
Introduction

THE ROLE OF ECCLESIOLOGY IN (SYSTEMATIC) THEOLOGY

Even though contemporary systematic theology, as any other academic discipline, offers such a variety of approaches and areas of interest that it easily defies any generalizations, it can be said with full legitimacy that two areas have especially caught the attention of many theologians, namely pneumatology and ecclesiology. Significantly enough, these two loci happen to share a number of mutual connections between them. If it is true that we are living amidst a pneumatological renaissance, there is no denying the fact that the last two decades or so have also seen the appearance of surprisingly many full-scale treatments of ecclesiology.

Ecclesiological Renaissance

What might be the potential reasons for such a revived interest in the church? One could also counterattack the claim for the resurgence of the doctrine of the church simply by referring to the prevalent individualism of the Western world and its growing influence on the rest of our world. In an individualistic, post-modern cacophony of differing voices and pluralism, it does not sound appealing to begin talking about a collective called the church, especially since the term *church* for better or worse reasons has been loaded with so many unfortunate connotations from authoritarianism to coercion to antiquarianism.

In my opinion, the main catalyst for the rapidly growing ecclesiological interest has been the ecumenical movement. No other movement in the history of the Christian church, perhaps with the exception of Reformation, has shaped the thinking and practice of Christendom as much as the modern movement

for Christian unity. Now, it is true that the history of *formal* ecumenism in terms of the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 is quite brief—less than half a century—but its roots go back at least to the end of the nineteenth century. Any talk about the unity of the church presupposes some tentative understanding of what the church is. One cannot unite entities without knowing what kind of organisms one is trying to put together. The ecumenical movement has also helped open up a fruitful dialogue about the church and related issues. The older controversial approach has given room for mutual learning and appreciation. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962-1965), without doubt the most significant council of the modern Christian church, completely changed the horizons of the largest church of the world with regard to efforts for unity. Also, at the same time, the Eastern Orthodox churches, with the leadership of the Russian churches, joined the WCC and broadened significantly the membership basis. Eastern tradition is theologically pregnant both in ecclesiology and pneumatology.

Two other developments in Christendom, partly interrelated but also independent to some extent, have challenged theology considerably, especially thinking about the church: the rapid growth of Christianity outside the West, so much so that currently the majority of Christians are in the Two-Thirds World,¹ and the rise of nontraditional forms of the church both in the West and elsewhere. The latter development is in general connected to what are nowadays known as “Free churches.” The expression *Free churches* involves two primary meanings. It designates first those churches with a congregationalist church constitution, and second those churches affirming a consistent separation of church and state.² New congregational models are emerging especially in the Two-Thirds World but also in the West, and many specialists are of the opinion that the Free church congregational model will be the major paradigm in the third millennium. Even the current prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, who has expressed severe criticism of congregational ecclesiologies, has admitted that this is the direction in which Christian *oikumene* is heading.³

¹Statistics are revised annually in the January issue of *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, with detailed calculations from David Barrett and Todd Johnson.

²Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 9 n. 2.

³Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), pp. 45-47.

If one is not ready simply to discount the ecclesiality of Free churches and other nontraditional church forms, it poses the question of the conditions for being a church. Of course, the approach of traditional theology has too often been to impose its own often quite-limited definition of churchhood on its younger counterparts. Naturally, those churches that define what ecclesiality means usually themselves fulfill the requirements of their own definitions! But ecumenically, it does not further the discussion. For older churches, just to discard the enormous potential and force of nontraditional churches by classifying them as something less than a church is both dangerous and useless. Younger churches have shown their vitality in their lives, and now it is left to theology to catch up with these developments. This has always been the main task of theology: to reflect on and make sense of what is happening in Christian life and churches.

The expansive growth of Christian churches outside the traditional "Christian" West has also posed another challenging question to theology, namely, how to account culturally for the existence of churches in various contexts. What does it require to be a church amidst an animistic culture in Africa or highly spiritualistic Asian cultures? What from the mainly Western heritage is transferable to the rest of the world, and what has to be revised and corrected? Furthermore, there are other contextual challenges: what would the church look like if it were to make women and other minorities feel at home and find their potential? Or, what does it mean for a church to be a church for those who struggle for freedom and equality?

There is no denying the value of ecclesiological traditions in classical theology. It simply is the fact that most ecclesiological thinking and even experimenting has taken place within the confines of classical Christendom up until the expansion of the modern missionary movement. And even then, almost until our day, theologies were still Western. Even though today in any meaningful teaching and study of theology full hearing has to be given to voices from outside the West, it is only naïve and harmful to imagine that two thousand years of theological tradition could be easily disregarded.

The Emergence of Ecclesiology as a Separate Locus in Theology

It might come as a surprise to many students of theology that ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, did not gain its own established standing in systematic theology until the time of the Reformation, and even then many crucial topics, as they are discussed nowadays in systematic treatments of the church, received hardly any attention. Ecclesiology was not a separate locus either in the early

church or in the Middle Ages.⁴ The systematic outline included topics such as the trinitarian God, creation, reconciliation in Christ and the sacraments; it is noteworthy that sacraments as such were considered to be so crucial a topic that it required its own locus, even without direct reference to the church.⁵ The first separate treatments on the church go back to the fifteenth century.

Of course, the church fathers had many things to say about the church. The church, in its confession of faith, is said to be connected with the Holy Spirit. The church is named in the creeds⁶ in the clause after the Holy Spirit.⁷ According to the *Traditio apostolica* of Hippolytus, the third baptismal question runs, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit in the Church?"⁸ The patristic author Faustus of Riez of the fifth century commented on the fact that the last clauses in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed were connected with the Holy Spirit:

Whatever in the Creed follows the words "the Holy Ghost" should be understood without reference to the preposition "in," so that our belief about the Holy Church, the communion of saints, etc., is said as part of our appeal to God. This means we believe that these things have been ordered by God and derive their existence from him.⁹

This ecclesial conviction about the integral relationship between the Spirit and the church was expressed clearly by Irenaeus: "For where the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God. And where the Spirit of God is, there is also the Church and all grace; for the Spirit is the Truth."¹⁰

Also, the description of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic became a theme in the Catechetical Lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century.¹¹

⁴A detailed brief outline of the emergence and history of ecclesiology can be found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 3:21-27.

⁵It is indicative that, e.g., in the Catechetical Oration (chap. 33) of Gregory of Nyssa and in *De fide orthodoxa* of John of Damascus (4.9) the discussion moves directly from Christology to a discussion of baptism. See further Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:21.

⁶E.g., the Creed of Constantinople and the (Western) Apostles' Creed.

⁷Michael Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, trans. Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), p. 2. See also Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, ed. Timothy McDermott (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1989), 2.1.1-2.1.9, question 5.

⁸Hippolytus, cited in Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of Saints*, p. 1.

⁹*De Spiritu Sancto* 1.2.; *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 21:103ff.; see further Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints*, p. 1.

¹⁰Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 3.24.1 (ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* [Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844-1902], 7:966).

¹¹See further Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1897), 3:233-39.

Famous is the judgment of the church historian Adolf von Harnack, according to which the treatment of the church in the fathers was so underdeveloped that it did not even connect to the doctrine of redemption.¹² To be true, this observation applies even to those rare works of the fathers that really did focus more on the church; for example, the celebrated work of Cyprian on church unity is more in the nature of a polemic than a constructive proposal. Even Augustine failed to offer any kind of separate treatment of the church, even though he has contributed significantly to our understanding of the church.¹³

Even the great work of Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, one of the first comprehensive *summæ* of Christian doctrine, surprisingly did not have a separate locus on ecclesiology, and what it does say about the church is included under the heading of Christology. The first separate ecclesiologies were *Tractatus de Ecclesia* (1433/1435) of Johann of Ragusa and *Summa de Ecclesia* of John of Torquemada, of the same period.

With regard to the Reformation era when the more comprehensive treatments were written, it is instructive to see how slowly the consciousness of a need for a separate discussion of the church emerged. The first edition of the *Loci* (1521) of Melancthon, Martin Luther's Reformation colleague and the drafter of many of the Lutheran Confessional texts, did not yet include ecclesiology. Only in the later edition in 1535 did Melancthon insert a section *De Ecclesia* which elucidates the statements of the Augsburg Confession about the church. "It has been rightly said that here for the first time, on the basis of the new reformation beginning, Melancthon tried to project and develop a theology of the church as a whole."¹⁴ Interestingly enough, the very same principle applies to John Calvin's *Institutes*. The first edition (1536) lacks ecclesiology, but the 1539 revision added an expanded section on the concept of the church, and the last edition (1559) has an even more developed discussion.

Salvation: Individualistic or Communal?

One of the most famous statements of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology, is that what distinguishes Protestantism from Roman Catholicism is that the former makes the relation of individuals to the church dependent on their relation to Christ, whereas the latter, conversely, makes the relation

¹²Ibid., 3:236.

¹³See further J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 412-17.

¹⁴Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:22.

of individuals to Christ dependent on their relation to the church (§ 24 Thesis).¹⁵ Paradoxical as this statement is, it is also both an overstatement and historically inaccurate. Both Protestant and Catholic theologies traditionally have discussed the means of salvation, including the sacraments, prior to the topic of the church, the implication being that salvation is received individually and then the faith received is nurtured by the church community. Even the Catholic dogmatic manuals up until our day followed the same route.¹⁶ With few exceptions, this is the rule even in most contemporary systematic theologies.

Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* first discusses the foundational theological issues concerning the church and then launches into the topic of faith and salvation.¹⁷ By doing so, it challenges the established canons of systematic theologies. Pannenberg contends that if we ignore the disciples, "the fellowship of individuals with Jesus is always mediated by the church, by its proclamation and its administration of the sacraments."¹⁸ The same order is followed in the recent massive Catholic doctrinal manual, *Mysterium Salutis*,¹⁹ which offers a salvation-historical approach to theology.

It is another thing to acknowledge the fact that even though faith is ecclesially mediated, it is still addressed to individuals for personal appropriation. It was typical of Jesus' proclamation that he addressed individuals directly, and did not, like other Jewish movements of the time, attempt to achieve a gathered eschatological community or any other form or historical manifestation of the true people of God.²⁰

Approaches to Ecclesiology

In order to orient the reader, it might be helpful to chart the waters of ecclesiology and provide an orientation for navigation, especially since the area, as already mentioned, is developing quickly in contemporary theology. The following gives an outline of various approaches to ecclesiology studied in the present book. In the introduction to each major part of the book, a more detailed explanation is offered as to why these particular movements and per-

¹⁵F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

¹⁶See, for example, L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis: Herder, 1957).

¹⁷For the necessary ecclesial mediation of faith, see also Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).

¹⁸Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:24.

¹⁹J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, eds., *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, vols. 4/1-2 (1972) and 5 (1976).

²⁰See further Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:27.

sons have been selected for discussion.

First, there are several more or less established traditional approaches that are related to specific denominations, such as Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed. Each of them approaches the church from a distinctive perspective, based on its overall theological program. To these traditional approaches have to be added some others that in the contemporary world have become significant, namely Free church ecclesiologies, which mostly go back to Baptist views and even further to Anabaptism from the time of Reformation. Also, some newer and statistically overwhelmingly important ones are the ecclesiologies of Pentecostalism and later Charismatic movements. In fact, numerically, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostals almost equal the number of all other Christians. However, even the most recent theology textbooks usually either totally ignore these two latter traditions or just offer some passing comments. Since the present textbook wants to be ecumenically sensitive, the first major part of the book concludes with a detailed discussion of the role and views concerning the church in the theologies of the ecumenical movement.

Second, the doctrine of the church has surfaced in the systematic theologies of some of the most noteworthy contemporary theologians, such as the Orthodox John Zizioulas; the Catholic Hans Küng; the Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg; the Reformed Jürgen Moltmann; the ecumenical Miroslav Volf, who has roots in both the Pentecostal and Reformed traditions; the Baptist James McClendon Jr.; and the Anglican Lesslie Newbigin. All of them bring to the understanding of ecclesiology their specific voices. On the one hand, they represent all the major theological traditions (with the exception of Pentecostalism, for which there are simply no full-scale ecclesiologies available yet). On the other hand, all of them are also ecumenically very sensitive, and they transcend their own specific denominational boundaries. For example, even though Pannenberg certainly takes notice of the best of Lutheran heritage, by no means can he be considered an exclusively Lutheran theologian.

Third, contextual ecclesiologies will be treated in the final major part of the book. The ones chosen for a closer look are feminist ecclesiologies, liberationist ecclesiology, Catholic base communities in Latin America, the non-church movement begun in Japan and extended to Asia, and the ecclesiologies of African Independent Churches. Also, the ecclesiologies of the Charismatic Shepherding movement, the novel idea of the "world church" and the vision of the "church as another city" will receive our attention. Many other contextual or intercultural ecclesiologies could be added, but with the limitations of space

not everything can be said, and no one theologian is equipped to do so.

There is a specific focus to the discussion of ecclesiology in the present book. It might be helpful to take a parallel from Christology. Traditionally, Christology has been divided into two parts, namely the person and the work of Christ: the former part deals with foundational issues, in other words, who Christ is, while the latter looks at the derivative topics, such as atonement and faith. While ecclesiology does not fall that easily into discernible parts, it is possible to apply that same kind of division to the discussion of the church. "Ecclesiology proper," the main interest of this book, focuses on the question of the ecclesiality of the church, that is, what makes the church church, or what are the conditions for being a church. The second part of ecclesiology, then, deals with questions such as the ministry, the structure and the sacraments of the church. Those issues receive only secondary treatment in this book, not because they are not important, but simply for the fact that in order to meaningfully survey such a broad territory as is our intention here, there have to be limitations.

The present book attempts what is sometimes called "comparative ecclesiology," which has become popular especially in ecumenical circles. According to the widely used textbook *Models of the Church* by one of the leading Catholic ecclesiologists, Avery Dulles, S.J., the term *comparative ecclesiology* "signifies a systematic reflection on the points of similarity and difference in the ecclesiologies of different denominations."²¹ Dulles's preferred term for this enterprise is *model*. By this he wishes to indicate his conviction that the church, like other theological realities, is a mystery. "Mysteries are realities of which we cannot speak directly. If we wish to talk about them at all we must draw on analogies afforded by our experience of the world."²² Comparative ecclesiology usually draws from two kinds of sources: more or less official denominational confessional writings, and texts of representative theologians. In principle, our approach is no different from that. However, the present book goes beyond the traditional comparative ecclesiology in that the last part of the book also focuses on what may conveniently be called "contextual" (sometimes also "global") ecclesiologies.

²¹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*

PART ONE

Ecclesiological Traditions

A natural way to begin a survey of ecclesiologies is to introduce major theological and confessional traditions that have emerged during church history. This is the task of the first part of the book. With regard to major confessional traditions such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism and the Reformed family, the task ahead of us is quite straightforward. Each of these traditions has established doctrines and views of the church, though it has to be noted that especially during the last century a proliferation of ideas in each of these established traditions has occurred. Roman Catholic theology is a case in point: while there is an official, normative Catholic doctrine concerning the church, a plethora of (more or less) legitimate varieties have also arisen. Furthermore, both major Protestant traditions are often less accurately defined by their theologies because they do not have an official magisterium, that is, teaching office of the church, even though they do have confessional statements. These traditions naturally leave more room for the views of individual theologians.

Concerning more recent ecclesiological traditions—those stemming from the Protestant Reformation but going beyond it and expressing quite a lot of disagreement with their forebears—the task of introducing ecclesiological views is more complicated. The complication comes from two interrelated questions. First of all, which traditions to choose for presentation? Should one try to discuss all the varieties of, say, what has come to be known as “Free churches,” or should one lump them together and try to discern common features? Second, once the decision is made as to which recent views to present,

should one search only for a *theology* of the church, or is it legitimate to try to derive the ecclesiological views by looking at how the movement lives out its ecclesiality. The fact is that many of those newer Christian traditions have not yet produced much *theology* of the church, even if in their everyday life they do, of course, live out their “churchliness.”

The approach of the present book is to divide the more recent traditions into two categories: Free churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. The term “Free churches” here denotes the heritage of the Radical Reformation, such as Anabaptists, Quakers and Baptists. Even though each of these Free churches also displays distinctive features, they share enough common foundations to treat them together. For more fine-tuned discussion, the reader is referred to specific sources in the text. With regard to Pentecostal/Charismatic traditions, one could also place them in the Free church category. The reason for not doing so in the present study is twofold. First, currently the Pentecostal/Charismatic family of churches represents the biggest Protestant constituency, so that on the basis of numbers alone it would be unfair to lump it together with the rest of the Free churches. Second, even though this newest Christian tradition has not yet produced much theology of the church, a closer look at its church life and related doctrines strongly indicates that a distinctive kind of ecclesiology is emerging—one based on the Charismatic spirituality of the movement.

The last chapter of part one may seem strange at first glance: the ecumenical movement ecclesiologies. What this section attempts to accomplish is to take stock of the emerging ecumenical thinking about the church, primarily as it has taken place among the World Council of Churches constituencies and related ecumenical venues such as the Faith and Order movement. Here there is even more variety than within any individual Christian tradition; but there are also trends and orientations that seem to point toward a growing consensus, even if under the much-used label “unity-in-diversity.” The name of the section itself, “the ecumenical movement ecclesiologies” may not be the most appropriate one, since the ecumenical movement, a heterogeneous body of various organizations itself, is not a theological tradition similar to, for example, Roman Catholicism; however, in want of a better name, that term will have to suffice.

The Church as an Icon of the Trinity

EASTERN ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

The Patristic Roots of the Eastern "Spirit-Sensitive" Theology

Eastern Orthodox theology draws heavily from the early sources, namely the church fathers of the East. Therefore, any inquiry into the distinctives of Eastern thought should bear in mind the experiences and theological developments of the early centuries. A fine introduction to modern appropriations of those ancient patristic thoughts is offered by C. N. Tsirpanlis in his *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology*.¹

Generally speaking, it can be said that Eastern theology has been more "Spirit-sensitive"² than its Western counterparts. Eastern Orthodox theology is heavily imbued by pneumatology; Western theology in the main is built on christological concepts rather than on pneumatological. This pneumatological orientation does not, however mean neglecting either Christ³ or the Trinity⁴ in Orthodox theologizing. One thing that guards Eastern thought from a one-sided concentration on the Spirit is its focus on the primacy of the Father in the doctrine of the Trinity. Tsirpanlis's words are illustrative of the Eastern mindset:

Those who speak of an Orthodox "Pneumatocentrism" opposed to the so-called Christocentrism of the Roman Church, may express their own personal theology, but they speak a language alien to the Fathers and to the saints of the Eastern Or-

¹C. N. Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991).

²The phrase is taken from Robert Imbelli in his recommendations of Y. Congar's book, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, three volumes in one (New York: Herder, 1997).

³See, e.g., Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology," in *Oecumenica: An Annual Symposium of Ecumenical Research* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), pp. 235-52.

⁴See, e.g., Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), chap. 4.

thodox Church. The three Persons, in the Holy Trinity, share in activity of each of them. The Father and the Son are included in every action of the Spirit.⁵

There is a genuine trinitarian outlook in the Eastern view: "The Father does all things by the Word in the Holy Spirit."⁶

The mystical theology of the Eastern wing of the church is often more experience-based and concrete than Latin theology. This comes to focus even in their pneumatology: "As he who grasps one end of a chain pulls along with it the other end to himself, so he who draws the Spirit draws both the Son and the Father along with it."⁷

The doctrine of the church can never be isolated from other theological loci; ecclesiology is kind of a *summa* of any given theological tradition. What gives special flavor to the Eastern view of the church is that its doctrine of salvation is not focused on guilt concepts and sin—as in the West—but focuses rather on a gradual growth in sanctification culminating in deification, becoming like God. This orientation shapes the doctrine of the church in a profound way. According to Eastern theology, Latin traditions have been dominated by legal, juridical and forensic categories. Eastern theology, on the contrary, understands the need for salvation in terms of deliverance from mortality and corruption for life everlasting. Union with God is the goal of the Christian life, even becoming "in-godded." The underlying anthropology⁸ is not necessarily more positive but, instead of operating mainly in guilt concepts, it looks upward, so to speak, to the image of God to be fulfilled in mortal human beings.⁹ The idea of divine-human cooperation in salvation is not only accepted but enthusiastically championed, although it is not understood as nullifying the role of grace. Prayer, asceticism, meditation, humble service and similar exercises are recommended for the attainment of this noble goal. The notion of merit, though, is foreign to the Eastern tradition. Redemption has as its immediate aim our salvation from sin, but salvation will have its ultimate realization in the age to come in our union with God, the deification of the created beings whom Christ ransomed. In general, their attitude toward grace and free will is less reserved than their Western counterparts. In the East, the question of free will has never had the urgency which it assumed in the West from the time of

⁵Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought*, p. 85.

⁶Athanasius, *A Serap.* 1.31.

⁷Basil *Letter* 38, 4.

⁸See John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), chap. 11.

⁹See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 161-63.

Augustine onward. The Eastern tradition never separates grace and human freedom. Therefore, the charge of Pelagianism (that grace is a reward for the merit of the human will) is not fair. It is not a question of merit, but of cooperation, of a synergy of the two wills, divine and human. Grace is a presence of God within us that demands constant effort on our part.¹⁰

Church: A Lived Experience

According to Bishop Kallistos, Eastern Orthodox theology has not yet redeemed its promise of creating a full-scale theology of the church, even though many observers would say that the doctrine of the church is one of the distinctive strengths of that tradition. This lack of a systematic treatment of the church has been acknowledged by such great theologians of the East as P. Evdokimov, who contended that the church is simply assumed, since it is a lived experience, and V. Florovsky, to whom ecclesiology is still a chapter in Christology.¹¹

Even though strict definitions are still lacking—one may even ask if those will ever appear in a theology that is characterized by the principle of apopathicism¹²—several characteristics of Eastern ecclesiology can be mentioned: First, the church is seen as the image of the Trinity.¹³ Just as each person is made according to the image of the Trinity, so the church as a whole is an icon of the Trinity, “reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity.”¹⁴ Not only is the church as such the image of the Trinity, but in Eastern thinking even other social institutions may be as well: the family, the school, the workshop, the parish, the church universal.¹⁵

The church as the image of the Trinity represents the principle of identity and mutuality simultaneously:

¹⁰See, for example, Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), pp. 196-97. For a recent discussion, see Grigorios Larentzakis, “Die Teilnahme am trinitarischen Leben: Die Bedeutung der Pneumatologie für die Ökumene heute,” in *Der Heilige Geist: Ökumenische und reformatorische Untersuchungen* (Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg; Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1995), pp. 225-44.

¹¹Bishop Kallistos, “Incarnation and the Church,” unpublished lecture, International Charismatic Consultation on World Evangelization (ICCOWE), Prague, Czech Republic, August 23-27, 2000.

¹²The term *apopathic* means doing theology in a way that does not necessarily have the explicit purpose of defining its objects positively but rather comes to a preliminary understanding by negation. The opposite term is *katapathic*, the general orientation of much of Western theology.

¹³See further Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 176-77.

¹⁴Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 240.

¹⁵Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), p. 39.

In the Trinity the three are one God, yet each is fully personal; in the Church a multitude of human persons is united in one, yet each preserves her or his personal diversity unimpaired. The mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is paralleled by the coinherence of the members of the Church.¹⁶

This principle of “unity in diversity” means that just as each person of the Trinity is autonomous, so the church is made up of a number of independent, yet related autocephalous churches. On the other hand, just as in the Trinity the persons are equal, so in the church no one bishop can claim to wield absolute power over all the rest.

There is also a vivid consciousness of community: “We know that when any of us falls, he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He is saved in the Church, as a member of it and in union with all its other members.”¹⁷ The “spiritual way,” as the journey of the Christian is often called, presupposes that individuals come together and join in community. The journey is undertaken in fellowship with others, not in isolation. The Orthodox tradition is intensely conscious of the ecclesial character of all true Christians.¹⁸

At the very core of Orthodox theology in general and ecclesiology in particular is the relation of humanity to creation as whole, the cosmos. The church is described in cosmological terms. In this understanding the church is the center of the universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined. Eschatologically, at a given moment when the church has attained to the fullness of growth determined by the will of God, the external world, having used up its vital resources, will perish. The church is also necessary since all the conditions required for us to attain union with God (*theosis*, divinization, deification) are given in the church. It is in the church that human beings are restored to their original role as cocreators with God.¹⁹

Eucharistic Ecclesiology

At the heart of Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology stands the Eucharist. The Eucharist both represents the general principle of sacramentalism, common also to the Western Catholic traditions, and is the sacrament of primacy. Sacramentalism here means that God’s grace is both mediated and experienced by and through the sacraments of the church. It does not downplay the meaning of

¹⁶Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 240.

¹⁷This clause is attributed to G. Khomiakov in Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 239.

¹⁸See further Ware, *Orthodox Way*, pp. 107-8.

¹⁹Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 178.

faith, as is often depicted in Protestant caricatures of sacramentalism, but rather brings faith into focus. It is through faith that sacraments are received, even though the sacraments also give birth to faith.

In the church and through the sacraments human nature enters into union with the divine nature. Human nature becomes consubstantial with the deified humanity, united with the person of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This union is fulfilled in the sacramental life.²⁰

One may ask, "What is the church for?" The biblical answer is to be found, for example, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, which speaks of the partaking of the bread and wine at the Eucharist and implies that the church is to bear witness to salvation in Christ—not only "telling" but also "doing" in remembrance of Christ. This is the function of the Eucharist. Therefore, the basic ecclesiological rule that goes back to the fathers says, wherever the Eucharist is, there is the church. Or, the church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the church. Eastern theologians point to the fact that in Paul talk about the Eucharist is not only analogical but causal ("therefore" denotes causality).²¹

Several implications follow: *ekklesia*, the church, is not just any kind of assembly but God's people gathered for Eucharist. The bishop is one who watches over rather than simply administers the celebration. This kind of Eucharist gathering can only be a local gathering, and therefore in every celebration the whole Christ is present. The important ecclesiastical corollary overall is that every local church is a true church.

Local churches are then on the one hand independent of each other, but on the other hand united in terms of their identity. Some recent Orthodox ecclesialogists, just as John Zizioulas, have drawn attention to the fact that the older Eucharistic ecclesiology may easily turn into an overemphasis on the local church, and thus compromise the equally important principle of collegiality and communion. Bishop Kallistos reminds us that we should not isolate the Eucharist from the context of unity.²²

The Eucharist also stands at the center of Eastern Orthodox liturgy and worship. In a sense, church life is "liturgy after liturgy," even in its mission. The earthly liturgy is a foretaste and icon of the heavenly worship when the

²⁰Ibid., pp. 181-82.

²¹Kallistos Ware, "Incarnation and Church," paper presented at ICCOWE, Prague, August 23-27, 2000.

²²Ibid.

church has finished its course and the members have reached the fulfillment of the earthly sojourn, that is, have become deified.²³

Sobornost

One of the catchwords in the Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology, deriving from Russia, is *soborny*, which has the double meaning of “catholic” and “conciliar.” Its theological usage goes back to Alexis Khomiakov²⁴ but is nowadays widely used by many. The term has several facets.²⁵ It refers to the organic unity of the church, not by negating individuals but by employing them. Each member contributes to the common activity of the church, and each member does his or her work with the help of others. So individuality is preserved not extinguished. Even though Orthodox ecclesiology is hierarchical in the sense that the bishop is representative of and appointed by God to guide the church,²⁶ there is also the equality of all members; all members are equal in honor.

The principle of *sobornost* also denotes the idea that church institutions are expressions of unity. The Spirit creates the structures of the church and they can never be independent of the Spirit. Consequently, all believers are interrelated, and all believers are needed to guarantee unity.

Orthodox ecclesiology holds a firm belief that the church is one. “Its unity follows from the unity of God.”²⁷ According to Bishop Kallistos, if we take seriously the bond between God and his church, then we must inevitably think of the church as one, even as God is one. Since Orthodox theology refrains from separating the “invisible” and “visible” church, oneness is not relegated to something unseen. The church of God on earth is one. It is a bold claim, but still legitimate from the Orthodox point of view, the view that it believes itself to be that one visible church.²⁸

Pneumatological Ecclesiology

The general pneumatological orientation of the Eastern tradition carries over

²³See further Ware, *Orthodox Church*, chaps. 13 and 14.

²⁴See, for example, “The Church Is One,” in *Russia and the English Church*, ed. W. J. Birkbeck (London: SPCK, 1895).

²⁵I am indebted to Miroslav Volf, “ST503 Systematic Theology III: Ecclesiology and Eschatology,” unpublished class notes (Pasadena, Calif.: Fuller Theological Seminary, summer 1988).

²⁶For an exposition of what *hierarchical* means in Orthodox ecclesiology, see, e.g., Ware, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 248-49.

²⁷Khomiakov, “The Church Is One,” section 1.

²⁸Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 246.

to the doctrine of the church. For instance, the Eastern fathers attribute to the Spirit all the multiplicity of names that can be attributed to grace,²⁹ as is evident, for example, in Gregory Nazianzen and Basil. They freely speak about the Holy Spirit as effecting deification, perfection, adoption and sanctification.³⁰ Therefore, as the Spirit inspires and empowers the process of deification, the role of the Spirit in the church comes into focus.

Ecclesiologies have been traditionally built on either of the two classical rules, that of Ignatius of Antioch or of Irenaeus. Ignatius suggested the ecclesiality of the church could be secured by reference to Christ's presence: "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church."³¹ According to Irenaeus, what is decisive is the presence of the Spirit of God: "Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and all grace."³² It is understandable that very soon, especially in the East, the question arose as to the role of the Spirit in the building of the church. The answer was obvious: Christology and pneumatology must be seen as simultaneous rather than exclusive. And it is noteworthy that this finding was not so much due to sophisticated theological analysis—in fact, as is well known, the fathers did not have ecclesiology as a separate theological *locus* (topic)³³—but rather it came through their lived experience in the church. Irenaeus, Athanasius and others were pastors and bishops in the church. They realized that God works in the world using "both of his hands," as Irenaeus put it.³⁴

Consequently, in the Eastern Orthodox understanding, the church is founded on a twofold divine economy: the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁵ Eastern theologians speak about the church as the body of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ Significantly enough, Basil contended that "Christ comes, the Spirit goes before. He is present in the flesh, and the Spirit is inseparable from him."³⁷ This is a noteworthy theological statement since it

²⁹For a careful analysis of the relation between grace and the Holy Spirit in Latin theology, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 3:197-200.

³⁰For a sample of representative texts, see Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 163-66.

³¹Ignatius *Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2.

³²Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 3.24.1.

³³For details, see Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:21-26.

³⁴Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 4.4; for a detailed discussion, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik*, vol. 3, *Der Geist der Wahrheit* (Basel: Johannes Verlag, 1987), p. 151.

³⁵Vladimir Lossky, "Concerning the Third Mark of the Church: Catholicity," in *The Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), pp. 177-78.

³⁶Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 157, 174.

³⁷*De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 19, 49.

anchors the work of Christ in the church in the economy of the Spirit. Not only that, but, as already mentioned, there is also a trinitarian outlook. The Eastern Church teaches that that which is common to the Father and the Son is the divinity that the Holy Spirit communicates to humans within the church, making them partakers of the divine nature.³⁸ So deification means participation in the life of the triune God.

The mutual relation between the Son and Spirit is manifested in that just as the Son comes down to earth and accomplishes his work through the Spirit, so also the Spirit comes into the world, being sent by the Son (Jn 15:26). The work of the Spirit is not subordinate to the work of the Son, nor is Pentecost a continuation of the Incarnation, but rather its sequel, its result.³⁹

As a result of the mutual work of the Son and the Spirit, catholicity⁴⁰ of the church means two things: the unity of the church (as a result of its being the body of Christ) and the diversity of the church (as a result of its being the fullness of the Spirit).⁴¹ The Holy Spirit who rests upon Christ, the "Anointed One," communicates himself to each member of this body, creating, so to speak, many christs, the anointed ones.⁴²

The christological aspect creates the objective and unchangeable features of the church, while as a result of the pneumatological aspect there is a subjective side of the church. In other words, the christological aspect guarantees stability while its pneumatological aspect gives the church a dynamic character.⁴³

Eastern pneumatological ecclesiology, ideally, balances hierarchy and charisms:

But the Church is not only hierarchical, it is Charismatic and Pentecostal. "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying" (1 Thessalonians 5, 19-20). The Holy Spirit is poured out upon all God's people. . . . In the Apostolic Church, besides the institutional ministry conferred by the laying on of hands, there were

³⁸Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 162.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 158-59.

⁴⁰For the understanding of catholicity in the Eastern tradition, see Lossky, "Third Mark of the Church," pp. 169-80.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 178-79; Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, pp. 174-75; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 176. "This is the unfathomable mystery of the Church, the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; one in Christ, multiple through the Spirit, a single human nature in the hypostasis of Christ, many human hypostases in the grace of the Holy Spirit" (Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 183, emphases in the text). The classical biblical locus of this twofold nature of the church according to Eastern theology is Eph 1:23: "the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

⁴²Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 174; see also p. 166.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 190-92.

other *charismata* or gifts conferred directly by the Spirit: Paul mentions “gifts of healing,” the working of miracles, “speaking with tongues, and the like” (1 Corinthians 12, 28-30). In the Church of later days, these Charismatic ministries have been less in evidence, but they have never been wholly extinguished.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Ware, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 249-50; see also pp. 240, 243.

The Church as the People of God

ROMAN CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY

The Church as the "Continued Incarnation"

The Roman Catholic Church is currently the world's largest Christian body, claiming the membership of about half of all Christians. Catholic theology represents, together with the Eastern Orthodox Church, the growth of tradition over two millennia. Therefore, whatever general characterizations can be made concerning Catholic theology in general and ecclesiology in particular, they are no more than generalizations. Furthermore, one has to take into account the enormous changes brought about as a result of the Second Vatican Council, one of the most decisive councils ever. That Catholic theology builds on tradition does not mean a repetition of something already said but rather a Spirit-guided reappropriation and often critical reshaping of ancient dogmas. All these factors, and the fact that this church literally extends to all corners of the earth with innumerable contextual varieties of church life, should make one cautious about attempting to discern the leading developments in Catholic ecclesiology.

The immediate roots of current Catholic ecclesiology go back to the nineteenth century with definitions of Vatican I and an oscillation between placing emphasis on either Christ or the Spirit as the point of departure for the doctrine of the church. One of the Catholic theologians of the past, Jean Rigal, defined the church as oppressive, dogmatic, pyramidal, lifeless and remote from modern realities. Often in the past, the Catholic Church did not welcome its critics: Antonio Rosmini wrote in 1832 (and published in 1846) his *The Five Wounds of the Church*; his work was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1849. Vatican I (1871) championed a predominantly hierarchical view of the church. The council became famous especially for the way it defined papal infallibility. The pope is infallible in relation to morality and religion when he teaches *ex cathedra* (literally: from the chair), in other words, with the intent to give a definite doctrinal or moral pronouncement meant

for the whole church. The power of the pope is universal, *ordinaria* ("ordinary," it exists by virtue of the office) and immediate, in that it can be used without any other media.

J. Adams Möhler is known as the originator of the influential view of the church as the continuation of the incarnation of Christ. Möhler, however, first wrote an ecclesiology, *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism* (1825), which clearly opted for a Spirit-centered ecclesiology.

In that work, he argued for the importance of the Spirit as the guiding principle of the doctrine of the church. Soon, however, with the rest of the Catholic ecclesiologists of that time, he came to view the church as the continued incarnation. According to B. E. Hinze, the "twentieth-century renewal of pneumatology in Catholic ecclesiology could be constructed in part as an attempt to reaffirm Möhler's early Spirit-centered approach and to reintegrate it with his later incarnational ecclesiology within a fully developed trinitarian framework."

A little later, M. J. Scheeben (d. 1888) wanted to develop Möhler's neglected pneumatological dimension in the church and spoke about the church as a "kind of incarnation of the Holy Spirit." Even though the intention of this endeavor has to be welcomed, the approach is a problematic way of describing the Spirit: it is totally foreign to the New Testament and its content is unclear. In the New Testament, the church is never called the "body of the Spirit," but rather the body of Christ.

Characteristic of the earlier Catholic ecclesiology is the papal encyclical *Divinum illud munus* by Leo XIII (1897), according to which Christ is the head and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the church. The problem with this approach is that it makes the church and its structures absolute, divine in its origin, while the only task of the Spirit is to "animate" the already existing ecclesiastical apparatus. Not much better ecclesologically was the message of another encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, in 1943. It essentially reaffirmed the basic teaching of its predecessor, but it still contains one of the most significant theologies of the Spirit for the twentieth-century Catholic Church. Yves Congar criticizes it for still viewing the church in institutional terms.¹ Congar also argues that the Catholic theology created several sorts of "substitutes" for the Holy Spirit, such as the Eucharist, the pope and Mary.²

Several noted theologians, such as Hans Küng, Heribert Mühlen and Karl

¹Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 1:154.

²Ibid., 1:160-64.

Rahner, played a crucial role in initiating a fuller recovery of the early patristic roots of the Catholic doctrine of the church on the eve of Vatican II and afterward. For example, Mühlen,³ while criticizing the view of the church as a continued Incarnation, argued that the church should be seen as a continuation of Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit in his baptism. In Mühlen's estimation attention to the identity of the Holy Spirit in the anointing of Jesus and of Christians helps to avoid hierarchical (in Mühlen's terminology, "naturalistic") and mystical tendencies, both represented in precouncil ecclesiologies.

The Ecclesiology of Lumen Gentium

One of the most significant ecclesiological documents in ecclesiology is *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II. Its creative, often tension-filled approach to the ancient doctrine of the church marks a watershed not only in Catholic theology but also in ecumenical theology of the church.

Perhaps the most important development of Vatican II was the replacement of the old *societas perfecta*, institutional-hierarchic ecclesiology, with the dynamic "people of God" notion in which the church is seen first of all as a pilgrim people on the way to the heavenly city. The view of the church as a perfect society had enjoyed widespread support from the time of the Counter Reformation through the first half of the twentieth century.⁴

Even the structure of the document gives clues to its purpose: rather than beginning with a chapter on hierarchy, which was the outline of the draft, the final version placed the chapter on the People of God at the beginning of the document, just after the opening chapter, "The Mystery of the Church," to be followed by the treatment of hierarchy and laity. Then there is a call to holiness to the whole church, not only to the religious. The document ends with a profound vision of the "Pilgrim church." Finally, a chapter on Mary, "Our Lady," was attached to the document on the doctrine of the church, since that is the proper context for honoring the First Lady of the Church.

Instead of beginning with a description of the church as the perfect society, the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* notes the reflection of the inner life of the

³Mühlen's pneumatological ecclesiology is developed in his two earlier works: *Una Mystica Persona: Die Kirche als das Mysterium der Heilsgeschichtlichen Identität des heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen: Eine Person in Vielen Personen*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1968), and *Der Heilige Geist as Person: In der Trinität bei der Inkarnation und Im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Verlag Aschendorff, 1969).

⁴*Lumen Gentium* 4. Note that the reference numbers following Vatican II documents refer to paragraph numbers.

trine God within the church itself. Borrowing a phrase from Saint Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), the council states, "Hence the universal church is seen to be a 'people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'" Along with this trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the church, the Second Vatican Council came to speak of the church as a "mystery" and sacrament. The opening section of *Lumen Gentium* states, "The Church in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all human beings."⁵ This notion is far removed from the older views of the church, which tended to understand it first of all as a hierarchical institution. This understanding of the church as sacrament has also enlarged the notion of (traditional) sacraments, and consequently opened the way for less polemical and ecumenically more fruitful thinking about sacramental celebration and sacramental theology.⁶

Whereas in *Vehementer Nos* by Pius X (1906) the church was described as "an unequal society" composed of two categories of persons, "the pastors and the flock" (and the flock having "no other duty but to allow itself to be led and to follow its pastors as a docile flock"), *Lumen Gentium* rehabilitates the whole people of God as the church. Every local gathering of the church, under the bishops and pastors, is a legitimate church. There is a lot of ecumenical potential in the way a recent Roman Catholic theology textbook invests the local church with the fullness of meaning, based on the ancient formula "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" church:

The church is one because of the indwelling of the one Holy Spirit in all the baptized; it is holy because it is set apart by God's graciousness for the reception of a mysterious love of predilection; it is catholic in the original sense of the word, meaning that it is whole and entire, possessing all the parts needed to make it integral; and it is apostolic because it remains in continuity in essentials with the original witnessing of the first-century apostles. . . . Catholics are often inclined to apply these descriptive characteristics only to the worldwide, universal church, yet they are beginning to learn from the eastern Orthodox churches and others that these characteristic are meant to apply just as truly to the local church.⁷

⁵*Lumen Gentium* 1.

⁶R. A. Duffy, "Sacraments in General," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. F. S. Fiorenza and J. P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 203-7.

⁷Michael Fahey, "Church," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. F. S. Fiorenza and J. P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 43.

The Church as Communion

According to Avery Dulles one of the models of the church is the church as “mystical communion.”⁸ Taking his point of departure from both sociological theory and Protestant ecclesiologies such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *The Communion of Saints*, which describes the essence of community as “the complete self-forgetfulness of love,”⁹ and Emil Brunner’s *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, which describes the church as “a pure communion of persons,”¹⁰ Dulles argues that the Catholic ecclesiology of communion goes back to the New Testament witness and was never abandoned, even though at times other models towered over it.

Communion language goes back to the early church in Acts 2: “So, if one is true to the dynamics of Acts, one would add immediately after the imparting of the Spirit, *koinonia* / communion, i.e., community formation together with its Eucharistic expression. The language of Luke is communion language.”¹¹ In its basic meaning, the term *koinonia* / *communion* denotes “a sharing in one reality held in common.”¹² Synonyms for *koinonia* are sharing, participation, community, communion. Early patristic development incorporated other biblical communion texts in order to lay bare the inner source of the church’s life. These display a pronounced trinitarian dimension: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship [*koinonia*] of the Spirit be with you” (2 Cor 13:13; see Phil 2:1). The basic communion themes, especially the Eucharistic one, constituted the ecclesiological supposition “for most, if not all, of the earliest councils,”¹³ and remained a force as an ecclesiological model for about the first thousand years.¹⁴ *Lumen Gentium* defines the essence of communion ecclesiology neatly when it states that God “has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.”¹⁵

The communion in the church is based on the communion among the mem-

⁸ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), chap. 3.

⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 123.

¹⁰ Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), p. 17.

¹¹ Kilian McDonnell, “Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit: Tertullian and the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 674.

¹² McDonnell, “Communion Ecclesiology,” p. 674.

¹³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Church and Personhood* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), p. 156.

¹⁴ McDonnell, “Communion Ecclesiology,” p. 676.

¹⁵ *Lumen Gentium* 9.

bers of the Trinity. The trinitarian communion of the persons of the Trinity is the highest expression of unity for Christians, the “deepest meaning of *koinonia*”: “This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ with the Holy Spirit, energizing its various functions. The highest example and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶

Catholic theology in general and ecclesiology in particular are sacramental, not unlike Orthodox. Therefore, the communion is sacramental in nature. For Roman Catholics, primary in the “sharing in holy things,” *communio in sanctis*, are baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, as constitutive of the church. For Catholics there is a double relationship between the sacraments and the communion of the church. On the one hand, the sacraments mediate the communion of life with God, and thus they are constitutive of the church. On the other hand, the sacraments are acts of the church inasmuch as it is a communion. The sacraments are at the starting point of the church as a communion.¹⁷ Since baptism and the Eucharist have a foundational role in building up the church as a communion, they simultaneously provide a structural form for the church. Baptism is the sacrament that introduces the faithful into the *koinonia* (1 Cor 12:13). Thus baptism gives to the church its body. Confirmation, in conjunction with baptism (the two cannot be theologically separated), also contributes to the foundation of church order. Moreover, baptism, which already unites the body of Christ, only reaches its full aim by common participation in the Eucharist, through which the unity of the church becomes effective (1 Cor 12:27). Legrand argues that the oldest reference to the Eucharist, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, clearly expresses the causal subordination of the church’s ecclesial body to its eucharistic body.¹⁸ “The assertion that *before* making the eucharist the Church is made by the eucharist is of capital importance in Catholic theology.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Catholic theology also sees ordination as in the service of church communion, although ordination is not put on the same level as baptism and the Eucharist. Legrand summarizes the Catholic view of the relationship between *koinonia* and the sacraments: “According to Catholic ecclesiology

¹⁶*Unitatis Redintegratio* 2; see also the opening paragraphs of *Lumen Gentium* with its trinitarian structure.

¹⁷Harvey Legrand, “Koinonia, Church and Sacraments,” The Catholic Position Paper for the International Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal Churches, Venice, Italy, August 1-7, 1987 (unpublished), pp. 6-14.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 9 (emphasis his).

one can and one must say that the sacraments make the church inasmuch as they are operated by Christ, celebrated in faith and in the communion of the Holy Spirit."²⁰

The Spirit and the Structures of the Church

On the eve of Vatican II, Karl Rahner, one of the main architects of the council, wrote a passionate appeal for the openness to the Spirit, titled "Do Not Stifle the Spirit,"²¹ in which he spoke about the great potentialities and challenges facing the church. He issued a serious warning: the Spirit who blows everywhere "can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church's official life, her principles, sacramental system and teaching."²² He was very concerned about the Charismatic element of the church:

It is a situation by a spirit which has been rather too hasty and too uncompromising in taking the dogmatic definition of the primacy of the pope in the Church as the bond of unity and the guarantee of truth, this attitude objectifying itself in a not inconsiderable degree of centralization of government in an ecclesiastical bureaucracy at Rome.²³

A couple of years later, while the Council was still going on, he published another appeal for the Charismatic in the church, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*.²⁴ Rahner issued a powerful call for the Charismatic structure of the church by reminding us that the Holy Spirit is promised and given first and foremost to ecclesiastical ministry, not to suppress the free flow of the Spirit but to make room for it.²⁵ The church should be until the end the "Church of the abiding Spirit."²⁶

Rahner suggested that one must learn to perceive charismata when they first appear.²⁷ Rather than canonize Charismatic persons after their death,

it is almost of greater importance to perceive such gifts of the Spirit on their first appearance, so that they may be furthered and not choked by the incomprehension and intellectual laziness, if not ill-will and hatred, of those around them, ecclesiastics included. . . . But the Charismatic is essentially new and always

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Karl Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," in *Theological Investigations VII* (New York: Herder, 1971), pp. 72-87.

²²Ibid., p. 75.

²³Ibid., p. 76.

²⁴Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964).

²⁵Ibid., pp. 42, 44-45.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 47-48.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 82-83.

surprising. To be sure it also stands in inner though hidden continuity with what came earlier in the Church. . . . Yet it is new and incalculable, and it is not immediately evident at first sight that everything is as it was in the enduring totality of the Church. . . . And so the Charismatic feature, when it is new, and one might almost say it is only Charismatic if it is so, has something shocking about it.²⁸

According to Rahner, the Spirit is constitutive of the church in a way more basic than its institutional structure.²⁹ Where there is one-sided emphasis on Christology, church structures tend to become dominating (this has also been the result of the older Catholic view of church as continued incarnation). The Charismatic element “does not merely stand in a dialectical relationship to the institutional factor as its opposite pole, existing on the same plane. Rather it is the first and the most ultimate among the formal characteristics inherent in the very nature of the Church as such.”³⁰ Rahner also says that the church is primarily the “historical concretization of the Charismatic as brought about by the Spirit of Christ.”³¹ And it is clear that in Rahner’s view the term *Charismatic* does not refer to any specific group in the church but to the life and ministry of all believers. If the church is founded in the sovereign action of the Spirit, then the church has to be understood as an “open system.”³² It means that the church cannot be understood or defined from a point within the church itself but rather from outside, from the Spirit of God.³³

The practical results of Rahner’s view of the Charismatic structure of the church are obvious. First, there is an openness to the promptings of the Spirit: “Do Not Stifle the Spirit.” Second, the Spirit has primacy over the structures and offices of the church, even if the structures in themselves are expressive of the Spirit (Rahner never champions individualism). Third, legitimate plurality results from the sovereign action of the Spirit.³⁴

Charisms in the Service of the Church

Vatican II was instrumental in the new Catholic theological and ecclesiological

²⁸Ibid., pp. 82-83.

²⁹Rahner, “Observations of the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church,” in *Theological Investigations XII* (New York: Seabury, 1974), p. 97.

³⁰Ibid., p. 97.

³¹Ibid., p. 86.

³²Ibid., p. 88.

³³See John R. Sachs, “‘Do Not Stifle the Spirit’: Karl Rahner, the Legacy of Vatican II, and Its Urgency for Theology Today,” in *Catholic Theological Society Proceedings* 51 (1996): 30.

³⁴See Rahner, “Heresies in the Church Today?” in *Theological Investigations XII* (New York: Seabury, 1974), pp. 117-41.

renaissance. Vatican II, more so than any previous council, also paid attention to the role of the Spirit in the church.³⁵ Pope John XXIII, when formally announcing the Council, wrote, "This getting together of all the bishops of the Church should be like a new Pentecost."³⁶ This council could be called the "Council of the Holy Spirit" for, as Pope Paul VI pointed out, there are 258 references to the Holy Spirit in the pages of the Council documents.³⁷ And since the Council, the popes have urged theologians and lay people alike to revive their interest in the Spirit.³⁸

As already mentioned, *Lumen Gentium* opens up with a trinitarian outlook in which pneumatology has its own secure place in ecclesiology. This approach widens the earlier christological concentration of traditional doctrines of the church. The church is the work of the Spirit, who makes believers one in the unity of the triune God.³⁹ The document insists that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God not only through the sacraments and church ministries, but also through special charisms bestowed freely on all the faithful in a variety of ways. Believers have "the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of humankind and for the upbuilding of the Church."⁴⁰

The explicit emphasis upon the pneumatic nature of the church, including the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, was secured in the Council by Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, who played such a critical role in assuring the college of bishops of the importance of the Holy Spirit and of spiritual gifts to the future of the Roman Church.⁴¹ The Catholic systematician Michael A. Fahey states that "another way that the church is described in the perspective of the Second Vatican Council is as a community of charisms."⁴² In this understanding the church is seen as the Body of Christ "created, ordered, and sustained

³⁵Two basic sources that summarize neatly the pneumatological perspectives of Vatican II are Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Creator Spirit: Explorations in Theology*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993): 245-67; and Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, pp. 167-73.

³⁶Germain Marc'hadour, "The Holy Spirit over the New World: II," *The Clergy Review* 59, no. 4 (1974): 247.

³⁷Marc'hadour, "The Holy Spirit," p. 248. See also E. E. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1971), p. 184.

³⁸For papal documents and evaluations of their significance, see Kilian McDonnell, *Open the Windows: The Popes and Charismatic Renewal* (South Bend, Ind.: Greenlawn Press, 1989).

³⁹*Lumen Gentium* 4; see also Sachs, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3.

⁴¹Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism*, vol. 1, *Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums* 44 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978), p. 25.

⁴²Michael Fahey, "Church," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2, ed. F. S. Fiorenza and J. P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 39.

by the Charismatic inspirations of the Breath of the risen Jesus."⁴³ Since the Holy Spirit pervades the church and accomplishes a profound communion among the believers, every member of the church is meant to be permeated with Christ.⁴⁴ "Not only clergy but also lay people are urged to live every dimension of their existence, including married and family life, their daily tasks and recreation in the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵ Vatican II also presents a firm faith that the "body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief."⁴⁶

Several Vatican II documents (especially *Lumen Gentium* but also others)⁴⁷ establish the existence and contribution of charisms under the supervision of the shepherds of the church. Vatican II emphasized repeatedly the Spirit's sovereign freedom in dispensing the charisms.⁴⁸ The council insisted on the universal availability of the charisms: the Spirit calls all Christians, ordained and lay alike, to some form of Charismatic ministry.⁴⁹ *Lumen Gentium* freely accepts both kinds of gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, but adds a helpful corrective:

Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired, nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labors are to be presumptuously expected.⁵⁰

Along with ecclesiological rethinking, a reassessment of sacramental theology has also taken a pneumatological course with the idea of the church as the sacrament of the Spirit and sacraments consequently integrated with *epiclesis*, the prayer for the Spirit. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Ad Gentes Divinum*) in a special way emphasizes the role of the Spirit. Since the liturgy is the "summit" and source of the church's life, believers can grow most deeply in the life of the Spirit precisely through sacramental celebrations.⁵¹

⁴³Donald L. Gelpi, "The Theological Challenge of Charismatic Spirituality," *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14, no. 2 (1992): 187. He refers to the following Vatican II documents: *Lumen Gentium* 6, 32, 48, 50; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3.

⁴⁴*Lumen Gentium* 12; See also Mary Ann Fatula, *The Holy Spirit: Unbounded Gift of Joy* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 89.

⁴⁵*Lumen Gentium* 34; Fatula, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁶*Lumen Gentium* 12.

⁴⁷*Lumen Gentium* 12, 30; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 9.

⁴⁸*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3; *Ad Gentes Divinum* 23; *Lumen Gentium* 7.

⁴⁹*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3, 28, 30; *Lumen Gentium* 4.

⁵⁰*Lumen Gentium* 12.

⁵¹*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, p. 10.

By means of the invocation of the Spirit on the sacramental elements, earthly realities such as water and oil, bread and wine are transformed to mediate the Holy Spirit's presence and power. But the renewed liturgical rites stress, too, that the Holy Spirit is invoked also upon the Church community celebrating the sacraments, so that our own hearts and lives may be transformed as well.⁵²

The Jesuit theologian Donald Gelpi, though, criticizes his own church for not taking seriously the Charismatic and pneumatological teaching of the Second Vatican Council. He thinks that the responsibility to renew the church does not belong to the so-called Catholic Charismatic Movement, but it is precisely the burden of the whole church with its theologians and teachers to implement what was rediscovered in the Council.⁵³ He argues that the charisms play an indispensable role in the life of the church and they therefore cannot be confined to the first generation of Christians, as most Catholics before Vatican II were taught to believe.⁵⁴ Kilian McDonnell, OSB, said that "the charisms of the Spirit play an indispensable role in the life of the Church because they create the shared faith consciousness of the Christian community."⁵⁵

Ut Unum Sint: The Catholic Vision of Christian Unity

Ecumenically, a radically new perspective was launched with Vatican II, which brought a new appreciation of other churches and their contribution to the Christian testimony. It was admitted that the other churches carry with them saving function—although less full than that of Rome—and are transmitters of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ The old dogma *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("outside the church there is no salvation") no longer applied exclusively to the Roman Church; the new openness toward other churches came to be expressed by the slogan *Una sancta ecclesia subsistit in* ("One holy church subsists in [the Roman Church]").⁵⁷ *Lumen Gentium* stresses that the Catholic Church "recognizes that in many ways she is linked" with other Christian communities by a true union

⁵²Fatula, *Holy Spirit*, p. 90.

⁵³Gelpi, "Theological Challenge," pp. 188-89.

⁵⁴See Donald J. Gelpi, *Charism and Sacrament* (New York: Paulist, 1976), pp. 97-110 especially; *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 103-5.

⁵⁵Kilian McDonnell, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit: Tertullian and the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 671.

⁵⁶*Lumen Gentium* 15 describes in detail "the elements of sanctification and truth" that are present in other churches.

⁵⁷*Lumen Gentium* 8.

in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ Rahner expresses this beautifully, saying that in the Spirit “all of us ‘know’ something more simple, more true and more real than we can know or express at the level of our theological concepts.”⁵⁹

The most recent papal encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut unum sint* (“That They May Be One”),⁶⁰ leaves no doubt about the firm commitment to further Christian unity. John Paul II confesses, besides the doctrinal differences, the burden of long-standing misgivings inherited from the past, and of mutual misunderstandings and prejudices,⁶¹ as well as the weaknesses of his church in all of this.⁶² Speaking about the “inseparable sacrament of unity,”⁶³ he calls all Christians to do their utmost, not just for the unity of the church but also for the “unity of all divided humanity.”⁶⁴ He includes in this endeavor of realizing unity all “those who invoke the triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.”⁶⁵ Referring to the positive elements found in other churches that *Lumen Gentium* affirms, the pope writes that the Western and Eastern fathers have always believed that “in the Pentecost Event God has already manifested the Church in her eschatological reality.” This reality is something already given.⁶⁶ “Ecumenism is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow toward full communion in truth and charity.”⁶⁷ Each church has to ask itself honestly whether it is faithful to the apostolic tradition, that is, “whether they truly express in an adequate way all that the Holy Spirit has transmitted through the Apostles.”⁶⁸ In accordance with *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the pope reaffirms the primacy of “spiritual ecumenism” in terms of prayer and other forms of spirituality,⁶⁹ at the same time acknowledging that it does not do away with the importance of doctrine.⁷⁰ To demonstrate the de-

⁵⁸*Lumen Gentium* 15.

⁵⁹Rahner, “Some Problems in Contemporary Ecumenism,” in *Theological Investigations XIV* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), pp. 245-53 (quote on p. 251); see also his “Church, Churches, and Religions,” *Theological Investigations X* (New York: Herder, 1973), p. 42.

⁶⁰John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995). See also his speech at the Roman Coliseum on Good Friday 1994 with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, 1995, p. 88.

⁶¹John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 5.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 6.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 11, 13.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁹*Unitatis Redintegratio* 8.

⁷⁰John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 23-27; cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 6.

terminated commitment of the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenism, John Paul II argues that the movement promoting Christian unity “is not just some sort of ‘appendix’” added to the church’s life, but rather, “ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.”⁷¹ The Holy Spirit, who gives growth to the church down the centuries, is leading the church toward greater unity.⁷² However, for Pope John Paul II, as for his predecessors, there is no unity without the primacy of the bishop of Rome. This is clearly attested in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*.⁷³

⁷¹John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 20, emphasis in original.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 7.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 88-97.

The Church as Just and Sinful

LUTHERAN ECCLESIOLOGY

The Communion of Saints

Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:3). So children pray, "I believe in one holy Christian church." Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs [the papists] which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but consists of the Word of God and true faith.¹

Even though Luther's understanding of the church according to this delightful passage may appear simple and naive, it emerged out of a severe conflict and it displays marked tensions.² To understand Luther's view of the church—and Luther's theology in general—one has to take note of the fact that he had to fight on two fronts: on the one hand, against the Catholic position that, according to Luther's interpretation, regarded the church/hierarchy as absolute; on the other hand, against the Enthusiasts who appealed to the Spirit in their claim that they were the true Reformers.³

Luther stressed the noninstitutional character of the church; he disliked the word *Kirche* and preferred terms such as *Sammlung* (assembly) and *Gemeinde* (congregation). For him the church was in the first place a communion of saints, a gathering of believers. Luther maintained that the church as the "communion of saints," in accordance with the Apostles' Creed, is

¹Schmalcald Articles 3.12:2-3. All the Lutheran confessional writings can be found in *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959).

²Fittingly, Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson title their chapter on ecclesiology "Church-Body in Conflict" in *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 124.

³For Luther's harsh judgment against the Enthusiasts (*Schwärmerei*), see further Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 1:139-40.

“called together by the Holy Spirit.”⁴ In fact, his most famous definition of the church simply says that the church is “the gathering of all believers, in which the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered in accord with the gospel.”⁵ Consequently the church is not an institution for the supply of blessings as conceived in much of ecclesiological thinking of that time and especially of medieval times. In other words, the Lutheran Reformation had from the start an actualist understanding of the church: “the church is something *going on* in the world.”⁶

As such the church is both a hidden community and a visible fellowship. It is hidden since faith is “the conviction of the things not seen” (Heb 11:1) and visible because of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Luther wanted to retain this dialectic, since on the one hand, “God does not want the world to know when he sleeps with his bride” (the hidden), and on the other, “the assembly of the church is visible for the sake of the confession of faith” (the visible).

The Marks of the True Church

Luther’s shorthand for distinguishing the true church from a false one is the excerpt from the Augsburg Confession cited above: the church is “the gathering of all believers, in which the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered in accord with the gospel.”⁷ There are two formative elements, the Word and the sacraments. Luther’s theology is always centered on the gospel of Christ: “Where the word is, there is faith; and where faith is, there is the true church.”⁸ Significantly, Luther sometimes called the church “mouth house.” Not only was the gospel to be read but also preached. But the gospel does not work alone, it is associated with the sacraments. Together they point to and draw from Christ and his salvation.

Ecumenically, it is highly significant that the Word and sacraments are the only necessary marks of the church. Everything else—the structures, minis-

⁴Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 7.219; 30.190. *Weimarer Ausgabe* is the standard collection of the German/Latin original of Luther’s works. For the convenience of English readers, where available, I give references to the standard American edition of *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986). See further Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), pp. 294-323.

⁵*Augsburg Confession* 7:1.

⁶Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, pp. 130-31 (quote on p. 131).

⁷*Augsburg Confession* 7:1.

⁸*Luther’s Works* 39.xii.

try patterns, liturgy and so on—could vary from church to church, even within the Lutheran family, as it in fact does. For example, Scandinavian and many other European Lutheran churches are episcopal (they have a bishop), whereas most American ones have not had bishops.⁹ The unity of the church is given in the gospel event itself rather than in ecclesiastical uniformity: “It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.” Lutheran confessions make a careful and significant distinction between the “gospel” and “ceremonies”; the “church usages” are not necessary for salvation or for the ecclesiality of the church.

Since the church is not a human invention but a creation of the Word, it will remain, whatever may happen. One of the Luther’s most famous ecclesiological maxims states, “One holy Christian church must be and must remain forever.”¹⁰

The Community of Saints and Sinners

Luther’s soteriological maxim, the believer as *simul justus et peccator*, just and sinful simultaneously, also shapes his doctrine of the church. In fact, even the church is just and sinful at the same time. Sometimes the marks of the church—the “pure” preaching of the Word and the “right” administration of the sacraments—is interpreted in a sectarian way, as if Luther would make a distinction between the true and false church based on how the members or the leaders pass this test. Luther’s understanding is much more realistic; he takes it for granted that this church of Christ, the communion of saints, is also always a communion of sinners, until the Lord of the church will return. In other words, ecclesiastical purity is not a moral but a functional phenomenon (even though the first is not a matter of indifference either); as long as the church is guided by the Holy Spirit, mediated by the Word and sacrament, it will remain pure:

Creation is past and redemption is accomplished, but the Holy Spirit carries on his work unceasingly until the last day. For this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work. For he has not yet gathered together all his Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into his commu-

⁹As a result of Lutheran-Episcopalian dialogue, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America appointed a bishop to each of its synods in the late 1990s.

¹⁰*Augsburg Confession* 7:1.

nity through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins.¹¹

On earth, the church is incomplete, a “mixed body”: “In this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners are mixed in among the godly.”¹² Luther rejects the idea of a “pure church” as Donatism. Consequently, “Sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men.”¹³ Therefore, there is no way for humans to distinguish between the true followers of Christ and the wicked in the church:

If the church, which is truly the kingdom of Christ, is distinguished from the kingdom of the devil, it necessarily follows that since the wicked belong to the kingdom of the devil, they are not the church. In this life, nevertheless, because the kingdom of Christ has not yet been revealed, they are mingled with the church and hold office in the church.¹⁴

The Priesthood of All Believers

In addition to his doctrine of justification, Luther is best known for the rehabilitation of the idea of the priesthood of all believers. His view, built on the theology of the early church and the Middle Ages, about the sharing of all the baptized in the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ,¹⁵ appealed especially to 1 Peter 2:9. According to Luther, sharing in Jesus Christ on the basis of baptism includes also sharing in his priesthood.¹⁶ His entire understanding of the church as the community of saints can be described by the priesthood as the law of the church’s life. When Christ bears our burdens and intercedes for us with his righteousness, he does the work of a priest; mutual bearing of burdens and the taking of the other’s place in the church is also priestly activity. The inner life of the church is the priesthood of Christians for each other. The priesthood of Christians flows from the priesthood of Christ.¹⁷

¹¹*Large Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 2:61-62.

¹²*Augsburg Confession* 8:1.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 7:1-8:17.

¹⁵For details, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 3:373.

¹⁶Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 7.56-57.

¹⁷See, for example, Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 6.407, 564; 10.309; 17.6. See also Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 313-18.

See also Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 3:373.

Sharing in Christ's priesthood gives the right to come before God in prayer and teaching for others.¹⁸ The priesthood of all believers means for Luther primarily the right to preach the Word and administer absolution and discipline.¹⁹ The right to preach does not contradict the limitation of public preaching to those who have been called through the community.²⁰ The whole church is also authorized to proclaim the forgiveness of sins,²¹ the task that is in fact the community's glory.²²

According to Paul Althaus, Luther follows two lines of argumentation concerning the foundation of the office: one "from below" and one "from above."²³ On the one hand, all Christians are called to minister in Word and sacrament. But in order to avoid confusion, the community entrusts the public service to ordained people, who carry out this duty in the name of the church.²⁴ In this case, the difference between the one who occupies the office and the other members of the community lies purely on the level of service.²⁵

On the other hand, the fullness of the authority of the office is grounded in its institution by Christ, that is, the office derives directly from its institution by Christ without reference to the universal priesthood.²⁶ It has to be noted, though, that not even the latter nullifies the general priesthood of all believers.²⁷ The apparent contradiction between these two forms of ministry is solved by deriving the special (ordained) office from the universal. Luther distinguished the necessary exercise of the priestly office "between brother and brother" from the public administration of the ministry of the Word for the entire congregation.²⁸ The special office is necessary for the sake of order (1 Cor 14:40).²⁹ "Thus the only distinction between the ecclesiastical office of

¹⁸Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 7.25-26.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 7.57; 11.412.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 6.408; 11.412.

²¹*Ibid.*, 2.722.

²²*Ibid.*, 2.723. It is noteworthy how close Hans Küng comes to Luther's view in his *The Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 361-480.

²³Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 323-29; Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe (*Communion of the Saints: Nature and Structure of the Church*, trans. Patrick Madigan [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994], p. 141) follows Althaus.

²⁴Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 12.189; 50.633.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 6.657.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 50.647.

²⁷Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 324, 325.

²⁸Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 12.189. I follow here the interpretation of Althaus (*Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 324-25). The issue is debated among Lutheran experts; for the discussion, see Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 3:375-77.

²⁹Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 12.189.

the ministry and the universal priesthood is the public character of the official ministry of the Word and sacrament to the entire community.”³⁰ It is easy to see Luther’s main targets here: the Catholic idea of a special “priesthood” of ordained persons, and the special status by virtue of ordination of ordained persons. Both of these are denied by Luther.

The lasting contributions of the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers are obvious. First, it rehabilitates the New Testament usage of the term “priest”³¹ as referring not to individual ordained persons (as in the earlier Catholic understanding) but to the whole people of God as they fulfill the Christ-given mandate. Second, it abolishes the difference between ordained and nonordained in the sense of these two groups differing from each other ontologically (even if the difference of ministerial status still remains). Third, the Protestant view sought to legitimize the use of ordained ministry in a way that should not—at least in principle—lessen the importance of the rest of the people of God. In other words, the task of the ordained in the church was to help do what the rest of the church members were doing.

The Spirit, Word and Sacraments

In Luther’s view, the Spirit works in the church and in the believer’s life through the preached Word and the sacraments. This is perhaps the most characteristic of Luther’s ideas of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is indispensable for preparation for faith: “I believe that I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him, of my own reason or power but the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and upheld me in true faith.”³²

Two seemingly opposing tendencies are present in Luther’s understanding of the relationship between the Word, the Spirit and church. On the one hand, there is total dependence on the ministry of the Spirit, as the quote above clearly shows. On the other hand, the ministry of the Spirit is tied to the Word and the sacraments; the Spirit never works apart from these:

³⁰ Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 327.

³¹ I am well aware of the fact that the term *priest* in the New Testament occupies various nuances and the trajectory is quite complex. A general exegetical and theological consensus nowadays is that, in distinction to the Old Testament usage, the New Testament does not coincide with the (patristic and Medieval) understanding of “priest” as a sacramentally designated person in the church.

³² Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 30.1367-68.

Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe in him and take him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit. . . . For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, and outside it not one can come to the Lord Christ.³³

In other words, the Word and Spirit belong together: the church is not an invisible Platonic reality of *Schwärmerei* (Luther's pejorative term for the Enthusiasts of his time), nor an infallible unchanging institution of the pope. The Holy Spirit, mediated through the Word and sacrament, sanctifies and makes holy the believers.³⁴

In his insistence on the integral relation between the Spirit and the Word, Luther limits the phenomena of Pentecost (tongues, fire, wind) to the apostolic era: they refer to proper instruments of the Holy Spirit given to the church, namely the Word and sacraments, that is, the visible Word. The wind and fire symbolize the encouragement and zeal given to the apostles, and speaking in tongues symbolizes the gospel itself, preached in every tongue.³⁵

In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit is "clothed" in the Word and sacraments. This was Luther's insistence against the spiritualists, who in his view sought for an immediate access to grace apart from the Word and sacraments. According to Luther, this is the order set up by God himself with regard to the work of the Spirit. Against the "Heavenly Prophets" he differentiates two ways God approaches us: (1) the "outer" way, through preached Word and sacraments; and (2) the "inner" way, through the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Both ways are needed, but the outer is primary; the inner is a function of the outer, not vice versa. God does not give his Spirit apart from the preparing work of the Word and sacraments.

Luther argues that in the Bible nobody is given the Spirit without mediation. In this sense, the outer Word for him has a sacramental nature. However, this does not mean domesticating the work of the Spirit exclusively to the outer Word, insofar as the Spirit has already come to live inside the person. As an example, he mentions a special kind of prayer wrought by the Spirit that causes human words to cease. Furthermore, some spiritual gifts, such as healing, were a normal part of spiritual life in Luther's time.

³³Large Catechism 2:38, 45.

³⁴See further Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, p. 125.

³⁵Here one should note the decisive role Luther played in the translation of the Bible to make it available to every Christian in his or her own language.

The Christian as Christ to the Neighbor

All works except for faith have to be directed to the neighbor. For God does not require of us any works with regard to himself, only faith through Christ. That is more than enough for him; that is the right way to give honor to God as God, who is gracious, merciful, wise and truthful. Thereafter, think nothing else than that you do to your neighbor as Christ has done to you. Let all your work and all your life be turned to your neighbor. Seek the poor, sick, and all kinds of wretched people; render your help to those; surrender your life in various kinds of exercises. Let those who really need you enjoy you, insofar that is possible with regard to your body, possessions, and honor.³⁶

Martin Luther is usually looked upon as the theologian of justification by *faith*, the doctrine that settles our relationship to God; that he was also a theologian of *love*, both divine and human, is often neglected. His distinctive understanding of the nature of God's love and the power of the love poured out into the believer's heart as a result of Christ's real presence in the Christian offers an exciting perspective on human relationships and neighbor love.³⁷ It also shapes radically his view of the church. The church becomes a place where Christians are given a chance to exercise God-like love, inspired by the Christ living in the heart of the believer through the Holy Spirit.

To gain a perspective on the importance of neighbor love in Luther's theology in general and in his view of the church in particular, we should note his distinctive understanding of two kinds of love, namely human love and God's love. Human love is oriented toward objects that are inherently good—self-love defines the content and the object of the love. Men and women love something that they believe they can enjoy.³⁸ God loves in a way opposite to human love: "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing

³⁶Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 10:1.2, 168 (*Advent Postil*, 1522; my translation).

³⁷Research on ecumenical implications of Luther's theology conducted by the scholars at the Department of Systematic Theology of the University of Helsinki under the mentorship of Professor Tuomo Mannermaa since about the mid-1970s has opened up a new perspective on Luther's theology. A major study on Luther's understanding of neighborly love is Antti Raunio, *Die Summe des christlichen Lebens: Die 'Goldene Regel' als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510 bis 1527*, Systemaattisen teologian laitoksen julkaisu 13 (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 1993); the book will be published in German by Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz. A brief summary in English can be found in Mannermaa, "Why is Luther so Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 1-20.

³⁸See further Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 77-83.

to it. . . . Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good.”³⁹ Luther sometimes calls God’s love *amor crucis*: “This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.”⁴⁰

We can certainly do nothing for our salvation, but our neighbors need our work, that is, our love: “Every man is created and born for the sake of others.”⁴¹

For if I do not use everything that I have to serve my neighbor, I rob him of what I owe him according to God’s will. A Christian, then, becomes a ‘work of Christ,’ and even more a ‘Christ’ to the neighbor; the Christian does what Christ does. The Christian identifies with the suffering of his/her neighbor.⁴²

Christ is the subject of good works, since Christ lives in the believer and makes the believer to do the works Christ did. Justification for Luther means primarily participation in God through the indwelling of Christ in the heart through the Spirit. It is not only forgiveness of sins, but a real participation in God, in God’s characteristics such as goodness, wisdom and truthfulness. Luther even expresses this truth by saying that God in fact becomes truthful, good and just in the person when God himself makes the person truthful, good and just. Never is there reason to boast, however, since even the presence of Christ and its consequences are always hidden in the Christian.

Out of this emphasis on neighborly love grows Luther’s understanding of the church as “hospital to the sick.”

The Church as a Hospital for the Incurably Sick

Since Christians are living in the world, they are involved with people who are both sinful and less than perfect; therefore, the church of Christ in the world cannot be anything else except a hospital for the incurably sick.⁴³ The *summa* of the Christian life is to bear the burden of one’s neighbor. Consequently, the task of the bishops and pastors is to act as if each diocese were a hospital and church members were sick and in need of medical treatment:

³⁹Luther’s Works 31.57.

⁴⁰Luther’s Works 31.57.

⁴¹Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 21.346.

⁴²Luther’s Works 31.55-56.

⁴³This section is heavily indebted to Tuomo Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta: Johdatus Lutherin uskonmaailmaan*, 2 painos, Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran Julkaisuja 194 (Helsinki: STKJ, 1995), pp. 97-100.

This is the *summa* of the Gospel: The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of mercy and grace. It is nothing else than the continuous bearing of [each other's] burdens. Christ bears our wretchedness and sicknesses. Our sins he will take upon himself and he is patient when we are going astray. Even now and forever he carries us on his shoulders and never tires of carrying us. . . . The task of the preachers in this kingdom is to console consciences, associate in a friendly spirit with the people, feed them with the nourishment of the Gospel, carry the weak, heal the sick and take care of everybody according to their need. That is also the proper ministry for every bishop and pastor.⁴⁴

The theological basis for this kind of caring attitude is Luther's idea of the church members as Christs to each other. This comes to focus in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As Christ has given himself to Christians in the bread and wine, so also do Christians form one bread and one drink as they participate in the Eucharist. The Christian is bread to feed the hungry neighbor and drink to quench their thirst: "Also with us it happens so that we all become one cake and we eat each other," Luther explains.⁴⁵ He compares the eucharistic eating to the baking of bread in which the ingredients get completely mixed and are indistinguishable from each other, or the preparation of wine in which the grapes are mashed together.

Luther employs the beautiful ancient symbol of the church as mother. In fact, he compares the church with the physical womb of the mother to deliver a baby. The task of the church is noble: "The church namely teaches, cherishes us warmly, carries us in her womb and lap and arms, shapes us and makes us perfect according to the form of Christ until we grow to become perfect men."⁴⁶

Luther also knows the most interesting dialectic between the Christian as "Lord" and "servant" at the same time. On the one hand, as a result of the presence of Christ, the Christian is "above all" and on the other hand "under all." Through faith the spirit of the Christian is taken into the heights of God, but at the same time that she is being elevated, she should also do what God's love always does, namely, orient one's self downward, to that which is nothing in itself. Consequently, the Christian is both totally free and totally bound by needs of others. She is totally free and totally given to service for others.

In summary, it could be said that in Luther's thinking all human efforts in

⁴⁴Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 10:1.2; 366, 18-34 (*Summer Postil*, 1526; my translation).

⁴⁵Martin Luther *Weimarer Ausgabe* 12.489-90.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 40:1.665.

principle are meant for the service of love. Preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked are sharing good as much as the rest of life in the family, society and church. "All human actions in the church and society spring up from love to protect and cultivate the life created by God."⁴⁷

⁴⁷Mannermaa, *Kaksi rakkautta*, pp. 99-100.

The Church as Covenant

REFORMED ECCLESIOLOGY

The Marks of the Church

As with Martin Luther, so also with John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli—it took time before they came to the painful realization that the Reformation withdrawal from the Catholic Church was more than a temporary one. After the collapse of the Colloquy of Regensburg in 1541, which was a last-ditch attempt to reach a compromise between Catholics and Protestants, the Reformers were slowly compelled to begin to develop their distinctive understanding of the church. Calvin is the leading figure in that company of Protestant Reformers who set themselves the difficult task of creating an ecclesiology that would be faithful to both the ancient creeds and to the ideas that brought the Reformation into existence. Calvin agreed with Luther that the marks of the true church were the preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments.¹ However, he came to emphasize correct faith and an upright Christian life more strictly than Luther. “He accepted Zwingli’s test of ‘faith,’ and the Anabaptists’ test of ‘life,’ and added a sharing in the sacraments.”² According to Calvin, “members of the church [are] those who by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments profess the same God and Christ.”³

In opposition to Luther, however, Calvin believed that there were specific scriptural directions regarding the right order of ministry in the visible church, so that a specific form of ecclesiastical order now became an item of doctrine.

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.12.

²C. Penrose St. Amant, “Reformation Views of the Church,” in *The People of God: Essays in the Believers’ Church*, ed. Paul Basden and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), p. 213. See further Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon, 1952), pp. 115–16 especially.

³Calvin *Institutes* 4.1.8; see also Calvin, *Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 1 Corinthians 11:2.