ECCLESIAL REPENTANCE AND THE DEMANDS OF DIALOGUE

Bradford E. Hinze

[For the author, John Paul II's call for ecclesial repentance raises three disputed issues. How is the dialogical character of revelation and the Church to be understood? Does the sinfulness of the Church refer only to individual members or also to the Church as a corporate entity? Is it appropriate to understand the reformation of ecclesial traditions of discourse and practice as an act of penance associated with conversion?]

WHAT DOES IT MEAN for the Church to repent? And how can dialogue serve as both an impetus for and instrument of the Church's repentance? These are questions raised by statements of Pope John Paul II over the last few years. As widely discussed, in preparation for the new millennium, the pope called the Roman Catholic Church to repent of numerous offenses.[1] His apologies to Jews and to women have elicited considerable attention. But no less important is his acknowledgment that the Church should repent of its sins against Orthodox and Protestant Christians both during the initial disputes that divided the Church and over the long history of polemics; against Muslims, especially during the Crusades; against Galileo and the scientific community; and against those who suffered during the Inquisition and at the hands of Church-supported oppressive dictators and regimes. The pope also denounced the Church's complicity with racism

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[1] John Paul II, "*Tertio millennio adveniente,*" *Origins* 24 (November 24, 1994) 401–16. The International Theological Commission recently addressed various issues raised by the pope's call to repentance, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," *Origins* 29 (March 16, 2000) 625–44. The first Sunday in Lent in the new millennium, March 12, was designated a Day of Pardon. During the eucharistic celebration the pope formally apologized for the Church's sins.

and the inhumane treatment of blacks. And his plea for forgiveness for the harmful treatment of the indigenous peoples and religious traditions of Native Americans in the Church's missionary work of evangelization can reasonably be extended to those peoples and venerable religious traditions of Africa and Asia.[2]

These public ecclesial acts of repentance raise a number of difficult questions. One concerns the question: who has sinned? Is it individuals in the Church, or is it the Church as a collectivity?[3] Looming larger is a second question: if the Church is repenting, what should be done to make amends? Change in discourse and action is the basic ingredient in any act of conversion. If the sinfulness of the Church is solely a matter of the sins of individuals, then it is individuals who must change. But if the sinfulness of the Church is a matter of collective, institutional responsibility, do not the Church's doctrines and practices need to be changed in order for the penitential process to be complete? In other words, are there instances when ecclesial repentance can and should serve as a catalyst for doctrinal change? This is a hard question to ask. It makes many people uncomfortable. In fact, it may be a new question, albeit not a new phenomenon. Although the question is difficult, and there are numerous disputed issues entailed, it is one we cannot avoid at the beginning of the new millennium.

Over the last 30 years it has become clear that dialogue has played an increasing role in our understanding of the Church, and especially of the process of repentance. Pope John Paul II, building on the legacy of Pope Paul VI in *Ecclesiam suam* and or the teachings of Vatican II, deserves credit for making dialogue both within the Church and between the Church and other groups one of the themes of his papacy. Not only does dialogue serve as the instrument of mutual recognition and respect, but in far-reaching judgments, the pope has taught that "dialogue serves as an examination of conscience" and contributes to a genuine "dialogue of conversion."[4] In other words, dialogue about the past transgressions of the Church with representatives of historically maligned individuals and groups—and with historians commissioned to examine the evidence—can clarify where the Church has sinned and needs to apologize, and where the Church needs conversion and reform.

In light of these recent acts of ecclesial repentance and their significance for our understanding of the nature of Catholic tradition, I wish to advance

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[2] See the collection by journalist Luigi Accatoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness: The Mea Culpa's of John Paul II* (Boston: St. Paul, 1998); Bradford E. Hinze, "John Paul II on Collective Repentance," *The Ecumenist* 3 (1996) 49–53.

[3] Stated more precisely, is it individual Church members who bear responsibility for sinful acts, whether fully volitional or only partially so, or is it the Church as a group that is sinful and responsible, in a sense analogous to personal sin?

[4] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* nos. 34, 82.

two proposals. First, there is the need to develop more fully and more self-consciously a dialogical understanding of revelation and the Church. Such a dialogical approach is particularly well suited to the challenges and opportunities involved in the contemporary quest for God and the discernment of human identity and destiny.[5] Let me put the matter boldly: a more fully developed dialogical approach holds the promise of transcending in significant ways, without discrediting, Avery Dulles's monumental contribution to our understanding of the doctrines of revelation and the Church, which has profoundly shaped North American Catholic thinking since Vatican II.[6]

A dialogical approach to revelation and the Church finds its deepest inspiration in the communicative life of the trinitarian communion of persons and in the interpersonal and social constitution of the human person made in the *imago Trinitatis.* A dialogical and trinitarian focus provides the most comprehensive theological framework for exploring how individual and social identity and mission emerge and are realized in and through revelation and the Church. Dialogue provides the path of discovery in the ways of love and friendship with God and with other human beings, and is the indispensable means of individual differentiation and communion. Such convictions have fostered a growing consensus that a dialogical approach is valuable and warranted. However, considerable disagreements exist about the details of such an approach and its implications for our understanding of God's revelation and the nature and mission of the Church.

My second contention is that a dialogical approach to tradition should foster a willingness to acknowledge the sinfulness of the Church, not simply as the sins of individuals, but also in terms of collective responsibility, and that dialogue provides the means for conversion and occasionally change in ecclesial teachings and practices. Investigating ecclesial repentance as an impetus for doctrinal change is a relatively narrow focus in the grand communicative process involved in the ecclesial mediation of revelation, but one that is important nonetheless especially today. No one would

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[5] This is not the place to delineate the current challenges and opportunities facing the Catholic Church, but there is a need for a comprehensive assessment that would include a range of issues from the ascendance of liberal individualism, secularization, and globalization, to the ongoing battle against injustice, and the exploration of how gender, racial, ethnic, and national differences affect individual and cultural identity and social action.

[6] Among the many widely read books by Avery Dulles, see *Models of the Church,* rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1987; original ed. 1974); *Models of Revelation,* rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992; original ed. 1983); *A Church To Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); and *The Catholicity of the Church* (New York: Oxford University, 1985).

disagree that, in the formation of new Church doctrines and practices, dialogue has always been involved; one could benefit from thinking through the significance of that fact. On the other hand, that changes in tradition are inspired and indeed in certain cases required by acts of repentance is a rare occurrence, yet it is a crucial fact that needs to be recognized as the fitting response to the purifying and reconciling work of God.

I wish to advance these two proposals by considering three substantive issues. Each is highly contested; each requires close scrutiny and reflection. The first concerns the dialogical nature of revelation and the Church. The second pertains to the sinfulness of the Church. The third addresses the question whether or not in certain instances ecclesial repentance and reconciliation require an openness to revising tradition and reforming the practices of the Church.

THE DIALOGICAL CHARACTER OF REVELATION AND THE CHURCH

How are we to understand the dialogical nature of revelation and the Church? It can be chronicled that since Pope John XXIII convoked Vatican II (1959), and especially following Pope Paul VI's first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam* (1964), the Catholic Church has slowly adopted and developed a dialogical approach to revelation and the Church. There is considerable evidence of this not only in John Paul II's teachings,[7] but also in regional and local church documents,[8] and in "calls for dialogue" that include the United States Common Ground Project and the "Dialogue for Austria" assembly of 1998.[9] In addition, there have been countless exercises in dialogue: ecumenical, interreligious, as well as many intraecclesial efforts in small groups and parishes, in local diocesan churches, at regional

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[7] See Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) 26–34. See also his *The Acting Person* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1979); *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1994); his apostolic exhortation "Reconciliation and Penance," *Origins* 14 (December 20, 1984) no. 25, 432–52, at 446. See also the encyclicals *Redemptoris missio* nos. 55–56; *Ut unum sint.*

[8] Especially noteworthy is the statement by Asian Bishops in the Statements of the Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs on the Theology of Dialogue," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from 1970 to 1991* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992) 307–34.

[9] Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative: Foundational Documents* (New York: Crossroad, 1997); on the "Dialogue for Austria," see John L. Allen, Jr., "Austria's Catholic Revolution," *National Catholic Reporter* 35 (October 30, 1998) 14–16; also his "A Dramatic Step Toward Reform," and accompanying articles, *National Catholic Reporter* 35 (November 6, 1998) 3–7.

synods, and in international settings. In light of this evidence, the cumulative judgment can only be that the Church is being ineluctably drawn into a dialogical way of thinking and being.

Two Approaches to Dialogue

As a way of illuminating this multifaceted situation, let me suggest that two basic approaches to dialogue, two tendencies, have emerged since the time of Vatican II. One approach accentuates the role of obedience in the dialogue of revelation and the Church. Here a personalist philosophy is combined with a trinitarian theology of interpersonal relations that frames matters of dialogue in terms of Jesus' obedience to the Father and consequently the obedience of the members of the Church to official representatives of Christ. The official theology of the Catholic Church during the pontificate of John Paul II expressed in papal and Vatican documents, shaped in significant ways by the theologies of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, is representative of this tendency.[10] Balthasar highlighted the importance of dialogue in his esthetic rendering of the drama of salvation history. The nature of dialogue, as a transforming I-thou encounter that entails a reciprocity of consciousness, was perceived above all by Balthasar in Jesus' obedience in his dialogue with the Father.[11] But he also drew important judgments about interpersonal dialogue that bear on the nature of dialogue in the Church from the phenomena of the mother-child relationship,[12] male-female love and specifically spousal relationships as determinative of the feminine and maternal character of the

[10] On dialogue, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie,* 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1970) 292–96; 394–403; *Behold the Pierced One* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) 15–37; *The Nature and Mission of Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995) 32–34; "Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today," *Origins* 26 (October 31, 1996) 309–17, at 312; also see Gerhard Nachtei, *Dialogische Unsterblichkeit: Eine Untersuchung zu Joseph Ratzingers Eschatologie und Theologie,* Erfurter Theologische Studien 54 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1986) esp. 23–69. For Hans Urs von Balthasar, begin with *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory,* 1, *Prolegomena* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988) 34–37, 626–48. Note Balthasar's engagement with the work of Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984) and Bernard Casper, student of Bernard Welte, *Das dialogische Denken: Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners, und Martin Bubers* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967).

[11] Martin Buber was very influential for Balthasar's approach to dialogue in *Theo-Drama,* See also his *Martin Buber and Christianity: A Dialogue Between Israel and the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1960); on Balthasar's use of the significant phrase of Maurice Nédoncelle, "réciprocité des consciences," see *Theo-Drama* 3.175, 179.

[12] *Love Alone* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 61–62.

Church,[13] and the roles of Mary (drawing from the other two relation-
ships), John, and Peter in the Gospels.[14] Like Balthasar, Ratzinger's ap-
proach to dialogue emphasizes the relationship between Jesus' obedience
to the Father and the believer's obedience to the Church. By contrast,
Ratzinger's approach has been characterized as distinctively Platonic and
Augustinian and draws special attention to the dialogical character, to the
"we-structure" of the creedal faith, which reflects the earliest confession of
faith in the rite of baptism, and that culminates in participation in the
trinitarian dialogue celebrated in the Eucharist.[15] Dialogue in the Church
in this first approach accentuates the scriptural, creedal, and sacramental
character of Catholic Christian identity. In matters of ecclesiology, Vatican
consultation with local bishops and priests, theologians, and the laity in the
interest of fostering a deeper awareness of the *sensus fidelium* receives
limited treatment, whereas emphasis is placed upon the need for strong
hierarchical leadership in the promotion of the unity of the Church through
the obedient reception of the official Church teachings by theologians and
all the faithful. The hierarchy's christological foundation is accentuated as
is the Holy Spirit's role in enabling the obedient reception of all the faith-
ful. The Church is thus constituted by a dialogue in which individual mem-
bers strive for communion with God and with other believers through
obedience.

An alternative approach to the dialogical character of revelation and the
Church is more pluriform than the first approach and can be delineated in
terms of certain common features.[16] It agrees in principle with the first
approach about the dialogical character of the Scriptures, creed, and sac-

[13] "Who is the Church," *Explorations in Theology*, 2: *Spouse of the Word* (San
Francisco: Ignatius, 1991) 143–92.

[14] *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius,
1986); *The Glory of the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius; New York: Crossroad, 1982)
1.350–64.

[15] For background on the Platonic and Augustinian character of dialogue, see
Paul Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969)
154–70; Kenneth Seeskin, *Dialogue and Discovery: A Study in Socratic Method*
(Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1987); Rudolf Berlinger, *Augustins
dialogische Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1962).

[16] For example, David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity* (San Francisco: Harper &
Row, 1987); Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Reli-
gious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Jacques Dupuis, *Toward A Christian
Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997) 358–84. Quoting
Walter Kasper, Ormond Rush says what is needed is " 'a new form of ecclesial
authority' between the extremes of monolithic authority enforcing obedience and a
relativistic conversation of the deaf . . . 'the only alternative is orthodoxy regarded
as a process based on dialogue' " (Rush, "Determining Catholic Orthodoxy: Mono-
logue or Dialogue," *Pacifica* 12 [1999] 1–20, at 14); Wolfgang Beinert, "Dialog und
Gehorsam in der Kirche," *Stimmen der Zeit* 216 (1998) 313–28; "Dialog und Ge-

raments, and, at a more fundamental level, about the interpersonal christological and trinitarian impulses for such a dialogical approach. But this approach is distinguished by its stress on the importance of listening to and learning from the polyphony of voices, both complementary and conflicting voices, in scriptural texts and in the history of the Church, those marginalized voices within the community, those silenced in our midst and at the borders, especially the poor, but also neighbors and those from alien lands with different beliefs and practices.[17] This approach emphasizes the need for open, collegial, consultative dialogue in deliberations about the Church's teachings and practices. Dialogues with creative, critical, and dissenting opinions, long-suppressed voices, especially among women and non-Western communities, other Christian churches, other religions and philosophies are from this viewpoint indispensable ingredients contributing to the divine education of the Church and the human race. This second approach espouses a robust pneumatological and trinitarian model of discernment that highlights mutual processes of communication and learning between those in episcopal office and representatives of diverse theological disciplines in consultation with people from various sectors of local communities. The authority of episcopal office and the papacy is not denied in this approach, but it is set in a dynamic and mutually enriching and challenging relationship with the authority of theologians and of all believers.

A decisive difference between these two approaches is that the first defines dialogue in terms of obedience, whereas the second defines obedience in terms of dialogue. The first emphasizes obedience to a divinely authorized hierarchical authority and the official doctrinal articulations of this authority, while the second stresses the divinely inspired process of mutual learning and teaching about the fullness of Christian beliefs and practices that takes place among bishops, theologians, and the faithful

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horsam als geistliches Geschehen," *Stimmen der Zeit* 216 (1998) 386–98; and *Dialog als Selbstvollzug der Kirche?* ed. Gebhard Fürst, Quaestiones disputatae 166 (Freiburg: Herder, 1997).

[17] Cyril O'Regan has accentuated Balthasar's convictions about divine and human otherness, plurivocity, and the diversity of receptions. Genuine individuation and communion are explored in terms of the trinitarian mystery. O'Regan's interpretation places Balthasar far closer to the second approach to dialogue as I am describing it. By contrast, without denying O'Regan's basic contentions, I am underscoring those aspects of Balthasar's theology that illuminate the selection of certain voices and restraining of other voices in his dialogical approach to revelation and the Church, implying that there may be a tension between Balthasar's dialogical model for understanding Scripture and tradition and his less than fully dialogical approach to the details of revelation and the work of the Church. See Cyril O'Regan, "Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval: Post-Chalcedonian Symphonic Theology," *Gregorianum* 77 (1996) 227–60; and his "Balthasar: Between Tübingen and Postmodernity," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998) 325–53.

through dialogue, formal doctrinal statements, and the diversity of receptions. The first contends that communion is arrived at through obedience, whereas the second fosters communion through dialogue. In short, at stake is the very understanding of the meaning and practice of dialogue as it bears upon the judgments and decisions that affect and constitute the life of the Church. No doubt such a characterization of a key difference blurs nuances and ignores mediating positions, but it highlights one central dialectic of horizons that has enormous ramifications.[18]

A Specific Example

The disputed nature of dialogue in the Church is present in many settings on a variety of issues. One particularly instructive example is the exchange between David Schindler and Robert Imbelli concerning the Catholic Common Ground Project inaugurated by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.[19] Building on concerns raised by Avery Dulles,[20] Schindler voices grave reservations about the governing liberal assumptions and the prevailing liberal cultural context of reception for this invitation to ecclesial dialogue. Indebted to Balthasar's theology, Schindler, operating from a model comparable to the first approach to dialogue, concentrates on "the normative place of Jesus Christ and the living Catholic tradition in the dialogue being called for." The perceived problem concerns the treatment of dialogue in the foundational documents "in its *ordering and integration* of these christological-ecclesiological principles: it is precisely the lack of this proper ordering and integration that distorts already at the beginning the model of dialogue appealed to by the document."[21] "All dialogues among Catholics and between Catholics and non-Catholics must be measured intrinsically by this christological dialogue which is extended in a unique way through the sacramental *communio* of the Church." Specifically, "in Jesus Christ and through the hierarchical-sacramental Church, an objective revelation of the truth of God" is transmitted, which provides the basis and conditions for the Church's understanding of inclusive love and

[18] Bernard Häring spoke of the shift from an ethics of obedience to an ethics of responsibility, and from the concentration of power in the Catholic Church to the use of a collegial model in *My Hope for the Church: Critical Encouragement for the 21st Century* (Ligouri, Mo.: Ligouri, 1999); also see Francis Sullivan, "Authority in an Ecclesiology of Communion," *New Theology Review* 10 (1997) 18–31.

[19] Joseph Bernardin and Oscar H. Lipscomb, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative*.

[20] Avery Dulles, S. J. "The Travails of Dialogue," Laurence J. McGinley Lecture (November 19, 1996), Fordham University, New York City.

[21] David L. Schindler, "Editorial: On the Catholic Common Ground Project: The Christological Foundations of Dialogue," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23 (1996) 823–51, at 826.

solidarity.[22] For Schindler, one cannot in such forums enter into dialogue intending to settle disputes about Christology and ecclesiology, for to do so betrays the influence of hidden liberal assumptions. Instead, one needs a dialogical process and method that seeks to confirm and clarify the demands of Catholic doctrinal truth.

Schindler concludes that the approach to dialogue espoused by the Common Ground Project reveals a model of dialogue indebted to conventional liberalism, wherein an open process of dialogue undermines the substance and truth of doctrine, and common ground implies formal and shallow agreements about peripheral matters. Schindler in effect identifies the alternative to his own approach to dialogue with a liberal paradigm that is reductionistic and works with a sociological and contractual view of dialogue insufficiently shaped by the means of grace and the judgments of doctrine. Interestingly, although Dulles's approach to the issue is more nuanced and less combative, the net effect is the same.[23] Schindler forces his readers to conclude that either one subscribes to his own christocentric ecclesiology or to a reductionistic sociological, liberal ecclesiology. There are no mediating theological positions that legitimately promote wider dialogue about a diversity of positions. In the end, Schindler is convinced, if one subscribes to the alternative liberal viewpoint, one fails to appreciate the reality of personal sin and the need for conversion.[24] Any discussion about polarization in the Church is judged illegitimate unless it subscribes to his approach to the substance of Catholic doctrinal truth. Breakdowns in communication can only be addressed in terms of "the divine trinitarian *communio* revealed in Jesus Christ and present sacramentally-hierarchically in the Church. The Church is an icon of the trinitarian *communio.*"[25] Schindler does not use the language of obedience in his initial essay on dialogue, but his stance presupposes that any legitimate approach to dialogue begins and ends with the obedient reception of Catholic doctrine articulated by the christologically justified hierarchical teaching office.

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[22] Ibid. 830–31.

[23] Dulles contrasts a traditional approach to dialogue, which he associates with Plato, Augustine, and personalist philosophies, such as those utilized by John Paul II and Ratzinger with "prevailing conceptions of dialogue" like the dialogue theory in comparative religions (Paul Knitter and John Hick) and democratic political theory, that is, liberalism ("The Travails of Dialogue" 10–13). Like Schindler, Dulles ends up forcing his readers to choose between a classical theological paradigm and a liberal relativist one. The "alternative" paradigm is ruled out, and no legitimate theological alternatives that are seeking to adjudicate these alternatives are explored.

[24] "Editorial: On the Common Ground Project" 839.

[25] Ibid. 841.

Robert Imbelli, a participant in the Common Ground Project, wrote a generally congenial response to Schindler's questions and concerns. But he criticized Schindler for failing to complement the christological foundations of dialogue with pneumatological ones, and thus of drawing on only one side of Balthasar's achievement.[26] "The two constitutive realities of Church must be ordered and integrated, and that these imperatives flow from the indicative of God's economy of salvation: the missions of Word and Spirit."[27] What benefit accrues from more attention to pneumatology? "It will promote a truly Catholic, because comprehensive, ecclesial vision and practice; and prevent a rightful concern for the unity of the faith from falling into a lifeless insistence upon uniformity."[28] The implications were not spelled out by Imbelli, but he sounded the right note.

Schindler responded to Imbelli's challenge in two subsequent essays that merit attention. Schindler admitted that he had given insufficient attention to the role of the Spirit in dialogue but insists that this would only deepen and extend, rather than modify his central argument concerning how dialogue in the Church is to be understood. For him the dual character of the Holy Spirit is receptive and obedient: "the Spirit speaks only what he hears, declaring to us what he has received from the Son (and the Father)"; and creative: "the Spirit 'blows where it wills'. The Spirit's creativity always presupposes his listening to and receiving from the Son (and the Father). The Spirit is infinitely creative *in* his *reference to* the divine Other(s)."[29] Schindler argued that the ultimate disagreement with Imbelli is over what kind of pneumatology supports what kind of dialogue and that there must be sufficient attention given to "an *a priori receptivity to* and *unity with* the Word sacramentalized in the Petrine Church (e.g., the magisterium)."[30] In his conception, clearly indebted to Balthasar, dialogue is based on the exercise of the papal magisterium: the Petrine dimension discloses the objectivity of holiness as person-institution, and the Marian dimension communicates the subjectivity of holiness as person-charism.

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[26] Schindler's book, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) had previously been criticized by Joseph Komonchak for not developing an explicit pneumatology (*Commonweal* 124 [September 12, 1997] 34–35). See also Robert P. Imbelli, "The Unknown Beyond the Word: The Pneumatological Foundations of Dialogue," *Communio* 24 (1997) 326–35.

[27] "The Unknown Beyond the Word" 334.

[28] Ibid. 332.

[29] Schindler's position on pneumatology, dialogue, and the church is advanced in two articles, "The Pneumatological Foundations of Dialogue: Response to Imbelli, Tekippe, and Culpepper," *Communio* 25 (1998) 366–76, at 367–68, and "Institution and Charism: The Missions of the Son and the Spirit in Church and World," *Communio* 25 (1998) 253–73.

[30] "The Pneumatological Foundations of Dialogue" 370.

The crucial point is that these objective and subjective holinesses are (are intended to be) 'circumincessive,' in the ordered way revealed in the Trinity itself: objective (sacramental) holiness always-already presupposes the 'subject(-ivity)' in which it is received as it were is brought to fulfillment; and subjective holiness is always-already (meant to be) ordered from, toward, and by the 'objective' (sacramental) Other. It is in this way that we have a unity without confusion, and a distinction without separation, between the Petrine-institutional and the Marian-charismatic dimensions of the Church. . . . There is thus a mutual if asymmetrical priority of the Marian and the Petrine: obedient listening and abiding are 'first' (*fiat*), but these themselves presuppose (in a different order), the primacy of the objective Word (sacramental-hierarchical office) to whom one is obedient and with whom one abides, even as, out of this obedience and unity—that is *coincident with* this obedience and unity and *conditional upon* these—emerges the 'excess' of an ever-new creative spirit (*magnificat*: an *ever-new* magnification *of* the Lord).[31]

This exchange invites a much larger discussion about the nature of dialogue and its trinitarian foundations. Schindler's position represents what I have described as the first approach to dialogue associated with official Catholic teaching and the theologies of Balthasar and Ratzinger. It is consistent with a resolutely high Christology and christocentric ecclesiology that gives notable emphasis to the role of the magisterium and the obedient response of theologians and all the faithful to this magisterium as the basis of ecclesial communion. Even when pneumatology is treated, and a trinitarian framework is invoked, the patterns of relationship established by the christocentric orientation remain in place and are said to be deepened and extended in the interest of dialogue understood as obedience.[32]

But the choice is not, as Schindler suggests, between his own approach to dialogue and a detestable liberal approach, but between a rendering of the officially sanctioned position like Schindler's and another kind of approach

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[31] Schindler, "Institution and Charism" 264–65.

[32] Schindler's hierarchical approach to dialogue in the Church may reflect a Western approach to the *Filioque,* the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, that has been criticized by Orthodox theologians. I would agree with those who argue that such a Western approach to the Spirit needs to be complemented by the wisdom of Byzantine theology at the level of trinitarian theology and ecclesiology. Had Schindler devoted more attention to Balthasar's doctrine of trinitarian inversions, he might have been able to address these issues. In another vein, one could take Imbelli's question about whether Schindler has incorporated Balthasar's pneumatology into his approach a step further and ask whether he has given sufficient emphasis to the ecclesiological implications of Balthasar's treatment of various other topics, including, human individuation, the stereoscopy of the New Testament witnesses, and the plurivocity of styles of theology and saints, all of which could broaden out Schindler's vision of dialogue in revelation and the Church. But even with Balthasar's position fully represented, the question cannot be avoided, whether a dominant christocentrism of a peculiarly "high" variety undergirds and in some ways undermines Balthasar's treatment of pneumatology, trinitarian theology, and these other topics as well.

that is also striving in good faith and in agreement with the fundamental convictions of the official Catholic position, one that aims to develop a theology of dialogue responding to the work of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as a communion of persons. What is emerging is an alternative theology of the dialogical nature of revelation and the Church. Associated with what I have called the second approach, this latter position, one I have tried to foster in my own writing, is committed to advance *generous catholicity* (the full flowering of diversity and individuation) and *dynamic communion* as the most appropriate way to honor and reverence the Triune God of Christian faith.[33] The judgment of trinitarian faith is the criterion for ecclesial reality: perichoresis, mutual informing and indwelling, genuine collaboration, and equality constitute the identity and mission of the Trinity wherein individuation fosters a catholicity that flows from and is oriented toward a communion of persons. This trinitarian reality empowers and defines generous catholicity and dynamic communion in the realization of the Church's identity and mission. This alternative theology of dialogue seeks to honor and reverence the Triune God by being genuinely receptive to the polyphony of christologies, pneumatologies, and trinitarian theologies in the diverse biblical and theological traditions, not only those high christologies, pneumatologies, and trinitarian theologies that warrant the exercise of hierarchical authority and ministry and that accentuate passive obedience to the magisterium.

The Triune God is likewise revered by promoting processes of listening (the root meaning of obedience) and learning from the diversity of voices in the Church, from all corners of the global Church, from ordained and charismatic ministries of all types, from female and male members, and not only or predominantly from the official magisterium. Christian understandings of relationships as constitutive of human identity and mission are based on the deepest convictions of faith about God; so too our understanding of ecclesial identity and mission. Dialogical collegiality and collaboration, mutual learning and teaching among all the baptized—bishops, theologians, and all of the faithful—are necessary requirements for reverencing the fullness of God's glory and for realizing a generous catholicity and dynamic communion that are constitutive of the complex personal and social drama of salvation. Ultimately our understanding of the dialogical character of revelation and the Church will be judged in light of the mystery of God's identity and mission. This being so, should we not welcome the emerging reality that the entire world Church, East and West, South

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[33] Certain facets of a trinitarian approach to the catholicity of the Church are advanced in my essay, "Ethnic and Racial Diversity and the Catholicity of the Church," *Theology: Expanding the Borders,* ed. María Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third, 1998) 162–99.

and North, ordained and laity, male and female, is being drawn into the mystery of God through greater and wider dialogue?

An Open Question

The debate about the dialogical nature of revelation and the Church is far from resolved. At a one level this debate cannot go forward until we give additional attention to the shifts that have occurred over the course of the 20th century concerning how we approach and theorize about dialogue and conversation. The personalist approach to dialogue espoused by Balthasar and Ratzinger privileges an I-thou encounter that reflects the impulses of Martin Buber and others such as Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner, and Gabriel Marcel. For Balthasar and Ratzinger dialogue is viewed through a personalist lens that privileges particular theological and experiential filters and lights in the analysis and description of dialogue: Jesus' obedience to the Father, and child-mother and spousal relationships. These remain important and valuable, even if open to further critical inquiry.

However, dialogical phenomena are now being reexamined with enlarged, wide-angle lenses, using diverse filters and lighting. Instead of concentrating on the defining experiences of one-on-one encounters, as, for instance, mother-child and spousal, more recently attention has been given to a wider range of dialogical encounters with "the other" including dialogue with those who have suffered injustice or been marginalized because of gender, race, their religious beliefs and practices, or their lay status in the Church. Here the Church needs to learn from the spectrum of experiments in dialogue: intraecclesial, ecumenical, interreligious, interdisciplinary, and the dialogical work for justice in the public arena. These living practices of dialogue with the other will also need to be examined in relation to the contributions of those theorists who, after Buber and the personalists, have analyzed and theorized about dialogue and communication offering diverse, sometimes transverse,[34] and eventually more comprehensive, approaches to these phenomena. A wide variety of thinkers come to mind: Hans Georg Gadamer on dialogue with texts, Jürgen Habermas on communicative action, his interlocutor Jodi Dean on dialogical solidarity, Emmanuel Levinas on the ethical demands and transcendence of the dialogue partner, Mikhail Bakhtin on plurivocity and contestation in dialogue, and Hans Robert Jauss on the dialogical character of reception.[35]

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[34] Calvin O. Schrag proposes transversal rationality and transversal communication as a postmodern alternative to Habermas's approach to the universal and context-dependant character of validity claims in his theory of communicative action in *The Self After Postmodernity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1997) 128–38.

[35] For an initial exploration into this topic, see Werner Stegmaier, "Heimsu-

Why is this transition important? On one level, it is important because theologians need to recognize and learn from this multifaceted research into dialogue and to explore its implications for theology. At a far deeper level, however, theologians need to contribute to this work on dialogue in light of the fundamental convictions of Christian faith. Most significantly the doctrine of the triune communion of persons that inspires and ultimately must govern a dialogical understanding of revelation and the Church, needs to be clarified not only in terms of the dialogical I-thou schema developed earlier in the 20th century, but also by taking into account the significance of otherness, polyphony, conflict, and diverse receptions in the dialogical process explored by more recent theorists. In other words, an interpersonal approach to the Trinity and dialogue must now be augmented by a fully social and historical approach that can advance generous catholicity and dynamic communion.[36]

Let me end this section by recalling one of Schindler's main complaints against the approach to dialogue in the Common Ground Project: namely that it pays too little attention to sanctity and personal conversion from sin and too much to civility. Personal conversion draws from the Petrine and Marian character of the Church as objective and subjective and built on obedience. But Schindler's favored approach to holiness and conversion, focused on the individual person, invites larger questions about the sinfulness of the Church as a social entity.

THE SINFULNESS OF THE CHURCH

The holiness of the Church is a note that is sounded in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:26–27; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 21:2) and reverberates

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chung: Das Dialogische in der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Dialog als Selbstvollzug* 9–29; see also Jodi Dean, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism After Identity Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), and Terence J. Martin, *Living Words: Studies in Dialogues about Religion* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998).

[36] My interest in the social and historical repercussions of the doctrine of the Trinity intersect with the advancement of "social Trinitarianism" by proponents like Jürgen Moltmann, Leonardo Boff, and Joseph Bracken. Questions have been raised about this usage. See Sarah Coakley, " 'Person' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion;" and Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity,* ed. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999) 123–44, 203–49. The crucial point for my argument is that an interpersonal approach to God cannot avoid the social character and implications of the Triune God's identity and missions in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification. The encounter with the Triune God is not only a personal encounter, but a social encounter of persons in communion as equal, mutually related, and dialogical. Also see Bernd Jochen Hilberath, "Vom Heiligen Geist des Dialogs: Das dialogische Prinzip in Gotteslehre und Heilsgeschehen," in *Dialog als Selbstvollzug der Kirche?* 93–116.

in a chorus of early creedal formulas: the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (ca. 215), the symbols of Ambrose (ca. 397), of Rufinus (ca. 404), of Constantinople (381), and the Apostles' Creed. Is it proper to say that this same Church, gifted with holiness in time and called to the fullness of holiness beyond time, is sinful? This question received considerable attention when Augustine wrestled with perfectionist strands of Donatism and Pelagianism, and when Luther and Calvin confronted excesses of late medieval ecclesial practices. During Vatican II this question received renewed attention in Catholic circles in part in reaction against the triumphalistic emphasis on the holiness of the divinely established Catholic Church that had been bolstered to repudiate Protestant and other critics in the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century. The contributions of Hans Küng, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar were especially noteworthy.[37] The 20th-century discussion has reconfirmed that across the spectrum of theological opinions, no one denies that there are sinners in the Church, and that even official representatives of the Church—popes, bishops, and priests—like the rest of humanity, can be sinful at times, and therefore in need of repentance and conversion. The holy Church is composed of sinful individuals and this disgraceful state of affairs regularly thwarts the power of God's love in the Church and the world. The disputed question is whether it is appropriate to speak of a sinful Church. Vatican II teaches that the Church is "at once holy and always in need of purification" (*sancta simul et semper purificanda*), but it is the precise meaning of this phrase that is in dispute.[38] Can the Church as a collectivity, a corporate identity, an institutional agent, be described as sinful? Expressed in the current idiom, can the debated terms social sin, or structures of sin, be applied to the Church?

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[37] Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection,* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1981; original ed. 1957) 244–48; Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse reforme dans l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1950); Karl Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 6.253–69; and his "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," ibid. 6.270–94; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "*Casta Meretrix,*" in *Explorations in Theology* 2.193–288; Stephen Laszlo, "Sin in the Holy Church of God," in *Council Speeches of Vatican II,* ed. Hans Küng, Yves Congar, Daniel O'Hanlon (New York: Paulist, 1962) 44–48; Johannes Stöhr, "Heilige Kirche—Sündige Kirche?" *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (1967) 119–42; for ecumenical discussions, see André Birmelé, "La peccabilité de l'Église comme enjeu oecuménique," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 67 (1987) 399–419; Harding Meyer, "Sündige Kirche?" *Ökumenische Rundschau* 38 (1989) 397–410.

[38] *Lumen gentium* no. 8, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) 2.855.

Social Sin

What is the debate about the nature of social sin? There is little difficulty in speaking about social sin as the social *effects* of individual personal sin. This has long been recognized. John Paul II went a step further and taught that social sin is the *embodiment* of personal sin and injustice in social structures. Social sins are "the result of the accumulation and concentration of many *personal* sins," and are "rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals."[39] But what sense does it make then to speak of social sin? Social sin, like mortal and venial sin in the theology of Thomas Aquinas, must always be understood as "sin by analogy."[40] John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger have made clear that using the term social sin does not mean that collectivities are moral agents, since only individuals are moral agents. On this point they criticize tendencies in liberation theologians' campaign against injustice and institutional violence. Nevertheless, the pope has stated that one must fight against social sin understood in terms of structures of sin and sinful social mechanisms. Gregory Baum helpfully points out that the pope emphasizes the personal voluntary impetus of social sin, personal responsibility, and personal agency, but, at the same time, as in the teachings of Latin American bishops at Medellín, he also acknowledges "the unconscious, nonvoluntary dimension of social sin—the blindness produced in persons by the dominant culture, blindness that prevents them from recognizing the evil dimensions of their social reality."[41] This is a decisive move. The unconscious dimensions of human behavior, personal and social, have received considerable attention during the 20th century. On the one hand, insights from psychoanalysis and depth psychology into the workings of the unconscious and the semi-conscious have profound significance for theological ethical

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[39] See John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (December 2, 1984) no. 16; and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (December 30, 1987) no. 36; also see Mark O'Keefe, *What Are They Saying About Social Sin?* (New York: Paulist, 1990) 17–24; and Michael Sievernich, " 'Social Sin' and its Acknowledgment," in *The Fate of Confession,* ed. Mary Collins and David Power, *Concilium* 190 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987) 52–63.

[40] *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* no. 16; O'Keefe, *What Are They Saying About Social Sin?* 19.

[41] Gregory Baum, "Structures of Sin," in *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical On Social Concern,* ed. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989) 110–26, at 113. Baum is deriving the unconscious and nonvoluntary character of social sin from the treatment of conscientization in the documents from the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellin, 1968. See *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching Since Pope John,* ed. Joseph Gremillion (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976) Justice, nos. 17–23; Peace, no. 18.

reflection on personal agency and disclose dimensions of personal responsibility and accountability that do not rest solely on fully volitional personal acts.[42] On the other hand, and relevant for the discussion of social sin, is the recognition of the social counterpart to the influence of the personal unconscious or semiconscious, often described in terms of ideology as some form of distorted collective consciousness that affects social discourse and action. It is precisely this contention that merits further clarification.

It is important to recall that the debate about social sin in Catholic social teaching has largely focused on economic and political arenas. This was John Paul II's initial intent. But with the publication of the encyclical *Ut unum sint,* the pope has clearly, if cautiously, acknowledged that social sin is a category that can be applied to the Church.[43] This emerging recognition of social sin in the Church will eventually need to be integrated with the larger call to ecclesial repentance heralded by the apostolic letter *Tertio millennio adveniente.* But a problematic issue lies at the core of this teaching.

There is an unresolved tension in the pope's teachings: a personalist approach to moral agency predominates in terms of acknowledging the social effects and embodiment of sin. But, if Baum is correct, at the same time the unconscious, nonvoluntary dimensions of ideology (or least the not fully conscious and not fully voluntary) that shape collective patterns of behavior and beliefs are also conceded. This dual approach to social sin in papal teaching reflects wisdom and growing insight. In fact, this is an instance of dramatic doctrinal development. But it is also indicative of and the source of confusion concerning whether it is proper to hold social institutions, collectivities, and their beliefs and practices, responsible for social sin even though strictly speaking it may be unconscious and nonvoluntary. Here Baum's distinction between "social sin defined in terms of its objects (i.e., social sin as the evil of individual persons or groups of persons that adversely affect society) and social sin defined in terms of its subject (i.e., the community, a collectivity)" may be helpful. Baum contends that social sin must be considered in terms of its subject, that it resides in groups

[42] The topics of vincible and invincible ignorance in moral decision making as well as the personal psychological odyssey of the path of purification and integration associated with John of the Cross's dark night of the soul, should be reconsidered in light of the study of the unconscious. Ernest Wallwork argues that phenomena such as selective attention, defenses, and denial merit greater consideration in religious ethics and the same could be said of the doctrine of sin; see his "Psychodynamic Contributions to Religious Ethics: Toward Reconfiguring *Askesis,*" *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 19 (1999) 167–89.

[43] Like the principle of subsidiarity, which was developed first in Catholic social teaching and subsequently applied to ecclesiology, John Paul II has described social sin in terms of sinful economic and political structures and mechanisms in *Sollicitudo rei socialis;* in *Ut unum sint* he applied the category to the Church.

and in communities. But, like the pope, he does not talk about collective guilt, a notion that was much debated by theologians after World War II. As Mark O'Keefe comments, for Baum "what is proper to social sin is that it is not produced by deliberation and free choice. Social sin must, therefore, be understood to produce evil consequences in the community but no guilt in the ordinary sense."[44]

The crux of the matter is that one finds this same tension between an emphasis on personalist agency and an acknowledgment of collective structures of sin in the pope's teaching on ecclesial repentance. If the sins of individuals have left their effect on the Church and have been embodied in structures and mechanisms of the Church, and yet the pope rejects a belief in corporate guilt, if not corporate responsibility, one must ask what it means to make a public confession of the Church's sin. Is it simply to confess the sins of individuals? Or does it mean confessing the sinful patterns of discourse and action, judgments and decisions that convey at least the limited insight, if not the distortion, found in the institutional Church?[45]

Some cardinals have resisted the call for a public confession of the Church's sin and reject the formula of a sinful Church, precisely because these raise large issues about the holiness of the Church and errors in its beliefs and practices. Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, Archbishop of Bologna, asked: "Is the Church, precisely as Church, guilty of any sin? No; considered in the very truth of its being, the Church has no sins, because it is the 'total Christ.' "[46] Cardinal Ratzinger, comments on the Roman liturgy that says "Domine Jesu Christe . . . ne respicias peccata mea, sed fidem Eccle-

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[44] O'Keefe, *What Are They Saying About Social Sin?* 30–32, 71–75.

[45] It seems reasonable, following Luigi Accattoli, to assume that the Pope's call for a public act of confession was inspired by the work of Balthasar. "The Catholic can't just shrug off all this history: the Catholic principle of Tradition (note the capital T) reminds him that the very Church he belongs to has done or allowed to be done things that we certainly can't approve of nowadays. . . . The Christian . . . received the tradition and with it his share of responsibility, whether he likes it or not. . . . Since this is the state of affairs, perhaps the honest reaction is not only an immediate recognition of sinful responsibility but also a full one that will emphasize the harsh tragedy of the past" (Balthasar, *Who is a Christian?* [Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1967] 14). It is also important to recognize that like the pope and Cardinal Ratzinger, Balthasar falls short of speaking of collective sin or collective responsibility. "All Christians are sinners, and if the Church does not sin as Church, she does sin in all her members, and through the mouths of all her members she must confess her guilt; "It is true that the Church is immaculate (in the sense that she is the place where God sanctifies human beings with his grace), but that does not exclude but rather includes the Church's unceasing confession of sin" ("*Casta Meretrix*" 245, 261).

[46] Negative reactions to the pope's call for ecclesial repentance are discussed in Accatoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness* 61–66; the quotation from Biffi is found at 63. For a fuller statement by Biffi, see *Christus Hodie* (Bologna: EDB, 1995).

siae tuae. Lord Jesus Christ, look not upon my sins, but upon the faith of your Church." As individuals, "we sin, but the Church that is yours and the bearer of faith does not sin."[47] The views of Biffi and Ratzinger are consistent with the earlier formulation of Charles Journet, which has been reaffirmed by Georges Cottier: "L'Église sans péché, non sans pécheurs."[48] Balthasar's position was in effect the same.[49] And although the pope has strongly defended the need for ecclesial repentance and has even spoken of the Church as "holy and sinful," there is every indication that the pope has rejected the belief that the Church as a collectivity is sinful.[50] The Church is sinless, but there are sinners in the Church. The result is that the pope finds himself in the position of calling the Church to repent of its sins, but saying that it is only individuals who have sinned.

The Sinful Church?

Three theological convictions warrant this reticence to speak of the sinfulness of the Church collective. One is the venerable understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ that draws from Pauline and Augustinian sources, and that views the Church as the collective presence in the world of the incarnate Son of God and risen Christ. Affirmations in the Old Testament about Israel, and later about the Jews, as a collective singular, were transformed among earlier Christians as they described the nascent Christian community as people of God and temple of the Holy Spirit. But, in contrast to the conviction of the Hebrew Scriptures, enunciated by prophets, sages, and priests, that sinfulness can be attributed to the religious community as well as to individuals,[51] the Christian community came

[47] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985) 50–53; *A New Song For the Lord* (New York: Crossroad/ Herder, 1997) 147–60, esp. 149.

[48] See Charles Journet, "Le caractère théandrique de l'Église," in *L'Église de Vatican II,* Unam Sanctam 51b (Paris: Cerf, 1967) 299–311, at 310–11. Avery Dulles describes Journet's position "that while from a purely empirical point of view the Church may appear to be sinful, the eye of faith is able to discern that the Church in its theological reality as Body of Christ is sinless, albeit not without sinners" ("Should the Church Repent?" *First Things* no. 88 [December 1998] 36–41, at 37). In agreement with Journet's views, see the essay by Georges Cottier, O.P., "Église sainte: L'Église sans péché, non sans pécheurs," *Nova et Vetera* 66 (1991) 9–27.

[49] See n. 44 above.

[50] John Paul II spoke of "the Church, living, holy, and sinful," at a prayer vigil at Fatima on May 12, 1982, see *L'Osservatore Romano* (31 May 1982) 8; cited by Avery Dulles, "Should the Church Repent?" 38.

[51] Dulles comments that "[i]n certain texts God is apparently portrayed as punishing the whole people for the sins of a few. . . . In the later books of the Old Testament, however, the prophets insist that the Israelites of their day are not being punished for sins they did not themselves commit" (Jeremiah 31:30; Ezekiel 13:20)

to accentuate the holiness of the Church as a work of God and ultimately resisted a belief in the collective sinfulness of the Church. This latter claim was assiduously avoided (although not explicitly ruled out) largely because of the emerging Pauline and Augustinian view of the Church as Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. This ecclesiology promoted the belief that in the creation of the Church God has formed a singular identity, a subject, that is, like the incarnate Son of God, informed by the divine principle of God's agency in its identity and mission.[52] This affirmation of the Church as a singular, holy, even divine, subject provides the background warrant for the exercise of the universal Church's teaching office and the ministrations of the sacraments. Within this frame of reference, individuals can and do still sin, but the collective identity and mission of the Church universal, since divinely instituted and obediently received, remain intact.

The danger of this line of argument has been described in terms of ecclesial monophysitism or christomonism,[53] a position unable to recognize the human role in ecclesial matters, one that discredits human agency both in moments of creativity and in matters of sin. From this vantage point, any effort to speak about the sinfulness of the Church is viewed as an impious attack on the divinely instituted character of the Church as the Body of Christ, when in fact it may be simply a striving for a more complete articulation of the reality of the Church under the influence of divine *and* human agency.

A second reason for this reticence is that the Church has traditionally been understood as the means of sacramental grace. For instance, according to the doctrine of penance, Christians are reconciled to God through the mediation of the Church, so that being reconciled to the Church is a constitutive ingredient in being reconciled to God. Clement Tierney has expressed this well within a dialogical framework:

[Penitents] must confess to God in their heart because they have sinned against God and are seeking forgiveness from God and reconciliation from God. But this

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(ibid. 38). For a fuller exploration of the biblical materials, see the International Theological Commission, "Memory and Reconciliation," section 2.

[52] See Siegfried Wiedenhofer, "Die Kirche als 'Subject' oder 'Person'," in *Weisheit Gottes—Weisheit der Welt,* 2. *Festschrift für J. Kardinal Ratzinger zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. W. Baier et al. (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987) 999–1020.

[53] On ecclesiological monophysitism and christomonism, see Yves Congar, "La pensée de Möhler et l'ecclésiologie Orthodoxe," *Irénikon* 12 (1935) 321–29, at 323; also his *Tradition and Traditions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966) 312; and "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la tradition latine?" in *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta, Lumen gentium, 53: Mélanges théologiques, hommages à Mgr Gérard Philips* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1970) 41–63. On the use of hypostatic language, see also Michael J. Buckley, *Papal Primacy and the Episcopate: Towards a Relational Understanding* (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 32–44.

personal and intimate dialogue between the sinner and God must also be drawn into God's historical plan of salvation which takes visible and sacramental shape in the Church. In other words the personal dialogue with God must become a sacramental dialogue with God. Hence the dialogue of confession between the sinner and God is sacramentalized in the external and integral confession of sins.[54]

Now it is one thing to recognize, as tradition has consistently acknowledged, that the bishop or priest who presides at the sacraments may be sinful; it is quite another to recognize that the Church collective is sinful. But the traditional doctrine of *res et sacramentum* affirmed the objective power of God's grace at work through the Church. This position reflects the belief that the Church is the primary sacrament of Christ. According to the teaching of *res et sacramentum,* one "effect of the sacrament of penance was recognized to be the reconciliation of the repentant sinner with the Church, while the final effect (in the realm of grace) is reconciliation with God."[55] If it is conceded that the Church is sinful, then there is need to rethink the sacramental character of the Church, the doctrine of *res et sacramentum.* It may seem impossible to confess that the Church is a mediation of the reconciling power of God even though it has been and continues to be sinful as a body. I argue, on the contrary, that this conviction need not undermine the power of God's grace at work in the Church, but in fact can serve to highlight it. Our hope is in God and God's desire and design to purify not only individuals but the very collective identity of the Church.

A third reason for such reticence is that the major critics of the doctrine of the sinful Church have promoted a robust Mariology in which the obedient Mary is the type of the obedient Church and that Mary, like the

[54] I am grateful to David Coffey for drawing my attention to the larger issue raised here, for bibliographical leads, and for the slightly revised citation from Clement Tierney, *The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation* (Sydney, Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1983) 73. See *Lumen gentium:* "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon through God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayers labors for their conversion" (no. 11).

[55] Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992) 217. "*Res et sacramentum,* a kind of middle term between the sacramental sign (*sacramentum tantum*) and the final effect of grace (*res sacramenti*), must participate both in the final effectiveness and in the visibility of the sign, but in such a 'middle' way that the *res et sacramentum* is not to identify with either. . . . Accordingly, an individual sacrament always actualizes the fundamental sacrament that is Church and incorporates those celebrating the sacrament, in a way unique to each sacrament, into that fundamental sacrament" (ibid. 92). For an earlier treatment of *res et sacramentum,* see Bernard Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1956) 159, 250–64, 315–21, 327–29.

Church, is the objective medium for the Word in history, objectively blessed and holy. This implies that sinless Mary is the type of the sinless Church, the immaculate Mary is the type of the immaculate Church. Her "sons and daughters" have sinned, but not holy mother the Church. Any attempt to transgress this typology is viewed as irreverent and suspect. Although the arguments against the formula "sinful Church" and the recognition of the Church's collective and institutional responsibility are not made in terms of Mariology, one can conclude that the bond between Mary and the Church is for some theologians a crucial reason for denying that the Church is collectively sinful. Such a view would render problematic the belief in the Church as an objective medium of salvation. This style of Mariology is found in John Paul II, Ratzinger, Balthasar, and de Lubac.[56] This connection calls to mind the elective affinity and correlation between a high Mariology and a staunch apocalyptic response to *Der antirömische Affekt* in the late 19th and early-20th century.[57] The question is whether this typology can be broken of its unwarranted ramifications in the service a more comprehensive approach to the human and divine character of the Church and a humble recognition of the sinful character of the pilgrim Church.

Can a counter argument be advanced against this reticence to acknowledge the sinfulness of the Church? In 1966 Karl Rahner advanced such an argument in his essay "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II." By drawing attention to the sinfulness of individual members of the Church, which New Testament and patristic sources never tired of affirming, the council drew the conclusion that the Church is sinful: "The guilt of the individual (whether in the ranks of the shepherds or of the flock) has an

[56] See the personal statements by John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* 212–24; and his *Mary: God's Yes to Man: John Paul II's Encyclical Redemptoris Mater* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988); Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Marie première Église* (Paris: Paulines, 1981). For an explicit connection between the sinless Mary and the *Ecclesia immaculata,* see Joseph Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983) where we read: "[T]he doctrine of the *Immaculata* reflects ultimately faith's certitude that there really is a holy Church—as a person and in a person. In this sense it expresses the Church's certitude of salvation . . ." (70–71, also 67); Balthasar's statements about Mary as the type of the church are abundant, see for example, "Who is the Church?" in *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991) 2.143–91, esp. 157–66; *Theo-Drama* 3.300–60; *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) 183–225, esp. 212–22; Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982) 56–58; *The Splendor of the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956) 174–207, 238–89; *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia, 1969) 54–67.

[57] Joseph Komonchak, "Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism," in *Modernism as a Social Construct,* ed. George Gilmore et al. (Spring Hill, Ala.: Spring Hill College, 1991) 11–41.

importance for the *Church* and affects her being."[58] Rahner believed that
Lumen gentium "recognizes the *fact* that the Church is a sinful Church,"
that the Church is affected by the sins of her members, "and not merely
that in her (the holy institute of salvation) there are sinners (as object of
her ministrations)." But the council avoided the expression "sinful Church"
and offered no plausible theological explanations for such a reality. The
Augustinian position that "the Church in eternity which will be holy 'with-
out spot or wrinkle' . . . is applied by way of anticipation to the Church
without qualification," is insufficient.[59] Rahner invokes the distinction be-
tween the objective holiness of the Church's institution and doctrines and
the subjective holiness of Church members in order to explain that the
members are recognized as both holy and sinful by the council, and by
inference "the Church must be 'subjectively' at once 'holy' and sinful."[60]
Herein lies the basis for speaking about the sinful Church for Rahner. This
is why "not only every individual in the Church must truthfully and humbly
confess himself a sinner, but also the Church, for she is the community of
these sinners" and herein lies the most persuasive reason "that she has a
constant need of being cleansed, that she must always strive to do penance
and achieve inner reform."[61]

Many are unwilling to concede Rahner's argument that the profound
effect of the sins by individual Church members justifies speaking of a
sinful Church.[62] Here Rahner's transcendental, existential approach fo-
cuses on the collective effect of individual agents and thereby goes beyond
the pope's brand of personalism. But, even if we acknowledge Rahner's
claim, another question arises, one that Rahner does not address. Are we
to conclude that the Church remains objectively holy in its institutions,
doctrines, and sacraments, or has the subjective sinfulness of Church mem-
bers and the subjectivity of the Church left its mark on these as well?

Toward a New Paradigm

Are there other theoretical resources that enable us to build on and
move beyond Rahner's position? How might it be possible to advance
theologically the conviction that social sin must mean more than the effects
and embodiment of personal sins? For it seems plausible that the doctrine
of social sin demands that one make room for collective responsibility and
accountability. This may not entail collective guilt in a narrower, fully

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[58] Karl Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," in *Theological Investigations* 6.270–94, at 278.
[59] Ibid. 288.   [60] Ibid. 276–77, 288.
[61] Ibid. 291–92.
[62] Johannes Stöhr, "Heilige Kirche—sündige Kirche?" 119–42.

volitional sense, but it does demand that the Church, in response to the purifying and reconciling work of God, undergo a collective examen of consciousness and lamentation for sinful patterns, mechanisms, structures of collective agency that reflect distorted consciousness and are evident in the Church's beliefs and practices. This is a difficult argument to advance when the countervailing claims that seem to leave such little room for qualification and augmentation are so deeply entrenched in memories, beliefs, and practices. A major difficulty here is that we have few resources for naming, describing, and theoretically clarifying an understanding of social sin that entails collective responsibility and accountability, but without collective guilt and fully-conscious collective agency.

Important resources do exist. Gregory Baum provides valuable leads for developing a multidimensional approach to the reality of social sin in terms of the much debated category and theories of ideology, as a nonvoluntary and potentially pernicious mode of consciousness and communication that bears upon a community's basic beliefs and patterns of action.[63] With so many contested theories of ideology, it is important to craft solid and widely accessible theoretic frames of reference that can ground wise and honest discourse about the sinful Church. The contributions of Bernard Lonergan, Jürgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur offer such resources.

Lonergan's transcendental analysis of consciousness identifies the destructive power of collective blindness, bias, and scotosis; his theory of dialectical dialogue and conversion seeks to redress such distorted vision. Habermas in turn has developed a theory of ideology as distorted discourse; early in his career he proposed a critique of ideology on the model of psychoanalysis and subsequently advanced a theory of communicative action as fostering noncoercive efforts at reaching consensus. Ricoeur offers an important complement to these two theorists. He would not contest the legitimacy of both Lonergan's Husserlian style of intentional analysis and his treatment of affections, but gives far greater attention to the power of language and esthetics in the process of conversion. Likewise, Ricoeur engages positively Habermas's approach to ideology and his proposed model of communicative action, but he offers indispensable correctives on

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[63] Baum distinguishes four levels of social sin: (1) "injustices and dehumanizing trends built into the various institutions—social, political, economic, religious—which embody people's collective life"; (2) symbol systems called ideologies: "cultural and religious symbols that legitimate and reinforce the unjust situations and intensify the harm done to people"; (3) "false consciousness created by these institutions and ideologies through which people involve themselves collectively in destructive action as if they were doing the right thing"; (4) collective decisions, generated by distorted consciousness, which increases the injustices in society and intensifies the power of dehumanizing trends" (*Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* [New York: Paulist, 1975] 71–75).

precisely those issues that matter the most to theologians: the abiding importance of tradition, narrative identity, and ongoing conversion.[64] Further, Ricoeur's advice about personal identity seems particularly applicable, far beyond explicit connections found in his own work thus far, to his own treatment of ideology and so to the topics of social sin and collective identity. As he argues, one needs to find imaginative variations in the narrative configuration of identity in order to address the congruence and dissonance of life, and to respect the plurality of others (acknowledging Emmanuel Levinas's work) as they impinge on personal identity and on attempts to offer a universalistic vision of the subjects.[65]

These resources are important for a Church struggling to put into words the reality of social sins as ideology, as blindness, bias, or scotosis that do not always rise to the level of fully conscious intentional moral acts, but are composed nonetheless of judgments and decisions that "serve to sustain relations of domination."[66] Some social theorists would force us to choose between an individualistic approach and a collectivist approach to ideology and by extension structures of sin. But it seems wiser to garner warranted judgments from both position. The pope's stance leans toward a personalist paradigm, but other sectors of the Church seems to be striving to complement that position with an acknowledgment of the agency and responsibility of a collectivity in and through culture, institutions, and practices. The cutting edge of the argument is that the Church, like other social bodies, can be sinful as a social entity.

The Church will always be understood as the Body of Christ and the continuing mediation of the Incarnation, two affirmations that serve as the foundation for the universal teaching and sacramental mission of the Church. But both of these claims must be purified of unwarranted impli-

[64] Paul Ricoeur's contribution to the topic of ideology must be placed within the larger frame of reference provided by his work on the voluntary and the involuntary in his earliest work, and the roles of symbols, psychology, ideologies, and utopias for addressing these issues. The importance of naming and narratively configuring the realities addressed by the categories of ideology and social sin can here be served by a cogent philosophy. See his *From Text to Action: Essays In Hermeneutics, II* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1991) 227–337; also his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia,* ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University, 1986); for critical comments on Habermas, see *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992) 286.

[65] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* 113–68, at 147–48.

[66] On ideology, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991) 5; David Hawkes, *Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Michael Rosen, *On Voluntary Servitude: False Consciousness and the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996); J. M. Balkin, *Cultural Software: A Theory of Ideology* (New Haven: Yale University, 1998). Lonergan's treatment of bias and scotosis are relevant for an understanding of social sin and ideology; see *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970) 191–206, 222–42.

cations and applications. One must come to accept the fact that the Church as body and institution has been informed by the Word, but also by finite and sinful human judgments and decisions; that it has been cooperative with divine grace, but wittingly and unwittingly resistant to this grace; that it has been the means of truthful teaching and sacramental grace, but that in these very acts it has not been completely protected from ideological claims and biases, social forms of repression and limited awareness that require deeper purification and conversion.

One is left to ponder an ambiguity in the Church's official position—affirming the need for ecclesial repentance and yet denying corporate responsibility. To put the matter in Baum's categories, current official teaching acknowledges the objective character of social sin, but not the subjective dimensions. Perhaps there is momentum toward clarifying the Church's position. Consider the resistance to a recent Vatican document: "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah" which was introduced in 1998 by a letter from the pope. In it the pope stated that Catholics needed to "purify their hearts through repentance" and "examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time."[67] Some Jewish and Catholic observers noted that such comments "were undercut by passages that seemed to them worded more to exonerate the Church than to take responsibility or inspire repentance." Cardinal Edward Cassidy stated the issue clearly when he commented: "The greatest difficulty was the fear that if you say the Church has been wrong in the past, then it can be wrong today and tomorrow." Significantly, he concluded that one cannot "avoid a kind of collective responsibility . . . for just as Catholics understand that they are linked to the merits of the saints, they are similarly linked to the sins of their wrongdoers."[68]

This calls for further elaboration. Catholics have long affirmed through the doctrine of the *communio sanctorum* that there is a living mutual bond of love and of prayer between the dead and the living; transhistorical agents are united in the present and through time. These are not simply benefactors, but friends. The Body of Christ provides a bond of communion through time, which is the result of human cooperation with the actions of the Triune God. In light of the developing doctrine of social sin, and what it implies about collective responsibility and accountability, we are now being called upon to reconsider this ancient doctrine so that the *communio sanctorum* can be also recognized, in humility and with no

[67] Cardinal Cassidy made these remarks at a conference held at the Cardinal Bernardin Center in March 1999, which were reported by Peter Steinfels in "Beliefs," *The New York Times* (April 3, 1999) A 12. The proceedings from this meeting will be published in the Bernardin Center Series by Sheed & Ward.
[68] Ibid.

malice implied, as a *communio peccatorum.*[69] The nature of this communion is both divine and human, and we dare not diminish the significance of either aspect. The holiness of this communion has its source in divine agency and in responsive human cooperation. The sinfulness of this communion is based on collective human agency distorted by bias and sinful ideologies, distortions that we trust can be healed in the fullness of time. The pilgrim Church relies upon the examples, prayers, and good will of those individuals who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. Moreover, the Church has long affirmed that we can pray for those individuals who have died and yet are in need of further purification. In light of the doctrine of social sin, we must further develop our teachings to include the sins of the communion of saints, not simply as individuals but as an ecclesial communion, sins that may not have been fully, self-consciously voluntary, but were judgments and decisions that reflected false consciousness and corruption in action.[70] This doctrinal formulation opens up a new vista on the question, what can the living do for the dead, for the communion of saints who were *also* the bearers of social sin? There are things we can do. One can acknowledge, as a grace and a light received, the complex reality of sin, including social sin. One can repent for the sins of which our forebears were not subjectively aware, yet which one acknowledges as objective disorder, bias in judgments, harm in decisions, distortion in discourse. And by repenting of these social sins, the Church can be called upon to change, to make satisfaction. We honor God and venerate the dead by struggling to purify the Church of social sin by changing.[71]

If it is true that the Church as a collectivity and institution must bear responsibility and repent, how can the communal conversion process pro-

[69] The International Theological Commission's text "Memory and Reconciliation" (4.2) has acknowledged the substance of what is suggested here. A doctrine of *communio peccatorum* in light of the doctrine of social sin offers an important dimension to the transactions between the living and the dead as insightfully developed in Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

[70] Developing the doctrine of the *communio sanctorum et peccatorum* invites further investigation of the ecumenically disputed Lutheran doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator.* Robert W. Jenson, a Lutheran, raises questions about applying the latter doctrine to the Church; see his *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 102–3.

[71] For secular analogues, see Hannah Arendt's discussion of forgiveness in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958) 236–43. During the 20th century, there were various debates about collective responsibility, accountability, and making amends for the beliefs and acts of a social group. This kind of discussion took place especially after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in Germany in the aftermath of the Holocaust, but also in South Africa, Chile, Guatemala, Northern Ireland, and in the United States about apologizing and making reparations for

ceed and acts of penance or satisfaction be made? To address this question is an important step in the cumulative argument being advanced, but an answer can only be introduced here. Both in instances of personal sin and psychological neuroses and complexes, the role of dialogue is crucial for the process of consciousness raising and change. Through dialogue, which can include awkward moments and painful silence, an individual may be led into the purifying dark night of the soul, where deception, delusion, repression, and blindness can be illuminated.[72] Dialogue provides the occasion for the residual projections of idolatry and of the false self to be brought into a purifying light. An examination of conscience can provide an individual the means for entering into dialogue with God, with the self, and indeed with the internalized voices of the community, about individual actions and patterns of behavior. Through the multifaceted processes of interior dialogue new light can be shed on the person's behavior and a fuller awareness of sin can emerge.[73] In the sacrament of penance this internal dialogue is externalized within the Church collective through the representation of the priest. In the setting of the sacrament a dialogical exchange among the penitent, God, priest, and community is ritually enacted: the priest declares the performative words of forgiveness and peace, and can on occasion invite the penitent into dialogue about deeper issues manifesting themselves through confessed sin. Analogously, a therapist enters into dialogue with a patient in order to shed light on destructive patterns of discourse, behavior, and consciousness that are often somewhat opaque to the individual and are painfully coming to light through relationships with loved ones. Therapy provides a special dialogical forum whereby the inner dialogue with the self and dialogical patterns with others may come into clear relief, setting the stage for the possible release of the patient from adverse patterns of thought and action.

In matters of social sin, how can dialogue serve the process of examination of conscience and conversion? It can only be suggested here that the

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the long history of the practice of slavery and the abusive treatment of Native Americans.

[72] On the dark night of the soul and purification for the individual and society, see Constance FitzGerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development,* ed. Joann Wolski Conn (New York: Paulist, 1986) 287–311; Michael J. Buckley discusses ideology in terms of the purification process of the dark night that leads to purity of heart in *Papal Primacy and the Episcopate* 22–31.

[73] This interior dialogue can include the self's dialogue (1) with itself, following Plato; (2) with the voice of conscience, following Heidegger and Ricoeur; (3) with the echoes of voices from community and society, following George Herbert Mead and Jodi Dean; and (4) with the Triune God.

purification process, sometimes described in terms of the dark night of the soul, is not only a process for individuals, but for communities as well. Just as the painfulness of dialogue with God or between individuals can provide the critical impetus for purification and deeper communication and communion, so too in communities a process of ecclesial conversion may take place through dialogue whereby false collective consciousness is revealed and healing initiated.[74]

REVISING TRADITION AS AN ACT OF PENANCE

Is it possible to maintain that ecclesial repentance and conversion can lead to the development and reform of Church doctrine and practice and that openness to such change can be a sign of genuine ecclesial repentance and conversion?

Some would argue that for the Church repentance means solely that individuals in the Church confess their sins, and such repentance has no bearing on whether ecclesial doctrines or practices should be changed. No collective responsibility is deemed necessary, no ecclesial penance required, no change in doctrine or practices need to be considered. However, if one admits the fuller reality of the sinful Church and its collective responsibility, as I have proposed, one must be open to instances where reforming tradition can be the most appropriate act of penance. This openness need not unleash uncontrollable doctrinal relativism, but is the only fitting response to the work of the Triune God who purifies and redeems. Let me introduce three theological warrants that support this claim; each requires further elaboration.

First, there is a need to establish the connection between Jesus' message of repentance and his critical remarks about tradition. The very heart of the message of Jesus and the apostolic mandate is: repent and let God reign (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38). Jesus' violation of Sabbath requirements in the interest of doing good and alleviating suffering must not be separated from his message of repentance and God's reign. "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The situation may seem exceptional, but there is an abiding lesson here that should not be lost. Should not the same be said of certain ecclesial doctrines and practices, that they are offered for

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[74] Lonergan offered important resources for the intersection of dialogue and conversion. Lonergan spoke of religious, moral, intellectual, and affective conversion to which Robert Doran has added psychic conversion in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990) 9, 42–63, 85–90. Also see valuable contribution of the ecumenical Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1993); and Maurice Schepers, "Dialogue and Conversion," *Horizons* 25 (1998) 72–83.

humankind? Are there not instances when Jesus' critical denouncements need to be redirected: "You have abandoned the commandment of God and hold to human tradition" (Mark 7:8)? "Woe to you . . . hypocrites! You . . . have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:1–36, here 23–24). The Catholic Church has been slow to speak about Jesus' call to repentance in terms of his critical remarks about tradition and the official defenders of that tradition. It is likewise said that the Spirit fosters ecclesial accountability, calling the Church to judgment by bringing to mind and memory the works and words of Jesus and by guiding the Church into the fullness of truth (John 14:25, 15:7–18; 1 Corinthians 2:8–16). Recent developments in Catholic teachings on dialogue, social sin, and ecclesial repentance, have laid the groundwork for recognizing more fully this connection between Jesus' message of repentance and his evaluation of human tradition and for acknowledging its implications for doctrinal reform.

Second, the first apostolic council as documented in the Acts of the Apostles, provides an instance in the New Testament where dialogue and repentance are associated with changing doctrines and practice. The dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews surfaced issues of religious, ethnic, and gender differences (e.g., Acts 6:1–7) and culminated in the Council of Jerusalem (15:1–35). Dialogue in this context served as an examination of conscience and as a means of conversion and instrument of doctrinal change. Moreover, it was the participants' intention to respond to the grace of God and to strive for a generous catholicity in the midst of genuine differences and a dynamic communion of persons and as a result a new way of communal living emerged. This council provides a justification and an apostolic precedent of dialogue, mutual repentance, and reforming tradition that can illumine avenues for addressing many of the similarly divisive issues that confront the contemporary Church, including those concerning cultural and gender differences.

Third, that reforming tradition is a move that may be warranted as an aspect of ecclesial repentance is further supported by considering the relevance of what the Church has taught about the sacrament of penance. In keeping with biblical teaching and the history of sacramental practices, both the Council of Trent and the Introduction to the 1973 Revised Rite of Penance indicate that besides contrition, confession, and absolution, an act of penance or satisfaction must be included as one of the constitutive parts of the sacrament of penance. The Rite notes: "True conversion is completed by acts of penance or satisfaction for the sins committed, by amendment of conduct, and also by the reparation of injury. The kind and extent of the satisfaction should be suited to the personal condition of each penitent so that each one may restore the order that he disturbed and through the corresponding remedy be cured of the sickness from which he suffered.

Therefore it is necessary that the act of penance really be a remedy for sin and a help to renewal of life."[75] If amends are needed in personal life, why would this not also be true in collective life? And how are these communal changes to be understood and enacted?

If one is looking for a contemporary example where revising tradition has served as an act of penance through a process of dialogue, the most poignant example would be the Church's attempts to make amends for its discourse and practices concerning Jews. There have already been profound changes over the past three decades in response to interreligious dialogue and ecclesial repentance: changes in the interpretation of Scripture and our sacramental practices, especially during Holy Week.[76] No longer is one to speak of the Jews as perfidious, nor blame them for the death of Jesus; greater care in preaching on the Passion Narratives and Paul's Letter to the Romans has been demanded. But there are many other examples that demand the attention of the Church, including, the characterization of the role of women in the economy of salvation and in the ministerial life of the Church;[77] the reformation of the exercise of the papacy and the curia in light of numerous grievances and ongoing dialogues with Orthodox and Protestant Christians;[78] the need for contrite openness to new ways of authentically inculturating the gospel in dialogue with non-Western cultures and religions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

CONCLUSION

Ecclesial repentance requires in certain cases doctrinal change. Ultimately such change is demanded in response to the call of the gospel. The voice of Jesus Christ echoes down through history in the living memory of the Church: repent and believe the gospel. And the Spirit who illumines the darkness and brings judgment, forgiveness, and transformation, is mediated in and through the community of faith. Jesus and the Spirit invite

[75] *The Rite of Penance* (New York: Catholic Book, 1975) 15; also see *The Council of Trent,* 14th session, Doctrine of the Sacrament of Penance (1551), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 2.703–13.

[76] See, for example, *Nostra aetate* no. 4; for explorations of the significance of conciliar and postconciliar teachings, see the work of John Pawlikowski.

[77] Wolfgang Beinert mentions the profound shift from Pius XI's *Casti connubii* (1931) which affirmed gender subordination as a consequence of the divine order to John Paul II's teaching that this is a consequence of sinful disorder ("Dialog und Gehorsam als geistliches Geschehen," *Stimmen der Zeit* 216 [1998] 394–95).

[78] See John R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999); Hermann J. Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I and II,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

believers to reverence the differences among peoples, genders, cultures, religions, differences that manifest the work of the Source as divine parent in the human process of individuation and community building, by fostering the multifaceted dialogue that will fulfill the pedagogical design of the Triune God. It is the communication of the Triune God of Christian faith, the communion of persons, that summons the Church to be always purifying and always reconciling through dialogue.

If the Catholic Church as a collectivity, and not simply as a group of individuals, has sinned and needs to repent, then the Church as corporate entity and institution must be open to conversion and change in its modes of discourse and action. The role of dialogue in the process of conversion, repentance, and reconciliation and correlatively in the process of tradition has a special place, for dialogue serves not only as the impetus and means for the transmission and reception of tradition, but also for changing and applying tradition in new and unprecedented ways. If this is true, then doctrinal change is not always linear and based on manifest continuities. Any doctrinal change, it is now widely acknowledged, reflects a discontinuity-in-continuity.[79] There are occasions, presumably rare, when the discontinuity that is called for is more pronounced, where the interpretation of the Scriptures and the practices called for are innovative and different. Yet even here calls for discontinuous changes in the Catholic tradition are motivated by a desire to affirm a more basic continuity with the gospel and are advanced as a faithful response to the Triune God of Christian faith. This call to ongoing conversion and purification lies at the heart of the gospel.

What I have proposed here is a dialogical or communicative understanding of tradition that recognizes the legitimacy of doctrinal changes through a process of ecclesial dialogue, repentance, and conversion. This dialogical approach can contribute to a new way of envisioning the divine pedagogy of the Triune God through history, society, and tradition that will serve the Church well as it moves into the new millennium.

[79] This essay explores at a new level the issues raised in several of my previous essays: "Narrative Contexts, Doctrinal Reform," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990) 417–33; "The End of Salvation History," *Horizons* 18 (1991) 227–45; "Reclaiming Rhetoric in the Christian Tradition," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996) 481–99. For their helpful suggestions in the formulation of this present article, I wish to thank Joseph Bracken, David Coffey, Mary Ehle, and Michael Fahey.