REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

Roger Haight, S.J. Christian Community in History, Volume 1: *Historical Ecclesiology,* Volume 2: *Comparative Ecclesiology.* New York: Continuum, 2004. x + 423 and ix + 498 pages. $34.95 per volume.

FOUR PERSPECTIVES

I

Roger Haight conceives of this project as the third part of a kind of trilogy dealing with the nature of theology (*Dynamics of Theology*, 1990, 2001), Jesus Christ (*Jesus Symbol of God*, 1999), and the church. It grew out of lecture notes for a course he began teaching in the early 1980s. He lays out his method and presuppositions in the first sixty-six pages where he describes the project as an ecclesiology within a postmodern perspective "from below." This ecclesiology considers "the concrete, social, and historical community and institution of the church as that in which God acts in grace" (I, ix) in the conviction that theological images of the church must "correlate with historical, social, and political considerations of the genesis and history of the community." This is in accord with the insight articulated in *Dynamics* "that critical theology must keep theological assertions attached to the historical symbols that mediate the experiences on which they depend" (I, ix-x). He further describes an ecclesiology "from below" as incorporating a method that is concrete, existential, and historically conscious.

He contrasts this approach with an ecclesiology that is "abstract, idealist, and a-historical" which reflects a kind of classical pre-critical consciousness, appeals to the authority of its doctrinal sources as something unquestioned and shared in common, and explains development theologically rather than historically or sociologically. This leads to his assertion: ". . . theological statements about the church that do not in some way refer to the concrete, existential, and historical church fail in characterizing the object of the discipline; and statements about that church which do not illumine the historical institution with the light of God's presence and activity relative to it are in that measure not theological and thus not ecclesiological" (I, 6). He intends to "to provide a sweeping view of the church as a developmental and pluralistic movement" which is contingent and radically characterized by change. At the same time he hopes to dialectically balance sameness and difference by providing a sense of continuity and sameness of intrinsic iden-

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tity preserved throughout the church's development. This is a descriptive rather than prescriptive ecclesiology.

Haight presupposes a Christian unity in the face of religious pluralism within the historical context of postmodernity described as: "a historical consciousness that is deeper and more radical than that of modernity, an appreciation of pluralism that is suspicious of all absolute or universal claims; a consciousness of the social construction of the self that has completely undermined the transcendental ego of modernity and, ironically, encouraged a grasping individualism; a sense of the size, age, complexity, and mystery of reality that modern science never even suspected" (I, 57).

The first volume, subtitled "Historical Ecclesiology" covers the genesis of the church though conciliarism and the late medieval church. Each chapter is constructed according to the same structure and includes the historical development, a social and theological analysis, a description of the church, and, finally, principles for a historical theology for the church in that particular period. Thus the history of the church is always contextualized historically and socially. The "principles" section of each chapter is where the work moves from church history to ecclesiology. This is where he discusses such issues as the normativity of the early church, the dialectic between the part and the whole, the difference between power and authority in the medieval papacy, and the polarity between subjectivity and objectivity in institution and sacrament. The advantage is that the principles are derived from and relate to historical events and situations.

The second volume, subtitled "Comparative Ecclesiology," picks up the narrative with the sixteenth century with chapters on the ecclesiology of Luther, Calvin, the Church of England, the Anabaptists, Baptists, and Roman Catholicism. Haight treats the modern period through representative theologians, Schliermacher and Möhler, the twentieth century through a discussion of the ecumenical movement, Vatican II, liberation ecclesiology and basic ecclesial communities. The final chapter addresses Orthodox ecclesiology through the work of John Zizioulas, Pentecostal ecclesiology and the Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry.* Each chapter in the second volume concludes with the same section as in the previous volume on principles for a historical ecclesiology.

An apologetic for functionalism and pluralism appears to be a subtext of this work and appears throughout it. Even though he claims that such an ecclesiology is also theological and therefore cannot be reduced to conclusions that can be generated by history or sociology alone, his ecclesiology "from below" never quite correlates with doc-

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trinal claims, what he would call an ecclesiology "from above." His criteria for judging changing structures, values, and beliefs within ecclesiology are fidelity to the past, intelligibility and coherence today, empowerment into the future, and communion with the church as a whole (I, 55). This raises the question as to what past is fidelity owed, what constitutes the principle of intelligibility and coherence, and where the center of communion is to be located. This is particularly evident where he asserts that "existential community in Christ holds priority over doctrinal agreement" (II, 422). What is the basis of this community?

Haight writes:

> "Pluralism requires fairly nuanced concepts of faith and belief in which a common faith can brook real differences of expression or practice, and where distinctions are made between what is essential and what is not. But each community has its own thresholds of toleration and a center of gravity that will be offended by deviations from its particular norms for what is essentially Christian. . . . Yet each is able to find or grant that other churches participate in true Christian faith" (II, 423).

The ecumenical problem of the division of Christian churches is a witness to limitations of thresholds of toleration. However, not all have been able to assert that other churches participate in true Christian faith. Doctrine is inseparable from Christian community for the church is a post-paschal assembly gathered by faith in the risen Christ. Doctrines are expressions of that faith.

The problem is that pluralism radically relativizes not only doctrine, since it negates a meta-narrative, but also the possibility of any one tradition within the pluralism of Christian churches to claim identity with this narrative at the expense of any other church. Haight paints a striking portrait of diversity in the church over time. However, uniformity and hegemony are not the only alternatives to this diversity, but rather unity amidst diversity. Then the challenge is to identify the unifying center. Historical reconstruction alone cannot supply this.

I wonder whether a method of correlation is needed, rather than the exclusive approach "from below" that Haight adopts. Haight rightly speaks of the mediatory power of history to reveal God. Nevertheless, history itself does not exist apart from its interpretation, and an ecclesiology is a religious interpretation. Thus there is always a certain "aboveness" in giving an account of a historical reconstruction "from below."

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Finally, one thousand pages cannot represent adequately two thousand years of ecclesiology. Haight has necessarily relied on an enormous corpus of secondary literature and thus is only as reliable as his sources. Historians may quibble about some omissions and emphases. I will mention two. Haight cites *The Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus, to give some idea of the church in Rome from the second to the early fourth century. Paul Bradshaw in *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods* (Oxford, 2002) concludes that "This church order . . . deserves to be treated with greater circumspection than has generally been the case, and one ought not automatically to assume that it provides reliable information about the life and liturgical activity of the church in Rome in the early third century" (83). Second, the origins of Pentecostalism precede the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1905. In 1901 at Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas Agnes Ozman received what she called the baptism of the Spirit and spoke in "tongues." It was after that event that Charles Parham went to Los Angeles.

As Haight admits, there is no real conclusion to this lengthy study. This is disappointing, for after an extended exposition on method and attention to the major historical periods and theologians of the church through two volumes, I was hoping to find a principle of unity, some correlation with what had been dismissed earlier as an ecclesiology "from above." In not providing a substantive conclusion, Haight remains faithful to his method and his convictions. The reader is left with the particular and multiplicity. In such a method there can be no conclusion, not simply because the future presses in and yet precedes us, but because no generalizations and conclusion in the sense of "end or summary of a sustained argument" can be drawn.

Marquette University SUSAN K. WOOD

II

The Second Vatican Council described the church as a "complex reality comprising a human and a divine element" (LG 8). While Roger Haight does not quote this text in his book, I think one might describe his "ecclesiology from below" as one that attributes to the human element a more pervasive and decisive role in the construction of the church than has usually been the case in ecclesiology. Since the human element in the church is the proper object of such sciences as history and sociology, the method that Haight uses in his ecclesiology is dis-

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tinctively historical and sociological. But he is also aware that "an exclusively historical and sociological language will easily leave behind the effects of God's grace operative within the church. This dimension of the church requires the theological language that appeals to transcendence and faith" (46).

Having written a book with the title *From Apostles to Bishops*, I have been particularly interested to see how Haight has treated the development of ecclesial structures that took place in the course of the second and third centuries. From the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian, it is clear that during this period the church faced serious threats to its unity and the authenticity of its faith. Haight says: "The embryonic church of the first century developed clear and lasting institutional forms during those two centuries. To cast these against the problematic of internal unity and identity does not of course tell the whole story. But simply to enumerate some of the most important institutions against that background allows one to see their sociological function in close connection with the theological relationship the church bears to God" (176-77).

Among those institutions, Haight first names worship and cult, referring to Troeltsch as saying that the most basic element that holds the Christian community together is faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. This accords well with Haight's understanding of Jesus, but I miss what I believe is the more distinctive element of Christian cult, namely, worship of Jesus Christ. As J.N.D. Kelly says: "The vast majority of Christians in the early second century probably shared the faith and practice of the simple Bithynian believers who, as they confessed to Pliny, were in the habit of meeting together before dawn and singing a hymn 'to Christ as to God'." In second place, Haight names the bishop as "the single most important unifying institution in terms of organization" (177). Next, the canon of normative scripture, including especially the New Testament, "helped to hold the single communities together in worship where they were read and in doctrine as a source for teaching" (178). Another such norm was a rule of faith which would eventually become a common creed. Haight calls attention to the fact that these elements of church structure are apostolic and insure apostolicity. "Scripture, rule of faith, and ministries insure apostolicity; closeness to the original source is the final norm of truth" (179). In view of the crucial role which these institutions played in preserving and guaranteeing the apostolicity of the church's faith and practice, Haight recognizes the presence and guidance of the Spirit in the process of their development and reception by the early church. This raises the question of the normativity of the early church, and of the institutions

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that it developed during that formative period. Haight treats this question in the following way.

> The normativity of the past in any organization has to do with identity. A natural tendency aims at preserving the identity of a group as that was constituted in its origin or genesis. This natural tendency is enhanced in the religious organization that was formed around Jesus the Christ in whom was encountered a self-revelation of God and salvation. This was apparent in the deep logic of apostolicity that drove the community to fashion organizational mechanisms that would ensure the original identity of the group against alien and corrupting influences. The principal institution here was scripture itself, and even those Christian communities which have rejected some of the other institutions, such as episcopacy, still cling to scripture as a norm of authentic Christian revelation and practice (136).

This brings me to the question that I would put to Roger Haight. It has to do with the lasting normativity of the institutions that were developed by the early church to preserve and guarantee its apostolicity. The question is whether, in his view, there is any one of those normative institutions whose rejection would qualify as one of those "gravest reasons" that could justify separation between churches. (I refer here to his statement about "the deeper unity of the whole [church] that does not concede separation without the gravest reasons or, perhaps, ever" [139]). For instance, would the rejection of some major part of the canonical New Testament, such as the Gospel of John, qualify as such a reason?

I ask this question because, if I am not mistaken, Haight does not consider the rejection of the episcopacy by some Christian communities to be a "church-dividing" issue. Having summed up the argument that I put forth in *From Apostles to Bishops* in favor of the view that the episcopacy is an essential and divinely willed structure of the church, he said, "But it does not succeed in justifying it as a church-dividing structure. The theory does not establish that other developments or arrangements that might serve to guarantee apostolicity would not also be legitimate and divinely willed" (193, n.104).

The question, then, is whether the genuine apostolicity of ministry, especially the ministry of the Eucharist, can be guaranteed apart from apostolic succession in the episcopate. The answer that the Catholic and Orthodox churches have given to this question is that it cannot. And that, I believe, is why the episcopate is a church-dividing issue.

Boston College FRANCIS A. SULLIVAN, S.J.

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III

Roger Haight's two-volume *Christian Community in History* is an ambitious, multi-layered work that defies the common divisions in ecclesiological approaches. In integrating a history of the church with both theological and social scientific analyses, Haight adopts themes that James Gustafson explored decades ago in *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, but which have pretty much disappeared from ecclesiology ever since. Like Gustafson, Haight wants to avoid both theological and sociological reductionism. He insists that attention to historical contingency and sociological function is not incompatible with the conviction that the church continues to be guided and nourished by God, indeed that "the Spirit of God impels particular organizational structures as a way of ensuring the church's well-being" in a given time (I, 194).

"Finding the normative in the historical" (II, 1) is necessarily a tentative enterprise, and Haight is more tentative than some readers will want. But he does not dismiss this quest as impossible or fruitless, and so Haight's work is a welcome alternative to ecclesiologies that dissociate the church's concrete historicity from its theological normativity. Sometimes Haight parses his approach in terms of using two languages to talk about the church: historical language deals with the church in its concrete imperfections and theological language presents the church in its transcendent ideal. In this way, the historical imperfectly actualizes the theological ideal and the theological keeps calling for adjustments in the actual church (II, 2). Certainly a crucial function of theological language about the church is to present models that give Christian communities critical leverage on their shortcomings. But it seems to me that Haight's method requires deeper integration of the historical and theological than a two-languages approach suggests.

On the one hand, the church must reflect theologically on its historical imperfections. In Rowan Williams' words, "we have to theologize about the church's misconstruals, its premature totalizations, the victims of the historical church."[1] This means that Christian theology must include reflection on the sins of the church, as well as on its ideal form. Conversely, the church must let concrete historical realities, both positive and negative, shape its theological formulations. For example, one could argue that the presence of Protestant observers at Vatican II had a salutary effect on subsequent Catholic and Protestant ecclesiology. As I read him, Haight does indeed go beyond positing two parallel vocabularies for talking about the church: his project revolves around

[1]New Blackfriars vol. 73 (June 1992).

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the insistence that theology confront the church's concrete historical existence and that this historical existence suggest more adequate forms of theological formulation.

Haight acknowledges that while his project attempts to view the whole church, it necessarily does so from a particular vantage point within that church (I, 9). It is clear in many ways that his vantage point is Roman Catholic. This can be seen in the very organization of the volumes. No Protestant theologian would have devoted that much attention to the Gregorian reform. No Eastern Orthodox theologian would have made the sixteenth-century ruptures in the Western church so pivotal. That said, Haight manages to carry out his broad historical overview quite even-handedly and appreciatively. His harshest criticisms are reserved for developments within his own tradition.

A historicism and ecclesial absolutism are the chief problems according to Haight's narrative, and the embrace of pluralism and the ongoing inculturation of the church are proposed as remedies. As a Protestant, I see things a bit differently. There are millions of American Protestants who seem perfectly content to ignore the whole Christian tradition beyond the New Testament. The entrepreneurial, individualistic ethos of nondenominational American Protestantism seems to exhibit inculturation almost without remainder. Here the curious result of an inculturation that lacks a critical engagement with historical tradition is ahistoricism and absolutism in a new guise. Inculturation and ahistoricism are not necessarily incompatible.

Again, from my perspective as a Reformed Protestant, one of the most Catholic features of Haight's work is paradoxically its celebration of ecclesial pluralism. Haight describes the "different arrangements" in the Western church following the Reformation as "a multicolored tapestry of ecclesiologies, or a large river that has branched out . . . to carry the full flow of Christian life" (II, 6-7). Perhaps only a Catholic theologian could talk so confidently about "a nontoxic and positive" pluralism! Their own communion embraces great cultural pluralism. Moreover, Roman Catholics always approach the subject of Christian pluralism from a position of strength—theologically, institutionally, numerically. They are secure in their own ecclesial standing and are thus able to ask (since Vatican II, often in generous and hopeful ways), "Can there be church out there, beyond the boundaries of the Roman Catholic institution?"

For Protestants, ecclesial identity is always more tenuous. By comparison to the Catholic Church, Protestant churches are exponentially smaller and more fragile. Membership within my current denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), is roughly two-and-a-half million and shrinking. My family background is in a Reformed denomination

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about one-tenth that size. Dissent and division have honed the shape of Reformed communities throughout their history, and even today, whenever a serious dispute about theology or polity arises, institutional divorce is on the table as a possible outcome. The pluralism of repeated internal fractures and of institutional separation from the vast majority of the world's Christians hardly feels "nontoxic and positive."

Ironically, Reformed Christians have capitalized theologically on the historical fact of our institutional weakness. As Eberhard Busch has summed up this fundamental conviction of Reformed ecclesiology, "One does not need to belong to the Reformed faith in order to be a member of the church of Jesus Christ."[2] The Reformed embrace of pluralism also extends to its own forms of life. In some respects, the heuristic parallels Haight draws between Lutheran and Reformed ecclesiologies at the beginning of his second volume are misleading. Calvin does not occupy a comparable place to Luther in Reformed theology, nor does the sixteenth century have the same definitive importance for Reformed Christians as it does for Lutherans. Reformed polity has developed both connectional and congregationalist expressions. There is no authoritative list of authentic Reformed confessions; they have been written by many authors over the centuries and continue to be created at an impressive rate. In some ways, what Busch calls a "specific Reformed openness for relativizing one's own denomination"[3] is the epitome of where Haight's historically informed ecclesiology leads. But Haight misses the pathos of it: if we looked only to ourselves, Reformed Christians would have a hard time trusting God's promise of the indefectibility of the church.

In the middle of the second volume, Haight asks, but does not answer, a provocative question: "What difference do the externals of church service and polity make relative to the Christian life?" (II, 204). From one point of view, not very much. Significant doctrinal agreements have been reached across large differences in polity. Praying, reading Scripture, engaging in mission are perennial features of Christian life in all its manifestations. But in another way, these "externals" matter quite a bit. It seems to me impossible to be indifferent to the traditional Roman Catholic claim that the fullness of the church includes the structures of episcopacy and papacy. To be indifferent to it is to reject the claim. To accept the claim has huge implications for the shape of ecumenical relations. Unless it is radically revised, Roman

[2]Eberhard Busch, "Reformed Strength in Its Denominational Weakness," in Wallace Alston and Michael Welker, eds., Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 21.

[3]Busch, 21.

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Catholic polity cannot simply take its place among others in a multicolored ecumenical tapestry.

This puts ecumenically-minded Protestants like me in a dilemma. I come from a Christian tradition that had its birth in the perception of scandalous failings in the established church. I am therefore wary of ceding to one clerical office the authority not only to speak definitively for the whole church, but even to choose the issues on which to speak definitively. There are, of course, some Protestants who advocate the papacy on functional grounds as a symbol of unity for the whole church. While I sympathize with this Protestant hunger for ecclesial unity, I find myself scandalized by their willingness to give up anything and everything (women's ordination, for instance) in the interests of structural unity with Rome. This leaves me still searching for ecumenical practices that can nourish a strong sense of Christian identity and unity without stifling dissent.

"We don't know yet what we shall be," says I John. The history of the church that Haight has traced makes it clear that this is as true in our ecclesial as in our personal lives as Christians. I am grateful for the invitation he extends in this book to all Christians to reflect together on our common history. There is a sacramentality of the church that comes simply from this kind of hermeneutic of generosity toward other believers. Through a critical examination of the church's history, Haight prompts us to find new ways to live into our identity as a body with many members.

I conclude with a few questions for the author's reflection.

1. You trace a convergence of historical factors that made Rome the center of the Christian world. Given the shifting Christian "center of gravity" towards the global south, might it become appropriate for Roman Catholics to reconsider the location of its concrete manifestation of global church unity?
2. "From below" is a notoriously slippery theological concept. You describe your ecclesiology that way. But as a highly educated member of a religious order, you naturally turn your attention to papal pronouncements and reforms and the writings of established (male) theologians in developing your ecclesiology. Isn't this really a form of "ecclesiology from above"?
3. The rise of historical consciousness in the modern west is the starting point for your ecclesiological project. Does historical consciousness across cultures (II, 365) restrain western Christians from attempts to impose this cultural framework on Or-

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thodox Christians and the millions of non-European Christians throughout the world?

4. Women receive little explicit attention in your ecclesiology. Teresa Berger has accused the Ecumenical Movement of relegating women's status to the margins, as one of the "nontheological" factors in the fragmentation of the church. By contrast, she sees the marginalization of women as a more central threat to the life of the church than confessional differences. What is your view?

Louisville Presbyterian Seminary AMY PLANTINGA PAUW

IV

As one who knows from experience the amount of time and effort that are required to put together a two-volume work,[1] I am reluctant to add any negative comments to those already expressed in a few early reviews of *Christian Community in History*.[2] Moreover, Roger Haight is one who has already had more than his fair share of criticism from the Vatican.

I approached these two volumes with high hopes. I have been teaching ecclesiology at the graduate level for all of my academic life—some 40 years. We are still without a completely satisfying textbook for graduate courses on the church. One must put together materials from various monographs, or portions thereof, and an abundance of articles in professional and popular journals. Much of this material can be assembled in a photocopied course packet, commonly employed in various universities, colleges, and seminaries around the country, but packets cannot substitute for a single, coherent, systematic presentation that incorporates the main elements from such documents–and much more.

While I—and, one would expect, many others—applaud Roger Haight's emphasis on history and his positive embrace of pluralism and the global dimension of ecclesiology and of theology generally, I tend to agree with Luke Timothy Johnson that the project of deriving ecclesio-

[1]In my case, Catholicism, originally published by Winston Press, Minneapolis, in 1980, and since then available in a one-volume, completely revised and updated edition from HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.

[2]E.g., Luke Timothy Johnson, "Theology from Below?" Commonweal, 28 January 2005, pp. 34-36; Robert Imbelli, "Preserving the Church's Identity" America, 7 February 2005; and Christopher Ruddy, "The Boundaries, Please," America 1 August 2005.

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logical principles from the actual historical realizations of the church (if that is, in fact, a fair characterization of the project) is too ambitious and indeed "potentially endless."

I frequently point out to my own students that we are all heretics in the literal sense of the word. We all have selective perception. We perceive only a part of the truth. One becomes a formal heretic, in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, when one confuses a portion of the truth with the whole truth. In my rendition, God is the only nonheretic. God alone sees all that is, all at once, accurately and comprehensively. Because the rest of us have only partial vision—some wider than others, to be sure—we need to remain modest in our claims and constantly engaged in dialogue with other "heretics" in order to pool our "heresies" and to refine and correct them in mutually respectful conversation and argument.

To be sure, I fully endorse Haight's openness to other ecclesiological traditions and to the many lessons of history. However, to present the history of anything, including the church and theological reflections on it, is inevitably to present a partial history. I wonder, therefore, if a somewhat more tentative, self-critical approach to the "from below" method employed in this substantial work might have been in order. One can critically examine as many different views of the Church as may be deemed practical, but they do not all enjoy a virtually equal claim to validity. No amount of honest, self-searching criticism can obscure the fact that there are major substantive differences between mainline Catholic ecclesiology, as enriched by Vatican II and recent biblical scholarship and as practiced by such theologians as the late Yves Congar, and other Christian approaches, past and present. Students of theology and readers generally need to identify and reflect upon criteria for discerning among these various ecclesiological traditions. At some point, one is compelled to say that one or another ecclesiology seems to offer a more biblically, historically, and theologically reliable account of the mystery of the church than others, without claiming that any view—including those within the Catholic tradition—possesses the whole truth, "without spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:27).

In one of the other critical reviews cited above, Christopher Ruddy, a former student of mine at Notre Dame, suggests that the work's methodological "clarity and consistency" and its insistence that "theology must always be yoked to history . . . make for a good textbook or reference work for graduate and advanced undergraduate classes." A reference work, yes, and an exceedingly valuable one at that. A textbook, no. *Christian Community in History* is, in my admittedly fallible opinion, not only a bit too long and too diffuse, but also too diffident in

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its systematic orientation, syntheses, and conclusions. In its commendable effort to represent other views fairly and sympathetically, it fails to develop a clear theological focus grounded in an existing ecclesial tradition. I may be one of those Haight acknowledges at the beginning of the second volume who feel that Catholicism (I reject his term, "Roman Church") is "not sufficiently represented."

Which is perhaps why I was surprised by how little the work of Yves Congar—in my judgment, the greatest ecclesiologist in all of church history—plays in these two volumes. I noted only a few scattered references to Congar's writings in each of the volumes. To be sure, Congar himself was dependent in large (but hardly total) measure on Johann Adam Möhler, and there are several extensive references to Möhler's work in the second volume. But that still does not explain the relatively limited impact of Congar on this work. Similarly, there are only two or three references to a single article by Haight's fellow Jesuit, Avery Dulles, who, by any reasonable account, has been the foremost ecclesiologist in the United States, at least until recent years when he seemed to turn his attention almost exclusively to an examination and defense of the writings and pronouncements of Pope John Paul II.

In my judgment, the construction of a Catholic ecclesiology that is at once institutionally self-critical, ecumenical, sensitive to other faith-traditions, pluralistic, globally conscious, and respectful of history is possible, even if within definite limits. No one, not even Congar, could produce an ecclesiology to end all ecclesiologies. That is an ongoing task in which all "heretics," Catholic and otherwise, must be engaged.

I salute Haight for the extraordinary accomplishment represented by this two-volume work, and leave him with two clusters of questions, at the suggestion of the editors, to help carry the discussion forward. (1) Granted that you apparently did not set out to write a textbook or one adaptable as such, what, if anything, have those who are actually engaged in the teaching of ecclesiology at the graduate level said to you personally or via a formal review about the potential value of this work as a textbook as opposed to a reference work? To the extent that any of them have been guarded in their evaluation, as I have been, what aspects or lacunae have others tended to stress, and what has been your own reaction to their observations? (2) Do you think it possible to construct an ecclesiology without a specific ecclesial focus, be it Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Pentecostalist, or whatever? Where specifically do you think Catholicism fits in your own overall approach to the mystery and mission of the church?

University of Notre Dame RICHARD P. MC BRIEN

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AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

I am grateful to *Horizons* for sponsoring this symposium on my recent two volume work on the history of ecclesiology. My thanks go to Susan Wood, Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., Amy Plantinga Pauw, and Richard McBrien for participating in it. It is, in fact, a privilege to have such an exchange about one's work, to learn how it is being received from the different perspectives of these ecclesiologists, and to have a chance to enter into conversation with them about the subject matter.

After considering a variety of ways of designing a compact response that engaged the many questions that are raised in the four preceding essays, I have chosen the following format. I will begin with a short analytical narrative of how this work came to be written because that will help clarify the perspective I bring to the interchange. In that light, second, I will take up some of the bigger issues that are raised in the reviews: one is the question of a method from above and below; another has to do with what may be called essential elements in the church, that without which there would be no authentic church; and still another has to do with unity and diversity, i.e., pluralism. Finally, in a third section I will take up some of the other questions that are raised by my conversation partners.

The Genesis of This Work

I began teaching doctrinal or systematic ecclesiology relatively early in my academic career; I focused on the Roman Catholic Church but gave space to ecumenical questions. But it became evident to me rather quickly that one could not really understand the Catholic Church or any church without tracing its origins and history. I take this to be an intrinsic corollary to historical consciousness: all particular phenomena in history, especially social organizations, are what they are because of their origins and the history that took them to a given point. I therefore began to complement my course in systematic ecclesiology with another course in historical ecclesiology, that is, the history of ecclesiology. A systematic ecclesiology that is not attentive to the history of ecclesiology, I felt, will in the same measure be defective. After writing *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), I wanted to write a parallel constructive or systematic theology of the church, but I could not do so without working through the history of ecclesiology.

Christian Community in History is a work in the history of ecclesiology, that is, not the history of the church, but of understandings of the church. Its main immediate goal is to represent as accurately as

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possible significant manifestations of the many and various ecclesiologies that have emerged in the course of the church's history. Its deeper purpose is to exemplify historicity and thus engage historical consciousness. Susan Wood gets at this nicely when she writes: "Haight paints a striking portrait of diversity in the church over time."

But how is it possible to write a one-volume history of ecclesiology that does not simply glide over two millennia with generalizations? One way is to choose influential authors and representative texts and privilege these as foci of analysis. I tried to select authors on the basis of a variety of criteria, such as intrinsic authority and de facto influence. In the construction of the work, analysis of these texts preceded recourse to secondary sources. Beginning with the early modern period, comprehensiveness became a factor. Thus, for example, of many representative Lutheran ecclesiologies over the last five hundred years, Martin Luther stands out. In the twentieth century, Vatican II, due to its comprehensiveness and authority, trumps Yves Congar. This is admittedly not the only nor the best way to chart the history of ecclesiology, but it enabled a compact way of doing it while preserving some measure of analytical detail. It also sets up a subtle dialectic that promotes reflection: on the one hand, these synthetic representations aim at being historically accurate as particular ecclesiologies; on the other hand, they function as types (while not being types) that enable comparison. Historicity and comparison drive the work: an interactive and comparative back-and-forth between the past and each new present, between the whole and the particular or the part.

In the final stages of preparing this work for publication, and with the help of some readers, it became apparent that it was too long for one volume, that a natural break occurs in the sixteenth century, in the West but ultimately affecting the whole church, and that the discipline of ecclesiology itself, if one wanted to use the term loosely to mean "reflection on the church," was undergoing a significant transition since the late Medieval period. Thus the work was divided into two volumes. The shift of subtitles signaled that authors were beginning to write formal and more or less comprehensive treatises on the church, so that the history of ecclesiology became less constructive and more synthetic of the way representative authors were defining the church. I call this comparative ecclesiology because it more obviously emphasizes a consistent framework for understanding a given ecclesiology according to elements found in any organization and thus enables and even forces the responding reader to make interpretive comparisons along the route of the historical narrative. Wood has also astutely observed that, although this work is historical, it constructively transcends reporting by finding more universal principles within the par-

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ticular historical narratives that are useful for the construction of a systematic ecclesiology. "The 'principles' section of each chapter is where the work moves from church history to ecclesiology."

In the end, however, *Christian Community in History* is a history of ecclesiology and, as such, propaedeutic to a constructive or systematic ecclesiology. As I wrote, this whole two-volume work is itself the first part of "a two-part ecclesiology from below which I hope will be followed by a more systematic and constructive essay" (CCH, I: 13). That systematic ecclesiology is "under construction" at the present time and is not immediately available. As Wood again observes, "uniformity and hegemony are not the only alternatives to this diversity [displayed by history], but rather unity amidst diversity. Then the challenge is to identify the unifying center. Historical reconstruction alone cannot supply this." Therefore the goal I have set for what I have tentatively entitled *Ecclesial Existence* is to consider norms and mediate differences in the construction of a common ecclesiology modeled by the World Council of Church's *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*.[1] My hope is that this will provide a "fitting conclusion" to *Christian Community in History* by being "a more fully developed constructive ecclesiology that appeals to the threads of the tradition of the church which are held in common, is schooled in the principles and axioms of historical and comparative ecclesiology, and is built on the common faith in Jesus the Christ and God as Spirit" (CCH, II: 498).

This serves to situate CCH as a work and to explain very fundamentally its logic or place in a broader project. This also responds to some of the observations and questions from the reviewers where I sensed that more was expected from this work than it could deliver because of its specific and limited character. But I am grateful for the observations that the representation of the ecclesiologies along the way was more rather than less accurate, for that, after all, is the specific intent of the work. Of course, one can hardly deny a certain authorial perspective and an occasional phrase that misleads.

Some Central and Clarifying Issues

I now move to those questions whose discussion goes to the heart of ecclesiology. I hope that the dialogue here can transcend responding to questions and help illumine the subject matter of the discipline itself.

Ecclesiology from Below. In the course of working on CCH, I was warned by colleagues that the phrase "ecclesiology from below" would

[1]Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). Referred to as BEM.

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be problematic for various people; others suggested that it does define the approach and, if it is explained, should be used. The phrase has come up in our discussion, once with the proposal that it needs to be complemented with a logic "from above," and a second time with the suggestion that I really operate on the basis of principles dictated by authority, that is, from above. I am very grateful to Amy Pauw for this last observation; it tempers the opinions of several critics. Comments such as these are what make conversation so interesting. In the first case, I think I have gone some distance in clarifying that "history from above" is too paradoxical a concept to be helpful, and that the mediation of doctrinal claims in the church today is the work of another project that has not yet been completed. In the second case, I agree that we all have our authorities and that one cannot really imagine Christian theology without the dimension of revelation from above. So what are we talking about here with a method "from below?" I think I can clarify this in four points.

First, I operate with a distinction between revelation, its expression in scripture and doctrine, and theology. This is a fairly elementary distinction for the theologian, but a good deal of language about "above" and "below" seems to ignore this distinction. I am not referring to present discussants, but in the interests of clarifying the issues one must be clear that revelation occurs in human subjectivity and becomes conscious in a reflecting and responding faith and an affirming belief; it is not the simple equivalent of the marks on a page or the literal meaning of propositions. The task of the theologian is to interpret the past witness of the church to revelation so that it is relevant to the present situation and its truth appears credible.

Second, in the performance of this task, since all thinkers and writers stand somewhere, so too do all theologians. Pauw has accurately and significantly underlined that I stand in the Roman Catholic Church. But human transcendence is such that it can go beyond the self in some measure, and can actually communicate with the other as other, even though it can never escape its defining, ontic location. I have argued that when theologians take up the academic study of the church, they should try to appreciate the broader horizon of their location in the whole church in order to overcome a narrow Christian tribalism. Such I take is the imperative of the gospel, not to mention the logic of monotheism.

Third, standing in the church, in my church and in the larger or great church, I have presented to me and we have presented to us a whole series of doctrines and institutions that are considered normative; the task of the ecclesiologist is to interpret them. Surely these doctrines and institutions have been inspired by revelation, but it does

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not take too much study of history to realize that they were not dictated in their present form by God, but are the work of human freedom in response to or under the influence of revelation. The interpretive reflection by the theologian from within the church should be inspired by the same God, the same revealing Jesus Christ and the same illuminating Spirit as was behind the genesis of these doctrines and institutions when they took shape in human freedom.

Fourth, the term "from below" refers to the point of departure for that reflection. It highlights at once that theology is human reflection and an academic discipline, that it unfolds in a place and is done by a someone in dialogue and conversation with others, in order to provide a relevant interpretation of the institutions and doctrines that are the historical effects of the self-revealing God in this Christian community. The key word in "from below" is "from." The object of interpretation is the result of revelation, but the interpretation of it consists in human reflection, however animated and inspired it may be in its background faith. The generative first act of this reflection is a question from below: what do the symbols of faith and revelation mean?

These are, in sum, a few of the principles at work in my appeal to a method in the discipline of ecclesiology that begins "from below."

Essential Elements in the Church. The question raised by Francis Sullivan is a major one for an ecclesiology that tries to reach out and encompass the whole church. Are there church-dividing structures, that is, structures or institutions that are essential to a fully authentic church, so that the lack of these is a warrant for division between churches? Sulllivan poses the question sharply by the example of episcopal polity and eucharistic ministry as a function of it. Is episcopacy "a church-dividing issue?" Is it the case that genuine eucharistic ministry cannot "be guaranteed apart from apostolic succession in the episcopate?" It is interesting to note that Pauw raises the same question and gives an analogous response but from the opposite perspective. Sullivan says episcopacy is essential to a fully authentic church and divides the Orthodox and the Roman [and the Anglican?] churches from the others; Pauw also says that papacy and episcopacy are divisive and in their present form she does not want to have anything to do with them.

This issue is quite important: related to the institution of episcopacy in Catholic theology are priesthood, and ordination, and eucharistic ministry, and sacramental theology, all church-dividing issues in the past. A discussion of episcopacy, therefore, should help illumine how a historically conscious ecclesiology might proceed in addressing it. Currently episcopacy continues to be a church-dividing issue, but the theological question is whether it should be so in the future, or whether this division can be transcended. Without clearly responding

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with a Yes or No to the theological question, I will suggest how a historical ecclesiology cum a historically conscious, constructive, and transdenominational approach to the question does not allow a simple Yes or No to the question, but opens it up for ecumenical discussion. I can do this schematically by a series of short propositions, each of which I take to be fairly self-evident, but which cumulatively point in the direction that this is an open question.

a. The Spirit was at work in the origins of the church urging the formation of structures that would maintain in history the well-being of the church. Monarchical episcopacy is one of these institutions as Sullivan has shown in *From Apostles to Bishops*.
b. Episcopacy developed historically, and this means that it was a function of human freedom, but not without the impulse of God as Spirit.
c. There are other institutions besides monarchical episcopacy that preserve apostolicity (continuity with Christian origins). Of them all, scripture is the most central and important by common Christian consensus.
d. On the one hand, what is impelled by the Spirit at any given time may or may not be an essential element of the church; moreover it may be an "essential" element for a time, so that at another time the Spirit may urge a reformation or a deliberate neglect or a dismantling of a given institution or structure. On the other hand, institutions that historically develop in the church may become essential *historically*, that is, they can become so ancient, ingrained, and revered that they make themselves indispensable in the historical life of the whole church or a given part of it.
e. Neither episcopacy nor succession in episcopacy can guarantee the church's apostolicity. History gives witness to instances where bishops have acted contrary to gospel and apostolic values and led the church astray. Yet episcopacy has also preserved apostolic values and ministry in a remarkable way across two millennia.
f. The office and job description of bishops have and therefore can change rather dramatically in different times and places; the episcopacy is a possible subject of reform.
g. Other persons who hold offices in various churches, and thus within the boundaries of the whole church, perform the same functions as do bishops. In some churches this office is shared

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by a group of ministers. In other words, there are few if any churches without some office of oversight and administration.

h. The history of the church in the modern period, especially in the ecumenical movement, has demonstrated that the unity in and of the church is an analogous concept. As the church becomes more historically conscious, it becomes proportionately dissatisfied with the binary of institutional uniformity or division as describing the only alternatives for the historical actualization of this mark of the church. There are many grades or degrees of both division and unity that shade into each other to form a wide spectrum of relationships. The recent success of the term *koinonia* or communion in ecclesiology reflects the new cultural matrix. It suggests a wide variety of possible formulas for communion that allow for and transcend differences in almost every phase of Christian and ecclesial life.

i. Finally, to bring the Reformed tradition which Pauw reflects into the conversation, the document on episcopacy of the "Le Groupe des Dombes,"[2] representing a Catholic and Reformed conversation, is a striking example of mutual understanding between episcopal and non-episcopal traditions that focuses on the dynamics of ecclesial life and community and their need for oversight. Existentially, it is the *function* of *episkope* that actually preserves apostolicity.

In sum, a constructive ecclesiology written within the horizon of the whole church on the basis of principles generated by a historical ecclesiology would not accept on the basis of the insistence of some churches that episcopacy is essential for all churches. This line of argument by no means disallows it; indeed, a common comparative ecclesiology may even recommend episcopacy as a universally relevant structure, as does *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, for example (BEM, "Ministry," 25). But it does not suggest a simple Yes or No response to the question of whether it should be church-dividing.

Unity and Diversity. The theme of unity and diversity is present in three of the reviews of CCH. Wood raises the issue of relativism where there does not seem to be criteria for overcoming "pluralism" and diversity; Sullivan raises the issue with respect to whether different organizations of church ministry need divide the church; Pauw worries that while attention to pluralism and inculturation may respond to absolutism in the church, they are not enough to guard the church from collapse into culture. These are all substantive observations and issues.

[2]"The Episcopal Ministry," One in Christ 14 (1978): 267-88.

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I cannot provide an answer to these issues that matches their weight, but can only indicate how I am and will be sensitive to them in the systematic sequel to CCH, I-II. Relative to overcoming "pluralism" and diversity: I use the word "pluralism" to mean unity in diversity or differences within a shared field of meaning or behavior. The church has been, is, and will always be pluralistic. It was not the task of this work to characterize the normative unity across differences, but one can hardly miss a sense of it today in a context where the background of the pluralism of religions highlights the consistency of the Christian movement. In *Ecclesial Existence* I hope to construct an interpretation of that which Christian churches share in common on the basis of the norms of scripture, tradition, and vital church life in the present. This common ecclesial existence and self-understanding, however, will allow for, or rather demand, different traditions within itself.

Relative to unity and diversity in the ecclesial organization of ministry and polity, it is self-evident that diversity of organization and church law prohibits unity in the sense of a uniform church government. But the Christian ecclesial mind can think of all sorts of other bonds of communion between different churches that unite them, beginning with the recognition of one faith, one Lord, one baptism, and one Spirit. It could progress from there to a simple act of corporate will on the part of one church that recognizes the fundamental legitimacy of another church's ministry. "Communion" is the richest of categories precisely because of its vagueness and openness to so many different historical arrangements.

Relative to the possibility of a collapse into culture that is threatened by the otherwise positive missionary concept of inculturation, I believe that churches have to take that risk. The church has to be inculturated. Not to be inculturated in the home culture is to be inculturated in another. But, in saying that, I mean that it should be *the Christian church* that becomes inculturated. Authentic identity must be protected. Inculturation points to the relevance of the church to a particular culture and society. To be counter-cultural in the name of gospel values implies engaging culture and society with the aim of becoming integrated into their substance. I believe that what is called for is not a withdrawal from culture, but a reform of the church so that it addresses culture with Christian faith and value. There is no church anywhere that does not need such a reform.

Pauw also questions a seemingly facile celebration of pluralism as "nontoxic and positive." Many churches which are more open to pluralism than the present authoritarian Catholic Church experience that differences are not so easy to cope with: encouraging pluralism opens the way to internal divisions, fragmentation, and in some cases divi-

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sion. My response is surely not to deny this. But many churches are leading the way for others in finding formulas for dealing with pluralism within churches and communions; it is not contradictory to affirm differences as both a blessing and a task. What I want to insist on, however, is that short of global totalitarian rule by repression, pluralism is the natural historical human condition. In itself it is not a negative, but the condition in which we live as historical beings. We must therefore find ways in which it works to enrich our lives in freedom, interchange, conversation, and mediation and not yield to mere external control.

Other Questions

Here, by way of conclusion, I take up the series of explicit questions placed by Amy Pauw and Richard McBrien at the end of their interventions. To the straightforward question of whether the Roman Church should reconsider its center in Rome, after the Avignon Papacy I hope the center remains in Rome. It is one of those institutions that has made itself historically necessary. But this should not prevent other churches from having their own centers. And it would be good to have ecumenical councils outside of Rome.

Second, Pauw asks the question, not unrelated to inculturation, whether the historical consciousness so typical of late modern and postmodern culture in the West, and thus increasingly a factor in western theology, might be imposed on other cultures? This is like a trick question: all answers have serious problems. I regard historical consciousness as a freeing development in the history of the human spirit; it is a cultural breakthrough. But I do not like the idea of imposing anything of a religious nature, not even what one takes to be truth, on the freedom of other human beings. Such imposition negates the very qualities of truth. But in a missionary context, where mission extends in all directions of truth sharing, historical consciousness helps release human consciousness from bondage to one cultural framework to a recognition of other expressions of truth and value. New local churches insisting on inculturation are implicitly historically conscious.

Third, Pauw says that "Women receive little explicit attention in your ecclesiology." I think that is not true. I was conscious of the role of women in the church throughout the work, but I also had to focus on the structures of the ecclesiologies, and the synthetic, analytical approach focused attention on places where major changes in ecclesiological structure occurred. It is true that I did not chronicle the marginalization of women across history, something that today is painfully self-evident, but attended to places where women exercised leadership

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or played public roles in the church. In a constructive systematic account of what the church should be, the adjustment to women playing a role in the church equal to that of men will contribute to major changes in churches, and in ecclesiology, as compared to the past. In other words, the changes in the church will go further than simply allowing a new set of people to hold the old offices and ministries. But how and in what degree this will occur is only now beginning to take shape.

McBrien poses two sets of questions at the end of his commentary. The first regards the possible reception and use of this two-volume work. I do in fact see this book as useful in teaching the history of ecclesiology. I recommend, however, that it be used along with a series of texts. A collection of ecclesial documents and texts of the selected authors would be complemented by this extensive analysis and commentary. The goals of such a course would not simply be to collect information, but to induce a critical historical consciousness relative to the formation and development of the church. It would also help prepare the way for a critical as distinct from, at the extreme, a more sectarian and doctrinaire ecclesiology. This is not meant as a criticism of anyone, but who can deny that many of the mainline churches today are moving in this direction? This critical-mindedness is of course demanded of graduate students, but I have found M.Div. students very appreciative of this approach.

Along with this first question McBrien asks about reactions thus far to *Christian Community in History* and my reactions in turn to them. The work has not received sufficient critical assessment to generalize, and this is one of the reasons I am grateful for this interchange. Pauw commented that this is a "multi-layered work that defies the common divisions in ecclesiological approaches." She is right: there is in fact a lot going on in this work that one page summaries inevitably miss. I believe that most of the reviews to date have measured the work against a model, or genre, or set of expectations that do not correspond to the intentions of the author or the implied dynamic of the work. This is not meant to be a Catholic ecclesiology or even a Catholic history of ecclesiology (CCH, I: 9). The term "church" in its first and most general sense refers to the whole Christian movement. This is not a systematic ecclesiology, but relative to a systematics, a first propaedeutic stage in the construction of a contemporary ecclesiology; not a definitive ecclesiology, but *a* constructive interpretation of the church at the beginning of the third millennium.

In a second set of questions, McBrien asks, first, whether I think it possible to construct an ecclesiology without a denominational focus. I do. I propose two examples of schematic outlines for such an eccle-

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siology in two documents of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The first is the well known BEM cited earlier, which has had enough traction in the church at large to stimulate five volumes of responses from the churches. The second is the text they have been developing over the past years, the last published draft of which is entitled *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*," Faith and Order Paper 181 (November, 1998). It is absolutely important, however, to recognize what such an ecclesiology is and is not. For example, it precisely is not a denominational ecclesiology. To measure it against a denominational ecclesiology would be a simple mistake. Its logical status is not the same as denominational ecclesiology, but aims asymptotically at an impossible ideal of characterizing elements of an ecclesiology that all churches share. It therefore cannot function as the ecclesiology of a particular church. But it can function as a bridge for various forms and levels of communication and even communion. My defense of such an ecclesiology as a common task appears in this issue of *Horizons.*

Finally, McBrien asks specifically where "Catholicism fits in [my] own overall approach to the mystery and mission of the church." I am not sure I can improve on his own words in this regard. We are, he writes, all of us, heretics in our ecclesiologies. Because we "have only partial vision–some wider than others, to be sure–we need to remain modest in our claims and constantly engaged in dialogue with other 'heretics' in order to pool our 'heresies' and to refine and correct them in mutually respectful conversation and argument."

To conclude, I realize that I have only scratched the surface of the questions posed. Nonetheless, I hope that this whole discussion sheds some light on the discipline of ecclesiology. I am grateful to my interlocutors.

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