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The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women

What does it mean when Scripture claims that both male and female are made in God's image? (Gen 1:28) And that in Christ Jesus there is no male nor female? (Gal 3:27-8) These are questions that Christianity as an organized religion has grappled with from its origins. Although the responses have varied from group to group, period to period, until the 20th century these passages were consistently interpreted to mean that there is spiritual equality between women and men, but not social equality. Other biblical texts were said to call for the subordination of women in church and society and their exclusion from the ordained ministry.

Women's participation in the ecumenical movement was an agenda item from the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, which brought together scores of Protestant denominations and the Orthodox communions. Saroe Chakko of India, chair of the committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church," noted then the disappointment of some that only two women were on the large WCC Central Committee.[1]

The ordination of women has been a particularly contentious issue in the ecumenical movement and is perceived by some as a threat to the unity to which the World Council aspires. A few Protestant denominations had begun to ordain women in the 19th century and more were considering it in the 20th. A 1964 Faith and Order report recognized that

> it is an essential element of the Christian message that men and women are created in the image of God and are therefore of equal dignity and worth. The developments in our time have shown us that this truth has not always been sufficiently understood and emphasized. All the churches are confronted with the necessity of finding a new expression for this basic truth. It is in this context that the question of the ordination of women is raised.[2]

It was not till the WCC Assembly at Uppsala in 1968 that discrimination against women was acknowledged as a social justice issue. The Assembly affirmed that "established patterns in church, family and society, which deny the full human rights of women, stand condemned."[3] In 1975, sexism was added to the "structures of injustice" previously targeted by the WCC – racism and unjust economic structures. The WCC Programme to Combat Racism was a crucial partner in the struggle against apartheid and white rule in Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, and South Africa. Although limited in their impact, WCC programmes such as the Ecumenical Loan Fund supported income-generating projects that eased poverty and helped empower poor people in Third World countries.

The Ecumenical Decade

The World Council launched the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women at Easter 1988, to sustain and expand upon the energy generated by the UN Decade for Women. The goals of the Ecumenical Decade were

1) to empower women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and church;
2) to affirm – through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality – the decisive contributions of women in churches and communities;
3) to give visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
4) to enable the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism, and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women;
5) to encourage the churches to take action in solidarity with women.[4]

From the mid-point of the Decade, 75 ecumenical teams of women and men visited 330 churches, 68 national councils and about 650 women's groups around the world in support of the Decade's goals. The teams' findings were distilled into a "Living Letters" report. These letters described "Life in the Garden" – women, the majority in most congregations, who participate actively in the spiritual and worship life of the church as well as lay ministries. They also described "Stones" which need to be rolled away – violence and racism against women, economic injustice, barriers to participation, the role of the family, oppressive theology and interpretations of the Bible, attitudes to sexuality, and the gospel–culture connections. They noted that "to deal with the violence women experience even within the church is to approach two areas – sexuality and abuse of power – which have always been taboo for the churches."[5]

The teams added that "we could not help being struck by the evidence that almost everywhere boys are still socialized to dominate and girls to be subservient, and by the number of times 'culture' was used to explain or justify violence against women." When a team in South Africa asked, "Whose culture and tradition – biblical, African, male – allowed wife-beating, rape, killing and child abuse?" they were told "it was a very complex matter."[6] The teams noted that whether or not culture was given as a pretext, it often is "at the root of ill treatment of women, and only rarely is it challenged by men in the churches." The teams were particularly discouraged by the "clear evidence that women are marginalized by their own church structure." All of the teams observed women's limited access to decision-making processes and power in their churches. Some church leaders insisted that church constitutions could not be changed. The teams concluded that the situation they observed "both reflects and promotes a similar imbalance of power in society." The teams' visits and the publication of their living letters were an urgent attempt to engage reluctant churches in the work of the Ecumenical Decade.

The Concluding Festival

The Ecumenical Decade concluded in November 1998, with the Ecumenical Decade Festival: Visions Beyond 1998, at Harare, Zimbabwe, with 1,200 women and men attending from around the world. The participants of the festival gave particular attention to the issue of violence against women. On the second day, we prepared for the Hearing on Violence Against Women, with the ritual pouring of tears. This hearing was the first time women testified about the violence that they experienced within the church at a global ecumenical gathering.

The first witness was an indigenous woman from Latin America who spoke of the physical and psychological violence her people have suffered since the conquest of their lands when missionaries accompanied the soldiers. A Canadian woman told of being sexually abused by her father, a clergyman, who also practised ritual beating as a form of exorcism in a charismatic prayer group he formed. A woman from the Pacific Islands described years of brutal domestic violence and the church's failure to support her when she decided to leave her husband and to recognize her divorce as ethical.

Theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a Cuban living in the United States, spoke of the churches' marginalization and silencing of women's theologies, which take stories like these as the source of their reflection. She affirmed that "women's theologies simply reclaim that, as women, we are made in the image of God." And a New Zealand clergywoman testified to her abuse by supposedly liberal church decision-making structures, which rendered her silent and invisible because of her work for gender equity and justice. As each woman completed her testimony, festival participants softly responded with "your story is my story, your story is our story."

The hearing also included four encouraging testimonials of efforts to confront this issue: the Centre for Trafficked Women in Taiwan; an effective church policy

concerning sexual harassment in Norway; SISTERS – a global network for the elimination of racism and sexism; and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, which analyzes the relation of religion and culture. Four statements of commitment to continue addressing this concern, including one from Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the WCC, concluded the hearing.

A part of the work of the Decade Festival was finalizing a document to be forwarded for action to the Eighth Assembly of the WCC, which was to meet in the same city, Harare, December 3-14, 1998. Participants at the festival spent several hours discussing a draft, in table groups and as a body. The document, adopted by consensus, took the form of a Letter to the Assembly. In it, we committed ourselves "to God's mission of a world where all God's people can live fully, care for and share the resources of the world equitably, dwell in harmony with creation and affirm one another in the image of God." The Letter declared, among other things, that violence against women is a sin and implored the churches to announce this to the world. It recommended a number of initiatives for repentance, conversion and renewal of the church, its leadership, and its theologies, traditions and practices. The Letter also denounced other forms of violence, such as poverty, racism and war. In the spirit of the biblical Jubilee we also supported demands for the cancellation of debts of the world's poorest nations, debts which are particularly harmful to poor women and children.

Participants in the Decade Festival could not agree on issues such as ordination, abortion, divorce and human sexuality "in all its diversity" – a reference to homosexuality – but we did "condemn the violence perpetrated due to [these] differences." Many of us at the festival reflected on the divisions in our own societies on these issues, yet we pledged, even though the discussions on these topics were painful, to follow the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit and "continue the conversation in order that justice may prevail."[7] Through hearing each other speak, and making sure each one who wanted to did speak, we were able to find some common ground. Agreeing to condemn violence perpetrated because of these differences may not seem like much to some observers. Yet I think what we did matters greatly. It is crucial that we speak out against violence perpetrated because of differences on theological and ethical issues if justice is to prevail. It is significant that women have collectively spoken out, broken the silence, worked together, and urged the churches to continue in solidarity with them to make changes in women's lives, changes that will benefit all of humanity.

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[1] W.A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Official Report,* London: SCM Press, 1949, 151.

[2] Rosemary R. Ruether and Rosemary S. Keller, eds., *Women and Religion in America,* vol. 3, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986, 377-78.

[3] Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968,* Geneva: WCC, 1968, 92.

[4] Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society, "Ecumenical Decade 1988-1998: Churches in Solidarity with Women," Geneva: WCC, 1998, 1.

[5] In writing about the 1980's WCC "Community of Women and Men" study, staff person Constance Parvey described a socialized conspiracy of silence in churches on issues of sexuality, including family violence and sexual assault. ("The Community Study: Its Mixed Messages for the Churches," *Beyond Unity-in-Tension,* Thomas F. Best, ed., Geneva: WCC, 1988, 39.)

[6] "Living Letters" Report, Geneva: WCC, 1997, 25.

[7] "From Solidarity to Accountability: Letter to the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches from the Women and Men of the Decade Festival of the Churches in Solidarity with Women." This document can be accessed online at <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/achall-e.html>.

The Church and Scottish Nationalism

How is the Church of Scotland reacting to the contemporary revival of Scottish nationalism? What ethical reflections are offered by Scottish theologians in regard to this recent development? The Church of Scotland has always regarded itself as a protector of Scottish national identity. After World War II it created the Commission on Church and Nation that was to offer socio-ethical reflections on public issues. In recent years, these reflections have been increasingly inspired by the prophetic social ethics that has come to prevail in many churches internationally. The Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh holds conferences and publishes papers on ethics and contemporary social, economic and political developments.

Renewal of Scottish Nationalism

Scotland lost its government in 1707. An agreement between the dynasties created the Union between England and Scotland with a single government at Westminster in London. Throughout the centuries the established Presbyterian Church regarded itself as the guardian of the Scottish nation. It preserved and developed the myths and symbols that shaped the self-understanding of the people. In spite of the presence of many Scotsmen in England and the place of a Scottish elite on the highest level of British government, industry and finance, the English have continued to look upon Scotland as a people or nation with an historical identity going back to the middle ages. While the Scots themselves have a strong sense of being a nation, they have been divided between unionists and nationalists in proportions that varied over time. To be able better to serve Scottish concerns, the Westminster government eventually created the Scottish Office, giving the nation a certain political identity. The Scottish Office assumed ever greater importance after World War I and, more drastically, after World War II when the advancing secularization of culture made the active members of the established Church a minority in their society.

The minority status has not turned the Scottish Church into a pietistic community simply concerned with the spiritual life of its members. The Church continues to remain in solidarity with the Scottish people, care for the well-being of the nation, and address current social and political issues from a theological perspective. While it no longer speaks from a position of power, it confidently joins the public conversation through which a democratic society defines its policies and purposes. Progressive ecclesiastical leaders insist that the Church must rethink its role in society. The Church must learn to act ecumenically, i.e., in union with the Catholic Church and other Christian confessions, and, secondly, adopt a political perspective defined by the biblical prejudice in favour of the poor and the weak. It is in this spirit that the Centre for Theology and Public Issues addresses the issue of contemporary Scottish nationalism.

The revival of Scottish nationalism in the last decade is related to several factors, including especially the globalization of the free market economy. The new international division of labour led to the collapse of Scotland's heavy industry. Growing unemployment caused a massive emigration of professionals and workers to southern England which stirred up economic and cultural insecurity in Scotland. At the same time the discovery of oil in the North Sea created a certain confidence. Of great importance has been the opposition to the neo-liberalism of Margaret Thatcher and the individualistic culture it promoted. While the Scots voted for Labour and the Scottish National Party, they were ruled by Thatcher's Conservative government in Westminster which paid no attention to the concerns expressed by the Scots.

Many Scots claim – a claim supported by the Church – that neo-liberalism represents a foreign culture to them. They see themselves as heirs to a culture of co-operation and solidarity. They point to the difference between the English Enlightenment with its individualism and social contract theory and the Scottish Enlightenment of Adam Ferguson and others which recognized that people are born into a society, oriented by its values and moved to support its civic institutions.[1] Adam Smith and David Hume are here regarded as non-representative of Scottish political thought. In fact the Scots believe that their intellectual tradition has a certain affinity

with European social thought. The creation of the European Union which gave some recognition to the rights of labour and other social concerns greatly appealed to the Scots, while England under Margaret Thatcher rejected these provisions as obstacles to free enterprise. Reviving their strong sense of nationhood, the Scots began to demand greater political autonomy that would make them more independent of the British government in London and allow them to establish their own relation to the European Union. The new nationalism was not confined to a single party, the National Party, but found expression in a cultural current that influenced the political thinking in all parties. While some Scots favour the creation of an independent Scottish state, the majority want a new political status within Great Britain that gives them greater autonomy.

When Mr. Tony Blair, the leader of the British Labour Party, was elected prime minister in 1997, he promised to grant Scotland its own parliament, the first one since 1707. Commentators have claimed that Mr. Blair did this in the hope of increasing Scottish support for his own Labour Party without realizing that the new parliament may well increase people's desire for even greater autonomy.

In the Scottish Church, sustained theological reflection on nationalism was greatly stimulated by a speech given by the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, at the University of Edinburgh in 1988, in which she offered theological reasons for her own neo-liberal philosophy. She preached a regular sermon on Christian individualism: God's Word is addressed to individuals, she said, summoning them to do great things with their lives. Society, she said, does not exist; there are only individuals and their families. The lesson she drew from the parable of the Good Samaritan was that this good man was able to help his neighbour because he had the money to pay at the inn. Mrs. Thatcher's perspective was foreign to the Christianity preached by the Church of Scotland. Since the location of the university is called the Mound, her speech was mockingly referred to as 'the Sermon on the Mound.' After her address the Moderator of the Church presented the British Prime Minister with a report, entitled *Just Sharing,* which offered a more social interpretation of the Christian message.[2]

Reactions Against Neo-Liberalism

The Ecumenist has published several articles which have described neo-liberal economic policies and their social impact. Forced to obey the rules of the international financial institutions, countries allow their economies to be integrated into the global competitive market and invaded by the US-based monoculture of consumption, entertainment and technological devices. This development summons forth counter-movements in all parts of the world. It is possible, I think, to distinguish three different types of counter-movements: 1) reaffirmations of collective identities ranging from narrow fundamentalisms to authentic renewals of cultural and religious traditions; 2) regionalisms in conflict with a central government, intent on promoting the regional economy; and 3) a turn to the local in support of community development and the social economy.

At the present we are witnessing a form of nationalism that embodies the three trends opposing neo-liberal globalization mentioned above: the protection of cultural identity, the enhancement of the regional economy, and the emphasis on community development and participation. This form of nationalism is emphatically democratic because it seeks to mobilize the citizens to cooperative economic activity and promises them a greater degree of participation in the development of their society than does a purely formal representative democracy. Because this form of nationalism presupposes the inheritance of a democratic culture, it cannot be found, at least for the time being, in certain parts of Eastern Europe nor in many other regions of the globe. Yet it is present in some of the large, industrial democracies of the West where a centralized form of government has failed to recognize the identity and the aspirations of a nation located within the political boundaries. Examples are nationalist movements in Catalonia, Scotland and Quebec. It is an open question whether this form of nationalism aspires to independent statehood or whether it simply aims at constitutional guarantees for an appropriate degree of sovereignty within the larger political entity.

Nationalism of this kind has ethnic and cultural roots from which it derives some of its energy. Yet because it wants to foster regional economic development, this nationalism transcends its ethnic inheritance, embraces all citizens living in the same territory, and encourages the cooperation of all in the building up of the nation. And because of its commitment to community development and the mobilization of the unemployed, this nationalism stands for redistribution and economic justice and finds itself at odds with the dominant economic ethos created by neo-liberalism.

Christian Reflection on Scottish Nationalism

Among the thinkers engaged in conversation at the Centre of Theology and Public Issues is the Scottish sociologist, David McCrone, author of *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation.*[3] McCrone has chosen to designate the new Scottish nationalism as 'postmodern,' a terminology that has attracted much attention there. What does McCrone mean by postmodern?[4] He analyses the cultural impact of the neo-liberal economy in a manner similar to the description offered in *The Ecumenist*, except that he interprets the destabilization of traditional institutions in a positive way. 'Postmodern' means that the state is questioned by nations and regions within its borders, that political parties lose relevance in favour of social movements, that churches decline while sects thrive and multiply, and that the nuclear family is challenged by other forms of personal union. Postmodern is the new freedom that allows people to define themselves in new ways, avoiding rigid boundaries. What emerges here are plural identities without inner conflicts. People can emphasize their ethnic inheritance while honouring the ethnicity of others. They can think of themselves simultaneously as citizens of Scotland, Britain and the European Union. Postmodern nationalism, McCrone argues, is not turned in upon itself but eager to have links with other countries. He remarks that Scotland strongly favoured the European Union at a time when England wanted nothing to do with it. (One might mention that in 1992 Quebec favoured the free trade agreement with the USA, while the majority of English-speaking Canadians were opposed to it.)

It is a postmodern phenomenon, McCrone continues, that people can become nationalists while intensifying their global concern. People may opt for feminism and/or the ecological movement, and redefine – without anguish – their relationship to the state, to other traditional institutions, and to communities in other parts of the world. While globalization summons forth the defence and promotion of the local, it also creates new bonds of solidarity with peoples in other parts of the world – through economic ties and transnational social movements. What takes place, according to McCrone, is a new dynamic between the global and the local, stirring up creativity and, in some parts, a new form of nationalism.

McCrone even suggests that a certain mistrust of reason and a turn to symbols and emotional loyalties is a postmodern phenomenon. What passes for reason in neo-liberal society seems to many people increasingly irrational: dominant reason in neo-liberalism, supported by teams of scientists, recommends indifference to the impoverishment of the masses and the devastation of the natural environment. Because this reason contradicts people's sane intuitions, they become increasingly willing to rely on their feelings and cherish the stories and symbols that belonged to a saner world. The renewed loyalty to a national or cultural tradition, without exclusivism and in full respect of pluralism, is a postmodern phenomenon.

McCrone quotes with approval two British sociologists, Anthony Giddens and Stuart Hall, who reflecting on present-day globalization recognize the complex dialectic between the global and the local, the creation of multiple identities, the shifting of heartfelt loyalties, and the porous nature of the contemporary state.[5]

The idea of 'postmodern nationalism' was found persuasive by several authors collaborating at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues. The appeal of this unusual terminology is that it allows the authors to make a clear distinction between Scottish nationalism and the closed, xenophobic and authoritarian nationalism present in parts of Eastern Europe. This seems all the more important since T.F. Torrance, an older Scottish theologian of international reputation, had expressed his distaste for any positive evaluation of nationalism.[6] The postmodern character of Scottish nationalism, these Christians authors claim, assures its openness to the Spirit, its respect for minorities, its democratic bent, its international orientation, and its commitment to the creation of a more just society. That is why Christians can be part of it.

Christopher Hardie, another contributor to the discussion at the Centre, has expanded the characterization of the postmodern by suggesting that in reaction to the materialistic understanding of human beings in neo-liberal thought – humans as utility-maximizers – the postmodern mood attaches great importance to non-material values. People have discovered, Hardie writes, that materialism is an alienating cultural force.[7] The theologian William Storrar also uses the idea of postmodern nationalism in several of his writings to underline not only the openness and plural nature of present-day Scottish nationalism, but also its preferential solidarity with the poor. Against the neo-liberal neglect of people whom the market is unable to help, the postmodern mood,

Storrar argues, generates concern for the excluded. Storrar goes so far as to relate this postmodern impulse to 'the option for the poor' invoked by liberation theology.[8] For this author, then, contemporary Scottish nationalism is characterized by its resistance to cultural globalization, its loyalty to an open-ended national identity, its commitment to foster the national economy and its support for movements at the base demanding participation and justice, at home and in the Third World.

While I am persuaded by many aspects of the analysis proposed by these Scottish social thinkers and theologians, I am not convinced of the usefulness of the postmodern discourse. My objection has in fact been raised in an article by Michael Northcott.[9] The author argues that the postmodern discourse, first developed by a series of French thinkers, does not provide useful images in support of an historical movement calling for social solidarity. Postmodern discourse reflects the disillusionment with all political projects, the experience of social fragmentation, the expectation of purely temporary associations, and the disaffection with any and all institutions and organizations. I add to this critical evaluation my own opinion that the postmodern thesis claiming that the present age spells the end of all grand narratives is false, for the world interpretation implied in neo-liberal ideology and practice has become the dominant narrative with the aura of orthodoxy.

The issue that remains unresolved in this nationalist literature is whether in today's world a nation that demands self-government should aspire to the creation of a state or whether it should rather seek a constitution that relates it in a new way to various existing political institutions. I recall in this context two famous arguments against the creation of a state by thinkers committed to the self-determination of their people. The Indian poet and philosopher, Rabindrath Tagore, argued passionately against Gandhi's non-violent campaign for political independence and the creation of an Indian state.[10] While Tagore had great respect for western ideals of law and social justice, he believed that the western creation of the state was an organized form of collective selfishness unable to live peacefully with its neighbours. Tagore was deeply troubled by the brutality exhibited by all sides in the First Word War. He argued that if India became a state in the image of the modern European states, it would seek to preserve its inner unity by government decree, no longer by a shared spiritual culture, and it would soon try to expand its power, be in need of a large army, and enter into conflict with its neighbours. A similar argument was made by Hannah Arendt against the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. While she regarded herself as a Zionist, supported the Jewish renaissance taking place in Palestine, and desired a political arrangement that would guarantee the cultural self-determination of the Jewish population there, she – together with a group of like-minded Zionists – vehemently opposed the creation of a Jewish state.[11] Her arguments were similar to those of Tagore: the state, following its own inner logic, would seek to increase its power and soon find itself in violent conflict with its neighbours.

Scottish nationalists look with interest at the recent developments in the European Union that welcome greater autonomy for regional development and closer associations of peoples speaking the same language across state boundaries. Will the emerging constitution of the European Union find ways of guaranteeing the autonomy of stateless nations?

Gregory Baum

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1 William Storrar, "Scotland's Social Identity: A Christian Reflection," in *Christianity and Social Vision*, Occasional Paper No 20, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, New College, Edinburgh, 1990, 17-28, 20.

2 See *Christianity and Social Vision*, 7 and 27.

3 David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*, (London: Routledge), 1992.

4 See his article, "Understanding Scotland: A Sociological Perspective," in *Seeing Scotland, Seeing Christ*, Occasional Paper No 28, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, New College, Edinburgh, 1993, 3-13.

5 Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew, eds., *Modernity and Its Futures* (London: Polity, 1992), 309.

6 See William Storrar, *Scottish Identity*, (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1990), 139-140.

7 Christopher Harvey, "Religion and Change in Scotland and Europe," in *Christianity and Social Vision*, 4-15, 7.

8 William Storrar, "Roofless in Scotland: Towards a New Christian Social Vision," in *Seeing Scotland, Seeing Christ*, 14-42, 29.

9 Michael Northcott, "Identity and Decline in the Kirk," in *Seeing Scotland, Seeing Christ*, 43-64, 56.

10 See Gregory Baum, *Le nationalisme: perspectives ethiques et religieuses* (Montreal: Fides, 1998), 86-94.

11 See Hannah Arendt's article, "Zionism Reconsidered" (Oct. 1944), in her book *The Jew as Pariah* (New York: Grove Press, 1978). Also Richard Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), 105-109.

Note: A longer version of this article was presented at a symposium on nationalism, directed by Jean Richard, at Laval University, Quebec.

Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

This article for *The Ecumenist* was written by the editor after his return from a visit in South Africa. He had been invited by Phambili ka Ntloko of the Industrial Mission to participate in a seminar on the theology of work, organized by him at the School of Theology of the University of Natal located at Pietermaritzburg. A first seminar of this topic had been held in 1989, to which I had also been invited, but at the time the Apartheid government refused to grant me a visa. Over ten years later, after the fall of the Apartheid regime, a second seminar was held on the same topic, to which I again had the honour of being invited. A theology of work includes attention to the organization of labour and its role in the construction of society. The seminar, which greatly moved me, allowed me to listen to committed South African Christians analyzing and debating the state of their new society, its problems and its potentialities. Despite the crass economic inequalities and the government's inability to make drastic policy changes, the participants stood squarely behind President Nelson Mandela and his government's policy of national reconciliation. While they disagreed about how to respond to the unresolved economic problems and the human damage produced by them, they fully agreed that the Christian mission in today's South Africa is to promote support for democracy and the process of reconciliation. After the horrors of the Apartheid regime, the churches, following the teaching of Jesus, must summon all citizens to justice and mercy, restitution and forgiveness, confession of guilt and the healing of memories. The seminar supported the great work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set up by President Mandela's government.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission[1]

In his book, *An Ethic for Enemies*, Donald Shriver has shown that already the ancient Greeks were fully aware that justice alone did not suffice to assure peace in society. If powerful evildoers received the punishment they deserved, their family and friends would be angry and resentful, plot against the rulers, and destabilize the peace of society. What was needed in addition to 'justice' was 'amnesty' – a secular, utilitarian version of what the Bible called forgiveness. The important ethical task of the rulers was to find the appropriate balance between justice and amnesty.

This ancient tradition has acquired contemporary relevance in the task assigned to the truth commissions that have been set up in several countries of Africa and Latin America to foster justice, social peace and reconciliation after the crimes against humanity committed by an antecedent dictatorship. The crux of these commissions is the *mandate* they receive from their government, specifying their powers. Will their pursuit of truth and reconciliation be allowed to put the emphasis on justice, or must they give priority to amnesty?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) was assigned a very particular function. It was the official agent constituted by the 'Government of National Unity' under President Mandela to create a new nation, the new South Africa, a democratic society where every citizen had a vote, including, for the first time, the black majority. The deep divisions that had to be healed were the wounds inflicted by the Apartheid legislation and, going back into the past, by the entire history of colonization, including the killing of men and women, the conquest of the land, the removal of populations, and the pauperization of the aboriginal majority. More than that, there was the historical drama of the Boers, the Afrikaners, the descendants of a small group of Dutch settlers, who had been conquered by the British Empire in a most brutal war at the turn of the century. The Afrikaners had successfully struggled to survive as a people with its own language and culture; yet when they eventually achieved political power in South Africa, they used it in a frantic effort to enhance their identity, wealth and privilege by introducing the inhuman Apartheid legislation that increased even further the enslavement of blacks and people of colour.

South Africa appears as a microcosm of the world, for the oppressive North–South divide exists within its own borders: a wealthy, highly developed industrial sector stands over against a majority of men and women excluded from the benefits of society. The task of the TRC was to reveal the truth about South Africa, and in

doing so create the foundational story of a country that was still to be born. If the reconciliation of groups and peoples with a history of enmity is possible in South Africa, then – in my opinion – it is possible in the world as a whole. If there is hope in South Africa, there is hope that the multiplication of violent ethnic conflicts in our time and the increasing economic marginalization of the poor countries can be overcome. As a case study, the effort of the TRC has universal significance. Because of this symbolic meaning, I wish to examine not only its remarkable success, but also its prominent failures.

What was 'the mandate' given to the TRC? We note that the new South Africa was not created by a revolution, but by democratic means and negotiations with the former rulers. The election of May 1994 created the new 'Government of National Unity' with Nelson Mandela as president. Over a year later, in July 1995, this government wrote into law the National Unity and Reconciliation Act. This bill, which mandated the TRC, was the result of negotiations in which opposition parties had their say, assuring a prominent place for amnesty. The TRC's mandate was to establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes and the nature of the gross human rights violations – killings, abductions, torture and severe mistreatment such as rape – committed between March 1960 and May 1994, i.e., from the beginning to the end of Apartheid. The Commission was to conduct investigations and hold public hearings. The victims or their families were to come forward and tell the story of their great suffering. The Commission was not empowered to grant compensation to the victims; all it could do was to recommend compensation to the government and leave the decision to parliament. Yet the Commission was obliged to grant amnesty to all persons who fully disclosed the gross human rights violations they had committed for political reasons. Amnesty prevented the victims or their families from seeking justice through the courts.

Under these conditions the Commission understood its task mainly as serving the truth, revealing the horrors that had been committed, and taking initial steps toward ultimate reconciliation. The public hearings and the results of the investigations profoundly shocked the entire country. The massive killings and the maiming of people, including the use of chemical and biological weapons, and the extensive use of torture on people suspected of subversive activities painted a gruesome picture of the Apartheid reality that often moved the commissioners and the audience to tears. Many of these hearings were broadcast on television. These revelations scandalized the white population, especially the Afrikaners who had defended Apartheid yet were completely unaware – so they said – of the horrible crimes ordered by their government. The perpetrators who chose to appear at the public hearings added to this loathsome picture by confessing in detail the violent acts they had committed in the name of higher authority. Sometimes these men asked to be forgiven. But whether they did or not, they all received amnesty. There were some moving incidents when perpetrators asked for forgiveness, and the families of the victims present at the hearing stood up and forgave them.

The public hearings had a certain religious quality. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the president of the TRC, gave the entire process a spiritual meaning. When the Commission arrived at conflicting views and wondered in which direction to move, he would stop the proceedings and lead the commissioners in prayer. Revealing the hidden truth about human sin, offering forgiveness, demanding restoration, and generating new life are the signs of a drama of biblical proportions. The TRC hoped to provide the symbols and myths by which South Africans would, in the future, define their collective identity. It created a saga – televised, at least in part – that intended to raise the consciousness of South Africans and strengthen the collective desire for reconciliation. The Commission completed its work by publishing a five-volume Report of its findings and is presently preparing a small book, a synthesis of the Report, to be used in public education.

The Limitations Imposed on the Commission

Let me now turn to the problematic aspects of the TRC and the criticism to which it was exposed. Most of the complaints had to do with the mandate the Commission had received from the government.

1. Protests against amnesty were undertaken by several families of political activists who had been tortured and killed, among whom was the family of Steve Biko, the outstanding intellectual and spiritual leader of black resistance. The families were scandalized that full disclosure of the crimes committed entitled the perpetrators to amnesty, even if they expressed no regret over what they had done. Reconciliation, they said, is to create some sort of balance, a balance which the Commission did not achieve. In fact, Amnesty International, in a submission to the government, had challenged the mandate given to the Commission. Granting amnesty

stripped the victims or their families of the right to seek justice and reparation through the courts, which is a human right that has come to be recognized by international law. The Supreme Court of South Africa replied that the mandate of the TRC was in conformity with the country's Constitution, created as it was by negotiation with the former ruling party. Without compromise there would have been no peaceful entry into a new South Africa.

The price paid for the democratic transition to new South Africa was that the Government of National Unity had, in fact, limited power. When the military stonewalled the TRC and refused to release the files that had been requested, the government was unable to force the military to obey the law. Military and financial powers remain in the hand of the white elites.

2. Great frustration was experienced by many victims who appeared at the public hearing. While the TRC was empowered to grant amnesty to perpetrators immediately after their disclosure, the Commission had no power to grant reparation to the victims and help them in their present financial difficulties. All the TRC could do was to promise reparations: it had to send the demand for appropriate compensation to the government which, in due time, would respond to it. This meant long waiting. In some cases, victims who had been maimed and needed immediate help were left without public support.

Victims must always wait. This had been the tragic experience of survivors of German concentration camps. This had also been the experience of the victims who appeared before the various Latin American truth commissions. The Native peoples of Canada can tell the same story.

3. The government's mandate entitled the TRC to investigate the gross human rights violations, such as killings, abductions, torture and severe mistreatment, committed for a political purpose – between March 1960 and May 1994. These violations of human rights were, as a matter of fact, against the law under the Apartheid regime. Not included among the crimes to be investigated were the cruel and oppressive actions that were in keeping with Apartheid legality, such as the forced migrations of the black population, the destruction of their subsistence economy, their confinement in small townships, the imposition of humiliating living conditions, the exploitation of their labour, the constant harassment by the police, and so forth. Black people in South Africa felt daily in their flesh that they were victims. But because of its mandate, the Commission was unable to listen to thousands of people who came forward to tell their story. It had to tell them that they were not victims according to the definition given in its mandate.

Because the investigations were limited to crimes committed after March 1960 when Apartheid was introduced, the TRC was unable to tell the entire story of brutal oppression in South Africa beginning with the conquest of the land and the colonization of the people. Some critics complained that the Commission's revelation of South Africa's ugly history was incomplete and protected the reputation of the white man's invasion and conquest. This shortcoming is likely to be corrected in the five-volume Report published by the Commission.

4. Another critique of the Commission was that it did not challenge the beneficiaries of Apartheid, i.e., the members of the white minority. By taking possession of the land and its resources and exploiting the labour power of the blacks, the white minority had created for itself a wealthy society where all hard physical work was done by blacks. The whites of all classes, in one way or another, benefitted from the Apartheid laws. Most of these people were profoundly shocked when the public hearings revealed the crimes against humanity committed by the police and the military. They claimed they did not know that these things happened. They had been told by their government that the stories printed in foreign newspapers were hostile fictions created by communists and communist sympathizers. While many white citizens, especially Afrikaners, had approved of the Apartheid legislation, they were now horrified by its brutal reality. Their approval of Apartheid, they now said, was given in ignorance. They would never have consented to such brutal crimes. Their honest outrage after these revelations now gives them a good conscience. Most of them do not feel personally challenged. The work of the Commission does not prompt them to question themselves, reread their history, assume responsibility for the past, and be ready for some sacrifices in the service of reconciliation. Again, the five-volume Report of the Commission will rectify some of these omissions.

5. There is also the unresolved question about whose violent crimes the Commission should investigate, only those of the establishment or also those committed by the resistance movement, the African National Congress (ANC)? At one point in the proceedings, members of the government intervened to prevent the investigation of killings attributed to the ANC. They argued that the ANC saw itself engaged in a just war against an evil aggressor and that the use of violence in

certain dangerous situations was justified. Archbishop Tutu was ready to resign over this issue. The Commission was appointed, he argued, to investigate all gross violations of human rights in South Africa, including those committed by black people. His judgement is still questioned by some people today. Is it just to create a record where the violence of a resistance movement is listed side by side with the violent acts committed by the oppressive institution? At the Medellin Conference of 1968, the Latin American bishops clearly distinguished between the 'institutionalized violence' exercised by those in power and the 'violence of resistance.'

The Commission's investigation of the violence committed by black people remained incomplete for a quite different reason. There exists a substantial group of black people belonging to the Zulu nation that is organized as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) under the leadership of Mongosutho Buthelezi. The Inkatha Freedom Party regarded itself as an anti-communist vanguard and fought against ANC over many years. In the Natal region of the country, the conflict between the IFP and the ANC cost at least 20,000 people their lives. But because the IFP boycotted the Commission, it was difficult to arrive at the truth. Yet the Commission's investigation discovered proof for what had been suspected by many, namely that the South African security forces had trained and financed the IFP to wage war against the ANC and all black people who resisted law and order under the Apartheid regime. The investigation was able to demonstrate that the public statement made by Buthelezi to the Commission contained many lies. Because of the non-cooperation of the IFP, what happened during the war between the IFP and the ANC has remained obscure, at least for the time being.

The Task of the Future

Despite these shortcomings, owing largely to its limited mandate, the TRC was an outstanding institutional achievement, a nation-creating event, a turning-point in the self-understanding of South Africans. It told the foundational story which South Africans will assimilate as their own and upon which they will build their new society, committed to democracy, pluralism and the pursuit of social justice.

The task of the present is to build on the work of the Commission and communicate the new self-understanding to all citizens. This is not an easy assignment. It is not surprising that after generations of oppression and humiliations some black people, coloured people and Asians are unable to transcend the past, forget their anger, and enter upon the path of reconciliation. Nor is it surprising that members of the former ruling elites are unable to move beyond their racist prejudice, renounce their former privileges without regret, and commit themselves whole-heartedly to democracy and pluralism. Opposition to the new society continues in some quarters. Some powerless and frustrated people, enraged over the poverty inflicted on them or still prisoner of the inherited hostilities, break out into arbitrary violence. This article is not the place for giving a proper analysis of the fault lines of contemporary South African society. There are in fact two mutually interacting fault lines: the crass economic inequality and the immobility of ethnic paranoia. When the new government under President Mandela introduced a macro-economic policy that focused on the redistribution of wealth, it was forced by the economic elites and the World Bank to change this policy and opt instead for a macro-economic programme that focuses on growth, production and export. While Apartheid as a political system has been dismantled, it is not an exaggeration to say that an economic Apartheid is still in place. The newly elected government is not likely to be able to do anything about it. It is my impression, moreover, that the elite-based South African and international mass media tend to emphasize, for their own reasons, the failures of the new society. They give a high public profile to the acts of violence, without reminding the reader that the Apartheid regime has taught the people that life is cheap in South Africa and that killing and torture outside the law can go unpunished.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission constitutes the springboard of a nation-wide social movement, supported by many committed communities, including the churches, aimed at the spiritual and cultural renewal of the population. This movement wants all people to confront the truth, transcend the past, opt for reconciliation, strengthen the bonds of solidarity, allow their memories to be healed, and support reparation and restitution.

Gregory Baum

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[1] This article is based on the special issue of the South African review *Siyaya!* (Spring 1998) on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and on many conversations with engaged South African Christians. Documents of the Commission and of topics related to the Commission can be found on the Internet: http:// www.truth.org.za.

Vatican II: The Church and 'The Others': Turning Point of Catholic Teaching[1]

The invitation to give a paper at this colloquium on Vatican Council II has prompted me to recall the events of my own participation as 'peritus' at the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Since I had written a doctoral dissertation on an ecumenical topic, later published as a book,[2] I had the great honour of being invited by Cardinal Bea to join the Secretariat as a theologian. The members met for the first time in 1960. At that occasion Cardinal Bea told us that we had to acquaint the bishops and their people with the ecumenical movement and urge them to be more welcoming to 'separated Christians' and their churches. Use public talks, radio interviews and newspaper articles to promote the ecumenical idea in the Church. He himself, the Cardinal added, would travel from country to country giving public lectures 'at the open window,' as he called it, to be heard far and wide. His texts would be published in *La documentation catholique,* which we were to use, he said, to defend ourselves when being accused of deviating from Catholic teaching. Cardinal Bea's team, bishops and priests, became very active in those years.

It is not my intention to tell the story of my involvement in the Unity Secretariat. Nor shall I analyze the conciliar drafts we produced or explain the role we played during the four sessions of the Council. In the first place, I made the decision, possibly a foolish one, not to keep any of my papers. There exist, moreover, many commentaries on the work of the Secretariat which give more precise information than I would be able to offer.

What I shall do in this paper is something different. One of the profound theological experiences I had at the Unity Secretariat was the recognition that there are moments of discontinuity in the Church's official teaching. The Church is able to change its mind. The three controversial conciliar drafts we had prepared were eventually, after a lengthy debate and some rewriting, approved by the entire Council. Looking back over my work as a theologian I now realize how important this recognition was for me, and how much it influenced my theological approach after the Council.[3]

The Unity Secretariat was charged with the preparation of three innovative counciliar documents: *Unitatis redintegratio,* the decree on ecumenism; *Nostra aetate,* the declaration on the Church's relation to Jews and other non-Christians; and *Dignitatis humanae,* the declaration on religious liberty. They all dealt in one way or another with the Church's relation to 'the other' or 'the outsiders.' In preparing the draft documents and replying to the objections made by bishops on the council floor or in private appeals, we came to realize that we were participating in a conciliar process that constituted a turning point of the Church's magisterium.

In this paper I shall first present the change of mind that occurred at the Vatican Council through the service of the Secretariat and then offer a brief sociological reflection on the creativity of conciliar process.

The Decree on Ecumenism

According to the decree on ecumenism, 'separated Christians' (Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox) are truly Christians: through faith and baptism they are living members of Christ. Their churches and communities participate in the ecclesial mystery, that is to say, they are used by the Holy Spirit to save and santify their members, even if the Catholic Church remains in some (not clearly defined) sense the true Church of Christ. Morever, the decree interprets the ecumenical movement of Protestant and Anglican origin as the work of the Holy Spirit. In it the Catholic Church now wants to participate. Catholic and non-Catholic Christians are now already enjoying a true, even if incomplete, spiritual communion.

At the time this was bold teaching. It contradicted the Church's *lex orandi.* The Catholic people whose spiritual outlook had been shaped by the Church's liturgy, especially the Roman Missal, believed that their solidarity in faith was confined to the Catholic Church. In the Roman Missal were repeated prayers for the Church, but no prayer for the world, i.e., the people beyond the Church's borders, except on one day, Good Friday, when we offered the great prayers for universal redemption. Because the *lex orandi* has such an impact on

Catholic consciousness, let me give the full text of the prayer for non-Catholic Christians and their churches.

> Let us pray for heretics and schismatics. May our God and Lord save them from all errors. May he be pleased to call them back to our holy Mother, the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, you save all men. You will that none shall be lost. Look down on those who are deceived by the wiles of the devil. With the evil of error removed from their hearts, may the erring repent and return to the unity of your truth.

Lex orandi is *lex credendi.* The Catholic people did not believe that through faith and baptism Protestants were living members of Christ. They were brought up to think of Protestants, not as brothers and sisters in Christ, but as people deceived by false teaching and belonging to false churches. Catholics regarded it as a sin to participate in Protestant worship. These beliefs and practices were confirmed by the theological texts used in the schools and seminaries. Pope Leo XIII still regarded Protestantism as a destructive movement, the source of all unrest and upheaval in European society, including rationalism, secularism, materialism and socialism.[4]

At the same time, beginning with Leo XIII, the popes began to speak to Protestants in more respectful terms, no longer calling them heretics and instead honouring their virtues. In my dissertation on papal teaching, published in book form in 1958, I showed that beginning with Leo XIII the popes were gradually moving towards a polite recognition of Protestant Christians. But I could not find a single text in their teaching that recognized that Protestants had 'supernatural' faith, i.e., the faith that saves. The most positive thing I could then say was that unlike many theological treatises at the time, papal teaching never denied the possibility that Protestants could have faith.[5] Nor did the popes ever acknowledge Protestant churches as churches in a theological sense.[6]

When I wrote my dissertation in the fifties, I thought of myself as sympathetic to ecumenism within the Catholic framework; yet reading the book today, I recognize that I still had the Catholic mind-set of the pre-conconciliar period. I still concluded that "the last end of ecumenism is the return of the seperated Christians to the Church of Christ, that is, to the Roman Catholic Church." And I added, "About this there can be neither doubt nor difficulty in the mind of a Catholic."[7]

This conclusion of mine was based on important texts of the Roman magisterium. Catholic participation in movements for Christian unity had been forbidden several times. First, there was a set of letters written in 1864 and 1865 by the Holy Office and republished in 1919 in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis,* after Pope Benedict XV had rejected an invitation by Protestant churchmen to participate in the emerging ecumenical movement. Second, in response to ecumenical assemblies at Stockholm (1925) and Lausanne (1927), the Holy Office published a letter in 1927 forbidding Catholics to particate in ecumenical gatherings, followed in 1928 by Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium animos* which, for doctrinal reasons, condemned the ecumenical movement. Ecumenical movements, wrote the Pope, falsely believe that the unity of the Church has been lost, while this unity exists, in theory and in fact, in the Roman Catholic Church.[8]. The foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 was greeted by a *monitum* of the Holy Office forbidding Catholics to attend ecumenical assemblies without the permission of the Vatican. An *instructio* published in 1949 was more positive: it recognized that the Spirit moved these Christians to seek the unity they lost, a search that gives joy to the children of the true Church.[9]

When the first draft of the decree on ecumenism was submitted to the Council, many bishops were deeply disturbed by its bold teaching. Some of them told us personally that they had always taught the very opposite in their dioceses. If this draft were accepted by the Council, they said, the faithful will think the Church is reversing its teaching. Some of the opposition to the draft came from bishops in Catholic countries where the law still restricted the freedom of Protestants. Opposition also came from bishops in English-speaking countries, where Catholics had been persecuted in the past and were still exposed to some discrimination. I recall that the Australian bishops were so upset that even after the decree had been approved by the Council, they approached Pope Paul VI with the request not to promulgate it. This is not the place to analyze the long debate that took place on the council floor. Eventually, after some rewriting, the great majority of bishops gave their approval to the decree. They were ready to return to their dioceses, alter their pastoral practice and support the ecumenical movement.

Further on I shall ask what it was that made this extraordinary process possible.

The Text on the Church's Relation to Jews and Judaism

The moment of discontinuity in the Church's teaching was even more dramatic in *Nostra aetate,* the Declaration on the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions, in particular to Jews and Judaism. Since this topic has been dealt with in many commentaries, I shall mention only a few ecclesiastical texts to reveal the extraordinary leap of the magisterium.

The *lex orandi* on Jews and followers of other non-Christian religions was quite specific. In the Roman Missal we prayed for these 'outsiders' only once a year, on Good Friday. These were the prayers.

> Let us pray for the (perfidious) Jews.[10] May the Lord our God tear the veil from their hearts so that they may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ. Almighty and everlasting God, you do not refuse your mercy to the Jews. Hear the prayers we offer for that people. May they acknowledge the light of your truth, which is Christ, and be brought out of all darkness.
>
> Let us also pray for the pagans. May almighty God take away the evil from their hearts. May they give up their idols and be converted to the living and true God and his only Son, Jesus Christ. Almighty and everlasting God, you always desire not the death but the life of sinners. In your goodness hear our prayer. Deliver them from idol worship. Unite them to your only Church, to the praise and glory of your name.

The *lex orandi* was in keeping with the *lex credendi,* the Church's official teaching: outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation. Catholic teaching did not normally offer a harsh interpretation of this dictum. Only rarely did the Church teach as it did at the Council of Florence (1442) that all non-Catholics went to hell immediately after they died.[11] Even in the prayers just cited, presenting Jews as blinded by a veil and pagans as surrendered to idols, there is the reference to God's gracious universal will to save. Because the Church acknowledged this divine will, it did not exclude the possibility that some outsiders would be saved, yet their prospects were not seen to be good. Against this background, the conciliar declaration *Nostra aetate* was quite extraordinary.

In this paper I shall only deal with section 4 of *Nostra aetate,* on the Church's relation to Jews and Judaism. The text tells us that the Church greatly honours the Jews as the people who received God's revelation, brought forth the prophets and eventually gave birth to Jesus Christ. The Church, it says, continues to draw strength from its rootedness in the ancient biblical tradition. Even though the majority of Jews did not accept Jesus, and some even worked against the spread of the Gospel, the Jewish people remains most dear to God because of the fathers. Their divine election has not been withdrawn. The Church regrets that its past preaching did great harm to the Jews. It deplores antisemitism in all its forms. Because of "the spiritual patrimony" between Christians and Jews, the Church now wants to relate itself to Jews and Judaism with respect, asking for dialogue, coooperation and mutual understanding.

While the final version of the declaration was more cautious than the original one and hence has been criticized by some observers, it is still a remarkable document, a break with traditional teaching, a testimony to the Church's ability to change its mind.

Nothing in the Church's past had prepared the Vatican Council's acknowledgement of "a common spiritual patrimony" between Christians and religious Jews who do not accept Christ. The Pauline passage (Rom 11:29) that the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable and that, therefore, the Jews remain God's chosen people has never before been understood as an assurance that God's grace is *now* present in Jewish worship and Jewish life. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul believed that, apart from a remnant, the Jews had now been "hardened" and become "blind," thus excluding themselves from the community of salvation. Their continued divine election meant that they would not lose themselves in the world, but be preserved until the day of God's chosing when they shall again receive their eyesight, recognize Jesus as their saviour and be re-integrated into the Church, the community of salvation. To read the Pauline passage as a promise of grace operative *now* among the Jewish people is unprecedented. Yet *Nostra aetate* was not the only conciliar document that introduced this new interpretation. In *Lumen gentium,* the dogmatic constitution on the Church (paragraph 16), we also read with the same reference to Romans 11 that the Jews, because of the promise made to their fathers, remain a people most dear to God in accordance with their election; *populus secundum electionem Deo carissimus propter patres.*

There exists today an extensive literature on the anti-Jewish current in Christian teaching and practice,

beginning in the first century.[12] Against this millennial background, the teaching of the Council represents a leap. How differently the Church still thought about these matters in the 1930s is revealed in a recent book, *L'encyclique cachée de Pie XI,* which examines the draft of an encyclical on racism prepared for Pope Pius XI by three learned and highly respected Jesuits.[13] The encyclical was never published, and the draft had been lost until it was recently discovered in a dark corner of an ecclesiastical library.

The principal section of this draft repudiates the racist theories of the 19th century adopted by empires in regard to their colonies or their slaves and, in the present century, by the political Right in Europe and in an extreme form by German fascism. Theories assigning differing degrees of dignity to racial families, we read, contradict the divinely revealed teaching of the unity of the human race, created and redeemed by God. For doctrinal reasons, racism is for Catholics wholly unacceptable. Yet another section of the draft reveals that the elite Catholic milieu in Rome and other parts of Europe was still unable to free itself from the ancient anti-Jewish theological prejudice, even at the time when the Jews were already persecuted in Germany. The draft repudiates antisemitism and discrimination against Jews based on biological or racist grounds, yet defends laws restricting the influence of Jews in society on theological grounds. The clerical circles at the Church's administrative centre were still caught in the traditional belief, supported by a few New Testament passages (see Rom 11:28), that the Jews were enemies of the gospel. Their influence in society, according to this draft document, fostered secularism, materialism, liberalism and socialism.

The leap to the recognition of "a common spiritual patrimony" was the fruit of the Church's penitential reflection on the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi-Germany. The bishops acknowledged with great sorrow that in the past the Church had never critically examined the human consequences of its teaching, asking whether it promoted love or hatred. The Council now recognized that only if we have *love* for 'the others' and 'the outsiders' are we able to discern the *truth* about them.

The Declaration on Religious Liberty

The difficulties in preparing the declaration on religious liberty, *Dignitatis humanae,* and having it passed by the Council, have been described in books on the Council, beginning with the volumes of Xavier Rynne. Even though Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963) had already recognized the human rights tradition from a Catholic perspective, the opposition at the Council to the freedom of religion was very strong, especially in the Roman Curia. The popes had condemned the freedom of worship many times in the past. Since the Church had rejected liberalism, popular sovereignty and the modern, secular state in the 19th century, it is not surprising that this included opposition to civil liberties and the condemnation of the freedom of worship. In *Mirari vos* of 1832, Gregory XVI wrote: "Indifferentism is the fetid source that gives rise to the mistaken view, or rather madness, that everyone is entitled to freedom of conscience."[14] Pius IX endorsed this position when he condemned as an error the idea that "every man is free to embrace and to profess the religion which, by the light of reason, he believes to be true."[15] Leo XIII reaffirmed this teaching in *Libertas praestantissimum* (1888) when he called false "the widely proclaimed freedom of conscience, as they call it, based on the principle that every person may profess the religion that appeals to him or even to profess no religion at all."[16]

At the same time, Leo XIII declared in his *Immortali Dei* (1886) that while the Church cannot approve of governments that refuse to protect the true religion, i.e., the Catholic Church, and instead grant all forms of worship the same legal rights, the Church does not condemn those governments which, under special circumstances, do this for the sake of fostering the public good or avoiding social unrest.[17] The Pope alludes here to the curiously named distinction between 'thesis' and 'hypothesis,' where the thesis asserts that in Catholic countries, deemed the normative situation, the Church opposes religious liberty, while the hypothesis concedes that in countries where Catholics are a minority, the Church favours religious liberty. The thesis–hypothesis formula was widely used by Catholics in countries such as France and the U.S.A. which allowed them to follow the Church's official teaching in theory but favour pluralism in practice.

That it demanded great courage to challenge this two-edged doctrine even in 1940s and 50s is demonstrated by the attacks delivered by canonists and theologians in the United States and the Roman authorities against John Courtney Murray who defended religious liberty as a universal principle on Catholic grounds.[18]

The new approach taken by *Dignitatis humanae,* adopted also by *Gaudium et spes,* the Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, begins with theological reflection on the human vocation, the vocation of all human beings, and not with the status of the ecclesiastical institution in society. In the third session of the Council, the Unity Secretariat invited John Courtney Murray to become a member of the team responsible for redrafting the text. Because humans are called to follow their way to the transcendent, the freedom to do this, i.e., religious liberty, is a human right and must be protected by government. This was new teaching. To show that despite this doctrinal change there existed a deeper, underlying continuity in Catholic teaching, the declaration emphasized the principle, repeatedly defended by church authority, that no one may be compelled to believe.

At the same time, the declaration did not wrestle with the question of why the popes had chosen to condem religious freedom in the past. Since the principal opposition to the proposed declaration was that it contradicted the Roman magisterium, it would have been useful to clarify the evolution of the Church's teaching and reveal the contextual character of ecclesiastical pronouncements. I recall a large meeting of English-speaking bishops and theologians that dealt with the questions raised by the draft, including the delicate issue of the papal magisterium. At that occasion Bishop Young from Australia had the nerve to suggest, "Why can't we simply say that the popes were wrong." The other bishops did not think that this was a good idea. It is probably more correct to say that in the 19th century, the popes were still identified with traditional European culture and society defined in the 17th century, after a hundred years of religious wars, by the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio.* The union of throne and altar belonged to the commonly accepted wisdom of that period. What the popes failed to see was that this traditional order was about to be overthrown by the arrival of modernity and creation of the liberal state. In this, the present situation, the Church must foster commitment to Christian faith and resistance to the secular spirit by religious education, not by legal protection.

Theological and Sociological Reflections

What happened to the Church that it was able to change its mind in regard to Protestants, Jews and followers of other religions and come to affirm the freedom of worship? I hesitate to take a 'moral' point of view, judging the Church of the past and claiming that we are more virtuous today. One has to admit that the attitude of the Christian community towards 'the others' and 'the outsiders' remains unresolved in the New Testament. The Catholic principle of incarnation or inculturation allowed the Church to identify itself with the culture in which it lived, and even if it criticized this culture from the perspective of the Gospel, it was and is nonetheless unable to transcend altogether the cultural mind-set of the age. European feudal society was tiered; and while it celebrated the plurality of cultures within Christendom, it saw the people outside of Christendom mainly in dark colours. Apart from a few prophets, Christians – including ourselves – are caught in their age. It was only when, in this century, the secular state became the norm, when society became marked by religious pluralism, and when liberal ideas critical of imperialism, domination and social inequality acquired cultural power, that Christians discovered that many of their attitudes were sources of prejudice, social injustice and contempt for outsiders. Christians acknowledged their guilt for having promoted hostility among one another, contempt for the Jews, and justification of colonial conquest. At first a few Christians and then very many asked themselves what love, *caritas,* Christ's great commandment, meant in their present situation. What, in the Spirit, should be their relation to 'the others' and 'the outsiders'? This was a topic on which Christians living in earlier periods had not reflected. Now the answer to this question became the testing stone of the Gospel.

The discontinuity of the Church's teaching at Vatican II preserves and even enhances an abiding continuity of its teaching, namely the primacy of love and God's universal will to save.

How does a Church, the Catholic Church in particular, change its perspective? The process begins with a few prophetic voices, which are ignored or even silenced. As critical Christians become more numerous, they found associations, study centres, scholarly reviews and popular publications and create a countervailing current in the Church, often under the frowns of popes and bishops. These Christians take certain risks. On the three topics discussed in this paper, the reversal of church teaching on Protestants, on Jews and on religious liberty, the countervailing currents were substantial. This is not the place to retell the history of these countertrends, naming the theologians involved in them, the clerical and lay associations promoting them, the books

and reviews published in support of them, the few bishops who favoured them, and the victims punished by the magisterium for their outspokenness. At the Vatican Council, convoked by the good Pope John, these countervailing currents were allowed to come to the surface and influence the assembly of decision-makers.

In a book written a long time ago, I tried to show that Max Weber's theory of social change, explaining the role of countervailing trends in social and poltical transformations, illuminates as well the evolution of Catholic teaching and practice at the Vatican Council.[19]

In my opinion a second social phenomeon deserves attention. At the Council, Catholic bishops and theologians engaged in open conversation about the meaning of the Gospal in today's world. They began to trust one another, reveal their deep convictions, and express ideas they had carried in their hearts but had never dared to articulate. The bishops were open to theologians who represented the countervailing currents. Some of these theologians, though previously censured, were invited to participate in the discussions and the drafting of the conciliar documents. The bishops were willing to listen to the Spirit speaking in the midst of the believing community. At the Council, the bishops experienced themselves as empowered to change the inherited doctrine on the Church's relation to 'the others' and 'the outsiders,' and in doing so discovered a deeper continuity with the teaching of Jesus Christ. The Council recognized that only when we have *love* for 'the others' and 'the outsiders' are we able to discern the *truth* about them.

I am tempted to introduce a sociological term to describe what, according to my experience, took place at the Vatican Council. Émile Durkheim has called "effervescence"[20] the hightened consciousness, increased vitality and unanticipated creativity that occur at solemn gatherings of communities whose members are united by bonds of solidarity and yet live dispersed over a wide territory. While Durkheim introduced this term in his study of tribal religion, he used it later on to interpret periods of collective innovation and creativity in contemporary communities. Durkheim's theory explains why bishops known to be cautious at home, once gathered at wider, possibly intercontinental, ecclesiastical assemblies, are often deeply stirred and willing to adopt, in fidelity to Jesus and his Spirit, unconventional and bold ideas. The countervailing currents presently flourishing in the Church, especially the women's movement, have remained powerless because, thanks to a monarchical style of governance, there have been few occasions for "effervescence" among the ecclesiastical decisonmakers. Yet I am convinced that as the countervailing trends continue to spread, the Catholic Church, urged by the Spirit, will come to define in a new and possibly radical manner the Christian attitude toward 'the other,' the outsider, the excluded and the despised.

Gregory Baum

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[1] This lecture was prepared for a symposium on Vatican Council II held in Montreal by the Canadian Catholic Historical Society on October 25, 1996. It was also given at Newman Centre of the University of Toronto on May 13, 1996.

[2] Gregory Baum, *That They May Be One: A Study of Papal Doctrine* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1958).

[3] I became aware of how important this insight has been in my work through an article by the Protestant theologian, Donald Schweitzer, soon to appear in *Horizons*, on the Holy Spirit in Baum's theory of the development of doctrine.

[4] Gregory Baum, *op. cit.*, 53.

[5] *Op. cit.*, 41.

[6] *Op. cit.*, 72.

[7] *Op. cit.*, 98.

[8] *Op. cit.*, 103.

[9] *Op. cit.*, 150.

[10] The word 'perfidious,' also translated as 'faithless,' was removed from the liturgy in 1959 by Pope John XXIII.

[11] See *Denzinger*: *Enchiridion symbolorum* (Freiburg Br.: Herder, 1962), 32nd edition, 342, no. 1351. When in 1949 the doctrine of the Council of Florence was preached by a U.S. priest, Leonard Feeney, his teaching was formally reproved by Rome: see *Denzinger*, no. 3866-3873.

[12] See, for instance, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

[13] Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky, *L'encyclique cachée de Pie XI: Une occasion manquée de l'Église face à l'antisémitisme*, preface by Émile Poulat (Paris: La Découverte, 1995). For a discussion of the book, see Pierre Anctil, "L'Église et la question juive durant la guerre," *Relations* (Montréal), July-August, 1996, 185-187.

[14] *Denzinger*, no. 2730.

[15] *Denzinger*, no. 2915.

[16] *Denzinger*, no. 3250.

[17] See *Denzinger*, no. 3176.

[18] See Thomas Love, *John Courtney Murray: Contemporary Church–State Theory* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965); D.P. Pelotte, *John Courtney Murray*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

[19] Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 176-177.

[20] See Steven Lukes, *Émile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1973), 422.

The Communion of Saints and the World's Redemption

How often have we recited, as part of the traditional creeds, "I believe in the communion of saints," without giving much thought to what it is that we are professing. Such a casual recitation will no longer be possible after a reading of Elizabeth Johnson's new book, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*, Ottawa/ New York: Novalis/Continuum, 1998). The book deserves careful attention. In this new work the feminist theologian who gave us *She Who Is* makes a case for awakening "the sleeping symbol" of the communion of saints, purging it of its traditional patriarchal, hierarchical and sacerdotal connotations to render it a living, inclusive, empowering symbol that can both transform our relationship with one another and with creation, and deepen our liturgical and spiritual life. The book's title is taken from the biblical Book of Wisdom, where the female figure Wisdom (Hebrew *Hokmah*, Greek *Sophia*) "renews all things: and in every generation... passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets" (p. 40).

For Protestants without the ancient practice of praying to and through the saints or celebrating the feastdays of individual saints, such as still practised by Roman Catholics, the symbol of the communion of saints might evoke no greater recognition than a vague memory of singing "For all the saints" on a Sunday close to November 1. We are more likely to associate it with the more pagan antics of Hallowe'en (from "all hallows' eve"). Readers wanting to find out more about this inheritance can have their curiosity aroused and satisfied by the five chapters making up Part II, entitled "Dialogue with a Living Tradition."

In this dialogue, Johnson covers biblical territory from Israel's One Holy God of the Exodus to the "clouds of witnesses" of the early Christian communities. History buffs will delight in her scholarly and oft-times "subversive" tracing of the evolution of this tradition from the age of the martyrs (which gave equal weight to female and male martyrs and invented the model of holy companionship) during the period of persecution, through the adaptation of the patronage-petition custom of Roman society in the first few centuries, to the development of an elaborate system of canonization of official saints (usually if not exclusively "great names" in the ecclesial hierarchy) by the church by the tenth century. A popular devotional practice of "invoking the saints" as intercessors in prayer, with Mary as the chief of saints, developed alongside. Such a patron model came under severe criticism during the Reformation of the 16th century, not only for its ecclesiastical abuses, but also for its dubious theology of substituting human mediation for Christ's work as sole mediator. There are thus good historical reasons for the lack of knowledge on the part of Christians belonging to the Reformation tradition.

Reforming efforts of the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council included renewed thinking about the saints, situating it in the broader theology of the church and recommending a model of "companionship" over the model of patronage. In recognizing and commending "the sacredness of the life of the baptized" (p. 117) while still living, Vatican II teaching "enfolds all the saints in heaven into the community of God's holy people, living and dead" (p. 118).This model is in fact operative in the Sanctus ("Holy, holy, holy") sung or said at the Eucharistic Prayer, thus affirming its central place in public worship.

Reforms such as these give hope for the possibility of reclaiming the symbol of the communion of saints for a liberative, feminist reading towards inclusive community and a deepened spirituality, embracing "an alternative vision of humanity and the earth... actively seek[ing] to bring this vision to realization"(p. 34). Johnson does this by formulating a convincing "Theology of the Friends of God and Prophets" in the six chapters of Part III. She validates and explores women's "practices of memory" by reclaiming lost women's memories (Hagar, Mary Magdalen, the virgin martyrs, the anonymous women saints who never made it into the canonized elite) through the use of a "hermeneutic of suspicion," by drawing upon the recovery of dangerous memories from other "communities of discourse," such as feminist theorists and rabbinical scholars, and by re-

flecting theologically on the perpetual themes of death and Christian hope.

I find the final two chapters especially powerful. Here Johnson moves us towards a possible realization of that feminist alternative vision by offering helpful suggestions for how to transform the symbol of the communion of saints so as to include the ordinary, faithful practioners, may of whom are women. Such a transformed interpretation comprises five elements: "1. the community of living, ordinary persons as 'all saints', in particular...the members of the Christian community; 2. their working out of holiness through creative fidelity in ordinary times; 3. their relation to the circle of companions who have run the race before...; 4. the paradigmatic figures among them; and 5. the relation of this whole community, living and dead, to the whole community of the natural world"(p. 219).

Johnson does not leave us wondering how to begin this task. Her final chapter offers concrete suggestions for embarking on liturgical practices of memory and hope. Such liturgies could include praise and lament on ordinary Sundays. All Saints' Day could emphasize celebrations of the countless nameless saints in our communities, including the victims of injustice locally and globally. Litanies on feast days of the church year could list the names of recognized saints of past and present. Such a practice could borrow from the Latin American ritual of responding with a resounding "Presente!" as each individual name is invoked. Here Johnson reminds us to remember the women usually forgotten and neglected, citing as one example Korean theologian, Chung Hyun Kyung's "stunning" address at the opening of the 1991 World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly in Canberra, in which she invoked the spirit of a whole litany of "han-ridden" ones, from Jephthah's daughter to the Amazon rain forest (p. 260).

For those whose global awareness of God's presence and work has been raised, Johnson's capacity to learn from many places and communities can act as both example and challenge. For those originating from or having connections with regions outside of North America and Europe, her sensitivity will encourage them to look with greater sympathy at certain ritual practices of these regions that establish connections across generations. They may even wish to transform these practices into workable rituals in a Christian context. I am thinking of the African Christians' vibrant link with the spirits of their ancestors in everyday life; of Native/Aboriginal peoples' living sense of connection with all of creation as well as their ancestors; of Chinese and Korean Christians' family commemorations of the dead in spring and fall; of some Japanese-American/Canadian congregations' practice of remembering their dead during monthly communion services. In this way it may be possible to redeem some of the deleterious effects of the cultural imperialism exercised by well-intentioned missionaries when they condemn these vital religio-cultural practices.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this book to all Christians, especially women, who desire to deepen their understanding of a long, but not well-critiqued Western church tradition and devotional practice, and to all who wish to enrich their public liturgical and personal/family devotional life. Just think, the next time you recite "I believe in the communion of saints" or sing the "Sanctus" during communion, you may be able to do so with greater integrity, and with a far wider circle of saints than your catechism or confirmation/membership training ever dreamed of!

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Volf: Taking Liberation Theology One Step Farther

Miroslav Volf, the author of *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), is a Croatian Protestant theologian in the Reformed tradition, presently teaching at an American theological faculty. Moved by the violent conflict in the region of his birth, he now provides brilliant theological reflections on identity, otherness, liberation and reconciliation. Even though reconciliation is a central idea in the Scriptures, especially in the writings of St. Paul, few theologians have explored the meaning of this teaching for the reconciliation of groups or peoples with a history of enmity.

The book is a major theological achievement. The author is in creative dialogue with classical theology, ancient and modern philosophy, as well as feminist and postmodern thought. He reads the Scriptures in an innovative and brilliant manner, wishing to make a contribution to what he calls the contemporary renewal of biblical theology. Volf argues that the present debates on topics such as exclusion, oppression, justice, liberation and peace can be clarified, possibly only be clarified, by an attentive reflection on the Christian doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation and the Cross. Yet this orthodox Calvinist approach does not generate an exclusivist theology.

Embracing the Other

The first part of the book deals with exclusion and embrace. The author shows that the manner in which we define our identity as persons and as community determines whether we shall be closed to 'others' and exclude them, or whether we shall be open to 'others' and welcome them. When collectivities protect their identity and draw the appropriate boundaries, they easily produce negative images of 'the other' and encourage contempt. To face up to God's pluralistic world with arms ready to embrace, people must develop an 'open identity' – characterized by the following three features. 1) Identity must be 'dynamic', i.e., evolving and responding to new historical circumstances; 2) it must be 'porous', i.e., having penetrable walls, letting 'the others' enter, learning from them, and without betrayal, integrate some of their ideas and practices. Here 'the others' do not simply remain outsiders; they also come to exist within the self; and 3) an open identity is sensitive to the sinister side of its own cultural inheritance and hence, when the moment comes, is willing to be transformed.

Volf, we note, does not advocate a false universalism. He recognizes that under certain circumstances persons and peoples must defend their identity against the forces that seek to undermine it. Here Volf distinguishes between 'exclusion' and 'differentiation.' To defend one's identity by exclusion is to engage in a fateful process of separation that makes the others unrelated outsiders. Yet to protect one's identity by differentiation is to engage in a process of separating and binding, affirming the difference and yet establishing relations with the others. Differentiation defends identity and simultaneously recognizes a common bond with others. We are different from others and yet in so many ways similar to them. Volf is willing to apply this recommendation to the affirmation of Christian identity.

To move from a 'closed' to an 'open identity' equals a spiritual conversion, a rescue from self-centredness and an entry into self-giving love, a transition inspired and sustained by the Spirit of Jesus.

This first part offers a profound practical theory of identity and otherness that by itself makes the book an outstanding contribution to Christian theology. Volf has chosen to leave his practical theology general enough so that readers can apply it to their own historical situation. Volf does make his analysis concrete in a brilliant chapter on gender identity. He is one of the rare male theologians who is thoroughly familiar with feminist theological literature.

Exclusion must be replaced by embrace. If 'the others' have in fact been enemies, to embrace or be open to them calls for the kind of self-giving love that Jesus manifested on the Cross, i.e., forgiving the others, even before they recognized their own guilt. Christ's self-giving love discloses the inner life of the triune God, Father, Son and Spirit. As believers in this divine mystery, Christians led by the Spirit also want to love 'the others,' their opponents and even their enemies.

Reading Volf's reflections on embracing, the reader may get the impression that Volf overlooks the

need to denounce oppression and the obligation to stand up against evil. To reassure the reader, Volf writes, "As I stress the will to embrace, my assumption is that the struggle against deception, injustice and violence is indispensable." He asks the reader to be patient: justice and liberation are the topics treated in the second part of the book.

Liberation and Beyond

In the book's second part Volf offers a liberation theology with a difference. He firmly believes that God sides with the poor and oppressed and empowers them to stand up and, if need be, struggle for truth and justice. Yet he develops themes that are only hinted at in Latin American liberation theology and are often neglected in less thoughtful books on the topic. According to Latin American liberation theology and other liberation theologies inspired by it, the self-confidence and the inner strength of the poor, enabling them to resist oppression and marginalization, are inspired by the grace of Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Here the struggle for justice and community is not seen as a promethean project of self-redemption, but rather as a social movement revealing God's merciful presence among the powerless and despised. The option for the poor is here a form of discipleship.

Latin American-style liberation theology also recognizes that the greatest temptation of the oppressed is the desire to conquer the oppressor, replace him, and rule with an iron hand as he has done. To counter this temptation, liberation theology insists that the aim of the struggle for justice is the creation of a qualitatively different society, one that transcends the antecedent structures of inequality and domination. Volf develops in an innovative way these two themes: the grace-sustained character of liberation and the moral vulnerability of the victims. The theologian from Croatia has the courage to articulate what others may have thought, but did not dare to say: victims do not remain innocent. Since evil begets evil, since violence and oppression are soul-destroying forces, the self of the victim suffers damage – save in exceptional cases. The damaged self prompts the wounded people to act in ways that betray the best in themselves and lead to the loss of their innocence. Unless readers pays close attention to the text, they may get the idea that Volf wants 'to blame' the victims. Of course, he does not. He writes, "The perpetrators are sinners and the victims are sinned against, their non-innocence notwithstanding." Yet he argues persuasively that to divide the world into perpetrators and victims may be legitimate as a first step, but if not transcended, such a division obscures the historical reality. Even the 'neutral' observers, Volf argues correctly, are not totally innocent: they bring their own history to the observation of events. On different levels, therefore, conversion in the power of the Spirit is a universal demand.

Volf agrees with liberation theologians and many contemporary exegetes that Jesus promised liberation to the oppressed population of Palestine. Yet while he regarded them as victims, he – strangely – called for their conversion. 'Repent, for the Reign of God is at hand.' Unless the victims, the sinned-against, turn away from envy and hatred, their struggle for justice will create new forms of oppression.

Volf has his own approach to liberation theology. Latin American liberation theology recognizes a certain affinity between the message of Jesus and the biblical prophets promising divine rescue, and the desire for emancipation generated by the Enlightenment. Volf, I think, also acknowledges this affinity. Yet he does not share the trust in emancipatory reason exhibited by Catholic liberation theologians. Catholic theology and, on quite different grounds, liberal Protestant thought tended to have confidence in 'natural' reason. Yet with Saint Augustine – plus Nietzsche and the postmoderns – Miroslav Volf is keenly aware that our natural intelligence is gravely distorted by personal pride and the will to power mediated by the dominant culture. Reason itself, Volf holds, must be rescued from its bias by faith and self-giving love. He says with Augustine, "*Credo ut intelligam* – I believe so that I arrive at understanding."

Volf quotes with approval postmodern thinkers who hold that utterances of truth are always at the same time affirmations of power. For Volf, knowledge and power are inevitably intertwined. That is why he argues that human reason and theological thought can only be trusted if they are grounded in a quest for self-giving love and universal solidarity.

Volf's Reformed sensitivity to the world as sinful leads him to many original approaches. Here is one example. With the Reformed tradition, Volf is suspicious of the self-confident bourgeois or liberal self that sees itself as master of life and judge of history. This modern view of the self also stands behind political engagement and the struggle for justice. Liberal theologians call this approvingly 'the responsible self.' According to

postmodern thought, this responsible self is an illusion: the self, the argument goes, has become fragmented, unsure of itself, capable of playing many games, but incapable of making a total commitment. Volf recognizes that this ironic stance tends to produce indifference and non-intervention in response to the suffering of others. Yet he does not rush to defend the self-confident self. Instead, following St. Paul (and the mystical tradition), he questions the self human beings have constructed for themselves, the prideful self or the self shaped according to the symbols of the dominant culture. What we need, moderns and postmoderns alike, Volf argues, is a conversion to Christ who creates a redeemed self in us, grounded in his self-giving love, thanks to which we are able to act responsibly in the world.

Volf's Reformed suspicion of the world's sinfulness extends happily to religion itself, including the churches and their truths. In a chapter on violence and peace, he analyzes the mechanisms by which churches relying on the letter of their doctrines have generated symbols of exclusion, nourished fratricidal hatred, and encouraged armed violence.

Is Reconciliation Possible?

In my opinion, *Exclusion and Embrace* lifts liberation theology to a new level. The reader can learn from Volf, even if he or she does not agree with the author's christology. As a theologian in the Reformed tradition, Volf points to Jesus Christ and him alone as the solution for all our unresolved conflicts. He argues that people will be able to create conditions for peace and justice only if they follow Christ's sacrificial self-donation on the cross. He writes, "A genuinely Christian reflection on social issues must be rooted in the self-giving love of the divine Trinity as manifested on the cross of Christ." For Volf, reconciliation between groups or peoples with a history of enmity is a process – a possible, yet almost impossible process – demanding selfless, sacrificial 'agape' from the parties involved.

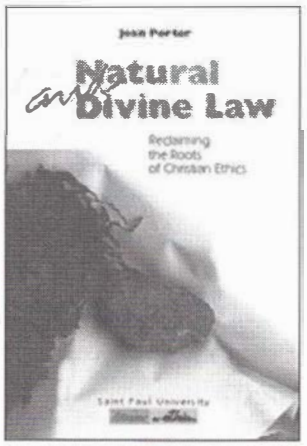
As a Catholic theologian, I am more inclined to hold that revealed in Jesus Christ is the universality of God's offer of grace. In recent years this has often been called 'an inclusive christology.' God is creatively and redemptively involved in the whole of humanity – an idea already found in the psalms – even if God's revealed Word is acknowledged, proclaimed and celebrated only in the Church. God's grace summons people everywhere to trust the benign powers that invade their hearts and to love their neighbour as themselves. The kind of conversion necessary for the reconciliation of peoples is, therefore, a gracious possibility offered to people whether they be Christian or not.

More than that, Volf touches upon the classical debate over the relation between 'eros' and 'agape.' For him, in line with the Reformed tradition, the self-giving or sacrificial love (*agape*) revealed in the New Testament leaves no room for the human longing for fulfilment and happiness (*eros*). Agape is self-forgetfulness and self-donation. According to this strict understanding, Augustine can be said to have gone astray when he said to God, 'Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee,' for here the love of God is aided by the quest for self-fulfilment.

The Catholic tradition here stands with Augustine: God is believed to have created human beings with a natural desire for happiness. While this eros, which is good in itself, has, in the Fall, become an organ of selfishness and sin, it is rescued in the life healed by grace and then sustains the self-surrender of agape. This teaching has important consequences for the reconciliation of former enemies. The people involved in this process are summoned to repent, forgive and embrace, in accordance with the circumstances of the past: they are thus summoned not only by the example of Christ's self-giving love on the cross, but also by the grace-inspired recognition that the painful road toward justice and peace leads to their own spiritual happiness. In the Spirit, people long to be delivered from resentment, bitterness and feelings of hostility because these damage the human heart and cause unhappiness.

Yet the wisdom of Volf's wonderful book transcends his particular theological orientation. Because of his method of 'separating and binding,' his original ideas are open to different interpretations: they are even capable of stimulating secular reflections. I have had occasion to present several of Volf's ideas to groups of political scientists. Catholic audiences have been particularly impressed by what Volf calls 'distancing and belonging.' Seeing the patterns of exclusion created by the religious and secular traditions to which we belong, we can only be agents of love and reconciliation if we guard a certain distance from these traditions; yet since these traditions also provide the resources for dedication to love, justice and peace, we want to preserve our rootedness in them. Volf praises freedom and fidelity.

Gregory Baum



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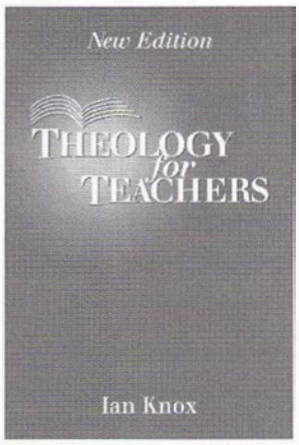

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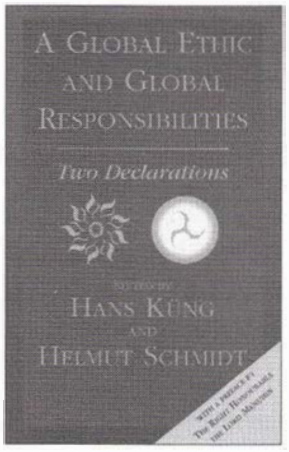

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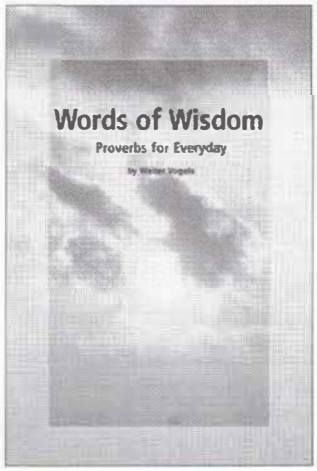

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