pope pointed out that the union between Christ and the Church, while more than moral or juridical, does not eliminate the distinction of persons between Christ and the members of the Body. Nor does mystical mean invisible. Like several popes before him, Pius XII insisted that the Church could not be a body unless it were visible. This emphasis on visibility stood in some tension with the ideas of Mersch and, as several scholars would soon point out, those of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁴ Exegetes soon became involved in a discussion as to whether Paul had understood the body in

¹¹ S. Tromp, *Corpus Christi quod est ecclesia*. 4 vols. (Rome: Gregorian University, Vol. 1, 1937, rev. 1946; Vol. 2, 1960; Vol. 3, 1960; Vol. 4, 1972).

¹² AAS 35 (July 20, 1943) 193-248; ET, *The Mystical Body of Christ* (New York: America, 1957).

¹³ K. Pelz, *Der Christ als Christus* (Berlin, 1939, ad instar manuscripti).

¹⁴ Albert Mitterer, *Geheimnisvoller Leib Christi nach Thomas von Aquin und nach Papst Pius XII* (Vienna: Herold, 1950). Cf. Felix Malmberg, *Ein Leib—ein Geist: Vom Mysterium der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1960; Dutch original, 1958).

a way that necessarily involved visibility.¹⁵

In the passage for which *Mystici corporis* is principally remembered, the pope taught that the Mystical Body is identical with the Roman Catholic Church—a point later reaffirmed against dissenters in *Humani generis* (1950). According to *Mystici corporis*, no one could be truly (*reapse*) a member of the Mystical Body without being a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Christians not united to the visible structure of the Roman Catholic Church by the threshold bonds of faith, sacraments, and obedience, were cut off from communion with Christ. It was possible, however, for non-Catholic Christians to be in a certain manner united to the Body. If they were living by the grace of Christ and were in good faith in their errors, they could be attached unsuspectingly in desire and resolution (*inscio quodam desiderio ac voto*) to the Mystical Body.

These statements in *Mystici corporis* gave rise to an intense discussion in Catholic theological circles. Without overtly dissenting, many theologians were evidently dissatisfied.¹⁶ New Testament exegetes pointed out that Paul evidently considered that every valid baptism incorporates the recipient into the Body of Christ. Canon lawyers remarked that the doctrine of the encyclical needed to be harmonized with the Code of Canon Law, which in canon 87 stated that baptism makes one a person in the Church of Christ, even though by heresy or schism one may forfeit certain rights normally belonging to such persons. Ecumenists were embarrassed because the encyclical seemed to put baptized non-Catholics in the same spiritual category as non-Christians. After 1947, liturgical theologians were able to appeal to a new encyclical, *Mediator Dei*, in which Pius XII taught that by baptism Christians are made members of the Mystical Body and participants in Christ's priestly office. On the eve of Vatican Council II, Cardinal Bea, taking advantage of the critical work done from all these perspectives, proposed a doctrine of membership that seemed to diverge from *Mystici corporis*.¹⁷

The Historical Dimension; Yves Congar

The very return to the sources that brought about the rise of Mystical Body theology contained a dynamism that evoked other images. A number of biblical scholars, some Protestant (Ernst Käsemann and Nils

¹⁵ Pierre Benoit, "Corps, tête et plérôme dans les épîtres de la captivité," *Revue biblique* 63 (1956) 5–44. Benoit makes use of previous exegetical studies by Wikenhauser, Cerfaux, and others.

¹⁶ J. Robert Dionne, in *The Papacy and the Church* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987) 195–236, argues that the reception of *Mystici corporis* is an instance in which the feedback brought about a correction in the teaching of the ordinary papal magisterium.

¹⁷ Augustin Bea. *The Unity of Christians* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963) 32–34.

A. Dahl), some Catholic (Alfred Wikenhauser and Lucien Cerfaux), considered that the concept of Mystical Body was less securely rooted in the Bible as a whole than that of the People of God. Robert Grosche in his *Pilgernde Kirche* defended the image of People of God on the ground that it gave greater scope to the Church's historicity and its eschatological finality.¹⁸ M. D. Koster, in his *Ekklesiologie im Werden*, vehemently criticized the concept of Mystical Body as being metaphorical and pretheological.¹⁹ A truly scientific ecclesiology, he maintained, must work with the concept of People of God, which was nonmetaphorical and had a stronger foundation both in Scripture and in the liturgy. Somewhat later Joseph Ratzinger called attention to the concept of People of God as a type of the Church in the Latin Fathers, especially Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus, and Augustine.²⁰

In the years between *Mystici corporis* and Vatican Council II the most influential ecclesiologist was undoubtedly Yves Congar. Many of Congar's seminal ideas were already present in his 1937 work *Chrétiens désunis: Principes d'un 'oecuménisme' catholique*, the first volume in the great collection *Unam sanctam* primarily edited by Congar himself.²¹ The description of "catholic unity" in this volume, allowing for the creative contributions of diverse cultures, is a prophetic anticipation of the teaching of Vatican Council II.

In the 1940s and early 1950s Congar published in the *Unam sanctam* collection several more of his groundbreaking studies: *Esquisses du mystère de l'église*,²² *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'église*,²³ and *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc*.²⁴ In 1958 he published in a different series another important work, *Le mystère du temple*.²⁵ Without prejudice to Congar's subsequent works, which contain some significant developments, one may say that these early works embody his major insights. Through them all runs the theme of the Church as constituted in its essentials by Christ, who was its founder and remains its head. It is animated by the Spirit of

¹⁸ R. Grosche, *Pilgernde Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1938).

¹⁹ Mannes Dominikus Koster, *Ekklesiologie im Werden* (Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1940).

²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich: Zink, 1954). As Aidan Nichols notes in *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 47-48, Ratzinger in this work (205-18) already alights upon what will be the central motif of his ecclesiology: the Eucharist as the bond of Christian fellowship.

²¹ Paris: Cerf, 1937; ET, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (London: G. Bles, 1939).

²² Paris: Cerf, 1941; ET, *The Mystery of the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1960).

²³ Paris: Cerf, 1950; rev. ed., 1969.

²⁴ Paris: Cerf, 1953; rev. ed. with appendix, 1964; ET, *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1965).

²⁵ Paris: Cerf, 1958; ET, *The Mystery of the Temple* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1962).

Christ, who enjoys a certain freedom of action in the Church. From below, however, the Church is constituted by fallible and sinful human beings.²⁶

Committed to the movement of *ressourcement* (that "return to the sources" which Pius X had commended in matters liturgical), Congar sought to reclaim for ecclesiology the experience of the first millennium, when the Church did not as yet dominate by its massive power. In the early Church, especially before the conversion of Constantine, Congar perceived a more intense spirituality, a prayerful listening to Christ the Lord, an openness to conversion and reform. In the Church of the second millennium Congar found a less attractive preoccupation with power and domination. While recognizing that this shift was an understandable reaction to a series of threats, such as the spiritualist heresies of the Middle Ages, the hostility of secular powers, and the assaults of the Protestant Reformation, Congar evidently felt that the earlier centuries could provide better models for the transition into the present age, when the Church had ceased to dominate society and culture, and was obliged to rely again on its power to attract hearts and minds.

Congar reflected at some depth on the familiar images of the Church, including "Ekklesia," as a people convoked by God, and "People of God," as the multitude over which God reigns. "Body of Christ" he saw as accenting what was new in the new covenant—a special union with the risen Christ. In his study of the Pauline metaphor of Body of Christ, Congar found the central meaning to lie not in strict visibility but rather in unity in plurality. Among the various metaphors, Congar gave a certain preference to "Temple of the Holy Spirit," which suggested the dimensions of interiority and spirituality, giving rise to an ecclesiology of communion. In contrast to others who dwelt on the visible structures of the Church, Congar looked upon the institutional structures as mere means. He preferred to define the Church essentially as a community in the Spirit, a *congregatio fidelium*.

Toward Vatican II

In the second decade of Pius XII, who was pope from 1939 to 1958, Rome showed a strong distrust of the "new theology" flourishing in France. Congar himself, as one of the chief leaders, experienced what he later described as "an uninterrupted series of denunciations, warnings,

²⁶ For overviews of Congar's ecclesiology, see Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Yves Congar: Theology in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: Priory, 1968); and Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984).

restrictive or discriminatory measures and mistrustful interventions."²⁷ In spite of many obstacles to his scholarly and apostolic work, he continued to work patiently and perseveringly, awaiting a better day. He remained in touch with a large circle of theologians, in many different nations, not only Catholic but also Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant. Ecumenically-oriented Catholic theologians were in these years unconsciously preparing for Vatican II.

The dominant themes of the theological renewal centered about the Church, considered both in itself and in its relations to all that was not Church. At one level this renewal touched on the theology of ministry, a term that became increasingly familiar in Catholic circles. The fruits of this research were gathered up and presented in several important conferences held under Congar's direction at the Benedictine priory of Chevetogne in Belgium. The large collection *L'Épiscopat et l'église universelle*²⁸ consistently depicted the hierarchy as a ministry of service. It explored the nature of episcopal ordination (J. Lécuyer), primacy and collegiality (K. Rahner, G. Dejaifve), apostolic succession (J. Colson, A.-M. Javierre), and the communion among particular churches (Y. Congar). A follow-up conference at Chevetogne in 1963 resulted in the important volume *La collégialité épiscopale*,²⁹ composed to illuminate problems being discussed at Vatican II.

These two volumes illustrate a new sense of the importance of the bishops in the universal Church. The papacy was reconceived as a ministry of service within the episcopal college. The powers of the bishop—those of teaching and pastoral rule as well as administering the sacraments—were linked less directly to "canonical mission" from the pope and more immediately to episcopal ordination.

In addition to Congar's *Lay People in the Church*, new work on the theology of the laity was done by Paul Dabin, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar.³⁰ Lay persons were seen not merely as passive recipients of the ministrations of the hierarchy but as active and responsible subjects in the Church. Their call to the apostolate was seen as rooted in faith, baptism, and confirmation rather than primarily in a mandate from the hierarchy. Their special responsibility was ex-

²⁷ *Dialogue between Christians* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1966) 34.

²⁸ *Unam sanctam* 39; Paris: Cerf, 1962.

²⁹ *Unam sanctam* 52; Paris: Cerf, 1965.

³⁰ P. Dabin, *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans les livres saints* (Paris: Bloud, 1941), and *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans la tradition ancienne et moderne* (Brussels: Desclée De Brouwer, 1950); G. Philips, *Le rôle du laïc dans l'église* (Paris: Casterman, 1954); ET, *The Role of the Laity in the Church* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides, 1956); K. Rahner, "Notes on the Lay Apostolate," *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 319-52; H. U. von Balthasar, *Der Laie und der Ordenstand* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1948).

plained as that of transforming the world in the light of the gospel. Several theologians, including Gustave Thils and Marie-Dominique Chenu, began to sketch out a theology of terrestrial realities and a theology of work.³¹ These efforts were connected with the abortive worker-priest experiment in France.

The renewal of sacramental theology proceeded more slowly. Significant advances were, however, made, especially by those who rooted the sacraments more solidly in the nature of the Church itself. Partly as a result of the patristic studies of theologians such as Henri de Lubac, the idea that the Church itself was the great sacrament of Christ was retrieved in important studies by Otto Semmelroth,³² Karl Rahner,³³ and others.³⁴ The seven sacraments were then viewed as the essential actions of the Church when it actualizes itself historically in a tangible manner. The historical studies on penance by Bernhard Poschmann,³⁵ K. Rahner,³⁶ and others fed into this renewal.

Another notable development in the 1950s was the re-entry of eschatology into ecclesiology. As already mentioned, some ecclesiologists, drawing on new biblical studies, came to look upon the Church as the pilgrim people of God, still on the way to its heavenly destination. The biblical concept of the *basileia theou* was seen not as identical with the Church but as God's sovereign lordship bringing the Church, and indeed all creation, to their eschatological goal.³⁷ The recognition that the Church was still groping within the darkness of history led to a more modest ecclesiology and encouraged a more critical stance toward the actions of the Church at various stages of its development.

The questions of the salvific mission of the Church and its relation to nonmembers, previously dealt with by authors such as Louis Capéran,³⁸ came up for new discussion in the light of *Mystici corporis*. The ancient idea of justification by baptism *in voto*, which the Council of Trent had

³¹ G. Thils, *La théologie des réalités terrestres* (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1946); M.-D. Chenu, *Pour une théologie du travail* (Paris: Seuil, 1955); ET, *The Theology of Work* (Dublin: Gill, 1963).

³² O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1953).

³³ K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg: Herder, 1960); ET, *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

³⁴ The history of the concept is traced in L. Boff, *Die Kirche als Sakrament im Horizont der Welterfahrung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1972).

³⁵ B. Poschmann, *Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im frühen Mittelalter* (Breslau: Möller & Seiffert, 1930). Poschmann also wrote extensively on penance and indulgences in the patristic era.

³⁶ K. Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church*. (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

³⁷ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich* (Freiburg: Herder, 1959); ET, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

³⁸ L. Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1912).

applied also to penance,³⁹ was increasingly applied to the Church itself. In response to Leonard Feeney, who gave a seemingly harsh interpretation to the maxim "Outside the Church no salvation," many authors tried to show that the fruitfulness of the Church as sacrament (its *res sacramenti*) did not necessarily depend upon actual membership in the Church as effective sign (*sacramentum*). This solution was taken up by the Holy Office in its 1949 response to Feeney.⁴⁰

In the theology of the missions two tendencies asserted themselves. The first tendency, sometimes identified with the Münster school (Joseph Schmidlin, Thomas Ohm), but also popular in French catechetical circles, emphasized the themes of witness, evangelization, and personal conversion. Others, sometimes identified with the Louvain school (Pierre Charles), regarded the planting of the Church as the primary goal of missionary activity, stressing the establishment of the hierarchy and the growth of indigenous churches. The studies on missionary theology by Henri de Lubac⁴¹ and André Seumois⁴² belonged to this second tendency.

Ecumenical contacts with Protestants and Orthodox had a notable impact upon ecclesiology. As mentioned above, many Catholic theologians found it inadequate to explain the relationship of non-Catholic Christians to Christ the Savior in terms of the *votum* theory. They felt it necessary to give some proper ecclesiological value to these other Christian communities. The Benedictines Jean Gribomont and Thomas Sartory contended that the sacrament of the Church admitted of imperfect realizations outside the Roman Catholic communion.⁴³

In the United States, and also to some degree in France, the question of church-state relations came up for re-examination. If the position of power claimed for the Church in the late Middle Ages was an exception or even a distortion, there were grounds for holding that the Church need not claim a privileged position in civil law, and that the acceptance of nonestablishment was not a mere accommodation to an abnormal "hypothesis." John Courtney Murray cautiously articulated these views, but was met with vehement opposition from Joseph Clifford Fenton and others. The temporary "silencing" of Murray has been sufficiently com-

³⁹ DS 1524 (on *votum baptismi*) and DS 1543 and 1677 (on *votum* for the sacrament of penance).

⁴⁰ Text in *American Ecclesiastical Review* 127 (152) 307-15; excerpt in DS 3866-73.

⁴¹ Henri de Lubac, *La fondement théologique des missions* (Paris: Seuil, 1946).

⁴² A-V. Seumois, *Introduction à la missiologie* (Beckenreid, Swit.: Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft, 1952).

⁴³ J. Gribomont, "Du sacrement de l'église et de ses réalisations imparfaites," *Irénikon* 22 (1949) 345-67; T. A. Sartory, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Unity of the Church* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1963), translated from German edition, 1955.

mented upon by others to require no discussion here.⁴⁴

After Pope John XXIII in 1959 announced his projected ecumenical council, there was a new outburst of literature on the nature and history of ecumenical councils.⁴⁵ Picking up on Pope John's emphases on *aggiornamento* and reunion, Hans Küng captured the eager expectations of progressives in his best-seller *The Church, Reform, and Reunion*⁴⁶—a work heavily indebted to Congar's earlier work *Vraie et fausse réforme*.

Vatican II

The ecclesiology of Vatican II, in its main lines, is well known.⁴⁷ Generally speaking, it followed the directions of the *nouvelle théologie* rather than those of neo-scholasticism, but it made no sharp break with the official teaching of the recent past. The shift was one of emphasis more than substance, of rhetoric more than doctrine.

In the council documents the theme of the Church as an organized society or institution is clearly subordinated to those of the Church as mystery, sacrament, and communion of grace. Yet the image of the People of God, which holds a major position in the Constitution on the Church, is developed in such a way as to imply institutional and hierarchical structures. The hierarchy, without detriment to its authority, is viewed as a service to the whole People of God. The bishops are seen as a collegiate body, sharing with the pope a responsibility for the total apostolate of the Church. Yet the pope is acknowledged as having discretionary power to act independently ("seorsim," according to the interpretation given in the *Nota praevia explicativa*), without consultation with his fellow bishops. The bishops are described as receiving through ordination the three functions of teaching, ruling, and sanctifying, but as needing hierarchical communion for their powers of teaching and ruling to be exercised. The laity are portrayed as active participants in the threefold office of Christ, but not as empowered to determine the

⁴⁴ Donald E. Pelotte, *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict* (New York: Paulist, 1976) 42–59.

⁴⁵ Bernard Botte et al., *Le Concile et les conciles* (Chevetogne: Chevetogne, 1960); Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961); Piet Fransen, "The Authority of Councils," in John M. Todd, ed., *Problems of Authority* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962) 43–78; and some of the essays in Hans Küng, *The Council in Action* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963).

⁴⁶ Hans Küng, *Konzil und Wiedervereinigung* (3rd ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1961); ET, *The Council, Reform and Reunion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961).

⁴⁷ Guilherme Baraúna, ed., *L'Eglise de Vatican II*. 3 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1966); Bonaventure Kloppenburg, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1970); Gérard Philips, *L'Eglise et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*. 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1967); Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 105–305.

policies or doctrines of the Church.

The Church, in Vatican II's dogmatic constitution, is depicted as the initial budding forth of the eschatological kingdom. Its catholicity is appealingly presented in language reminiscent of Congar. Regional and local churches are seen as having a distinctive character, adapted to their cultural milieu. Episcopal conferences are given a new canonical and theological status.

For ecumenical reasons the council distanced itself from the more controversial affirmations of *Mystici corporis*. Where Pius XII had said that the Mystical Body and the Roman Catholic Church were one and the same thing, Vatican II contented itself with saying that the Church of Christ "subsists in" the Roman Catholic Church—an expression deliberately chosen to allow for the ecclesial reality of other Christian communities. At various points the council seemed to imply that non-Catholic Christians are members of the Body of Christ, and thus of the Church. Vatican II, while looking optimistically on the possibilities of salvation for non-Christians, did not commit itself to any particular explanation—whether the *votum* doctrine of Pius XII, the "anonymous Christian" theory of Rahner, or any other. The assumption seems to be that the Church plays an instrumental role in the salvation of everyone who is saved.⁴⁸

SINCE VATICAN II

Interpretation of the Council

The ecclesiology of Vatican II has been expounded in the standard commentaries. A penetrating analysis of the struggles and compromises in *Lumen gentium* was offered by Antonio Acerbi.⁴⁹ He maintained that the council fathers gradually moved from a static, juridical vision of the Church to one that was open and dynamic.

Controversies soon arose about the hermeneutics of Vatican II. Early on, the progressives interpreted the council on the principle that its innovations were more central than its reaffirmations of previously official positions. Authors such as Edward Schillebeeckx,⁵⁰ Richard P.

⁴⁸ I have defended this interpretation in *The Reshaping of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 138–41. See also Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist, 1988) 125–28.

⁴⁹ A. Acerbi, *Due ecclesologie: Ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella "Lumen gentium"* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1975).

⁵⁰ E. Schillebeeckx, *The Real Achievement of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

McBrien,⁵¹ and the Lutheran George Lindbeck⁵² favored what we may call the hermeneutics of discontinuity. More recently, through the influence of Joseph Ratzinger⁵³ and, in a somewhat different way, that of Hermann Josef Pottmeyer,⁵⁴ there has been a growing concern to interpret Vatican II as continuous with previous Catholic teaching. Of this shift we shall see more when we come to the Extraordinary Synod of 1985.

Post-Vatican II ecclesiology can scarcely be understood without some familiarity with the principal theologies of the period. In addition to Congar, who has continued to develop his thinking,⁵⁵ special mention must be made of Rahner, Mühlen, Küng, Bouyer, and Tillard.

Karl Rahner

Unlike the other four authors just mentioned, Karl Rahner never wrote a major monograph on the Church, but he published a whole series of very influential essays and booklets between 1946 and his death in 1984.⁵⁶ His basic understanding of the Church was closely correlated with his vision of salvation history, with Jesus Christ as the culmination of that history. The Church perpetuates in time God's definitive self-gift in Christ. The individual Christian, as a bodily and social being, is subject to ecclesiastical laws and regulations. But because the human spirit has a direct relationship to God as its transcendent goal, God can act immediately upon it, arousing charismatic impulses beyond the control of the Church as institution. Church authorities, therefore, must respect the zone of personal freedom. In the last analysis, therefore, Rahner seemed to favor the charismatic over the institutional.⁵⁷

In an early essay on membership in the Church according to *Mystici corporis*, Rahner supported the teaching of Pius XII, explaining this in

⁵¹ R. P. McBrien, *Do We Need the Church?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

⁵² G. A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II—Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

⁵³ Joseph Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985) chap. 2, "A Council To Be Rediscovered."

⁵⁴ H. J. Pottmeyer, "Continuité et innovation dans l'ecclésiologie de Vatican II: L'Influence de Vatican I sur l'ecclésiologie de Vatican II et la nouvelle réception de Vatican I à la lumière de Vatican II," in Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *Les églises après Vatican II: Dynamisme et prospective* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981) 91-116.

⁵⁵ Among Congar's many postconciliar works, the nearest to a systematic treatise on ecclesiology is his *L'Eglise une, sainte, catholique et apostolique* (Paris: Cerf, 1970).

⁵⁶ For an overview of Rahner's theology of the Church, see Leo O'Donovan et al., "A Changing Ecclesiology: A Symposium," *TS* 38 (1977) 736-62.

⁵⁷ See the exposition and criticism of Rahner in Medard Kehl, *Kirche als Institution* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1976) 172-238.

terms of the Church's nature as a sacrament or visible sign of Christ's grace.⁵⁸ The sacrament, he maintained, has salvific efficacy not only for its members but for others who are oriented toward it. They can be united to the Church in a salutary way by means of an implicit *votum*. Rahner made a somewhat idiosyncratic distinction between the Church and the People of God. All human beings, he held, are ontologically consecrated to God by reason of the incarnation of the divine Logos, and thus are members of the People of God, even though only a relatively small minority belong to the Church as sacrament. Vatican II was not to follow Rahner in his very broad conception of the People of God.

In another early essay Rahner contended that the Church itself is not only holy but also, in a true sense, sinful.⁵⁹ He rejected as excessively formalistic the prevailing theory that sin does not touch the Church as such. Here again, Vatican II stopped short of following Rahner. While holding that the Church clasps sinners to itself, it never predicated sin of the Church.

Rahner's doctrine of the episcopate, developed on the eve of Vatican II, does on the whole coincide with that of the council.⁶⁰ The council seems to teach, as did Rahner, that episcopal ordination directly effects the incorporation of the bishop into the episcopal college, and that assignment to a particular pastoral charge is the result of a subsequent canonical mission. On the relationship between the pope and the other bishops, Rahner challenged the prevailing thesis that the Church has two inadequately distinct subjects of supreme power—the pope and the episcopal college. Rahner held that the college, together with the pope as its head, is the only supreme power, and that the pope never acts as pope except when he acts as head of the college. The council did not attempt to settle this debate. It can be read as supporting Rahner's theory, but the *Nota praevia explicativa* (commonly regarded as an authentic interpretation) seems to favor the theory of two inadequately distinct subjects.

In various writings Rahner contended that the Church exists primarily in the local community, where the bishop celebrates the sacraments and preaches, surrounded by his presbyters and faithful.⁶¹ This doctrine

⁵⁸ K. Rahner, "Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis Christi,'" *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 1–88; German original in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 69 (1947) 129–60.

⁵⁹ K. Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," *Theological Investigations* 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 253–69; German original in *Stimmen der Zeit* 72 (1947) 163–77.

⁶⁰ K. Rahner, "The Episcopate and the Primacy," in *Inquiries* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964) 303–400 (German original, 1961); idem, *Bishops: Their Status and Function* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965)—translation of a 1964 lecture.

⁶¹ K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963)—translation of a 1961 article.

harmonizes with certain texts from Vatican II, which apparently give priority to the local church. But in other texts the council suggests the primacy of the universal Church. Rahner himself conceded that certain attributes of the Church, such as indefectibility, are not verified in the particular churches.

In his ecclesiological essays after the council Rahner became more critical of the Church as institution. Without denying the necessity of the Church as means of salvation, he preferred to describe it as a result of God's grace offered to, and received by, human beings as incarnate spirits. The Church, in this perspective, is regarded as a sign of grace rather than as a cause of grace, even an instrumental cause.

In books and articles composed in response to particular events, Rahner began to press for institutional changes. Some of his bolder suggestions were somewhat casually put forth. Thus he proposed, in a brief volume written on the occasion of the German pastoral synod, that charismatically gifted leaders of basic Christian communities should receive "relative ordination," equipping them for the ministry of word and sacrament to a given congregation but not for the universal Church.⁶²

The Church of the future, Rahner contended, should be open, democratized, and declericalized. He seemed ambivalent about sociopolitical engagement. In some essays he stated that specific social-policy questions lie beyond the Church's sphere of competence, but elsewhere he urged Church authorities to issue prophetically-inspired concrete directives for secular society. He criticized contemporary Catholicism, at least in his own country, for its lack of a vibrant spirituality.

Hans Küng

A very different approach to ecclesiology is found in the writings of our second representative theologian, Hans Küng. In a major work, *The Church*,⁶³ he presented a learned and highly readable treatise covering the traditional questions in a fresh way. His work is self-consciously ecumenical in the sense of seeking a rapprochement with Barth and the disciples of Rudolf Bultmann. The influence of Küng's Protestant colleague at Tübingen, Ernst Käsemann, was noted by many critics.⁶⁴

With a minimum of theory, Küng constructs his ecclesiology primarily on the basis of the biblical data. Within the Scriptures he shows a marked

⁶² K. Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury/Crossroad, 1974), from German original, 1972. Rahner's proposals on local ordinations appear chiefly on pages 108-13.

⁶³ H. Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1968); German original, *Die Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967).

⁶⁴ See, e.g., the comments on Küng's *The Church* in Congar's "Bulletin d'ecclésiologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 53 (1969) 693-705, esp. 694.

preference for the early letters of Paul. He sets Luke-Acts, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Letters on a lower level as derivative works from a later generation, infected, it might seem, by "early Catholic" distortions.

Küng also makes use of church history, not so much to support current official teaching as to suggest alternative possibilities. He prominently displays the less admirable incidents to keep the reader from imagining that the Church is divine and impeccable. *The Church* is in fact a reversal of the clerical, juridicist, and triumphalist ecclesiologies of the preconciliar period. Küng does not present the Church as a continued incarnation or even as primordial sacrament, but rather as a community called to obey and proclaim the gospel. The idea of the Church as transformer of the world, so prominent in the secular theologies of the 1960s, is almost totally absent.

On a number of points Küng challenges the dominant positions. Jesus Christ, for him, is not the founder of the Church. The Church is sinful and has properties quite contrary to the kingdom of God. Apostolic succession can be accepted in the sense that the whole Church abides in the faith of the apostles, but not in the sense that the bishops, by ordination, receive special apostolic powers. The bishops are described as pastors of particular churches, but not as divinely commissioned teachers. The Vatican II theme of episcopal collegiality receives little attention. The papal office is described in terms that seem hardly compatible with the Vatican I definitions of primacy of jurisdiction and infallibility.

Heribert Mühlen

The boldest effort at a systematic ecclesiology since Vatican II is probably Heribert Mühlen's *Una mystica persona*.⁶⁵ Not content to view the Church in terms of metaphors, Mühlen seeks a dogmatic formula that defines the Church in its essential reality. He proposes the formula "one person [the Holy Spirit] in many persons [Christ and us]." Just as the property of the Holy Spirit within the Deity is to be one person in two persons (the Father and the Son), so in salvation history the Holy Spirit is the supernatural bond of unity among all who are in Christ. By his personalist formula Mühlen brings together the three central mysteries of faith: the Trinity (three persons in one nature), the Incarnation (one person in two natures), and the Church.

Anointed by the Holy Spirit, Christ received the grace of headship (*gratia capitalis*). Christians participate both in Christ's consecratory anointing, bestowed upon him and them for the benefit of others, and in his sanctificatory anointing, given for his and their personal holiness.

⁶⁵ H. Mühlen, *Una mystica persona* (3rd ed.; Munich: Schöningh, 1968).

The Church as sacrament perpetuates Christ's consecratory anointing and thereby mediates his grace.

Mühlen develops his theory with close attention to the biblical texts, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, *Mystici corporis*, and Vatican II. He shows how his theory allows for sinfulness in the Church and develops at some length its ecumenical implications, with frequent reference to the Decree on Ecumenism. Mühlen's interesting work, when reviewed in its 1964 edition, gave rise to some objections, to which the author responded in his later editions.⁶⁶ Never translated into English, the book is little known in the United States, but it has received favorable comment from Sabbas Kilian,⁶⁷ Robert Sears,⁶⁸ and Avery Dulles.⁶⁹

Louis Bouyer

Another major contribution to ecclesiology that has received insufficient attention, partly because the English translation was very late in coming, is *The Church of God* by Louis Bouyer.⁷⁰ In its systematic section this work develops an ecclesiology inspired by the Fathers, the liturgy, J. A. Möhler, and J. H. Newman. Bouyer agrees with Rahner that the Church is actualized most intensely on the local level, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. He is concerned to give due importance to the presbyterate, so neglected at Vatican II. The bishop, he holds, is a presbyter chosen to preside over the presbyterium, the presbyteral college to which he belongs. Bouyer regrets that in modern times bishops have been drawn away from the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care, with the result that they sometimes become ecclesiastical technocrats. With Congar he laments the modern preoccupation with power in the Church, which results, he believes, in a hypertrophy and deformation of authority.

For a reanimation of the laity, Bouyer works by preference with the category of "royal priesthood." The mission of the laity, accordingly, is to consecrate everyday reality through participation in the Eucharist.

⁶⁶ Critical questions are raised in the following reviews: G. Dejaive, "Un tournant dans l'ecclésiologie," *NRT* 87 (1965) 961-63; P. De Letter in *TS* 26 (1965) 127-29; Y. Congar, "Bulletin d'ecclésiologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 55 (1971) 334-39. Congar is reviewing a French translation of the third edition.

⁶⁷ S. Kilian, "The Holy Spirit in Christ and in Christians," *American Benedictine Review* 20 (1969) 99-121; idem, "Dialogue in Ecclesiology," *TS* 30 (1969) 61-78.

⁶⁸ R. T. Sears, "Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church," *TS* 37 (1976) 652-79, esp. 653-60.

⁶⁹ A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974) 51-52; expanded edition, 1987, 55-56.

⁷⁰ L. Bouyer, *The Church of God* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1982); French original, *L'Eglise de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1970).

While respecting Congar's seminal study on the laity, he observes that that work might mislead the reader into separating the laity's engagement in the world from their personal participation in the life of worship.

Bouyer's book provides an interesting contrast with that of Küng. While the two agree in placing primary emphasis on the local church and on pastoral ministry, the differences are sharp. In terms of method Bouyer, without neglecting the biblical witness, differs from Küng in strongly emphasizing tradition, particularly the Fathers. He sees the Church less as a herald of the gospel and more as the Body of Christ, centered on the Eucharist. In contrast to Küng's contention that the whole Church succeeds to the apostles, Bouyer insists that the bishops alone have received from the apostles the gifts necessary to perform the apostolic functions. The pope, he remarks, is not a "superbishop" but the bishop who receives personally the "solicitude for all the churches" that all the bishops receive collectively.

Jean-Marie Tillard

Among the Catholic ecclesiologies published in the 1980s, Jean M.-R. Tillard's *Eglise d'églises*⁷¹ merits special attention. It is an ecclesiology of communion in the style of Congar. A distinguished ecumenist, Tillard puts forward his proposal with the conviction that the debates about sacraments and ministries, so prevalent in ecumenical circles in the past 50 years, cannot be resolved except in the light of a better appreciation of the nature and mission of the Church. By communion (*koinōnia*) Tillard does not mean mere fellowship on the human level but a common participation in the gifts of salvation gained by Jesus Christ and bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Communion in the theological sense, he is convinced, brings people into solidarity with one another by giving them a share in the life of the triune God.

For Tillard, the basic ecclesial reality is the local church, which actualizes itself most fully when it celebrates the memorial of the Lord, in sacramental communion with the Church of all times and places. The bishop, who presides at the Eucharist, is responsible for integrating the particular church into the apostolic heritage and maintaining it in the catholic communion.

Tillard reacts against the excessive polarization of authority on the person and office of the pope. Reproducing the main conclusions of his earlier volume *L'Evêque de Rome*,⁷² he holds that the pope is first of all the bishop of a local church—the church which, by reason of its singular

⁷¹ J. M.-R. Tillard, *Eglise d'églises* (Paris: Cerf, 1987).

⁷² *L'Evêque de Rome* (Paris: Cerf, 1982); ET, *The Bishop of Rome* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983).

relationship to Peter and Paul, has a certain primacy in authenticating the apostolic faith. The pope, he believes, should not normally appoint bishops, but should allow the process of selection to occur locally, intervening only where there is some serious irregularity.

In the ecumenical section of *Eglise d'églises* Tillard maintains that a measure of communion already exists between Roman Catholicism and other Christian churches and communities. The lack of visible bonds of communion with Rome is a defect in the separated churches, but does not of itself prevent these other communities from being churches in the strict theological sense. The Catholic Church, although it retains the fulness of the apostolic heritage, stands in need of continual reform. The catholicity of the Church is marred by the existing schisms. Councils held since the division between the Eastern and Western churches, he asserts, have not been in the full sense ecumenical.

Tillard's book contains valuable discussions of many current questions such as collegiality, the sense of the faithful, reception, subsidiarity, and episcopal conferences. His footnotes give excellent leads to current literature, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox. He provides abundant material on the interpretation of biblical texts and gives apposite reference to the Greek and Latin Fathers. His ecclesiology, which tends to idealize the early centuries, may be somewhat anachronistic. At least he can be accused of failing to provide strong theoretical reasons why the forms of the patristic period should be determinative today. He is obviously convinced that if the ancient practices were recovered, the Catholic Church would be in a better position to solve some of its internal problems and the restoration of communion among the divided churches would be facilitated.

Secular and Political Theology

Influenced by the Protestant secularization theology of the early 1960s, some Catholic theologians began to proclaim that the Church was essentially a service organization, having as its principal aim the establishment of a more just and human society. Secular theology sought to overcome the isolation and introversion of the Church and to make it more responsive to the trends of the times. Richard P. McBrien in his *Do We Need the Church?* answered the question in his title as follows: "If it cannot or will not work to bring men together, if it cannot devote itself full time to healing the fractures in the community of mankind, if it cannot uphold principles of justice and charity and peace, if it will not place itself at the disposal of others in fulfillment of these goals, then it has no reason or justification for being."⁷³ In a subsequent book, *The*

⁷³ McBrien, *Do We Need the Church?* 163-64.

Remaking of the Church,⁷⁴ McBrien proposed a 13-point "agenda for reform," which amounted to the transformation of the Church into a kind of parliamentary democracy in which the papacy was thoroughly "demythologized" (his own term). While criticizing Küng for neglecting the importance of sociopolitical *diakonia*, McBrien welcomed his views on the papacy, infallibility, and freedom in the Church.

In Germany Johann Baptist Metz produced several brief but influential volumes of essays. Opposing what he regarded as introverted spirituality, he redefined the Church as "the institution of the critical liberty of faith."⁷⁵ In spite of Metz's unwillingness to adopt the Marxist ideology or any other program of social reform, his work was helpful to Latin American theologians because of his activist stance and his antipathy to "bourgeois religion" (especially in *The Emergent Church*⁷⁶).

Latin American Liberation Theology

Though heavily dependent on European scholarship, Latin American liberation theologians are attempting to forge an ecclesiology suited to the sociopolitical situation in their part of the globe. The Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez holds that the Church in Latin America must be "the visible sign of the presence of the Lord within the aspiration for liberation and the struggle for a more human and just society."⁷⁷ Without being specific about the structural changes he favors, he asserts that the present ecclesial structures "appear obsolete and lacking in dynamism before the new and serious challenges," and are in urgent need of profound renewal.⁷⁸ In his recent works Gutiérrez insists that the Church in our time must be built up from below—that is to say, from the poor, the marginalized, the exploited. His project is to encourage the formation of a popular Church that arises from within the masses under the influence of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹

Brazil has led the way in promoting basic ecclesial communities, which Paul VI discussed at some length in his apostolic letter *On the Evangelization of the Modern World*.⁸⁰ The Brazilian Marcello Azevedo describes

⁷⁴ R. P. McBrien, *The Remaking of the Church: An Agenda for Reform* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

⁷⁵ J. B. Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) 116.

⁷⁶ J. B. Metz, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

⁷⁷ G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (15th anniversary edition; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988) 148.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 70.

⁷⁹ G. Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983) 21 and *passim*.

⁸⁰ Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1976) no. 58, pp. 40–42.

these as communities in which the gospel is proclaimed from the perspective of the poor with the aim of converting the rich and powerful. The Church in these communities, he states, serves the world through the *diakonia* of faith, denouncing injustices and promoting social transformation. Each basic community, according to Azevedo, is called to be a sign and sacrament of the coming reign of God.⁸¹

Another Brazilian, Leonardo Boff, writes of "ecclesiogenesis," which he describes as the "reinvention" of the Church by basic ecclesial communities.⁸² The local church, he maintains, is no longer viewed, as at Vatican II, in terms of the diocese under the authority of its bishop, but is understood more on the analogy of the house communities referred to in the Pauline letters. Spontaneous gatherings of lay people, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, are reconstituting the Church from below. These communities, Boff believes, establish a new way of being Church without centralization and hierarchical domination.⁸³

Although Boff does not deny the need for institutionalization, he evidently regards it as a secondary feature of the Church. He is commonly criticized for neglecting the hierarchical nature of the Church as instituted by Christ. He seems to depreciate the institutional in relation to the charismatic, to exalt the local over the universal, and to advocate the priority of praxis over theory. Not surprisingly, some of his writings have come under criticism from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁸⁴

Latin American liberation ecclesiology has attracted a following in other continents. A few Catholic theologians in North America, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Africa have attempted to apply liberationist principles to their own circumstances. But these efforts remain as yet tentative. It is probably too early to set forth the characteristics of liberation ecclesiology in non-Latin American dress.

The ecclesiology of the liberationists has provoked opposition from theologically and economically conservative Catholics in Latin America and elsewhere. The most sustained theological challenge, both to Latin American liberationism and to North American secular theology, has come from survivors and followers of the theology of *ressourcement* that

⁸¹ M. deC. Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1976) 218. The entire chapter 4, "Ecclesial Dimensions," 177-224, is important for ecclesiology.

⁸² L. Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1986); Portuguese original, 1977.

⁸³ L. Boff, *Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1985) esp. 125-30.

⁸⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Notification regarding L. Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*," *Origins* 14, no. 42 (April 4, 1985) 683-87.

prevailed in France immediately after World War II. Authors such as Jean Daniélou,⁸⁵ Henri de Lubac,⁸⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar,⁸⁷ and Joseph Ratzinger,⁸⁸ strongly influenced by the Platonism of the Fathers, have promoted a kind of neo-Augustinianism in ecclesiology. They do not want to see the Church reduced to an instrument for the rebuilding of secular society. They see it as a divinely animated organism, the bride of Christ, and the virginal mother who begets children for eternal life. They are deeply convinced that special graces or charisms are attached to office in the Church, and especially to the papacy. While approving of the accomplishments of Vatican II, they regard the postconciliar turmoil as the work of an alien spirit. They strongly resist all proposals to reform the structures of the Church according to contemporary management theory. The Church, in their view, is being excessively politicized. The very persons who protest against the power of the papacy are seeking to gain power for themselves and their constituencies. True reform, these theologians maintain, is interior and spiritual. It requires humility and obedience, respect for authority and for tradition.

The Synod of 1985

In 1985 Pope John Paul II convened an extraordinary meeting of the Synod of Bishops to assess the impact of Vatican II. The Final Report of the Synod gives a compact summary of the current ecclesiological tendencies.⁸⁹ The main body of the report (Part 2) is divided into four sections, dealing respectively with the mystery of the Church, the sources of life for the Church, the Church as communion, and the Church's mission to the world. Different theological schools were able to set their mark on different sections of the document.

In the first section, "The Mystery of the Church," the theologians of the neo-Augustinian school—to use my own term—seem to have prevailed. The Church is here asked to foster the sense of the sacred and to understand itself in Trinitarian and Christological terms. "We must not replace a false, one-sided, hierarchical notion of the Church with a new

⁸⁵ J. Daniélou, *Why the Church?* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1974).

⁸⁶ H. de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982).

⁸⁷ H. U. von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), ET of *Der antirömische Affekt* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974).

⁸⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) esp. chap. 1, "The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council," expressing Ratzinger's current reservations about the concept of the People of God.

⁸⁹ Synod of Bishops, "The Final Report," *Origins* 15, no. 27 (Dec. 19, 1985) 444–50. Another translation is given in Xavier Rynne, *Pope John Paul's Extraordinary Synod* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1986) 112–32, with an unfortunate omission of eight lines on page 127.

one-sided sociological concept."⁹⁰ The purpose of the Church is to lead humanity to "a profound conversion of heart, to a share in the life of the triune God."⁹¹

The second major section, less directly pertinent to ecclesiology, deals with the Word of God and the liturgy as sources of the Church's life. It contains paragraphs on evangelization, on the magisterium, and on the sacred liturgy, embodying respectively the perspectives of kerygmatic, institutional, and mystagogic theology. The renewal of the liturgy is praised as the most visible fruit of Vatican II. But the caution is stated: liturgy requires interior and spiritual participation; it must nourish and illumine the sense of the sacred.

The next major section, "The Church as Communion," promotes as "a central and fundamental idea in the documents of the council"⁹² an ecclesiology of *koinōnia*, somewhat along the lines of Congar. Communion is interpreted as involving variety in unity, the spirit of collegiality, and participation and coresponsibility on all levels in the Church. Basic ecclesial communities are described as a positive development offering great hope for the revitalization of the Church. Lay people are encouraged to collaborate in the apostolate, and the gifts of women are mentioned as a resource insufficiently utilized. Ecumenical dialogue is seen as a means of pointing the way from the present state of incomplete communion among separated churches to the restoration, with the help of God's grace, of full communion.

The final section, "The Mission of the Church in the World," builds on the Vatican II constitution *Gaudium et spes*. With some debt to recent liberation theology, the Final Report states that the signs of the times today include "a growing amount of hunger, oppression, injustice and war, of torture and terrorism, and other forms of violence of every kind."⁹³ Interpreting all these signs in the light of the gospel, "the Church must in prophetic fashion denounce every form of poverty and oppression and defend and support everywhere the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person."⁹⁴ The preferential option for the poor is endorsed.

The Extraordinary Synod made a number of recommendations for future study and implementation. The four main recommendations—the completion of the Eastern Code of Canon Law, the preparation of a universal catechism, the clarification of the status of episcopal conferences, and the need for study of the principle of subsidiarity—are all

⁹⁰ Rynne translation 117.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 118, slightly modified by the present author.

⁹² *Ibid.* 122.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 128.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 130.

indicative of the existing tensions between universalism and regionalism in the Church.

The significance of the Final Report may be assessed in terms of the five models proposed by the present author in his 1974 study *Models of the Church*. To what extent is the Church here presented as a hierarchical institution, as a mystical communion, as a sacrament of Christ, as a herald of God's Word, and as a servant of secular society? The concepts of sacrament, communion, and servant dominate respectively the first, third, and fourth sections of the Report. The herald model makes a clear but fleeting appearance in the treatment of evangelization in the second section. Institutionalism is disavowed in the first section but makes itself felt in the treatment of magisterium in the second section. The sacramental type of ecclesiology reappears in the treatment of liturgy in the second section. Thus all five models of the Church are visible in the Final Report, with priority given to the models of communion, sacrament, and servant. In a pregnant sentence the report declares: "The Church as communion is a sacrament for the salvation of the world."⁹⁶ Sacrament is interpreted in the report as a manifestation of the mystery of salvation, as the focus of communion, and as an instrument of salvific transformation.

The Synod of 1985, which reflected on the council in the light of two decades of experience, does not register any significant progress beyond Vatican II. That council remains, in my judgment, the high point of Catholic ecclesiology. It harvested very successfully the fruits of several decades of intense research and speculation. Since then, efforts have been made in different parts of the world to apply and extend the teaching of the council in complex and varied situations. Some new insights have been achieved, but often at the expense of serenity and balance. The Extraordinary Synod made it clear that the favorite themes of particular schools can and must be harmonized in the interests of depth, completeness, and unity.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 127.