SACRAMENT *of* SALVATION



An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology

PAUL McPARTLAN

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For dear
Michael and Patricia

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Contents

Abbreviations ix

Introduction xiii

1: The Eucharist Makes the Church 1
Calvary Cross and Heavenly Banquet

2: Preparation of the Children of Abraham 14
The Messiah Foretold by the Prophets

3: The Story of the New People of God 30
Two Thousand Years in Three Steps

4: 'A Modern Father of the Church' 45
The Trials and Triumphs of Henri de Lubac

5: The Church, Sacrament of Salvation 61
Liturgy, Structure and Mission

6: The Holy Spirit and Unity 78
The Eucharist in Ecumenical Dialogue

7: 'This Is the Cup of My Blood' 97
The Chalice and the Renewal of Baptism

8: 'The Universe Attains Its Destiny through Us' 113
Christ and the Church: Priest of Creation

Index of Names 125

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Abbreviations

PG	J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857–66).
PL	J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844–64).
DS	Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum* (36th ed.; Herder, Freiburg, 1976).
MC	Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis* (1943).
MF	Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Mysterium Fidei* (1965).
EN	Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975).
SC	Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963). Quotations from this and the following conciliar texts are taken, with some small adjustments, from A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dominican Publications, Dublin, 1981).
LG	*Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964).
UR	*Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism (1964).
DV	*Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965).
AG	*Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (1965).
PO	*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (1965).
GS	*Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (1965).
Final Report	Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, *Final Report* (CTS/SPCK, London, 1982).

BEM	*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper 111; World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982). The 'Lima Report'.
Mystery	'The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity' (1982), first agreed statement of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, in Paul McPartlan (ed.), *One in 2000? Towards Catholic–Orthodox Unity. Agreed Statements and Parish Papers* (St Paul, Slough, 1993), pp. 37–52.
Unity	'Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church' (1987), second agreed statement of the above commission, in *One in 2000?*, pp. 53–69.
Order	'The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church' (1988), third agreed statement of the above commission, in *One in 2000?*, pp. 71–86.
RH	Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979).
RM	Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990).
OL	Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Orientale Lumen* (1995).
UU	Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1994).
Oss Rom	*Osservatore Romano* (English edition).

Books by Henri de Lubac:

Catechesis	*A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1984); translation of *Petite catéchèse sur nature et grâce* (Communio–Fayard, Paris, 1980).
Catholicism	*Catholicism* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988); translation of *Catholicisme* (Cerf, Paris, 1947[4]).
Corpus	*Corpus Mysticum* (Aubier, Paris, 1949[2]).

Discovery	*The Discovery of God* (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1960); translation of *Sur les chemins de Dieu* (Aubier, Paris, 1956).
Faith	*Christian Faith* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1986); translation of *La Foi chrétienne* (Aubier, Paris, 1970²).
Fondement	*Le fondement théologique des missions* (Seuil, Paris, 1946).
Motherhood	*The Motherhood of the Church* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1982); translation of *Les églises particulières dans l'Eglise universelle* (Aubier, Paris, 1971).
Mystery	*The Mystery of the Supernatural* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967); translation of *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Aubier, Paris, 1965).
Paradoxes	*Paradoxes of Faith* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1987); combined translation of *Paradoxes* (Livre français, Paris, 1946) and *Nouveaux paradoxes* (Seuil, Paris, 1955).
Service	*At the Service of the Church* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1993); translation of *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Culture et vérité, Namur, 1989).
Sources	*The Sources of Revelation* (Herder & Herder, New York, 1968); translation of *L'Ecriture dans la Tradition* (Aubier, Paris, 1967).
Souvenirs	'Souvenirs (1940–1945)', in *Alexandrina: Mélanges offerts à Claude Mondesert* (Cerf, Paris, 1987), pp. 9–13.
Splendour	*The Splendour of the Church* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1986); translation of *Méditation sur l'Eglise* (Aubier, Paris, 1953²).
Surnaturel	*Surnaturel* (Aubier, Paris, 1946).

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Introduction

'The Church is awakening in souls', wrote Romano Guardini with great excitement in 1922, saluting what he called 'an event of incalculable importance'.[1] Soon afterwards, Otto Dibelius already dubbed this 'the century of the Church'.[2]

We, near its end, can say that these two prophetic voices have been richly vindicated, as we look back on the way in which study of the Church, or 'ecclesiology', has remarkably flourished in the twentieth century. We can also point to a particular avenue that this study has increasingly followed as the century has proceeded. In order to understand the Church, Christians of many denominations have progressively focused their attention on the Eucharist and searched the mystery of this central celebration in the life of the Lord's followers.

Thankfully, as we shall see in chapter six, it is by Christians together, in ecumenical dialogue, that much of this research has been done. Guardini and Dibelius, Catholic and Lutheran, respectively, were outstanding spokesmen for an interest in the Church that was already becoming evident in the Christian family at large in the early decades of this century. It is so appropriate that, in these final decades, the Spirit who kindled that interest has not only drawn the different Churches together in their investigation, but has led them in common to dwell upon the Eucharist, where the Spirit's action is powerfully centred, for the transformation of both gifts and people.

In 1982, a joint statement by Catholic and Orthodox bishops and theologians profoundly explained this focus. 'Taken as a whole,' it said, 'the eucharistic celebration makes present the Trinitarian mystery of the Church' (*Mystery*, I, 6). In the same year, around a

[1] Romano Guardini, opening words of his book, *Vom Sinn der Kirche* (1922); cf. Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic* (Sheed & Ward, London, 1935), p. 11.

[2] The title of Otto Dibelius' book, *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche* (1927). Cf. Henri de Lubac, some years later: 'the twentieth century is destined to be "the century of the Church"' (*Splendour*, p. 27).

hundred theologians representing a wide range of Christian denominations in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches unanimously agreed a text which indicates how broadly the Eucharist is now accepted as something central to the Christian life. On behalf of a great variety of Christian traditions, the so-called 'Lima Report' says the following.

> As the Eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place at least every Sunday. As it is the new sacramental meal of the people of God, every Christian should be encouraged to receive communion frequently. (*BEM*, Eucharist 31)

Furthermore, it is to this celebration that we should look for the revelation of the Church. 'It is in the Eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested' (ibid., 19).

Modern liturgical studies have taught us to widen our gaze from the elements of bread and wine on the Lord's table, to heed the assembly which is gathered around and to understand the Eucharist as the entire celebration of God's people within which the elements are transformed. This will be our understanding in what follows. Moreover, attention to the letters of St Paul encourages us to focus our use of the word 'church' precisely on these local assemblies which regularly mark and distinctively characterise the life of the worldwide community of Christians. Not only does he address the recipients of his letters (in Corinth and elsewhere) as, 'the church of God (in Corinth, etc.)' (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; cf. also Gal 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1), but he also calls their weekly gathering for the Eucharist, their assembly 'as a church' (1 Cor 11:18).

Thus we begin to see how Eucharist and Church can become interchangeable terms. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger memorably expressed this insight as follows.

> The Church is the celebration of the Eucharist; the Eucharist is the Church; they do not simply stand side by side; they are one and the same; it is from there that everything else radiates.[3]

The purpose of this book is to explore *how* the Christian faith which is lived in the Church does indeed radiate from this source. We shall

[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1987), p. 53; translation amended to include the final clause, unfortunately omitted in the English version, cf. Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre* (Erich Wewel, Munich, 1982), p. 55.

see that the Eucharist offers an invaluable key with which to unlock the meaning of the scriptures and explain the structure and mission of the Church. In short, we shall investigate how the Eucharist serves as a standard around which gather not only the multitude of Christian people but also the many facts of Christian life into an ordered unity.

I have called this book *Sacrament of Salvation* because, while this title was famously applied to the *Church* by the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium* 1, 9, 48; cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 42), which declared that '[e]very benefit the people of God can confer on mankind during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the Church's being "the universal sacrament of Salvation"' (*GS* 45), it also readily describes the *Eucharist*. 'Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I shall raise him up on the last day' (Jn 6:54). With these words, Jesus clearly indicates that the Eucharist is the sacrament of salvation. The bread and wine which become his body and blood in the celebration of the Eucharist are the food and drink of eternity.

The fact that the title equally applies both to the Eucharist and to the Church is simply an echo of the profoundly significant fact that, from apostolic times, the Eucharist and the Church have *both* been called the 'Body of Christ'. We shall investigate this terminology and its important historical modulations in chapter three, guided by Henri de Lubac, who said the following in 1953.

> The Church, like the Eucharist, is a mystery of unity – the same mystery and one with inexhaustible riches. Both are the body of Christ – the same body. (*Splendour*, p. 156)

I hope that this book will serve a wide readership. Its roots lie in an academic book which, of its nature, has attracted more specialised readers. It is entitled: *The Eucharist Makes the Church*,[4] and analyses what this principle means for two of its leading modern advocates, Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, respectively. The latter book is copiously footnoted and I would refer to it anyone who wishes to pursue in greater detail various points made in this book, in which I have tried to keep footnotes to a minimum.

[4] Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in dialogue* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; paperback, 1994).

De Lubac and Zizioulas have both influenced these pages, as will be particularly evident from time to time. However, my appreciation of their thought has been leavened since the writing of that earlier book by four years as a pastoral priest in a London parish, prior to my return to Cambridge. After all, the Eucharist is not the preserve of academic theologians; it is at the centre of the lives of everyday Christians in parish communities. It is with such people in mind, as well as theological students and those training for ministry, that I have written this book, unfolding in, I hope, an accessible fashion some insights of what is dauntingly termed 'eucharistic ecclesiology', which simply means an understanding of the Church strongly centred upon the Eucharist.

We begin with what for Christians is the decisive turning point in history, namely the life of Christ himself, when the Old Testament passed over into the New. In chapter one, we examine how the Lord instituted the Eucharist as a celebration which would be for the Church on her pilgrim way thereafter both a memorial of his death and Resurrection and also an anticipation of the heavenly banquet. As we shall see, the earliest communities encountered both the past and the future in the eucharistic present and thus set the pattern for the countless communities that were to follow, up to our own day. Chapter two investigates how the salvation brought by Christ and made accessible in the Eucharist fulfilled the hopes that God had engendered in the people of Israel throughout two thousand years of promise, beginning with the call of Abraham. Then, in chapter three, we analyse the two thousand years which have passed since the time of Christ in terms of three main periods, patristic, scholastic and modern, which are characterised by different understandings of the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist.

Certain figures stand out as promoters of the widespread renewal which marks the modern period. The long life of Henri de Lubac spans the whole period and in chapter four we look at the contribution of this great pioneer, dubbed by Hans Urs von Balthasar 'a modern Father of the Church', and at the various tribulations that he had to endure. In his first book, *Catholicisme* (1938), de Lubac introduced this century to the notion of the Church as a sacrament, 'the sacrament of Christ' (*Catholicism*, p. 76), and in chapter five we come to the heart of our topic and consider the inner and outer aspects of the mystery of the Church.

In *Catholicism*, de Lubac denounced doctrinal controversy, especially concerning the Church and the Eucharist, as an 'enemy'. It produces, he said, a 'narrowness of outlook and lack of proportion' which 'amount in practice to error' (ibid., pp. 309–10). His title, he made clear, referred not so much to a denomination in distinction from others, but rather to a spirit of wholeness and inclusion, the spirit of the 'mysterious *Catholica*', which is the society of believers, 'on earth' and '[in] the world to come', 'visible and especially . . . invisible' (ibid., pp. 16–17). The influence of such a spirit can be detected in the remarkably fruitful ecumenical dialogue that has taken place in recent times between believers from many different Christian traditions, striving in common for a fuller understanding of the Gospel. Chapter six aims to give an account in some detail of the remarkable progress and results of this dialogue, with regard to an understanding of the Church and the Eucharist.

It is often by together reappropriating previously neglected aspects of the topics they are considering that partners in ecumenical dialogue have made progress. By means of a renewed appreciation of the forgiveness inherent in the Eucharist, chapter seven moves on to consider the dynamic relationship between baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Finally, the cosmic dimension of the Eucharist, one of its most neglected aspects, is our concern in chapter eight, where we acknowledge that God acts in the Eucharist not just to gather the Church into unity, nor even to save humanity at large, but, more widely still, to create the new heavens and the new earth.

As we pursue our enquiry, we shall refer often to the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which officially endorsed so much of the renewal promoted for decades by the four movements, liturgical, patristic, biblical and ecumenical, that really brought the Church into a distinctively new phase of her life in this century. We shall also frequently refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, indicating just some of the riches contained in this remarkable compendium of the Christian tradition, both Western and Eastern, that is newly available to pastors and people alike. Apart from in quotations, where the style of the original author may differ, I have rendered 'church' with a small 'c' whenever the reference is clearly to a local church (also called a particular church, or diocese), and with a capital 'C' in most other instances.

This book took shape in connection with various courses that I gave in 1994, at the Divinity School in Cambridge and the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, and also to the Cambridge Theological Federation and to the Auxiliaries of the Apostolate in Lourdes. It was a pleasure to meet the students in all of these places and to discuss this material with them. I would like to thank them for their questions and responses which helped to shape the ideas found here. Finally, the way in which those ideas are expressed has been improved at many points thanks to the comments made by Fr David Manson and Fr Peter McGrail, who kindly read this work in draft form. I am particularly grateful to them.

Paul McPartlan

29 June 1995
Solemnity of St Peter and St Paul

St Edmund's College
Cambridge

Chapter One

The Eucharist Makes the Church

Calvary Cross and Heavenly Banquet

When I first used the spelling-checker on my word-processor, it queried in my text the word 'parousia', the scriptural term for the coming of the Lord in glory on the last day (e.g. Mt 24:3, 27; 1 Cor 15:23; 2 Thess 2:1), and suggested 'paranoia' instead. I thought this was an intriguing alternative.

My dictionary defines 'paranoia' as 'a mental disorder characterised by fixed delusions', and I suppose that many people do regard the belief of Christians that Christ will come again at the end of time as a fixed delusion. Nevertheless, it is a firm belief, stated in the Creed: 'He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead'.

In his first letter, St Peter emphasises the certainty about the end that is intrinsic to Christian faith.

> You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him, you are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described, because you believe; and you are *sure of the end* to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet 1:8–9)

More precisely, it is a certainty of Christian *hope*, already affirmed by St Paul in his letters. To the Romans he says that, by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, we shall be raised from death to life as Jesus was by the same Spirit (Rom 8:11). The hope, kindled by the gift of the Spirit, is of nothing less than sharing God's glory, and he gives an assurance: 'this hope is not deceptive' (Rom 5:2, 5). When Christ appears, he tells the Colossians, 'you too will be revealed in all your glory with him' (Col 3:4).

Let us ask where this certainty of Christ's coming and firmness of hope of our sharing his glory come from. The Holy Spirit clearly plays an essential role, to which we shall return. But let us first note simply that these affirmations occur in letters from Peter and Paul that form part of the New Testament and ask how the sacred scriptures themselves came about.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear of a miracle worked by Paul at Troas (Acts 20:7–12). There was a gathering of the Christian community in an upstairs room lit by lamps and Paul preached on into the middle of the night. Eutychus, a young man unfortunately sitting on the window-sill, fell asleep and dropped three floors to his death. Paul went down, embraced him and brought him back to life and the people were greatly comforted. We hear of the incident because of the wonder worked, but what is disclosed incidentally is that this was the regular gathering on the first day of the week for the breaking of bread. It appears that, following the Lord's injunction to 'Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor 11:25), the Sunday Eucharist was such a regular part of the rhythm of Christian life (cf. *CCC* 1343) that it was rarely mentioned in the record of the life of the early communities.

If, exceptionally, an apostle were present, such as Paul that week in Troas, then he would preside, preaching and breaking the bread (cf. Acts 20:11). If not, the next best thing would be to have a letter from him to read out. The letters of the New Testament were first heard by Christian *communities* gathered for the weekly Eucharist. Those who wrote them in the power of the Holy Spirit could presume that context and write accordingly. It follows that, when we strive to interpret the epistles, we should be ever alert to the possibility of implicit eucharistic references. We can expect to detect eucharistic undertones, breaking through on occasion in explicit invocations and hymns (e.g. Phil 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20; Eph 1:3–14) or specific teaching, tailored to this context. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, for instance, is largely about the Eucharist and about appropriate behaviour for the community which celebrates it, reprimanding the Christians of Corinth for their unseemly factions (1 Cor 1:10–13) and unruly feasting (1 Cor 11:17–22).

St Justin Martyr gives us evidence to root the gospels, too, in the regular eucharistic gathering. Writing his *First Apology* in defence of the Christians, around the middle of the second century, he gives

an account of the Sunday assembly of all baptised Christians from the town and the country, patterned on the instructions given by Jesus to the apostles. Now, long past the days when the apostles themselves might be present, Justin tells us that their *memoirs*, 'which are called gospels', are read, with the writings of the prophets for as long as time permits. Then the president gives an exhortation and proceeds to offer prayer and thanksgiving (literally, 'thanksgivings', *eucharistías*) over the gifts of bread, wine and water.[1] We note immediately that the essential meaning of 'Eucharist' is *thanksgiving*, and see that the gospels were written, by their inspired authors, to furnish the weekly eucharistic gathering with an authentic, apostolic account of the Lord whose Resurrection the community was celebrating with joyful thanksgiving.

So the gospels and epistles were all written primarily for the eucharistic assembly, and, if that is where they originated, it stands to reason that that is still today where they will most be at home and come alive. The General Introduction to the revised *Lectionary* states that the liturgy is 'the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God's word', because God's plan of salvation, which the word unceasingly recalls and extends, 'achieves its fullest expression in the liturgy':[2]

> In the hearing of God's word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's many wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are symbolically presented anew. God in turn makes use of the assembly of the faithful who celebrate the liturgy in order that his word may speed on in triumph and his name be exalted among all peoples.[3]

Heavenly Banquet

Now, having noted that the certainty of Christian hope is expressed in the scriptures and having identified the liturgy, culminating in the celebration of the Eucharist, as the true home of the scriptures, we can return to our original question about where the certainty of

[1] Cf. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 66–7 (*PG* 6, 429).

[2] *Lectionary*, revised edition (1981), General Introduction, 4 (Collins / Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1981; vol. 1, p. xviii).

[3] Ibid., 7.

Christian hope comes from with a possible answer: perhaps it comes from the Eucharist.

Confirmation of this answer is offered by a remarkable passage from the Letter to the Hebrews. This letter was written perhaps from Rome to Jewish Christians who had left Jerusalem for safety from persecution and who were rather dispirited, remembering the splendour of their former worship in the Temple there. It culminates with a startling statement. 'What you have come to is nothing known to the senses . . . .' The writer goes on to explain.

> What you have come to is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where the millions of angels have gathered for the festival, with the Church of the first-born who have been enrolled in heaven. You have come to God himself, the supreme Judge and been placed with the spirits of the saints who have been made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:18, 22–24)

If we read this passage sitting a room by ourselves, we may well puzzle at its meaning. 'What you have come to'?, but I'm just here in this chair, praying or studying or reflecting. Here is an outstanding example of a passage that doesn't make sense until we recall that it was first directed to a community gathered for the Eucharist, a hard-pressed community, moreover, perhaps few in number and gathered probably in a simple upper-room. Though it appears to be only a modest gathering to which they have come, the writer urges the local Christians to see with eyes of faith what they have really come to, namely the final gathering of all the ages on God's holy mountain.

Neither for Jews nor for Christians is heaven just a vague rosy glow at the end of life. The scriptures give us an increasingly clear picture of it. Isaiah described it vividly as 'a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines' (Is 25:6), prepared by God on Mount Zion in Jerusalem for the assembled people of all nations to enjoy. Jesus himself took up this imagery of the heavenly banquet, particularly in the form of a wedding feast (Mt 22:2–14), and signalled the crucial advance that, with his presence, the banquet is already begun (cf. Jn 6:51, 54). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews continues the same line of thought, expounding more fully the same vision.

He teaches that what breaks upon this world whenever the Eucharist is celebrated is the assembly of all the angels and the saints

surrounding Christ in his glory in the heavenly Jerusalem, nothing less than the assembly of the last day, inaugurating the festival which is to last forever, the banquet of eternity. Stirred by the Holy Spirit, participants in the earthly liturgy are caught up into this heavenly scene. Week in and week out they see what is stored up as the fulfilment of God's purpose, what is already overshadowing this world, actively moulding it for eternity. Christians are *sure* in their hope because they *experience* its fulfilment in anticipation every Sunday, when they do what the Lord commanded them to do in memory of him.

That fulfilment is a gathering and the gathering has a name. We find it in the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews; it is 'the Church'. You have come, it says, 'to the Church of the first-born who have been enrolled in heaven'. The Greek word for 'church' is *ekklesía* (from *ek-kaléo*, to call out or summon forth) and this is perhaps its most direct and definitive use in the New Testament. The Church, properly speaking, is the heavenly gathering of all the nations for all eternity with Christ in the kingdom of the Father. 'The Church is the goal of all things' (*CCC* 760). Vatican II summarised the teaching of the Fathers when it said that, at the end of time, 'all the just from the time of Adam, "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect"[4] will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church' (*LG* 2; cf. *CCC* 769).

Anything on this earth in the meantime bears the name 'Church' in a derivative sense, in so far as it makes that future heavenly reality present or leads us to it. As the *Catechism* teaches, the pilgrim Church is the *sacrament*, the 'sign and instrument', of 'the full realisation of the unity yet to come' (*CCC* 775, with reference to *LG* 1; cf. *CCC* 1045). Stirringly evoking 'the great Tradition, attested to by the Fathers of the East and of the West', Pope John Paul recently stressed that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the final (or 'eschatological') mystery of the Church is already present sacramentally.

> [I]n the Pentecost Event God has *already* manifested the Church in her eschatological reality, which he had prepared 'from the time of Abel, the just One'. This reality is something already given. (*UU* 14)

[4] St Gregory the Great, *In evangelia homiliae*, 19, 1 (*PL* 76, 1154)

This ought to seem strange, because it *is* strange. It is quite contrary to our normal way of thinking to shift reality into the future like this. In everyday life, some of what we call our hopes materialise, many do not. This seems reasonable because, from the firm ground of the reality of the present, hope makes a projection into the uncertain future and so, common sense tells us, is bound to be disappointed often by the way things actually work out. In sharp contrast, as we have seen, the future is not uncertain for the Christian and so the Christian's hope does not disappoint. By the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the *future* that becomes firm ground for the Christian as he or she faces an uncertain *present.*

When the Holy Spirit is active, time ceases to obey everyday rules. If we examine closely the eucharistic prayers used in the liturgy, we see that the Holy Spirit descends not only upon the gifts of bread and wine, transforming them into the Body and Blood of Christ, but also upon the community which is gathered around. We must expect strange things to happen. A future gathering is revealed and each of us samples an identity that we shall not fully possess until the last day. Because of our regular celebration of the Eucharist, the future is no stranger to us. Through the Eucharist, *it* becomes the foundation upon which we build our daily Christian lives.

While we are in the realm of paradox, let us note another flagrant violation of common sense. We tend to think that it is heaven as it is *now* that is thrown open when we celebrate the Eucharist, with the saints who are there already helping us on our way. They are there and we are here. That may seem logical, but logic is often a barrier to the full mystery of the Gospel. The Letter to the Hebrews shows that it is rather heaven as it *will* be that is thrown open, when the full gathering of all the ages is assembled. It is God's *future* kingdom that we experience.

The ceilings of the great Renaissance churches of Italy are frescoed to show the proximity of heaven when the central act for which those churches were built, namely the Eucharist, is celebrated. Looking up, it is as if the roof has been torn away and heaven is thrown open. You will normally see Christ in the glory of the Father with the Holy Spirit hovering and angels and saints crowding the scene. There is a serious though quite understandable omission, however, because one face you will not see is your own and, while being aware of the dangers of presumption, we can say that it ought to be there.

God wills us and all humanity to have a place there (cf. 1 Tim 2:4) and, by our Baptism, we have expressed our desire to be numbered in that company. To encounter Christ in that heavenly assembly is also to encounter myself as he wills me to be, my true self, my best self, my real self. Let us recall again St Paul's words to the Colossians, newly baptised into Christ.

> Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him. (Col 3:1–4)

In its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Second Vatican Council teaches that Christ *is* revealed in the Eucharist. He is present 'not only in the person of his minister, . . . but especially in the eucharistic species'. 'He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in Church.' Then, also, he is present, as he promised, whenever two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). Moreover, it immediately adds that Christ 'always associates the Church with himself' in the liturgy 'where God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified' (*SC* 7; cf. *CCC* 1089). In other words, we are never to imagine Christ acting as an isolated individual. The Church is always associated with him, clustered around him. And if we ask ourselves what Church that is, no partial answer will do. It cannot be the church of any one place or one time. It must be the Church of all places and all times, in other words that great final assembly, in which we all hope to have a place.

So, indeed, when Christ is present, we should look for ourselves. It surely is immensely reassuring to know that we are cloaked in the mantle of the risen Lord, enfolded in his mystery. When Christ is revealed, so are we, and each of us can ask him to help us in the Eucharist to see more clearly the person he would have us be and to mould us more closely into that identity. Mother Teresa once explained why her sisters are required to spend time in adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament in addition to their work among the destitute. It is to complete the circle, so to speak. Just as

they must learn in the streets to see Christ in the poor, so in the chapel they must learn to see the poor in Christ. Where he is, they are. When he is revealed, you too will be revealed with him.

If this is so, then beyond simply making us sure about the end, the Eucharist must kindle a *yearning* for that end, for the full achievement of God's promise and our share in the glory of Christ. A good test of what I have said so far is to check whether such a yearning is apparent in the Eucharist of the early Church. There is an ancient text, called *The Didache*, discovered only in 1873, which reflects the life of an early Christian community in Syria around the year 100, and which gives us some striking evidence. In its account of the Eucharist, we find a presidential prayer that has since become a hymn.

> As this broken bread, once dispersed over the hills, was brought together and became one loaf, so may thy Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom.[5]

Here the mystery of the Church being gathered from all nations into God's kingdom is beautifully linked to the formation of the bread for the Eucharist where that mystery has its focal point. Towards the end of the formal prayers we find the president saying, 'Let His Grace [i.e. Christ] draw near and let this present world pass away', and the people crying out, 'O Lord come quickly, Amen'.[6] *Come, Lord Jesus*, a moving expression of the yearning of those who have had the foretaste and long for the full reality of the Coming of the Lord in his kingdom.

As time passed, the vivid sense of the early Christians that Christ might return at any moment faded. Nevertheless, each Advent season calls the faithful to renewed vigilance, and an examination of the prayers used in the Mass indicates that every Eucharist is still celebrated in a spirit of eager longing (cf. *CCC* 1404–5). The presidential prayer after the *Our Father* asks the Lord to protect us from all anxiety 'as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of Our Saviour Jesus Christ' and in Eucharistic Prayer III the community is said to be 'ready to greet him when he comes again'. The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* describes the congregation for Mass as 'the faithful who gather to await the Lord's coming'.[7] I wonder how many of us would recognise ourselves in that description!

[5] *Didache*, 9.
[6] Ibid., 10; cf. *CCC* 1403.
[7] *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 19.

Two books of the New Testament actually end with the exclamation, *Come, Lord Jesus!* The first is St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. We have already noted that this and the other epistles were directed to eucharistic assemblies and this manner of ending only serves to reinforce that understanding. As Paul signed off with the Aramaic formula *Marana tha*, meaning 'Lord, come!' (1 Cor 16:22), which the *Catechism* evocatively calls 'the Spirit's groaning in the Church' (*CCC* 1130), we can imagine this cry being taken up by the community and echoing around as they prepared to break bread.

The other book to end thus is the Book of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation) and we suddenly find ourselves with a key to the interpretation of this great and mysterious book, also. At the end of his account of the revelations he has received, John tells us, 'The one who guarantees these revelations repeats his promise: I shall indeed be with you soon', and he instantly responds: 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!' (Apoc 22:20) If we look back to find the context of these revelations, we read at the start of the book that they occurred on the island of Patmos, where John had been exiled for witnessing for Jesus, and more importantly that they were given *on the Lord's day* (Apoc 1:10). This rarely heeded detail leads me to wonder whether we aren't meant to ask ourselves what John would have been doing on the Lord's day and to conclude that these revelations were vouchsafed to him in the context of a eucharistic celebration.

Just as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews urges the downcast recipients of his message to see with eyes of faith what they have really come to, namely Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, so when the Spirit takes possession of John (cf. Apoc 1:10) in exile on Patmos, he too sees 'the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven' (Apoc 21:2). This vision, born in the Eucharist, is written down to edify the faith of other communities who will hear it at the Eucharist. Just before John himself signs off with 'Come, Lord Jesus!' and the community proceeds to the eucharistic meal, he actually pronounces an invitation to come for refreshment to the heavenly scene which is thrown open: 'let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price' (Apoc 22:17).

Calvary Cross

In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican II summarised this forward-looking perspective on the Eucharist as follows. 'In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims . . .' (*SC* 8; cf. *CCC* 1090). However, it also teaches that Christ instituted the Eucharist 'in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again' (*SC* 47; cf. *CCC* 1323), and we must now ask the important question of how to integrate into our understanding of the Eucharist its essential reference to Calvary.

We have seen that, when we gather for the Eucharist, heaven is brought to bear upon this earth and upon ourselves making our historical pilgrimage. Now, in 1965, Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical letter on the Eucharist as the *Mysterium Fidei* (the mystery of faith) in which he affirmed that, in the Mass, what is applied 'to the whole world, for its salvation' is 'the redemptive virtue of the sacrifice of the cross' (*MF* 32). At first sight, this seems to envisage something breaking in from the *past*, whereas we have been firmly envisaging the inbreaking of the *future*. Does this now mean that we must look *backward* as well as *forward*? In short: No, it does not. The *future* is where all the treasures of Christian truth are stored up, and that means the triumph of Calvary, too. A closer examination of the future kingdom will reassure us that everything we need to say about the salvific memorial of Christ's Cross in the Eucharist is, in fact, implicit in what we have already said about the eucharistic anticipation of the heavenly banquet, if only we will look closely enough.

A clue was given above to the mysterious integration of the Cross with the banquet, for is not the 'water of life' that flows freely in the heavenly Jerusalem and that John urges us to take freely (Apoc 22:1–2, 17), the very water that the evangelist himself was so overwhelmed to witness pouring from the pierced side of Christ on the Cross (Jn 19:34–5)? We shall refer to this water more fully in the next chapter, but for now let us simply ask John to describe the future gathering in the new Jerusalem to us, so that we may draw a careful picture. Our desire is to know what 'the Church' in its fullest sense looks like.

In the Book of the Apocalypse (cf. *CCC* 1137–8), John tells us that he saw, standing on Mount Zion, 'a Lamb who had with him a

hundred and forty-four thousand people' (Apoc 14:1), a multitude so numerous as to be countless (cf. Apoc 7:9). But let us look more closely. John records that the Lamb bore the marks of having been *slain* (Apoc 5:6), these marks being worn now not as wounds but as trophies. Calvary is not forgotten in heaven, rather heaven is the celebration of the victory won there. Moreover, the assembled throng is dressed in robes that are *white* because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. These people have been through 'the great tribulation' (Apoc 7:14), and are now sharing his glory because they have faithfully taken a share in his Cross. Indeed, Calvary has not been forgotten! Finally, the song being sung by the throng is not a bland expression of heavenly fellowship, but a rousing hymn of *victory*, celebrating the redemption won by the Lamb in his sacrifice (cf. Apoc 5:6–14; 7:9–12).

Having seen that the mystery of the Calvary Cross is gathered up and crowned, together with the whole sweep of history, in the heaven we anticipate in the Eucharist, we can now see that the Eucharist brings both joy and *judgement*. While we are still on our earthly pilgrimage, the Eucharist makes present 'the victory and triumph' of Christ's death (*SC* 6; cf. *DS* 1644) and casts us each Sunday around the presiding celebrant in the role of the multitude who will surround Christ in heaven, wanting only to sing for evermore of his victory, because they have washed their robes white in his blood and been transformed by his Cross. As the one who presides does so 'in the person of Christ' (*in persona Christi*) and is 'an "icon" of Christ the priest' (*CCC* 1142), so we might aptly say that those who gather round do so 'in the person of the multitude'.

Finding ourselves cast in such a role can only prompt heart-searching and repentance, as we realise how unfit for it we still are. This, surely, is one reason why the Lord instructed his friends to go on *doing this* in remembrance of him, so that the final moment of judgement would not catch them unawares, but rather be experienced as a moment long rehearsed, at the culmination of a life progressively purified by anticipations of the heavenly Jerusalem. So we see that the Eucharist, far from being a piece of escapism, as is sometimes alleged when its link with the future is emphasised, is instead precisely tailored to our pilgrim needs, designed to bring about conversion and growth, uplifting and admonishing at the same time. As St Paul taught, 'as often as you eat this bread and drink

this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26).

Implicit in the heartening uplift that 'the Hebrews' received from the passage we examined earlier, is the admonition given as they encounter the heavenly scene with the whole Church of saints and angels gathered around Jesus the Lord: 'See that you do not refuse him who is speaking' (Heb 12:25). What in particular is speaking is his 'sprinkled blood', which is said to speak 'more graciously than the blood of Abel' (Heb 12:24). As we shall see when we examine the forgiveness that is intrinsic to the Eucharist in chapter seven, whereas Abel's blood cried to God for vengeance (cf. Gen 4:10), Jesus' blood, which could likewise be held by God against the sinful humanity that shed it, is now offered to us by God as the ultimate sign of the reconciliation won by Christ. Hence the imperative: do not refuse it, take it, drink it, wash your robes white in it!

So there is joy and judgement, food and forgiveness in the Eucharist. As we unpack its manifold mystery, there are the past and the future, too, or rather there is the past *in* the future, the memorial of Calvary in the midst of the anticipation of the kingdom. Though we may appear to be looking *backward* in this celebration, by re-enacting what the Lord did at the Last Supper, it is clear that Jesus himself was looking *forward* in that sacred meal and that, therefore, in the deepest sense, so are we, as we do what he did. To the Twelve at table with him, Jesus said: 'I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom' (Mt 26:29; cf. *CCC* 1403); and do the Twelve gathered around Christ there not already depict in outline the hundred and forty-four thousand who will constitute the full heavenly gathering around the Lamb in the kingdom?

Every congregation that gathers around the celebrant for the Eucharist until the Lord comes again does likewise. The Holy Spirit, who enables our memorial by reminding us of all that Jesus said (Jn 14:26; cf. *CCC* 1099, 1103), is the same one who leads us into all truth and tells us of 'the things to come' (Jn 16:13; cf. *CCC* 1107), and we have seen that the reminding is embedded in the foretelling, just as the memorial itself takes place principally not on a Thursday or on a Friday, but on a Sunday, embedded within the weekly celebration of the Lord's Resurrection, the beginning of the harvest of eternity (cf. 1 Cor 15:20). Assembled on Sunday at the Lord's table, we

anticipate our membership of that great final assembly on Mount Zion; we experience, in other words, what it is to be the Church. As John Zizioulas memorably says, the Church 'is what she is by becoming again and again what she will be'.[8]

We have seen that the celebration of the Eucharist is essentially bound up with the future, with the Holy Spirit and with the Church. As is evident from the many references already indicated, this trio of interrelated aspects of the Eucharist, so easily neglected but so important for a rounded understanding of the mystery, is prominent in the *Catechism*, which describes the heavenly array foreseen by John and then says, in summary, that '[i]t is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate' (*CCC* 1139). The trio will recur frequently in the following pages.

Before going on to examine the unfolding story of the new people of God, who anticipate the culmination of God's redemptive purpose in the Eucharist, let us now first look back to the earliest workings of that purpose and see how the mystery of salvation was prefigured in the Old Testament. Recalling the heavenly scene of Christ inseparably surrounded by his own, in a fundamental configuration which is the blueprint of the Church, let us see how the Old Testament sketched and sought a salvation with that shape.

[8] John Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition', *One in Christ* 24 (1988), p. 301. Zizioulas' major work in English is *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1985).

Chapter Two

Preparation of the Children of Abraham

The Messiah Foretold by the Prophets

The stained glass windows of Chartres Cathedral are marvellous not only for their colours but also for their composition. One set of four lancet windows is particularly memorable. In it, the thirteenth-century craftsman has depicted the four evangelists each being given a piggy-back by one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. Luke, Matthew, John and Mark are to be seen, respectively, on the shoulders of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

These pairings are profoundly thought-provoking. We shall see evidence for that of Ezekiel and John later in this chapter, but the general point being made can be stated immediately: for the Christian, the New Testament fulfils the Old in that it reveals the one who finally realises the promises made and the plans laid over many centuries beforehand. St Augustine memorably captured the relationship between the two Testaments in the expression: *novum in vetere latet et in novo vetus patet* ('the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is manifest in the New').[1]

However, it is important to see that the Old does not thereby become redundant; it is not cast off now that the New has come. On the contrary, it remains as the indispensable preparation for the New, necessary not only for a proper understanding of the New but also because the great historical journey to Christ which it maps out is subsequently reflected in the individual lives of countless believers. Just as each one cherishes the path which has brought them

[1] Cf. Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.* 2, 73 (*PL* 34, 623), cited in Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*DV* 16). Henri de Lubac gives further patristic references for this point in *Sources*, pp. 119–22.

personally to Christ and regularly appreciates the treasure more by reflecting again upon the trail, so the Church as a whole cherishes the history of Israel as the story of her own journey of faith, by contemplating which she continually learns more about the Lord and his ways. No, the New can never dispense with the Old, rather the Old continues to undergird the New which fulfils it. Henri de Lubac expressed this fact in a remarkable image: 'as the seed gives way to the fruit in which the seed again appears . . . the Old Testament lives on, transfigured, in the New' (*Sources*, p. 175).

In the Old Testament, we find a particular longing for an individual person who would embody the whole people and take them to their salvation. How Jesus reveals himself to be this long-awaited 'corporate personality' and, moreover, how he indicates the Eucharist to be the place where we gain access to the salvation that he personifies, we must now see.

The prophets themselves may be called *tentative* corporate personalities. The people were evidently linked with them in a far more intimate way than simply as recipients of their message; rather the people were themselves somehow bound up with the lives of the prophets and mysteriously implicated in their occasionally bizarre actions. Ezekiel provides a classic example of this relationship. By probing it we shall discover the motif which powerfully unifies the Old Testament, bringing together not just prophets, patriarchs and kings, but also the figures of prophetic promise, to whom we shall turn in a moment.

Let us first, however, get a feel for this motif by looking briefly at the passage from the Book of Ezekiel which the *Jerusalem Bible* entitles 'The mime of the emigrant' (Ezek 12:1–20). There we read that God tells Ezekiel to pack an exile's bundle and to leave in the evening in full sight of the wayward people.

> As they watch, make a hole in the wall, and go out through it. As they watch, you will shoulder your pack and go out into the dark; you will cover your face so that you cannot see the country, since I have made you a symbol for the House of Israel. (Ezek 12:5–6)

The prophet is told next day to verbalise the meaning of this act for the people: 'the thing I have done will be done to them; they will go into exile, into banishment' (Ezek 12:11). But the prophetic act itself has already exercised its extraordinary power. Ezekiel cannot be dismissed as a lunatic, as a prophet he conveys a message which

must be heeded. But more than that, his action is not just a warning, it actually initiates the catastrophe he foretells. The people's exile is now irrevocably under way, because Ezekiel who has enacted it *embodies them.*

After this introductory reference to a disturbing mime telling of disaster, which fits into a remarkable line of prophetic acts in the Old Testament,[2] let us examine prophecies of salvation also centring upon corporate personalities, not now prophets themselves but rather two of the most dramatic figures who feature in biblical prophecy, namely the Son of Man and the Servant of God (or the Suffering Servant).

Son of Man

In the description of the Last Judgement in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 25:31–46), the central character is that of the Son of Man. He appears in his glory and separates the wicked from the virtuous. However, contrary perhaps to an easy impression of the scene, the King does not then condemn the wicked for not having cared for him in the virtuous whom he takes to himself. Rather, he confronts *both* the wicked *and* the virtuous with a *third* group, namely the company who evidently appear with him, kindness to even the least of whom has been kindness to the King himself.

We are told simply that the 'Son of Man' appears and we must therefore deduce that this is a corporate entity which comprises both the King, who clearly is Jesus, and the company of his own.[3] Furthermore, this company must necessarily consist of the virtuous, since there are no people other than the virtuous and the wicked, respectively, the latter being destined for the eternal fire. Thus, it follows that, for the virtuous, their confrontation with the Son of Man is nothing less than an encounter, face to face, with *themselves* in Christ. St Paul seems to be envisaging a similar scene when, as we recalled in the last chapter, he tells the recently baptised Colossians that their true life is now hidden with Christ in God, such that: 'When Christ is revealed . . . you too will be revealed in all your glory with him' (Col 3:1–4).

[2] The *Jerusalem Bible* provides a handy summary of instances in footnote 'a' to Jeremiah 18.

[3] Cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 265, 270.

In short, the Son of Man is Christ together with his own in their final corporate glory, inseparably united. To encounter the Son of Man is to encounter not just Christ but also ourselves as God would have us be, fully transformed into the likeness of his incarnate Son, in our final perfection.

The figure of the Son of Man originates famously in the Old Testament, in the Book of Daniel (Dan 7:9–14). In an awesome description of the judgement of the world ('A court was held and the books were opened'), we hear of 'sovereignty, glory and kingship' being conferred upon 'one like a son of man'. This is evidently a recognisable individual, who nevertheless is more than just a singularity, for the interpretation tells us that sovereignty is granted to 'the saints of the Most High' (vv. 18, 22). We are to conclude that the triumphant figure of the Son of Man is an inclusive being, both one and many, an individual who embodies the multitude for salvation, a messianic corporate personality.

But who is the Son of Man and when is he to come? Such are the questions with which the Old Testament leaves us. This figure of wonder and hope is an enigma, revealed only when Christ appears on the stage of history and repeatedly applies the name 'Son of Man' to himself. Perhaps most memorably, he does so when he is giving a teaching so hard that many thereafter walk with him no longer (Jn 6:60, 66). This teaching concerns the Eucharist, the flesh and blood of the Lord offered to be eaten and drunk by his faithful (Jn 6:48–58).

If salvation takes the form of a corporate personality, it is of the utmost importance to know how to gain membership, how to be included in the inclusive being. Jesus here gives the answer. He speaks of himself as the inclusive being, the Son of Man (v. 53), and indicates that it is by eating his flesh and drinking his blood that eternal life is attained and a place in the final resurrection secured, because by so doing we share his life and participate in the mystery of the one and the many, mutually interpenetrating.

> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. (Jn 6:54, 56)

Servant of God (Suffering Servant)

We have seen one of the great messianic corporate personalities of

Old Testament prophecy, the Son of Man, being fulfilled in Christ and we have also crucially seen Jesus himself indicating that the Eucharist is the place where salvific incorporation into him is to be realised henceforth. It is now time to turn to that other towering corporate figure, the 'Servant of God', also called the 'Suffering Servant', to survey the even richer development of this figure in the time of promise, and to see that it too is fulfilled in Christ and realised in the Eucharist.

One of the most poignant prophecies of the crucifixion in the Old Testament is, perhaps, to be found in the following words from the Book of Isaiah:

> . . . you will flee, until what is left of you will be like a flagstaff on a mountain top, like a signal on a hill. (Is 30:17)

This stark moment is the culmination of an extended reflection by many prophets, but especially by Isaiah, on the theme of the faithful *remnant* of Israel. We might aptly speak of it as the *crux* of their argument, some details of which we must now fill in.

The chosen people split into two kingdoms after the reign of King Solomon. Within two or three centuries prophets had arisen in both the northern and the southern kingdoms who foretold a necessary time of punishment, trial and purification of the people, who would be reduced by the rigours of this time to just a faithful remnant. Amos, in the north, was the first to voice this theme, around 750 BC, in a warning to the people. 'Hate evil, love good, maintain justice at the city gate, and it may be that the Lord God will take pity on the remnant of Joseph' (Amos 5:15; cf. 3:12; 9:8). The kingdom duly fell in 721 and its inhabitants were deported.

In the south, there were deportations following the siege of Jerusalem in 597 and its capture, together with the destruction of the Temple, in 587. The Lord spoke to his people at that time through Jeremiah, who suffered greatly because of the unpopularity of his message that exile would surely come (Jer 25:1–11) and that the people must accept it with hope (Jer 29:4–14). In time, the faithful remnant would be gathered in by the Lord (Jer 23:3–4) and would be ruled by a king bearing the title 'Branch' (Jer 23:5).

However, the south first heard of the remnant from the prophet Isaiah, about a century before Jeremiah, and generations of his disciples continued to develop the theme through the period of exile. It is in these writings (all gathered under the name of Isaiah,

but with chapters 40–66 belonging to the later generations) that we find the theme most fully developed. Looking to the day of salvation, Isaiah says that the branch of the Lord 'shall be beauty and glory'. 'Those who are left of Zion and remain of Jerusalem shall be called holy and those left in Jerusalem noted down for survival' (Is 4:2–3). But then comes a striking concentration of the idea, with Isaiah envisaging the remnant numbering only *one*, simply the faithful branch, pruned to the very last for a new beginning, hoisted as a signal to which all the nations will then rally (cf. Is 11:10, 12; also 17:4–6 and 30:17–18, above).

As already suggested, Christian ears may hear these words as a foretelling of the Cross about which Christ himself said: 'when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself' (Jn 12:32). The fact that Jesus said this with reference to his role as the Son of Man (cf. Jn 3:13–15; 12:34) alerts us to the intimate connection between this figure, which we have already considered, and that of the Servant of God, which we are now examining. Jesus himself makes the connection particularly clear when he says: 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mt 20:28; cf. Mk 10:45).

However, it is normally at a slightly later stage in the development of the idea of the remnant that the link with Christ is recognised. Around 550 BC, shortly before the Edict of Cyrus allowed the people to return from exile, in 538, the single remnant of whom Isaiah speaks takes on the name of 'faithful servant', and it becomes clear in four great 'songs of the servant' (Is 42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; 52:13 – 53:12), which have a privileged place in the Christian liturgy of Holy Week, how he embodies the people, atones for them and so brings about a new beginning. Here is described in uncanny detail the one who offers his back to those who strike him and his cheeks to those who tear at his beard, exposed to insult and spittle (50:6), crushed in the eyes of the world (53:5), evoking a revulsion matched in strength only by the astonishment of the crowds and the speechlessness of kings at what happens to him, in an outcome never told or heard before (52:14–15). The faithful servant is upheld by God (42:1) and established as the 'light of the nations' (42:6; 49:6), receiving 'whole hordes for his tribute' (53:12) and bringing salvation 'to the ends of the earth' (49:6).

The Old Testament simply outlines this messianic figure and leaves us again with the all-important questions: who is the Servant

of God and when is he to come? At two decisive points early in the public ministry of Jesus Christ, he is presented as the fulfilment of the promised servant. Immediately after his baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon him and a voice addresses him from heaven in terms echoing those used in the first song: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him' (Mt 3:16–17; cf. Is 42:1).[4] Then, on the sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus actually reads from the prophet Isaiah a passage (Is 61:1–2) almost identical to that describing the mission of the servant ('... to serve the cause of right ... to free captives from prison ...') in the first song (Is 42:6–7), and comments: 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen' (Lk 4:21).

But the decisive moment for the servant is, of course, his being lifted up when all have fled. In that moment of abandonment, witnessed only by his blessed Mother and the beloved disciple, he alone carries the whole nation, loyal to its faith and the focus of its fate: 'ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried ... he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins'. 'On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed' (Is 53:4–5).

Depictions of the Crucifixion have taken many forms over the years. It is possible to locate a marked shift in popular preference between the years 1260, when Nicola Pisano sculpted a serene, almost sleeping, figure of Christ for the pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa, and 1310, when his son, Giovanni, sculpted an anguished and suffering figure for the pulpit in Pisa Cathedral. While figures of the later type are said to be more realistic, paradoxically they can take us further away from what was really happening. They present us purely with what even those who passed and mocked saw, whereas the earlier type penetrate with eyes of faith to the inner truth of the servant who is victorious in death.

There is a world of difference between being simply an external spectator of this event and being an internal participant in its mystery. On the night before he died, and in the strictest union with the *sacrifice* he was to make on the following day, as we shall see in a moment, Jesus inaugurated the means by which we could pass from being spectators to being participants, by honestly acknow-

[4] In the Acts of the Apostles, the Greek word, *pais*, which means both 'child' and 'servant', is applied to Jesus in relation to God (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30).

ledging our part in the sins he was bearing and thankfully claiming a share in the redemption he won and a place in the gathering to come. At the Last Supper, he instituted the means by which we could be included in the inclusive being, the corporate and salvific Suffering Servant.

In this definitive meal, which must be set in the context of the table fellowship which Jesus had with his disciples and with many others all through his public ministry (e.g. Mk 2:15–17) and which he notably continued after his Resurrection (e.g. Lk 24:13–35), Jesus takes up bread and wine with thanksgiving to God. However, he does not simply identify the bread and wine with his body and blood and leave it at that. On the contrary, all of the accounts show that he invests this transformation with the significance of the Suffering Servant by saying that it is for the *many* and for the forgiveness of their sins that his body is given and his blood poured out in the sealing of a new and everlasting *covenant* (cf. Mt 26:26–28; Mk 14:22–24; Lk 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25). The two italicised words are key pointers to the songs of the servant. In the first song, God says to the servant: 'I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of the nations' (Is 42:6), and in the fourth, he proclaims: 'By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself' (Is 53:11; we must remember that 'many' in Hebrew has none of the English implications of restriction; it positively means 'multitudes', *all*). At the Last Supper it becomes clear that, henceforth, it is by taking, eating and drinking what the Lord offers to us in the Eucharist that we can have a place among the many who are gathered into a new and everlasting covenant with God through the mystery of the suffering and glorified servant.

At this point, we may note that 'to sacrifice' literally means 'to make holy' (*sacrum-facere*), which, in biblical terms, means to hand over to God, the all-holy (cf. Is 6:3), or to set apart for him, the wholly-other. It is *holiness* that makes the followers of Jesus to be *in* the world but not *of* the world, after the pattern of the Lord himself (cf. Jn 17:16). At the Last Supper, he symbolically enacted and inaugurated his coming sacrifice to the Father by the gift of his body and blood to his disciples. In John's account of the Last Supper (Jn 13–17), the evangelist does not specifically tell us of the institution of the Eucharist. He has dealt with that topic earlier, in chapter six of his gospel. Instead, he takes us profoundly into the meaning of the Eucharist by relating the farewell discourses and priestly prayer

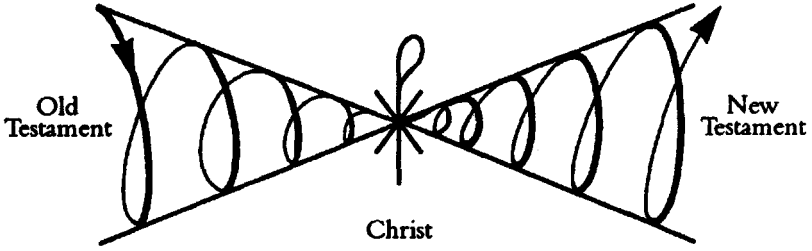
of Christ and also the solemn action he performed of washing his disciples' feet, where he showed himself to be the servant. We shall return to this action in chapter seven, but for the present let us recognise that the discourses, the prayer and the action are all implicitly eucharistic because of the setting in which they occur.

Thus, we are to understand that it is by receiving the sacred food and drink offered by Jesus that the disciples are to be *sanctified*, as Jesus asks of his Father (Jn 17:17). It is by receiving his body and blood that they partake in the sacrifice or consecration of the faithful servant, and so are consecrated themselves: 'for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth' (Jn 17:19). 'In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body' (*CCC* 1368).

Paul urges the Romans to live lives consecrated to God, not conformed to the world, but transformed in Christ: 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice', he says, 'holy and acceptable to God' (Rom 12:1–2). This transformation from being self-centred and worldly to being God-centred and holy has its focal point in the Eucharist. Addressing the Father in the name of Christ, the third Eucharistic Prayer in the *Roman Missal* says: 'may he make us an everlasting gift to you'.

Living Embodiment

The Old Testament can be said to spiral in towards Christ (represented by the *chi–rho* monogram in the figure), in the way we have described, as the faithful people progressively diminish in number until only one person stands at the focal point, which then becomes a point of transition, a passover, into the ambit of the new covenant. This we call the New Testament and it spirals out from Christ as new people in new places are increasingly gathered into the new people of God.



In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul reflects upon the historical profile of faith, from Abraham to the eventual fulfilment of the promises made to him by way of the only one of his physical descendants who is ultimately faithful, namely Christ. It was Abraham's *faith* that justified him and therefore it is faith that distinguishes his true children. 'Scripture foresaw that God was going to use faith to justify the pagans, and proclaimed the Good News long ago when Abraham was told: In you all the pagans will be blessed' (Gal 3:8). It was Christ who liberated faith from the realm of the Law by suffering the curse of the Cross, so that all could then be gathered in: 'so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might include the pagans, and so that through faith we might receive the promised Spirit' (3:14). Paul then plays with words to suggest that the singularity was also foreseen. 'Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his posterity. Scripture does not say "and to posterities", as if there were many, but "and to your posterity", as if there were one, which is Christ' (3:16). Thus it is that, in God's design, 'by belonging to Christ you are children of Abraham, the heirs he was promised' (3:29). Accordingly, in the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I), Abraham is acknowledged by gentile Christians all over the world as they celebrate the Eucharist as 'our father in faith' (cf. also Rom 4).

At this point in our account we must clearly recognise that Christ, and Christ alone, is able to play this focal part, this inclusive role, at the heart of history because he, and he alone, is *risen from the dead.* Earlier, I referred to the prophets, such as Ezekiel, as 'tentative' corporate personalities because, though they powerfully embody the people for a while, ultimately they relinquish this vital role by dying. Death is the downfall of corporate personality because the dead cannot embody the living. True, lasting embodiment can occur only in one who truly and forever *lives*, in a way no longer threatened by death. Living stones can be securely built only upon a sure foundation, no longer in danger of slipping away.

It follows that, when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he did so not just, as we have seen, in the light of his coming sacrifice, so that we might be participants in its mystery, but also and crucially in the light of his Resurrection, such that henceforth the principal day for its celebration will not be Thursday or Friday but Sunday, the paschal day (cf. *SC* 106). We celebrate our salvific incorporation into the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant on the day of his

triumph, which is not the seventh day, the sabbath day of God's rest, but the *eighth* day, the first day of God's new cycle of creation, in which '[t]he first creation finds its meaning and its summit' (*CCC* 349, cf. 1166, 2174–5).

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St Paul gives remarkable expression to something upon which he has evidently reflected deeply:

> the love of Christ overwhelms us when we reflect that if one has died for all, then all have died; and the reason he died for all was so that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them. (2 Cor 5:14–15)

The bald statement that if one man has died then all have died would, in itself, be a good summary of the tragedy that we call original sin. The original corporate personality in the Bible, one who himself embodies all of humanity, is Adam. His original disobedience, which broke his communion with God, necessarily broke also his corporate communion with all men and women, for that is a gift from God, being patterned on God's own life. As Adam lapsed from life into subjection to death, so inevitably did also the whole of humanity, no longer being securely rooted in *his* life. This is the predicament in which we are all now born. As Paul taught the Romans: 'death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall' (Rom 5:17), not by God's arbitrary decree but by the logic of the original failure of corporate personality because of Adam's wilfulness, after which all would-be corporate personalities fail simply because of their mortality, until the coming of the one who does *not* ultimately succumb to death.

Thus, we must realise that we can speak, as we have done, of the 'triumph' of the Cross only in the light of Christ's Resurrection. Without this light, his death speaks only of failure, not least the failure to incorporate humanity for its salvation. We may appropriately recall Paul's celebrated words to the Corinthians in his earlier letter: 'if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless'.

> If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins. And what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people. But Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and

> in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as in Adam all die, so all will be brought to life in Christ. (1 Cor 15:14, 17–22; cf. Rom 5:12–21)

Returning, then, to the striking passage in his second letter to them, we may note that Paul sets Christ's death apart from that of Adam by stipulating that it was a death *for us*, and moreover that it was then crowned by his *being raised* for us. He also distinguishes the consequence for others of Christ's death from that of Adam's death. Whereas the latter plunged fragmented humanity into self-centredness, by Christ's death we are released from the death of living just for ourselves and freed to live for him; its consequence, in other words, was the death of death.

The corporate personality securely established as a result has a notable mutuality of life: he lives for us and we live for him. This is the Christ who abundantly fulfils the promises made to Abraham and repairs with outweighing generosity the fall of Adam. The two genealogies of Christ in the gospels, linking Abraham with Christ (Mt 1:1–17) and Adam with Christ (Lk 3:23–38), do not just show his (schematic) physical descent from them; more profoundly, they line up these all-important figures in the history of the world and of faith for the gifts which they receive from Christ in return, as beneficiaries of his Resurrection. These are truly life-lines, not just from Adam and Abraham to Christ, but more importantly from him to them. They gave life to him and died; now he, by arresting the succession of their deceased descendants, has come to their rescue and, by being raised, has raised them, too. The *Catechism* tells of Christ descending to deliver the souls awaiting him 'in Abraham's bosom' (*CCC* 633), and it then quotes part of the ancient homily which forms part of the liturgy of Holy Saturday and tells of Christ going to find Adam himself and crying out to him: 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!' (*CCC* 635).

Temple and Jerusalem

We close this chapter by examining how two of the greatest symbols of Israel's unity, identity and faith, namely the Temple and Jerusalem, come through the transition from the Old to the New Testament. Each is revered as a place of gathering for salvation, but, when the whole world is to be assembled, what form will they take?

The children of Abraham were formed into a people after the Exodus from Egypt by a covenant, sealed between God and the twelve tribes of Israel by Moses when he sprinkled them with the blood of the communion sacrifice after casting half upon the altar (Ex 24:3–8). They were given a Law and eventually came into the Promised Land, where their capital became Jerusalem, in which Solomon built the magnificent Temple planned by King David.

In due course, Jeremiah foretold a new exodus (Jer 23:7–8), together with a new covenant and law (Jer 31:31–34), and Isaiah (Is 66:18–23) and Zechariah (Zech 8:22–23) foretold such a universal gathering that clearly a new Jerusalem and a new Temple would be needed to accommodate it. With the benefit of hindsight, we may note that, as the new law would be written 'deep within' the faithful, 'on their hearts' (Jer 31:33), and would no longer be on external tablets, so the blood of the new covenant would not be cast over them but drunk by them, taken deep within.

Zechariah beautifully expresses the stirring of hearts that will gradually draw the whole world to Jerusalem.

> The Lord Sabaoth says this. There will be other peoples yet, and citizens of great cities. And the inhabitants of one city will go to the next and say, 'Come, let us go and entreat the favour of the Lord, and seek the Lord Sabaoth; I am going myself.' And many peoples and great nations will come to seek the Lord Sabaoth in Jerusalem and to entreat the favour of the Lord. The Lord Sabaoth says this. In those days, ten men of nations of every language will take a Jew by the sleeve and say, 'We want to go with you, since we have learnt that God is with you.' (Zech 8:22–23)[5]

Isaiah makes clear that this mighty throng, that the Lord himself is going to gather from all nations to witness his glory (Is 66:18–19), will come with gifts to offer in the Temple on the holy mountain.

> As an offering to the Lord they will bring all your brothers, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, on dromedaries, from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem, says the Lord, like Israelites

[5] Is it, perhaps, the fulfilment of this prophecy that Jesus perceives in the request of the Greeks who have gone up to Jerusalem for the Passover to see him? His hearing the request instantly draws from him the recognition that 'the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (Jn 12:20–23).

> bringing oblations in clean vessels to the Temple of the Lord. . . . From New Moon to New Moon, from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down in my presence, says the Lord. (Is 66:20, 23)

Once again, the Old Testament gives us a wonderful vision with major questions attached: how and when is this to happen? What sort of Temple in what sort of Jerusalem could accommodate such a multitude? Not until Christ are the riddles solved and the promises fulfilled, in an utterly unforeseen way: he himself is the Temple and Jerusalem is the Eucharist.

We have already noted the latter point at some length in the previous chapter. Let us now give our attention particularly to the new Temple, before recapping our findings on the new Jerusalem. We shall see how inspired was the choice of John to sit on the shoulders of Ezekiel in the window at Chartres.

Ezekiel describes a vision he had in the year 573 BC. We can deduce the date precisely because he tells us that it was fourteen years since the destruction of Jerusalem and twenty-five years since the people were taken off into the captivity where he himself was then to be found. As a priest, he would have been particularly lamenting the fate of the Temple, first defiled by idolatrous rites so as to incur God's violent punishment and the withdrawal of his glory therefrom (Ezek 8–10) and then actually destroyed with the city by the Babylonians. He tells us: 'the hand of the Lord came on me'. 'In a divine vision he took me away to the land of Israel and put me down on a very high mountain, on the south of which there seemed to be built a city' (Ezek 40:1–2). This city is a new, expanded Jerusalem, in the midst of which is a rebuilt Temple which he meticulously examines. He sees the glory of God returning to the Temple (43:1–12) and then tells of a fertile, life-giving stream that flows 'from under the right side of the Temple' (47:1–12).

In his gospel, John records that Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover and drove the traders out of the Temple, complaining that they had turned his Father's house into a market (Jn 2:13–22). Indignant, the Jews ask him for a sign to justify his action. He tells them: 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up', but they mock him: 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' John himself adds a comment: 'But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he

had said.' Thus we see both that Jesus himself is the new Temple in person and also that it is by his Resurrection that he is established as this inclusive entity.

All of the evangelists relate the cleansing of the Temple, but John's particular preoccupation with the new Temple and with the life-giving stream that flows from it is apparent in two passages for which there is no synoptic parallel. First, he tells us what happened when Jesus went up again to Jerusalem, this time for the Feast of Tabernacles. The reading of Ezekiel's description of the stream flowing out of the Temple formed part of the liturgy of the feast. Against this background, Jesus made a dramatic proclamation.

> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and cried out: 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me!' As scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water. (Jn 7:37–38)

John comments that Jesus was speaking of the Spirit 'which those who believed in him were to receive'; 'there was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified' (Jn 7:39). Then, when he is standing at the foot of the Cross, the evangelist sees Jesus pierced with the lance and is overwhelmed to see Jesus' own promise fulfilled by what immediately happens: from his side, 'there came out blood and water'. 'This is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth – and he gives it so that you may believe as well' (Jn 19:34–35).

John's urgent testimony is that Jesus himself is the new Temple, as is confirmed by the vision of the new, heavenly Jerusalem which he describes in the Book of the Apocalypse. 'I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it' (Apoc 21:22–23). Moreover, John relates that, from the very throne of God and of the Lamb, there springs 'the river of life', which flows through the midst of the city with a life-giving fruitfulness that John uses the words of Ezekiel himself to describe (Apoc 22:1–2; quoting Ezek 47:12).

When do we actually enter this new Jerusalem, so as to worship in the new sanctuary, bathed in the light of the Lamb? John tells us that he was in exile, just like Ezekiel, when the Spirit possessed him, just as the hand of the Lord had gripped Ezekiel. He was on the Island

of Patmos and 'it was the Lord's day' (Apoc 1:9–10). As I suggested in chapter one, this detail may be a pointer to the Eucharist and an invitation to deduce that it was in the context of this celebration that John was caught up into the heavenly Jerusalem. Our reading of the Letter to the Hebrews in the last chapter would certainly support such an interpretation, for there we found strong evidence for the Eucharist being, indeed, the location of our experience of the new Jerusalem while we still pursue our earthly pilgrimage.

So we conclude that, in Christ, there is a definitive transition from the old covenant to a new one. A new people gathers to him and follows him in a new Exodus to their true homeland, in heaven. Located there is a new Jerusalem in which a new Temple has been established, which is big enough to embrace the worship of all the nations, a worship begun already in each and every Eucharist celebrated by countless local communities all over the earth. It is to the history of this celebration in relation to the Church that we now turn.

Chapter Three

The Story of the New People of God
Two Thousand Years in Three Steps

'Still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green' is the marvellously fertile image that Psalm 91 (92) uses for the just who are 'planted in the house of the Lord'. At the great age of 95, the eminent French Jesuit theologian, Henri de Lubac, died on 4 September 1991. Those who, with a sprig of green, sprinkled the coffin of this distinguished cardinal with holy water after his Requiem Mass in Notre Dame Cathedral saw that it bore the more humble title, 'Père Henri de Lubac SJ'. In a personal message for the occasion, read out after Communion, Pope John Paul II, who had given de Lubac the red hat in 1983, referred to him as 'a tireless scholar' and 'a spiritual master':

> With perspicacity, he plumbed the teachings of the Fathers and the medieval authors and found support in a penetrating knowledge of great modern writers, to nourish a personal reflection which, in a brilliant way became part of living tradition.[1]

The living tradition of the Church can aptly be called a *eucharistic* tradition since the Eucharist has been through the ages and remains still today the centre of Christian life. 'Do this in remembrance of me', said the Lord. 'The Eucharist makes the Church', said de Lubac, so neatly but so profoundly that many thought this must have been said first by one of the wise Fathers whom he had studied; but no, it was first said by *him*, in 1944, in his book *Corpus Mysticum*,[2] and repeated in 1953, in his *Méditation sur l'Eglise*.[3]

[1] *Oss Rom*, 16 September 1991, p. 12.

[2] *Corpus*, p. 104.

[3] Cf. *Splendour*, chapter four, pp. 134, 152. I have amended the translation to read

In the latter book, de Lubac described 'a man of the Church', evidently and poignantly giving a profile of the man he strove to be. 'Such a man will have fallen in love with the beauty of the House of God; the Church will have stolen his heart.' De Lubac added that 'he will root himself in her soil, form himself in her likeness and make himself one with her experience . . . holding her tradition in reverence and exploring deep into it'. He will be repelled by any notion that the Church of his day is 'already grown decrepit', because he knows that Tradition is 'a great living and permanent force' and that 'Christ is always present, today as yesterday, and right up to the consummation of the world, to continue his life, not to start it again' (*Splendour*, pp. 241–4). Moreover, he said that it is *in his Eucharist* that Christ is 'truly the heart of the Church' (ibid., p. 161). Thus, the living tradition in which the Church and her faithful members have an unquenchable spiritual vitality, whatever their physical age, can, indeed, truly be termed *eucharistic*.

While rejecting any 'cult of nostalgia', de Lubac recognises the pleasure of 'going back in spirit to the age of the new-born Church when . . . the echo of the Apostles' preaching was still audible' (ibid., p. 243). The 'Fathers' (in Latin, *patres*), who have now been mentioned twice, are the leading Christian thinkers and writers, often bishops and normally saints, from the early centuries of the Church's life. Strictly speaking, the age of the Fathers, the 'patristic period', in which they flourished, lasted until about the year 800, but more loosely it can be stretched to around 1200. Then the patristic period gave way to the scholastic period; the great thinkers and writers of the Church were now best characterised not as Fathers but as 'scholastics' or 'schoolmen', because they were the eminent professors in the newly-founded theological schools and universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna and elsewhere.

Broadly speaking, with various ups and downs, the scholastic period lasted well into the twentieth century, we might even say to about 1960. It was the Second Vatican Council, from 1962 to 1965, that finally signalled its demise. However, the seeds of the renewal that the council brought about had been sown by bold pioneers such

'makes' in both cases, instead of 'produces' and 'realises'. 'The Heart of the Church' is the title of this chapter. As de Lubac noted in his memoirs, the book's English translation, made in 1956, was given an unfortunately 'pompous title', *The Splendour of the Church*, cf. *Service*, p. 77.

as de Lubac decades earlier. That renewal was a *patristic* renewal, as can be seen from even a glance at the Council documents; they contain abundant references to the teachings of the Church Fathers.

It may well seem reckless to try to cover in one sweep two thousand years. With twenty-one ecumenical councils from Nicaea to Vatican II and two hundred and sixty-six popes from St Peter to Pope John Paul II, how can it be done? I suggest that we can gain a clear idea of what has been happening simply by thinking in terms of three periods following the time of the apostles whose writings are contained in the New Testament. First, the patristic period, lasting roughly from 100 to 1200; then the scholastic period, from about 1200 to 1900, when the modern period really began, heralded by four strong movements of renewal: liturgical, patristic, biblical and ecumenical.

What characterises the modern period is a *creative* return to the teachings of the patristic period, not going backwards in a frightened retreat from today's world, but rather wanting to draw deeply from the well-springs of the early Church so as to face the world of today with better resources. That may seem a paradox, but the fact is that, in some ways, the Fathers encountered a world rather like our own, one needing to be evangelised almost from scratch, in contrast to the mainly Christian medieval world.

One of the major achievements of Henri de Lubac was to show, in *Corpus Mysticum*, that the transition from the patristic period to the scholastic period involved quite a major shift in attitude towards the Eucharist. If 'The Eucharist Makes the Church' can be taken as an appropriate motto for the first period, to catch the mentality of the second period we should rather say, 'The Church Makes the Eucharist'. Let us now examine what these banners mean.

The Patristic Period

A prime question as the apostles died out was what was the shape into which the Church would settle. How would the followers of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, organise themselves for the living out of their faith? This faith can already be termed 'catholic' because 'catholic' means 'full' rather than 'extensive'. As de Lubac points out, the Church was already catholic 'on the morning of Pentecost, when all her members could be contained in a small room' (*Catholicism*, p. 49).

If we look at the letters of St Paul, we see that he addresses them to 'the church of God in Corinth' (1 Cor 1:2), 'the church of the Thessalonians' (1 Thess 1:1), 'the churches of Galatia' (Gal 1:2), and so on. Also, Paul often uses his letters to convey greetings to or from particular eucharistic communities, notably calling them 'the *church* in the house of . . .' (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm v. 2). There is a strong sense that the Church exists *in each place*; she is many *local* realities bound together in love and at peace. In these various places it seems that Paul appointed people called 'elders' to oversee the Christian community (e.g. Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5). The word used for 'elder' is either *episkopos, overseer* or *guardian*, from which the term *bishop* is derived (Tim 3:1; Phil 1:1), or *presbyteros*, which has given us the words *presbyter* and *priest* (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5).

In other words, the situation with regard to leadership and order in the various churches was still very *fluid*. This is hardly surprising, given that there was still on this earth the overwhelming presence of the apostles themselves, like Paul.

For the beginnings of some stability in the structure of the Church, we must look to the following generation, just a short time afterwards. Antioch in Syria was one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire. It was also one of the earliest centres of Christianity, the place where the Acts of the Apostles tells us that the followers of the Lord were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). One of the first bishops there was St Ignatius. Ignatius of Antioch was taken under guard all the way from Antioch to Rome to be martyred around the year 107, and on the way he wrote a famous set of letters to various local churches to encourage them in their faith. These letters constitute a priceless testimony to the life of the very early Church as it settled into a permanent shape.

What does he say? What was that shape? Ignatius urges all the communities he addresses to be united, the sign of that unity being one Eucharist. 'Stand fast', he says, 'in the faith of Jesus Christ, in his love, in his passion and in his resurrection'. 'All come together in common . . . breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote which saves us from death, driving away evil and causing us to live in God through Jesus Christ.'[4] The Eucharist is the *cause* of our life in Christ; in other

[4] Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians*, 20 (quoted in *CCC* 1405); cf. *Philippians*, 4.

words, *the Eucharist makes the Church.* That is the conviction that unites this first period.

When the local church community comes together, it does so around three definite ministries that Ignatius firmly identifies: the bishop, the presbyters and the deacons. Without these three ministries, he says bluntly, 'there is no church'.[5]

So, Ignatius portrays for us a scene in which there are many local churches, each having the same structure, the same central celebration and the same identity. Moreover, within the communion of communities, the local church of Rome 'presides in love'.[6] Such is his account of the structure of the Church around the year 100, a structure already becoming established and already looking familiar.

Week in, week out, Christians gathered in local communities to celebrate their faith in Christ our Saviour. They had not yet finalised the formal Creed to express that faith in words; they were still exploring it in worship. They had not yet even finally decided which books should be included in the Bible and honoured as truly inspired. That did not happen until the year 382, in the time of Pope Damasus (304–84, pope from 366), when a council in Rome gave a complete listing. All of these things were still to come, but the weekly rhythm of the Eucharist in the local churches was already beating, underpinning the Church's developing life.

The unfolding story was punctuated by great councils of bishops, the 'ecumenical' councils, so called because the bishops came 'from all the [known] world'. These gradually put the pieces of the Creed into place. The first council of all, not counting the Council of Jerusalem which is described in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 15), was held at Nicaea in the year 325 and was summoned by the Roman Emperor Constantine. Against the heresy of Arius, the Council declared that the Son is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father: 'begotten not made' and '*of one being* (*homoousios*) with the Father' (*DS* 125), as we still say every Sunday.

Soon afterwards, against those who denied the true divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Council of Constantinople in 381 declared that the Holy Spirit is 'with the Father and the Son . . . worshipped and glorified' (*DS* 150), again as we affirm each Sunday. The Spirit's

[5] *Trallians*, 3.

[6] *Romans*, Introduction.

divinity is implicit in that statement, because worship and glory are given only to God.

After this clarification of the eternal being of the God in whom we believe, controversy focused upon God taking flesh and becoming man in the Incarnation. What about Jesus Christ, God made man? Is he truly one person with two natures, so that Mary his mother logically deserves the title 'Mother of God', *theotókos* in Greek? Yes, said the Council of Ephesus in 431 (*DS* 250–3), giving the impetus to a great spread in devotion to Mary, exemplified by the building within ten years of the spectacular basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome.

So, we have the position of Christ our Lord being clarified and the position of Mary, too, in strict dependence upon him. However, the fullest clarification of the identity of the Lord was given by the next council, held at Chalcedon in 451. Against a variety of speculations to the contrary, this council painstakingly defined that Christ is one Person in whom there are two natures, divine and human, which are united 'without confusion, without change, without division and without separation' (*DS* 302). This definition, which seems so dull and pedantic, is in some ways the most decisive one of all. We shall note in chapter five, for instance, that it underpins major statements about the identity of the Church, patterned after the mystery of Christ himself.

We have seen the Creed being formed by the early councils and vital elements of the Christian faith being identified, all of these things becoming clearer as the Church entered ever more deeply into the faith she celebrated each week in the Eucharist. These councils were decisively led and influenced by famous saints, such as Athanasius, Basil, Cyril and Leo, some of the foremost Fathers of the Church. It is striking that they were themselves bishops, of Alexandria (Athanasius and Cyril), Caesarea (Basil) and Rome (Leo). In other words, they were people who, week by week, were leading Christian communities in the celebration of the Eucharist, that is, in the *living* of faith, which grounds *reflection* upon it.

We cannot move on from this period without mentioning one of the greatest Fathers of all, St Augustine, himself also a bishop, of Hippo on the north African coast, from 395 until his death in 430. Augustine had to contend not only with several major heresies, but also with the enormous civil upheaval which followed the sack of Rome itself in 410. In his thought, Christ and the Church are well

nigh inseparable. Together they form what he calls the *totus Christus*, the whole Christ, head and members. To receive one is to receive the other, too. So Augustine can even say that the eucharistic food which renders those who receive it immortal and incorruptible is nothing other than the blessed gathering of the saints in heaven, to which we look forward.[7] He memorably likens the process by which the eucharistic bread is formed to that by which new Christians are initiated in the following teaching on the reception of communion.

> 'The Body of Christ', you are told, and you answer 'Amen'. Be members then of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true. Why is this mystery accomplished with bread? We shall say nothing of our own about it, rather let us hear the Apostle [Paul], who speaking of this sacrament says: 'We being many are one body, one bread.' Understand and rejoice. Unity, devotion, charity! One bread: and what is this one bread? One body made up of many. Consider that the bread is not made of one grain alone, but of many. During the time of exorcism, you were, so to say, in the mill. At baptism you were wetted with water. Then the Holy Spirit came into you like the fire which bakes the dough. Be then what you see and receive what you are.[8]

For Augustine, to receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist is, in fact, *to be received by him* into his body which is the Church. He hears Christ saying to him: 'You will not change me into you, but you will be changed into me.'[9] What is basically being understood here? The real body of Christ is the Church, the heavenly community which will be revealed on the last day, and which, we pray, will include ourselves. The place where we enter most fully into the great historical plan of God to mould that community is in the celebration of the Eucharist. Augustine always looked *through* this celebration to what it is *for*, to what is the end in view. The Eucharist is the sacrament 'by which the Church is now united',[10] he said.

In other words, *the Eucharist makes the Church*; we are the *real* body of Christ, formed into this identity by receiving the Eucharist. The

[7] Augustine, *In Joannem*, 26, 6, 17 (*PL* 35, 1614).

[8] Augustine, *Sermons* 272 and 234 (*PL* 38, 1247 and 1116), quoted by de Lubac, *Catholicism*, p. 92; cf. *CCC* 1396.

[9] Augustine, *Confessions* 7, 10, 16 (*PL* 32, 742); a text which de Lubac applies to the Eucharist in *Catholicism*, pp. 99–100.

[10] Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 12, 20 (*PL* 42, 265); cf. *LG* 26.

Eucharist is where the Church mystically comes into being, hence the Eucharist is the *mystical* body of Christ. That is the perception which runs through the patristic period, giving the first ten to twelve centuries of Christianity a distinctive stamp. The Church is *defined* by the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Scholastic Period

In a nutshell, what indicates the major transition that takes us into the scholastic period is the use of quite different, increasingly juridical, definitions for the Church, and, significantly, the tendency to call the *Church*, rather than the *Eucharist*, the *mystical body of Christ*. These changes came about gradually in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the way of doing theology was itself changing, the writers and teachers being now, as we noted earlier, not so much bishops as professors, whose forum was not so much the weekly Eucharist as the lecture room in the Schools. A number of the leading professors or 'scholastics' belonged to the newly founded Dominican Order, most notably St Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–74).

One of the first scholastic theologians was the rather infamous Berengar, who bore the title of 'Master of the Schools' around the year 1070 at Tours, in France. Rather provocatively, he started probing the mystery of the Eucharist, focusing in on the elements of bread and wine at its heart and questioning whether there is any real change in them during the Mass. The Church authorities naturally wanted to correct Berengar, but instead of reasserting the full Augustinian picture, they rather fell into the trap and themselves focused on the elements, too, asserting that there is indeed a real transformation in them and leaving it at that. Armed with newly discovered and translated philosophical tools, especially the works of Aristotle, the scholastics analysed this change and developed the idea of 'transubstantiation', which the Church formally sanctioned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (cf. *DS* 802). The substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ in the Mass.

Let us be clear, Augustine would not have objected to this idea at all, for it was truly his belief also that the eucharistic bread and wine are transformed. He would simply have wondered how teaching on the Eucharist had become bogged down on this point. The consequences of this development were very considerable. To

emphasise that the change is indeed real and that Christ is indeed *really present*, the Eucharist shed its previous name, as the *mystical* body of Christ, which kept our overall gaze on the Church as his *real* body, and came to be called itself the *real* body of Christ, rather encouraging the train of thought to stop *there*. From being the defining source of the Church, the Eucharist became an end in itself. With evident dismay, de Lubac says that 'the mystery to understand' became 'the miracle to believe' (*Corpus*, p. 269).

Within this changed perspective, being ordained gave a man personally the power to bring about the transformation in the elements and, since every ordinary priest could do this, it was not at all clear whether the sacrament of holy orders had anything to do with bishops. Becoming a bishop was not an ordination but a consecration to *govern* the Church community, one of whose activities was the celebration of the Eucharist by simple priests, in small parish communities, or even by themselves.

So, the Eucharist was the *priest's* job; *bishops* governed the Church. Priests were concerned with the *real* body of Christ, in the celebration of the Mass, and bishops with his *mystical* body, as the Church herself was now called. What a wedge had been driven into the Augustinian view! The Eucharist had become submerged in a system of seven sacraments, first defined as such in 1274 by the Second Council of Lyons (*DS* 860), all seven being activities of the Church. That is why this period can be characterised by the slogan: 'The Church Makes the Eucharist'. The Eucharist is just one of the things that the Church, which is defined by other criteria, does.

What actually defines the Church now became a moot point. The way was open for all sorts of social, juridical and political definitions. Around the year 1300, scholarly texts dealing simply with the Church and her powers began to appear in a sudden rush. This external and institutional vision culminated in the definition of the Church given by one of the leading and indeed most saintly figures of the Counter-Reformation. Around 1590, Robert Bellarmine said: 'the one and true Church is the community of the faithful who profess the same Christian faith and participate in the same sacraments under the government of legitimate pastors, above all, the one Vicar of Christ on earth, the bishop of Rome'.[11] The

[11] Bellarmine, *De controversiis christianae fidei adversus nostri temporis haereticos*, bk 3, ch 2.

Eucharist is in there somewhere, but simply as one of the things done by the juridically defined Church: the Church makes the Eucharist.

Bellarmine was one of the earliest members of the Jesuit order, founded by St Ignatius Loyola at the time of Luther and Calvin, in the midst of the Reformation, to spearhead the Catholic response. Clearly the Catholic Church was in need of reform, but, at its heart, did the Protestant Reformation have the answer? We must answer in the negative when we realise that what the Catholic Church had rather lost on entering into the scholastic period was the centrality and prominence of the Eucharist as the celebration which gives the Church her identity, and when we acknowledge that restoring that centrality was not generally high on the agenda of the Reformers, or at least not on that of their followers. Centrality tended to be given, rather, to the Word of God in the scriptures. The Eucharist, in fact, was often sadly marginalised, becoming in places something celebrated only occasionally during the course of the year.

So, this was no prescription for a radical cure of the Church's ills. It certainly was not a return to authentic, primitive Christianity, because, as we have seen, the weekly Eucharist was fundamental to the life of the early Church. We ought, in fact, to give some credit to the Council of Trent (1545–63), held in the midst of the upheaval of the Reformation, for attempting an authentic renewal of the Church from the early Fathers. However, as we shall see in chapter five, though the Council of Trent saw *how* a thorough renewal of the Church from her early roots could be performed, it did not at that time have the resources to do the job. Moreover, facing what were considered to be major errors in the teaching of the Reformers, the Catholic Church was much more concerned simply to consolidate her position. Pope Pius V decisively inherited the implementation of the Council from Pius IV in 1565. He declared his fellow Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, a Doctor of the Church in 1567 and ordered a new complete edition of his works in 1570, clearly intending them to have pride of place in the host of new diocesan seminaries for the training of the clergy and to replace Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (written in 1155–8) as the standard theological text.

A thorough self-examination would have to wait. The wait turned out to be quite lengthy. A few centuries elapsed in which the scholastic approach continued in the Church. As recently as 1954,

while speaking to priests in France about the sacrament of ordination, a Benedictine scholar, Bernard Botte, was horrified to discover that their theological training had left them without an understanding of where the bishop fitted in, this we recall being one of the characteristics of early scholasticism, eight hundred years before. Ordination just applied to priests, giving them the power for transubstantiation. The bishop somehow floated above the Eucharist, governing the Church.

Botte was one of the number of pioneers, led by de Lubac and others, whose research in various fields was about to break through these tired notions and renew the Catholic Church radically at the Second Vatican Council. Pioneering efforts were concentrated in the four movements already mentioned, in at least three of which the French-speaking world was strongly represented, for example, by Botte and many other Benedictines in the Liturgical Movement, by de Lubac in the Patristic Movement and by Yves Congar in the Ecumenical Movement. It is notable that Pope John XXIII, who summoned Vatican II, was papal nuncio in France from 1944 to 1953. Familiar with the currents of renewal starting to flow there at that time, he was able in due course to invite them to flow into the whole Church.

The Modern Period

Scholasticism envisaged the Church as a pyramid. At the bottom were the lay-people for whom the priests said Mass. Governing priests and people were the bishops, who, in turn, received their jurisdiction from the pope at the top of the pyramid. This position of the pope at the summit was decisively secured by the definition of his infallibility at the First Vatican Council in 1869–70 (*DS* 3074). Many people thought that, after this definition, it would be unnecessary to have any more ecumenical councils of bishops to determine major issues. The pope would be able to deal with everything, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Pope John XXIII gave everyone a major surprise, therefore, when he announced in 1959 that he was summoning an ecumenical council. Some very set ideas were about to be shaken. He wanted fresh air to blow away the cobwebs and the Church to recognise the strong forces for renewal that had been growing within her for decades. In particular, he wanted the Council's teaching about the

Church herself to be not scholastic and institutional but biblical and patristic. Guardini's excitement in 1922 was caused by his realisation that, from being thought of as 'a thing exterior from which men might receive life', the Church was beginning to be understood as 'a thing into which men must be incorporated that they might live with its life'.[12] Pope John wanted fully and officially to carry through this transition.

One of the most vibrant biblical images for the Church is that of the body of Christ (e.g. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12–30; Eph 4:12; 5:21–33; Col 1:18, 24). However, this image had been dropped by Catholics at the time of the Reformation because, while they were convinced that the Church must be a clear public witness to Christ, Protestants had used this image to emphasise an inner, invisible allegiance of each Christian to the Lord. Now surely there is truth in *both* these views. There must be both a public witness and a strong, inner life; but how could this be expressed? It took a while to find a way.

'Outward sign of inward grace' is a formula familiar to Catholics as the definition of a sacrament. However, manifesting the legacy of scholasticism, Catholics would immediately tend to think in terms of the *seven* sacraments. De Lubac is probably the one who deserves the credit for inviting us to think *big* and recognise the Church herself as 'the great sacrament which contains and vitalises all the others' (*Splendour*, p. 203). Each of the seven sacraments expresses and strengthens the sacramentality of the Church. If grace was previously understood as something invisible, dispensed sacramentally to individuals, with de Lubac's encouragement it was increasingly recognised as something corporate, namely the life of the Church, and moreover as something *concrete*, for that life centres upon the celebration of the Eucharist, where the Church is dramatically revealed.[13] In 1938, de Lubac wrote: '[i]f Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ; she represents him in the full and ancient meaning of the term; she really makes him present' (*Catholicism*, p. 76; cf. *Splendour*, p. 203).

As we shall see in chapter five, Vatican II used this key concept no less than three times in its major document on the Church, *Lumen*

[12] Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, p. 11 (cf. opening of Introduction, above).

[13] Cf. my article, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology', *One in Christ* 22 (1986), pp. 314–31; also Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics* (St Paul, Slough, 1988), chapter one, 'The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council'.

Gentium (cf. *LG* 1, 9, 48). The Church, it says, 'is in the nature of a sacrament – a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all people' (*LG* 1), something, that is, both full of grace and intended to be seen.

In its very first document, on the liturgy, the council had already stated that the occasion when the Church is *most fully visible* is when the community comes together for the Eucharist, not just the people around their parish priest, but rather the people of the local church gathered around their *bishop*, with all his priests surrounding him (*SC* 41), as, for instance, at the annual Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday. Thus, from the outset, the council lifted the Eucharist out of the inner workings of the Church and put it firmly into the spotlight. At the same time, the *bishop* was rehabilitated as its primary celebrant.

Lumen Gentium makes both of these points. No longer does the sacrament of ordination apply only to priests, such that bishops are promoted to something else, as the scholastics maintained. On the contrary, to be a bishop is to have the fulness of the sacrament of orders (*LG* 21), and thus it is primarily the responsibility of the bishop to celebrate the Eucharist; priests who do so throughout his diocese represent him (*LG* 26, 28; cf. *PO* 5). Local gatherings around the bishop of each place are properly to be called 'churches', just as we saw they were in the letters of St Paul. Whenever such a community celebrates the Eucharist, Christ himself is present, actively constituting 'the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church' (*LG* 26). With these words, the council returns to the early understanding that the Eucharist makes the Church. The name mentioned in the footnote at this point is none other than that of St Augustine.

When the Eucharist is restored to the prominence it had for the early Christians, the pyramid that scholasticism constructed to understand the Church collapses. There is no pyramid to be found in the teaching of Vatican II. Instead, before *Lumen Gentium* dealt separately with the bishops or the pope or the laity (in chapters three and four), who all have particular callings within the Church, it gave a strongly biblical account (in chapter two) of the People of God as a whole, all of whom share, as it said, 'the dignity and freedom of the children of God'. Together they make up 'a communion of life, love and truth' and all are sent out by God to be 'the light of the world and the salt of the earth' (*LG* 9).

The Catholic Church now teaches that all of her members are on the same level in terms of Christian dignity, because of their common baptism, and that all share a common vocation, namely the call to holiness. The different vocations that people have within the Church are simply the different forms that that shared vocation takes: 'all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fulness of Christian life and to the perfection of love' (*LG* 40); 'all the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness' (*LG* 42). The faithful are knit together in local communities by their respective gifts, these local churches around their bishops being themselves bound together in a worldwide communion around the Bishop of Rome, the pope, who 'presides in truth and love' (cf. *UU* 97), such that the Catholic Church on earth can be regarded as a communion of local communities, a 'Church of churches',[14] rather like the vision of Ignatius of Antioch with which we started this chapter.

Before closing the chapter, we should note that the Orthodox Church has also emerged during this century from a period of scholasticism, though this phase began several centuries later in the East than it did in the West, namely, after the fall of Byzantium, in 1453. Georges Florovsky, one of the leading theologians in the Orthodox emigration to the West following the Russian Revolution of 1917, and a teacher of John Zizioulas, to whom we have already referred, analysed this period. He describes how scholasticism was progressively introduced into Russia, as part of the general importation of Western ways, particularly under Peter the Great (1672–1725), to the point where prayer was conducted in Slavonic, but theology in Latin, learnt in the newly established theological schools or seminaries.[15] Zizioulas himself believes that Orthodox liberation from this 'Babylonian captivity' has also been the result of Western influence. Giving particular credit to de Lubac and Congar, he says that the 'return to the ancient patristic sources, which has characterised Western theology in our century, is largely responsible for the Orthodox theological renaissance'.[16] It is in the strength of their *mutual* return to the Fathers, that Catholics and

[14] Cf. the title of Jean Tillard's book, *Eglise d'églises* (Cerf, Paris, 1987). Vatican II uses the term 'body of Churches [*corpus Ecclesiarum*]' (*LG* 23).

[15] Cf. Georges Florovsky, *Aspects of Church History* (Nordland, Belmont, 1975), pp. 166–7.

[16] Zizioulas, article on 'Ortodossia', in *Enciclopedia del Novecento*, vol. 5 (Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome, 1980), p. 6.

Orthodox have engaged in such a fruitful dialogue in recent times.[17]

To see more closely how the return to the Fathers has come about, let us now focus upon the modern period and follow the lifelong theological endeavours of the man whose ninety-five years embraced this period and reflected many of its controversies. By following the story of Henri de Lubac, who was so influential in the renewal that has been achieved, we shall better understand not only many of the theological insights gained into the mystery of the Church and the Eucharist during this century, but also the sometimes painful vicissitudes of the life of the earthly community that has this celebration at its heart.

[17] Cf. below, chapter six.

Chapter Four

'A Modern Father of the Church'
The Trials and Triumphs of Henri de Lubac

The spirit of Henri de Lubac blows most freely in pages of fragments. His two volumes of paradoxes contain some of his most characteristic and attractive writing. Published in 1946 and 1955, respectively, during a period when he was most under the suspicion generated against him in high ecclesiastical places by advocates of a timeless but worn out philosophy, they manifest his conviction that life is more complex than we might wish to think.

> The word *paradox* is paradoxical. Let the paradox be. But how should we define the frequently incomplete reflections of this little book? The reader will decide. In no way, however, are they intended to be the inventions of a solitary spirit. Remember, after all, that the Gospel is full of paradoxes, that man himself is a living paradox, and that according to the Fathers of the Church, the Incarnation is the supreme Paradox: *Paradox of paradoxes.* (*Paradoxes*, p. 8, amended translation)

> [P]aradox exists everywhere in reality, before existing in thought. It is there, everywhere, permanently. It is for ever reborn. The universe itself, our universe in its process of becoming, is paradoxical. The synthesis of the world is not complete. . . . Paradox, in the best sense, is objectivity. The higher life rises, the richer, the more interior it becomes, the more ground paradox gains. Already sovereign in ordinary human life, its chosen realm is the life of the spirit. The mystical life is its triumph. (ibid., p. 10, amended translation)

Hints and glints of so much of his work are here. His fascination with the encounter of God and man, with the mystery of God

becoming man in Christ and with the even deeper mystery of Christ indwelling the faithful, prompting the mystical life to which all are called, is apparent. So, too, is his attachment to the teaching of the Fathers. His sense of a *drive* within the universe to completion in God bears the unmistakable mark of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), a lifelong friend, whom de Lubac regarded as a mystic and as one of the prime inspirers of his ground-breaking first book, *Catholicism*, published in 1938.

It was that drive, from nature into grace, in the microcosm which is man that was to be de Lubac's constant preoccupation, as we shall see. Already in *Catholicism*, he summarised the theme upon which he was later to write many variations: 'the vision of God is a free gift, and yet the desire for it is at the root of every soul'. Neither logic nor common sense will bring us to this truth; it is a paradox, a prime instance where 'revelation presents us with two assertions which seem at first unconnected or even contradictory' (*Catholicism*, p. 327). Moreover, the mystics who pursue that desire to the end are no solitary spirits, they do so in the deepest solidarity with all humanity. Quoting from Teilhard, de Lubac likened them to 'the snowy summits whose impassive peaks continually breathe for us the invigorating currents of the higher atmosphere' (ibid., p. 346, amended translation). Like mountains, they actively channel a better air down into the valleys where most of us live. That Christianity, in fact, has no place for individualism, being on the contrary thoroughly *social* in its doctrine and life, was de Lubac's point, remarkably sustained and elaborated, in this opening work. 'Fundamentally, the Gospel is obsessed with the idea of the unity of human society' (ibid., p. 15; quotation from E. Masure).

Implicit in de Lubac's espousal of paradox was his rejection of another mode of enquiry, that of formal argumentation or dialectics, with *pros*, *cons* and conclusions progressively set down: the method, in short, of scholasticism. 'Paradox has more charm than dialectics', he says, 'it is also more realist and more modest, less tense and less hurried; its function is to remind the dialectician when each new stage is reached in the argument, that however necessary this forward movement is no real progress has been made' (*Paradoxes*, pp. 9–10). Real progress, we may deduce, is movement upward rather than forward. The gentle rebuff to scholastic pretensions quickly becomes sharper.

> Is intelligence a faculty of truth, or is it a faculty for the satisfaction at whatever cost of the taste for clarity, order, systematisation? Is it a power of penetration into the heart of reality, or a tool for constructing architecture of the mind? . . . There is a cult of intelligence which, in point of fact, betrays and mocks it, because it is not the cult of truth. (ibid., p. 104)

De Lubac's uncompromising stance was evident, some years earlier, in *Catholicism*. 'Many are already growing impatient with the new scholasticism,' he said, 'the mixture of abstractions and metaphors in which it tends to be entangled' (*Catholicism*, p. 324). Opposition to the holder of such views was also beginning to become apparent at that early stage in his theological life, long before the major crisis with which he is normally associated. One of the abstractions and metaphors that most irked de Lubac was the theory of 'pure nature', but before we turn to that let us first recap the history of the 'new scholasticism', so as to set in context the path of this bold pioneer of a better way.

Scholasticism

We have already seen that St Thomas Aquinas' elevation to being the standard reference point for Catholic theology did not actually occur until three hundred years after his death. Influential in the sixteenth-century revival of Aquinas' teaching, or 'Thomism', were two particular scholars: Thomas de Vio (1469–1534), a Dominican cardinal, known as 'Cajetan' from his Italian birthplace of Gaeta, and Francisco de Suarez (1548–1617), a Jesuit theologian from Spain. Cajetan's monumental *Commentary* (written in 1507–22) on Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* remains one of the prime scholastic texts and Suarez lectured on the *Summa* at the prestigious Collegio Romano from 1580 to 1585.

However, by the early-nineteenth century, scholasticism had all but died out when another revival took place, around 1830, at the Collegio Romano. This was to have important consequences because one of the young clerical students in Rome at that time was a future pope, Gioacchino Pecci (1810–1903). As Pope Leo XIII, he issued an encyclical letter, *Aeterni Patris*, in 1879, just a year after his election, in which he enjoined the study of St Thomas. Scholasticism, or rather neo-scholasticism, was to be the only philosophy and theology taught in Catholic seminaries. This strategy for promoting

strength and renewal in the Church actually resulted in a great flowering of scholasticism in the work of a distinguished host of its exponents.

Nevertheless, it was to be a final flourish, because of factors both external and internal. Leo XIII also encouraged Catholic biblical studies, in his encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), and by establishing the Biblical Commission in 1902, and the results of these and increasing historical and patristic researches were to prove incapable of being fitted into a neat scholastic scheme. Moreover, the coherence of the scholastic legacy itself came into question, most stunningly when de Lubac demonstrated, in his book *Surnaturel* (1946), that Cajetan and Suarez had distorted the teaching of St Thomas on the central question of the relationship between nature and grace and that a travesty of the teaching of the master was currently being offered in his name. He paid for the results of his honest and faithful research with a decade of silence, imposed upon him in 1950 in the aftermath of Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis*. His re-emergence came in 1960, when Pope John XXIII invited him to help shape Catholic doctrine for a new, non-scholastic age, by taking part in preparation for the Second Vatican Council.

De Lubac's fascination with nature and the supernatural, that is, broadly, with the question of our human constitution and our divine destiny, began soon after he entered the Society of Jesus in 1913. A meeting with the philosopher, Maurice Blondel (1861–1949), encouraged his reflections and developed into a strong and mutually supportive friendship. De Lubac later credited Blondel with having provided the 'main impulse' for 'Latin theology's return to a more authentic tradition' in its teaching on this question (*Catechesis*, p. 37).

Excluded from France, the Jesuit novitiate had taken refuge in England. Thus, it was in Canterbury that de Lubac spent 1918 to 1920, after war service that left him with severe shrapnel wounds from which he was to suffer for most of his life. In these formative years, he read works by two of the greatest Fathers, which deeply influenced his emerging theological vision: the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus (c.130–c.210) and the *Confessions* of Augustine (354–430). From 1920 to 1923, he studied philosophy, especially that of Thomas Aquinas, in Jersey, and then began his formal theological studies in Hastings in 1924, from which he moved to Lyon in 1926

for two more years' study, in the middle of which he was ordained priest (1927).

The mystery of the supernatural had recently been under investigation philosophically, by Blondel, and scripturally, by Pierre Rousselot, whose papers had been passed to de Lubac after his death at Verdun in 1915, and it fell to de Lubac to contribute historically to the considerable collective enterprise. Encouraged by his professor, Joseph Huby, he examined how the sound and ancient tradition of the Church, expounded by Augustine and Aquinas, had fared in the hands of various generations of scholastics.

In one sentence at the opening of his *Confessions*, Augustine voices the essence of the authentic tradition with a clarity that cuts through the endless intricacies of later speculation: 'You have made us for yourself, [Lord,] and our heart is restless until it rests in you.'[1] Here is restated what Irenaeus had already said in similarly memorable form: 'the glory of God is man alive [*vivens homo*]; and the life of man is the vision of God'.[2] Thomas Aquinas gave expression to the same fundamental truth, though perhaps less elegantly, in various ways: 'every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine substance';[3] 'the end of a reasonable creature is to attain to beatitude, and that can only consist in the kingdom of God, which in its turn is nothing else than the well-ordered society of those who enjoy the vision of God'.[4]

With these clear statements of the human being's natural desire for the vision of God in our minds, let us sketch briefly de Lubac's account of the breakdown of the traditional doctrine. Of course, the traditional doctrine is profoundly paradoxical, holding together, as it does, two seemingly incompatible elements, a natural desire and a supernatural gift, either one of which common sense will always urge us to jettison, so as to live comfortably with the other. De Lubac teaches us to beware of common sense in theology; he labels those who distorted the traditional doctrine as 'our "common sense" theologians' (*Mystery*, p. 210).

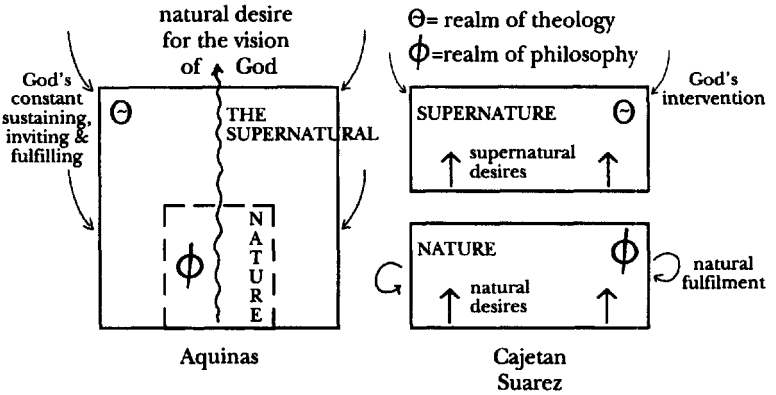
[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 1, 1 (*PL* 32, 661).

[2] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4, 20, 7 (*PG* 7, 1037).

[3] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3, 57, 3; quoted by de Lubac in *Mystery*, pp. 73, 256.

[4] Ibid., 4, 50, 5; quoted by de Lubac in *Catholicism*, p. 130.

The fact is that Aquinas was more deft in wielding the philosophical tools supplied by Aristotle than were many of his successors. This famously large man impressively walked a very slender tightrope, which many of his commentators unwittingly fell off. The scholastics derived two particular principles from Aristotle. First, there can be no natural desire for something that cannot naturally be had;[5] secondly, it is greater to be able to do more with external help than to be able to do less by oneself.[6] Aquinas regarded the first as generally applicable *except* in the case of man before God, where it is superseded by the second. Man is an utterly paradoxical special case, being constituted by God with a natural desire for something that he will need external (divine) help to attain, namely the supernatural vision of God (the beatific vision). On the other hand, Cajetan and Suarez applied the first *universally*, maintaining that natural desires can have only natural ends, and thereby precluding in man any *natural* desire for the vision of God.



The diagram shows schematically the difference between Aquinas' view of our human constitution, on the left, and that of Cajetan and Suarez, on the right. Within the changed perspective of Cajetan and Suarez, nature became a closed realm or tier, wherein natural desires are naturally fulfilled. Above this level, a *further* realm or tier of *supernatural* desires would have to be opened up by God for the

[5] Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo*, 2, 8, 290a.
[6] Cf. ibid., 2, 12, 292a.

supernatural fulfilment which he alone can give. The higher tier echoes, but now with God's explicit involvement, the pattern of desire and fulfilment found below: thus, if the ground floor is called 'nature', it is apt to call the upper floor 'supernature'. For Cajetan and Suarez, human nature had no particular yearning for the higher realm, but simply an adaptability, called an 'obediential potency', to be elevated, should the call come.

The theory of pure nature (cf. *Catechesis*, pp. 183–5) developed out of this changed perspective, which was generally and mistakenly believed to have been the original view of Aquinas himself. Its advocates maintained that, since we could imagine God having created human beings without the restlessness within that can only be satisfied by seeing him face to face, we should not regard that restlessness as something natural. Instead of understanding all human beings to have a desire for God at the very roots of their being, we should rather imagine that the norm is for human beings to go to a purely natural kind of heaven, where they would enjoy a purely natural beatitude, unless God exceptionally calls them to something higher, by implanting the desire for *himself* in their souls.

What an impoverishment of the panoramic perspective of Aquinas, in which philosophy naturally opens up into theology and Christianity has something to say to *everyone*, because it knows the same natural desire to be welling up in every heart, seeking the fulfilment it alone can offer! From the later, distorted point of view, philosophy and theology deal with distinct, closed realms, and Christianity has nothing to say to those who claim happily to be able to do without it; they appear simply not to have been given the supernatural call and should be left alone. Faced with the various atheistic philosophies of recent centuries, instead of reclaiming the high ground of Aquinas' anthropology, the Church increasingly retreated into her own sphere, armed with what she took, mistakenly, to be Aquinas' teaching, namely the version mediated by Cajetan and Suarez. The Church and the world grew apart. It was through the persevering efforts of scholars such as Blondel and de Lubac that the *real* Aquinas finally came to light again.

The implications of the restored perspective for the task of evangelisation are clear. We shall turn to this important area in the next chapter and see how de Lubac's work has borne fruit in the teaching of Vatican II and of recent popes. For now, let us note that what de Lubac perceived to be radically wrong with the distorted

picture was its crucial lack of a proper theology of *creation*. Cajetan and Suarez were not wicked or stupid; they simply weren't as clever and saintly as Thomas Aquinas. The 'common sense' theologians were trying, at all costs, to respect the consummate *freedom* of God, and their neo-scholastic successors duly suspected de Lubac of infringing God's liberty: did he not imply that God somehow *owed* salvation to every human being, and was this not an intolerable constraint upon the Almighty? De Lubac responded, on behalf of Aquinas, that it is perverse to allege that God is constrained by the implementation of the plan he himself has freely conceived. If in reality, aside from abstractions, God's creative act has constituted us with a desire to see him face to face, then the constraint is rather upon *us* to perceive and pursue that desire, not upon him to fulfil it.

All in all, the 'common sense' theologians were forgetting that creation implies not just some *past* act of God, but also the ongoing dependence upon him of *all* that he has made. God constantly sustains what is *natural* as well as what is *super*natural in this world. Even what we call 'natural' is unceasingly embraced by the 'supernatural', which is God in his loving care, a fact which alerts us to an inadequacy of our terminology, namely that it encourages anthropocentrism, an understanding of creation centred upon man rather than upon God. In this understanding, 'natural' comes first, suggesting what is most *me*, with a certain self-sufficiency; the *super*natural, the zone of God, comes second, as something *added*, foreign and optional. God is located with reference to me. However, does not Augustine refer to God as *interior intimo meo*,[7] nearer to me than I am to myself? At the root of my being he holds me and turns me to himself. I and all others *exist* only in constant relation to *him*. The proper picture is *theo*centric, that is, centred upon God.

The standard terminology reflects a view which stands in need of a Copernican shift, to place God, not man, at the centre. Unfortunately, this terminology, which became current in the thirteenth century, is now so hallowed by use that we are stuck with it. However, we must not let it beguile us. In *Surnaturel*, published in 1946, the book which most fully stated his findings and drew upon himself the terminal wrath of the neo-scholastic establishment,

[7] Augustine, *Confessions*, 3, 6, 11 (*PL* 32, 688).

de Lubac indicated the constant corrective that we must apply to anthropocentric terms in the discussion of grace: 'beatitude is service, vision is adoration, freedom is dependence and possession is ecstasy' (*Surnaturel*, p. 492). Moreover, he knew that the Eucharist regularly applies this salutary corrective, for it is there, as we receive him, that the Lord says the decisive words we have already heard: 'You will not change me into you, but you will be changed into me.'[8]

Catholicism

De Lubac refers to our created nature, together with the desire which is God's call written into it, as the 'first gift', the *datum optimum*, which yearns for the fulfilment that only God's imparting of the 'second gift', the *donum perfectum*, can give. The *donum perfectum* is 'the Spirit of God – in fact the "Spirit of Jesus" ' (*Discovery*, pp. 110–11), a gift poured over us, from the pierced side of Christ, at our baptism, and regularly renewed in the Eucharist, in a way that we shall reflect upon in chapter seven.

The more we advance in Christ to God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the more we shall come together as human beings, finding reconciliation and peace. The theocentric picture draws humanity together. Without it, we remain like scattered atoms, isolated from God and from one another. In other words, anthropocentrism fosters individualism. The greatest perversion of Christianity is the attempt to live the life of Christ self-centredly, submitting the *donum perfectum* to the very individualism it is given to remedy, because it is the hallmark of sin.

We see, then, how de Lubac's first book, *Catholicism*, which bore the subtitle, 'The Social Aspects of Dogma', sprang very readily out of his concerns about our understanding of grace, which had begun many years before, even though they still awaited their fullest statement. In it, he lamented 'the swamping of the spiritual life by the detestable "I" '. 'We are accused of being individualists', he said, acknowledging the scandalous truth of the allegation, 'whereas in reality Catholicism is essentially social' (pp. 15–16). Thus, for example, the Eucharist is not simply *my* personal nourishment by

[8] Ibid., 7, 10, 16 (*PL* 32, 742); cf. above, p. 36, and also chapter three of my book, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993). Vatican II quotes a similar text from St Leo the Great: the Eucharist accomplishes 'our transformation into that which we receive' (*LG* 26).

Christ for *my* personal salvation. 'True eucharistic piety . . . is no devout individualism. . . . [I]t gathers together the whole world. . . . [I]t cannot conceive of the action of the breaking of bread without fraternal communion' (pp. 109–10).

Hans Urs von Balthasar, who died on 26 June 1988, two days before he himself was due to receive the red hat of a cardinal, was a student from 1933 to 1937 in the Catholic faculty of Lyon-Fourvière, where de Lubac taught fundamental theology and the history of religions from 1929 until his banishment in 1950. He describes how programmatic a work *Catholicism* was with regard to de Lubac's later writings. 'The major works that followed grew from its individual chapters much like branches from a trunk.'[9] It was a big-hearted book, fired by a vision of wholeness amply reflected in the following extract.

> [The Catholic Church is] neither Latin nor Greek, but universal. . . . Nothing authentically human, whatever its origin, can be alien to her. . . . In her, man's desires and God's have their meeting-place, and by teaching all men their obligations she wishes at the same time to satisfy and more than satisfy the yearnings of each soul and of every age; to gather in everything for its salvation and sanctification. . . . [It is] the very opposite of a 'closed society'. (*Catholicism*, pp. 297–8)

In fact, in the 1930s, there was a great deal of ecumenical interest, both East and West, in the nature of the Church and her *catholicity*. In 1934, Florovsky wrote an article on 'The Catholicity of the Church' from an Orthodox perspective.[10] De Lubac's book was itself based on talks given from 1932 onwards, which he gathered together at the invitation of Yves Congar, to appear in the new series of ecclesiological texts, called *Unam Sanctam*, that Congar was directing. *Catholicism* was the third volume in this influential series, Congar's own famous book on ecumenism having been the first,[11] and it appeared in 1938, just a year after the second World Conference on Faith and Order had met in Edinburgh with

[9] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1991), p. 35.

[10] To be found in Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Nordland, Belmont, 1972), pp. 37–55.

[11] Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis: principes d'un 'oecuménisme' catholique* (Cerf, Paris, 1937); translated as *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (Geoffrey Bles/The Centenary Press, London, 1939).

discussion of different aspects of the Church forming the bulk of its agenda.[12]

Attention to the activity of the Holy Spirit, which we shall see in chapter six has been a major factor in recent ecumenical rapprochement, was already apparent in *Catholicism*, where de Lubac attributed the instinct for wholeness to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Eucharist.

> [A]s the Spirit of Christ once came upon the Apostles not to unite them together in a closed group but to light within them the fire of universal charity, so does he still whenever Christ delivers himself up once more 'that the scattered children of God may be gathered together'. Our churches are the 'upper room' where not only is the Last Supper renewed but Pentecost also. (pp. 110–11)

Von Balthasar came to Lyon after two years of philosophical studies near Munich that he described as 'languishing in the desert of neo-scholasticism', only to find himself struggling in theology 'with what men had made out of the glory of revelation'. Fortunately, de Lubac was at hand. 'He showed us the way beyond the scholastic stuff', says von Balthasar, 'to the Fathers of the Church and generously lent us all his own notes and extracts.'[13] De Lubac introduced von Balthasar to a new theological world, peopled by great Christian thinkers from East and West and full of noble vistas. The fulness of view and balance of perception that de Lubac derived from the Fathers and communicated in his exposition of *Catholicism* led Maurice Villain to hail it as 'a great ecumenical book' and to say of its author that, 'without ever directly seeking to be, he was a precursor of Catholic ecumenism'.[14]

Editions of the Fathers were not widely available at that time, so de Lubac appended nearly fifty texts, mainly extracts from their writings, to *Catholicism*. In 1942, a lasting and monumental remedy for this shortage was undertaken under the direction of de Lubac and Jean Daniélou. The series of patristic texts, 'Sources

[12] Cf. below, chapter six.

[13] Cf. David L. Schindler (ed.), *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (Ignatius, San Francisco, 1991), pp. 12–13.

[14] Maurice Villain, 'Un grand livre oecuménique: *Catholicisme*', in the collection of papers published to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of de Lubac's entry into the Society of Jesus, *L'homme devant Dieu. Mélanges offerts au père Henri de Lubac* (Aubier, Paris, 1963), vol. 3, p. 320.

Chrétiennes', which currently runs to hundreds of volumes, began to appear, with many works by Eastern Fathers among its early titles. The series was conceived particularly as 'a means of *rapprochement* with the Orthodox Churches' by showing them, in de Lubac's words, 'that the Catholic Church still recognised the ancient Fathers as her own' (*Souvenirs*, pp. 10–11).

Why should any doubt have arisen over this point? Because of the constant Catholic recourse simply to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. However, since Aquinas was deemed to have distilled the wisdom of the first millennium, the very desire to go back beyond him and read what he had read was felt to undermine his privileged position and was accordingly viewed with suspicion. It was murmured that de Lubac was hostile to St Thomas – few graver sins being imaginable – and that he was opposed to the systematic enterprise of dogmatic theology itself. Against this background, de Lubac's eventual contention that even what was being taught under the name of St Thomas was not the angelic doctor's authentic doctrine was clearly the last straw.

Early in 1950, the Jesuit General instructed de Lubac, as a 'counsel of prudence' (*Service*, p. 309), to cease teaching that summer. In August of the same year, Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical letter, *Humani Generis*, which was generally interpreted as a rebuke to de Lubac and other dangerous innovators. However, de Lubac was never formally called to account for his views during the miserable decade that followed, still less formally censured. He bore the trials of the period with patience and fidelity. To the end of his life, he maintained that the particular passage in the encyclical which affirmed the gratuity of God's call to, and gift of, the beatific vision, far from correcting his own view, actually incorporated his most recent statement of it, in an article published in 1949.

Corpus Mysticum

Two further strands in the web of suspicion that was gradually tightening around de Lubac in the 1940s may be highlighted. The first arose specifically from his book, *Corpus Mysticum*, which was actually written in the late 1930s, but delayed in appearing by the war. As we saw in the last chapter, de Lubac demonstrated in great detail in this book the significant change of terminology that had occurred in the mid-twelfth century. Although the *Church* was now

called the Mystical Body of Christ, he spoke in favour of the original perception of the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist according to which the *Eucharist* should properly be called Christ's 'mystical body', to encourage awareness that *the Eucharist makes the Church.*

Rather unfortunately for de Lubac, a year before *Corpus Mysticum* was eventually published in 1944, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* (1943), in which he warmly advocated the use of this title for the *Church.* The encyclical itself was, in fact, a very positive move towards rehabilitating the essential theme of the Church as the body of Christ, which, as we have seen, had rather slipped out of Catholic theology after the Reformation. Such a move was, of course, very welcome to de Lubac, but sadly he inevitably appeared to be out of step with the pope regarding the niceties of the terminology, which he understood to be full of implications.

There were, indeed, those who interpreted de Lubac's desire to link the adjective 'mystical' to the Eucharist and not to the Church as an indication that he had doubts about one of the touchstones of Catholic belief, namely transubstantiation. Though unfair to him, such a suspicion is not surprising, historically, since the doctrine of transubstantiation arose out of the static accent on Christ's real presence in the Eucharist occasioned by Berengar's doubts. Promoting the richer perspective of the previous millennium, de Lubac said that 'many texts concerning the Eucharist would be more deeply understood' and that 'certain of them would offer fewer exegetical difficulties to defenders of the "real presence"' if it were remembered that 'the essential perspective of these texts is not that of a presence or of an object, but that of an action and of a sacrifice' (*Corpus*, p. 78).

In the Eucharist, Christ is giving himself to the Father and gathering the Church. Particularly with an eye to those who would raise doubts even about Augustine's teaching, de Lubac asserted that respecting the *dynamism* of the Eucharist is the best way of defending Christ's *presence* at the heart of the mystery: 'ecclesial realism ensures eucharistic realism'. Christ's presence is assuredly 'real' because it is 'realising' (*Corpus*, pp. 283–4). If we remember that the purpose of the Eucharist is to transform those who are assembled, then we will better understand the transformation of the bread and wine that they receive. The Orthodox liturgy marvellously maintains the proper perspective when it hails the

consecrated gifts as 'Holy things for the holy' (cf. *CCC* 948), a perception mirrored in the following words of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, speaking together in recent times. 'The Spirit *transforms* the sacred gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ (*metabole*)[15] in order to bring about the growth of the Body which is the Church' (*Mystery*, I, 5c).

The other cause of unease with de Lubac at the time of *Corpus Mysticum* was the label that featured beneath the book's title: *étude historique*, 'historical study'. In reverberating contrast to the scholastics whose ideal was timeless verities expressed in a perennial philosophy, de Lubac was to demonstrate what is now taken for granted, namely that theology is pursued within the ceaseless flux of history and that doctrine must be restored to its historical context if it is to be properly understood. The careful study he was about to set forth would actually show that, in the important area of the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, terminology had changed and doctrine had suffered with the passage of time and the upheavals of disputation. We have already seen that the same was true especially with regard to the relationship between nature and grace, a subject which de Lubac had studied for longer, even though his collected findings were published two years afterwards. *Surnaturel* (1946) likewise bore the determined indication on its title page: *études historiques*.

Corpus Mysticum was, in fact, written during a period of convalescence in the vicinity of a good library. Paradoxically, or providentially, de Lubac's enforced leave, like his previous periods of recuperation after injury or illness, gave him the opportunity to write the books which themselves lastingly changed for the better the historical course of the Church's teaching and self-understanding.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he followed closely the work of liturgical scholars, such as Botte, who were researching sources such as ancient rites of ordination and rediscovering the early understanding of the bishop as high priest in the celebration of the

[15] It is important to remember that what is defined as Catholic belief is simply the *change* (*conversio*, in Latin; *metabole*, in Greek) of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Mass. The Council of Trent states that the Catholic Church very fittingly (*aptissime*) *calls* this change, 'transubstantiation' (*DS* 1652, cf. 1642).

Eucharist, in contrast to the late medieval understanding of him as governor of the Church. By restoring, patristically and theologically, the intimate links between the Church and the Eucharist in *Corpus Mysticum*, de Lubac made a major contribution to the liturgical movement and prepared the ground for the liturgical developments that swiftly followed. As we saw in chapter three, these bore fruit in the teaching of Vatican II that 'the fulness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fulness, namely, which both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the acme of the sacred ministry' (*LG* 21).

Throughout this period, de Lubac was composing his *Méditation sur l'Eglise*, which was published in 1953, eagerly incorporating the latest liturgical findings. Because of the cloud that he was then under, an Italian translation of the work could not possibly be done in Rome. It was Giovanni Battista Montini, newly arrived in Milan as archbishop in 1954 who secured its publication in that city in 1955, subsequently quoting it often and distributing it to his clergy. Ten years later, having become Pope Paul VI in 1963, he steered through to its ratification the crucial conciliar document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which bears significant signs of the influence of de Lubac's book, most of all in the way it begins its exposition. The draft text, first presented to the council in 1962, opened with a chapter on 'The Nature of the Church Militant'.[16] By 1964, the strident tone had gone and the first chapter of the final text bore the title, 'The Mystery of the Church', directly in line with the first chapter of de Lubac's *Méditation*, entitled, as the basis of all that was to follow, 'The Church is a Mystery' (*L'Eglise est un mystère*).

Having had a great influence, both directly and indirectly, upon many aspects of the Council's teaching, it is only to be expected that de Lubac would be concerned for that teaching to be properly interpreted, in line with what he knew to have been its true context and intention. He channelled his serious misgivings constructively into the writing of a number of basic theological texts for the post-

[16] Cf. Kevin McNamara, *The Church: A theological and pastoral commentary on the Constitution on the Church* (Veritas, Dublin, 1983), p. 51. As well as providing a good commentary on *Lumen Gentium*, this book gives a helpful historical background to the text. The Church Militant is that portion of the Church still on earth, in distinction from the Church Expectant (in purgatory) and Triumphant (in heaven).

conciliar period, dealing with faith (1969, cf. *Faith*), with the Church (1971, cf. *Motherhood*), and again with his overriding interest, grace (1980, cf. *Catechesis*).

We may finally note that the *Catechism* itself strongly echoes, in its *structure*, de Lubac's determination to approach *theo*centrically the study of grace and our divine calling, which is 'the framework in which all the other mysteries of revelation have their place' (*Mystery*, p. 217). Promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992, it follows exactly the fourfold order of topics treated in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, promulgated in 1566 by Pope Pius V, that order being, first, the Creed, then the sacraments, the ten commandments and, finally, the Our Father. Implicitly countering the Reformers who alleged that the Catholic Church had forgotten the priority of God's graceful initiative in salvation, this order significantly dealt first with God's gifts to us in faith and the sacraments, and only then with how we respond in action and prayer. To those who, in our ecumenical times, inherit the Reformers' misgivings, the new *Catechism*, by its very structure, offers the same reassurance as its predecessor that the Catholic Church itself firmly believes that *all is grace.*

De Lubac always emphasised that the God who made us engraved a call to share his life into our being and that we begin explicitly to share his life in the Church, whose heart is Christ in the Eucharist. We may close this brief survey of de Lubac's life and influence by noting also that the *Catechism* states with emphasis the principle in which he summarised his vision: *'the Eucharist makes the Church'* (*CCC* 1396).

Chapter Five

The Church, Sacrament of Salvation

Liturgy, Structure and Mission

To gather and to go, assemble and disperse, is the rhythm in the life of the eucharistic Church, like the beating of a heart. Liturgy gives vision and strength for mission and mission aims to gather the world for liturgical praise. In short, liturgy and mission belong together and both are structured around the bishops of the Church, successors of the apostles who were commissioned by the Lord both to 'Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor 11:25) and to 'Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News' (Mk 16:15). Vatican II affirmed that 'preaching the Gospel has pride of place' among the bishops' tasks (*LG* 25), but it indicated the end in view by adding that the Eucharist is 'the source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel' (*PO* 5; cf. *LG* 19). Preaching the word is not an end in itself.

The link, in fact, between liturgy and mission is very strict. The Good News the community is sent out to proclaim *is* of the salvation it foretastes in the Eucharist, and the gathering for the Eucharist itself announces the heart of the Gospel: 'Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26). The notion of a 'sacrament', a structured reality which is at once an 'outward sign of inward grace', perfectly conveys the intrinsic bond of mission and liturgy in the Church's life. Vatican II's account of the nature of the Church as the 'sacrament of salvation' occurs in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which was promulgated in 1964, appropriately between the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965).

Pope John Paul recently recalled 'the experience of the first millennium', when East and West together recognised the Eucharist as the heart of the Christian community and as the 'model' for 'the Church's very structure'. He commended this vision afresh (cf. *OL* 18; *UU*61). So, let us now investigate the structure that emerges from the liturgy, which is at once also the Church's structure for mission.

Liturgy

The eucharistic dynamism of inflowing and outgoing was already memorably expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the council's first document. There the liturgy is described as 'the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed' and also as 'the fount from which all her power flows' (*SC* 10). In other words, a whole programme of life unfolds therefrom. So it is fitting that the new *Missal* which arose directly from Vatican II's liturgical reform has duly been followed by a new *Catechism*, a prime resource for Christian teaching and formation. Although not directly ordered by the council, the *Catechism* can be rooted there in that it was the idea of the Synod of Bishops, a body established by the will of the council, when it met in 1985 to assess the implementation of Vatican II twenty years after its close.

This pairing of a *Missal* and a *Catechism*, and not just the structuring of the latter which we have already mentioned, follows the precedent set by the Council of Trent. Pope Paul VI recalled the earlier *Missal* when he promulgated its successor. In 1570, Pope Pius V said of his new *Missal*: 'we entrusted this work to men chosen for their learning'.

> They closely compared everything with the ancient manuscripts found in the Vatican Library and with other manuscripts, corrected and incorrupt, collected from all over; they consulted the writings of those ancient and trustworthy authors who have left us information concerning the holy arrangement of these rites, and they restored the rites of the Mass to the form received from the holy Fathers.[1]

Pius V's clear aim was to restore the Mass to the form it had in the early Church. However, the resources available at that time were not

[1] Pope Pius V, Apostolic Constitution, *Quo primum tempore*, of 19 July 1570; quoted in Robert Cabié, *History of the Mass* (Pastoral Press, Washington, 1992), p. 87.

adequate for the task. Liturgical science was at a very rudimentary stage and some vital texts were not yet even identified. The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus is a prime example: it lay unidentified until the early years of this century. It is now on many shelves. So it was that, in spite of his best intentions, Pius V's *Missal* fell short of its target.

By 1970, on the other hand, the resources were there to fulfil Pius V's aim and that is precisely what Paul VI saw himself as doing when he promulgated the revision of the *Roman Missal* ordered by Vatican II. He did this in 1969 and it appeared in 1970, exactly four hundred years after the earlier *Missal*. Paul VI explicitly mentioned Pius V's desire. Since that time, he said, 'other ancient sources have been discovered and published, and liturgical formulas of the Eastern Church have been studied'. 'Many wish that these doctrinal and spiritual riches not be hidden in libraries, but be brought to light to illumine and nourish the minds and spirit of Christians.'[2]

We may note in passing another way in which the liturgical reform resulting from Vatican II was in strong continuity with the developments of previous ages. The original version of the *Apostolic Tradition*, which contains the first complete eucharistic prayer that we have, dating from around the year 215, was written by Hippolytus in *Greek*, because that was the language spoken by the majority of people, of high station or low, around the Mediterranean at that time. Even in Rome itself, native Latin speakers were in a minority and the liturgy was conducted in Greek, the everyday language of the majority.

The balance of the two languages soon shifted both in society at large and in Christian worship. Greek was maintained for parts of the liturgy only until around 380, when Pope Damasus completed the transition into Latin, by then the dominant language in the cities of the West, and also famously charged his secretary, Jerome (342–420), with the task of producing a good Latin translation of the sacred scriptures. His celebrated version of the Bible is simply called the *Vulgate*, that is, the 'popular' edition.

In due course, Latin itself became a language understood only by a learned few, but it took many centuries before the ancient principle, that the liturgy and the scriptures should be in the language of ordinary people, was again applied. The Council of

[2] Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Missale Romanum*, 3 April 1969.

Trent considered vernacular worship in 1562, but decided against it, not least because the use of Latin effectively expressed Catholic universality in the face of Protestant fragmentation. However, the change had to come, and duly did, when *Sacrosanctum Concilium* gave an opening to the vernacular (*SC* 34, 36) and a tidal wave of translation followed.

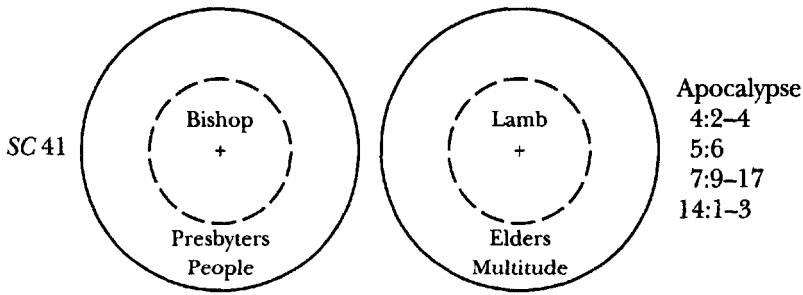
The profound reason why the liturgy should be in the language of everyone is apparent in the same conciliar document: because everyone has an active role to play in the liturgy. Any notion of an active celebrant and a passive congregation is banished. Broad horizons open up with the following teaching on the nature of the liturgy: 'Christ always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified.' Liturgy is always 'an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church' (*SC* 7). As we saw in chapter one, these words point us to the last day when the final community, which is most truly 'the Church', will be gathered with Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem. It is this eschatological assembly that the Lord actively associates with himself in every liturgical action, most of all in the celebration of the Eucharist, and all the earthly participants are active in consequence. With reference to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and echoing two of the Catholic–Orthodox agreed statements, the *Catechism* teaches that, '[i]n the celebration of the sacraments it is . . . the whole assembly that is *leitourgos* [minister], each according to his function' (*CCC* 1144; cf. *Mystery*, II, 2 and *Order*, 24).

St Ignatius of Antioch was the first to apply to the Church the adjective 'catholic', which as we have seen properly refers to qualitative fulness rather than quantitative extension, when he explained why the people should always be united around the bishop for the Eucharist. 'Wherever the bishop appears, let there the multitude of the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there [is] the catholic Church.'[3] In the first chapter, we saw, with reference to John's vision described in the Book of the Apocalypse, that the Eucharist casts the celebrant in the role of the Lamb, and the people in the role of the multitudes assembled around his throne. We may now note that John also tells of a third group of people, namely, the elders who themselves sit on an inner circle of thrones around the central one and complete the human element of the heavenly picture (Apoc 4:4).

[3] Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans*, 8.

So, a sketch of the full heavenly array must show a central throne, surrounded by a circle of elders, with a great throng then gathered around. Such *is* the 'catholic Church'. It is notable that, with reference to Ignatius, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* paints such a threefold picture of the eucharistic assembly, thereby enabling us to draw the striking visual parallel shown in the diagram below.

> [All] must be convinced that the principal manifestation of the Church consists in the full, active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of presbyters and by his ministers [*a suo presbyterio et ministris circumdatus*]. (*SC* 41)



The Eucharist, then, is the primary place where the heavenly mystery which is the Church is brought to bear upon this historical world, indeed it is the *sacrament* of the heavenly mystery, both containing and portraying it. Now, *salvation* is nothing other than participation in the same mystery. Salvation, after all, is not an abstract concept, it consists concretely in membership of the gathering of all peoples from all ages in the heavenly Jerusalem. So, here, in advance, the council gave a *eucharistic* key to its teaching, in *Lumen Gentium*, that the Church on earth is 'the universal sacrament of salvation' (*LG* 48; cf. also 1, 9). It is when gathered for the Eucharist that the earthly community best fills this role and is most itself (cf. *SC* 2): *be what you see and receive what you are.*

In his encyclical letter, *Mystici Corporis* (1943), Pope Pius XII taught that the Church has both inner and outer aspects, being patterned upon Christ, 'who is not complete if we consider in Him only His visible humanity or only His invisible divinity, but is one, from and in both natures' (*MC* 62), and he located its presence on earth very specifically. The Church of Christ, for which there is no name more excellent than 'the mystical Body of Jesus Christ', '*is* the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, *Roman* Church' (*MC* 13, my italics). *Lumen Gentium* richly teased out the analogy with the Incarnation, but famously removed the exclusive 'is'.

> [T]he society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. For this reason, the Church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. . . . This Church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, *subsists in* the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity. (*LG* 8, my italics)

Thus, we are to understand that God calls us to a saving unity, a 'spiritual community'. This reality, offered to us as our destiny, is 'the mystical body of Christ', 'the Church endowed with heavenly riches', and the earthly community is its sacrament or *epiphany* upon this earth, particularly, as we have already seen, in the celebration of the Eucharist. By saying, 'subsists in', the council clearly wanted to acknowledge that epiphanies of salvation can occur outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church, a point we shall develop in a moment; the term is not *exclusive*. But there is another great benefit, for neither is the term *static*; it reinforces the sense that there is a dynamism in the Church and especially in the Eucharist, where a future reality is mysteriously present for our judgement, conversion and salvation.

When asked how his perceptions had been changed by his participation in the deliberations of Vatican II, the distinguished Benedictine theologian and bishop, Christopher Butler, is said to have replied: 'Before the council, I knew where the Church was, and

I knew where it wasn't; now I still know where it is, but I no longer know where it isn't.' We can now liken the entry of grace into the world to the dropping of a pebble into a pool. We know where the focal point of the activity is, it occurs in the Church and principally in the Eucharist, but who is to say where the ripples end?

Furthermore, regarding the Eucharist itself, what are Catholics to say about its faithful celebration by Christians of many other denominations? Again, exclusive views belong to the past. From a Catholic perspective, the Eucharist is properly celebrated when two conditions are fulfilled. The targeting of the full mystery of the Church upon this celebration requires two co-ordinates, so to speak, one vertical and one horizontal. Historically, the bishop, or his priestly representative, who presides should have been truly ordained for this purpose in a clear line of apostolic succession, and horizontally, he should belong to the visible communion of the college of bishops, which succeeds to that of the apostles, around the successor of Peter, namely the pope. When these two requirements are met, there truly is the Eucharist, but that certainty no longer supports any dismissal of other celebrations.

In the decree of Vatican II on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which acknowledges that 'some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church' (*UR* 3), a Christian body is called a 'Church', rather than simply an 'ecclesial communion', when it is specifically understood to have retained the fulness of the sacrament of orders in the apostolic succession. The logical progression being used goes from orders to the Eucharist and then to the Church (cf. *UR* 22). In this light, the Catholic Church has particular esteem for the Orthodox Church and its sacraments. The two Churches share in the apostolic succession, though without the fulness of collegial communion, sadly broken in 1054 and not yet fully re-established. Nevertheless, Vatican II solemnly declared that, by the Orthodox Eucharist, the one Church of God 'is built up and grows in stature' (*UR* 15; cf. *UU* 50).

Overall, we may imagine local churches celebrating the Eucharist around their bishop being woven together in a vast tapestry through time and across space by the ties of apostolic succession and collegiality, respectively, which simply express the profound reality that, wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, in any place at any time,

only one heavenly mystery is present and one great purpose is at work: the one Christ is gathering the scattered children of God into the one Church. It is essential that the world understands that these countless celebrations, in many places and at many times, are not ultimately many but one. The integrity of the Church's witness to the Gospel demands that the oneness be evident. Apostolic succession expresses the oneness through the ages and collegiality expresses the oneness across the world at a given time (cf. *Mystery*, II, 4; III, 4; also, *Order*, 36, 47). Both of these realities are rooted in the Eucharist.

Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios I established in 1979 an international Catholic–Orthodox dialogue, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, has since produced substantial agreed statements on key areas of belief. The third statement honestly recognises that the papacy is a major stumbling block: the question of 'the primacy of the Bishop of Rome . . . constitutes a serious divergence between us'. Nevertheless, it positively acknowledges that 'an approach could be made' to this question 'in [the] perspective of communion among local churches' (*Order*, 55). So, let us now examine the papacy in precisely this perspective, with the Eucharist as our guide.

In his *Méditation sur l'Eglise*, de Lubac indicated that episcopal collegiality is grounded in the Eucharist when he quoted the assertion of St Cyprian that the episcopate is one (*episcopatus unus est*) in direct correlation with the statement that, wherever they may be, all bishops offer 'the same and unique sacrifice'. Moreover, the 'visible bond of unity' between the bishops is the Bishop of Rome, with whom they are 'at peace and in communion'.[4] Incidentally, referring to the pope as the 'Bishop of Rome', implicitly anchors his office in the local church of Rome and, thereby, in the Eucharist, over which he episcopally presides in that locality.

De Lubac also quoted the statement by Augustine which affirms the local Eucharist as the consummate act of witness to Christ and to his mission of gathering the nations: the Eucharist is the sacrament 'by which the Church is now united'.[5] It follows that, if the pope unites the Church, as he does, it cannot be because of some function

[4] *Splendour*, p. 150; quotation from Cyprian, *De unitate ecclesiae*, 5 (*PL* 4, 501).
[5] Ibid., p. 152; quotation from Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 12, 20 (*PL* 42, 265).

that he performs at an international level *above* the essentially local level of the Eucharist. It must be, rather, because of a unique service that he renders to the Eucharist itself. There is no level higher than this, as the *Catechism* resoundingly affirms. 'The Church', it says, is 'the People that God gathers in the whole world', but nevertheless, it *exists* 'in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly' (*CCC* 752; cf. also 832–5, 1561).

Lumen Gentium 26 refers to the same passage from Augustine, combining it with renewed references, like *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, to the teaching of Ignatius of Antioch, to the overall effect that, in each locality where the Eucharist is celebrated, Christ is present and, with him, the whole Church, such that local eucharistic communities, united with their bishops, are properly to be called 'churches', as we find in the New Testament. The one Church of Christ is 'really present', it says, 'in all *legitimately organised* local groups of the faithful'. By introducing a juridical note into a strongly eucharistic setting, the council invites us to see realistically that the Church's eucharistic witness requires a legal framework, but it also firmly circumscribes law in the Church as something ultimately at the service of liturgy.

What an advance is being signalled here from the starkly juridical definition of papal primacy by the First Vatican Council! There, it was defined that the pope has 'ordinary' and 'immediate' episcopal jurisdiction over the whole Church. It was, nevertheless, also acknowledged that the bishops have 'ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction' over their own flocks and asserted that their power is not restricted but rather confirmed and strengthened by that of the pope.[6]

The meaning of this teaching becomes so much clearer and more attractive when set back into the context of the Eucharist, from which it seems to have been, as it were, distilled. Drawing upon the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* 26, the 1992 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as Communion* noted that local churches are not independent entities: 'it is precisely the Eucharist that renders all self-sufficiency ... impossible'. The papacy has its place in the context of their mutual openness: 'the existence of the Petrine ministry . . . bears a profound

[6] Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution, *Pastor Aeternus*, chapter three (*DS* 3060–1).

correspondence to the eucharistic character of the Church'.[7] Because openness to one another is *essential* to the integrity of the Eucharist that each local church celebrates, the pope's ministry reaches into the very heart of each local celebration: 'we must see the ministry of the successor of Peter not only as a "global" service, reaching each particular church from "outside", as it were, but as belonging already to the essence of each particular church from "within" '.[8]

The pope, in short, is here being understood as *eucharistic guardian and guarantor*, as one who primarily strengthens his brother bishops not juridically but eucharistically. He supports the eucharistic presidency of each local bishop, with whom he is named in the eucharistic prayer,[9] and exercises a ministry of vigilance (cf. *UU* 94) to ensure that the eucharistic lives of the many local churches are in harmony with one another in their witness to the world of today and in harmony, also, with the witness of past ages, because the fact that all are striving to live out the same mystery in their own locality, means that the witness of each affects all, for good or ill. The *Catechism* endorses this account of the papacy in the light of the Eucharist, an account set so promisingly within the perspective desired by the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue:

> *The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ.* Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the *Pope* is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist, wherein he is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church. (*CCC* 1369)

We may note, at this point, that both Catholics and Orthodox have acknowledged an insight of the Calvinist theologian, J. J. von Allmen, as one offering remarkable support for the papacy as a ministry which is both eucharistic and ongoing. Von Allmen observes that 'Luke situates Jesus' words to Peter about the particular work

[7] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church considered as Communion* (28 May 1992), 11. Long before he became Prefect of the Congregation, Joseph Ratzinger already held, as Battista Mondin neatly summarises, that 'the primacy of the pope does not primarily concern either orthodoxy or orthopraxy, but rather ortho-Eucharist' (*Le nuove ecclesiologie* (Paoline, Roma, 1980), p. 171).

[8] Ibid., 13.

[9] In Lecce, on 17–18 September 1994, Pope John Paul said that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, we experience 'the internal architecture of the Body of Christ' (*Oss Rom*, 21 September 1994, p. 9).

which will be his *within the framework of the institution of the Eucharist*, that is, within the framework of what Jesus wants to see *endure until his return* (Lk 22:31ff)'.[10] It is also significant that Catholic and Orthodox theologians both agree that the instinctive intervention of the Roman church into the affairs of the church in Corinth around the year 96, by means of the *Letter of Clement*, is an excellent early example of the Petrine ministry truly in action,[11] striving to correct abuses, in this case the overthrow of certain presbyters, that impinge upon the Eucharist.

Looking towards 'a new situation', Pope John Paul II has momentously requested 'Church leaders and their theologians' to engage with him in 'a patient and fraternal dialogue' about the exercise of the primacy, so that 'this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned' (*UU* 95–6). We have seen that the Eucharist is already emerging as a key to ecumenical progress on this most sensitive topic.

In what is, perhaps, the densest sentence that it has produced, the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue goes to the very source of the unity at the heart of the Eucharist. 'Taken as a whole, the eucharistic celebration makes present the Trinitarian mystery of the Church' (*Mystery*, I, 6). The *Catechism* unpacks the same vision for us, linking first the Trinity and the Church and then moving to the Eucharist. The twelve apostles, it says, were 'sent out together, and their fraternal unity would be at the service of the fraternal communion of all the faithful: they would reflect and witness to the communion of the divine persons' (*CCC* 877). The Church 'is sent to announce, bear witness [to], make present and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity' (*CCC* 738). She is 'the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together' (*CCC* 1108; cf. 747), and 'it is in the Eucharist that the sacrament of the Church is made fully visible' (*CCC* 1142; cf. *SC* 41, quoted earlier). The Church is 'a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'[12] and '[t]he communion of the Holy Trinity . . . is lived out . . . above all in the Eucharist' (cf. *CCC* 2845).

[10] J. J. von Allmen, 'L'église locale parmi les autres églises locales', *Irenikon* 43 (1970), p. 529 (my italics); cf. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 115, 134, 210, 304.

[11] Cf. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 118–19.

[12] Cyprian, *De Oratione Dominica*, 23 (*PL* 4, 553), also quoted in *CCC* 810; cf. *LG* 4 and *UU* 102.

So far, we have aligned the bishop (or priest) surrounded by the people for the Eucharist simply with Christ surrounded by the multitude on the last day. Perhaps now a third image may helpfully be added, namely that of the Father surrounded by the Son and the Spirit in the eternal communion and archetypal *koinonia* of the blessed Trinity (cf. *GS* 24). As we allow the *three* scenes to overlap, and appreciate the *three* layers of meaning, so we enter into the full depth of the mystery of communion which is the Eucharist.

Evangelisation[13]

As creation results from the free outgoing love of the Trinity, so the Church, which lives from God through the Eucharist, must herself necessarily be outgoing. Let us now see how recent popes have presented this task.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in 1975, Pope Paul VI left no doubt about how essential evangelisation is to the life of the Church. It is not a bonus or something secondary. 'Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise . . .' (*EN* 14). 'To reveal Jesus Christ and his Gospel to those who do not know them has been, ever since the morning of Pentecost, the fundamental programme which the Church has taken on as received from her Founder' (*EN* 51).

Fifteen years later, in his encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican II's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, and quoted its striking description of missionary activity as 'the greatest and holiest activity of the Church' (*RM* 63; cf. *AG* 29). Recalling that Jesus chose people and sent them forth to be his witnesses 'to the ends of the earth' (*RM* 61; cf. Acts 1:8), he reiterated the centrality of mission. 'No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples' (*RM* 3). '*The Church is missionary by her very nature*, for Christ's mandate is not

[13] The remainder of this chapter closely follows the text of an article I wrote to commemorate the anniversary of de Lubac's death: 'Henri de Lubac – Evangeliser', *Priests & People* 6 (1992), pp. 343–6. I am grateful to the editor for permission to reproduce it here.

something contingent or external, but reaches the very heart of the Church' (*RM* 62).

Pope John Paul makes it plain that he is opening his own heart in this text. His first scriptural quotation is the dramatic cry of St Paul, 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!' (1 Cor 9:16), a cry which he says he feels 'an urgent duty to repeat'. Therein lies the profound reason for one of the hallmarks of his ministry. 'From the beginning of my Pontificate I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern' (*RM* 1).

It is notable that Pope Paul also gave prominence to that cry of St Paul and saw in it an echo of the Saviour's own urgency: 'I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God' (Lk 4:43; cf. *EN* 6, 12, 14). The desire to understand why mission is so essential to the Church brings us to the cry of St Paul and again into the company of de Lubac, who searched its meaning and was read and revered by both of these recent popes. Perhaps we have in their writings on this theme a further indication of his influence upon them and on the Church in our time.

De Lubac's mark is, in fact, already on the two papal texts we have been considering. Pope Paul's one explicit reference to a contemporary theologian is to de Lubac's analysis of the modern world as immersed in 'the drama of atheistic humanism' (*EN* 55 and footnote 77). However, implicit references to the work of de Lubac are numerous. For example, when Paul VI says that the Church 'prolongs and continues' the Lord himself (*EN* 15), he is echoing de Lubac's frequent refrain that she is 'Christ continued' (*Corpus*, p. 34), 'Christ perpetuated among us, Christ "spread abroad and passed on" ' (*Splendour*, p. 48; cf. *Catholicism*, also p. 48, with acknowledgement to Bossuet). Pope Paul's description of her as a sign 'simultaneously obscure and luminous' of the Lord's presence (*EN* 15), reminds us of de Lubac's statement in his *Méditation sur l'Eglise* that, while the mystery of the Church has 'one aspect which is all light', 'the dark side of the mystery is there too' (*Splendour*, pp. 45–6). We recall that, when de Lubac was facing particular opposition in Rome, it was Montini who secured this book's Italian translation in Milan.

In *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul recalls the teaching of his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, that Christ 'fully reveals man to himself' (*RM* 2; cf. *RH* 8, 10). In fact, as he acknowledges, this was

already said by Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes*. 'Christ, . . . in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling' (*GS* 22). These words remarkably reflect the statement made by de Lubac as long ago as 1938, in *Catholicism*. 'By revealing the Father and by being revealed by him, Christ completes the revelation of man to himself' (*Catholicism*, p. 339).

There is certainly an influence to be discerned here, not only of de Lubac on *Gaudium et Spes*, but also of the already ageing theologian upon the young Bishop Wojtyla, with whom he collaborated at the council. In his memoirs, de Lubac says that they worked 'side by side' from the outset of what eventually became *Gaudium et Spes*. 'He knew my works, and we were soon on good terms.'[14]

Indeed, in *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope John Paul spoke of the Church's understanding that there is a 'never-ending restlessness' in the human spirit and quoted the celebrated passage from Augustine to which we have already referred: 'You have made us for yourself, [Lord,] and our heart is restless until it rests in you' (cf. *RH* 18).[15] Not only does de Lubac himself repeatedly quote these words, but the theological axis linking Augustine's conviction with the authentic doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas, that humanity has a natural desire for the vision of God, could well be described as the backbone of de Lubac's lifelong work, as we saw in the last chapter. It is in order to fulfil this desire in all people that the Church has what John Paul II called, when he first raised the topic in 1979, 'the great mission of revealing Christ to the world' (*RH* 11).

So we are well justified in wondering whether de Lubac may have influenced Paul VI's and John Paul II's teaching about how essential evangelisation is to the Church, particularly when we find that he himself pays particular attention to the urgent missionary cry of St Paul, to which both popes refer. De Lubac focused on this cry in January 1941, when he gave two lectures in Lyon which were eventually published in 1946 under the title, *The Theological*

[14] *Service*, p. 171. In his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1994), p. 159, Pope John Paul II himself recalls the encouragement he received from de Lubac at the time of Vatican II, and the 'special friendship' that resulted.

[15] Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1, 1 (*PL* 32, 661).

Foundation of the Missions. We may note that, in those lectures, more than ten years before his *Méditation sur l'Eglise* was published, he already anticipated the teaching of Vatican II on the collegiality of the bishops: 'the whole episcopal body', he said, is the 'successor of the apostolic college' and is 'jointly responsible' today for the continuation of the Saviour's mission (*Fondement*, p. 17; cf. *LG* 22). In some of his most poetic pages, he explores the Church's utter need to be missionary. This 'inner necessity', he says, 'found its magnificent expression in the saying of St Paul'. 'If I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor 9:16). Describing this as a 'mysterious and profound saying', he goes on to explain it.

> If I cease evangelising, it is because charity has withdrawn from me. If I no longer feel the need to communicate the flame, it is because it no longer burns in me. Let no one say, for all that, that missionary activity understood in this way derives from a selfish source. The Christian does not use the unbeliever whom he converts so as to realise himself, after the fashion of the ascetic who would hand over his goods to the poor purely in order to free himself. Nor does he maintain charity within him by means of the gift which he gives to the other, as a reward which he would receive for this gift. His life is this very gift, because to give is to participate in the divine Life, which is Gift. (*Fondement*, p. 41)

In other words, since the life of the Trinity, and particularly the bond of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, is a unity of perfect love and of complete self-gift, I can only share in this life to the extent that I, in turn, am giving it to others, in and through the gift of myself. Of its very nature, I cannot enjoy it by myself. In order to retain it, I must pass it on. So, woe to me if I don't! Contrary to all our normal experience of presents, here is a gift which we truly possess only to the extent that we are trying to give it away! To de Lubac, the great expounder of the paradoxes in Christianity, we may sense that this paradox was particularly dear.

Need we look any further for the reason why Pope John Paul says that 'the Church's mission derives not only from the Lord's mandate but also from the profound demands of God's life within us' (*RM* 11)? Indeed, many of his assertions now fall into place. '*Mission is an issue of faith*, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love

for us' (*RM* 11). 'The Lord is always calling us to come out of ourselves and to share with others the goods we possess, starting with the most precious gift of all – our faith' (*RM* 49).

> The call to mission derives, of its nature, from the call to holiness. . . . The *universal call to holiness* is closely linked to the *universal call to mission.* Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission. (*RM* 90)

Assembling the whole of Pope John Paul's picture, we are to understand members of the Church, impelled by God's life within them, going out to share the good news of this life with all people, knowing that God's Spirit is continually stirring the heart of each person to pursue the 'existential and religious questioning . . . occasioned . . . by the very structure of his being' (*RM* 28; cf. 45). They go out to the multitudes proclaiming 'the riches of the mystery of Christ', riches in which, as the Pope quotes from his predecessor, 'the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fulness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his identity, life and death, and truth' (*RM* 8; cf. *EN* 53).

In short, both popes envisage one divine and all-embracing power and purpose of salvation at work in the world. God calls all to one and the same divine destiny, as both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* affirmed (*LG* 3; *GS* 1, 22), vindicating de Lubac's long-running battle against the alternative theory we examined in chapter four. The Church is the sacrament of salvation, as both popes reiterate from the teaching of Vatican II (*EN* 23; *RM* 9), de Lubac again having been the principal pioneer of this concept in recent times, as we have seen. All people have 'the right to know' about Christ and to hear 'the proclamation of salvation' (*EN* 53, 80; *RM* 8, 11, 40, 44, 46).

But what of those who never explicitly encounter and accept Christ? Against both the fundamentalism that would cast them out of the kingdom and the indifferentism that would sweep them in, the council adopted a stance decisive for Catholicism, particularly in the present Decade of Evangelisation: 'we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery' (*GS* 22; cf. *AG* 7). This stance, recalled by both Paul VI and John Paul II (*EN* 80; *RM* 6, 10, 28), was also foreshadowed by de Lubac. A quarter of a century earlier, he asserted that, 'under a thousand anonymous forms, the

grace of Christ can be everywhere at work' (*Fondement*, p. 35); 'everyone can be saved by a supernatural anonymously possessed' (*Catholicism*, p. 221, amended translation).

Such a belief should not, of course, induce any complacency about evangelisation. We Christians must go out to identify the unnamed one sensed and sought (*EN* 21) and the unknown God adored (*EN* 26) by many of our fellows. We must strive to bring them into the community which is faithful 'to the breaking of bread and to the prayers' (Acts 2:42; cf. *EN* 15, *RM* 26), where salvation is not only most explicitly celebrated but also most strongly secured. However, we must realise that it is not so much *their* salvation as *ours* that is in doubt if we don't. Both of the recent popes to whom we have referred here emphasise this point (cf. *EN* 80; *RM* 11). As de Lubac explains to us, our own participation, here and now, in the life of God is at stake.

One of the many names for the Eucharist is the 'Mass'. Used particularly by Roman Catholics, this name comes from the Latin form of the words of dismissal with which the celebration ends: *Ite missa est.* That the dismissal should effectively have named the whole service remarkably reminds us how intrinsic to the proceedings it is. As was said at the start of this chapter, we gather so as to go, refreshed and renewed, back into the world. The sending, 'Go, the Mass is ended', is a conclusion essential to the meaning of what has gone before.

Although we must acknowledge sadly that Christians are not visibly united either in their gathering or in their going, ecumenical dialogue between different denominations in recent decades has brought remarkable progress in understanding and reappropriating many aspects of the Eucharist and prompted hope for greater unity around the Lord's table and in mission therefrom. To this dialogue we now turn.

Chapter Six

The Holy Spirit and Unity
The Eucharist in Ecumenical Dialogue

The 'century of the Church' was well advanced by the time the Catholic Church officially joined the ecumenical movement. Perhaps this was providential, in that there was need for both sides to develop their respective understandings of the Church to the point where dialogue was not only possible but also full of potential. This point was reached in the 1960s after decades of preparation.

The movement has been deeply and consistently motivated by the realisation, based on the Gospel (cf. Jn 17:21) and on practical experience, that disunity undermines mission. It really began with such landmarks as the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, and with two famous announcements, Orthodox and Anglican, respectively, made in 1920. The Edinburgh conference brought together delegates from well over a hundred denominational and inter-denominational missionary societies working throughout the world to spread the Gospel. Its leading organiser, John Mott, spoke afterwards of the new perception the conference had generated: '[it] has familiarised Christians of our day with [the] idea of looking steadily at the world as a whole, of confronting the world as a unit by the Christian Church as a unit'.[1]

Both of the announcements mentioned were particularly prompted by the horrific experience of the First World War, waged by Christian nations upon each other. In January of 1920, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople addressed an encyclical

[1] Cf. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948* (SPCK, London, 1967), p. 329.

letter: 'Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere', in which it said that, between the various Christian Churches, it is 'highly desirable and necessary' that there should be *rapprochement* and fellowship, for which the actual term used was *koinonia*, a word destined to play a great part in subsequent ecumenical dialogue. The Churches, it said, should consider one another not as 'strangers' but as 'relatives' in the 'household of Christ' and each should renounce the proselytising of members of other confessions.[2]

Then, in July, the seventh Lambeth Conference issued an 'Appeal to All Christian People' urging the 'reunion of Christendom' as an 'imperative necessity'. The bishops said they were convinced that 'God is now calling all the members of His Church' to 'a new discovery of [His] creative resources'.[3] Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, in Belgium, sent a cordial reply and soon agreed to sponsor the 'Malines Conversations', a brief but significant series of informal meetings between Catholics and Anglicans, the last of which took place in 1926.

In order to encourage as wide a participation as possible, the Edinburgh conference had excluded from its agenda questions of faith and order, that is, broadly, issues of Christian doctrine and Church organisation. However, Bishop Charles Brent, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, a participant newly fired by the vision of a united Church, resolved to promote a further world conference which would deal with these essential matters. The eventual result was the first World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lausanne, in 1927, with representatives of no fewer than a hundred and eight Churches, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant.

The major absentee was the Catholic Church, which officially believed that it was not proper for her to go out to talk to other Christian denominations, rather they should return to her.[4] In 1928, Pope Pius XI duly issued an encyclical letter, *Mortalium Animos*,

[2] Cf. Constantin Patelos (ed.), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement* (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1978), pp. 40–3.

[3] Cf. Rouse and Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948*, p. 447.

[4] At an early stage in planning the World Conference, the Vatican was approached and informed of the scheme. The benevolent reply, on 18 December 1914, said that the Roman Pontiff (Pope Benedict XV), prayed for its success 'because, with the voice of Jesus Himself sounding before and bidding Him, He knows that He Himself, as the one to whom all men have been given over to be fed, is the source and cause of the unity of the Church' (ibid., p. 413).

directing Catholics not to participate in Faith and Order or in other such movements for reunion, with the result that over thirty years passed without official Catholic participation in Faith and Order and in the World Council of Churches (WCC). The latter, being composed of 'Churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour', was formally inaugurated after the Second World War, in Amsterdam in 1948, amalgamating Faith and Order with the other movement which had resulted from Edinburgh in 1910, whose title indicated its rather different emphasis: 'Life and Work'.

Investigation of 'the Church and its nature', which had emerged ecumenically by 1937, when the second World Conference on Faith and Order was held in Edinburgh, as 'perhaps the central problem',[5] continued strongly in the WCC, prompted partly by misgivings on the part of the Orthodox, who wanted to take part in the new organisation but could not accept the other members fully as Churches, and by questions on the part of various Catholic theologians, who could not take part but were greatly interested. As a result, the WCC swiftly produced a declaration regarding its own status, issued at its meeting in Toronto in 1950, and entitled: 'The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches'. There, the following was clarified. 'The World Council exists in order that different Churches may face their differences, and therefore no Church is obliged to change its ecclesiology as a consequence of membership of the World Council.' Furthermore, 'membership does not imply that each Church must regard other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the term'.[6]

Within the forum thus specified in order not to compromise or coerce any of its members, ecclesiological discussion continued, at the same time as great progress was separately being made, as we have seen, in Catholic understanding of the Church. The outcome, on the Catholic side, was a softening of boundaries, shown by the conciliar refusal to identify the one Church of God on this earth strictly with the Roman Catholic Church (cf. *LG* 8) and by conciliar esteem for the many elements of the Church to be found outside the latter (cf. *UR* 3).

[5] Ibid., pp. 574–5.

[6] WCC, 'The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches', III, 3 and IV, 4. The document may be found in the *Ecumenical Review* 3 (1950–1), pp. 47–53.

The years 1963 and 1965 mark a decisive convergence of understanding between the two sides regarding the Church. The catalyst was the question of *tradition*. The Reformation left Catholics and Protestants unhealthily polarised on this subject: Catholics tended to posit two sources of revelation, scripture and tradition, functioning side by side, whereas Protestants tended to focus on scripture alone, *sola scriptura*. In their respective understandings of the life of the Church, Protestants needed to *incorporate* tradition and Catholics needed to *integrate* scripture with tradition, so that both could meet in the common acknowledgement that tradition is something living and all-embracing in the history of the followers of Christ, a matrix within which the scriptures have life and meaning.[7] 'Tradition is the Holy Spirit explaining the Gospel to the Church.'[8]

In 1963, the Faith and Order movement, which has continued to have its own existence within the WCC, held its fourth World Conference at Montreal (the third having taken place at Lund, in 1952), in which it shunned as unrealistic the concept of 'scripture alone'.

> [W]e exist as Christians by the Tradition of the Gospel (the *paradosis* of the *kerygma*) testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Tradition taken in this sense is actualised in the preaching of the word, in Christian teaching and theology, and in mission and witness to Christ by the lives of the members of the Church.[9]

Soon afterwards, the Catholic Church endorsed a similarly rounded understanding at the highest level.

Only four documents of Vatican II contain the word 'Constitution' in their title, designating them as of prime importance, namely *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, to all of which we have already referred, and also *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, which we must now consider. Promulgated in 1965, it rejects any notion that the scriptures can be abstracted from the ongoing life of the Church and contextualises them as follows.

[7] The former Catholic view was apparent in the title, *The Sources of Revelation*, that was perversely given, in translation, to the book which de Lubac carefully entitled, in 1967, *L'Ecriture dans la Tradition*; cf. his memoirs again, *Service*, p. 122.

[8] Max Thurian (ed.), *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper 116; World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1983), p. xvi.

[9] Ibid., p. xvi.

> Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching. Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. (*DV* 9)

'Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church', it says, and 'the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God . . . has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone' (*DV* 10).

With these statements from both sides, a major ecclesiological barrier between them was breached and both could appreciate the other as a serious partner in the effort to unite the People of God to whom the scriptures have been entrusted and by whose life and worship they are transmitted. Furthermore, both sides simultaneously deepened their awareness of the origin of the life of God's People, by formally relating the Church not just to Christ, as his body, but to the Trinity itself. The Montreal conference, in 1963, 'stressed that our understanding of the church should not derive only from Christology but from the Trinitarian understanding of God'.[10] Vatican II, in 1964, quoted St Cyprian and affirmed, as we have seen, that the universal Church is 'a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (*LG* 4). The time was indeed ripe for dialogue! Let us see how the Catholic Church, by far the largest Christian Church, began to take part in the ecumenical endeavours which had long been a feature of the other Churches.

Wider Participation

It was on 25 January 1959, at the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, that Pope John XXIII announced, to everyone's surprise, that he was

[10] Zizioulas, 'The Church as Communion', in Thomas Best and Gunther Gassmann (eds.), *On the way to Fuller Koinonia* (Faith and Order Paper 166; World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1994), p. 104.

going to summon an ecumenical council, 'ecumenical' in the ancient sense mentioned in chapter three of a council of bishops 'from all the world', rather than from various denominations. That he intended this council to advance the cause of Christian unity quickly became apparent. Five days later, he spoke to the clergy of Rome about the coming council in this light.

> We do not intend to set up a tribunal to judge the past. We do not want to prove who was right and who was wrong. Responsibility was divided. All we want to say is: 'Let us come together. Let us make an end of our divisions.'[11]

Then, on 1 February, Pope John honestly diagnosed some of the Catholic ills that he wanted to remedy, with the implication that Catholics had pointed a finger at, rather than extending a hand to their fellow Christians, and a telling reference to scholasticism.

> The faults from which we catholics are not, alas, free, lie in our not having prayed enough to God to smooth the ways that converge on Christ's Church; in not having felt charity to the full; in not having always practised it toward our separated brethren, preferring the rigour of learned, logical, incontrovertible arguments, to forbearing and patient love, which has its own compelling power of persuasion; in having preferred the philosophical rigidity of the lecture room to the friendly serenity of the *Controversies* of St Francis de Sales.[12]

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was seventy-six years old when his pontificate which opened the windows to allow fresh air into the Catholic Church began. To develop the ecumenical dialogue which was an essential aspect of this openness, he chose another quite remarkable septuagenarian, Cardinal Augustin Bea, and named him as President of the new Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity on Whitsunday, 1960. Previously known primarily as a scripture scholar, Bea displayed the same engaging honesty and humility as the Pope in the following statement. 'I would like to say that we Catholics must recognise with sincere gratitude that it was our separated brethren, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant, who

[11] Cf. Bernard Leeming, *The Vatican Council and Christian Unity* (Harper & Row, New York, 1966), p. 19. This book consists mainly of a valuable commentary on the text of *Unitatis Redintegratio.*

[12] Ibid., p. 258.

gave the first impulse to the modern unitive movement and that we have learned much from them and can still learn more.'[13]

The separated brethren were, indeed, invited to send observers to the council and, in due course, they were equipped with all the documentation given to the bishops, prominently placed in St Peter's basilica for the debates and able to register their own views to the Secretariat. Reciprocally, in 1961, for the first time, Catholic observers accredited by the Vatican were present at an assembly of the World Council of Churches, in fact at the Third Assembly, held in New Delhi. Only seven years previously, Catholics had been expressly forbidden by the Archbishop of Chicago to take part in the Second Assembly, held in Evanston, a suburb of the city.

In 1964, the council duly produced its Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio.* Endorsing the WCC as a work of the Spirit, it referred to 'those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour' and commented: 'among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians' (*UR* 1; cf. 20). The decree firmly stated the conviction that drives all ecumenism, 'Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only', and indicated that the Catholic Church was now committed to working, and not just waiting, for unity. 'The restoration of unity among all Christians', it said, 'is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council' (*UR* 2). Accordingly, with regard to 'our separated brethren' it encouraged 'meetings of the two sides' for theological dialogue 'on an equal footing' (*UR* 9).

In a clear manifestation of divine providence, the Pan-Orthodox Conference meeting on Rhodes, also in 1964, reiterated its decision of the previous year, that 'our Eastern Orthodox Church suggests to the Roman Catholic Church the starting of a dialogue between the two Churches on an equal level'.[14] Indeed, 1964 had begun with the historic meeting of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch

[13] Ibid., p. 215.

[14] Paul McPartlan (ed.), *One in 2000? Towards Catholic–Orthodox Unity. Agreed Statements and Parish Papers* (St Paul, Slough, 1993), p. 123. For an account of the growing Catholic–Orthodox *rapprochement*, cf. two contributions to this book: 'The Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church', by Mgr Eleuterio Fortino, and my article, 'Regaining our Lost Unity'.

Athenagoras on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and 1965 saw the nullifying by both sides of the mutual anathemas dating back to 1054. Then, in 1967, not only did Pope Paul VI visit the Ecumenical Patriarch, Athenagoras, in Constantinople (Istanbul), but Athenagoras also visited Rome. Eight years later, as 'Servant of the servants of God', Pope Paul made the unforgettable gesture in the Sistine Chapel of kneeling to kiss the feet of the delegate of Athenagoras' successor, Patriarch Dimitrios, and it was announced that Catholic and Orthodox commissions would now start preparing for a full-scale theological dialogue to be built upon the dialogue of love already long begun.

Early in 1978, a joint co-ordinating group met in Rome and agreed that, according to the ancient tradition of the undivided Church, there is one great sacrament of Christ on earth, namely the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the Church is most truly the sacrament of Christ in the communal celebration of the Eucharist.[15] Only a year after his election, Pope John Paul II visited Patriarch Dimitrios in Constantinople in 1979 and together they announced the establishment of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The commission moved swiftly to produce its first agreed statement in 1982, from which we have already quoted, entitled, 'The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity'. It confirmed thereby its resolve to place at the centre of this dialogue of the two ancient halves of Christianity the Eucharist, which not only manifests most clearly the Church but also introduces us into the life of the blessed Trinity, the source of salvation. That Catholics and Orthodox may share the Eucharist once more as one is the dialogue's goal.

Three further agreed statements have been produced. After 'Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church' appeared in 1987, a statement on 'The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church' was published in 1988.[16] The next year, 1989, was a year of monumental upheaval in Europe as the communist bloc collapsed. The dialogue could not fail to be

[15] Cf. ibid., pp. 124–5.

[16] The first three agreed statements can all be found in *One in 2000?*, together with accompanying papers which describe the historical, theological and spiritual context of the dialogue.

touched by these momentous events, since seven of the fourteen Orthodox Churches involved in it were located in Eastern European countries. Political freedom resulted in the resurgence, after decades of suppression, of churches in communion with Rome (sometimes called 'uniate churches') in some of these territories, and in resultant tensions with the local Orthodox faithful. The commission had to suspend its original plan and address the highly sensitive historical and theological issues involved as a matter of urgency, the outcome being a fourth agreed statement, entitled 'Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion', which was promulgated at Balamand in Lebanon in 1993.[17] This statement affirmed that the faithful should be free 'to decide without pressure from outside if they wish to be in communion either with the Orthodox Church or with the Catholic Church' (n. 24), which it clearly hailed as 'Sister Churches' (n. 12; cf. *UU*60). Further statements, especially one on 'Conciliarity and Authority in the Church', may now be expected if, as is to be earnestly hoped, the dialogue resumes its original progress.

Pope John Paul II has recently indicated that his desire for full reconciliation between the two Churches by the year 2000 is still strong. This was the target that he set in Constantinople on 30 November 1979, the feast of St Andrew, patron of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. 'Is it not time to hasten towards perfect brotherly reconciliation, so that the dawn of the third millennium may find us standing side by side, in full communion, to bear witness together to salvation before the world, the evangelisation of which is waiting for this sign of unity?'[18] The place envisaged for the standing side by side and the witnessing together is, of course, the celebration of the Eucharist. On 13 June 1994, after nearly fifteen years of ups and downs in the official dialogue, speaking to a consistory of cardinals in Rome about plans for the millennium, the Pope referred to the need to 'find the way to mutual accord between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East' and stressed: 'In view of the year 2000, this is perhaps the greatest task.'[19] The papal letters of May 1995 doubly reiterated the urgency of this task: '[w]ith the grace of God a great

[17] The statement may be found in the *Eastern Churches Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1993/94), pp. 17–25.

[18] Cf. *One in 2000?*, p. 9.

[19] *Oss Rom*, 22 June 1994, p. 8.

effort must be made to re-establish full communion' (*UU* 56; cf *OL* 19).

While it is still possible that this target may be achieved, it is extremely unlikely that the Catholic–*Anglican* dialogue, which began before the Catholic–Orthodox one, will yield full communion by the year 2000, especially after the Church of England's decision in 1992 to ordain women to the priesthood. Nevertheless, the dialogue of Catholics and Anglicans is important, particularly in the light of the affirmation by Vatican II that, among the communions in the West 'in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican communion occupies a special place' (*UR* 13).

In December, 1960, Geoffrey Fisher became the first Archbishop of Canterbury since the Reformation to visit the Vatican. Having long been active ecumenically, and having chaired the inaugural session of the WCC in 1948, Fisher was concluding his long term of office by visiting the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and, finally, the Pope. Five months later, Pope John received Queen Elizabeth II at the Vatican.

It was, however, during the visit of Archbishop Ramsey to Pope Paul VI in March, 1966, that Anglican–Catholic dialogue was formally initiated. The preparatory commission for the dialogue met first in early 1967 and the tenth Lambeth Conference, held in 1968, received not only a personal message from the Pope but also seven official Catholic observers. The full Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) met for the first time at Windsor in February, 1970, with three topics singled out for study: authority, Eucharist and ministry. By the time of the second meeting, in September of that year, in Venice, the overall context of the commission's study was clear; it was to be the *Church*. Three preliminary papers were drafted, on 'Church and Authority', 'Church and Eucharist' and 'Church and Ministry'. The Preface to the ARCIC *Final Report*, in 1981, recalled this significant fact and added that 'this perspective was maintained and is reflected in what follows here: our work is introduced with a statement on the Church, building on the concept of *koinonia*' (*Final Report*, p. 2). It also reiterated the primary aim of the dialogue, namely 'the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life' (p. 3).

ARCIC quickly finalised (in 1971) its first agreed statement which, like that of the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue eleven years

later, dealt with 'Eucharistic Doctrine', and further agreed statements steadily followed, on 'Ministry and Ordination' (1973) and 'Authority in the Church I' (1976). An 'Elucidation' of the first two texts appeared in 1979, and of the third in 1981, together with a further statement, 'Authority in the Church II'. All of these were gathered into the *Final Report* in the same year, 1981, and this report was submitted to the two Churches. The 1988 Lambeth Conference endorsed the report from the Anglican side, but the official Catholic response was not announced until 1991 and turned out to be a rather qualified welcome, which dampened hopes that major strides towards unity might be imminent.

Meanwhile, a second ARCIC commission was established, following the meeting of Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie at Canterbury in 1982. It met first in 1983 and has produced a continuing series of important agreed statements, all of which have involved further reflection on the mystery of the Church, as is apparent from their titles: 'Salvation and the Church' (1986), 'Church as Communion' (1990) and 'Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church' (1994).

In January of the same year as that historic encounter on English soil, on the other side of the world, in Lima, at a plenary meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, an outstanding ecumenical text was finalised by over a hundred theologians. The Preface to this text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, rightly marvelled at the achievement.

> Those who know how widely the churches have differed in doctrine and practice on baptism, eucharist and ministry, will appreciate the importance of the large measure of agreement registered here. Virtually all the confessional traditions are included in the Commission's membership. That theologians of such widely different traditions should be able to speak so harmoniously about baptism, eucharist and ministry is unprecedented in the modern ecumenical movement. (*BEM*, p. ix)

Full Catholic membership of the Faith and Order Commission began in 1968, as a concrete expression of the new relationship between the Catholic Church and the WCC following Vatican II. Catholic theologians were now able to participate fully in the work just begun by Faith and Order, in the aftermath of the Montreal conference, to draft texts on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry which

would express the developing doctrinal convergence of the Churches on these matters in the years since Faith and Order first gathered at Lausanne, in 1927. The Preface to the final combined text indicated how many contributory factors had led to the time being ripe for such a widely agreed statement. It singled out the four movements to which we referred in chapter three: 'as a result of *biblical* and *patristic* studies, together with the *liturgical* revival and the need for common witness, an *ecumenical* fellowship has come into being which often cuts across confessional boundaries and within which former differences are now seen in a new light'. Highlighting with a quotation the new appreciation of the life of the Church achieved at Montreal, which we mentioned above, it pointed to the goal of 'visible unity' and said that, on the way towards it, the various Churches have been blessed 'through listening to each other and jointly returning to the primary sources, namely "the Tradition of the Gospel testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit" ' (*BEM*, p. ix, my italics).

Before looking at the text, we may bring the contribution of Faith and Order to an understanding of the Church fully up to date by mentioning its fifth World Conference, held at Santiago de Compostela in 1993, the aim of which was to help the Churches to clarify 'where they really are on the way towards unity and to create a common mind concerning the kind of unity they want to prepare together'.[20] Addressing the Conference, one of the leading Catholic figures in Faith and Order, Jean Tillard, referred to the 'common goal' of the various activities of the WCC and singled out the great, recurring theme of communion, or *koinonia*, when he said: 'this conference has reaffirmed that this common goal is unity viewed as *koinonia in faith, life and martyria* [witness]'. In serious pursuit of that goal, he added, will the Churches 'commit themselves to grow into a communion at the deepest level, rooting their solidarity and their work in the undivided faith, the common confession of the Triune God, a ministry of genuine communion, and, ultimately, one same Eucharist'? 'Is not that the full communion which God wills, not in opposition to service to the world, but as its focal point?'[21] In a later

[20] Jean Tillard, 'Concrete *koinonia*', *The Tablet*, 4 September 1993, p. 1146.

[21] Tillard, 'The Future of Faith and Order', in Best and Gassmann (eds.), *On the way to Fuller Koinonia*, pp. 190–1.

reflection, he commends one particularly clear vision of the goal that was expressed in a report at the Conference: 'the Church of God fully united is the communion of all the local communities gathered around the eucharistic table presided over by ministers in communion'.[22]

Such is the vision we have elaborated in our earlier reflections, with an awareness of the eucharistic role of the papacy at the centre of the communion of the Church. Tillard notes that, at Santiago, 'probably for the first time in an official gathering of this kind, the problematic necessity of a universal primacy was peacefully discussed', thanks to an intervention by the Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, which 'opened the way for a clear and courageous re-examination of the vocation of the Roman See'.[23] Pope John Paul himself notes this important development at Santiago. 'After centuries of bitter controversies, the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities are more and more taking a fresh look at this ministry of unity' (*UU* 89). Indeed, Tillard emphasises that much 'courageous re-examination' is required, by all confessions, on the road towards unity. Each must scrutinise its doctrine 'in the light of the *katholon* [wholeness or fulness] of the apostolic faith'.[24]

Lines of Convergence

Against the background of wide variations in emphasis upon the Eucharist and in the frequency of its celebration by Christian Churches since the Reformation, the Lima Report makes a most striking affirmation, also noted by the Pope (*UU* 45; cf. 17,87), of the importance of this action for the new times ahead.

> Christian faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord's Supper. . . . As the Eucharist celebrates the Resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place at least every Sunday. As it is the new sacramental meal of the people of God, every Christian should be encouraged to receive communion frequently. (*BEM*, Eucharist, 30, 31)

[22] Tillard, 'Concrete *koinonia*', p. 1147; cf. *On the way to Fuller Koinonia*, p. 251.

[23] Tillard, 'Concrete *koinonia*', p. 1146; the full text of Zizioulas' address, 'The Church as Communion: A Presentation of the World Conference Theme', may be found in *On the way to Fuller Koinonia*, pp. 103–11.

[24] 'The Future of Faith and Order', p. 190.

To some, this statement will seem strange in that it links the Eucharist so fundamentally with the *Resurrection*, rather than simply with the *Cross*. One reason why the Eucharist has become infrequent in some traditions over the years is precisely because it has been seen as an occasional means of profoundly renewing the faith of *individuals* by presenting them with the Lord's *death* on Calvary, rather than as the regular means by which the Lord renews the Resurrection *life* which he shares with *all* his baptised followers in the communion of the *Church*. In fact, with these rather gloomy overtones, the Eucharist has even been deemed an inappropriate celebration for the great Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter![25]

We may sense that the Lima Report was achieved by the drawing of all of its contributors into a fuller account of the Eucharist than, perhaps, anyone individually would have offered. It is not just the highest common denominator, but rather the least common multiple, of their beliefs. Such is the case in the various ecumenical dialogues of recent times. Agreement on the Eucharist, which has often been the first priority, as with ARCIC and the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue, has been achieved by the common reappropriation of aspects of the Eucharist which have been neglected or forgotten with the passage of time and the pressure of controversy.

One of the greatest weaknesses generally acknowledged as something longstanding in Western theology is the lack of attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, one of the greatest factors in recent ecumenical progress has been a renewed appreciation of the Spirit's role. Discussion of the Church and particularly of the Eucharist has been enlivened and greatly advanced through recognising them as prime works of the Spirit in the world.

Vatican II signalled this renewed awareness in its Decree on Ecumenism.

[25] Cf. Laurence Hull Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church* (Abingdon, Nashville, 1993), p. 37. Stookey, a Methodist theologian, interestingly comments that, instead of basically correcting an excessive medieval association of the Mass with Calvary, whereby it was understood as a propitiatory sacrifice for the souls in Purgatory, which at least had the merit of regarding the Mass as an objective action, the Reformation 'only made matters worse' by retaining the link with Calvary while banishing the notion of Purgatory, such that 'until recently, in virtually all Protestant churches, the sacrament had strong elements of subjective Good Friday devotions with an overlay of individual penitence' (pp. 97–8).

> After being lifted up on the Cross and glorified, the Lord Jesus poured forth the Spirit whom he had promised, and through whom he has called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church, into a unity of faith, hope and charity, as the Apostle teaches us: 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called into the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:4–5).... It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity. (*UR* 2)

In an address in 1987, Pope John Paul recalled the teaching of the council about the importance of the Eucharist for ecumenism and confirmed the Eucharist as the key to the doctrine of the Church as sacrament of salvation.

> In the last analysis, in fact, only the eucharistically reconciled Church will be a credible sign – the sacrament of the unity of all mankind and of peace in the world. The 'Decree on Ecumenism', presupposing that Christ 'instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about' (*UR* 2), directly specifies the goal of ecumenism: 'little by little,... all Christians will be gathered in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, [a unity] which Christ bestowed upon his Church from the beginning'. (*UR* 4)

He then made a striking reference to the Holy Spirit.

> Only the Holy Spirit can overcome the divisions still existing between Christians. On the day of Pentecost, when he descended upon the Apostles, he transformed them into decisive and mutually united witnesses to Christ. . . . Throughout Christendom there is now a deepening conviction that the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist – that is, the so-called *epiclesis* – is a great prayer for Christian unity and an incessant appeal for union.[26]

The Holy Spirit is here being identified as the one who gathers the Church, transforms individuals into a community, and directs our gaze to a fuller union in the future, all of this activity being focused upon the celebration of the Eucharist. This perception is deeply rooted in the New Testament. There we find St Paul

[26] Pope John Paul II, address to ecumenical representatives in Poland, 8 June 1987, in *Oss Rom*, 6 July 1987, p. 5.

particularly associating the Holy Spirit with the gift of communion (*koinonia*; cf. 2 Cor 13:13) and St John relating that it was when the Holy Spirit caught him up that he saw the future, the visions of 'what is to take place hereafter' that he endeavours to describe in the Book of the Apocalypse (cf. Apoc 1:10, 19). I suggested earlier that John gives a clue that these visions were vouchsafed to him by the Spirit in the context of the Eucharist, celebrated on the Lord's day (cf. Apoc 1:10). In the eucharistic context of the Last Supper in John's Gospel, Jesus himself promises: 'When the Spirit of truth comes, . . . he will declare to you the things that are to come' (Jn 16:13). The Holy Spirit declares and reveals the future, namely the heavenly assembly gathered by the same Spirit, in the context of the Eucharist.

All in all, ecumenical agreement on the Eucharist is being found by acknowledging what we saw in chapter one, namely that the Eucharist is not just my personal encounter with Christ in a re-enactment of the Last Supper, it is also a celebration of the *Church*, empowered by the *Holy Spirit*, in a foretaste of the *future* heavenly banquet. Since we also saw in the first chapter that the *Catechism* contains these complementary emphases, we may again appreciate the ecumenical value of this resource.[27] Let us now look at how they are expressed in the three agreed statements on the Eucharist that we have mentioned.

Regarding, first, the *Church*, ARCIC says that the theme of *koinonia*, which 'most aptly expresses the mystery underlying the various New Testament images of the Church', runs through all of its statements: 'we present the eucharist as the effectual sign of *koinonia*, *episcope* [oversight] as serving the *koinonia*, and primacy as a visible link and focus of *koinonia*' (*Final Report*, Introduction, 4, 6). The purpose of the Eucharist is 'to transmit the life of the crucified and risen Lord to his body, the Church, so that its members may be more fully united with Christ and with one another' (*Final Report*, Eucharistic Doctrine, 6).

> Christ through the Holy Spirit in the eucharist builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. The identity of the Church as the body of Christ is both expressed and

[27] Cf. the closing remarks of chapter four, above, and also my article, 'The *Catechism* and Catholic–Orthodox Dialogue', *One in Christ* 30 (1994), pp. 229–44.

> effectively proclaimed by its being centred in, and partaking of, his body and blood. (ibid., 3)

The Lima Report emphasises the vast extent of eucharistic communion.

> The eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church. The sharing in one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the oneness of the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places. It is in the Eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration. (*BEM*, Eucharist, 19)

The Catholic–Orthodox statement clearly identifies the Trinity as the source of *koinonia*. The Church is 'the sacrament of the Trinitarian *koinonia*' (*Mystery*, I, 5d) and this identity is focused in the Eucharist: 'the eucharistic celebration makes present the Trinitarian mystery of the Church' (ibid., I, 6). The 'mystery of the unity in love of many persons constitutes the real newness of the Trinitarian *koinonia* communicated to men in the Church through the Eucharist' (ibid., II, 1).

> Like the community of the apostles gathered around Christ, each eucharistic assembly is truly the holy Church of God, the Body of Christ, in communion with the first community of the disciples and with all those [communities] throughout the world which celebrate and have celebrated the Memorial of the Lord. It is also in communion with the assembly of the saints in heaven, which each celebration evokes. (ibid., III, 1)

Turning now to the *Holy Spirit*, the same statement refers to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as 'the completion of the paschal mystery' and the inauguration, simultaneously, of 'the last times'. Henceforth, '[t]he Eucharist and the Church, Body of the crucified and risen Christ, become the place of the energies of the Holy Spirit' (ibid., I, 4a). It says, indeed, that 'the Church is continually in a state of *epiclesis* [invocation of the Spirit]'. 'The Spirit *transforms* the sacred gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ' (ibid., I, 5c) and '*puts into communion* with the Body of Christ all who share the same bread and the same cup' (ibid., I, 5d).

Likewise, the Lima Report refers to the Holy Spirit as 'the immeasurable strength of love' which makes the eucharistic event possible 'and continues to make it effective' as 'the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity' (*BEM*, Eucharist, 14). ARCIC states that 'the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that in communion we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood' (ARCIC, Eucharistic Doctrine, 10), and immediately expresses the dynamism towards the future that the Spirit always imparts.

> The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of glory. In the eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the first creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth. (ibid., 11)

Finally, echoing this link of the Eucharist with the *future* via the action of the Spirit, the Lima Report says the following. 'The Holy Spirit through the Eucharist gives a foretaste of the Kingdom of God: the Church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord's return' (*BEM*, Eucharist, 18).

> The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it. Signs of this renewal are present in the world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love and peace. The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks to God for these signs and joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ (1 Cor 11:26; Mt 26:29). (ibid., 22)

'[T]he foretaste of eternal life, the medicine of immortality, the sign of the Kingdom to come' (*Mystery*, I, 2), is how the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue describes the Eucharist in its forward-looking aspect.

> The pilgrim Church celebrates the Eucharist on earth until its Lord comes to restore kingship to God the Father so that God may be all in all. It thus anticipates the judgement of the world and its final transfiguration. (ibid., I, 4c)

Nor is the Eucharist simply an earthly celebration which, as it were, reaches out to heaven; rather the opposite is true.

> [T]he Church existing in a given place is not formed, in a radical sense, by the persons who come together to establish it. There is a 'Jerusalem from on high' which 'comes down from God', a communion which is the foundation of the community itself. The Church comes into being by a free gift, that of the new creation'. (ibid., II, 1)

Thus it is that the earthly community is called to be 'the outline of a human community renewed' (ibid., II, 3), a sign, not empty, but full of that which gives it life, sacrament of the heavenly Jerusalem, sacrament of salvation.

Chapter Seven

'This Is the Cup of My Blood'
The Chalice and the Renewal of Baptism

'Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together', says St Paul to the Ephesians, in one of the key texts which inspire the ecumenical movement. His listing of the factors which cause this unity is well-known. 'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, through all and within all.' What is rarely heeded, however, is that, ahead of this list, Paul gives priority to another factor which should hold the Church in unity. 'There is one Body, one Spirit', he says, 'just as you were all called into one and the same *hope* when you were called' (Eph 4:3–6).

By associating both the unity of the Church and hope for the future with the Holy Spirit in this passage, Paul strikingly affirms the intimately related trio of elements that we have seen contributing strongly to a renewed ecumenical appreciation of the Eucharist at the heart of the Church. His perspective is a liberating one, in that it offers an alternative to thinking that ecumenical discussion must somehow aim to understand and remedy all the past disputes which have divided Christians from one another, a task which is at least daunting, if not impossible. He suggests that we should look rather to the future and consider the hope that is in us. Pope John Paul likewise urges us to have '*hope* in the Spirit, who can banish from us the painful memories of our separation' (*UU* 102). If we can agree on that hope and upon the way in which we already anticipate its fulfilment, primarily in the Eucharist, then perhaps we can cast off some of the baggage of a divided history and move forward together.

It is in baptism that Christ first imparts hope to his people, forgiving all the sins that weigh them down and freeing them to run unhindered towards the heavenly home newly revealed to them. We must now consider the relationship between this foundational sacrament and the Eucharist.

The Baptism of Jesus

We find in Luke's Gospel not only an account of Jesus coming for baptism to his cousin John who was preaching in the wilderness (Lk 3:21–2), but also Jesus' dramatic later statement that there is a baptism that he must yet undergo.

> I have come to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive and how great is my distress until it is over! (Lk 12:49–50)

Jesus is clearly referring to his death on the Cross. That he should call this also his *baptism* makes us reflect on the relationship between what happened in the River Jordan and what happened on Calvary.

At the Jordan, Jesus expressed his solidarity with the faithful people of Israel, taking upon himself 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Lk 3:3), even though he himself was sinless, and being anointed from heaven by the descending Holy Spirit and confirmed in his identity as the Suffering Servant, as we saw in chapter two. He embarked publicly on a path of fidelity to God which led him inexorably to the Cross, where his baptism in the waters of Jordan was consummated as he plunged into the waters of death.

In between these two events, he invited anyone who would be his disciple to 'renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me' (Lk 9:23). For us who know that Jesus' ministry culminated on Calvary, the cross mentioned here is instantly understood as the wooden Cross which he ultimately bore. But, before Jesus had even embarked upon his journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51), what could such an invitation mean?

The prophet Ezekiel was taken in a vision to see the corrupt worship offered in the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 8:1–18) and he heard the violent punishment that God decreed. However, before the punishment was carried out, an envoy was instructed: 'Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross on the

foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of all the filth practised in it' (Ezek 9:4). Those people were to be spared.

Could it be that Jesus regarded his baptism by John as a signing with a cross to indicate his faithful stand against all infidelity, a cross on his forehead which duly became a Cross on his shoulder? If so, then the cross which he invites us to take up, in our turn, is first of all a cross on the forehead, signifying fidelity to the living God and indicating a willingness to take our share in the Cross on the Lord's shoulder as and when that becomes necessary. It is notable that the baptism of an infant begins with a signing on the forehead with a cross, and the words: 'I claim you for Christ'. Baptism is for us, as it was for the Lord, the moment of publicly embarking on a path of fidelity through life. Christ has gone before us as our pioneer (cf. Heb 12:2) and we now follow the path he has marked out. As his journey culminated in his death and Resurrection, so we at the very outset already plunge into that mystery in sacramental signs and pledge our desire to end our own earthly journey by dying with him so as to rise with him in actuality.

Just as Jesus' baptism was, as it were, a pending commitment, begun in the Jordan and *realised* on Calvary, so, too, our baptism is a pending commitment. It is fulfilled at the moment of death, when our participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ is *realised.* As a newly baptised infant is clothed in a white garment as a sign of being clothed in Christ (cf. Gal 3:27) and welcomed by him into the Church with an embrace, so the new Catholic funeral rite envisages that a (white) pall may placed over the coffin. This 'reminder of the baptismal garment of the deceased'[1] is an eloquent reminder that the Lord's embrace is most secure at the moment of ultimate weakness, to bring his faithful safely through the passage from death to life.

This view of baptism as a pending commitment contrasts sharply with any notion of it as something over-and-done-with, conferring a static status which guarantees salvation. On the contrary, it is the dynamic undertaking of a way of life, something to be kept vivid in us until our final passover. We shall see that what keeps it alive and fresh in us is the regular celebration of the Eucharist and, moreover,

[1] *Order of Christian Funerals* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1990), General Introduction, n. 38: the pall is 'a sign of the Christian dignity of the person' and also signifies that 'all are equal in the eyes of God'.

that this perspective on the Eucharist casts particular light on the reception of Holy Communion from the *chalice.*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus refers to his own death as the drinking of a cup, from which he asks his Father to deliver him (Mt 26:39, 42). Earlier, he anticipated this end when he simply said to the sons of Zebedee, in response to their mother's request that they should sit beside him in his kingdom: 'can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' (Mt 20:20–23). Indeed, in Mark's version of the event, the baptism still to be undergone and the chalice still to be drunk are identified. Jesus asks: 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?' They reply that they can, and he responds. 'The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised, you shall be baptised' (Mk 10:38–39).

The communion cup, then, particularly reminds us that the Eucharist is what keeps our baptismal commitment alive until we finally consummate it by dying in Christ so as to rise in him. Aware of daunting trials facing the Christians in third-century Carthage, their saintly bishop Cyprian and his fellow bishops of North Africa advocated fully reconciling with the Church those who had lapsed but then repented, precisely so that they might again receive communion from the cup.

> Since the Eucharist is meant to protect those who receive it, the people whom we want to see protected against the enemy should be given the help the Lord's food brings with it. How can we instruct and urge them to shed their blood in confession of [Christ's] name if we refuse them the blood of Christ when they go out to battle? How can we instil in them the strength to drink the cup of martyrdom if we do not first permit them to drink the cup of the Lord in the Church, in virtue of the right to do so that comes through communion with us?[2]

Let us now note two ways in which the Eucharist echoes the benefits of baptism: both involve a washing and convey eternal life. There is a washing in baptism. Paul refers to it when he tells the Ephesians that 'Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy'. 'He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious' (Eph 5:25–27). There is also, as we have seen, a washing

[2] Cyprian, *Epist.* 57, 2 (53, 2 in Migne; *PL* 3, 856; cf. 4, 348).

in the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus says that he is giving his blood 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28) and the assembly gathered around his throne in heaven consists of those who have 'washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb' (Apoc 7:14).

Turning to the Gospel of John, we learn that there is eternal life in baptism from the teaching of Jesus at the Pool of Bethzatha. In this baptismal setting, Jesus says: 'whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgement he has passed from death to life' (Jn 5:24). That there is also eternal life in the Eucharist is taught by Jesus in the very next chapter of John's account. 'Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life', 'he lives in me and I live in him' (Jn 6:54, 56).

Now, clearly the two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are not rivals in the conveying of these gifts, somehow jockeying for position. So, how should we order them and understand their relationship? The Eucharist is what keeps alive and actual the paschal mystery of baptism until its accomplishment in the lives of believers. It is the whiteness of their *baptismal* garment that the saints have restored by washing in the blood of the Lamb. The initial washing in water has been refreshed and renewed in the Eucharist, which secures in the path of life those who, in baptism, have turned their backs on death but who continue to contend against its allies, darkness and sin.

Bread and Wine

As we saw in chapter one, there is joy and judgement in the Eucharist, food and forgiveness. I suggest that the nourishment of food is more conveyed by the consecrated bread: 'my body, given up for you'; while the element of forgiveness is more conveyed by the consecrated wine: 'the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven'.[3] These emphases are supported by the first Preface of the Holy Eucharist in the *Roman Missal*. 'As we eat his body which he gave for us, we grow in strength. As we drink his blood which he poured out for us, we are washed clean.'

[3] Cf. words of consecration in the *Roman Missal*, from which a number of short extracts are quoted in the following paragraphs.

It is important to see that the bread and the wine *each* speak to us of Christ's death and of his total self-gift to his people, but that they do so in different and complementary ways. Over the centuries, there have occasionally been gruesome suggestions that the manifestation of his death requires *both* the bread and the wine. According to these theories, it is the *separation* of Christ's body and blood, in the consecrated bread and wine, respectively, that images forth his death. Here is his body, here is his blood: see his death! This is pious nonsense, because the New Testament does not make a point of the separation of the bread and the wine at the Last Supper, rather it shows two rites, which are presented side by side in the Eucharist, but which were quite distinct in the original meal.

The blessing of the bread seems to derive from the grace said before the passover meal, and the blessing of the cup from a grace said at the end: 'when supper was ended he took the cup'. The passover meal took place *between* these two graces; they were not said one after the other.[4] What, then, do the two rites, respectively, show?

Let us consider, first, the bread, of which Jesus says: 'This is my body'. In John's Gospel, Jesus says that it is the Father who gives the true bread from heaven, which is himself, given for the life of the world (Jn 6:32–35, 48–51). This gift recalls the tradition of God feeding his people with manna in the desert for forty years, as the food for their continuing journey to the Promised Land (Ex 16). At the Last Supper, Jesus is aware of a journey that he is about to undertake, through death to undying life, and this bread is to feed our participation in it. His definitive passover is about to take place and we eat in readiness to go with him. The bread now used in the Roman Catholic Church is unleavened, like that of the Jewish people at the first Passover, when they were ready for a hasty departure to liberation (cf. Ex 12; *CCC* 1334).

Bread is also the staple of life. Whenever the devout Jew eats, he gives God thanks for his bountiful fidelity to his promises. Already before the supper, Jesus' multiplication of the loaves had prefigured 'the superabundance of [the] unique bread of his Eucharist' (*CCC* 1335). By his words of consecration, Jesus offers himself to be the source of life for his disciples. They are to be nourished by all that he has achieved in his bodiliness, by his words and actions and by the

[4] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (SCM, London, 1966), pp. 84–8.

bonds that he has forged with them and between them, as a community.

Now we turn to the wine, of which Jesus says: 'This is my blood'. For the Jew, blood means life and is sacred. Blood which is shed speaks of death. Again, therefore, Jesus is clearly looking to the Cross and offering a life *through* death to those who will participate. There are loud echoes of the covenant that God concluded with his people in the desert (Ex 24). In that case, half of the blood of sacrificed bullocks was poured over the altar, representing God, and half over the people, sealing their half of the contract. At the Last Supper, this whole procedure is dramatically intensified. As we saw in chapter two, to ratify the new covenant written on hearts, not on tablets of stone, the blood of the covenant is not poured externally but drunk deep within. Moreover, it is the blood of God himself, in Christ. In contrast with all covenants broken in the past by human sinfulness, this is 'the new and everlasting covenant', which enables the future to be faced with a hope that is certain.

There is, in fact, a strong future dimension to the drinking of the cup, as the *Catechism* explains. 'The "cup of blessing" (1 Cor 10:16) at the end of the Jewish Passover meal adds to the festive joy of wine an eschatological dimension: the messianic expectation of the rebuilding of Jerusalem' (*CCC* 1334). When, at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, he already announced the hour of his glorification and looked to 'the fulfilment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom' (*CCC* 1335). At the Last Supper, he is aware of the imminent arrival of the wedding feast in the new Jerusalem: 'I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God' (Mk 14:25); and he offers to the disciples a new wine, his own blood, the blood of the covenant that will be eternally celebrated there.

So we see that *both* the consecrated bread and the consecrated wine speak of Christ's death and of the invitation to join him, through death, in the risen life of God's kingdom where there will be joy in abundance. It is simply different aspects of this mystery that the elements, respectively, convey: bread speaks of food for the journey, while the cup of wine speaks rather of forgiveness on the way.

Forgiveness in the Eucharist

Von Balthasar dwells upon the immense significance of Christ giving his blood to be drunk.[5] In the Old Testament, the flesh of animals could be consumed, but never their blood. The blood of sacrificed animals had to be completely poured out, because it is the symbol of life and belongs to God alone. Then also, the blood of those who were murdered cried to God for vengeance, as was clear after Cain slew Abel (Gen 4:10). 'This blood would be remembered by God as evidence against the criminal, and demanded in its turn revenge by shedding the blood of the murderer.'

> The astounding thing about Jesus' offering is that he freely gives himself into the hands of his murderers, and his blood, which belongs to the Father, and which could be recalled by the Father as testimony against the unpardonable sin of the human race, is given back to the murderers so that they might drink of it as a sign that they are indeed reconciled with God.[6]

Of all the blood that has ever been spilt or ever could be spilt this is the most precious, the blood of God's own incarnate Son. That God should give this very blood back to those whose sins have caused his death is the fullest possible sign that God's mercy and forgiveness outweigh all that humanity could ever do against him. This is 'the sprinkled blood' of which the author of the Letter to the Hebrews says that it 'speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel' (Heb 12:24), because it pleads with God for mercy, not vengeance, and pleads with us not to stand aloof but to receive it for the forgiveness of our sins. Having noted the eucharistic setting of this passage in chapter one, we may now understand von Balthasar's view that, liturgically, 'the sacrifice is completed in the communion' (just as, we may recall, the original passover lamb had to be completely eaten, Ex 12): 'the sign that Jesus' sacrifice has been accepted by the Father consists in the the exchange of gifts whereby what has been sacrificed is given back in order to be consumed'.[7]

[5] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh), vol. 6 (1991), pp. 388–401.

[6] John O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1992), p. 80.

[7] Ibid., p. 80. Cf. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 1 (1982), pp. 571–5.

Thus, it is imperative to receive and consume the blood of Christ and, while this is certainly done under the form of the eucharistic bread alone, for the Council of Trent teaches that 'the whole and entire Christ and the true sacrament are received under either species' (*DS* 1729), it is done with much more awareness when we drink from the communion cup. As we do so, we receive what should be held against us, but what instead is being offered to us as the supreme sign of God's forgiveness. Let us take and drink, and be washed clean!

The urgency of receiving, as well as the relationship between baptismal and eucharistic washing, is dramatically set before us by a famous incident in John's gospel which centres upon a rather puzzling dialogue. As we noted in chapter two, John does not tell us about the institution of the Eucharist in his account of the Last Supper. Having dealt with that in detail earlier, he uses these chapters to imbue with eucharistic meaning the words and actions of Jesus that he does relate.

Jesus comes to Peter, who initially refuses to let the Master wash his feet. Jesus says sternly: 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me'. Peter hastily asks, in that case, for his hands and head to be washed as well. Jesus rather enigmatically replies: 'no one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over' (Jn 13:2–15). Jesus seems to be speaking in some sort of code. To what is he referring? What does he mean? It would seem that the message to the community for which John was writing his account some years afterwards concerns baptism, the unrepeatable 'bath', and the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins.[8] From the context, we are to locate the latter in the Eucharist, where everyday sin, like the everyday grime on the feet of the disciples, is washed away.

Moreover, the urgency of Jesus is apparent: *you must let me do this for you.* He is instituting the Eucharist so that he can continually tend his followers, washing away, this time with his blood, the sins which have accumulated daily since he bathed them completely in baptismal water. 'If we say we have no sin in us, we are deceiving ourselves', says John in his first letter, 'but if we acknowledge our

[8] Cf. Pierre Grelot, 'L'interprétation pénitentielle du Lavement des pieds', in *L'homme devant Dieu*, vol. 1, pp. 75–91.

sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong' (1 Jn 1:8–9). Admitting the everyday sins we have committed since our baptism, we *must* come to the Eucharist and allow the Lord to forgive them. It will not do simply to rest upon the laurels of our baptism and shun regular participation in the Eucharist. 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.'

As we have already acknowledged, the *Catechism* prompts us to recall important truths which, for various reasons, have been rather forgotten over the years, such as the links between the Eucharist and the Church, the Holy Spirit and the future, respectively, links which have been reappropriated in recent ecumenical dialogue. We may now note another such link, namely that between the Eucharist and forgiveness. The *Catechism* teaches that the normal sacrament for the forgiveness of everyday sins is the Eucharist (*CCC* 1394–5, 1436), whereas the sacrament of penance exists 'above all for those who, since baptism, have fallen into grave sin' (*CCC* 1446, cf. 1395). This truth has also been appreciated ecumenically. In the first Catholic-Orthodox statement, there is the following affirmation: 'the Eucharist forgives and heals sins, since it is the sacrament of the divinising love of the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit' (*Mystery*, II, 2).

This teaching is by no means new. First of all, as we have seen, it is profoundly scriptural. Moreover, the *Catechism* is simply reiterating what the Council of Trent already taught in 1551, that there are supernatural gifts both of food and *forgiveness* in the Eucharist. This sacrament is 'a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins' (*CCC* 1436; cf. *DS* 1638). The important affirmation of Trent that the one Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is really and fully present under both forms of bread and wine after the Consecration (DS 1636), such that both his body and his blood are received under either form, must be heeded. However, clearly it was determined by particular practical and historical circumstances, and cannot be regarded as altering the basic directive of the Lord himself to 'take and eat' *and* to 'take and drink'. When we engage fully with the sacramental signs, then we are open fully to the sacramental meaning. As we have seen, while the consecrated bread, the Lord's body, particularly comes to us as food, the cup containing his precious blood speaks eloquently and powerfully of forgiveness.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that Trent went on, in 1562, effectively to withdraw the chalice from the laity (cf. *DS* 1726–9; 1731–3), though it could fairly be said that this measure simply endorsed the laity's own long-standing withdrawal of themselves from the chalice, which dated back to the twelfth century. Either way, the potential for understanding and faithfully receiving the Lord's forgiveness in the Eucharist was considerably diminished while the custom of receiving the wafer alone prevailed in the Catholic Church, as it did until recent times.

In its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II opened the way for the faithful to receive the chalice again in certain circumstances (*SC* 55) and successive permissions have since widened the scope for reception of communion under both kinds, until now it is possible for this to happen in all celebrations of the Mass. Implementation of this permission, however, is still patchy, and one aim of this chapter is to promote the offering of the chalice to the Catholic faithful. Many dimensions of the Eucharist are more clearly opened up by drinking the cup of the Lord. Forgiveness is prominent among them, and this aspect is of particular importance to Catholics at the present time when the proper use of the sacrament of penance is so much debated and Catholics go to confession much less than before the council.

It is providential that Vatican II, which has been followed by a decline in recourse to the sacrament of penance, promoted the giving of the chalice to the laity, offering thereby a vivid way of expressing the forgiveness which is regularly to be found in the Eucharist. As a pastoral problem has emerged, so too has a profoundly traditional solution. In many places, it would seem that the *sensus fidelium* has reacted against a devotional use of confession and against the notion that this sacrament should ideally precede the Eucharist so that recipients can present themselves spotless at the altar. The faithful sense that this is unrealistic and that the Lord looks kindly upon ordinary sinners who approach the altar with repentance and the desire to be renewed. The time is surely ripe for pastors to link this instinct, in a new catechesis on conversion and repentance, to the chalice, newly available to the faithful.

Such a catechesis would, true to its origin, focus the sacrament of penance primarily upon the forgiveness of serious sin, and would make use of the wealth of scriptural teaching on the chalice, the covenant and the Lord's blood to emphasise the forgiveness of

everyday sins that is inherent in the Eucharist. The *Catechism* provides ample resources for such a catechesis, not least the following quotation from St Ambrose:

> For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.[9]

Confirmation

Convinced of its importance for the spiritual life of the faithful, Pope Pius X promoted wider reception of the Eucharist by recommending daily communion in 1905 (in the decree, *Sacra tridentina synodus*) and children's communion in 1910 (in the decree, *Quam singulari*), thereby giving a decisive impetus to the liturgical movement. He reduced the age of first communion from around twelve or fourteen years to the age of discretion (about seven), in a drastic reaction against the rigorism which had insisted upon a long preparation for the sacrament. Such rigorism smacked of the harshness of Jansenism, which Pope Innocent X condemned in 1653, but which retained (and retains) the allure of the worst heresies. However, Pope Pius X inadvertently left the sacrament of confirmation, which had preceded first communion, stranded at a higher age and bequeathed a pastoral problem to the Catholic Church from which she still suffers.

We have quoted earlier de Lubac's statement in 1938: 'Our churches are the "upper room" where not only is the Last Supper renewed but Pentecost also' (*Catholicism*, p. 111). The fact is that the Eucharist renews not only the washing of baptism, as we have seen in this chapter, but also the anointing of confirmation, which is Pentecost in the life of each Christian. It should therefore rightly *follow* confirmation. The same Spirit who descended upon Mary and the twelve in the upper room 'to light within them the fire of universal charity' (*Catholicism*, p. 110) blows strongly in every Mass, being invoked not just upon the gifts but also upon the people who

[9] Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 4, 6, 28 (*PL* 16, 464), cf. 1 Cor 11:26; quoted in *CCC* 1393.

receive them, and the dismissal which gives the Mass its name (*ite missa est*) is itself an echo of the sending out into the world of that first community, empowered by the Spirit.

Zizioulas considers that confirmation is the essential designation of a baptised person to take part in the Eucharist in the first place. Just as the bishop or priest is anointed at his ordination to preside at the Eucharist, so each of the faithful is anointed at their confirmation into the *order* of the laity who gather around the president, so that 'there is actually no such person as a "non-ordained" member of the Church'. 'Baptism and especially confirmation (chrismation) as an inseparable aspect of the rite of initiation involves a "laying on of hands" and a "seal" (*sphragis*), and *inevitably* and *immediately* leads the baptised person to the eucharistic community in order to assume his particular "*ordo*" there.'[10]

Although Catholics and Orthodox differ in many respects regarding the administration of the sacraments of Christian initiation, they have made the following bold statement in unison. 'Christian initiation is a unity in which Chrismation is the perfection of Baptism and the Eucharist is the completion of both' (*Unity*, 37). Indeed, the articles dealing with baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist in the *Catechism* show a particular desire to promote in the West a harmony with the East regarding the correct order of reception of these sacraments. A veil is deftly drawn over the fact that, while these three sacraments are *all* given in their proper order even to infants in the East, in the West a baptised child will normally receive the Eucharist long before being confirmed. Significantly, the *Catechism* makes no explicit mention, let alone defence, of this anomalous practice.

The common practice, West and East, with regard to the initiation of adults, which after all is the normative situation, is stressed, whereby the catechumenate culminates in 'a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist'. Then follows a careful statement about the initiation of children.

> In the Eastern rites the Christian initiation of infants also begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the Eucharist,

[10] Zizioulas, 'Ordination – A Sacrament? An Orthodox Reply', *Concilium*, vol. 4 (Ecumenism), 1972, p. 36. Cf. also, 'Some Reflections on Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist', *Sobornost* series 5, number 9 (1969), pp. 644–52.

> while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian initiation. (*CCC* 1233)

The clear implication is that, whereas the rites differ with regard to the *age* of reception they ought not to differ with regard to the *order*.

Both rites have a post-baptismal anointing, given by the priest, but whereas this *is* the sacrament of confirmation or chrismation in the Eastern Churches, in the Roman liturgy it simply 'announces a second anointing with sacred chrism to be conferred later by the bishop – Confirmation, which will as it were "confirm" and complete the baptismal anointing' (*CCC* 1242). Then, while the Eastern Churches actually give holy communion immediately even to newly baptised infants, '[t]he Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptised child brought to the altar for the praying of the *Our Father*' (*CCC* 1244).

A helpful historical background to the two traditions is given (*CCC* 1290–1), which shows that a good case can be made for the Western staggering of the ages of reception, with confirmation being reserved to the bishop: this practice 'more clearly expresses the communion of the new Christian with the bishop as guarantor and servant of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of his Church, and hence the connection with the apostolic origins of Christ's Church' (*CCC* 1292).

However, with the evident implication that confirmation should not be so delayed as to occur after first communion, the *Catechism* recalls that the age stipulated for its reception is simply 'the age of discretion' (*CCC* 1307). Even if it is regarded as the 'sacrament of Christian maturity', we must never confuse adulthood in faith with adulthood in human growth. It quotes St Thomas Aquinas: '[m]any children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood', and urges that we must never forget that 'baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need "ratification" to become effective' (1308).

There is a genuine danger that the rigorism from which Pope Pius X successfully saved first communion may now attach itself to the sacrament of confirmation. Those who advocate delaying reception of confirmation, in some cases until the late 'teens, must acknowledge that we are *never* worthy, deserving or fully prepared for any of the sacraments. All of them are free, unmerited gifts to us that we shall

spend our whole lives appreciating and appropriating more fully. It is worth recalling that the early Christians received no explicit instruction about baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist until the week *following* their reception of these sacraments at Easter. [11]

Ecumenical Consequences

From an ecumenical point of view, a restored general administration of the chalice to the Catholic faithful would remove a quite unnecessary difference in eucharistic practice between the Roman Catholic Church and other Churches which routinely offer the communion cup, a difference which itself is a cause of ecumenical tension, prompting the reasonable question of why Catholics do not fully follow the Lord's own directions. A further purpose of this chapter, following the considerations in the previous chapter, is, indeed, ecumenical, but it goes much deeper than the point just made. I have sought to understand the relationship between baptism (and chrismation or confirmation) and the Eucharist and to suggest that the eucharistic cup helps Christian hearts and minds to keep these foundational sacraments intimately united, recognising the Eucharist as the living of the mystery of baptism with a regularity which constitutes the heartbeat of the body that we join when we are washed with baptismal water and sealed with holy chrism.

There are two major ecumenical consequences of such a perception. First, it encourages all Christians to celebrate the Eucharist regularly, preferably every Sunday, on the weekly feast of the Lord's Resurrection, as we have seen being advocated by the Lima Report (cf. *BEM*, Eucharist 31). Second, it means that the Churches must press ahead in trying to overcome the difficulties which prevent sharing the Eucharist. Recognising a common baptism *is not enough*, because baptism of itself is 'only a beginning, a point of departure', it is orientated towards 'a complete participation in Eucharistic communion' (*UU* 66; quoting *UR* 22). Baptism is lived and actualised in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The second point particularly applies to dialogues which the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church have with other Churches and between themselves, though it is already well

[11] Cf. Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1994).

recognised in their mutual dialogue. Both of these ancient Churches feel strongly that intercommunion, not least between themselves, is not normally possible (but cf. *UU* 46, 58), because unity at the altar is inseparable from unity in the world; the two must go together, lack of the latter precludes the former. They believe that the Eucharist, of its nature, cannot be celebrated together by those who intend to depart with denominational or other public divisions between them still intact. We simply cannot bring disunity to the altar and have it endorsed by the imprint of the heavenly Jerusalem in which there is no disunity. Nor can we Christians content ourselves with unity at the Lord's table when we are dismaying the Lord and standing in the way of his love 'for all humanity' (cf. *UU* 99; also *OL* 28) by being disunited in the eyes of the world. 'There must never be a loss of appreciation for the ecclesiological implication of sharing in the sacraments, especially in the Holy Eucharist' (*UU* 58). Oneness at the altar must go with oneness in witness.

The refusal of intercommunion, however, can have the unfortunate effect that Christians with whom they are in dialogue can feel that the reluctance of Catholics and Orthodox to share the Eucharist with members of other Churches is more evident than their recognition of the baptism administered by those Churches.[12] To the extent that this springs from an urge to push on existentially from baptism into regular eucharistic participation, the highlighting of eucharistic separation has value in urging the Churches on towards full reconciliation. However, the very intimacy of the bond between baptism and Eucharist should also cause Catholics and Orthodox themselves constantly to make sure that no unnecessary obstacles are being placed in the way of eucharistic sharing with those whom they acknowledge baptismally as Christian brothers and sisters.

The communion cup has a unique capacity to convey that intimacy and is a most important symbol for the Church in our ecumenical times. The chalice powerfully symbolises fidelity to the Lord, forgiveness repeatedly received from his mercy, determination to die with him and hope that we shall rise with him for the eternal banquet.

[12] Catholic acceptance of baptism conferred in other Christian denominations is very broad. The sad reluctance of some Orthodox to recognise even the baptism of Catholics has recently been firmly corrected by the Balamand statement of the joint Catholic–Orthodox dialogue. Recognising that neither side has exclusive possession of Christ's gifts to his Church, it says that, in this context, 'it is clear that rebaptism must be avoided' (13).

Chapter Eight

'The Universe Attains Its Destiny through Us'

Christ and the Church: Priest of Creation

George Bernard Shaw once unburdened himself with feeling on the subject of heaven. 'Heaven, as conventionally conceived', he said, 'is a place so inane, so dull, so useless, so miserable, that nobody has ever ventured to describe a whole day in heaven.' On the other hand, he added, 'plenty of people have described a day at the seaside'.[1]

It is important to ask: what is the picture of heaven that we carry around with us and where has it come from? Sitting on clouds all day, plucking harps, as the conventional view would have it, is indeed rather inane, and fairly useless, too. Sydney Smith imagined that one of his acquaintances would revel in eating *pâté de foie gras* to the sound of trumpets! Even that, I dare say, would swiftly become dull and miserable.

Christian faith holds out the promise of eternal life in heaven. However, if the picture of heaven that we have is tedious, not only will there be an underlying dismay in our own lives, there will also be very little to attract others in the account that we give of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). Too often, Christian promises are unwittingly hitched, in fact, to a quite pagan vision, a patchwork of mythology and fantasy.

We have repeatedly seen that a clear and vibrant picture of heaven emerges from the scriptures themselves and that the Eucharist is the principal place where the life of heaven is anticipated.

[1]G. B. Shaw, *Misalliance*, Preface.

We have probed the scriptures and discovered that they speak to us of the Eucharist as the place where the Church is experienced, where the great eternal gathering of the angels and saints is encountered (cf. Heb 12:18ff). They tell us that, in the Eucharist, it is the Holy Spirit who reminds us of all that Christ taught (Jn 14:26) and who tells us of 'the things to come' (Jn 16:13), the former within the context of the latter (cf. Apoc 1:10; 5:6–14). Moreover, we have seen indications from the scriptures that there is forgiveness in the Eucharist for the pilgrim people, as there was for the apostles (Jn 13:2–15), and that not only their own ministry, but also that of their leader, Peter, is to be continued in the midst of the people as a service to the Eucharist that sustains them all (cf. Lk 22:14–20, 31–32).

Our reflections have led us to banish any notion of the earthly Church as a citadel for refuge from the world and to appreciate that, especially when gathered for the Eucharist, the Church is a sacrament for the world. She contains the very salvation portrayed in that assembly and goes out from there to gather the nations. Now, finally, we must recognise that the Eucharist speaks to us not just of the salvation of humanity but, more widely still, of the salvation of creation as a whole. As bread and wine, made by human hands from the produce of earth and vine, are taken and lifted up to God, we learn that humanity has a responsibility for the wider creation and that it, too, has a place in the heaven we eagerly await.

New Heavens and New Earth

Jesus said: I have come so that you may have life to the full (cf. Jn 10:10). Is it not true that we often feel most fully alive and exhilarated with life when we are close to creation and thrilled with the power and beauty of nature? Think of walking in the hills, with a strong wind blowing, a magnificent view, a glorious sunset, the night sky. Think, indeed, of a day at the seaside: the sun, the sea, the sand, the vitality of it all! If, by comparison with even a day at the seaside, heaven itself seems dull, to recall Shaw's comment, is it largely because we too readily allow ourselves to think that the physical world, with all its drama and sensation, has no place in heaven and that heaven is just a rest home for disembodied spirits?

Such a picture, thankfully, is a travesty of the true Christian picture. Jesus rose bodily from the tomb on Easter Sunday, and each

Sunday, in the Creed, Christians profess their faith in a whole harvest of bodily resurrection that is to follow. Using St Paul's image, we believe that the risen Christ is the beginning of the harvest: 'the *first-fruits* of all who have fallen asleep'. 'Just as all die in Adam, so all will be brought to life in Christ; but all in their proper order: Christ as the first fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end' (1 Cor 15:20–24).

These words to the Corinthians echo what Paul said earlier to the Romans: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies, too, through his Spirit which dwells in you' (Rom 8:11).

So, the physicality which is thoroughly *me* will also be raised by God, in the power of the Spirit, so that I can be *fully* me in heaven (cf. *CCC* 1000). Moreover, the whole creation that I experience *through* this physical body, with its senses of sight, sound, touch and taste, is itself to be transformed and renewed around our victorious Lord. In a nutshell, what we are waiting for is nothing less than 'the new heavens and new earth' (cf. *GS* 39), which St Peter tells us is what Jesus himself 'promised' (2 Pet 3:13) and which we may also note is what Isaiah already promised from God (Is 65:17; 66:22).

That, then, is the full vision of God's intention which Christianity has inherited from the faith of Israel, understanding now that the death and resurrection of Christ is the key to its achievement: a transfigured humanity in a *world* transformed and renewed (cf. *CCC* 1043, 1405). Some of the most thrilling words heard by John in the preview of the last day that the Spirit gave him and that he recorded in the Book of the Apocalypse are those uttered from the throne of God: 'Behold, now I am making all things new' (Apoc 21:5). Until that day, there is a groaning not just in the hearts of believers but throughout the whole of creation, a groaning to which St Paul gave famous expression. Let us reflect upon his words, some of which I have particularly highlighted.

> I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. *The whole creation* is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, *like us*, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy *the same freedom and glory*

> *as the children of God.* From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free. (Rom 8:18–23)

So, it is not creation's fault that it is still unfulfilled; it was made so by God. Paul is referring here not to some gratuitous act on God's part, but rather to the consequence that God's punishment of Adam's primordial sin necessarily had for creation as a whole. We can tell this from the fact that what will free creation is nothing other than the revelation of God's sons. It is the behaviour of true sons of God that will give freedom and fulfilment to creation, just as it was the behaviour of a rebellious son, who rejected God's guidance, that enslaved it. 'Cursed be the ground *because* of you' (Gen 3:17).

To clarify what is meant here, let us recall the scene on Palm Sunday. Jesus is entering Jerusalem. Here is *the* Son of God himself, being acknowledged for who he is; the people are crying out in praise and honour. St Luke's account takes us further. Not only are the *people* rejoicing at his presence, so too is the very *earth* beneath him. The Pharisees tell him to silence his disciples and he replies: 'I tell you, if these keep silence the very stones will cry out' (Lk 19:40). What is keeping the stones quiet, we may deduce, is that human beings are voicing their praise.

We are to imagine the creation yearning and straining to respond to God and give him praise. But it has no limbs and no voice; it relies on *our* limbs and *our* voice. In the vast realm of creation, we human beings are located on the frontier with God as the ambassadors of creation, its ministers, its priests. If we bring creation to its God, then it breathes deeply and rejoices; if we close the door to God, the creation itself loses its air, is stifled and left groaning. It has no passage to God except through us.

On Thursday of that same week, the true Son of God celebrated the Last Supper with his friends. We are told by the same evangelist that Jesus took bread and *gave thanks.* Then he broke it and distributed it: 'This is my body'. Later, he did the same with the cup, taking it and giving thanks: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood which will be poured out for you' (Lk 22:19–20). Here we have the heart of the attitude and behaviour which characterise the true Son of God. What fulfils creation at his hands, to such a point that it is transformed *in* his hands, is that he takes it and, as an

essential prelude to using it, he presents it to its maker, lifting it to God with thanksgiving.

Jesus told us to do likewise: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk 22:19). We do this, of course, when we celebrate the Eucharist. But this weekly action is meant to train us in the behaviour proper to children of God who will live for eternity, so that this attitude and conduct may extend from there like ripples to fill our lives and our world. We are in a way fortunate that the groaning of creation is so much in the spotlight today, under the title of the ecological crisis. However, we need to diagnose its true cause, for it is as old as sin, and to seek a remedy there. If, like Adam, we human beings assume that the world and its resources exist for us to use as we will, without reference to *our* God and *its* God, then the world suffers on. If, on the other hand, we respect it as coming from the same God as we do, give voice to its praise and thanks and ask our common God in our prayers for guidance as to its use, then it finds itself in the hands of one approximating to a true child of God and begins, just begins, to sense the freedom that God put us on this earth to give it.

A fragment of the Berlin Wall sits upon my desk, a chunk of minerals daubed with graffiti. There, I reflect, is the groaning creation, turned to a godless purpose by human hands, used to enforce division on behalf of a regime which not only enchained human beings but also, and so significantly, devastated the environment. Now that it is itself liberated from that setting, maybe it groans a little less. On a lighter note, I once said to a group of schoolchildren: there may well be times when you groan at school dinners, but the fact is that school dinners groan at you if you haven't said your grace and thanked the God who made you both!

The Second Vatican Council taught that Christians should 'love the things of God's creation', revere them, thank God for them, and so use them and enjoy them unpossessively, 'in a spirit of poverty and freedom' (*GS* 37). In so doing, it echoed the voices of Fathers from both West and East. St Anselm gladly praised the 'immense benefits' that have come to the creation as a whole 'through the blessed fruit of the blessed womb of the blessed Mary'. 'Sky, stars, earth, rivers, day, night, and all things that are meant to serve man and be for his good rejoice', he said.

> When they lost the noble purpose of their nature, for which they had been made, of serving and helping those who praise God, they were

> like dead things. They were crushed, disfigured, and abused by idol worshippers for whom they had not been made. They rejoice now as if they had come to life again. Now they are made beautiful because they serve and are used by those who believe in God.[2]

St Leontios of Cyprus beautifully expressed the dignity and responsibility of human beings with regard to the wider creation as follows.

> The creation does not venerate the Maker directly through itself, but it is through me that the heavens declare the glory of God, through me the moon worships God, through me the waters and the showers of rain, the dew and all creation, venerate God and give him glory.[3]

The more I fulfil this task, the more I am configured to the one true Son of God and fitted for my eternal vocation. Perhaps, also, the more the elements of creation will be to me the brothers and sisters they were to St Francis of Assisi and less than alien things they so often are to the people of today. Perhaps we are close here to the reason why miracles were possible for Jesus, the true Son of God. Was it because creation uniquely co-operates with true children of God, is uniquely pliable to them and assumes its proper form in their hands? If so, then miracles are not really the exceptions they appear in this fallen world, rather they are the norm in a higher world, the world in which we are invited to have eternal citizenship.

Regarding the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, the Second Vatican Council set out to refresh the teaching of the Catholic Church by restoring the perspectives of the scriptures and the Fathers. Its teaching on this topic is set within the context of its teaching about eschatology, that is, about the end things and their implications for us now, which is to be found in the council's two great documents on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (particularly, 48–51) and *Gaudium et Spes* (particularly, 37–39). This location is significant. One of the council's principal legacies is the understanding of the Church not so much as a static institution but rather as the pilgrim People of God (cf. *LG*, chapter two). Since a

[2]Anselm, *Oratio*, 52 (*PL* 158, 955); from the *Office of Readings* for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

[3]Cf. Kallistos Ware, 'Praying with Icons', in McPartlan (ed.), *One in 2000?*, p. 163. An outstanding example of the voicing of such praise is the song of the three young men in the burning fiery furnace in the book of Daniel (3:51–90).

pilgrimage has a definite destination, teaching on the Church becomes immediately linked to teaching on our Christian destiny, and vice versa. Moreover, we are thereby encouraged to consider our destiny not so much as individuals ('What will happen to *me* when *I* die?') but rather as a community ('What will happen to us *all* when *the last day* comes?'). Then finally, we are directed not to forget the rest of God's creation, because when he made it he saw that it was good (Gen 1) and it is therefore not to be cast off by human beings imagining that they are all that God is really pleased with.

We have already recalled a short passage from *Gaudium et Spes* 37. Let us now consider some memorable sentences from *Lumen Gentium* 48, in which many of the themes we have mentioned are woven together.

> The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, . . . will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things (Acts 3:21). At that time, together with the human race, the universe [*universus mundus*] itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10, etc.). . . . [Already] the renewal of the world is irrevocably underway. . . . However, until there be realised new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells (cf. 2 Pet 3:13) the pilgrim Church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God (cf. Rom 8:19–22).

Backward or Forward?

How and when were the perspectives restored by Vatican II lost? At an early stage, Christianity had to contend with the dualism taught by both Platonism and Gnosticism, for which the material world was, at best, irrelevant, and, at worst, actually evil. A Christian Gnosticism flourished at Alexandria, in Egypt, taking on the great intellectual challenges of the day, but doctrinally treading a rather delicate path. The most famous and influential member of this school was Origen (c.185 – c.254), around whose teaching controversy still smoulders. Origen thought that souls were *imprisoned*

in bodies as a consequence of sins committed beforehand as free spirits and that death merely released souls to continue their spiritual odyssey. Ultimately all souls would recover their pristine spiritual state. Hence, for him, hell could only be a temporary punishment. All spirits, including the devil, would finally be gathered into God's salvation. This doctrine, technically known as *apokatastasis*, was formally condemned by the local Synod of Constantinople, held in the year 543 (cf. *DS* 403–11).

As well as its basic fault of believing that matter doesn't matter, so to speak, there are many other difficulties with this view, particularly the considerable, Platonic satisfaction that it takes in our ending up back where we started. The apostle of the gentiles stressed that we do not do so. O happy fault! *Felix culpa!*, as the Easter *Exulcet* exclaims, Christ's gift considerably *outweighed* Adam's fall (Rom 5:15), it did not merely compensate and take us back to our starting point. As a result, Paul spoke of himself, not as going *back* to an original perfection, but as *forgetting* the past and straining *ahead* for the prize to which God calls us (Phil 3:13–14). St Gregory of Nyssa greatly developed this theme, using Paul's very word, *epektasis*, which means 'stretching forward'. As Jean Daniélou commented, Gregory of Nyssa takes us away from the anthropology of the Platonists to that of the Bible: 'forgetfulness, a sin to the Platonist, here becomes a virtue'.[4]

It is said that the romantic poet, Shelley (1792–1822), was so overcome one day in Oxford after reading Plato's teaching on heaven, that he rushed up to a woman carrying a new-born child, freshly arrived therefrom, grabbed the infant and said urgently to the startled mother: 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam?' That is Platonism, for which 'all knowledge is reminiscence';[5] it is not Christianity!

For the wildest sort of dualism, however, we must look to a contemporary of Origen, by the name of Manes or Mani, who gave his name to the Manichaeans. Centuries later, the medieval Albigensians took up the cause again, maintaining that the flesh and the material creation are evil and that human souls eventually

[4]Jean Daniélou, Introduction to Herbert Musurillo (ed.), *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings* (St Vladimir's, Crestwood, 1979), p. 61.

[5]Cf. James Sutherland (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 190–1. Apparently, the woman simply replied: 'He cannot speak, Sir.'

escape the grip of the body and are finally restored to their original heavenly state. The Fourth Lateran Council, which met in 1215, comprehensively corrected these assertions. First, it said that *all* creation, material as well as spiritual, comes from the hands of God and is good. Secondly, there is a final resurrection, when all people will rise again, *reunited* with their bodies, so as to be judged according to their works and consigned to their eternal destiny, either to *perpetual* punishment with the devil or to everlasting glory with Christ (*DS* 800–1).

Inward or Outward?

While on his own early spiritual pilgrimage, Augustine became a Manichaean at about the age of 20. He remained one for nine years, before becoming a Neo-Platonist and finally a Christian at Easter in the year 387. Manichaeism was one of the main heresies he eventually had to fight when he became a bishop. His stance was decisive for subsequent Christianity, right up to our own day, and is of immense importance.

Augustine taught that we should regard evil not as something positive which springs from an evil power eternally opposed to the good God, but rather as something inherently negative, resulting from the absence of some good which ought to be present. All creation is essentially good because it comes from a good creator, namely God. Evil is not some other kind of entity, deriving from another source, which fights goodness, but rather the simple lack of goodness. Evil is like a terrible black-hole which sucks into nothingness whatever comes within its range; it is a rampant void, so to speak.

In other words, there is an undoubted, overriding positive option for goodness in God's creation, an option which Christ's Resurrection publicly proclaims on the stage of history. Evil will not have the last word. It is not an equal opponent of the good God, still contending with him for superiority, but rather a destructive corrosive force at work within the world that God created for a good purpose and that he will finally bring to its super-abundantly good fulfilment (cf. *CCC* 671).

Decisive though this teaching undoubtedly is, it is nevertheless a fact that, though Augustine was convinced of material creation's goodness, he could not really integrate it into his picture of heaven.

His inability to foresee much interaction between humanity and the wider creation in the hereafter led him to neglect our responsibilities towards it in the meantime. What was most characteristic of humanity for Augustine was not our unique capacity at the summit of creation to relate what is beneath us to our common Maker, but rather our internal faculties of memory, understanding and will. Instead of looking *outward* for the activity that best defines us, Augustine looked *inward.* His *Confessions* are an early masterpiece of introspection. The fact that this work is generally regarded as remarkably avant-garde simply shows how fashionable introspection has since become. And while humanity has looked inward for the peaks of human achievement, the creation has groaned ever more loudly all around.

A famous, Catholic example of the introspective tradition was provided much more recently by Descartes (1596–1650), who employed as a foundational principle, *Cogito ergo sum*: 'I think therefore I am'. Speaking from the heart in Angola in 1992, Pope John Paul referred to Descartes in the course of some impromptu remarks to the assembled bishops about the beauty of the Pentecost celebration they had shared that morning. 'Thanks be to God we still have Africa,' he said, 'where the liturgy is so deeply and spontaneously lived.'

> This Africa which they wanted to make swallow the so-called 'Hegelian poison'. But in Africa very few knew who Hegel was. Perhaps Descartes was more familiar. They wanted Africa to swallow [the] Cartesian inspiration. But thanks be to God it did not happen. Africa remained African.[6]

We can readily imagine the outward-going zest for life and joy in creation that the Pope was experiencing and praising in Africa, in contrast to the inward-looking European mentality. The long-standing introspective tradition tends to neglect creation, thinking that, now that humanity has emerged on this earth, with faculties of reason and intelligence, *we* are what God delights in, forgetting the rest. Zizioulas even thinks that Christians must take some blame for the present ecological crisis, because Christianity has for so long viewed creation as something just to be used for human benefit, rather than as something to be respected and lifted to God. In the

[6] *Oss Rom*, 17 June 1992, p. 5.

Middle Ages, he says, the Church gradually lost an awareness of 'the importance and eternal value of the material creation, and this was particularly evident in the way it treated the sacraments and the Eucharist in particular: instead of being a blessing over the material world, the fruits of nature, and a reference of it with gratitude and dedication to the Creator, the Eucharist soon became primarily a memorial service of the sacrifice of Christ and a means of grace for the nourishment of the *soul*'. 'The dimension of the cosmos soon disappeared from sacramental theology in the West.'[7]

Scholasticism reinforced the idea that what distinguish us as beings made in the image of God are our intellectual faculties. Zizioulas maintains that Darwin's theory of evolution, which so scandalised the Church because it showed that man does not have a monopoly of intelligence in creation, and that 'consciousness, even self-consciousness, is to be found in animals, too, the difference between them and man being [simply] one of *degree*, not of *kind*', was in fact 'a blessing in disguise'.[8] Humanity was firmly put back into the realm of nature, and the Church, still rightly convinced of our uniqueness, was forced to ask what, in that case, is our true distinguishing feature. A better answer was needed. What truly makes us the image of God?

We look to the unique image, Christ our Lord, and learn from how he related not just to humanity, but to creation as a whole. Our uniqueness lies in having the capacity to step back from nature so as to take it in our hands in the way that he did, as its priest, raising it to its God and our God. That capacity brings a responsibility and the Eucharist coaches us regularly in the stewardship of creation. It sets an agenda for us to implement outside the celebration itself. The Archbishop of York recently urged an end to experimentation on our near neighbours in the evolutionary chain. The *Daily Telegraph* reported his address under the heading: 'Apes have souls too, says primate'.[9] I would suggest that the Archbishop was speaking up for the apes as a good steward and not just as a descendant, because though in terms of evolutionary descent there may be just

[7]Zizioulas, 'Preserving God's Creation, I', *King's Theological Review* 12 (1989), p. 3. The other two lectures in the series are to be found in the same review, vols. 12 (1989), pp. 41–5, and 13 (1990), pp. 1–5.

[8]Ibid., p. 4.

[9]*Daily Telegraph*, 9 June 1994, p. 1.

a small step between the ape and man, in terms of stewardship there is a giant leap. Here lies our uniqueness.

Zizioulas notes that Hebrew culture was preoccupied with history rather than with nature and fostered the development of prophecy rather than of cosmology. Greek culture, on the other hand, distrusted the flux of history and found security in cosmology: 'the regular movement of the stars, the cyclical repetition of the seasons, and the beauty and harmony which the balanced and moderate climate of Attica offered'. Making use of both Hebrew and Greek cultures, Christianity, he considers, ought to be marked by 'cosmological prophecy', an approach that he finds manifest for the first time in the Book of the Apocalypse, to which we have frequently referred in these pages, where 'the fate not only of Israel alone but of *creation*' is viewed. 'Cosmological prophecy is thus seen as a new type of prophecy, and this marks the beginning of a new approach to man's relationship with nature, which the Church would pick up and develop further later on.' This approach understands that the world is not self-explanatory but perishable, and the Eucharist is then seen to be vital to its survival, because it is the place where man brings life to creation by offering it to God, relating it constantly to the eternal and imperishable Creator.[10]

In conclusion, we may note that the *Catechism* gives the widest range for the thanksgiving which *is* our Eucharist when it says that we thank God 'for everything that he has accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification' (*CCC* 1360). It is as if Christ has opened up the channel of thanksgiving for the whole realm of creation. He is there, at its summit, transmitting all of its goodness and praise to the Father. In the Eucharist, we take our place there with him. The *Catechism* says simply, but with great beauty, that in the Eucharist 'the Church sings the Glory of God in the name of the whole creation'. 'This sacrifice of praise is only possible through Christ: He unites the faithful to his own person, to his own praise and to his own intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered *through* Christ and *with* him, so as to be accepted *in* him' (*CCC* 1361). 'In the eucharistic sacrifice, the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father by means of the death and resurrection of Christ' (*CCC* 1359).

[10]Zizioulas, 'Preserving God's Creation, I', pp. 2–3.

Index of Names

von Allmen, J. J., 70–1
Ambrose, St, 108
Anselm, St, 117–18
Aristotle, 37, 50
Arius, 34
Athanasius, St, 35
Athenagoras I, Patriarch, 84–5, 87
Augustine, St, 14, 35–8, 42, 48–9, 52, 57, 68–9, 74, 121–2

von Balthasar, Card. H. U., xvi, 54–5, 104
Basil, St, 35
Bea, Card. A., 83–4
Bellarmine, St Robert, 38
Benedict XV, Pope, 79n.
Berengar, 37, 57
Best, T., 82n.
Blondel, M., 48–9, 51
Bossuet, Bp. J. B., 73
Botte, B., 40, 58
Brent, Bp. C., 79
Butler, Bp. C., 66

Cabié, R., 62n.
Cajetan (Card. T. de Vio), 47–8, 50–2
Calvin, J., 39
Clement of Rome, St, 71
Congar, Card. Y., 40, 43, 54
Constantine, Emperor, 34
Cyprian, St, 68, 71n., 82, 100
Cyril of Alexandria, St, 35

Damasus, Pope St, 34, 63
Daniélou, Card. J., 55, 120
Descartes, R., 122
Dibelius, Bp. O., xiii
Dimitrios I, Patriarch, 68, 85

Elizabeth II, Queen, 87

Fisher, Abp. G., 87
Florovsky, G., 43, 54
Fortino, E., 84n.
Francis of Assisi, St, 118

Gassmann, G., 82n.
Gregory I, Pope St, 5n.
Gregory of Nyssa, St, 120
Grelot, P., 105n.
Guardini, R., xiii, 41

Hegel, G. W. F., 122
Hippolytus, St, 63
Huby, J., 49

Ignatius of Antioch, St, 33–4, 43, 64, 69
Ignatius Loyola, St, 39
Innocent X, Pope, 108
Irenaeus, St, 48–9

Jeremias, J., 102n.
Jerome, St, 63
John XXIII, Pope, 40–1, 48, 82–3, 87
John Paul II, Pope, 5, 30, 32, 60, 62, 68, 70n., 71–7, 85–8, 90, 92, 97, 122
Justin Martyr, St, 2–3

Leeming, B., 83n.

Leo I, Pope St, 35, 53n.
Leo XIII, Pope, 47–8
Leontios of Cyprus, St, 118
de Lubac, Card. H., xv–xvii, 14n., 15, 30–2, 36n., 38, 40–1, 43–4, 45–60, 68, 72n., 73–77
Luther, M, 39

Manes, 120
Manson, T. W., 16n.
Masure, E., 46
McNamara, K., 59n.
McPartlan, P., 41n., 53n., 71n., 72n., 84n., 93n., 118n.
Mercier, Card. D. J., 79
Mondin, B., 70n.
Mott, J., 78
Musurillo, H., 120n.

Neill, S. C., 78n., 79n.

O'Donnell, J., 104n.
Origen, 119

Patelos, C., 79n.
Paul VI, Pope, 10, 59, 62–3, 72–4, 76–7, 84–5, 87
Peter the Great, Tsar, 43
Peter Lombard, 39
Pisano, G., 20
Pisano, N., 20
Pius IV, Pope, 39
Pius V, Pope St, 39, 60, 62–3
Pius X, Pope St, 108, 110
Pius XI, Pope, 79
Pius XII, Pope, 48, 56–7, 66
Plato, 120

Ramsey, Abp. M., 87
Ratzinger, Card. J., xiv, 41n., 70n.
Rouse, R., 78n., 79n.
Rousselot, P., 49
Runcie, Abp. R., 88

Schindler, D., 55n.
Shaw, G. B., 113–14
Shelley, P. B., 120
Stookey, L. H., 91n.
de Suarez, F., 47–8, 50–2
Sutherland, J., 120n.

Teilhard de Chardin, P., 46
Teresa, Mother, 7
Thomas Aquinas, St, 37, 39, 47–52, 56, 74, 110
Thurian, M., 81n.
Tillard, J. M. R., 43n., 89–90

Villain, M., 55

Ware, Bp. K., 118n.

Yarnold, E., 111n.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan J., xv–xvi, 13, 43, 82n., 90, 109, 122–4