THE TRANSFORMATIVE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE THOUGHT OF GREGORY BAUM

REBECCA McKENNA, C.N.D.

[Editor's note: The author explores the notion of mission in the writings of Canadian theologian Gregory Baum. She traces the chronological development in his missiology, identifies three dynamics that Baum uses to speak about the mission of the Church (dialogue, conflict, and solidarity), and argues that in his publications there is a single underlying notion of mission, namely the transformation of personal and social consciousness.]

THROUGH THE CENTURIES various Christian communities have asked themselves, "What is the mission of the Church?" Questions of this nature express the desire of particular communities to identify exactly where to focus their energy, resources, care, and concern. The Church's mission is not self-evident; the theological concept of mission has undergone significant transformation during the last half of the 20th century.

David Bosch maintained that after the 1950s several important changes in the way human beings viewed the world, and in the way Christians approached other nations, led to a radical critique of the missionary movement from inside and outside its ranks.[1] These changes included the secularization and dechristianization of culture, awareness of the enormous disparity between the world's poor and the rich, awareness among Christians of their complicity and active participation in the subjugation and colonization of various peoples, and a refusal on the part of younger churches to be dominated by established Western churches. Criticism of past missionary practices generated a crisis within the missionary sectors of various churches and a subse-

REBECCA McKENNA, C.N.D., received her Ph.D. from the University of St. Michael's College within the Toronto School of Theology. She is assistant professor in the Religious Studies Department, St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Her current research focuses especially on various forms of contemporary missiology.

[1] Although the development of the Christian notion of mission has been closely related to those activities commonly described as missionary, it is no longer thought of only in terms of the preaching of the gospel to new peoples and cultures. Today "mission" can be used in a broad sense to refer to "everything that the Church does in service of the kingdom of God" (William McConville, "Mission," in *The New Dictionary of Theology* ed. Joseph A. Komonchak et al. [Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987] 664–68, at 664).

quent rethinking of "the foundation, the motives and aim, and the nature of mission."[2]

In this article I wish to demonstrate some of the contributions toward a contemporary theology of mission by the Canadian theologian Gregory Baum (b. 1923). I study the writings he published between 1957–1998.[3] I begin by grouping his texts according to the three movements that preoccupied Baum during these 40 years, those on ecumenism, psychology, and political theology. Baum has traced the stages in his own career:

I began my work as an ecumenist. I was convinced of the need of Catholic–Protestant and Christian–Jewish dialogue. . . . A second phase began when I was deeply impressed by the humanist message written into divine revelation. I learned to see in the humanity redeemed by Christ the locus of God's self-communication. In this phase I relied greatly on psychotherapeutic insights into the transformation of personal life. Finally the radical social justice movement in the church touched me deeply. Without giving up my ecumenical and humanistic concerns, I turned to the more radical critique of church and society, generated by the preferential option for the powerless. I came to identify myself with what after Johann Baptist Metz is called "political theology."[4]

In the context of each phase in Baum's career I illustrate the corresponding ways in which he articulated the mission of the Church and three dynamics of mission that have their origins in those three movements.[5]

ECUMENISM (1956–1967)[6]

Baum entered the theological arena in 1956 with his doctoral thesis *That They May Be One: A Study of Papal Doctrine (Leo XIII–Pius XII).*[7] From 1956 until well after Vatican II, most of his theology reflected his

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[2] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993) 4.

[3] Stephen J. Schäfer has produced a thorough bibliography of Baum's works from 1958 to 1985 ("Chronological Bibliography of the Works of Gregory G. Baum," in *Faith That Transforms: Essays in Honor of Gregory Baum,* ed. Mary Jo Leddy and Mary Ann Hinsdale [New York: Paulist, 1987] 152–94).

[4] Gregory Baum, "A Response to Haight, Hutchinson, Simpson, and Rotstein," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 2 (1987) 203–8, at 204–5.

[5] While I do not suggest a relationship of strict determinism between these theological articulations and the perspectives of the three movements in which Baum was involved, I do note a strong correspondence between them. In addition, while I claim that the three dynamics of mission have their origins in each of the movements, I do not imply that they are limited to these periods in Baum's career. Evidence suggests that these dynamics continue to have lasting impact on the overall development of his theology of mission.

[6] The dates I designate as parameters for the three phases of Baum's career are approximate boundaries and allow for considerable overlap.

[7] Baum, *That They May Be One: A Study of Papal Doctrine (Leo XIII–Pius XII)* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1958). Here Baum traced papal teachings on Christian unity from 1894 to 1958. Throughout his career Baum has continued to interpret and discuss the significance of various episcopal and papal teachings.

preoccupation with the situation of intra-Christian alienation. During these years he was active in many ecumenical initiatives. This involvement ran the gamut from his work as a consultant for the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, a Vatican office that had a significant impact on the council, to numerous public-speaking engagements in Protestant and Catholic churches. Describing the situation of division and discord, he wrote, "We have often avoided one another, we have often had greater dislike for one another than for godless and non-Christian men. Looking upon one another as heretics or schismatics, we felt religiously justified in not seeking any bond of charity at all."[8] In his earliest works Baum seemed predominantly concerned with the problems that Christian disunity posed for Catholics. For example, in 1958 he wrote, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. A Christian world divided into competing religious bodies is so much weakened that even the Catholic Church, situated at its centre, will not remain unaffected by the attacks against Christianity. Although the Church will not be overcome by the gates of hell, she may nevertheless lose a multitude of members from her own fold and observe the decay of Christian elements outside her own borders."[9] By 1968 Baum's concern had broadened from his original focus on the divisions within the Christian faith to the many global experiences of conflict and social alienation: "We experience ourselves as a divided world, a world threatened by conflicts: man against man, race against race, party against party. We discover the isolation produced by sin. We know the painful isolation of people in our big cities and the problem of their personal identity."[10]

Another dimension of Christian alienation that Baum addressed in the years leading up to Vatican II and during his participation at the council was anti-Semitism and the Church's relationship to Jews.[11] Although concern for Church-Jewish solidarity is generally situated in the context of interfaith relations, Baum argued, on the basis of common roots, that Christians were destined to a special intimacy with the

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[8] Baum, *Progress and Perspectives: The Catholic Quest for Christian Unity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962) 57. In respect to exclusive language found in this quote and throughout this article, while I am committed to the use of gender-inclusive language as a way of incorporating women's consciousness into research, I will not attempt to change the exclusive language found in primary and secondary sources. Although it might make these texts appear to be more inclusive, I do not want to trivialize or gloss the clear record of exclusion found in such documents. From the contemporary vantage point it is almost impossible to determine accurately whether authors intended to include the perspectives and experiences of women in their statements.

[9] Baum, *That They May Be One* 118.

[10] Baum, "Father Gregory Baum: A Roman Catholic Reaction," *The Ecumenist* 6 (1968) 123–25, at 125.

[11] His late 1950s and early 1960s investigation of the history of Christian anti-Semitism and its New Testament roots resulted in the publication of *The Jews and the Gospel* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1961).

Jewish people and that in fact "the Church is incomplete without Israel."[12]

Israel is related to us not only through the memory of the Church's early days; Israel is alive in the Church of today. We carry Israel in our midst; or more correctly, to follow the idiom of St. Paul, Israel carries us as the stem carries the branches. . . . The community created by the new covenant of Jesus is the true Israel, the continuation of the old, based on the promises made to the patriarchs and the prophets, fulfilled in Jerusalem, embracing the holy remnant of the chosen people. . . . This community, the Catholic Church, is founded and built up on the Israel of God's choice.[13]

Baum was disturbed by the ignorance of many Christians concerning the close relationship between Christianity and Judaism (e.g. their common roots and eschatological hope) and Christians' prejudice toward the Jewish people. He was convinced that individuals and communities were responsible for the state of Christian alienation. While individuals committed various sins against unity, communities often tolerated or even promoted whole systems of division and prejudice. Baum gave concrete examples of individual and corporate offenses against Christian unity: "In teaching children, in preaching in church, in private conversations and personal arguments we still employ a multitude of expressions, and assert a number of ideas, concerning Protestants (and Jews and others) which sin against truth and charity."[14] In respect to anti-Semitism, Baum accused all Christian denominations of playing a part in the origination and maintenance of this deep-seated prejudice: "Christians, of all the Churches, have discovered that in popular preaching, in certain liturgical formulas, and often even in serious theological studies we have misrepresented the New Testament doctrine on the Jews. We have drawn a picture of the Jews which aroused contempt and misrepresented their role in scriptures."[15]

Inter-Christian disunity (including Christian relationship with Judaism) preoccupied Baum in the 1950s and 1960s and had a significant impact on his reflections on God's saving work and the Church's mission on behalf of this mystery. At the heart of Baum's praxis of ecumenism and much of his early writings was a commitment to what he called the "doctrine of unity."[16]

It is the teaching of the Scriptures—and in this its doctrine is unique—that mankind is one single family and that all divisions in this family are the fruit of sin, against the divine order, and the source of perpetual misery. . . . All men, however widely they may differ in appearance or custom, are related to

[12] Baum, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Jews," *The Ecumenist* 1 (1963) 36–38, at 38.

[13] Baum, *Ecumenical Theology Today* (New York: Paulist, 1964) 232–33.

[14] Baum, "Apologetics and Ecumenism Compared," *The Catholic World* 196 (1962) 14–19, at 16.

[15] Baum, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Jews" 37.

[16] Baum, *Progress and Perspectives* 7.

one another as members of the same family. . . . The Bible rejects the views so widely spread among ancient civilizations that women are essentially inferior to men.[17]

Baum maintained that the Scriptures provide believers with a cosmic vision of unity and cooperation. In these authoritative texts we are told that the entire universe had been created by God as a unity and that all components have the potential to work together for the good of the whole. We hear of many occasions when individuals and groups sinned against this unity and established relationships of disunity and enmity. Finally, we are told that God sent Jesus into our broken world and gave him a mission to restore the integrity of creation. Jesus performs this unifying mission by showing humankind how to transcend the divisions of hatred and suspicion, and how to love one's neighbor without bounds.

Baum argued that God is redemptively active in all of reality, even in those situations marked by profound estrangement and conflict. From his study of the biblical dynamic of schism, found in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, he concluded that God is active in situations of fracture, speaking to humans of their sin and initiating appropriate cures:

God continues to speak to His Church through the events of her history. He speaks to us even through our divisions. Our schisms remind us of our past infidelities and of the present unwillingness to obey the Lord in all things. As the chastisement of the people of Israel and especially the division and dispersion of the Twelve Tribes were part of God's plan to teach His people their involvement in infidelity and to lead them to greater faithfulness to the divine call they had received, so are also the schisms in the Church signs of God to which we must listen, signs reminding us that we have sinned and signs initiating the divine remedy for our failures.[18]

Baum claimed that God was similarly involved in the dialogues and struggles of the ecumenical movement. Drawing good from evil, God uses current situations of division to call the entire Church to renewal.

Baum's understanding of the doctrine of unity and the reconciling mystery of God had direct implications for his early articulation of the mission of the Church. He claimed that Christ bestows the gift of unity upon the Church so that it can truly engage in the mission of reconciliation. Unity is a dynamic "property" or "message" inclining the Church toward the world and "empower[ing] the Church to heal the obstacles to unity set by sin" rather than a static "note" defining the nature of the Church in itself.[19] If the Church "bears in herself the

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[17] Ibid 6–7

[18] Baum, "Drawing Closer Together," *Ave Maria* 100 (1964) 14

[19] Baum, *Progress and Perspectives* 20–21 The Nicene Creed expressed the self-understanding of the Christian community as being "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic " These marks of the Church have often been used polemically as criteria to distinguish the "true" Church from heretical sects

power to overcome all obstacles to unity,"[20] then by virtue of this power he concluded that it could be held responsible for the state of unity in the world and especially among Christians.

In union with Christ the Church sets out to extend the fullness of reconciliation to all persons. In 1962 Baum noted that the primary meaning of the office of reconciliation was to restore all persons to God: "The first meaning of this office of reconciliation is, of course, the extension of Christ's forgiveness to those who will believe and be baptized. The mission of the apostles, and with them of the entire Church, is to free men of their sins and to sanctify them in the living body of the Lord."[21] But he maintained that Christ not only restored people to relationship with God, but also destroyed the many divisions that separated people (e.g. divisions based upon race, class, and sex). Consequently, the second meaning of the office of reconciliation included those works that destroy prejudice and hatred and restore unity and trust: "Since the ministry of the apostles is to apply the total reconciliation present in Christ, we assert that the Church is sent to heal the wounds of humanity, to overcome the barriers that divide men against men, and to restore the unity of the human family on this earth."[22] Based on this second meaning of reconciliation, Baum encouraged Christians to become involved in movements that sought to promote unity and social equality. While he insisted that social reconciliation was an essential part of the Church's mission, at this early date the theme was clearly secondary.

Dialogue

There is probably no other term Baum used more frequently in relation to the Church and its mission than "dialogue." In 1969 he wrote that "the Church is destined to engage in dialogue with other people, with their religions and ideologies: in this dialogue the Gospel is sounded. . . . Dialogue is mission. Dialogue is a way of proclamation."[23] Throughout Baum's writings, dialogue has continued to be an important dynamic that explains the challenge and gift of the Church in relationship to the world. Here I explicate his understanding of dialogue in relation to the Church's mission of promoting unity.

In the years before Vatican II, Baum wrote that "ecumenism is part of the essential mission of the Church to reconcile the world in Christ."[24] In light of this mandate he advocated that the Catholic Church abandon its isolationist position and enter more readily into

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[20] Ibid. 22.   [21] Ibid. 20.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Baum, *Faith and Doctrine* (New York: Paulist, 1969) 116.
[24] Baum, *That They May be One* 101.

conversation with "dissident Christians,"[25] especially with Eastern Orthodox Christians, as well as with Jews. Within this context of "traditional ecumenism"[26] he constructed an ideal notion of dialogue as "a careful listening, the sincere attempt to understand the others, the readiness to acknowledge the truth in their criticism of ourselves, and the willingness to change and be conformed more closely to the Gospel."[27] Baum claimed that this type of dialogue would "reestablish charity,"[28] cause the various Christian churches to "strive for a greater penetration of the Word of God,"[29] and so act as "an instrument of renewal in the Church."[30] In this process of renewal he claimed that both Catholics and Protestants would be led to a deeper understanding of the apostolic heritage that was theirs and toward greater fidelity in relation to these treasures.

Baum's understanding of dialogue is closely connected to his understanding of ecumenism; both concepts were influenced by the teaching of Vatican II. In summarizing the missiology of Vatican II, he noted a plurality of approaches to mission and the fact that the council had failed to reconcile the more recent "wider sense" of mission (i.e. dialogue, universal solidarity, and service) with the traditional notion of mission/evangelization, namely that of making converts.[31] In his published commentaries, explaining the meaning and significance of Vatican II, Baum drew attention to those conciliar texts that indicated a movement of radical openness toward the world. The following text from the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* is an example of this new expression of openness shaping the thought of Baum and other Catholics: "For our part, the desire for such dialogue, which can lead to truth through love alone, excludes no one, though an appropriate measure of prudence must undoubtedly be exercised. We include those who cultivate beautiful qualities of the human spirit but

[25] This term was used to distinguish separated Christians who were of good faith from schismatics and heretics Thus Baum explained that by "dissident or separated Christians we mean all men believing in Jesus Christ as God and Savior who remain apart from the Catholic Church in good faith" (ibid 34)

[26] Baum contrasts this type of ecumenism that focuses on doctrinal differences among Christian traditions with a "wider ecumenism" that focuses on contemporary world issues and the unity of all peoples ("Ecumenism After Vatican II," in *Oecumenica An Annual Symposium of Ecumenical Research*, ed Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach and Vilmos Vajta [Minneapolis Augsburg, 1967] 149–58, at 157)

[27] Baum, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Jews" 36

[28] Baum, "Dialogue or Conversion?" *Pax Romana Journal* 7 (1963) 17–18, at 18

[29] Baum, "Ecumenical Attitudes," *Apostolic Perspectives* 4 (1959) 4–8, at 5

[30] Baum, "Ecumenical Dialogue or Conversion," *Clergy Review* 47 (1962) 585–88, at 587

[31] Baum, "The Self-Understanding of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II" 103–5 For a fuller discussion of these unresolved notions of mission in Vatican II, see Lucien Richard, "Vatican II and the Mission of the Church A Contemporary Agenda," in *Vatican II, The Unfinished Agenda A Look to the Future*, ed Lucien Richard et al (New York Paulist, 1987) 57–70

do not yet acknowledge the Source of these qualities. We include those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways."[32] This particular aspect of Vatican II theology challenged Baum to extend his definition and aspirations regarding ecumenism. Whereas he had previously held that the mission of unity required the Church to engage in conversation with other Christian denominations and the Jewish peoples, he now wrote of "the Church's solidarity with the human family."[33] "According to the teaching of Vatican II, the human family has an inner Christ-given unity. It may well be that the understanding of ecumenism must be widened so that it includes all the efforts of the human family to actualize and make visible this Christ-given inner unity."[34] All subsequent involvements of Baum in official ecumenical dialogue were marked by this "wider ecumenism." Thus he wrote of the need for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to dialogue about the world and its concerns, rather than simply about their own unity: "The Ecumenical Movement is becoming increasingly aware that Christians cannot restrict their dialogue to themselves; they must extend dialogue to all. . . . Ecumenical dialogue in the second part of the twentieth century must make the Churches more sensitive to the problems of the world and the needs of humanity—so that together and singly they involve themselves in the reconciling ministry in which is found the salvation of the world—and of the Church herself."[35]

Baum invited ordinary Christians to become actively involved in the Church's mission of reconciliation. He claimed that by extending friendship beyond the narrow boundaries of one's own ecclesial community they could learn to appreciate the faith of others and become less polemical and defensive in their own creedal expressions. "We have to get over our touchiness and our emotional involvement—even in such commonplace situations as talking about religion with friends in our own living room. We have to learn to relax, admit our differences, and see how many things we have in common."[36] Baum likewise encouraged church teachers and theologians to become informed and involved in official ecumenical dialogue. These dialogues, he reasoned, not only had the potential to expand the common doctrinal ground between various communities but were also a powerful means of eradicating prejudice and awakening the desire for religious renewal.

During these years of ecumenical involvement Baum spoke of the mission of the Church in terms of unification and reconciliation. Dia-

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[32] *Gaudium et spes* no. 92; I cite the translation edited by Walter Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild, 1966).

[33] Baum, "Ecumenism After Vatican II" 168.

[34] Ibid. 157.

[35] Baum, "Anglican–Roman Catholic Relations: The New Situation," in *Lambeth Essays on Unity*, ed. Archbishop of Canterbury, A. M. Ramsey (London: SPCK, 1969) 44–53, at 53.

[36] Baum, "What You Can Do for Christian Reunion," *Sign* 43 (1963) 20–23, at 23.

logue and friendship were the means by which all Christians could participate in God's reconciling work.

PSYCHOLOGY (1965–1970)

By the late 1960s and early 1970s Baum began to express a growing frustration with "committee ecumenism"[37] and what he perceived to be an "exclusivist stress" within the ecumenical movement.[38] He concluded that little was accomplished in the narrow pursuit of common doctrinal ground. Likewise he became disillusioned with many forms of dialogue: "I am losing faith in dialogue. There are things dialogue cannot do. Dialogue can become a technique. . . . The dialogue is fine for a few people. But if dialogue is used by people in power—even unintentional power—it becomes a technique to keep people as they were before."[39]

Coincident with Baum's waning interest in official ecumenical dialogue was his enthusiastic involvement in a psychotherapeutic movement in Toronto. His experience in the therapy group known as "Therafields" had a profound effect on Baum, changing the way he thought about life and consequently influencing his theology during the late 60s and early 70s, including his theology of mission. He noted the significance of his therapy experience in the following autobiographical text: "In telling the story of the important experiences that have influenced my style of theological reflection I must mention, finally, my association with a psychotherapeutic movement in Toronto called Therafields, which lasted over many years in the sixties and had a profound influence on my understanding of human life."[40] From psychology, Baum claims to have gained insight into the dynamics of his own life, greater understanding and compassion for others, as well as a beginning awareness of the need to critique what he later called "pathogenic religion."[41]

Baum continued to identify "the presence of evil in human life in terms of dividedness."[42] But whereas his earlier focus had been on the fragmentation within the Christian Church, his attention in the post-conciliar years was directed toward personal dimensions of alienation, and certain social dimensions insofar as they affected the personal: "This, then, is the universal human predicament: the dividedness of

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[37] Baum, "The Church Needs a Theology of Conflict," *U.S. Catholic* 34 (1968) 18–20, at 20.

[38] Baum, *Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience* (New York: Seabury, 1970) xi.

[39] Baum, "The Church Needs a Theology of Conflict" 20.

[40] Baum, "Personal Experience and Styles of Thought," in *Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience on Religious Thought* (New York: Paulist, 1975) 5–33, at 26.

[41] Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist, 1975) 99.

[42] Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today: A Reply to Charles Davis* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 159.

man. Man is estranged from himself and from others."[43] During these years Baum was most interested in psychology's study of the "inner drama," whereby all of us know a constant "wrestling against the elements of destruction and falsification in our lives and the quest for a truly human freedom."[44]

From this new perspective Baum understood sin not primarily as the inner conflict between selfishness and selflessness, for "there are moments . . . when selfishness, or narcissism, is the only available reaction to life. This is not sinful."[45] Instead he maintained that "the crucial struggle in life . . . is between growing and refusing to grow. Sin is here understood as man's pathological resistance to growing up, to cling compulsively to the past, and to resist the light that reveals the truth to him."[46] With an emphasis on human growth and development, that which was seen to be most threatening was not the occasional acts of selfishness, but those pathological actions that expressed a resistance to growth, a hatred of self, and a secret longing for death.

Baum explained that the human person, whether religious or not, is an open reality, an entity coming to be, a locus for God's redemptive presence. As the human person goes through life he or she has certain experiences that are "memorable, the source of many decisions and [that] tend to unify human life."[47] He identified these episodes as "depth experiences,"[48] and claimed that within everyday "secular experiences" God was redemptively available: "God is present to people in the process of becoming more truly themselves, not by intervening in their lives from a point outside of history but by summoning and gracing them from within the human situation in which they live."[49]

"God is the humanizer of man."[50] God resides in the depth of human phenomenon and is experienced as that source that pushes humans toward fullness of life, creativity, and truth. The divine presence within human life is experienced as "a liberating power enabling people to live their humanity to the full, explore their hidden potenti-

[43] Ibid. 36.
[44] Baum, "Secular Spiritualities: Alcoholics Anonymous, Therapies, Radical Politics," *New Catholic World* 219 (1976) 53–57, at 55.
[45] Baum, "Pastoral Psychology: The Future," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 7 (1972) 60–68, at 64. In speaking of the psychological approach a few years later Baum made a distinction between therapeutic movements that emphasize the self in a narcissistic, individualistic manner and those which lead the person to realization through self-transcendence (*The Social Imperative* [New York: Paulist 1979] 135).
[46] Baum, "Pastoral Psychology: The Future" 65.
[47] Baum, *Faith and Doctrine: A Contemporary View* (New York: Paulist, 1969) 60.
[48] Baum cites Donald Evans as his source for the notion of "depth experiences" (*Faith and Doctrine* 59 n. 2). According to Evans depth experiences are those events in which persons "detect the mysterious depths of human relations" and in which "a hidden personal being called 'God' . . . sometimes reveals himself" (Evans, "Differences between Scientific and Religious Assertions," in *Science and Religion, New Perspectives on the Dialogue* [New York: Harper & Row, 1968] 103).
[49] Baum, *The Credibility of the Church* 46.
[50] Baum, "The Self-Understanding of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II" 95.

alities, transcend their damaged resources and enter upon a creativity of ever new proportions."[51] Baum's Augustinian training is evident in those passages in which he explained the psychologically healing effects of God's grace rehabilitating the human will and spirit.[52] Thus, God is "the divine enabler,"[53] operating within the human equation, empowering people to overcome the many resistances to life and to move freely into the future: "God's presence in a broken humanity, disfigured by evil, is the enabling source of insight and power that permits people to transcend their brokenness and move forward toward more authentic humanity."[54] In the context of human pathology God is healer, enabler, and thus "the mystery of man's de-alienation."[55]

Baum claimed that humans experienced God's empowering grace in those events that provoked a dialogic exchange with life. In the midst of everyday life people perceived themselves as being summoned by God toward greater truth and fullness of life. "God opposes evil by summoning and gracing men to deal with their lives, to understand what is going on, to face up to the destructive powers, to gain increasing mastery over evil, and to assume more and more responsibility for their human future. God has triumphed over evil in the orientation of mankind toward growth and reconciliation."[56] God's grace became most evident in the context of human dialogue. Baum maintained that the word of truth spoken in meaningful human exchange was not reducible to the human: "The word of truth that saves us from self-deception may be uttered by a friend or an adversary. In either case, the word does not belong to the person who pronounces it. . . . A voice which transcends the human seems to enter into the conversation of men."[57]

During these years Baum noted another "great change" that was occurring in spiritual consciousness, the realization "that the important and crucial events for us are interpersonal relations."[58] He believed that never before had people been so aware of the fact that it was within the human experience of community that they came to new

[51] Baum, *The Social Imperative* 136.

[52] Baum was a member of the Augustinian order of Roman Catholic priests and brothers from 1954 until 1976. The legacy of this relationship is evident throughout his writings; see "The Meaning of Hope in Evil Times," *ARC* [McGill University] 20 (1992) 79–83.

[53] Baum, "Pastoral Psychology: The Future" 65.

[54] Baum, *Christian Theology after Auschwitz* (London: Council of Christians and Jews, 1976) 21; this work from a later period illustrated the enduring influence of the humanistic phase.

[55] Baum, "Religious Experience and Doctrinal Statement," in *New Dimensions in Religious Experience,* Proceedings of the College Theology Society, ed. George Divine (New York: Alba, 1971) 3–11, at 9.

[56] Baum, *Man Becoming* 246.   [57] Ibid. 46.

[58] Baum, "Are We Losing the Faith?" *U.S. Catholic* 35 (July 1970) 6–9, at 7.

insight, to greater self-knowledge, that they were challenged to move out of selfishness and self-destructiveness, enabled to love another and to find the courage to move into the future with hope and imagination. Attentive to this transformation of spiritual consciousness, Baum began to shape his theology accordingly.

Consequently he concluded that "the way in which salvation today must be offered to men" was in the experience of "finding communion . . . by entering into a friendship with others" and "discovering dimensions of sharing."[59] Thus he spoke of the mission of the Church in terms of "the promot[ion] of communication among people born into estrangement."[60] In its care for souls, Baum suggested that the Church learn to address the isolation and impersonalism that many people suffered as a result of living in a highly mobile, technological society. It is in the creation of communities that the Church best responds to these basic human needs. In addition, Baum thought that membership in community gave Christians a natural ability to generate communities, and that in this way they could extend solidarity toward the world: "The fellowship created in the Church extends beyond its boundaries to include other men in whom the Spirit is at work. The Church is, therefore, creator of community in a special sense. Since she initiates her members into the mystery of communion, they in turn have the mission to create fellowship in the environment in which they live, a fellowship uniting as friends not only Christians but all men open to friendship, truth, and the sharing of new life."[61]

During this stage of Baum's career he continued to address the phenomenon of alienation. However his gaze had shifted from a concern for Christian disunity toward personal brokenness. Despite this change in Baum's focus he continued to articulate the mission of the Church in terms of promoting unification and reconciliation.[62] Convinced of the healing effects produced by many "human growth movements,"[63] he suggested that the Church adopt a more therapeutic approach in pastoral and spiritual practice. To this end he wrote of the role of the priest as counsellor or therapist for individual Christians,[64] and of the place of "therapeutic contemplation"[65] within Christian prayer. He advised that in order to serve the restoration or reintegration of the human psyche it was necessary for the Church to adopt a spirituality and language that not only accepts all dimensions of the human person (i.e. reason, emotions, and body) but that also

[59] Baum, "The Voice and the Crowd," *Media* 1 (1966) 12–18, at 17.

[60] Baum, "The New Ecclesiology," *Commonweal* 91 (October 31, 1969) 123–28, at 124.

[61] Baum, *Man Becoming* 80.   [62] Baum, *The Credibility of the Church* 198.

[63] Baum, "Prayer in New Perspective," in *New Horizon: Theological Essays* (New York: Paulist, 1972) 71–88, at 84.

[64] Baum, "Pastoral Psychology" 66.   [65] Baum, "Prayer in New Perspective" 83.

facilitates inner dialogue among these elements, leading to eventual harmony.[66]

Conflict

As previously mentioned, Baum's enthusiasm for dialogue had, by this time, been tempered with a realism concerning the possibility of using dialogue as a technique to mask dishonorable intentions. Consequently, several of his later texts display an effort to balance his earlier optimistic treatment of dialogue with a realistic awareness of the need for conflict.[67] By 1970 his writings affirm conflict as an essential part of the Church's mission: "There are value systems which are so destructive that to engage in dialogue with them would make Christians accomplices in the dehumanization of man. The Church's mission in regard to these systems is to be in conflict with them."[68]

What did Baum mean by suggesting that the Church engage in a mission of conflict? Surely he was not promoting struggle and confrontation for its own sake. From his association with the Therafields psychotherapeutic movement Baum came to realize the importance of conflict and confrontation in the process of human development. Through conflict, inner obstacles to freedom are unmasked, people are forced to face the many distortions of reality that are active in the unconscious and are responsible for certain compulsive and defensive behaviors.[69] Despite the pain involved in the experience of conflict, this process was thought to be positive in the long term because "according to the therapeutic movement, the word that reveals the illness is also the healing word that initiates people into a new self-understanding."[70]

Baum understood the dynamic of conflict to operate in a parallel manner within social institutions: "While conflict as a rule is personalized, it also has a role in the formation of society."[71] Although he was at this time primarily concerned with individual pathology, Baum was also beginning to think and write about institutional illnesses, and in particular those which threaten the Church. In *The Credibility of the Church,* he explored several of these ecclesial "pathologies."[72] He con-

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[66] Ibid. 85.
[67] See Baum, "The Church Needs a Theology of Conflict" 18–20.
[68] Baum, *Man Becoming* 86.   [69] Baum, "Secular Spiritualities" 55.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Baum, "The Church Needs a Theology of Conflict" 19.
[72] This book was a response to the challenge that Charles Davis had presented to theologians when he left the Catholic Church: "Was I right to go? Should I not have stayed in the Roman Church to reform it from within? . . . Have I blundered? Is there a flaw in the argumentation I have constructed from criticisms and ideas widely admitted? Why do not others draw the same ultimate conclusion? I must now leave readers to test my case in detail for themselves. I have laid it before them as fully as I can. I merely ask those who dismiss it to state their reasons for doing so and not be content with consoling conjectures about my psychological reasons for leaving the Church" (Charles Davis, *A Question of Conscience* [New York: Harper & Row, 1967] 179–80).

cluded that institutions fall prey to the distortions of ideology in a manner not unlike that which distorts the awareness of individuals: "Through largely unconscious processes, people *and communities* modify their self-understanding and their perception of the world in order to protect their own interests, their power and their privilege."[73] He maintained that whole cultures can be submerged under particular types of false consciousness.

On the basis of this analysis Baum concluded that a further dimension of the mission of the Church is its confrontation with religious ideology: "Fidelity to the Gospel today demands that the Church deideologize its Christian message."[74] It was his awareness of Christian complicity with the Holocaust that clearly convinced Baum of the dire need for an ideological critique of Christianity.[75]

What the Holocaust reveals, then, is the awful power of the ideological trends in Christian preaching that made the Jews look inferior, faithless, and set apart, with no place under the sun, assigned to the darkness of history. The message of the Holocaust to Christian theology, as I see it, is that at whatever cost to its own self-understanding, the church must be willing to confront the ideologies implicit in its doctrinal tradition. We must be willing to sever ourselves from the ideological deformation, whatever they may be, even if we do not know as yet how to formulate the positive content of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, even if we must live with a few question marks for a while.[76]

Baum treated conflict as a positive personal and social dynamic. He was convinced that it was impossible for societies to "evolve a change unless conflict occurs."[77] Conflict forces individuals and societies to admit their reluctance to face reality[78] and thus it is an indispensable tool of ideological critique. In respect to the Church, Baum claimed that even serious divisions and schisms were not simply expressions of sin, but could also function as "signs of God to which we must listen, signs reminding us that we have sinned and signs initiating the divine remedy for our failures."[79] The Church, like every other group (and individual), needs confrontation and conflict in order to move from false consciousness toward transformative, liberating truth. The Church would only become free of its ideological blindness and become truly Church to the degree to which it responded to the conflicts and questions raised by ordinary people: "It is through contact with reality, with

[73] Baum, *Christian Theology after Auschwitz* 12 (italics added).

[74] Baum, "Liberation Theology and Marxism," *The Ecumenist* 25 (1987) 22–26, at 23.

[75] Baum cites Jules Isaac, *Jésus et Israël* (Paris: A. Michel, 1948), and Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

[76] Baum, *Christian Theology after Auschwitz* 12.

[77] Baum, "The Church Needs a Theology of Conflict" 19.

[78] Baum, "Religion and Psychiatry: Dialogue at St. Michael's College," *The Ecumenist* 6 (1968) 132–36, at 134.

[79] Baum, "Drawing Closer Together" 15.

the real questions of people, that the ecclesiastical institutions shall be healed of their pathological trends."[80]

Baum asserted that Scripture can function as a powerful agent assisting the deideologizing mission of the Church: "it is precisely God's Word . . . operative in the Church, that discloses the self-seeking and self-elevating trends in religion and delivers men from the hold of ideology over them."[81] God's Word, as proclaimed by the Church, can offer "the faithful critical tests against the ideological distortions of the truth."[82]

By the mid-70s Baum was consciously moving away from an ecclesiology and missiology constructed on the predominant value of unity toward one that gave priority to the conflictual process as required by justice. He saw that unity and reconciliation were often used ideologically by those who held positions of power to "disguise the real conflict in the community and the inequality of power and pretend that love can unify all people in a common humanity."[83] This led him to speculate on a new theology of Church that would be grounded in those critical points of tension dividing Christians: "I propose that it should be possible to develop an ecclesiology that does not make unity the central notion . . . it should be possible to detect in the churches the dominant structures and the countervailing trends and interpret their meaning in the light of the Gospel."[84]

In a 1971 article discussing Christian involvement in the transformation of society, he gave priority to dialogue over conflict, asserting that conversion takes place "in the *dialogue* with others and even in the conflict."[85] Three years later, speaking of the Church's mission of humanization, he reversed the order, stating that "this is done through *conflict and struggle* with others against the forces of evil and oppression; and this in done in honest and open *dialogue* with other religions."[86]

POLITICAL THEOLOGY (1969–1998)

My examination of Baum's theological writings after 1969 indicates that he has adopted sociology as a primary resource for his reflection and analysis. At the same time he continued to insist on the importance of therapeutic analysis, for "people committed to radical social change still get depressions and find themselves in need of therapeutic

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[80] Baum, "Ecumenism After Vatican II" 168.
[81] Baum, "The Jews, Faith and Ideology," *The Ecumenist* 10 (1972) 71–76, at 73.
[82] Ibid. 74.
[83] Baum, "Middle Class Religion in America," in *Christianity and the Bourgeoisie*, ed. Johann Baptist Metz, *Concilium* 125 (New York: Seabury, 1979) 15–23, at 21.
[84] Baum, "Unity or Renewal?" 7–8.
[85] Baum, "Religious Experience and Doctrinal Statement" 7 (italics added).
[86] Baum, "Theology After Auschwitz: A Conference Report," *The Ecumenist* 12 (1974) 65–80, at 73.

wisdom and/or spiritual counselling."[87] From a critical perspective, however, he now promoted "a politically responsible therapeutic approach."[88] Similarly, this new interest did not negate this previous commitment to ecumenism, but caused it to be significantly refocused: "Only as the Churches become willing to serve the human family, especially the oppressed and despised, will they be freed from the obstacles to unity."[89]

The Therafields experience had taught Baum "to analyze . . . situation[s] in psychic as well as social terms,"[90] an approach he later described as being characteristic of the "Freudian Left."[91] From this perspective he began to critique mainstream psychology and its individualistic trends. Thus in 1987 he wrote, "Yet, psychology is still caught in contemporary individualism, still abstracts the person from his (her) place in society, still perpetuates the idea that it is possible to understand people's suffering by focussing on their personal biography, abstracted from the history of their social class. Psychology 'privatizes' the perception of human life. By locating the source of anxiety in the unresolved conflicts of infancy, it makes invisible the contradictions of society that tear at people's lives."[92] This critique of the privatization of mainstream psychology caused him to reject one of its main tenets, that of "personal integration," stating that "there can be no integrated personality in a wicked and unjust world . . . [since] persons can be rounded, balanced, in harmonious possession of all powers, only if they are willing to close their eyes to the existing oppression and their heart to the people pushed to the margin."[93]

Dissatisfied with the personal-familial analysis that psychology provided, Baum gradually came to rely more on sociopolitical analysis to interpret experiences of contradiction and suffering. Whereas he had previously explained evil in the psychological terminology of repression or resistance to growth, in this latest stage he has turned to the sociological language of ideology and false consciousness.[94] Similarly, whereas psychotherapeutic analysis had helped him to identify certain pathological tendencies within religion (e.g. its promotion of dependency and infantilism),[95] sociology has given him insight into both the

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[87] Baum, "Ecumenical Theology: A New Approach," *The Ecumenist* 19 (1981) 65–78, at 71.
[88] Baum, *Theology and Society* (New York: Paulist, 1987) 283.
[89] Baum, "After Twenty Years," *The Ecumenist* 21 (1983) 17–19, at 18.
[90] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 229.
[91] Ibid. 228.
[92] Baum, *Theology and Society* 264–65.
[93] Ibid. 283.
[94] Baum uses the term "false consciousness" to explain the way in which good people are deceived by the illusions of ideology. He claims that such illusions can govern the thoughts and actions of large groups of people to the extent that they become complicit in systems that oppress not only others but also themselves.
[95] Baum, "Rethinking the Church's Mission after Auschwitz," in *Auschwitz, Beginning of a New Era: Reflections on the Holocaust,* ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: KTAV, 1977) 113–28, at 124.

alienating and healing effects of particular religious practices and structures.[96]

In order to pursue this new theoretical grounding more seriously, in 1969 Baum began a two-year study of sociology at the New School of Social Research in New York City. He stated that he hoped by this study to gain greater insight into the institutional pathologies within the Catholic Church, and to gain the necessary tools "to confront the structures of oppression and the symbols legitimating injustices in the Christian tradition."[97]

In his 1975 book *Religion and Alienation* Baum paid tribute to several classical figures within the sociological tradition, among them Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. From these authors he gained insight into the positive and negative impact of religion on society. Baum esteemed these 19th- and early-20th-century critical thinkers because of their profound reverence for the human, or what he described as their "spiritual humanistic roots,"[98] and their corresponding commitment to humanize and reconcile society: "What also greatly impressed me in the sociological literature was the humanist perspective adopted by these great thinkers. They studied society to detect in the social institutions the trends that hurt and diminish human life, and they tried to create sociological theory that would actually promote the social processes that promised to make society more truly human."[99]

During this most recent phase of Baum's career, which he characterizes in terms of political theology, he uses the term "social sin" to identify the destructive forces built into the symbols, structures, and institutions of our society that negatively shape our personal and collective lives: "Sin . . . was not simply private malice; it also had a social dimension. Sin also referred to structural realities, produced by human beings, that inflicted exploitation and oppression on sectors of the population."[100] Baum does not dismiss personal freedom and responsibility. In fact he argues for a dialectic relationship between the personal and social dimensions of sin. What he wants to emphasize is the structural order of sin within society and the fact that evil structures, once in place, seem to have a life of their own. He now identifies the sources of alienation as a complex intermeshing of various forms of social, cultural, economic, and political alienation: "It is unrealistic, in

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[96] Concurring with those sociologists who claimed religion to be ambiguous, Baum began to explore both those forces that make it a creative and innovative force in society, as well as those aspects of religion and piety that alienate Christians, that allow them to be indifferent and uncommitted toward the world in which they live. The results of this study are documented in Baum's *Religion and Alienation.*

[97] Ibid. 83.

[98] Baum, "Personal Testimony to Sociology," *The Ecumenist* 8 (1969) 1–4, at 2.

[99] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 2.

[100] Baum, "Structures of Sin," in *The Logic of Solidarity,* ed. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989) 110–26, at 111.

my view, to look for a single form of oppression in North America, to which all others are subordinated. What we have is a complex intermeshing of technocratic depersonalization and immobility, economic domination and exploitation, racial exclusion and inferiorization, and other forms including the subjugation of women."[101] At the same time it ought to be noted that although he admits many dimensions of societal alienation (e.g. classism, racism, and sexism), he focused for the most part on economic oppression. Following what he calls a "sociology of evil," Baum claims that "the sources of dehumanization are the structures of oppression and domination, built around the economic process of production and distribution."[102] He identified capitalism, particularly the "brutal" form of the existing world capitalist system, to be the main source of social evil in our world.[103]

An important distinguishing characteristic of this stage in the development of Baum's theology is a growing preoccupation with the marginalized, the "victims"[104] of society. "The central threat to human well-being is . . . injustice. The danger to humanity is derived from the structures of oppression and exclusion that keep people away from the good of life, damage their freedoms, diminish their humanity and drive vast numbers of them into death with indignity."[105] Concomitant with this preoccupation is his interest in emerging movements of compassion and solidarity which attempt to respond to these dilemmas. In

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[101] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 218–19.

[102] Baum, "Three Theses on Contextual Theology," *The Ecumenist* 24 (1986) 49–59, at 53.

[103] Here Baum follows the Pope John Paul II's critique of unrestrained capitalism; see Baum, "The Labor Pope in Canada," *The Ecumenist* 23 (1985) 17–23, at 20. For a later analysis of the development of capitalism, see "Are We in a New Historical Situation? Must We Rethink What Justice and Solidarity Mean Today?" in Gregory Baum et al., *Stone Soup: Reflections on Economic Injustice* (Montreal: Paulines, 1998) 17–40. Recent literature suggests that Baum recognizes a more complicated, contextual situation, "the interstructuring of several oppressive patterns: sexist, racist, classist and possibly others" ("Feminism and Christian Theology," *Journal of Gender in World Religions* 4 [1993] 1–16, at 8).

[104] Baum often uses this term instead of referring to "the poor" as a way of identifying those "people at the bottom and in the margin" of any society. He explains that many North Americans who have been pushed to the base of society do not think of themselves as "the poor," given the derogatory overtones of the label and the false consciousness produced by the myth of middle-class society (Baum, "Afterword," in *Faith that Transforms* 144). Baum has a very broad understanding of this category, as can be seen in his "Victims in the Affluent Society," in *Diakonia: Church for Others*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1988) 14–21. Whether "victim" is a helpful designation is not entirely clear, since it can imply a lack of agency or a posture of self pity. David Hartman, in an article which Baum reviewed for *The Ecumenist*, claims that there is a "moral narcissism that can result from suffering and from viewing oneself as a victim" (cited in Baum, "New Jewish Religious Voices II," *The Ecumenist* 21 [1982] 6–8, at 7). For a feminist critique of this metaphor, see Carol P. Christ, "Refusing to be Victim: Margaret Atwood," in her *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon, 1980) 41–53.

[105] Baum, "Review of *Identity and the Sacred* by Hans Mol," *The Ecumenist* 19 (1981) 91–93, at 93.

such movements he saw evidence of "a new self-experience of humanity producing powerful feelings of solidarity with other people, especially the underprivileged, and a powerful sense of being destined to a higher life."[106]

Baum claimed that this phenomenon of heightened social consciousness was paralleled by a reconstruction of the religious imagination.[107] Historical consciousness, global solidarity, and a feeling of greater responsibility toward the world and the future gave rise to a religious approach that he identified as transformist faith. Those who possessed such faith experienced God as "present in us and in others as enabler, as transforming agent, appointing us to be transformers of human life,"[108] and "Jesus Christ [and the gospel] as transformer of culture."[109] This new religious imagination, or "ethos of emancipation,"[110] as he calls it in one text, conceives of faith as being "inextricably intertwined"[111] with the demands of justice. It compels followers to live according to the preferential option for the poor which Baum describes as "a double commitment, implicit in Christian discipleship, to look upon society from the perspective of the marginalized and to give public witness of one's solidarity with their struggle against oppression."[112]

Solidarity

After Vatican II Baum began to describe a much broader experience of solidarity that various groups of Christians were experiencing: "Catholics today have a new sense of solidarity and feelings of friendship toward other Christians and toward people belonging to another, or to no religion. . . . A new sense of universal brotherhood has developed."[113] This new consciousness led to the creation of strong alliances between Christians and various secular movements, particularly those groups that worked for the liberation of oppressed and marginalized peoples.

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[106] Baum, "The Survival of the Sacred," in *The Persistence of Religion,* ed. Andrew Greeley and Gregory Baum, *Concilium* 81 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973) 11–22, at 18.

[107] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation: A Socio-Theological Approach," in *From Alienation to At-One-Ness,* Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University, ed. Francis A. Eigo (Villanova, Penn.: Villanova University, 1977) 133–70, at 162.

[108] Baum, "Political Theology in Canada," *The Ecumenist* 15 (1977) 33–46, at 37.

[109] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 187. Baum draws this notion of Jesus as the transformer of culture from Richard Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture* (1954). Baum declares that the fifth typology of Niebuhr "refers to the Christian faith that summons believers to the transformation of their social existence and to the encounter with God in the historical struggle between good and evil" (*Religion and Alienation* 178).

[110] Baum, *The Social Imperative* 137–40.

[111] Baum, *Theology and Society* 21.

[112] Baum, "Option for the Powerless," *The Ecumenist* 26 (1987) 5–11, at 7.

[113] Baum, "Tensions in the Catholic Church," *The Ecumenist* 7 (1969) 21–26, at 21.

Over the last decade or so, there has emerged in the Church a strong faith-and-justice movement, made up of groups and individuals, lay and clerical . . . in whose hearts love gave birth to a passionate yearning for justice. This movement began in Latin America and other third world countries; it was seconded by black theology, Mexican American collective aspirations, and the struggles of other Christian groups exploited in North American society; it was strengthened by Christian women who believed that the divine promises given in Christ included their liberation from patriarchal subjugation, and defended and enhanced by liberation theology and political theology of North America and Europe; and it was blessed and supported by many episcopal documents and occasionally even papal encyclicals. This movement exists in all the churches. . . . These Christians reach out for allies among other non-Christian religious communities and among secular groups.[114]

One of the aspects of theology that Baum has rethought on the basis of this explosion in human consciousness is his understanding of the Church's reconciling mission. Throughout his lifetime he has become convinced that "the Christian gospel summons the church to exercise a ministry of reconciliation in situations defined by strife and hostility."[115] Whereas his previous missiological starting point was the Church extending reconciling, unifying grace outward beyond itself, he now launched his discussion of mission in terms of the world, in both its sinful and graced conditions. The Church must first be in solidarity with the world so that it can discern the "demonic,"[116] the "grimace of evil"[117] that threatens humanity, as well as "the stirrings of parturition,"[118] the various structures of healing present within the human community. Only after close affiliation with the world and its peoples can the Church hope to serve the saving mystery active within it: "Today, thanks to the change of perspective, we realize that the Chris-

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[114] Baum, "Afterword," in *Faith That Transforms* 147.

[115] Baum, *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches,* ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997) 184. In recent years Baum has focused once again on the Church's reconciling mission, but currently he is drawn to consider the nature of this task in relation to particular groups of people and their cultural and political struggles for justice. In relation to Quebec nationalism, see his *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991), and his "Letter From Quebec," *Catholic New Times* [Toronto] 12 April 1992, 12. A more global look at this ecclesial work is found in *The Reconciliation of Peoples.*

[116] Although Baum does not provide a definition for his use of the word "demonic," it usually refers to those threats to full human life that are larger than personal. John Macquarrie uses the term in a similar manner: "The sense of helplessness in the face of some movements or situations for which no one seems directly responsible and which no one seems able to control has led to the thought of sin as somehow superhuman. This is what is meant when we speak of sin as 'demonic' " (*Principles of Christian Theology,* 2d rev. ed. [London: SCM, 1967] 262).

[117] Baum, "Rethinking the Church's Mission after Auschwitz" 127; and *Religion and Alienation* 189–90.

[118] Baum, "Are We in a New Historical Situation?" Baum borrows this phrase from Maurice Blondel as a way to speak about the presence of hope in all human situations, however desperate or depressing.

tian church cannot be defined without bringing in the whole human race. Christian church must be defined in terms of its function or—in more traditional terminology—its mission in humanity. . . . The Christian community serves this redemptive mystery present in the human community."[119]

While "universal solidarity" remained the ultimate goal of Christian reconciliation, global situations of suffering and injustice caused Christians to opt for a "preferential" or "partial solidarity," to "identify themselves especially with the underprivileged, the exploited, the mute."[120] Because "God takes sides with the victims" and "graciously affirms their struggle,"[121] Baum concluded that authentic Christian faith required individual believers and the Church as a whole to adopt the preferential option for the poor and to "abandon neutrality and take sides in the struggle of the oppressed for social liberation."[122]

Both the hermeneutical and activist dimensions of the option for the poor suggest a radical position of solidarity with those who suffer from want and injustice. In order to see reality from the perspective of the marginalized, Christians must become quite intimate with these groups of people and listen to their experience of the world.

Conversion away from sin, personal-and-social, implies an identification with the poor, the dispossessed, the disfavored and with the movements toward their emancipation, an identification that precedes the critical reflection on policy and strategy. This is the radical element of the gospel. Faith precedes calculation, conversion to Christ precedes the mapping out of the converted life, solidarity with the least of Christ's brothers and sisters precedes the search for an adequate plan of joining them in their struggle.[123]

The activist dimension expresses solidarity through involvement in concrete, historical movements and causes. Baum is clear that taking sides not only implies the work of advocacy but requires that the Church, in coalition with similarly inspired religious and secular groups, engage in concrete, political actions on behalf of the dispossessed and powerless. Thus his understanding of solidarity is not unlike that of the Latin American bishops at Medellín: "This solidarity means that we make ours their problems and their struggles, that we know how to speak with them. This has to be concretized in criticism of injustice and oppression, in the struggles against the intolerable situation that a poor person has to tolerate."[124]

Baum understands the critical mission implied by solidarity to be

[119] Baum, "The New Ecclesiology" 124.
[120] Baum, *Faith and Doctrine* 67.
[121] Baum, *Compassion and Solidarity* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1987) 75.
[122] Baum, "Option for the Powerless" 7.
[123] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 220.
[124] "Poverty in the Church," Medellín Conclusions, in *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John,* ed. J. Gremillion (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976) art. 11.

directly related to their prophetic mission, whereby Christians "suffer divine grace," are "overwhelmed by a yearning for justice," and consequently find themselves at odds with the world.[125] But in order for the Church to speak its prophetic word with integrity, to be an authentic sign and instrument of God, he insisted that the Church first of all examine and transform its own life. To this end, he advised the Church to adopt a posture of continuous self-vigilance in order to recognize elements of false religion within itself, and that it be willing to engage in activities that will "purify its own self-understanding from these ideological trends."[126] Baum noted that Christians are often thwarted in accomplishing this aspect of the Church's mission due to an insidious form of evil that sociologists call religious ideology, and that theologians call "sacralism." This refers to the unconscious tendency within religious institutions to generate teachings and symbols that affirm a system of gross inequity and that ensure the institution's maintenance of power and privilege.[127]

When Baum writes of the critical mission associated with the commitment to solidarity he is not only advocating "auto-critique";[128] he also understands the Church to have the important task of evaluating society according to gospel values. Frequently he mentions the need to critique those aspects of culture that militate against solidarity. As groups of Christians and churches begin to act so as to promote and strengthen particular expressions of cooperation and solidarity, they are simultaneously plunged into cultural battles with those more divisive and competitive structures of contemporary society. In addition, the fullest expression of solidarity, the option for the poor, requires that Christians "critique contemporary culture from the perspective of the poor and oppressed."[129] This radical commitment inspires Christians to examine and judge all social phenomena from the vantage of the most dispossessed and least favored.

The mission of the Church in relation to its commitment to solidarity is not exhausted by its praxis of deconstructive critique. Applying "Max Weber's remarkable theory of social change"[130] to the Church, Baum

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[125] Baum, "Sociology and Salvation," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 718–43, at 742.

[126] Baum, "Mission and Power," *The Ecumenist* 11 (1973) 44–46, at 44.

[127] More recently Baum has slightly modified his thoughts concerning the prophetic role of the Church. He argues that it is a rare moment (i.e., when there is substantial public support for a particular action) that an entire Church body can adopt a radical prophetic stance. More often the Church is unable to take such a radical corporate stand but instead provides a supportive framework for those smaller groups and movements that seek to promote countervailing social trends ("Is it Possible to Organize a Prophetic Movement?" *Catholic New Times* 16 April 1995, 9 and 18).

[128] Baum, "Survival of Canada and the Christian Church," *The Ecumenist* 11 (1973) 23–28, at 24.

[129] Baum, *Compassion and Solidarity* 92.

[130] Baum, *Religion and Alienation* 172. See the following works by Max Weber for a full development of this theory of social change: *The Sociology of Religion,* trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon, 1964); *On Charisma and Institution Building,* ed. S. N. Eisen-

suggests that it can contribute a great deal toward the transformation of society through the creation and support of countervailing trends and movements.[131] By organizing small groups of people around specific justice issues and cooperating with secular associations working for these same causes, the Church can help stimulate new imagination, alternative systems of thought based on values and aspirations different from those of the dominant culture. Baum encourages Christians to awaken the longing for social change and in so doing begin to weave the "web of renewal."[132]

Under certain historical circumstances, which are difficult to foresee, countervailing currents may converge, gain a certain power, and at a particular moment in time succeed in transforming the dominant structures. . . . What I propose, therefore, is that the liberationist orientation, well grounded as it is in religious experience, biblical assurance, theological reflection and ecclesiastical approval, promote countervailing trends in Church and society. While it would be futile to try to change entire institutions, it is effective to find a few people, a minority, dedicated to social justice within these institutions, organize them in small groups and centres, create networks between them and establish sets of communication with similar church groups and sympathetic secular organizations.[133]

Baum's hope is that eventually a *kairos* moment will arrive, like that of Vatican II, in which the new consciousness that is being cultivated in the many emancipatory movements will coalesce into a comprehensive renewal of church and society. To this end, in agreement with the Canadian Catholic bishops, he advocates the creation of a large solidarity movement "built around the labor movement . . . reaching out to all the groups that suffer . . . joined by all who love justice, of whatever social class."[134] He judges that the "ethos of solidarity" created by this large mixed alliance will be sufficient to influence public opinion and in so doing, it will become an "historical agent of radical social change."[135]

It would be wrong to think that Baum is naïvely endorsing an idealist notion of solidarity, where all will be well once we commit ourselves to working toward a common social vision. Baum has noted and carefully studied the failure of the left, along with its promotion of the common good, and admits the powerful and extensive influence of what

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stadt (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968); *Theology of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Fress, 1968); and *Basic Concepts in Sociology,* trans. H. P. Secher (New York: The Citadel, 1969).

[131] Baum's minority strategy is based on Max Weber's theory of social change; see his "Faith and Liberation: Development Since Vatican II," in *Vatican II: Open Questions and New Horizons,* ed. Gerald Fagin (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1984) 75–104, at 103–4.

[132] Baum, "Unity of Renewal," *The Ecumenist* 13 (1974) 5–9, at 9.

[133] Baum, "Faith and Liberation" 103–4.

[134] Baum, "The Labor Pope in Canada," *The Ecumenist* 23 (1985) 17–23, at 23.

[135] Ibid.

he calls our "solidarity denying culture."[136] In the face of such realities, he maintains that any commitment to solidarity must also include times of mourning and lamentation. He claims that such grieving is necessary and that such experience has the potential to unite believers with the excluded and disempowered peoples of our society. "Mourning unites those in the middle classes with the victims of society who also mourn, even if for different reasons. Mourning is part of the process of conversion."[137]

TRANSFORMING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Writing after the 1971 Bishops' Synod, Baum noted that "[t]he church's task is to raise the consciousness of the people, to make them see where they really are, what are the social, economic and political circumstances under which they live, and where are the sources of their frustrations and fears. The church's mission of truth is exercised in raising the awareness of people in regard to their real situation."[138] Over the years Baum has highlighted dialogue, conflict, and solidarity as three important activities in which the Church engages, three ways in which the Church nurtures the saving mystery present in our contemporary world. Having perceived saving work in terms of the ongoing process of transformation ("God is at work transforming men"[139]), he likewise envisioned the Church as being privileged to share in this work of human transformation.

Baum claimed that dialogue is mission to the extent that it involves all participants in transforming mystery: "Mission is the faithful dialogue of the Church with other religions and ideologies as a means of offering redemptive transformation to all the participants, the Church as well as the others."[140] Through dialogue the Church opens itself and others to the continual process of becoming in relation to the word of the other. Dialogue is especially transformative when it persuades those involved to face the prejudices and ideologies that distort their ways of thinking and acting.

We do not see the truth about ourselves and the situation to which we belong, because we do not want to see. Since we are so eager to defend our interests, our various castles, personal or social, we do not make ourselves sensitive to the aspect of reality that threatens us in our safe possession. Yet in conversation with others, we may begin to detect some of the deceptions we have entertained about ourselves and society. We may be shaken, we suddenly see; the truth challenges us; and we may discover in us the freedom to leave self-deceptions behind, face reality, and enter creatively into the future.[141]

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[136] Baum, "Are We in a New Historical Situation?" 33.
[137] Baum, "Structure of Sin" 119.
[138] Baum, "Synod's Double Message," *National Catholic Reporter* 10 December 1971, 8.
[139] Baum, "The Voice and the Crowd" 14.
[140] Baum, *Faith and Doctrine* 118.
[141] Baum, "Religious Experience and Doctrinal Statement" 7.

Baum's idea of dialogue requires that all participants be "ready to be unsettled,"[142] to have their consciousness changed through association with persons and ideas that are in some way strange or foreign. It forces individuals and societies out of the narcissism that threatens their growth and vitality and opens them to aspects of life and truth beyond isolation and thus available only in interaction with others.[143] Dialogue so conceived can be a catalyst of ecclesial and societal conversion, both personal and institutional. Thus genuine dialogue is a spiritual dynamic, "a way of God's presence" that inevitably generates profound transformation:

Conversation changes us. We listen, we are touched, we are moved, we understand better, we are resituated within ourselves, we see life differently, we discover new solutions for our problems. Conversation transforms us not because there is necessarily one person in the room who has the answers. No. Even if no one has any answers, conversation is a way of God's presence. It transforms the consciousness of the people involved, and then looking at life with this new awareness, they may see what before was hidden from them.[144]

Baum maintains that conflict is another important dimension of the conversion process. During both the psychological and political stages of his career he wrote of the importance of conflict and confrontation as a means to bring about the transformation of personal and social consciousness: the transition from repression and false consciousness to a perception of reality that is open to personal growth and social transformation. In terms of psychotherapeutic insight Baum maintained that confrontation could bring about not only greater freedom for the individual but an entirely new way of being, a conversion of personal consciousness:

To the extent that we surrender ourselves to the therapeutic word and *confront* the inner obstacles to freedom, we gain access to new power, and human growth becomes a possibility. This entry into growth is a kind of conversion, a raising of consciousness. . . . The therapeutic movement initiates people to a new sensitivity. . . . What takes place is a widening of consciousness. Therapy introduces people to a new way of perceiving the world.[145]

Applying this principle to the Church, he noted that as Christian communities struggled with other organizations they acquired knowledge of their identity and mission:

The Church even profits from the antagonism of those who oppose and persecute her. What is meant . . . is that through the opposition of men to her message the Church may well discover the dimensions of her own infidelity to the Lord, her own involvement in cultural and social patterns of the past, from

[142] Ibid.
[143] Baum contrasts the social dynamic of dialogue with institutional narcissism in *The Credibility of the Church* 88–89.
[144] Baum, "The World's Challenge to the Church" 10.
[145] Baum, "Secular Spiritualities" 55 (italics added).

which she must be set free. . . . As a man needs other men to come to true self-knowledge and to a more realistic understanding of his mission in life, so the Church needs other communities of men to come to a deeper self-understanding and to discover the true dimensions of her role in the present world.[146]

Baum esteems conflict as part of the larger transformative dynamic which he identifies as "negative dialectical thinking."[147] This process involves the negation or ideological critique of some aspect of religion followed by a retrieval sensitive to the aspects of negation.

Like dialogue and conflict, solidarity for Baum is another missiological practice that involves the Church in the process of transforming human consciousness: "Solidarity, I contend, cannot be accounted for simply in moral terms; it implies conversion or change of consciousness."[148] The growing sense of universal brotherhood constitutes one aspect of the renewal of human consciousness:

The sense of *human solidarity* goes beyond the experience of friendship. It includes all men. It makes us aware, in an overpowering way, of the unity of the human family and its common destination to growth and reconciliation. The experience transcends our ideologies; it may even shatter them. . . . We know that we belong together. We realize that we depend on one another. We share in the joys of people everywhere and we suffer from the common illness. We recognize the deathly character of prejudice, hatred, discrimination. . . . The sense of human solidarity makes new demands on us and prompts us to new kinds of choices. A new sense of being in solidarity with the whole human race has a profound influence on people's lives. Religious people, in particular, find that this experience demands a rethinking of their inherited positions which tended to confine their love to members of their own religious institution.[149]

A still more significant transformation of consciousness was that associated with the option for the poor: the Church encourages people to see reality with the eyes of the oppressed, and to experience the saving mystery present in the struggle of the poor.

Baum claims that by organizing small groups of people around specific justice issues and forming networks with parallel secular associations (those working for similar causes) the Church helps stimulate new imagination, alternative systems of thought based on values and social aspirations different from those of the dominant culture. Baum

[146] Baum, "Ecumenism After Vatican II" 168; this text is a commentary on no. 44 of *Gaudium et spes.*
[147] Baum, "Feminism and Christian Theology" 14. Baum draws attention to the origins of negative dialectical thinking within critical theology and applauds its presence within Christian feminist theology, claiming that this type of critical thinking is a powerful contribution to feminist thought. Baum often used the traditional mystical language to speak of this dynamic: *via negativa,* the critical negation of religious claims; and *via eminentiae,* "the way of expanded meaning" (*Compassion and Solidarity* 86).
[148] Baum, "The Survival of the Sacred" 19.
[149] Baum, *Faith and Doctrine* 66.

is clear, however, that this *metanoia* is not primarily a cognitive pro-
cess, but requires a coincident change in social location and identity:
"New thinking alone will not do. Since the particular forms of blind-
ness are rooted in the societal reality of the people struck by it, what is
necessary is that they resituate themselves in regard to society. What
is needed is commitment and action. Ideas change when their "bear-
ers" undergo significant societal changes. . . . We have to be willing to
feel the ground shake under us."[150]

Another way that Baum has described the transformation associated
with the grace of solidarity is in terms of a diminishment of one's
"self-promoting consciousness" accompanied by a concomitant "en-
largement of consciousness." "The new religious experience of solidar-
ity with the underprivileged undoes the walls of inauthentic self. An
enlargement of consciousness takes place that reveals the true self as
linked to brothers and sisters and caught up with them in the divine
movement toward human liberation."[151] Baum claims that this new
type of consciousness associated with solidarity is deeply religious and
displays many similarities with the mystical tradition of Christian
spirituality: "As the ultimate expression of the love of neighbor, soli-
darity cannot be achieved without God's hidden presence in the
heart."[152] Both of these spiritualities maintain a suspicion of the "iso-
lated egocentric self" and an effort to "dismantle the inauthentic
self."[153] Both traditions hold that God is present in the graced experi-
ence of transcending the narrow boundaries of individual soul-
centeredness.

CONCLUSION

A cumulative reading of the hundreds of texts Baum wrote between
1957 and 1998 reveals a comprehensive theology regarding the mission
of the Church. His multifaceted approach to mission offers many op-
tions to Christians in their approach to ministry. His contention is that
in order to address the contemporary "grimaces of evil," the many
forms of violence threatening our planet, we need to weave the web of
renewal and of countervailing trends from many different angles and
locations. This approach to mission can include people of various faiths
and all people of good will; it acknowledges the variety of works needed
in order to create a consciousness friendly toward the life of all peoples,
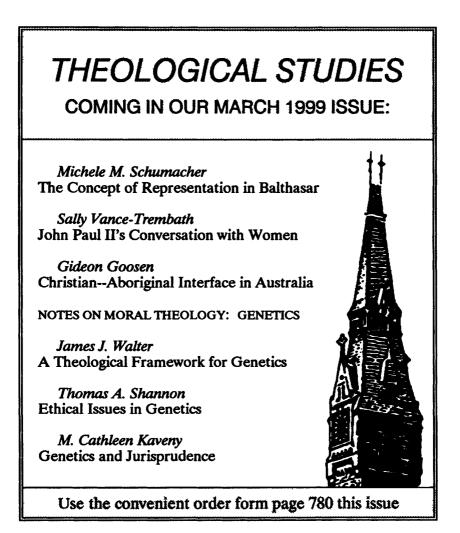particularly the most despised and disempowered.

Baum understands the saving work of God as the ongoing transfor-

[150] Baum, *The Social Imperative* 122.
[151] Baum, "Attack on the New Social Gospel," *The Ecumenist* 17 (1979) 81–84, at 83.
[152] Baum, "Structures of Sin" 120.
[153] Baum, "The Church's Growing Concern about Social Injustice Is Good Christian-
ity," in *Institutions in Crisis*, ed. Dean Walker (Toronto: Yorkminster, 1980) 127–42, at
132.

mation of humanity, and the mission of the Church as those activities that facilitate the development of a radically new consciousness concerning self, others, and God. He considers dialogue, conflict, and solidarity as important dynamics facilitating this process of personal and social recreation. Baum certainly does not offer the final or definitive word on the subject of the mission of the Church. His desire to begin weaving the web of alternative consciousness requires that others join him and that they too identify particular personal and social dynamics that offer transformative promise for some part of the world and the people who dwell there.

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