II. Notes on Paul Lakeland's Contributions to Ecclesiology

It is not easy to sum up in a few minutes the considerable contribution given by Paul Lakeland to ecclesiology, and to do it together with two heroes of contemporary Catholic theology, Elizabeth Johnson and Roger Haight. I am very grateful for this opportunity because it comes at a momentous time for the Catholic Church and ecclesiology during the "synodal process." In these brief remarks, I will try to address three ecclesiological themes in Paul Lakeland's work: "communio" ecclesiology, the critique of "radical orthodoxy," and the legacy of Vatican II.

Engaging with Communio Ecclesiology

Lakeland offered an assessment of communio ecclesiology when that model was still *the* model in vogue in the institutional church, at least since the mid-1980s.[10] Since the election of Pope Francis, in 2013, this ecclesiological model has been juxtaposed with other models. But already in his 2003 book *The Liberation of the Laity*, Lakeland offered a nuanced critique of communio ecclesiology: "If what we mean by 'communion' is an inward-looking, self-congratulatory, and fearful huddling together against the forces of modernity—the 'communion' of the nineteenth-century church—then 'mission' will mean little more than the periodic excoriation of the 'outside' world. But if 'communion' means a generous and loving association of free and faithful children of God, then the dynamic excess of love, without which it is not love at all, spills over into a mission to the whole human race, one marked by a generous sharing of the knowledge that God wills to save the world."[11]

This nuanced critique of communio ecclesiology is indicative of important motifs of Lakeland's thought. In an essay published in 2015, Lakeland analyzed three models of apostolicity: 1) "build it and they will come"—wholly centripetal, "apostolicity of maintenance"; 2) "the church of the new evangelization"; 3) "apostolicity of kenosis." Clearly, his preference is for the third one, a kenotic ecclesiology: "While there is some value to the first [maintenance] and second [new evangelization] of these three types, it is in the third, kenotic form of apostolicity that a vigorous postmodern ecclesiological posture can be discerned. This may be the only one of the three that demonstrates realistic

[10] See *The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986); Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Chestnut Ridge, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1989); Dennis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

[11] Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), 225–26.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

hope rather than muted despair and, perhaps, the only one that follows the christic paradigm of death to self for the sake of new life."[12]

In his 2013 book on *Lumen Gentium*, Lakeland inserted his preference for kenotic ecclesiology in his treatment and yearning for an "ecclesiology of humility": "The fundamental theological issue in fostering the grace of self-doubt, even among the official teachers in the church, is the recognition that the grace of God is spread throughout the world, that it is not coextensive with the church, and, indeed, that there is worldly grace that the Church does not control or even know. When grace is seen as the work of the Spirit and not as the preserve of the Church, there is absolutely no option but that of humility, both before the world and in face of the worldly experience of the Catholic laity."[13]

Lakeland's fundamental ecclesiological option could be summed up in the title of a section in that book: "Kenosis *in* the Church, kenosis *of* the Church": "It places the church in the role of the Samaritan and not like the scribe and Levite passing on the other side [but] . . . We are both the Good Samaritan and the victim in need of help. We proclaim and embody the grace of God as we also stand in need of that same grace. The parable tells us to look for that grace in some unexpected quarters, to learn from the love of God that suffuses the world, even the world that does not value the Church."[14]

What was Paul's appreciation of "the most positive aspect of the language of 'the new evangelization' that is current in today's Catholic Church"[15]—the recentering of the parable of the Good Samaritan as an image of self-giving love—has become now, in Francis's pontificate, an important exegesis of that key theological image of the Good Samaritan in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, as well as a meditation on how proclamation and humility can go hand in hand.

Engaging "Radical Orthodoxy"

A second theme that is indicative of Paul Lakeland's ecclesiology is his critique of "radical orthodoxy," an alternative theological reading of the history and status of modernity/postmodernity, but also a theological reconstruction

[12] Paul Lakeland, "Ecclesiology and the Use of Demography: Three Models of Apostolicity," in *A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz and Edward P. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 23–42, at 25.

[13] Paul Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End:. Lumen Gentium and the Church Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 109.

[14] Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End*, 146–47.

[15] Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End*, 146–47.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the contemporary that took its name from the title of a collection of essays published by Routledge in 1999.[16]

The seventh chapter of *The Liberation of the Laity*, titled "Mission in the (Post) Modern World," employed an epigraph from Joseph Komonchak[17] and paid homage to Komonchak's attempts to go beyond the left- and right-wing stereotypes. Lakeland drew from Charles Taylor for his reading of modernity and secularity, and engaged in a deep critique of the ecclesiological assumption of "radical orthodoxy," referring to the British scholars John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, and Stanley Hauerwas in the United States.

In a nuanced assessment of Daniel Bell's book *Liberation Theology after the End of History*,[18] Lakeland wrote: "We require a more nuanced approach to the complex legacy of modernity, which allows us not simply to jettison the Enlightenment. And we need to step back from the potentially totalitarian implications of radical orthodoxy's claim that it is Christian society that holds the key to history. Then and only then will any alternative we propose to the vision of global capitalism be open to reception in a pluralistic world. Radical orthodoxy needs to be corrected by the work of those who do not share its unqualified suspicion of the Enlightenment."[19]

It was not an all-out, uncompromising critique. Lakeland invited here "radical orthodox" theologians to a rereading of *Gaudium et Spes*, together with an acknowledgment of the contribution of some "radical orthodox" arguments for the church's mission in the struggle against the dehumanizing program of global capitalism. On the other hand, Lakeland identified a certain essentialism when "radical orthodoxy" talks about the church: "The mission of the church in the world is primarily conducted through countless millions of individual decisions made by laypeople, independently of ecclesiastical authority."[20]

This critique of "radical orthodoxy" and its reading of modernity and postmodernity gives us more than a glimpse into the ecclesiological thought of Lakeland. In the 2009 book *Church: Living Communion*, Lakeland advocated

[16] John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[17] Joseph A. Komonchak: "What the Church becomes in any age is never determined solely by the principles that constitute its distinctive life, but always by an interpretation and realization of them which actively engaged the challenges of the larger society and culture," in Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 220.

[18] See Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[19] Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 234.

[20] Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity,* 246.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for "an inductive ecclesiology," an "empirical ecclesiology," taking from Bernard Lonergan's turn from a "classicist world-view to historical mindedness," as well as from Gerard Mannion's 2007 book on postmodern ecclesiology. Here ecclesiology intersects with the idea of "doctrinal pluralism," drawing from Lonergan's 1971 Marquette Lecture—not just a development of doctrine, but a new kind of development.[21]

The Legacy of Vatican II

In *The Liberation of the Laity*, Lakeland recognized clearly the limits of the legacy of the Second Vatican Council: "Beyond the story of the mixed fortunes of Vatican II, there is a pressing need to address issues that were largely untouched by the council fathers . . . so let us suppose for a moment that Vatican III is about to open and that we are responsible for setting its agenda[,] what would we want to see the council addressing?"[22] The lengthy list proposed by Paul included the nature of ministry, the democratization of church procedures, church and capitalism, and the role of the laity among others.

A few years later, in 2007, Lakeland proposed, in *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, "ten steps towards a more adult church." These included: "the whole church needs to make an option for the poor and marginalized"; equality in lay clerical relationship; better education in the history of the Catholic tradition for both laity and clergy; "seminary and ministerial training should be for ministry in real life"; "genuine parish and diocesan pastoral and financial councils that have deliberative as well as consultative roles"; "real and significant lay participation in the process by which pastors and bishops are selected"; "renewed attention to the sacrament of baptism"; "centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic tradition for the life and structure of the church"; recognition of the "resource for education and renewal represented by our Catholic colleges and universities, and the colleges and universities need to recognize their responsibilities for helping the church to think"; "women achieve their rightful positions as fully equally partners with men."[23] Chapter 10 of the same book was titled "Catholics and American Culture," and its first section was concerned with "overcoming dualism."[24]

Once again, we see in Lakeland's proposal a foreshadowing of Francis's pontificate. In *Church: Living Communion*, Lakeland named the problem of

[21] Paul Lakeland, *Church: Living Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009) 124–25.

[22] Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 265.

[23] See Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2007), 104–23.

[24] Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 148.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"elite theologizing" and the need to look at the real church, together with the need to reread *Gaudium et Spes* for a more inductive ecclesiology.[25] In the final chapter on inductive ecclesiology, Lakeland invited us to a practice of intelligence and discernment.[26] Further, he proposes the use of new models for the church such as "the Church as hospice, as pilgrim, as immigrant, as pioneer."[27] This language belongs to not just the letter, but also the spirit of Vatican II in papal teaching. Strikingly, many invitations that Lakeland offered almost fifteen years ago have now become customary papal language.

In terms of assessing Vatican II, Lakeland, in 2013, identified the major obstacle in the reception of Vatican II not simplistically with clerical or institutional resistance and conservatism, but with a lack of historical consciousness:

> When we look for a reason why the Church's future seems not so settled as it once did, and when we recognize how much of the message of Vatican II has still not come to fruition, the answer is not hard to find. It lies in the persistent subcurrent of conciliar teaching and the way in which institutional Catholicism, for complicated reasons, has latched onto that to the detriment of *aggiornamento* in face of all that has happened in the Church and the world in the half century since the Council. The subcurrent is not simply the well-attested recalcitrance of the Roman Curia and its efforts to subvert the work of the council. Rather, it is the traces of a theological outlook that the text incorporates but is simply out of tune with the overall theological perspective of the council . . . The central problem, rather, is that of history. There are places in the documents in general, and in *Lumen Gentium* in particular, where texts that ignored the element of historicity in tradition occur alongside those that recognize the doctrinal importance of historical method. Here perhaps is where the business of *Lumen Gentium* is most "unfinished." In the conflicts within the text we can see unresolved tensions within the Council itself.[28]

In later works, such as an essay published in 2022 in a volume on receptive ecumenism, Lakeland returned to the "inductive turn" in Lonergan: "Following Lonergan and modifying him somewhat, I see the church as a collective incarnate subject growing and changing through history in a constant process of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. The generator of ecclesiological insight is the Spirit-filled work of the community of faith as it seeks to fulfil its mission in a constantly changing world."[29]

[25] Lakeland, *Church*, 130–31.

[26] Lakeland, *Church*, 138.

[27] Lakeland, *Church*, 146–56.

[28] Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End*, 134–35.

[29] Paul Lakeland, "What Does Rome Have to Learn from Geneva? Whole-Body Ecclesiology and the Inductive Turn," in *Receptive Ecumenism as Transformative Ecclesial*

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This opens a window on what kind of post–Vatican II church Lakeland imagines ecclesiologically. Certainly, it is radically ecumenical: "A candidate for consideration as a model more adequate to the emerging reality of Catholic ecclesiality today is afforded in the concept of 'whole-body ecclesiology' that in 1999 became a focus of British ecumenical discussions on conciliarity among Anglican, Methodist, and United Reformed Church representatives published as Conversations on the way to Unity."[30]

One of the typical problems of the post–Vatican II church, the continuing "infantilization of the laity," can be addressed in a "whole-body ecclesiality" in which "it is the praxis of the community that determines ecclesiology, not merely its liturgical praxis or its understanding of evangelization, but what it says about itself by the organizational structure it employs in the service of mission. The beauty of whole-body ecclesiology is that it sees ecclesiology grounded in a polity that takes modern people seriously and that is appropriately adjusted to the cultural expectations of adults.[31]

Lakeland recognized that "there are some challenges to the employment of the whole-body model in the Catholic tradition, but taken as a whole it is suggestive for a way forward . . .Whole-body or synodical thinking seems much more compatible with the freedom of the children of God than their continued infantilization in a condition of structural oppression where their freedom as children of God is apparently considered to be compatible with having absolutely no formal voice whatsoever in shaping their own church."[32]

Conclusions

Paul Lakeland has opened and even anticipated new paths for Catholic ecclesiology. Some of the questions he raised deserve a fresh look in light of the present historical and theological context. The option for a kenotic ecclesiology poses the challenge of the possibility and conditions for kenosis in this new age of normalization of war, in the sense of both cultural war and warfare. The aspiration for democracy in church life must also deal with the crisis of the democratic ethos in our secular political systems. The problem of "elite theologizing" and the need for theologians to look at the real church is more acute than ever and has to be considered in the context of the gradual marginalization if not disappearance of theology from the university. Finally, facing the limits of Vatican II—in what it said and did not say—is a necessary first step toward tackling the new *hermeneutical question* raised by the normalization

Learning: Walking the Way to a Church Re-formed, ed. Paul D. Murray, Gregory A. Ryan, and Paul Lakeland (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 124–25.

[30] Lakeland, "What Does Rome Have to Learn from Geneva?" 127.

[31] Lakeland, "What Does Rome Have to Learn from Geneva?" 128, 124.

[32] Lakeland, "What Does Rome Have to Learn from Geneva?" 129–30.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the rejection of the council and its teaching, a movement no longer confined to the fringes of schismatic and sedevacantist groups. To face these new trials, Paul Lakeland's work represents a major contribution from which the new generation of ecclesiologists must begin.

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III. Lakeland on the Laity, That Is, on the Church

Introduction

At this festive gathering to honor Paul Lakeland on the occasion of his retirement, we could not possibly do justice to all his theological contributions. My colleagues on this panel have already given you some idea of the scope and depth of his work. In the short time allotted to me, I want to zero in on one subject I consider perhaps Paul's most original contribution with continuing importance today, and that is his theology of the laity.

As is obvious to all, the Roman Catholic Church is led and controlled by a small group of clergy, all men, celibate men, as Paul consistently and critically points out. Church structures give this group preeminence not only in presiding over the sacraments and preaching the Word, but also in governance and juridical matters, such as handling finances, making personnel appointments, deciding policies, and decreeing what is and is not allowed in doctrinal and ethical matters. So strong is this structure at the present time, Paul notes ruefully, that when people hear the word "church" they usually think of the hierarchy, the Vatican, Rome, the institution, although in reality 95 percent of people who comprise the church are not part of that group. What else can be said about these people besides the fact that they are "not clergy"?

In numerous works Paul has been working out a strong theological answer to that question. He wrote books such as *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (2003), which won the Catholic Press Association Award for Best Book in Theology, and *Catholicism at the Crossroads: How the Laity Can Change the Church* (2007).[33] His probing articles address subjects such as raising lay consciousness, lay participation in decision-making, maturity and the lay vocation, and lay ecclesial ministry.[34] He builds a rich picture

[33] Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*.

[34] Some examples of Paul Lakeland's writings on these subjects are: "Raising Lay Consciousness: the Liberation of the Church," in *Changing Churches: The Local Church and the Structures of Change*, ed. Michael Warren (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 2000),

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.47 Published online by Cambridge University Press