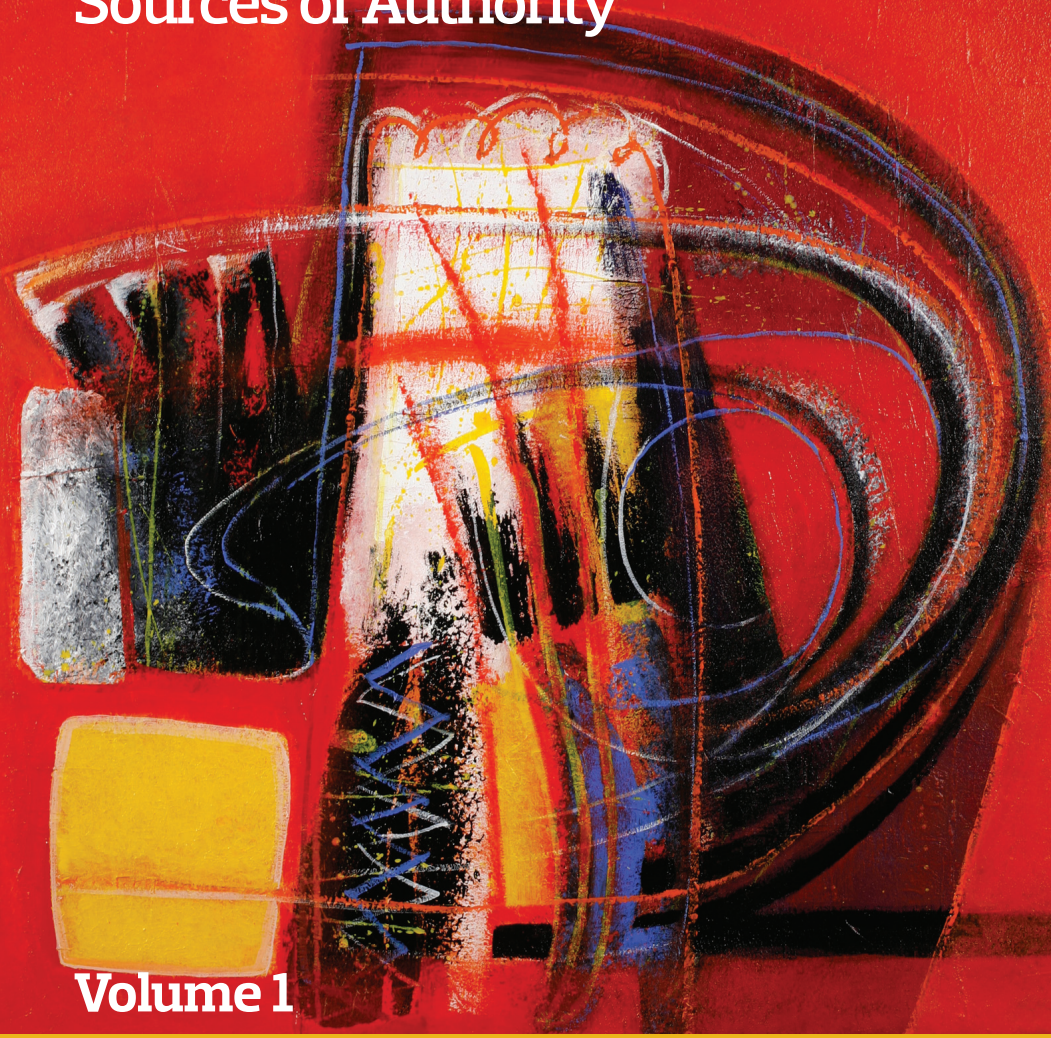


Sources of Authority



Volume 1

The Early Church

TAMARA GRDZELIDZE, EDITOR

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Edited by Tamara Grdzelidze

Faith and Order Paper No. 217



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY, VOLUME 1:

The Early Church

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Foreword

As co-moderator of the Faith and Order study on “The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church: A Common Source of Authority, Various Received?” held in Cambridge, England, I was privileged to host the consultation from which these papers come, to meet the participants and engage with them in lively and open discussion, to pray with them and learn from them, and to be inspired by them.

A consultation like this one is much more than the sum of its papers. There was a real sense that the Holy Spirit was with us and that something was happening among us. There was little, if any, sense of guarding space or reserving judgment or being academically cautious, but rather a profound kind of personal commitment to each other and to the subject that one might wish would characterize every ecumenical conversation. There were things said and things heard that were unexpected, revelatory even, certainly significant. And for some of us, at least, something shifted within us.

I was, on the face of it, one of the least likely people to co-moderate such a consultation. I am a minister of the United Reformed Church in the UK (a church which generally prefers theologians to be more contemporary than “early”), a biblical scholar and a preacher more than anything else, and a feminist too. I was more familiar with critiques of the “Fathers,” rather than with much detail about what they actually said or why they said it, and I was cautious about an ecumenical process that might seek to draw Christians “back” to any kind of false “golden age.” I knew, of course, that Calvin had sought to reform the church by reference to the teachers and witnesses of the early church, but I had not seen that as an example to be followed now. I was also, if I am honest, daunted by the prospect of discussing a subject about which I would know rather less than many of the participants.

I should not have worried. The consultation proved to be a life-changing event, for all of us there. We all came away from it renewed in our sense that to read and to reflect on the teachers and witnesses of the early church together is to share in something of profound significance for the life of the

church today. There was no lack of critical engagement with their writings, from all the participants, and there was no rosy romanticism. But there was a deep sense of participating in what is living tradition, and of hearing the voices of witnesses for Christ who were, in their time and for ours, profoundly practical and rooted theologians, living holy lives and sometimes witnessing with their dying too. I discovered at this consultation not only the company of the participants, but also the company of the early church. I realized anew that the *hubris* of modernity that encourages us to disdain our forebears has no place in the community of saints that is the church. I discovered how much these teachers were biblical scholars (rather than systematic theologians in the modern sense), and that what they were doing was interpreting the scriptures for the church—and in creative, passionate and vividly faithful ways. I realized how different they were from each other, how human, tested and wrestling with life's realities, and yet how strong with hope. I actually experienced the authority and power of their testimony in a way I had not done before. And all this was a gift to me from the participants, as many of them embodied how much these witnesses mattered to them, and indeed how much they could matter and should matter to all of us in the church.

This was not the kind of consultation from which you have to imagine or construct an argument for any potential influence on ecumenical theology. It was obvious among us that these were, in so many ways, our common sources of the living tradition of our shared faith. Discussing them, praying their prayers, hearing their testimonies, simply did bind us in a deeper unity. I hope very much that these papers, and the further work that has developed from this study, will enable many others to experience and to know the same unity.

Susan Durber

Editor's Introduction

This is the first volume of proceedings from the Faith and Order consultations on “Sources of Authority” within the study on Ecumenical Hermeneutics. It captures contributions from the consultation entitled “The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church: A Common Source of Authority, Various Received?” held 1-6 September, 2008, in Cambridge, UK.

For years Ecumenical Hermeneutics, naturally, dealt with biblical hermeneutics. Results of the process can be found in the document *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*¹ and in the critical reflection on it.² In the beginning of a new millennium, it was thought right to go beyond the “classical” hermeneutics and tackle the area that defines different readings (and interpretations) of the biblical texts. Since that “area” is a conglomerate of various factors organized in a unique way for each distinctive interpretation, hermeneutical investigations focused across two overarching concepts: source and authority. Thus the theological forum of the Christian churches—the Faith and Order Plenary Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2004—proposed to study various sources that are believed to be authoritative in churches and therefore foundational for the distinctive interpretations.³ The proposal was to start with the authority of the early church teachers and witnesses, the Fathers of the church.⁴ The proposal was accepted and a consultation took place in

1. Faith and Order Paper no. 182 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998).

2. See *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Peter Bouteneff & Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001).

3. See the proposal by Rev. Dr Hilarion Alfeyev followed by a response of Rev. Dr Richard Treloar and then a plenary discussion in *Faith and Order at the Crossroads, Kuala Lumpur 2004, The Plenary Commission Meeting*, ed. Thoman F. Best (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 283–95.

4. Following the pattern of the Faith and Order studies so far, the proposal about the Ecumenical Hermeneutics was discussed in the Faith and Order Standing Commission, a subdivision of the Plenary Commission, at meetings in Hagios Nikolaos, Crete (2005), see Minutes, Faith and Order Paper no. 200, 27-28; Faverges, France (2006), see Minutes,

2008 at Westminster College, Cambridge, a home of Reformed theology in Britain founded by two distinguished self-taught women scholars.⁵ The invitation came from the principal of the college and a co-moderator of the study, Rev. Dr Susan Durber. As one of the participants remarked, it was a “beautiful” consultation. This publication is trying to convey some of its “beauty” because the best of any profitable ecumenical gathering stays with its participants; it is about an unexpected transformation of strangeness into familiarity, acquiring the knowledge that is hard to detect from particularly written sources, but rather is a characteristic of a human exchange.

Why the Early Church?

There are a couple of reasons why the choice fell on the early church. First, there is the indivisibility of its teachers and witnesses from the Orthodox tradition; patristic writings are the salt of the Orthodox teaching. This fact sometimes reinforces alienation and inaccessibility of the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology from the contemporary world. Despite Orthodox theology's significant contributions to the ecumenical movement, it is still enigmatic and little known. Reflection on how much other traditions value the church Fathers—the foundation of the Orthodox tradition—may help us to rediscover together common roots and reduce the gap of misunderstanding.

Second, it is true that teachers and witnesses of the early church, because they belonged to the first centuries of the Christian era, stand at the outset of the Christian faith. Very little of the church Fathers' writings received by the early church was deliberately rejected by the Great Schism or the Reformation—by the so-called historical churches. Even so, the significance of these writings varies greatly today, from being foundational in church teaching to being passively present or even neglected. The papers presented here reveal this variety and affirm that early church writings, in spite of their different roles and significance in each tradition, are indispensable to the teaching of the Christian church. At the same time, the papers redefine the overwhelming generality of the latter statement: along with the profound

Faith and Order Paper no. 202, 79-82; Crans-Montana, Switzerland (2007), see Minutes, Faith and Order Paper no. 206, 43-44; Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt (2008), see Minutes, Faith and Order Paper no. 208, 36-38.

5. About the founders of the college, see a remarkable account by Janet Soskice, *The Sisters of the Sinai* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

familiarity and love towards the church Fathers, there are also traditions that struggle with this reality.

In spite of the resistance of some traditions of the Reformation to revere the past in the same way as does the Orthodox tradition, it is evident from the papers published here that the past is not entirely rejected but neglected—yet the door to it is not locked. The difficulty within ecumenism persists when the balance between “reverence” and “neglect” of the past—that is, Tradition, the early church—is seriously out of proportion. The consultation under discussion is meant to bring the two into balance.

The Early Church Teachers in the traditions

The consultation offered five major contributions on the theme—the authority of the early teachers and witnesses within the Orthodox (both the Eastern and Oriental), the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Methodist churches. Two theologians, one from the same or similar tradition and the other from a different tradition, responded to each of these papers. This structure aimed at exploring how the teachers and witnesses of the early church function as the source of authority in different traditions. At the centre of interest is the living link today, whether visible or hidden, between the authority in church and its sources in the early church. Although authors of the major papers were asked to be more descriptive than critical in their expositions, the task of identifying the authoritative function of the writings of the early church in today's traditions itself required a critical reflection.

Fr John McGuckin spoke of the Eastern Orthodox tradition (with responses by Dr Eleni Kasselouri and Rev. Dr Pablo Andinach) and Metropolitan Gregorios Iohanna Ibrahim of the Oriental Orthodox tradition (with response by Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian and Rev. Dr Anne-Louise Eriksson). Both families of the Orthodox Church—the Eastern and the Oriental—are witnesses to the paramount authority of the writings of the Fathers. The latter has become foundational in Orthodox dogmatics and doctrine, liturgical life, and spirituality. Since the 20th century, the Orthodox have been redefining the role of the Fathers in the life of the church. Without ever diminishing their constitutive authority for Orthodox theology, a fresh insight into the patristic teaching has brought to the surface new perspectives. For example, it is taken for granted now that there was not one harmonious patristic teaching throughout the ages (whenever

the patristic age terminates, in the 15th century or otherwise) and that the church Fathers from different cultural backgrounds and operating in various languages sometimes contradicted one another. These were different persons from very different cultural settings—graduates of schools of philosophy, local bishops or priests, hermits in remote deserts—mostly trying to interpret the word of God either for their fellow citizens or in defence against false teachings. They were in conversation with their own times.

Today the continuous and dynamic heritage of the church Fathers has to answer questions generated by philosophical systems different from those that formed their thought. But this was a method employed by the Fathers themselves; being well aware of their own times, they wrestled with the word of God in search of worldly wisdom, accompanying the faithful on the way to the salvation. If the Orthodox observe the authority of the patristic teaching as the cornerstone of their faith, others may draw on it—critically yet faithfully—to engage with the contemporary issues.

Closest to the Orthodox tradition regarding the authority of the church Fathers is the Roman Catholic Church. In the exposition offered here by Dom Michel Van Parys, one witnesses to the huge role attributed to the church Fathers in the Magisterium (with responses by Dr Catherine Clifford and Rev. Dr Emmanuel Anymbod). The early teachers and witnesses are considered the unifying force in Catholic teaching; during times of controversy, they are addressed as a clarifying source. The church Fathers continuously inspire the official Roman Catholic documents with their universal character.⁶

The Anglican tradition, presented by Canon Dr John Gibaut (responded to by Natasha Klukach and Dr Antoine Arjakovsky), formally acknowledges the authority of the early teachers of the church through its liturgical life, for example, commemorating them in the liturgical calendar or through the Anglican hymnody. However, at times of crisis the Anglican tradition, it seems, does not address them as an authoritative source; this is especially evident through the recent documents, the instruments of communion within the Anglican Communion.

One interesting example of use of the church Fathers in a church tradition which emerged after the Reformation is that of the Methodist Church.

6. The contemporary documents of the Orthodox Church (for example, documents of the Russian Orthodox Church) also draw heavily on the writings of the church Fathers, but the significance of these documents is different from their Catholic counterparts. The contemporary Orthodox documents lack the status of the universal significance within the Orthodox Church.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, which was formed as Anglican but moved away from the established church, showed a great reverence for the early church Fathers, a fact that is apparent in the rich Methodist hymnal tradition. The present-day Methodist documents, however, have either forgotten or rejected this important source of authority, in spite of a number of significant works on the influence of the church Fathers in the theology of John Wesley.

Although representatives of the churches of the Reformation and Free churches at the consultation spoke only while responding to major papers or participating in discussions, they demonstrated a variety of approaches. The Reformed suspicion that the Fathers were inseparable from Tradition and the past was considerably challenged throughout the meeting. Unfortunately, although it was initially planned and speakers were invited, participation of the charismatic groups was not possible. Their contribution would have been very interesting.

From Strangeness to Familiarity

The most agreed-upon point in discussing the authority of the church Fathers was their competence as biblical exegetes. This was true in large part due to Fr. John Behr's brilliant keynote paper on how the early teachers of the church read the Bible (and the responses by Dr Margaret Barker and Dr Christopher Hall). Through the texts of the Fathers, especially Irenaeus of Lyon, Fr John Behr demonstrates that the early biblical exegesis, in fact, meant to search for Christ, to understand Christ. A parallel is brought also from the book of Acts, Philip's guidance to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-37) as an example of a coherent guidance into the scriptures in light of the proclaimed gospel. The comprehensive and clear paper of Fr John McGuckin also emphasizes the art of preaching of the church Fathers, their skills of rendering their age in proclamation of the faith. As a result of these papers in particular, discussions in small groups culminated with a proposal to publish a short guide on the issue of the early teachers being interpreters of the Bible.⁷ In this way, the participants submitted, those who are out of the practice of reading the writings of the early church may learn about the spiritual reading of the biblical texts by the Fathers.

7. The booklet is published as *Reading the Gospels with the Early Church: A Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

The consultation, in some ways, indeed, gave the impression of moving from strangeness to familiarity. In the beginning, gaps in understanding among participants coming from different confessional and cultural backgrounds felt immense. However, discussion on the theme of the spiritual reading of the Bible together with the sincere effort that the ancient authors had made to tackle the issues of their own realities had a profound influence in turning the remote names into lively figures. They were commonly apprehended as ones who struggled themselves but most courageously consoled, through their spiritual writings, their fellow believers, those who struggled in their faithful fulfilment of the word of God. The human experience of the church Fathers in searching for answers to the word of God—searching for Christ—through the help of the Spirit was unanimously accepted as the point of convergence: contemporary believers may consider the early church teachers as the authoritative resource for learning. Certainly, the gap between the authority attributed to the church Fathers by the Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church (including the advanced tradition of sainthood and canonization) and that recognition is not adequately filled in. However, at least all participants became aware of and accepted the paramount authority of the church Fathers as an issue for further consideration (see the recommendations at the end of the report).

Learning how to read the Bible with faith was at the top of the agenda of the participants; this, however, requires critical reception of the heritage of the Fathers. It was a remarkable convergence point when the participants wished commonly to affirm that “within each ecclesial tradition there is a place for different practical applications of the apostolic and patristic heritage according to the various contexts in which different communities live.”⁸ In other words, they affirmed diversity of the reception of the Spirit in different places and at different times.

Another learning experience emerging from discussions on the basis of the offered papers was a warning to fellow Christians of not falling into amnesia of the past; sadly, the beginning of the Christian faith was more constructive and less antagonistic in its variety than future stages in the history of the Christian faith.

8. Report 4 in this volume.

Beyond the Cambridge Consultation

It must be noted how the Faith and Order Plenary Commission in Crete in October 2009 reacted to the proposed exercise to reflect on a passage of the church Fathers. Each of three passages from the writings of Gregory the Naziansus, Ambrose of Milan, and Isaac of Syrian were offered to groups, and all together about two hundred persons participated. In the report on this exercise, it was mentioned, among the other things, that the church Fathers' ways of reflection on the scriptures remains inspiring and authoritative as any good teaching. They shaped not only the canon of the New Testament but also modified Christian thinking on the Hebrew scriptures. They also assist in creating awareness of a common theological discourse, from which all may draw as a common source. In fact, the church Fathers today are considered as living conversation partners.⁹ It is hard to say whether this attitude regarding the authority of the early teachers of the church prevails within the Faith and Order circles or within the ecumenical fellowship only, but certainly it expresses the opinion of many theologians formed in the Reformation tradition. If theologians in the ecumenical movement today can affirm the church Fathers as authoritative sources of the Christian faith, it addresses two important issues: first, the churches desire to look for a common source of spiritual authority in the past, and second, the churches search for authentic spiritual sources of biblical exegesis in order to enrich ways of faithful reading of the scriptures. These are encouraging signs on the way to Christian unity.

Concluding Remarks

Reading proceedings of the ecumenical theological gatherings requires, at least, the basic knowledge of "ecumenical chess"; most people invited to present a paper in a consultation try to comply with the outline suggested by the members of the commission, in this particular case the Faith and Order Commission. When working on the outline, or rationale, each member of an ad hoc group responsible for creating the outline naturally tries to make a formulation as lucid as possible for one's own tradition. It is the personal understanding and tolerance of the members of the group that save this process from ending in a fight for one's preferred formulation, but

9. Reports from the study groups of Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions, in *Called To Be the One Church: Faith and Order at Crete*, ed. John Gibaut, Faith and Order Paper 212 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 139-46.

the outline, even if it is crystal clear, remains broad and wide-ranging; in a way it calls for a personal response. Then the presenters, while responding in a personal way—all the participants use the subjective “I”—still speak for their traditions. This is also a part of the Ecumenical Hermeneutics, which has its own grammar: representatives of the churches, whether members of the Faith and Order Commission or invited experts, speak on behalf of their traditions, but the personal style in their presentations is unavoidable.

The process of editing the papers, apart from other tasks, also requires a transformation of the personal style of presenters into a non-personal style, and thus transforming the authors into “porte-paroles” of their respective churches. This publication, however, ironically will have a line on the copyright page saying that “opinions expressed are those of the authors,” with the exception of quoted official documents. The ecumenical theological publications—fruits of the ecumenical endeavour—including documents such as the celebrated *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, are deliberately impersonal and often a difficult read. That is also a part of “ecumenical chess.”¹⁰

10. The editor wishes to express deep gratitude to Alexander Freeman for his assistance in the preparation of the consultation and of this publication.

Report from the Consultation

The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church:
A Common Source of Authority, Various Received?
1-6 September 2008 in Cambridge, United Kingdom

Twenty-four participants gathered at Westminster College in Cambridge to engage in the first of a series of consultations under the title of “Tradition and traditions: Sources of Authority for the Church.” The aim of the meeting was to build on the work begun by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the 1960s and, by paying particular attention to the teachers and witnesses of the early church, to explore further the possibility of discovering, rediscovering, or re-receiving some particular sources of authority on the way to the unity of the church.

Westminster College, a centre for learning within the United Reformed Church and the home of many important historic documents and treasures, offered a warm welcome to the participants, who were able to explore the context of Cambridge itself, where theological education for ministry is carried out in a thoroughgoing, ecumenical way.

The participants came from a wide diversity of traditions, contexts, and backgrounds, with a good balance of men and women, of lay and ordained, and of language groups, continents and traditions. Among all of these were three younger theologians. It was a remarkable exchange on the witnesses of the early church received within the different traditions, and on the authority they have in their respective traditions. Papers and responses were delivered in plenary, followed by reflection in small groups on questions of authority and tradition.

Many participants observed that this consultation had a remarkable quality; many were both moved and fascinated by the depth and openness of discussions. The Holy Spirit was present among them. It is important to note that some of the participants came to discuss well-loved subjects, of which they had much experience and to which they came with a ready facility and affection. Others came with many questions and even reservations about discussions of the early witnesses of the church, fearing that they would be uncomfortable and that their own reservations would not be heard. However, what many who attended this consultation experienced

was a critical moment in terms of the ecumenical possibility of rediscovering the rich sources of the common tradition.

Sometimes gaps in understanding were felt, or the sense of inhabiting different worlds; but much more often what was experienced was mutual recognition and affirmation and a growing awareness of the delight of exploring faith and theology ecumenically, rather than in separated traditions. All were alert to the possible dangers inherent in studying texts from such times, but all participants also affirmed together the significance of sharing and listening carefully to texts that have shaped the life of the church for centuries and through which God has been made known and the scriptures illuminated. We urged each other to avoid the dangers of romanticizing early witnesses or reading them without a critical eye. But we also encouraged each other to believe that today we cannot stand alone in our naming and living the faith. God has given us resources through the ages and we, together with the early witnesses, belong within the communion of saints.

Traditions of faith and witness are always being received and re-received among us, in all churches, and this is better done ecumenically, growing in understanding of one another and in readiness both to receive and to give. The creative but often uncomfortable questions about the relationship between Tradition and traditions arise not only in the churches, but also in our postmodern world, in which varieties of fundamentalism are sometimes a chosen response to the challenges of modernity. How then can the church bear witness to the strength and possibilities of early witnesses while also exercising a critical hospitality to new insights?

The participants affirmed that the kind of traditions God gives us are best described and understood as Living Tradition, that they are not ossified and static but rather inhabited by the dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit. For some the very word “tradition” may imply something of the past, something conservative and static; but all affirmed an understanding of tradition as that which has an eschatological dimension and is filled with the Spirit. Also, the kind of authority that God gives the teachers and witnesses of the early church is not an authority rooted in something like a form of political power (*potestas*), which imposes itself from outside, but the kind of authority rooted in integrity and authenticity (*auctoritas*), which is compelling and draws us from within itself. The authority of the teachers and witnesses of the early church comes from this second understanding rather than the first. All rejoiced to learn from one another that this was common to all.

Tradition and traditions

The consultation stood in succession to the insights of the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order at Montreal (1963) and to its further elaborations at Bristol (1967). The scriptures are the pre-eminent source of, and witness to, our common faith. While reference to *sola scriptura* carries a vital affirmation of the centrality of the scriptures, it should not be used to limit the ways in which the traditions we have inherited may bear witness to the gospel. Sometimes important theological insights, used as slogans, have hidden from view important sources of hope and truth.

The participants affirmed the way in which a variety of hermeneutical keys for the interpretation of the scriptures (e.g., the entirety of scripture; the incarnation, atonement, and redemption; justification by faith; the message of the nearness of the kingdom of God; the ethical teaching of Jesus; what the scriptures say to the individual under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; the mind of the church; the faith as guarded by the church) remain important and, moreover, are no longer exclusive to any one community. *All* these hermeneutical keys enable us to learn of Christ. A strong theme of the consultation was also that the experience of reading the teachers and witnesses of the early church together strengthened a conviction that Christ as Person is the most important key to liturgical and personal reading of the scriptures.

The historical-critical method and other hermeneutical tools remain vital for underpinning the ways in which churches speak of Tradition and traditions. In our times the academy is often a centre of ecumenical *rapprochement* and there was agreement that academic research is important for its correction of sometimes naïve confessional standpoints in the process for handing on traditions.

The group reflected on the difference between our own times and those in which earlier consultations on these themes did their work. The context has certainly changed since 1963, the year of the Montreal conference. In our times, we see the twin responses to the postmodern world in, on the one hand, the rise of fundamentalist approaches to religious traditions (clinging tightly to traditions), and on the other, the danger of turning away from traditions altogether, letting them go and forgetting our history and shared memory in a tragic kind of amnesia.

In view of the wide range of traditions represented by the participants, it was remarkable to reach unity and resist the temptations of either of these two dangers. Christian faith found in the scriptures was received as

revelation and interpreted through our respective traditions. Whether any particular tradition preserves or develops the plenitude of the Tradition or orthodoxy of the faith was not agreed upon. But all agreed that the fathers and the mothers of the ancient church were, each in their own way and in the consensus that joins them together through Tradition, living witnesses of the faith in Christ lived within the Holy Spirit. It is in this way that they are teachers, elders, authorities, and witnesses today.

Though most churches claim to pay attention to the authors of the patristic period, this is not always carried through in practice. Further, in different periods of history such attention may signify different things, at one time seen as a radical or reforming move, at another as a conservative one.

There is always selectivity in the choice of authors studied and the texts used by the churches. This leads us to question the criteria by which an authentic authority of the texts for the church has been determined. The work of the early teachers and witnesses has been received in a wide range of ways, not only in texts but also in oral tradition, liturgy, prayer, and creed. These early teachers were formative in the understanding of the faith that has come down to us. Whether we accept, modify, or reject their work, we ought to wrestle with them, critique them, and be challenged by them. We seek to hear within them the voice of the Holy Spirit that they heard and to which they bore witness not only in their words but in their lives.

Tradition is the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit always leading back and towards the mind of Christ. “Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (Rev. 4:8).

Hermeneutics of Ecumenical Re-reading

In contemporary theological education there is a tendency to treat the “Fathers” in courses on systematic or historic theology and in relation to Christian doctrine. An important recovery would be also to read their preaching and teaching on the scriptures. There is a multitude of ways to read the scriptures within our traditions. Understanding how the early witnesses read the scriptures may help us to see the particular ways we have learned to read the same scriptures. In other words, the early teachers challenge us to look again at what we are doing as we engage with a biblical text. These early biblical readings have an authority because of their earliness, and also because of both their familiarity to some and their strangeness to others.

They do not so much interpret texts for us, but they may teach us how to read, and to read with faithfulness.

The early witnesses and teachers help us to understand our faith. If faith is not simply an individual affair but shaped and shared within a community of understanding, then the early teachers belong within the community and as early witnesses are even privileged members. The church is the body of Christ, a living community of earth and heaven; the early teachers and witnesses are part of that community. Many gave their lives for their faith and bequeathed to us the traditions they inherited. So we should receive them not uncritically but with respect and desire. We ought neither despise the past with the arrogance of modernity, nor ossify it as though nothing ever changes, but rather welcome our ancestors in the faith (our fathers and mothers in this sense) and listen to them. They are important witnesses to God from times and situations very different from our own, and their voices speak to us today.

To understand who we are as Christians it is important to receive, re-receive, and pass on the teachings of the early fathers and mothers with the faith of the early councils. This would shape an ecumenical Christian identity and contribute to a common vocabulary, grammar, and syntax amongst the estranged churches, an essential prerequisite to bilateral and multilateral dialogue.

Thanks to the study of the various routes of the patristic reception in our traditions, new possibilities arise for understanding how the Holy Spirit has guided our churches. The right teaching of the faith, a hermeneutical key making it possible to determine our fidelity to the gospel message, can take various forms according to the contexts and the levels of consciousness of Christian communities. Such respect for the various ways in which the Spirit works encourages us to continue the work of reception of the great doctrinal syntheses that made possible the living out of the evangelical *kerygma*.

There is not a single and synchronic reception of the Spirit in all places. Within each ecclesial tradition there is a place for different practical applications of the apostolic and patristic heritage according to the various contexts in which different communities live. The richness of Christianity consists precisely in this exchange of gifts between communities living each in their own particular way their attachment to the gospel. But it is under this condition that the church can also really actualize itself as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

Rediscovering Patristics as a Living Tradition

The living Tradition is indeed a dynamic reception of the respective treasures of each confession. It is for each tradition to listen to the signs of the Spirit, in particular by a joint re-reading of certain teachers of the early church, and initially those that we all esteem, such as Irenaeus of Lyon, Basil of Caesarea, and John Chrysostom. But it would be advisable to widen this spectrum by integrating the great male and female figures of our respective traditions, like John Wesley, Catherine Booth, Martin Luther King, or Thérèse of Lisieux. These figures are dear to us for many different reasons and in particular because they did not hesitate to engage with wisdom in popular debates or political issues concerning faith. This wider ecumenical reading would enable us to purify some accretions from the past unduly identified with the Tradition. This ecumenical reading will also enable us to face together the challenges of our times. We understand, for example, that the ancient church could not yet completely support the message of emancipation of slaves and the equal dignity of men and women brought by Jesus Christ.

Christians experience a crisis of authority in contemporary society and church. Many are seeking an authentic witness to the truth. Jesus taught “as one who had authority” (Matt. 7:29). The Christian tradition has always understood the authority of those who continue to teach and hand on his message as having authority—not in the sense of “power,” but in the sense of testifying with authenticity (*exousia*) and integrity. For this reason, the church has recognized as authoritative those early witnesses who teach in fidelity to the faith of the apostles, not only in their written works but also through holiness of life. They are esteemed for their proclamation of the Word through the right teaching of doctrine (*orthodoxy*) and the right quality of their lives (*orthopraxis*). The harmony of their words and deeds allows them to speak even today with authority. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church has been led at critical moments in the development of its understanding of the gospel, to recognize and receive their teachings as an expression of the common faith and mind of the church. Their insights, clarifications, and their penetration into the mystery of our common faith contribute to the authoritative action and proclamation of the people of God in the world today.

The authority of the mothers and fathers of the church comes from their intimate relationship with the scriptural witness, and is confirmed in

their consensus with one another. Their very unity in diversity authenticates their authority. Behind, in, and through this authority (*exousia*), we believe the Holy Spirit is active. The early authors were intimately connected with the life of the local churches as bishops, presbyters, and monastic women and men. As pastoral theologians, they offer to us a perspective on how to be rooted and faithful to the gospel in times of crisis and transition. They demonstrate that biblical fidelity and authentic inculturation are not in opposition to one another.

A *consensus fidei* amongst divided Christians today will only be enhanced when we are in living consensus with our common parents in the faith from the earliest centuries. By listening to the scriptures together with our elders, we learn to listen and speak to each other in our common heritage of language, grammar, and syntax. Such is part of the journey to the visible unity of the church in one faith, and in one eucharistic fellowship, so that the world may believe (see John 17:21).

A “re-discovery” of the early teachers of the faith as a living tradition will be a source of unity for the churches. A careful listening both to the authors themselves and to one another is needed to read and rediscover patristic traditions—which may be new or strange to some—and not simply proof text them to defend our existing traditions. Since living traditions are challenging and growing there is need to learn from those who have been accepted and affirmed by the *consensus fidei*, but also to listen again for the prophetic voices among the fathers and mothers. There is the need for re-reception and a critical reading of these authors and their texts, according to both a “hermeneutics of trust” and a “hermeneutics of suspicion.”

The ancient authors and teachers of the faith remain a valuable source for understanding the meaning of the word of God and for enlivening the life, prayer, and mission of the church today. At various times in history, each of our churches has lost sight of the rich treasure of their testimony for understanding our common faith and its potential to enliven our contemporary witness. Rather than translating the fathers into contemporary conceptions perhaps it is better to let them be strange for us first, so that they can speak their own wisdom to our times. What we do need to work at is what the study of the fathers has sometimes signaled to people in the church. At the time of the Reformation it meant renewal of the church, going back to the sources and finding new life. For many now it implies an alignment with the past in order to conserve a static past today. We need to “translate” what it means to study the fathers and mothers and to revive a lively sense of the

communion of saints. We also need to develop a confidence about engaging with early traditions and history which embraces honest, open, and critical enquiry with a willingness to receive new things from what is old—a hermeneutic of suspicion as well as a hermeneutic of trust.

Two ways were identified in which the early teachers of the church might be appropriated ecumenically today:

They enunciate for us that which is necessary for the existence and unity of the churches. In this sense, we have to speak of “Tradition” with a capital “T” (the *paradosis, mashlmonutho*). But although almost all Christian communities agree that the orally delivered *kerygma* (unwritten tradition) that precedes the Christian scriptures and the canon of scriptures itself is necessary for the existence of the Christian community and for the right interpretation of the Christian scriptures, we differ over the extent of the content of “Tradition”: i.e., whether eucharist and baptism are necessarily part of this “Tradition.”

If we became more aware of the collective memory of the early Christian communities, we could recover a greater sense of unity, the memory that shaped the way these communities thought, lived, worshiped, and understood the scriptures.

Recommendations

That in ecumenical gatherings, whether at WCC or more locally, opportunities are taken when appropriate to read and study patristic texts together;¹

That there be an ongoing group for serious ecumenical study of major texts, communicating its conclusions to the churches.

1. See the first example of the recommendation: *Reading the Gospels with the Early Church: A Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

1. “Search the Scriptures for They Speak of Me”: Reading Scripture with the Early Fathers

John Behr

The way in which the disciples on the road to Emmaus came to know that it was the Lord who stood before them provides a clear paradigm for the scriptural hermeneutic of the early church, the manner in which the Fathers of the first centuries read the scriptures. Having abandoned Christ on the cross, not understanding the empty tomb, and then not believing the reports about it, the two disciples not only didn't recognize Christ when he appeared to them but even started telling him, as if he were a stranger, about what had happened over the previous days, and were reproached: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-26). Pressing him to stay the night, their eyes were opened in the breaking of bread, an unveiling in which Christ also disappears.

These two aspects—that Christ died and rose “in accordance with the Scriptures” (that is, the “Old Testament”) and the breaking of bread, “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes”—were received by the apostle Paul and handed down, or “traditioned” (1 Cor. 15:3-5; 12:23-26), before the evangelist even composed his account, and they form the fundamental context for Christian life and reflection thereafter: the engagement with the scriptures and the liturgical life are the framework and nourishment of Christian life, in which the Christian encounters their Lord, just as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus.

The 2nd Century

During the course of the 2nd century, this framework was hammered out; it was not self-evident from the beginning, and the New Testament is largely the result of these debates.

There were many other ways of explaining the work of God in Christ and many others claiming to be speaking on the authority of the Spirit or to be representing the true tradition, and, indeed, so many claimed to follow the apostle Paul that at the beginning of the 3rd century Tertullian referred to him ironically as “the apostle of the heretics.”¹ Some, such as Marcion, claimed that Paul had proclaimed a Christ who revealed a new god, a god of love and peace, distinct from the brutal and cruel god of the Old Testament. Others, such as Valentinus, and those usually designated today as “Gnostics,” reused the imagery of the apostolic writings, in much the same way as the apostolic writings had reused the imagery of the Old Testament, in the production of their own allegedly inspired revelations, resulting in ever more complex mythologies describing all sorts of cosmic and pre-cosmic dramas. While yet others, such as Montanus, together with his prophetesses Maximilla and Priscilla, proclaimed a new dispensation and outpouring of the Spirit expressing itself in the form of a new and authoritative prophecy, greater enthusiasm, and more rigorous asceticism.

The proper exegesis of the scriptures was the basis for the rebuttal of such approaches, articulated clearly and self-consciously for the first time by Irenaeus of Lyons. The definitive, “once for all,” work of God in Christ informs or shapes how followers of Christ read the scriptures thereafter, seeking to understand him. Irenaeus, in a lengthy but beautiful passage, sets this out, and more, with great clarity:

If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures this way, he will find in them the Word concerning Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling. For Christ is the “treasure which was hidden in the field” (Mt 13.44), that is, in this world—for “the field is the world” (Mt 13.38)—[a treasure] hidden in the Scriptures, for he was indicated by means of types and parables, which could not be understood by human beings prior to the consummation of those things which had been predicted, that is, the advent of the Lord. And therefore it was said to Daniel the prophet, “Shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the consummation, until many learn

1. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, ed. and trans. E. Evans, OECT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 3.5.4.

and knowledge abounds. For, when the dispersion shall be accomplished, they shall know all these things” (Dan 12.4, 7). And Jeremiah also says, “In the last days they shall understand these things” (Jer 23.20). For every prophecy, before its fulfillment, is nothing but an enigma and ambiguity to human beings; but when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then it has an exact exposition [*exegesis*]. And for this reason, when at this present time the Law is read by the Jews, it is like a myth, for they do not possess the explanation [*exegesis*] of all things which pertain to the human advent of the Son of God; but when it is read by Christians, it is a treasure, hid in a field, but brought to light by the cross of Christ, and explained, both enriching the understanding of humans, and showing forth the wisdom of God, and making known his dispensations with regard to human beings, and prefiguring the kingdom of Christ, and preaching in anticipation the good news of the inheritance of the holy Jerusalem, and proclaiming beforehand that the one who loves God shall advance so far as even to see God, and hear his Word, and be glorified, from hearing his speech, to such an extent, that others will not be able to behold his glorious countenance (cf. 2 Cor 3.7), as was said by Daniel, “Those who understand shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and many of the righteous as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12.3). In this manner, then, I have shown it to be, if anyone read the Scriptures.²

Irenaeus brings together, in a quite extraordinary manner, the discovery of Christ in and through the scriptures (which here refers to the Old Testament) and the transfiguration of the one encountering Christ in this manner, such that they become like Moses as he descended the mountain after his encounter with God.

The image given by Christ, of treasure hidden in the field or the world, is used to refer to Christ himself: he is the treasure hidden in the scriptures, and so the scriptures, in turn, are the treasury in which we find him. The scriptures, the “Old Testament,” are a “thesaurus,” a compendium of the words and images with which one enters into the mystery of Christ. Particularly important is that this manner of reading the scriptures operates from the perspective of the cross. Those who read the scriptures without the explanation of the treasure that it contains, the gospel it anticipates,

2. St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau et al., SC 263-64, 293-94, 210-11, 100, 152-53 (Books 1-5 respectively) (Paris: Cerf, 1979, 1982, 1974, 1965, 1969), 4.26.1. Eng. trans at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>.

see in the scriptures only myths and fables. It is through the cross that light is shed upon the scriptures, removing the veil that lay over Moses himself and now lies upon those who read Moses without a knowledge of Christ, so revealing the glory that Moses concealed with the veil, “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” making known “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ,” and inviting others to share in this glory (see 2 Cor. 3:7—4:6).

Thus, for Irenaeus it is not the scriptures themselves that are being exegeted, at least not in the sense of modern historical-critical “exegesis” in its attempt to understand the “original meaning” of an ancient text, but rather Christ who is being expounded through the medium of the scriptures, drawing upon its treasury of images and words. The whole of scripture (again, the Old Testament) is understood as speaking of the crucified and exalted Christ, and as such acquires a coherence and unity that it did not have, or at least was not known to have, prior to the proclamation of the gospel. The conversation between the apostle Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch also demonstrates this, and brings to light a further difference between our modern quest for meaning and the manner in which the early Christians approached the scriptures. When Philip found the eunuch sitting in his chariot reading the hymn of the suffering servant from the prophet Isaiah, the eunuch’s question was not the one that we would ask today, “What is the meaning of this passage?”—as if the “meaning” were located in the text itself, and so in the past, and our task is simply to uncover it, what the text “meant,” and then perhaps try to find “meaning” for ourselves in the present by some kind of analogy. Instead, the eunuch asked, “About whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about some one else?” (Acts 8:34). “Meaning” resides in the person of whom the text speaks, and the task is to come to know this person by understanding how the text speaks of him. This fundamental point is made by Christ himself, when he says, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, yet it is they that witness to me” (John 5:39). And, to emphasize the point, he says a few verses later, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). Moses certainly wrote in the past, but the “meaning” of his words is neither a straightforward description of historical events in the past nor something that can now be retrieved by reconstructing the past. Rather the “meaning” of his words, once again, lies in how he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To further explicate this framework, Irenaeus appeals to the image of a mosaic, with the treasury that is the scriptures providing the various gem stones used to portray the Lord. His opponents have a “hypothesis” that derives neither from the prophets, nor the Lord, nor the apostles, but is rather their own fabrication, which they then explicate with words from the scriptures, adapting the words of God to their own myths, in an attempt to endow it with persuasive plausibility. As such they “disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures” and “disjoint the members of the truth.” In this vivid image, they are like someone taking a mosaic of a king and rearranging the stones to make a picture of a dog or a fox, claiming that this is the original, true image. He follows this with a more literary example, describing how some people take diverse lines from the work of Homer and then rearrange them to produce a Homeric-sounding poem, a cento, which tells a tale not found in Homer: those who have only a passing knowledge of Homer are likely to be deceived; but those who are well versed in his poetry will be able to identify the lines and restore them to their proper context. But, Irenaeus continues,

[A]nyone who keeps unswervingly in himself the canon of truth received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and parables from the Scriptures, but this blasphemous hypothesis of theirs he will not recognize. For if he recognizes the jewels, he will not accept the fox for the image of the king. He will restore each one of the passages to its proper order and, having fit it into the body of the truth, he will lay bare their fabrication and show that it is without support.³

The terms Irenaeus uses are all technical terms in Hellenistic literary theory and philosophy. The term “fabrication” describes stories that are not true but seem to be so and “myth” refers to stories that are manifestly untrue. So, according to Irenaeus, the Gnostics start with their own fantastic myths, and then cloak them with the language of the scriptures. The term “hypothesis” had a variety of meanings. In a literary context it meant the plot or outline of a drama or epic: that which the poet posits as the outline for his subsequent creative work. It is not derived from reasoning, but presupposed, providing a skeleton, as it were, which is enfolded by the words of the poet exercising his talent. As Irenaeus put it, although the myths of his opponents use the words and phrases from the scriptures,

3. St Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 1.8.1-9.4.

they have adapted them to a different hypothesis, and so have created their own fabrication.

In the other arts similarly, the hypothesis—as that which is posited, the presupposition—facilitates both action and inquiry, and ultimately knowledge itself. Hypotheses are, as Aristotle put it, the starting points or first principles of demonstrations.⁴ For instance, the goal of health is the hypothesis for a doctor, who then deliberates on how it is to be attained, just as mathematicians hypothesize certain axioms and then proceed with their demonstrations. Such hypotheses are tentative; if the goal proves to be unattainable or if the conclusions derived from the supposition turn out to be manifestly false, then the hypothesis in question must be rejected. So, according to Irenaeus, his opponents have based their exegesis of the scriptures upon their own “hypothesis,” rather than that foretold by the prophets, taught by Christ and delivered (“traditioned”) by the apostles.

At least since the time of Plato, the aim of philosophy has been to discover the ultimate, non-hypothetical first principle. But even here, as Aristotle conceded, it is impossible to demand demonstrations of the first principle itself; if it could be proved, it would necessarily be dependent upon something prior to it, and so one would be led into an infinite regress.⁵ This means, as Clement of Alexandria points out, that the search for the first principle of any demonstration ends up with indemonstrable faith.⁶ What is accepted as the first principle of knowledge cannot itself be demonstrated, and so is accepted by faith. For Christian faith, according to Clement, it is the Lord who speaks in the scriptures, the Word of God himself, that is the first principle of all knowledge.⁷ The voice of the Lord, speaking throughout the scriptures, is the first principle, the (non-hypothetical) hypothesis of all demonstrations from the scriptures, by which Christians are led to the knowledge of the truth.

This first principle, accepted by faith, as that which is given, the Lord himself who is the truth (John 14:6), is not only the starting point for subsequent demonstrations, but is also used to evaluate other claims to truth, finding expression as a “canon,” the next technical term that Irenaeus

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. H. Tredennick, LCL Aristotle 17-18 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 5.1.2 (1013a17).

5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.4.2 (1006a6-12).

6. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata VII-VIII*, ed. O. Stählin, 2nd ed., rev. L. Früchtel and U. Treu, GCS 17 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1970), 8.3.6.7-7.2. Trans. in ANF 2.

7. See *Stromata* 7.16.95.4-6.

introduces. In modern times (since 1768) the tendency is to use the word “canon” to refer to a “list” of authoritative books, but by a sleight of hand invest this “list” with a regulative function.⁸ The focus is on the extent of the list of the books of the scriptures, while ignoring what the early Christians in fact said about “canon,” and the fact that the early church showed remarkably little interest in determining this issue.⁹ Originally the term “canon” simply meant a straight line, a rule by which other lines could be judged: “by that which is straight, we discern both the straight and the crooked; for the carpenter’s rule (*canon*) is the test of both, but the crooked tests neither itself nor the straight.”¹⁰ Without a canon or criterion, knowledge is not possible, for all inquiry will be drawn helplessly into an endless regression. So, in the face of radical Skepticism, it became almost obligatory in the Hellenistic period to begin any systematic presentation of philosophy with an account of “the criterion.” In the same way in which Hellenistic philosophers argued against the infinite regression of the Skeptics by appealing to a canon or criterion of truth, Irenaeus appealed to the canon of truth to counter the constantly mutating Gnostic mythology. And he continues his presentation by giving an example of the Canon of Truth: belief in one God the Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one Holy Spirit, who by the prophets spoke of all the things done by the Lord. The canon is structured upon the same three central articles of belief found in the baptismal interrogations from the earliest times and going back to the baptismal command of Christ himself (Matt. 28:19), and which also shape the later creeds, such as those of the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.

For the Christians of the first centuries, the canon of truth was not understood simply as fixed, and abstract, statements of Christian doctrine, to be used as building blocks, as it were, for metaphysical systems, but expressed the correct hypothesis of the scriptures themselves, the presupposition by which one can see in the scriptures the picture of a king, Christ,

8. R. Pfeiffer points to David Ruhnklin in 1768 as being the first to use the term “canon” in this way. See his *A History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 207.

9. There were indeed occasional discussions about what was to count as sacred scripture, but these were only sporadic; no council was called to determine the issue. A couple of the smaller councils did produce lists as part of their deliberations, and various bishops issued statements with the same purpose, but these invariably disagree with one another. For the scant evidence of such concern in antiquity, see B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, repr. with corrections (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), appendix 4, 305-15.

10. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, ed. and trans. W. S. Hett, LCL Aristotle 8 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), 1.5 (411a5-7).

rather than a dog or fox. One must, for instance, hold that the God of the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, is indeed the Father of Jesus Christ—the first article of any canon or creed—if one is not to end up with a falsified picture. As a canon it enables the believer to demonstrate the incongruous and extraneous nature of the Gnostic hypotheses. By means of the same canon of truth, the various passages, the “members of truth,” can be returned to their rightful place within “the body of truth,” the scriptures, so that it again speaks of Christ, while exposing the Gnostic fabrications for what they are.¹¹

The canon of truth thus expresses or crystallizes the presupposition that is the apostolic Christ himself, the one who is “according to the scripture[s],” and, in reverse, the subject of the scriptures throughout, being spoken of by the Spirit through the prophets, so revealing the one God and Father. The canon of truth is thus inextricably connected, for Irenaeus, with “the order and the connection of the Scriptures,” for it presents the one Father who has made himself known through the one Son by the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets, that is, through the scriptures—the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets.

Put in another way, the canon of truth is the formal structure of the harmony of the scriptures, read as speaking of the Christ revealed in the apostolic preaching “in accordance with the scripture[s].” Clement of Alexandria provides a concise definition of the canon in such terms when he states, “The ecclesiastical canon is the concord and harmony of the law and the prophets in the covenant delivered at the coming of the Lord.”¹² The hypothesis, the presupposition, of the Christian faith, the crucified and risen Lord himself, reveals the symphony of the scriptures, when he opens the books to show how they all speak of himself, the one presented by the apostles “in accordance with the scriptures.” The pattern of this harmony is expressed in the canon of truth, enabling the demonstrations from the scriptures to describe, accurately, the portrait of a king, Christ. The canon of truth thus provides the framework for the encounter with the Christ proclaimed by the apostles, an encounter that takes place through the engagement with the matrix of imagery provided by the scriptures.

11. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 1.8.1; and Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 1, trans. J. Behr (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

12. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.15.125.3.

Allegory and/or Typology

It is understandable now how and why, after the apostolic deposit had been clearly laid as a foundation during the course of the 2nd century, the major debates thereafter in the early church did not turn upon the boundaries of the scriptures or the meaning of a particular verse, but upon the one of whom they spoke, Jesus Christ: Does he only appear to be human? Is he truly divine? Is he really one concrete being? The Arians, for instance, argued that as all the scriptures spoke of Christ, he must said to be “created,” as Wisdom speaks of herself in Proverbs (8:22). Athanasius in turn argued that the scriptures speak of Christ in two ways, as divine and as human. To a striking degree, even the debate between Athanasius and Arius functioned with the presupposition that the scriptures (the Old Testament) speak about Christ (as with the key text from Prov. 8. 22). However, as the New Testament began to be taken for granted and used as the primary source for testimony regarding Christ, further dimensions opened up, which were ostensibly about different methods of scriptural interpretation but resulted in separating the Old Testament from the New Testament and dividing the one Christ (in more ways than one).

This is the debate between “Antiochene” theologians, especially Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and “Alexandrians” such as Cyril. The exegetical dimension of this debate has been variously assessed in modern times, which has tended to sympathize with Diodore’s assertion that “we far prefer *to historikon* to *to allegorikon*.”¹³ However, what is meant by this preference has never really been clear, and is again in dispute.¹⁴ At the end of the 19th century it seemed self-evident. H. B. Swete praised Theodore highly, as “except when led astray by theological prepossessions, his firm grasp of the grammatical and historical method and a kind of instinctive power of arriving at the drift of his author’s thought have enabled him often to anticipate the most recent conclusions of exegesis.” Theodore thus holds “a position in which he stands among ancient expositors of the

13. From a fragment from his work on the Octateuch, quoted by C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese*, Theophaneia: Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974), 13.

14. See Schäublin, *Untersuchungen*, 156: “Ihre erhaltenen Schriften teilen keine Definition des ἱστορικόν mit, und einigen Bemerkungen Diodors vermag man bloß eine sehr allgemeine Abgrenzung gegenüber der Allegorese zu entnehmen.” For a survey of scholarship on Antiochene exegesis from 1880 to 1990, see Bradley Nassif, “‘Spiritual Exegesis’ in the School of Antioch,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. B. Nassif (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 343-77.

scriptures almost alone—that of an independent inquirer, provided with a true method of eliciting the sense of his author, and considerable skill in the use of it.”¹⁵ Mid-20th-century scholarship was equally positive in its assessment of Theodore’s exegesis, though it was more likely to express his contribution not so much in terms of fidelity to authorial intent, but to his concern to preserve the real, historical account of the biblical narrative of salvation.¹⁶ Standing firmly against the Platonizing allegorical interpretation characteristic of Alexandrian theology, Theodore was seen as returning to the biblical record of God’s engagement with human beings in history, arranged as this is towards the coming of his Son, which is understood in terms of his human birth and subsequent history, his historical and human “personality.” Whilst there might be some typological parallels between the Old Testament and the New, to be discerned through “contemplation” or “insight” (*theoria*), this is a *sensus plenior* that ensures the historical integrity of the original event, word, and context.

Over the last decades, as the limitations of historical-critical methodologies have become more apparent, and perhaps reflecting the “linguistic turn” of modern thought more generally, such attempts to see Antiochene exegesis as foreshadowing the modern concern for historicity have largely, and rightly, been abandoned. More recent scholarship has tended to focus instead on the background of Antiochene exegesis in the rhetorical schools of antiquity, with their training in grammatical and historical methods, rather than the more philosophical approach of Alexandria, continuing the classical tension between sophists and philosophers.¹⁷ In this approach, interpretation of a text begins with setting out its *hypothesis*, the subject matter at hand;

15. [H. B. Swete], “Theodorus,” in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.*, ed. W. Smith and H. Wace (London: J. Murray, 1877), 971-72.

16. See, for example, Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (London: Faith Press, 1961), for whom “Theodore understood the Bible because he had an understanding of the way of thinking implicit in the Bible. He could enter into the Bible in a way that the Alexandrians with their philosophical preconceptions could not” (100). Yet even Greer can note that “Theodore draws his theology from the text, organizes it somewhat systematically, and then reimposes the more sophisticated theological system upon the text” (104).

17. See Frances Young, “The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis,” in Rowan Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 182-99; Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 161-213. See also David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

the lexical level is examined next, establishing the correct punctuation and construal of sentences; attention is then paid to questions of translation and etymology, foreign words, metaphors, and figures of speech; and finally the interpreter turns to the train of thought in the text, comparing it to other texts, which might provide further background material, from the scriptures, to set the text in its proper context. Despite the fact that this method investigates “*to historikon*,” the proper context of a text here is understood its place within the scriptural account rather than a reconstructed historical past.¹⁸ Employing this method, Diodore and Theodore were led to assert that the Old Testament scriptures, with scant exception, did not speak of Christ. If Christ is described as using a verse from the Psalms to speak of himself, Theodore claimed, “he used this testimony, not because it was something predicted of him through the oracle of prophecy, or certainly the Psalm (as a whole) would have been composed concerning him.”¹⁹

Turning to the interests and methods of the grammatical and historical instruction of the ancient rhetorical schools certainly offers a better insight into Diodore’s and Theodore’s exegetical practices. However, it is not really sufficient, for it is also clear that such concerns were not limited to the Antiochenes, nor do they themselves apply such methods consistently.²⁰ Any difference there might be between Alexandrian and Antiochene approaches cannot simply be explained by method. More recently it has been asserted that what characterizes their exegesis is not simply that they used the book of Kings to supply the *historia* of David’s life, contextualizing particular Psalms within its narrative (which was and is a common practice), but “that the narrative of the historical books completely controls and restricts the meaning of other texts,” even if some allegorical interpretation is occasionally used to make the Psalms fit such a mold. The Psalms do not speak of Christ, for David belongs to the narrative stream of “the old age” rather than the “new age” of Christ, which has its own narrative. As such, their stricter

18. As Young puts it: “No Antiochene could have imagined the critical stance of the Biblical Theology movement, explicitly locating revelation not in the text of scripture but in the historicity of events behind the text, events to which we only have access by reconstructing them from the texts, treating the texts as documents providing historical data” (*Biblical Exegesis*, 167).

19. *Commentaire sur les Psaumes*, ed. R. Devreesse, Studi e Testi, 93 (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939), 121; cited in Greer, *Theodore*, 110.

20. John J. O’Keefe, “‘A Letter that Killeth’: Towards a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8:1 (2000), 83-104.

application of exegetical method brought to light the limitations with the method itself. It failed not because their method was not as adequate as the tools of modern criticism, nor because it was not sufficiently appreciated. It failed because “the school method suffered more from theological limitations. It was simply not up to the task of uniting the stories of Ancient Israel and Jesus of Nazareth. . . . Antiochene commitment to method would end up creating an interpretative style that emptied the Old Testament of theological and, more significantly, christological references.”²¹ Concerned as they were for the sequence and coherence of the narrative, horizontal connections appeared self-evident to Diodore and Theodore, while any vertical connection was bound to appear arbitrary. Their restrictive assumptions about what a text might mean, however, put them at odds with the Christian tradition as a whole, which depends upon figural reading, especially in the case of the Old Testament, for “some figural reading is necessary to transform the text into something that the Christian community can use and ‘imitate.’ . . . In the end, Antiochene exegesis failed precisely because it did not appreciate how central a Christ-centered figural reading of the Old Testament was to its appropriation by the Christian Church.”²²

The problem presented by Antiochenes such as Diodore and Theodore was that instead of starting with the opening of the scriptures in the light of the passion as with the earlier theological tradition culminating in the Nicene Faith affirmed at the Council of Constantinople, their starting point (different as this was to both opponents of Nicaea and supporters such as Apollinarius) was the *historia* of the New Testament, which they treated with all the tools they had from their rhetorical training, tools that they shared with their opponents. The novelty of both the exegesis and Christological reflection of Diodore and Theodore was that they treated the Old Testament as a distinct narrative from the New, and consequentially “the man” as a distinct subject from the Word.

Continuing to Search

There are many more things that could be said with regard to the way in which early Christians read the scriptures. So far the focus has been the framework within which reading practices were established, and considered briefly the intersection between Christology and exegesis, especially the

21. O’Keefe, “Antiochene Exegesis,” 92-94.

22. *Ibid.*, 96.

contrast between approaches of Alexandria and Antioch, and the intriguing ways in which the latter parallel the modern concerns and presuppositions. There is much more that could be said about the way in which the scriptures were read in the desert, memorized and meditated upon, as part of the ascetic struggle, or in liturgy and hymnography. The way of reading the scriptures as explained by Irenaeus is intrinsic to Christianity. One could say that a great deal of the modern confusion results from detaching the New Testament from the constellation of elements—the scriptures (the Old Testament), canon, tradition, and succession—in which it came to be. Yet this framework is no more than just that—a framework within which one can come to know Christ, to respond in a meaningful way to the question that he poses: “who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15).

The answer to this question does not lie in a historical analysis of the texts of the New Testament—to find out what they *meant*—but in responding to Christ now, discovering what the scriptures *mean*. Christ remains the “coming one,” who opens the scriptures to his disciples so that they can come to know him as Lord. This demands, of those who would be his disciples, a continuing engagement with the scriptures, in the context of tradition and following the rule of truth, an engagement in which students of the Word are also “interpreted” by the Word as they put on the identity of Christ. Tradition is the continuity of this interpretative engagement with the scriptures in the contemplation of Christ, as delivered (“traditioned”) by the apostles. The faith delivered by the apostles “once for all” (Jude 3) is thus an active, dynamic movement. Tradition, therefore, is not a refuge, something that one can passively lay claim to, but a challenge, forcing to engage with the scriptures to contemplate Christ, who always remains the coming one, learning to put on his identity, so that when he appears we shall be like him (1 Jn. 3:2). Moreover, this is a task that cannot be avoided: even when the Baptist was imprisoned and sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the coming one or shall we look for another?,” Jesus did not give a straightforward answer, but directed him to signs—the blind seeing, the lame walking—which can only be understood as “messianic” through the interpretation of them by the scriptures (Matt. 11:2-5).

This is a task which lies before each and every one who would respond to Christ. The appeal to a canon of truth was not meant to curtail thought, but to ensure that it did not dissolve into endless regression or mythology. The canon functions to make genuine theological reflection possible. “The rule did not limit reason to make room for faith, but used faith to make

room for reason. Without a credible first principle, reason was lost in an infinite regress.”²³ And as Christ is the treasure hidden in the scriptures, the scriptures will themselves yield abundant riches as disciples continue to contemplate the precious pearl that is Christ. As St Ephrem of Syria, in the 4th century, put it:

If there were [only] one meaning for the words [of the scriptures], the first interpreter would find it, and all other listeners would have neither the toil of seeking nor the pleasure of finding. But every word of our Lord has its own image, and each image has its own members, and each member possesses its own species and form. Each person hears in accordance with his capacity, and it is interpreted in accordance with what has been given to him.²⁴

This is a creative task, to be engaged in by each generation as it appropriates the apostolic deposit and proclaim it anew under the inspiration of the same Spirit, so preserving the youthfulness of the church: as St Irenaeus put it, the preaching of the prophets and apostles, preserved in the church and received from the church, is constantly renewed by the Spirit of God, “as if it were a precious deposit in an excellent vessel, so causing the vessel itself containing it [i.e. the church] to be rejuvenated also.”²⁵ That is, by preserving the preaching of the church, the apostolic deposit, which the Spirit of God continually makes flourish, the church itself is rejuvenated.

This tradition, with its own proper hypothesis and canon or creed, calls for continual reflection. And of course the centuries that followed did so reflect and used all the means at their disposal. And there are now many monuments to this continual engagement with the gospel proclaimed in accordance with the scriptures—writings of the Fathers and saints, schools of iconography and hagiography and so on—all of which have a certain authority to the extent that they point to the same vision of the King, the gospel image of Christ. The Word grows, as Acts puts it (Acts 6:7), in that as more and more people believe it and reflect on it, there are ever new, more

23. E. Osborn, “Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 40–61, at 57.

24. St Ephrem of Syria, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, trans. C. McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.22.

25. St Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3.24.1.

detailed, and comprehensive explanations elaborated in defense of one and the same faith, the faith in what has been delivered from the beginning, the gospel according to the scriptures, the same Word of God—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever (Heb. 13:8).

A Response to John Behr

Margaret Barker

John Behr began with Jesus' words in St John's gospel: "Search the scriptures for they speak of me" (John 5:39), and he gave as one of the examples the story of Jesus explaining the scriptures to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, how the Anointed One had to suffer and enter into his glory. This story shows that the original framework for understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ was found in the Hebrew scriptures, and that Jesus himself taught this. But here is the first problem: what texts in the Hebrew scriptures did Jesus use to show that the Anointed One had to suffer and enter his glory? *The Hebrew text used today has no such prophecies.*

The example from St Paul presents a similar problem. "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, he was buried and he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). In the Hebrew scriptures used today, there are no obvious texts that say this.

Evidence from the time of Jesus, however, shows that there was another version of Isaiah which did clearly identify the suffering servant as the Anointed One in the way that the present Hebrew text does not, and furthermore suggests that he saw the glory after his sufferings. The text is the Qumran Isaiah Scroll, which existed in the time of Jesus. The Targum of Isaiah, the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text that incorporates material from this period, also knew that the suffering servant was the Anointed One.

An important problem that underlies any discussion of how the early Fathers interpreted the scriptures is what texts did they use, and how and when did those texts change to become what we they are today? In the New Testament, the Letter of Jude quotes from the prophecies of Enoch—a text now known from Qumran—but this is only in the Old Testament of the Ethiopian Church. When Jesus expounded Moses and all the prophets on the road to Emmaus, what prophets did he quote?

There are many quotations of prophecies in early Christian writings that cannot now be found in the Old Testament: the Letter of Barnabas

has several, including some that can be identified as coming from Enoch. Justin, writing in the mid-2nd century, showed that the Christian message was proclaimed *in terms of fulfilled prophecies*, and accused the Jews of altering important texts and even removing them from the Hebrew scriptures (*Trypho* 71). There is sufficient evidence from the fragments of Hebrew text found at Qumran to show that Justin was describing what actually happened: key texts that the Christians used were in the older Hebrew text but not in the post-Christian form that is used today.

Origen, when he began his great work on the texts of the scriptures, recognised that there were passages in the Christian Old Testament that were not in the text currently used by the Jews, and he was prepared to use the “Jewish” version of the Hebrew scriptures as the basis for discussion with them. Jerome also chose the Hebrew text current in his time as the basis for his Latin, despite Augustine’s warning that it would have disastrous consequences, since it implied that the Greek text was defective (Jerome *Letters* 104). Jerome said that by adopting their text, it would put an end to the Jews’ claim that the church had false scriptures (*Preface to Isaiah*). The question to ask is not only “Did the Greek and Latin Fathers read the scriptures differently?” but “Did they read different scriptures?”

This is true also for the New Testament. There is clear evidence that the New Testament text was changed during transmission to remove difficulties and interpretations that the church could not accept. St Luke’s account of Jesus’ baptism in the Codex Bezae has the heavenly voice declare, ‘You are my son. Today I have begotten you’ (Luke 3:22). Evidence from the 2nd and 3rd centuries suggests that this was the original reading,¹ but later texts had the form found in Mark: “With you I am well pleased.” The “difficult” reading became part of the old Syrian baptism rite (*Didascalia* 93). St Luke’s account of the last supper in the Codex Bezae does not mention the covenant cup (Luke 22:19b-20). These are but two examples of major variants. Which scriptures, then, both Old and New Testaments, did the Fathers read?

Irenaeus, who is such an important source for knowing how the scriptures were read, quoted sayings of Jesus not found in the New Testament, which he had learned from Papias, who had learned them from John (*Against Heresies* 5.33). He used these to show that Jesus taught about the millennial kingdom on earth, and that this was what St Paul had meant when he wrote

1. B. D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 62-67.

about the creation being released from bondage to decay (Rom. 8:19-21). Clement of Alexandria knew a saying of Jesus not found in the New Testament: “My mystery is for me and the sons of my house” (Misc 5.10 also in *Clem Hom* 19.20). It derived from the Targum to Isaiah 24:16, the words of the Righteous One, where the house means the temple. The Christians also preserved 2 Esdras, which says there were 94 books of Hebrew scriptures, of which only 24 could be made public—the Hebrew canon as we know it today. The other 70, the most important books, were to be kept only for the wise, for in them was understanding, wisdom and knowledge (2 Esd. 14.45-47).

Did the early Christians regard the books or teachings not in the public canon as more important? Maybe the mystery was kept for the sons of the temple? St Basil, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, wrote of teaching handed down in a mystery by the tradition of the apostles, which accounted for beliefs and practices for which there was no basis in the scriptures. These teachings concerned fundamental aspects of Christian worship, such as anointing, baptizing, and the epiclesis. The generation that taught St Basil (born in 330 CE) had formulated the Nicene Creed, and St Basil himself composed one of the great liturgies of the Orthodox Church. It is an interesting exercise to see how much of the creed and the liturgy can be rooted directly in the scriptures, and what might have come from the “unwritten” temple tradition.

Fr John made the important point that the Tradition existed before the New Testament writings, and that the person and work of Jesus Christ were expounded by means of imagery drawn from the Old Testament. The question is: Did the original Christian interpreters of the Hebrew scriptures re-use them, or simply use them? Was their way of reading the scriptures an innovation? Justin [and others] emphasized the fulfilment of prophecy, a continuity with the Hebrew scriptures. This does not necessarily imply a re-use, or using them in a different way. The Old Testament is certainly a compendium of words and images used to describe Christ, and the older scriptures were understood by Christians in the light of Jesus’ death and resurrection. But this was not necessarily a new way of reading the scriptures. It cannot be said with certainty that the older scriptures “acquired a coherence and unity” that they had not previously had.

The Qumran texts have shown how certain Hebrew texts were put side by side to describe, for example, the expected return of Melchizedek. Until these were found, nobody had guessed that these texts were related to each

other. It may be that the church took over an existing way of reading the Hebrew scriptures, similar to that attested at Qumran, and that it was not necessary to re-use the scriptures but simply to use them. Hence the argument that the scriptures were fulfilled, and the reason for certain key scriptures to be removed from the text. Irenaeus hints at this when he says, as Fr John quoted, that the one who reads the scriptures in this way is transfigured. The older way of reading the Hebrew scriptures was full of temple imagery, in which the one who looked upon the Lord was transfigured. The original meaning of Israel was “the one who has looked on God,” and so those who found Christ in the Old Testament were similarly transfigured.

It was Jewish scholars who devised a new way of reading the Hebrew scriptures in reaction to the Christian claims. Jacob Neusner, a distinguished Jewish scholar, showed how when Christians were finding Jesus in the Old Testament, Jews writing in Roman Palestine developed a counterpart exegesis. “They clearly treated with reticence and mainly through allusions, the perfectly available conception of God as incarnate.”² The greatest Jewish scholars were occupied during the early Christian era with a debate about the two powers in heaven: How many Gods were there? The belief that the Lord could be seen in human form, and that there was “another” who was never seen, was part of the older temple tradition that had been eclipsed by the dominant Deuteronomists, who emphasized the history of their people and the law of Moses, Hebrew monotheism (i.e., with no plurality of persons), and that the Lord was never seen.

These two strands in the Hebrew tradition are very similar to the two ways of reading the scriptures associated with the Antiochenes and the Alexandrians. Fr John showed how the Antiochene method of interpretation found great favour with 19th- and 20th-century scholars, who recognized in Theodore someone doing biblical scholarship in the way they did: the real history, the story of salvation. Fr John quoted John O’Keefe:

Antiochene commitment to method would end up creating an interpretative style that emptied the Old Testament of theological and more importantly Christological references . . . Antiochene exegesis failed precisely because it did not appreciate how central a Christ-centred figural reading of the Old Testament was to its appropriation by the Christian Church.

2. Jacob Neusner, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 196.

(This, incidentally, is why contemporary Old Testament study has so little relevance to the church.)

Fr John emphasized *the assumption* that the Old Testament was primarily concerned with something other than the Messiah, and so had to be reworked for Christian use. The two testaments were not seen by the Christians as distinct, but as parts of the one revelation. Irenaeus spoke of recapitulation, of the Old Testament figures being representative, and the story, in effect, being re-run. The Bible is one story.

The figurative or allegorical way of reading the scriptures associated with Alexandria has been somewhat devalued by associating it with Platonism, but maybe this characteristically Christian way of reading should be re-examined. Philo, the great example of this approach, was not simply adapting Hebrew tradition to suit contemporary philosophical fashions. *He was expressing ancient temple traditions in Greek*, and these corresponded, in many ways, to Platonism. What has often been identified as Platonism in the Alexandrian tradition is likely to have been the original temple, and therefore Christian, way of reading the Hebrew scriptures. The Jews always claimed that Plato had learned from Moses, and the traditional life of Pythagoras said that he spent his youth in “Syria” learning from the temple there. That the Timaeus is derived from temple thought is very clear to anyone who does not bring the usual assumptions to the texts.

Philo spoke of the Second God; Adam was made in the likeness of the Second God, the Logos (Qu Gen II.62). Other titles that he gives to the Second God show that he was described as the high priest of the original Jerusalem temple. The Logos was the Firstborn, “neither uncreated as God, nor yet created as [human beings]” (*Heir* 206). The Logos was Yahweh, or the angel of Yahweh, which meant Yahweh in visible form. The Old Testament theophanies for Philo were appearances of the Logos. The Logos was seen, so maybe “Word” is not the best translation. The Logos was the manifestation of the Second God in human form.

This is exactly how the earliest Christians understood the Old Testament appearances of the Lord. Justin proved there was a Second God mentioned in the scriptures by citing the appearances of Yahweh (*Trypho* 56-62; 126ff); Irenaeus in his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, shows that he read the Old Testament in this way too: it was the Son who was the agent of creation, who appeared to Abram at Mamre and to Jacob at Bethel, and led Israel from Egypt (2, 43ff). He ends his *Proof* with a solemn warning against those who wander from the truth, which must have included this way of

reading the Old Testament. Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Novatian, all read the Old Testament this way, and Eusebius, in his *Preparation* and in his *Proof*, assumes this belief that Yahweh, the God of the Jews, was the Second Person whom they had known as Jesus. When Constantine had the great church built at Mamre, it was because the Son of God had appeared there to Abraham. “He who was born of a Virgin, there manifested himself to a godly man” (Sozomenes, *History* 2.4).

This is the most striking difference between the way the earliest Christians read the Old Testament and the way it is usually read today. The imposed ways of reading have created a vast number of problems for theology. The move from this early way of reading the scriptures is well illustrated by the decision to use Yahweh in the Old Testament of the (readers’ version of the) Jerusalem Bible, and Lord in the New Testament, thus severing the true link between the two testaments. The continuity between the Old and New Testament is that they bear witness to one Lord, and the early church found Christ the Lord in the Old Testament because he had always been there.

A Response to John Behr

Christopher A. Hall

For years Protestant evangelicals have affirmed *sola scriptura* and deeply questioned the need for any authorities or authority outside of the Bible itself.¹ All evangelicals have a deep trust in the veracity of the scripture. In turn, they also profoundly trust in the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit to make the meaning of the scriptures clear. Most evangelicals attend a church where the sermon—not infrequently lasting 45 minutes—is the primary focus. They expect their pastor to exegete the Bible thoroughly, faithfully, and insightfully.

Interestingly, evangelical pastors interpret the Old Testament much along the lines of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus; they are interested in authorial intent, the historical meaning of the text, and other cultural and linguistic issues. In a word, almost all evangelical pastors exegete the scriptures according to the grammatical-historical method, finally drawing what Christian applications may be available from the text. In this exegetical work, evangelical pastors draw on the best modern, conservative commentaries available, but largely ignore the church's exegetical tradition, often identifying tradition with ecclesial authority gone bad. This is a bit of a caricature: happily things seem to be changing.

Evangelicals—and Protestants as a whole—are increasingly aware of the problems and even dangers present in evangelical exegetical and historical shortsightedness. How so? More evangelicals—scholars and lay people alike—are contemplating the following questions: How can we be sure our pastors are interpreting the biblical text thoroughly, faithfully, and insightfully? Is our confidence in the veracity of our pastors' reading and interpretation of the Bible based solely on the illumination of the Holy Spirit within individual members of the congregation?

1. In my short response to John Behr's fine paper I want to specifically pose two questions that Behr's paper raises in my own mind and offer a proposal. While a member of the Anglican communion, I am particularly responding with evangelical concerns in mind.

The fundamental question evangelicals face is this: Are the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the interpretation of Holy Scripture individual or communal experiences and practices? Are they a mixture of the two? Evangelicals, while not deserting the grammatical-historical approach (Theodore and Diodore loom in the background, though most evangelicals wouldn't know who they are), are more clearly perceiving its limitations and are much more open to the christological interpretation offered by Father John Behr and, behind him, by ancient writers such as Irenaeus.

Does it sound overly optimistic? At first glance, the willingness of evangelicals to familiarize themselves with the church's tradition would appear less than happy. It is probably reasonable to say that a fair number of evangelicals attending church each Sunday have little interest in tradition and view tradition with suspicion and distaste. After all, is not a deep trust in the reliability of the Bible and its ultimate authority for the Christian community a hallmark of evangelicalism? For many evangelicals, tradition represents exegetical, theological, and ecclesial malformations that marked the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation, or to travel back much further, the various viruses that supposedly infected the church's bloodstream with the rise of Constantine to power over the Roman world, if not earlier.

Evangelicals have frequently viewed the 1st century as the age of apostolic clarity, with the period of the 2nd through the 15th centuries as an exegetical wasteland largely devoid of the Spirit's presence and leading. Hence, the exegesis and theology produced during these centuries remains for the most part unexplored territory for the evangelical mind. As Daniel Williams puts it, many continue to view this period as a long unfortunate lacuna to be avoided by "an ahistorical jump from the apostles to the sixteenth century," a bound that "typifies most of the theology and biblical exegesis done by evangelicals. Like *Superman*, they are able to leap over the patristic and medieval developments of Christianity with a single bound."² What is one to do?

This leads to the second question, the appropriation of the church's tradition and rule of faith by the evangelical world, an appropriation that must recognize the tradition as in some sense authoritative. The question is to what extent—a question inherent in the last pages of John Behr's paper.

2. D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition & Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 27.

The second question, then, centres on John Behr's call for Christians to continually reflect on the church's tradition and canon of truth or rule of faith. "And so there are now many monuments to this continual engagement with the gospel proclaimed in accordance with the scriptures—writings of the Fathers and saints, schools of iconography and hagiography and so on—all of which have a certain authority to the extent that they point to the same vision of the King, the gospel of Christ" (my emphasis).

The emergence of evangelical interest in the church fathers and how the Fathers interpret the scripture is an indication of the Holy Spirit's prompting, especially over the last twenty years. There is need for more than Bibles, modern commentaries, and the illumination of the individual. More and more, evangelical scholars—and some lay people—are recognizing that many of the greatest heretics were committed "Bible thumpers."

The question then becomes, "How can evangelicals—and other Protestants—most effectively draw upon the rich tradition Father Behr describes in his paper?" As Williams asks, "How is this continuity with the past ages supposed to work? How are we, in the postmodern era, able to incorporate the patristic thought-world into our own without due regard for some hermeneutical guidelines?"³

Who or what structure within the church possesses the competence to judge the validity of biblical interpretation and proposed developments in theological construction? Each believer? The believer's conscience? The Magisterium? Those who judge by their own conscience ought to be grounded in the scriptures, the history of the church's interpretation of the scriptures, and spiritually formed by the practices and perspectives present in the early church's rule of faith or, as Father John Behr puts it, "canon of truth." In order to resolve a disagreement concerning the scriptures, no progress will occur if there is nothing but the Bible to adjudicate.

Some other questions surface. Is the tradition of the church entirely reliable? To what degree or extent is the tradition authoritative? Is it not possible for the church to wander from its biblical moorings and for the tradition to mutate as a result? How can authentic developments in the church's tradition effectively and wisely be distinguished from mutations from the original DNA of the gospel?

3. Ibid., 33.

A Proposal: Protestants and the evangelical wing of the Protestant church must affirm the faith and confidence in the Bible as the fundamental resource for theological reflection and for the confirmation and correction of theological proposals.

Yet the Bible is always an interpreted text, and, as Father John Behr has pointed out, has Christ as its central focal point and climax. Evangelicals must learn to read the entire scriptural narrative more effectively and thoroughly through the christological lens that the biblical narrative provides: Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh for us and for our salvation. It is the end of the story that sheds light on each book and chapter. Christ is expected to be found in the Prophets, Psalms, and old covenant narrative. Evangelical “Theodores” and “Diodores” are called to listen more closely to the christological resonances in the text of the scriptures heard by Irenaeus and later by Cyril of Alexandria, among others.

Not only so, but Protestants are called to broaden their understanding and practice of the church’s Tradition. The church’s Tradition is larger and more extensive than summaries such as the rule of faith. The content and dynamic of Tradition includes

more than a repository of doctrinal propositions. It is a way of being educated, trained and formed in the virtues necessary for Christian life and good theologizing. Along with these virtues come various skills, patterns of experience, and habits of perception as well as pieces of knowledge. It’s like learning to be a musician or scientist: you don’t just learn a bunch of theories; you learn to become a kind of practitioner; as a result you perceive the world differently, make different kinds of judgments and live differently from someone who is unmusical or scientifically illiterate.⁴

Father John Behr makes much the same point: the writings of the fathers, iconography, hagiography, classical liturgies, hymnography, and the decisions of the councils all form and shape Christian habits of mind and body that—individually and communally—aid in entering more thoroughly into Christ as we think and live more deeply into the life of his body on earth—the church.

4. Personal email from Phillip Cary, 27 February 2007.

2. The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church in the Roman Catholic Church Today

Michel Van Parys

Vatican II: The Tradition of the Divine Revelation

Anyone who wishes to understand how the Roman Catholic Church conceives *today* the place and the authority of the church Fathers and of the first ecumenical councils has to start with the dogmatic *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum*[DV])¹ of Vatican II (approved in 1965).

The first two words *Dei Verbum*—“The Word of God”—indicate already the core of the constitution. “In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and came to share in the divine nature” (DV §2). Revelation thus imparts knowledge and life to those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of humankind and obey his words. Although he reveals himself obscurely in the creation, God revealed himself gradually in the history of salvation (*dispensatio=oikonomia*) through his words and his deeds (see Acts 1:1). “By this revelation . . . the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (DV §2). No further revelation is to be awaited before the second glorious coming of the Lord (DV §4).

Chapter 2 (DV §7-10) of the constitution is particularly relevant for our topic.² It puts the question of how this saving truth, revealed in the risen Lord by the power of the Spirit, operates throughout all human generations.

1. *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum: Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

2. See C. Theobald, “La transmission de la révélation divine”: à propos de la réception du chapitre II de “Dei Verbum,” *Vatican II et la théologie. Perspectives pour le XX^e siècle*, ed. P. Bordeyne et L. Villemin (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 107-126.

Christ himself “commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and to impart to them heavenly gifts” (DV §7). The preaching of the gospel was, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written down by the apostles and by their disciples (DV §7). The apostles left bishops as their successors in order to hand over the treasures of divine life encompassed in the sacred Tradition and the sacred scriptures of both the Old and New Testament (DV §7). All Christian generations should hold fast to this apostolic tradition (DV §8), which is one.

“This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit” (DV §8). This process of listening and understanding will last till Christ’s *parousia*. It is precisely in the more general framework of the Tradition (the teaching, life and worship of the church) that the Fathers of the church are mentioned. “The words of the holy fathers *witness* to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church” (DV §8).

The next paragraph exposes the intimate connection between the scriptures and Tradition, which flow from the same divine wellspring.

For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apostles and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that, led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it and make it more widely known. (DV §9)

The last paragraph of Chapter 2 (DV §10) indicates the role of the contemporary magisterium in the church:

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one

deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. (DV §10).

A few remarks can further clarify the teaching of the *Dei Verbum* on the “Divine Revelation”:

First: Chapter 2 makes a clear distinction between the tradition of the revelation as a process of reception and interpretation of the saving truth and the actual listening to the Word of God. “God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church and through her, in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe, and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them” (DV §8; see also DV §21 and §25). The Word of God is the main agent of the tradition throughout the history of the church.

Second, sacred Tradition is more than dogmas to believe. “What was handed on by the apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes” (DV §8).

Third, the church in the course of history receives and hands on (the *traditum tradendum*) through the *tradentes* the saving revealed truth. In this process the apostles, their successors, the contemporary magisterium, have a specific role under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ.

Fourth, and finally, the *Dei Verbum* marks a distinction between the “tradition which comes from the apostles” and that same tradition which “develops [*proficit*] in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit” (DV §8). But *Dei Verbum* does not clarify here the place and the authority of the Fathers of the church and of the first ecumenical councils in this broader understanding of what the sacred Tradition is.

A tentative answer, coherent with the absolute authority of the word of God in the church, can perhaps be found further on in *Dei Verbum*. The church Fathers have a special authority as interpreters of the divine scriptures. “The bride of the incarnate Word, the Church taught by the Holy Spirit, is concerned to move ahead toward a deeper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures so that she may increasingly feed her sons with the divine words. Therefore, she also encourages the study of the holy Fathers of both East and West and of sacred liturgies” (DV §23). In the same line the *Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church (Ad Gentes)* values a role for the Fathers

of the church in the inculturation of the gospel in new social-cultural areas (AG §22).³

On the practical level, the *Constitution on the "Sacred Liturgy"* (SC 92)⁴ recommends a more intensive reading of the church Fathers during the Latin Divine Office. The *Decree on Ecumenism* recommends the Catholic faithful to open their hearts and minds to the spiritual riches of Eastern monasticism and to read the Eastern Fathers (UR §15).⁵ Likewise the study of the Fathers of the church is a part of the formation to the priesthood (*Decree Optatam Totius* §16) and a Catholic priest is expected to nourish his faith and scriptural understanding in reading the Fathers (*Decree Presbyterorum Ordinis* §19).

Perhaps the finest text that reassumes what we have learned so far, and introduces a complementary dimension, that of a *variety of complementary traditions*, can be found in the *Decree on Ecumenism*:

What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine. In the study of revelation, East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God's truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting. Where the authentic theological traditions of the Eastern Church are concerned, we must recognize the admirable way in which they have their roots in Holy Scripture, and how they are nurtured and given expression in the life of the liturgy. They derive their strength too from the living tradition of the apostles and from the works of the Fathers and spiritual

3. *Decree, Ad Gentes: On the Mission Activity of the Church*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

4. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

5. *Decree on Ecumenism: Unitatis Redintegratio*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

writers of the Eastern Churches. Thus, they promote the right ordering of Christian life and, indeed, pave the way to a full vision of Christian truth. (UR §17)

The existence of different authentic theological and liturgical traditions does not impede the unity of faith. This matter of facts goes back to the church of the Fathers, as the Synod of the Confessors (Alexandria, 362) and the formula of union between Alexandria and Antioch after the Council of Ephesus (431) attest. It is this same insight and conviction that permitted popes Paul VI and John Paul II to sign doctrinal agreements with the patriarchs of some of the Oriental Orthodox churches and with the *Catholicos of the (Assyrian) Church of the East* (see John Paul II's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, §38 and §62).⁶

The Magisterium after Vatican II

A number of documents issued by the Holy See after Vatican II can lead to a better appreciation of the place and of the authority of the Fathers of the church in the ordinary teaching of the hierarchy. However, the different levels of authority of these documents should not be forgotten. Further, a more in-depth investigation should take into account how bishops (and priests) integrate the witness of the Fathers and the first ecumenical councils in their magisterial ministry.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)⁷

In October 1992, Pope John Paul II approved and endorsed the publication of a new compendium of the catholic faith. This *Catechism* was not intended to replace the existing and future catechisms of the particular churches. It should become a guide for pastors and faithful, on the universal level, to better understanding of the divine revelation. Quotations of the church Fathers and of the ecumenical councils are very numerous. The *Catechism* claims as its sources the sacred scriptures, the holy Fathers, worship, and magisterium (CCC §11). It considers the church Fathers as “an always actual witness of the tradition” (CCC §688).

6. *Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html.

7. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/eng0015/_index.htm.

It would take too long, but be nonetheless very useful, to study how the authority of Fathers function in the exposition of the Catholic faith.

The deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*) is contained in the scriptures and Tradition (CCC §84 and §97). A clear distinction, without separation, is affirmed between the apostolic tradition and the many subsequent theological, liturgical, canonical, and devotional traditions (CCC §83). Nevertheless the content of the Tradition is one and the same everywhere (CCC §172-175), with a strong invocation of the authority of St Irenaeus of Lyon. The Fathers of the church, witness of the living Tradition of the whole church, introduce to the faithful the spiritual meaning of the Bible (CCC §113). The celebration of the sacraments, and therefore the worship of the church, generation after generation, confesses the apostolic faith and constitutes an essential part of the sacred Tradition (CCC §1124-1126).

Pope John Paul II published three apostolic letters on Fathers of the church. *Patres Ecclesiae* was published in 1980 to commemorate the 1,600 years since the death of St Basil of Caesarea.⁸ *Augustinum Hipponensem* in 1986⁹ marked the anniversary of the conversion of St Augustine of Hippo as an occasion to recommend the study of his writings. Finally *Operosam Diem* in 1996 commemorated the 1,600 years since the death of St Ambrose of Milan.¹⁰ These documents stress the theological and pastoral actuality of the church Fathers and offer a brief outline of their teaching.

Most interesting is the attempt to define who are the Fathers of the church. Fathers are those who during the first Christian centuries were eminent in holiness and doctrine; therefore they are called “Fathers in the faith” (*Operosam Diem* §3). The apostolic letter on St Basil the Great is more explicit, saying that they are Fathers because, through the gospel, they have given their lives to the church. They were Fathers and remain Fathers of the church for all generations. Each Christian generation should then resort to their magisterium (*Patres Ecclesiae* §1).

8. *Speech of the Holy Father John Paul II to the General Chapter of the Order of St Basil the Great, July 8, 2000*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000708_basiliani_en.html.

9. *Apostolic Letter, Augustinum Hipponensem of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families and Faithful of the Whole Church on the Occasion of the 16th Centenary of the Conversion of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor, August 28, 1986*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_26081986_augustinum-hipponensem_en.html.

10. *Lettre Apostolique Operosam Diem De S. S. Jean-Paul Ii A L'occasion Du Xvième Centenaire De La Mort De S. Ambroise*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_01121996_operosam-diem_fr.html.

Some features of this magisterium are recurrently stressed. The Fathers have been models of pastoral service to the people of God, authorized interpreters of the word of God in the scriptures, defenders of the orthodox faith, teachers of spiritual perfection, and promoters of the dialogue between faith and reason.

Roman documents

The Roman Dicastery for Catholic Education published in 1989 a special document on *The Study of the Church Fathers*.¹¹ A close contact and a serious study of the Fathers of the church are recommended to all those who prepare for the ministry of priesthood. The Fathers are privileged witnesses of the living tradition in the church. Their spiritual and ecclesial exegesis of the scriptures remains valuable and inspiring. The canon of the scriptures has been fixed in the early church, as have been the *regula fidei* and the basic canonical discipline (*statuta Patrum*). Their contribution to the liturgies of the churches is invaluable. Although they lived and fostered a variety of ecclesial, theological, and catechetical traditions, they preserved the unity of faith and the link of charity. The writings of the Fathers contain treasures of spirituality, pastoral insight, and culture. They are the teachers of the Church today, as they have been it in their time (§20-24).

The Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993 published a document on *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*.¹² The integration of the ecclesial understanding of the scriptures, the insights of the patristic and medieval exegesis and of the fruits of the critical-historical approach, has been a major challenge for the church in the last two centuries. A few pages are dedicated to the place of their exegesis in the church today. Stressing their decisive importance for the establishment of the Christian canon of the scriptures and of the liturgical *Sitz im Leben* of the Christian assembly listening to the word of God, the document concludes: “The Fathers of the church teach us to read the Bible theologically, within the heart of a living tradition, with an authentic Christian spirit” (III, B, 2).

11. *Congregazione Per L'educazione Cattolica (Dei Seminari E Degli Istituti Di Studi), Istruzione Sullo Studio Dei Padri Della Chiesa Nella Formazione Sacerdotale, Roma 1989*, Litterae Encyclicae, at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19891110_padri_it.html.

12. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Pontifical Biblical Commission, 23 April 1993, available at the Catholic Resources for Bible, Liturgy, Art, and Theology website: http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm.

Pope Benedict XVI in his weekly catechesis presented different Fathers of the church, intending to foster a better knowledge and a greater love of the church Fathers and to remind us of their special place and authority in the life of the people of God.

Some Questions

Forty years ago, the then professor J. Ratzinger published an important essay on the meaning of the church Fathers for the contemporary church.¹³ He stressed the primordial importance of the first answer (*Ant-wort*) given by the church of the Fathers to the word (*Wort*) of God. He discerned four main contributions they have given to the church of all times. They fixed the biblical canon, according to and inspired by its liturgical setting; they established the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*) against doctrinal and moral deviations; they elaborated the fundamental structures of the liturgical traditions of the churches; they became the initiators of theological reflection, confronting faith and reason. Furthermore, they are the theological teachers of the undivided church. These four contributions do not contradict the more traditional definition of a church Father: antiquity, orthodoxy, holiness, teaching, ministry. But it puts aside the question of antiquity. When does the patristic period come to an end? And what relation do the church Fathers have to the “teachers of the Church” (*doctores Ecclesiae*)? A *doctor Ecclesiae* in the Latin Church, as a witness of the gospel, has a special teaching authority for the church and constitutes a special category in the Latin Missal and Breviary. Not all the Fathers of the church are *doctores*, and some *doctores* (men and women) lived not so long ago.

The question thus is that of the ongoing living Tradition, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit: How can the special authority of the Fathers (*consensus Patrum?*) of the church in the Tradition be defined, and what about the authority of individual Fathers? How can we appreciate the theological method of (Western?) theologians who, besides the scripture, used the Fathers as *auctoritates* more than as *auctoritas*?

No less important seems the question of how the ecumenical councils, the Fathers, the liturgical traditions of the churches, the *sensus fidei* of the

13. J. Ratzinger, “Die Bedeutung der Väter für die gegenwärtige Theologie,” *Klèronomia* 1 (1968), 15-36. See also, M. Van Parys, “Le rôle de la théologie patristique dans l’avenir de l’œcuménisme,” *Irénikon* 44 (1971), 7-22.

whole people of God, form a harmonious “symphony.” What is the Tradition and what are the traditions? Can the ongoing reception of the Word of God (the dialogue between Christ and the Bride, as Vatican II recalls) be theologically defined as the sacred Tradition? Can Christians learn today to receive together the sacred Tradition, and if yes, how?

A Response to Michel Van Parys

Catherine E. Clifford

Michel Van Parys has helpfully identified the important sources for the Catholic Church's understanding of the place and the authority of the church Fathers in the expression of Catholic doctrine and for understanding their role in contemporary theology.

Patristic Tradition: The Sacred Scriptures and Living Word

It is not insignificant that one must turn first to the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* to gain an appreciation of the place and role of the church Fathers in Catholic theology and teaching. The council presents them as authoritative receivers of the word of God revealed in Jesus Christ and passed on to us in the writings of the sacred scriptures. Indeed, many early Christian writings are commentaries, in one form or another, upon the texts of the Old and New Testaments, unfolding for us the works of God in the history of salvation and, in the case of the mystagogical writings, on the nature of our participation in God's saving acts through the mysteries of the church, the sacraments. This same word of God enlivens the living faith tradition of the church. The writings of the church Fathers give expression not merely to personal opinion or to theological speculation, but to the living faith a whole community. They are much more than a mechanical repetition of platitudes or propositions. Their intention is to promote and inform the Christian community's life of faith in fidelity to those first witnesses of the resurrection whose testimony is recognized in the canon of the scriptures. Thus, the "reception" of the works of the Fathers of the church is itself a testimony to and a confirmation of their value as witnesses of a living tradition.

The Apostolicity of the Patristic Witness

It has been noted that many of the “Fathers” were bishops and successors to the apostles, charged with the pastoral office of teaching. While this is one way to consider the apostolic nature of their authority,¹ such an explanation does not fully explain the apostolicity of their witness. Indeed, from the 4th century onward, it became customary to appeal to the “Fathers” as authoritative witnesses to orthodox Christian belief. During the 5th-century controversies relating to Christology much was made of the “proof of the fathers.”² However, not all of these writers were bishops. Augustine includes Jerome, a simple presbyter, among the “Fathers” whom he considered to be reliable witnesses to the faith of the church (*Contra Julian* 1.7.34).³ Thus, the “apostolicity” of the writings of the church Fathers is due perhaps less to their carrying on the mission of the apostles through the ministry of the episcopate, than in their ability to articulate the living faith of the church, a faith inherited from those first witnesses. In other words, the authority of their writings is derived less from ecclesiastical office than from the authoritative character of their witness: they are exemplary expressions of the faith of the church. *Dei Verbum* points to this fact when it insists: “The words of the holy Fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying church” (§8).

1. In speaking of the “apostolic” character of these writings, I mean to use the term more broadly than the customary designation of “apostolic Fathers,” which is applied to the earliest witnesses who were active in apostolic times (e.g.: Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and the author of the *Didache*). Our focus is on these works as witnesses to the faith of the apostles.

2. Eastern liturgical texts consider Basil the Great, Gregory of Naziansus, and John Chrysostom as “great ecumenical teachers.” By the 9th century in the West, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great are considered distinguished teachers (doctors) of the church. To the three great bishops of the East, the Pope Pius V added Athanasius in 1568. See Lloyd G. Paterson, “Fathers of the Church,” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York and London: Garland, 1990), 345.

3. Origen, too, remained a presbyter and was never ordained a bishop. Tertullian, the first apologist among the Western Fathers, is thought to have been a presbyter, or possibly a layman.

The Ecclesial Reception of the Patristic Witness

To understand this, it is perhaps worth recalling the criteria that the church has traditionally invoked in discerning those who belong to this category of authoritative witnesses or teachers (doctors). The church understands this group of early Christian writers as distinguished for the orthodoxy of their doctrine and holiness of life, and thus formally recognizes them as witnesses of its faith. By recognizing their work as doctrinally orthodox, this does not mean that all of their works are free from error, or that all of their insights and opinions have been embraced or received into the teaching of the church.⁴ In general, their works are received for having made an original contribution or profound penetration, or again for shedding new light upon one or more significant aspects of revelation. Similarly, the criterion of holiness has not involved formal canonization in every case. In the very least, these writers, who offer an exemplary insight into the Christian faith, are known for their ordinary Christian virtue, and for having remained in communion with the orthodox faith of the church.

The final criterion is most important for the reflection on the theme of the authority of the church Fathers and their significance for the unity of the church. These early Christians and their writings have been formally, or at least implicitly, recognized and approved by ecclesiastical authorities as authentic witnesses to the faith.⁵ The fact of their reception points to the ecclesial—or as stated above, the “apostolic”—character of their writings. Reception may be expressed through the inclusion of their insights in the declarations of ecumenical councils, by the inclusion of their stories in the martyrology of the church, by the citation of their words in the liturgy, and by honouring these doctors (i.e., teachers) of the church in the calendar of

4. Thus, for example, the church did not receive all of Origen's views concerning the subordination of the logos, nor did it follow Tertullian's later evolution toward Montanist perspectives. Similarly, not all of Augustine's negative views on human sexuality or on the use of violence to persuade heretics (the Donatists), written in moments of polemical debate, are embraced by the church. As one final example, the anti-Jewish sentiments of John Chrysostom, penned in a period of tension between Jewish and Christian communities, are not considered today to be in harmony with the gospel.

5. The Catholic Church has continued to recognize exemplary teachers or “doctors” of the faith, whose writings do not share the characteristic “antiquity” of the early Christian writers. Among them one might consider Anselm, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas. More recently, Pope Paul VI declared the first women doctors of the church: Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena in 1970. Pope John Paul II recognized Thérèse of Lisieux among the doctors of the church in 1997.

liturgical feasts and memorials.⁶ These actions reflect the engagement of the church in an act of reception, and confirm that their writings have given voice to the consciousness of faith of the whole church (*sensus fidelium*). The church Fathers have therefore served, in the past, as a unifying force or a clarifying influence in moments of controversy and of significant development in the understanding of Christian doctrine.

Patristic Sources and the Search for Unity in Faith

What are the role and the authority of the church Fathers today and their possible role in service to the search for the unity of faith? Most of the traditions are unlikely to call into question their significance in the formation of Christian theology in the first millennium. The question is: If their works have been a significant point of reference for the theology and teaching of church in the past, can they continue to do so in the third millennium? Can these works, which were a force of unity in the first millennium, continue to provide a common horizon for today and in the future?

Despite the many salutary affirmations of the magisterium concerning the significance of the church Fathers, their significance is not always carefully considered in contemporary discussion of hermeneutics within circles of Catholic theology today. Many currents of contemporary theology, especially streams of liberation theology and various forms of contextual theology, take contemporary experience as their point of departure and place an emphasis on the individual subject. Some of these currents are driven by a hermeneutic of suspicion. In many cases they offer a valuable and constructive critique of past expressions of Christian theology and praxis. However, they run the risk, at times, of losing sight of the enduring values of the faith that continue to make the church Fathers an important source for theology. The challenge of contemporary theology is to find a way to wed this search for orthodox Christian praxis with an engagement in the act of re-receiving and re-actualizing the tradition of the church. To do this, one must take seriously the works of the church Fathers not only as signposts in

6. Of the 33 "Doctors of the Church" listed by the Catholic Church and commemorated in the liturgy, 17 are from the patristic period (if one considers it broadly as concluding with John of Damascus). All 17 of these are also honoured in the calendars of Eastern Orthodox churches: Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Athanasius, Isidore, Peter Chrysologus, Leo the Great, Hilary of Poitiers, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, John of Damascus, Bede the Venerable, and Ephrem the Syrian.

the historical development of Christian theology, but as continuing to bear witness to the living faith of the church.

The 20th century has proven the capacity of the church Fathers to be a unifying influence. Indeed, the renewal of the Catholic Church begun by the Second Vatican Council and the momentous turn from a dynamic of separation to a dynamic of unity in its relationship with other Christian churches is inseparable from the rediscovery of the Fathers of the church. Renewed interest in patristic studies made a significant contribution to the renewal of Catholic theology. This is most evident in the recovery of the understanding of the church as a communion of diverse local churches and in the renewal of the Roman rite of the liturgy and of the sacramental life of the church. The double challenge of Pope John XXIII, that the church be renewed at once by an updating (*aggiornamento*) and a movement of *ressourcement* is a perennial task. It cannot be emphasized enough that the return to the common sources of faith has been a key to the remarkable *rapprochement* in the nigh fifty years since Vatican II. Indeed, the council would not have been the momentous event that it was without the arduous work of patristic scholars in the century that preceded it. The Second Vatican Council might be seen as a significant moment of re-receiving and revaluing many perspectives of the church Fathers in the life of the Catholic Church. Returning to this heritage has meant returning to the patrimony that the Catholics share with many other Christians.

A Response to Michel Van Parys

Emmanuel Anya Anyambod

For Christians, the belief is that all have a common ancestry and descent, in spite of differences of opinion that shape the interpretations of texts of various traditions and heritages.

Michel Van Parys's paper starts off with an invitation to those who wish to understand the place and authority of the Roman Catholic Church Fathers to start with the dogmatic 1965 *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* of Vatican II. His starting point is with dogmatic positions, though mentioning *Dei Verbum*. Reformers would normally start with the word of God as found in the Holy Bible. Dogmatic statements are more dividing than uniting.

Roman Catholics and Protestants agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God. But it remains an unresolved issue that the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers including the pronouncement of church councils (e.g., Trent, 1549) should be placed on the same footing with the authority of the Bible. Apocryphal books no longer pose a big problem to some Protestants, although it is known that neither Christ nor the apostles quoted from them. The Bible presents itself as witness and confession rather than scientific truth.

While the Roman Catholic Church regards the deposit of faith to be contained in the scriptures and Tradition, Protestants still insist on the centrality of the Bible for the verification of religious truth. The secrets of God are inaccessible to human beings except through self-revelation in Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. Revelation is outside of the control of human beings.

The study of patristics is important to trace common origin and relive the difficulties and problems encountered as Christianity gained roots in various individual and collective lives. It helps to understand some of the theological debates within the church. The study of the Fathers is selective; especially their texts that are inspiring for contemporary faith issues. There has never been an official list of those who qualified to be included

among the church Fathers. The title is applied to all those whose writings contributed to the clarification of the Christian faith or theology within the early church. To read church Fathers in order to justify different positions today would be both misunderstanding and misleading, but they cannot be ignored in the theological reflections.

Although the Fathers decided on the canon of the Bible and other issues they considered heretical, they differed in their understanding and interpretation of the scope of biblical content. To what extent is the Bible the word of God and to what extent is it the word of human beings?

Michel Van Parys has laid a good foundation for dialogue with the ecumenical movement, but in order to understand and appreciate his contribution it is first of all necessary to study the documents of Vatican II from which he heavily draws his inspiration.

Reading the church Fathers is a search for criteria as part of the foundation of theological judgments. It is a search for “faith seeking understanding” (Augustine). Faith is a personal response to Christ, and corporate participation in the church comes before dogmatics. Faith is situational, functional, historical, and always struggling to articulate itself in human language and symbols. As such, faith is not identical with doctrinal faith statements that have been put together through the centuries. As a personal response, faith remains always an interpretation. The Bible remains unique, unchanged, unchangeable, and responds to all situations at any and at all times.

3. Where Does Patristic Authority Fit in the Orthodox Conception of Church Order?

John A. McGuckin

The Orthodox Sense of Tradition

One of the most commonly used phrases in the theological vocabulary of the Orthodox is: “The Holy Tradition.”¹ For most non-Orthodox, the concept probably suggests a retrogressive mentality that is not able to address the present era. The Orthodox do not understand the concept of “the Tradition” in that stultifying manner. For Eastern Christianity, Tradition is the gateway to the theology of revelation. Orthodoxy understands the holy Tradition to be the essence of the life-saving gospel of Christ brought to the world through the church by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. The Tradition is, theologically speaking, how the Spirit is experienced within the church of Christ as the charism of truth.²

Tradition in this sense is not something that is past-looking only (obsessed with traditions and precedents). It bases its claims to authenticity on the fact that it speaks the words of Christ in the here and now, faithful to his own Spirit; but as much as it looks to the past and stands in unbroken continuity with it, thus “passing on” the gospel of life (which is the root meaning of the word “Tradition”), it also looks to the future. The Tradition is the Spirit’s energy of proclaiming the gospel and energizing the church’s worship and knowledge of God in the present generation, and for future generations to come. The Orthodox, therefore, understand the holy

1. A fuller form of this paper can be found in John A. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church* (Oxford & New York: Blackwell-Wiley, 2008), chapter 2.

2. Very fine explanations of Orthodox Tradition can be found in George Florovsky, *Bible Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Collected Works, Vol. 1 (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972), and John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978). A fuller discussion of issues in this chapter can also be found in John A. McGuckin, “The Concept of Orthodoxy in Ancient Christianity,” *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 81 (1989), 5-23 and in “Eschaton and Kerygma: The Future of the Past in the Present Kairos—The Concept of Living Tradition in Orthodox Theology,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 42.3-4 (1998), 225-71.

Tradition to be venerable and hallowed from times past, but to be essentially charismatic, and alive, and full of the power and freshness of the Spirit of God, concerned with bringing new generations to Christ until the end of time: one of the basic functions of his earthly church.

For Irenaeus of Lyon, only the apostolic churches had the “charisma of truth.”³ This was manifested above all in the manner in which they interpreted the scriptures, soberly, and with catholic consensus.⁴

Irenaeus added to the vocabulary of Tradition theology when he developed the argument that the key to biblical interpretation was the “Canon of truth,”⁵ which in the Latin version of his works gave to the West, decisively so in the hands of Tertullian,⁶ the principle of the *Regula Fidei*, or *Regula Veritatis*.⁷ This “Rule,” Irenaeus says, is the strongest refutation of gnostic variability, for it is maintained in all the churches and goes back to the apostles. Apostolic succession, then, is not primarily a matter of succession of individual bishops one after another, but the succession of apostolic teaching from the time of apostles to the present.⁸

3. St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau et al, SC 263-4, 293-4, 210-11, 100, 152-3 (Books 1-5 respectively) (Paris: Cerf, 1979, 1982, 1974, 1965, 1969), 4.26.2. Eng. trans. at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>.

4. It was in this context he developed his famous image of the “interpretative key” (*Hypothesis*) which the church has and others outside do not possess. It was to grow into the fuller patristic concept of the *Mens Ecclesiae*, the “Mind of the Church,” what St Athanasius was to call the church’s “instinctive knowing” (*dianoia*) and its sense of the overall “intentionality” (*skopos*) of the scriptures and Tradition, namely the comprehensive overview given to the Spirit-illuminated faithful, which was radically partialized and distorted by gnostics who create a *hairesis* as their alternative to the Tradition. For Irenaeus, the heretics were those who did not possess the “key” to the scriptures. They re-assembled the pieces of the mosaic of the King and made it up again from the original parts, but now representing a dog; claiming that theirs was an authentic image because their mosaic squares were original. *Against the Heresies*, 1.8.1.

5. *Against the Heresies*, 3.2.1. The *Kanon Tes Aletheias*. He speaks of the church having the “body of truth”: *Against the Heresies*, 2.27.1.

6. Tertullian pressed the legal context much more than Irenaeus. For him tradition was transmitted within the churches that were linked by “familial” apostolic relationship. Tradition is thus the legal patrimony of the apostolic churches: a patrimony that is the legacy left by the legal founder of a corporation. It belongs only to the legitimate heirs. False pretenders to the legacy, such as the heretics, must be excluded by a legal *praescriptio*: that is, their claims are voided by default. *On the Prescription of Heretics*, 19-21.

7. The Rule of Truth, or of Faith.

8. “The apostolic tradition in the church, and the preaching of the truth have come down to us.” *Against the Heresies*, 3.3.3; see also, *ibid.*, 4.26.2; and 4.33.8.

Orthodoxy does not just hold to the Tradition, in this sense. It *is* the Tradition. It does not simply find the Tradition in its fundamental sources (such as the scriptures, the councils, the canons, the fathers, and the liturgy); it exemplifies and reveals the Tradition in its ongoing charismatic life. It is synonymous with the Tradition, because the Tradition itself is the communion of grace. Orthodoxy's life, as a church, is no more or less than a life lived in the grace of the Spirit of God: and the illumination of the Spirit is essential to that truth, conferring on the illumined servant of God the capacity for spiritual discernment, the knowledge of the difference between the ways of Christ, and the ways of the world. Orthodoxy has "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) and the possession of that *phronema* is what inspires the constant passion of the faithful to cling to the sacred gift of Christ's communication of the gospel to the church. This is a mystery ever ancient, ever new. The contemporary witness of the church is a sign of the life of the Spirit of the risen Christ which it can claim to experience directly, not only as mediated through historical report. The saving *kerygma*, therefore, cannot be located in any given age, or given priority in the past alone,⁹ as it is an eschatological mystery that is "re-enacted" always in the present *kairos* of God's grace.

It is, essentially, this spiritual *sobornost* (or catholicity) of the encounter of believers with the divine Spirit within the history of the church, and witnessed in its active *kerygma* from age to age, that is the guarantee of the church's essential catholicity. Because of its communion in the Lord, it has communion with itself across the ages, and through the different forms of its historical existence. This *sobornost*, what the Byzantine fathers called the redemptive mystery of *theosis*, is what constitutes both the church's ability to recognize itself from age to age, and its capacity to continue to offer its apostolic and saving *kerygma* to contemporary society, as from a living spring within itself, not as if taking words from a dead repository.

9. "That is why loyalty to tradition means not only concord with the past, but, in a certain sense, freedom from the past, as from some outward formal criterion. Tradition is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration. Tradition is not a principle striving to restore the past, using the past as a criterion for the present. Such a conception of Tradition is rejected by history itself, and by the consciousness of the church. Tradition is authority to teach, *potestas magisterii*, authority to bear witness to the truth. The church bears witness to the truth not by reminiscence or from the words of others, but from its own living, unceasing experience, from its catholic fullness." Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 47.

Sources of Authority in Orthodoxy

If one were to leave this broader discussion of the nature of sacred Tradition underlying Orthodoxy's apprehension of its "enclosure" in Christ, and its grasp of its self-identity as bearer of the gospel *kerygma* to the world, and come down, as it were, to the more concrete examples of "where" is this Tradition manifested and exemplified, then it would be relatively easy to synopsize. The fundamental bulwarks of the Orthodox faith are: the lives of the Spirit-filled elect, the holy scriptures, the ancient traditions manifested in the sacred liturgy and the church's ritual practices, the creeds and professions (*ekthesesis*) of the ecumenical councils, the great patristic writings defending the faith against heretical positions, the church's ever-deepening collection of prayers that have had universal adoption and enduring spiritual efficacy and, by extension, the wider body of the spiritual and ascetical writings of the saints of times past and present, the important writings of hierarchs at various critical moments in the more recent past which have identified the authentic Christian responses that ought to be affirmed in the context of new conditions and challenges prevailing after the patristic period. This last category is often known as the "Symbolical Books" of Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the "maintenance" of the sacred Tradition is the responsibility of the whole church by its holistic conscience of the faith (sometimes referred to in Latin terms as *sensus fidelium*).

Within the list of these great bulwarks of Tradition, there are hierarchies of importance, of course.¹⁰ The scriptures stand as far greater in moment, and richness, than any writing of the saints. But there is not a profound difference in order, and not a dissonance of quality; for it is the same Spirit who inspires saints in each generation, and inspires in them the same mind of the self-same Lord. The scriptures stand at the head of other bulwarks of the holy Tradition because they were the first written and didactic expression of the Tradition after the generation of the Lord Jesus and the apostles. But the church existed before it actually had a recognized New Testament, and the evangelical writings themselves were the first outflowings of the holy Tradition presided over by the Spirit of God. Similarly, the writings of the saints and fathers that have been gathered together across time were written under the inspiration of the same Spirit, offering clarifications of the same truth in different forms for different eras. The scriptures are qualitatively the

10. For a good recent discussion of authority-sources in Orthodoxy, see Peter Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006).

highest expression of the holy Tradition, but Orthodoxy does not “close” the ever-flowing river of inspiration from the Spirit in ways that some theological schools seem to do. For such reasons, the various bulwarks of the sacred Tradition are necessarily approached in a holistic and organically united fashion. The scriptures are read for what they are: part of the celebration of the mystery of resurrection within Christian worship. Equally, the conciliar formulations of doctrine are read for what they essentially were: exegetical commentaries on the holy scriptures that underlie them all. It is impossible to read any patristic text at all without recognizing that they are all, without exception, talking incessantly of either the scriptures or Christian worship.¹¹

All the elements of the holy Tradition are coherently bonded together in Orthodoxy, and they function to provide the church’s sense of its inner identity as Christ’s people. The fragmentation of the different parts of Tradition has always been regarded by the Orthodox as a sign of catastrophic ecclesial loss. It is the consensus of voice that matters: reading the Fathers within the scriptures; the scriptures within the horizon of the church; the liturgy within the context of prayer: all together forming a “seamless robe.” The seamless harmony of the whole Tradition shores up all the different parts, self-correcting and self-regulating in its wholeness. It ever converges to what it essentially is: not a systematician’s “reduction” of Christian faith in millions of propositions, rather the record of a whole people’s long pilgrimage towards God across the desert horizons of a long history, as well as a compass for keeping the right course for the future.

Orthodoxy’s Reading of the Scriptures

The Eastern church has a broad acceptance of many varied methods of exegesis; although it prescribes certain axiomatic attitudes to the sacred text as inescapably “ecclesial.”¹² In the first instance the sacred scriptures

11. The manner in which the Fathers have been appropriated in Western European academic traditions, largely as formulators of controversial dogmas, has heavily falsified their original intent; and while Orthodoxy is glad that a patristic revival has taken place in recent centuries, it often hardly recognizes them in the way they are presented as some kind of antique systematicians.

12. In other places and at different times I have tried to sketch out a survey account of Orthodoxy’s use and understanding of an ecclesial hermeneutic of the Holy Scriptures. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 102-110; McGuckin, “Recent Biblical Hermeneutics in Patristic Perspective: The Tradition of Orthodoxy,” in *Sacred Text and Interpretation: Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Studies. Papers in Honor of Prof. Savas Agourides*, ed. T. Stylianosopoulos (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Press, 2006), 293-324. (See also *Greek Orthodox Theological Review: Special Issue* 47:1-4 (2002).

collectively are regarded as authoritative because they are inspired by the divine Spirit and have the status of sacred revelations. They are in themselves a mystery of revelation; what some Western Christian traditions might call a “sacrament” of holiness. This reverential approach to the scriptures, especially in a liturgical ethos, is what we might call our first principle: a “Reading in the Ecclesia.”

The second principle, following from this directly, is that of a “Reading in Consonance.” It is perfectly expressed by St Athanasius the Great in the *De Incarnatione* (57.1-3) and by St Basil the Great in the *Treatise on the Holy Spirit* (9.23). Since the scriptures are given by the Spirit primarily for the edification of the Spirit’s elect, it therefore needs the Spirit’s insight before its full meaning is made apparent. This leads to the conclusion that, for Orthodoxy, biblical exegesis belongs properly to the community of the church, which is defined by the possession of the charism of the Spirit. Individual biblical interpreters supplement their own possession of the charism of the Spirit’s illumination, with the gift of illumination that over the centuries has been granted to preceding generations of the saints. For this reason alone, no Orthodox interpreter can presume to disregard, or ridicule, the interpretative efforts of previous generations; least of all those of the saints who have been preserved in the tradition as particularly worthwhile. Consonance in this case is certainly not the same as monotonous repetition of past utterance, which would amount to strict conformity, and would signal the end to intelligent development of biblical analysis; on the contrary what is meant is that new applications of biblical interpretative methods proceed reflectively “within the communion,” just as variations on a theme are self-evidently linked to the master theme that they in turn set out to elaborate, illuminate, or extend.

Our third principle is what can be called a “Reading under Authority.” The collection of the New Testament (pride of place being given to the gospels) is the lens through which the other scriptures are read: all focused on the Christocentric revelation that is the *telos* to which all the mystery of the scriptures unfolds: just as it was the *arche* from which it all first emanated. A shorthand for this authoritative transmission of the “Mind of Christ” given by the scriptures is what Orthodoxy calls the “Apostolic witness” of the New Testament canon. This scriptural consonance is the primary manifestation of what Orthodoxy, in fact, means by apostolicity; and apostolicity itself is a shorthand for fidelity to the teaching of Jesus.

The last principle is the “Reading for Utility,” which refers to the fundamentally edificatory character of the sacred scriptures. The biblical commentary is not, essentially, an historical essay or semantic analysis, but an expression of the charism of preaching within the church. The principle of utility is concerned with how the proclamation of the faith is rendered “appropriate” from age to age; how in one era the discourse is Semitic and symbolically imagistic, while in another the framework of Greek rhetoric and hymnody works most effectively, while in yet another age this does not work so well, and may require simpler forms of re-expression. Origen (who certainly saw the act of biblical commentary as an extension of the prophetic charism of preaching the word) expressed this principle in his own time by describing the commentator as a “spiritual herbalist” whose duty was to know the values of all the contents of the herbarium, and be able to make a potent mix for the benefit, not the bane, of the recipients.¹³

Patristic and Conciliar Authorities in Orthodoxy

While the body of conciliar doctrines (most particularly the decrees and decisions of the seven ecumenical councils) and other major patristic literature are not regarded as being of the same order of importance as the holy scripture, in the mind of Orthodoxy this does not set them radically apart from the scriptures. Some forms of Protestantism, for example, would not ascribe much authority at all to this venerable literature, and many modern evangelicals might never have read or been influenced by it at all.¹⁴ Even Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, while they hold the fathers in high esteem, do not afford them more significance than as part of a range of historical voices in the ongoing elaboration of theological discourse.

Orthodoxy sees the ecumenical conciliar theology and the greatest of the patristic theology as sharing in the charisms of the Holy Spirit’s truth, and therefore as possessed of a high and venerable authority for the universal church. The individual writings of each patristic theologian are not afforded the status of an infallible guide to the truth, but the decisions of the ecumenical councils are: in the sense that it is unthinkable that the Spirit of truth should ever abandon the high priests assembled in solemn liturgical adjudication of matters of fundamental concern to the definition

13. *Philocalia Origenis*, 10.2, at: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/origen_philocalia_02_text.htm#C10.

14. Something that could not be said of the classic Reformers.

of truth for the universal church. The patristic writings are seen as “sharing in” the charisma of the Spirit’s own truth, insofar as they are in “consonance” with the Tradition, and emanate from men and women whose lives are mirrors of the Spirit’s indwelling grace: the same grace, of the same Spirit, who revealed his mysteries to the prophets and apostles before them. Truth can barely shine through a lens that is filmed over with grime. A human being who has become transparent to the love of God, and conformed to the gentleness of the humble Saviour, can hardly fail to be a beacon of the Spirit’s truth. In many eras of the church the prophetic and theological witness of the great saints has stood out against all opposition to hold fast to the truth, winning through even when they seemed to be in a minority. One thinks especially of the ancient leaders such as Athanasius, Gregory the Theologian, Basil of Caesarea, Maximos the Confessor, John of Damascus, Theodore Studite, Gregory Palamas, and Mark of Ephesus, teachers who spoke for truth even in the face of powerful “established” pressures. There have been men and women in every century of the Orthodox Church to correspond with them in prophetic foresight and courage.

These then are the chief sources of the Orthodox understanding of what other traditions have sometimes called the “deposit of revelation”: the scriptures, the conciliar decrees, the patristic writings. All these fundamental things are bound together by, and approached through, the medium of the sacred liturgy in the Orthodox Church. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. The profoundly rich body of “non-textual” symbolic witness that the divine Liturgy constitutes for the church, sums up all these other things, sets them in context, interprets them for the Christian. Here in the liturgical and prayer life of Orthodoxy is the book for the unlettered, the library of theology that is sung in the praise of God from the assembly of the faithful. Orthodox Christians have long known how to sing their faith, even when they could not write or read it. To illustrate an authentic part of the Orthodox Tradition it is often enough to point to its manifestation in the Liturgy.

The Symbolical Books

Lastly, about the “symbolical books” of the Orthodox Church, which would probably appear on most Orthodox lists of authoritative sources, towards the end of the taxonomy (see Appendix). These do not have the same status as the great patristic and conciliar statements but are nonetheless held by the Orthodox to be substantive and significant theological statements, as from important later synods of the church (or its leading hierarchs) when faced with theological problems that needed immediate resolution. They were predominantly put together in the late 16th and 17th centuries, when the effects of the Reformation were first being dimly felt to impinge on life in the Eastern churches. But there are some from before that period, and after it. All of them are characterized as having been stimulated either by Roman Catholicism, or the Protestant churches, addressing Orthodoxy with different suppositions, which the Orthodox felt must be clarified and re-stated from an Orthodox perspective. One of the central texts in the list was the result of the explicit impact of the Reformation. One of the 17th-century Patriarchs of Constantinople, Cyril Lukaris, had issued a statement of faith which many at the time believed had moved towards being an implicit endorsement of Calvinism. It caused considerable alarm among the Orthodox. In the aftermath of Cyril’s fall,¹⁵ Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem moved to make the position of the Orthodox Church clear on some fundamental aspects of Protestantism. The Acts of his Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 have been widely accepted by the Orthodox ever since as having a high didactic authority.

The symbolical statements from this period of conflict, a period when generally speaking the intellectual and political resources of world Orthodoxy were at a low ebb, have increasingly visible limitations nowadays. Protestant and Roman Catholic agendas then largely “set the tone” for what the symbolical books tried to answer. The Orthodox today who accept their guidance are not bound to believe that their form of expression was the most felicitous possible. Many Orthodox theologians have looked back and called this period of “Westernization” (it would be better to call it the admission of heavily scholasticized method) in Orthodoxy as the “Great Captivity.” Several Orthodox theologians are of the position now that this very title of the symbolical books is misleading and ought

15. He was strangled on the orders of the Sultan, and the prestige of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was much damaged at the time.

to be discontinued.¹⁶ Nevertheless the symbolical books are still important elements of the historical defense, and expression of the Orthodox understanding of central matters. They derive their status from the character of the local councils of the church. Formally speaking, Orthodoxy attributes an indefectible character of the truth, only to the decisions of ecumenical councils. These cannot be revised, annulled, or even partially set aside. They belong to the core of the confession of the Orthodox Christian faith. But the last of these was held in 787. Since then the synodical life of the Eastern church¹⁷ has continued with the decisions and decrees of local councils. These are different from national synods insofar as for a local council hierarchs of other national churches travel to be part of the deliberations and give their statement a more solemn authority. While not being infallible of themselves, these important local councils are characteristic of all episcopal synods in that the bishops present speak charismatically, out of their hearts, on the nature of the ancient faith of the whole body of faithful. As a result, their decisions will usually be recognized by the Orthodox at large (and across historical periods) as having far more than a merely local effect. In the case of many synods of the Orthodox Church that have been held since the last ecumenical council, this has indeed been the case. Their teaching has been held up as having a large relevance.

A similar context applies to the decrees even of single bishops who have in times past written encyclicals in response to pressing matters.¹⁸ Local and

16. As Glubokovsky says, “The Orthodox church has no symbolic books; its only creed is that of Nicaea. Considering the so-called Orthodox ‘symbolic’ books as symbolic in the western sense of this term, leads to mistakes and misunderstandings. As the result of this, many important points of Orthodox Christianity take on a very different sense and meaning. The catechisms of different local churches, for example, have no credal authority, not even the best known and widest spread, the catechism of Platon, Metropolitan of Moscow, and especially the greater and lesser catechisms of the famous Metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret. But they are important, because they present the modern official view of the objects of the faith.” Stefan Zankov, *The Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1929), 35-36.

17. So too has that of the Western church, needless to say. But Orthodoxy will not recognize its synods as having been anything other than local councils since 787, even though for the Catholic West, Vatican II was listed as the 21st “Ecumenical Council.”

18. The same thing might be said as well about the witness of priests or lay theologians who in times past were afforded “patristic” status, and could well be again, since the age of the “Fathers” and “Mothers” of the church continues as long as Christ raises up saints and teachers in his charismatically endowed community. But bishops are called to teach by virtue of their ordained office, and it is their role, above all, to represent the truth collectively, in synodical and prophetic harmony, for the church’s guidance.

individual utterances of bishops can assume such an elevated significance too if they are accepted ecumenically, that is by a consensus of the faithful over a significant time, as important statements of faith. While the ecumenical councils cannot be taken piece-meal, however, the decrees of the local councils may well be. As Metropolitan Kallistos puts it, “The church has often been selective in its treatment of the Acts of Local Councils: in the case of the seventeenth century councils, for example, their statements of faith have in part been received by the whole Orthodox Church, but in part set aside or corrected.”¹⁹ A similar observation may also be made to the authoritative “Canons” of the Orthodox Church, the rules attached (generally) to the councils. Within their lists there is a hierarchy of importance. Their application governs the concrete ordering of the church’s life. Their spirit and ethos is of high authority, although their particular application is often subject to the discretion of the hierarchs.

In conclusion, one thing is clear. In considering the significance of any of the “authoritative sources” of Orthodox theology and praxis, anyone who wishes to appreciate them aright must understand them in their holistic harmony: refracted through the experience of divine worship that binds them into a vital oneness in the Orthodox Church and sets them before the faithful as what they are—the *therapeia* that forms and shapes Christian behaviour, and the church’s entrance into the mystery of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Appendix: List of the Symbolical Books

The Confession of Faith of Gennadios Patriarch of Constantinople (1455-1456).

The Responses of Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople, to the Lutheran Theologians (1537-1581).

The Confession of Faith of Metrophanes Kritopoulos (1625).

The Orthodox Confession of Peter Moghila (as revised and endorsed by the Synod of Jassy [Romania] in 1642).

The Confession of Dositheos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, as ratified by the Synod of Jerusalem (1672).

19. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 202.

In addition to this core, the Orthodox have generally also recognized the following statements as carrying great authority to “speak for” all Orthodox:

The Encyclical Letter of St. Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople (867).

The First Letter of Michael Caerularios, Patriarch of Constantinople, to Patriarch Peter of Antioch (1054).

The Acts of the Councils of Constantinople (1341, and 1351) relating to the Hesychastic Controversy.

The Encyclical Letter of St. Mark of Ephesus (1440-1441).

The Responses of the Orthodox Patriarchs to the Non-Jurors (1718, and 1723).

The Response of the Orthodox Patriarchs to the Letter of Pope Pius IX (1848).

The Response of the Synod of Constantinople to the Letter of Pope Leo XIII (1895).

The Encyclical Letters of the Patriarch of Constantinople (1920, and 1925) on Christian Unity and the modern Ecumenical Movement.

The Russian Church has also, since the early 19th century, given great weight to the Catechism of Philaret.²⁰

20. It is freely available on the Internet on the Christian Classics Ethereal Library site: <http://www.ccel.org>.

A Response to John A. McGuckin

Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi

Tradition has always been one of the most fascinating and most controversial themes among theologians. The fundamental questions, “What is Tradition?” or “What is the relation between Apostolic and Patristic Tradition?” have attracted both contemporary theologians and historians as well as patristic authors of the church and numerous ecclesiastical writers of the early Christian age.¹

In the whole context of biblical and Orthodox patristic theology, Tradition is usually understood in an inclusive way. For Orthodox there is one Tradition, the Tradition of the church. St Athanasius gives an appropriate definition of the church Tradition: “Let us look at the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the catholic Church from the very beginning, which the Logos gave (*edoken*), the Apostles preached (*ekeryxan*) and the Fathers preserved (*ephylaxan*). Upon this the Church is founded (*tethemeliotai*).”²

For the Orthodox, Tradition is based on a few principles.

The Trinitarian Basis

Tradition is the life of a person³—and more precisely the life of the whole Trinity—as revealed by Christ and to which the Holy Spirit testifies. Orthodox Tradition, basically biblical, focuses on the trinitarian nature of God. Tradition in the New Testament begins from the Holy Trinity and ends in the Holy Trinity. The essence of Christian Tradition is described by St Paul

1. For an overview of contemporary Orthodox views on Tradition see Stanley Samuel Harakas, “Tradition in Eastern Orthodox Thought,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 22 (1992), 144-65; Gerasimos Papadopoulos, “The Revelatory Character of the New Testament and Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12 (1967), 98-111; Theodore Stylianopoulos, “Tradition in the New Testament,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 15 (1970), 7-21.

2. Athanasius, *Epistola I ad Serapionem*, PG 26, 593-596.

3. Metropolitan Athenagoras (of Thyateira), “Tradition and Traditions,” *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly* 7:3 (1963), 103.

who declares that “*God* chose you from the beginning to be saved by the *sanctifying Spirit* and by the faith in the truth. Through the Gospel that we brought he called you to this so that you should share the glory of *our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess. 2:13-18). From this Pauline quotation, and many others (e.g., Eph. 2:13-14), the trinitarian basis of the *kerygma* of salvation runs through patristic literature, the creedal pronouncements, and the liturgical prayers of the church.

From this trinitarian basis some other aspects of the Tradition of the church are also derived, for example, its teaching about Mary, the Theotokos. The Orthodox have never articulated a “Mariology” but their teaching on the “All-Holy Theotokos” has important anthropological significance.⁴

Of similar importance is the application of the trinitarian theology to the structure of the church, at least in theory. By nature the church cannot reflect the worldly image of secular organizations, which is based on power and domination, but the kenotic image of the Holy Trinity, which is based on love and communion.⁵

The Pneumatological Basis

There are three central and distinctive characteristics of Orthodox pneumatology: (a) the rejection of the *filioque* theology; (b) the importance of the *epiklesis*, that is, the invocation of the Holy Spirit in all liturgical practices, especially in the eucharistic *anaphora*; and (c) the understanding of all the church’s ministries always within the context of the community.⁶

The second characteristic of orthodox pneumatology, *epiklesis*, is a particular significant factor in the life of the church. In Orthodox Liturgy, and in particular in all sacraments (called by the Orthodox mysteries and not sacraments in the Latin sense), the Spirit is repeatedly invoked. The *epiklesis* of the Holy Spirit, rather than the utterance of the dominical words of the institution of the eucharist, is understood as the moment in which the transformation of the holy gifts takes place. Additionally, the *epiklesis* of the Holy Spirit in the Eastern Orthodox Liturgy is made for both the holy gifts and the community (in fact first for the community and then for the holy gifts).

4. See Alexander Schmemmann, *The Presence of Mary* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Conciliar Press, 1988).

5. See Petros Vassiliadis, “Orthodoxy and Ecumenism,” in *Oikoumene and Theology*, ed. P. Vassiliadis (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis S.E., 1996), 149-79.

6. *Ibid.*, 159.

The church is not simply an institution—that is, something which is given; it is above all a *communion event*. Christ *institutes* church, but it is the Holy Spirit that *constitutes* the church.⁷

The Church as the Eschatological Reality

The whole Christian Tradition, from Jesus' preaching of the coming of the kingdom of God (the already inaugurated, but not yet fulfilled new heaven and new earth), through the Ignatian concept of the church as a eucharistic community (with the bishop as the image of Christ), down to the later Orthodox tradition (which understands the eucharist as *the* mystery of the church and not *one* mystery among others), reveals that, in fact, it is the eschatological and not the hierarchical nature of the church. In Orthodox theology and liturgical praxis, the church does not draw its identity from what it is as institution, but from what it will be, that is, from ages to come. According to Orthodox theology, the church is understood as portraying the kingdom of God on earth, that is, as being a glimpse or foretaste of the kingdom to come. A natural consequence of this understanding of the church is the *equal, active, and creative presence* of all members, women and men, and the enrichment of the life of the community with their special talents and characteristics. Inside this community "all people are ministers."⁸

The Dynamic Character of Tradition

Orthodox Tradition is not construed as a "deposit of doctrine" but as a common life-style, not primarily an accumulation of documents and testimonies, but the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the church.⁹ It is not a sum of propositions learned by heart, but a living experience. The only true

7. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 140.

8. Nicholas Lossky, *Femmes et hommes dans l'Église: une approche orthodoxe de la question des ministères* (Service Orthodoxe de Presse Orthodox/SOP No 66, 1982).

9. Nikos Nissiotis has pointed out: "Tradition is not therefore what people accuse the Orthodox Tradition of being, a sterile past which predicts our present *existence*, obliging us to conform to past forms. But it is a decision in the present of the individual who stands in communion with the other believers, from whom he receives faith and with whom he makes the decision regarding the future, but based on the experience of the past. Tradition is always a movement toward the future but on the basis which sustains and fills it." N. Nissiotis, "The Unity of Scripture and Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox Contribution to the Prolegomena of Hermeneutics," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 11 (1965), 163.

Tradition is living, critical, and creative, formed by the union of human freedom with the grace of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Tradition is the critical spirit of the church. Tradition is not simply a protective, conservative principle, but primarily a principle of growth and regeneration.¹⁰ It is not merely the record of what others have said in the past, was handed down automatically, and is repeated mechanically, but it involves a living response to God's voice at the present moment, a direct and personal meeting with Christ on the part of believers, here and now, in the Spirit. Authentic traditionalism, then, is not a slavish imitation of the past, but a courageous effort to discriminate between the transitory and the essential.¹¹

And as V. Lossky explains:

To tradition in its pure notion there belongs *nothing formal*. It does not impose on human consciousness formal guarantees of the truth of faith, but gives access to the discovery of their inner evidence. . . . The pure notion of Tradition can be defined by saying that it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church, communicating to each member of the body of Christ the faculty of hearing, of receiving, of knowing the Truth in the Light which belongs to it¹²

One of the most challenging issues is the concept of authority in and by Tradition. Authority, *exousia* (ἐξουσία) in Greek, is of biblical origin. The absolute authority belongs to the Lord himself for, as St Matthew says: “[Christ] taught them as one having authority” (5:9).

According to Orthodox theology, authority emerges wherever the truth that leads to holiness is expressed.¹³ Truth—or theology—is ultimately healing. It leads to greater authenticity in relationship with the self, with others, with creation, and especially with the Trinity. That is why the Bible in Orthodox tradition is primarily—or even exclusively—understood as the book of the church, by the church, and for the church. The Bible is of

10. George Florovsky, “Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church,” in *The Church of God*, ed. E. L. Marschal (London: SPCK, 1934), 64f.

11. See Kallistos Ware, “Man, Woman and the Priesthood of Christ,” in *Women and the Priesthood*, ed. Thomas Hopko (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 13.

12. Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 151-52.

13. Petros Vassiliadis, “Holiness in the Perspective of Eucharistic Theology,” in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough Jr. (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 101-16.

unique importance for Orthodox spirituality and ethos. It is placed on every altar; it is used to lead the steps in procession; the icons depict holy men and women, holding in their hand either the Bible or a scroll containing the passage which characterizes their life and mission. In the church's liturgical life, the Bible is addressed not to individuals but to a community: a community that brings the world into communion with God. The very structure of Orthodox worship, its language, rhythm, and ethos, are biblical in the deepest sense of the word.¹⁴ The liturgy cannot be understood or truly experienced without the Bible; the Bible cannot be fully valued without the liturgy. The unity that exists between the two indicates that the Bible and the church are not distinct "authorities" justifying and confirming each other. Rather, they are one and the same source of life, knowledge, and communion, the same word of God spoken to believers and spoken by believers.

As a result, Orthodox theologians have the advantage, with respect to the question of the authority of the texts, that their tradition does not limit revelation solely to the Bible, and they thus have more leeway for defining their concept of the word of God. In the Orthodox understanding, the word of God is in the first place experience and life and not just a collection of writings. The fact that the church in its liturgical life makes an uneven use of the biblical texts, turning to some more often than to others, proves that there is in practice an internal gradation within the category of canonicity. This proves helpful to biblical theologians when it comes to the evaluation and use of the biblical writings. The liturgy makes a distinction between gospel and epistle, and during the eucharist it takes readings from each. This practice indicates that church needs both the story of Jesus and the epistles as paradigms for the proclamation and application of the message in specific circumstances.¹⁵ The message of the Bible guides the formation of the church's liturgical customs. The Bible as it is used in liturgy includes not only the canonical biblical texts but also the so-called apocrypha, which have influenced many parts of Orthodox liturgical and spiritual life and have become a source and a resource for creative teaching, legends, writings, hymns and icons.

14. Petros Vassiliadis, "The Canon of the Bible: or the Authority of Scripture from an Orthodox Perspective," in *L'autorité de l'Écriture*, ed. Jean-Michel Poffet, (Paris: Verlag, 2002), 113-35.

15. Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 21; 152-64.

John McGuckin analyzes the four principles of the Orthodox ecclesial hermeneutic of the holy scriptures. In continuation to his thought, the following can be added:

In modern Orthodox biblical interpretation, the historical critical method still forms the basic tool of a primary approach. The historical critical method was introduced in Greece very late, after the 1970s, at a time when its limits had already begun to be realized in the international biblical studies and when new methods of interpretation had begun to appear. Contemporary Orthodox interpreters rightfully maintain that there is a hermeneutical problem, since the interpretation of the Bible demands not only a strict historical critical analysis, but also deep knowledge of history and human experience. The Bible is above all gospel, the revelation of God's plan for the salvation of humanity, and an invitation for participation in the gift of God's love to all people, women, and men. Orthodox biblical theologians only recently and hesitantly have begun to move into new areas and to enter into conversation with new hermeneutic approaches. The fundamental positive contribution of the new approaches and methods is considered the fact that the Bible is understood polyphonically. This polyphonicity of interpretations is not foreign to Orthodox tradition and it can be useful at different levels. For example, it encourages resistance to exclusive approaches, favours dialogue, and highlights progress in biblical research. At the same time, the Bible can once again become a source of inspiration.¹⁶

Three factors have enforced the above situation: First, stagnation in biblical research, for example in the Greek context, results from a further underestimation of the role and importance of the modern interpretation of the Bible; second, there is a noticeable reluctance in biblical studies to tackle questions and problems of the church's life and organization; and third, the presence of a traditionalism reveals itself in a thoughtless and mimetic use of the Fathers, leaving biblical scholars no room for a free and more creative involvement.¹⁷

16. See Daniel Patte (ed.), *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press., 2004), esp. introduction: xxi-xxxii.

17. Savas Agouridis, *Hermeneutics of the Holy Texts* (Athens: 2000), 8-9 (in Greek).

In Orthodox interpretation of the scriptures, an emphasis is given to the relation between *history* and *faith*. The dialectic between history and faith has never been expressed with acrimony as it developed in some parts of the Western theological reflection. The danger in Orthodox theology arose not so much from their dissension but from their being too close. The basic theological view that diffuses Eastern theological reflection is that the God of the Bible and of the eucharistic community is the same God as the one of the human history. Through history, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the people commune with the revealed God and express this experience in their lives, through texts, symbols, practices, and cultural realities. This communion and relation takes material shape in ways of life and forms of relationships, transforms human realities, shapes the relationships between persons, with society, and the whole creation. As can easily be understood, all these take place in specific time-spatial contexts that include both contemporary reality and the incorporation of timeless experience.¹⁸ The texts themselves are not the truth but an imprinting of the experience of the truth; at the same time, they provide an answer to specific time-spatial problems and situations.

It is without saying that the chief sources of Orthodoxy are, according to the Orthodox, the universal voice of the church. But it is interesting to emphasize another form of the synodical system, which accentuates the importance of Tradition: *the eucharist itself*.

The *laos* of God is a wholeness, the body of Christ, in which each member is irreplaceably unique, but is at the same time a vital part of the one living community. After the resurrection of Christ and after Pentecost, the church experiences the *eschata* every time it assembles, and in particular when it assembles to celebrate eucharist. Members are invited to holiness, not as individuals but as *koinonia*. As Aleksei Khomiakov has commented, "No-one is saved alone. [Each person] is saved in the church, as a member of the Church in union with all the Church's members. If anyone believes, he/she is in the communion of faith; if he/she loves, is in the communion of love; if he/she prays, is in the communion of prayer."¹⁹ As a result (at least in theory), there are no hierarchical structures and structures of power in the church, but only positions of *diakonia* and *service*.

18. Petros Vassiliadis, "The Canon of the Bible," 113-35.

19. Quoted from Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 107-108.

John McGuckin closes his paper by reminding us that the dominating and determining element of Christian identity is *living according to Christ and in Christ*. That is the liberating eschatological re-orientation and the dynamic eschatological composition of entity leading the way to a dynamic anthropology. The after-Christ identity of human beings, as same-gender beings, consists of not being limited or shut in their own gender attributes, their same-gender identity, but of being able to overcome them so as to attain in turn its eschatological composition, to overcome them for the sake of the unity/catholicity in Christ, for the sake of meeting any other being and especially of meeting the otherness of the other gender. Thus, once human beings through christening enter the church, they can no longer be children of need and of nature, but of freedom and grace. In this frame, discussing, for example, the ministry of women in the church, one realizes that Tradition stands at the very centre and brings challenges to essential questions.²⁰

Christianity, in contrast to the ideas and practices of the male-dominated era in which it appeared, revalued the role of women. Eminent representatives of Christian Tradition, such as Gregory Nazianzus, did not hesitate to denounce the unjust laws towards women: “laws were enacted by men; therefore legislation would be against the women; . . . I do not embrace this legislation, nor do I praise the practice.”²¹ The texts and speeches of Saint John Chrysostom express for the first time a theology of tenderness in marriage and concerning the attitude of husband towards wife. They stress the communion of persons, companionship, mutual attraction, and love instead of childbearing as the aim or eventuality of marriage.

In parallel with the liberating attitude, the tendency of belittlement and disdain of women was not missing from the church cycles, in which women were associated with evil, sin, and smut.²² References to women’s silence in the church and their subordination to men are repeated by Saint Basil, commenting on the respective quotation of Paul, and in a milder tone by Gregory of Nazianzus in a text attributed to him in *Sacra Parallela*

20. See P. Kalaitzidis, “From the Division of Gender to the Unity in Christ,” in *Gender and Religion: The Position of Woman in the Church* (Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2004), 9-30 (in Greek).

21. Gregory of Nazianzus, Discourse 36, PG 36, 289B.

22. “Here is juxtaposed and joined the liberating message of the Gospel and archaic taboos, a theological anthropology both spiritual and personal and the misogynistic stereotypes inherited from the patriarchal societies.” Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, “Women in the Orthodox Church,” *The St. Nina Quarterly* 2:2 (1988), 1.

by John Damascus. Even Saint John Chrysostom has a difficulty applying to woman the basic anthropological principle of “in God’s image” as he considers that the woman is “in God’s image” through the man, or more precisely through her subordination to man, since the decisive factor is not the image according to form (common to men and women) but according to authority (exclusive attribute of men since men are in authority whereas women are subject to them). Ascetic texts are full of negative expressions and characterizations of women, to the point of considering women more dangerous and vicious than the devil himself.

In addition, since in the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles there is no specific commandment to ordain women to the ministerial priesthood and since for nearly two thousand years the church has refrained from proceeding to such ordination, is there a chance at the beginning of the 21st century to take a fresh initiative in this matter?

However, an increasing number of Orthodox scholars now maintain that some elements and ideas of the Tradition, even if they were central and essential, especially those influenced by the historical and cultural reality, should be re-interpreted and re-examined.²³ According to the Greek Orthodox theologian Nikolaos Matsoukas, “from the rosebushes [of tradition] one picks flowers, not thorns . . . every dogmatic truth must be accurate; and second arguments that arise *ex silentio* or *ex absentia* are historically and philologically insufficient.”²⁴ In other words, the non-ordination of women to pastoral ministry is an undeniable historical fact but not a tradition in the strong sense.²⁵

Although the way of life and thought systematically cultivated for centuries cannot be changed easily, this situation is no longer an insurmountable

23. Ioannis Petrou, “Die Frauenfrage und die kirchliche Tradition,” *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 2 (1998), 244-59. Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, in the new edition of *Women and the Priesthood* (ed. Thomas Hopko, 1999, 5-54), has changed his views on the subject. He has moved in the direction of greater tentativeness about the possible ordination of women as priests and bishops in the Orthodox Church. He also demonstrates less conviction about authority of the traditional Orthodox practice on the issue and questions his own rather firm arguments against the ordination of women as bishops and presbyters drawn from the vision of the presbyter/bishop as a sacramental “icon” of Christ in the church.

24. “Women’s Priesthood as a Theological and Ecumenical Problem,” in *One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic: Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*, ed. Tamara Grdzeldidze (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 218-23.

25. The same argument is used by the Catholic theologian Herve Lengrand in his article “*Traditio Perpetuo Servata?* The Non-Ordination of Women: Tradition or Simply a Historical Fact?” *One in Christ* 1 (1993), 1-23.

obstacle for those who wish to establish a new reality and way of participation in the church in order to make it *the* authentic community of all sons and daughters of God.²⁶ In the words of St Basil:

Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to Paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return as adopted sons (and daughters), our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and in a word, our being brought into a state of a “fullness of blessing” (Rom. 15:29), both in this world and the world to come.²⁷

26. See Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, “Feminist Theology: A Challenge for Dialogue,” *Orthodoxia* 2 (1999), 65-66 (in Greek).

27. St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), ch. XV (36), 59.

A Response to John A. McGuckin

Pablo R. Andiñach

John McGuckin's paper is highly appreciated for the clarity of exposure of the issue in discussion. I disagree with him at the beginning when he says that for most non-Orthodox people the concept of holy Tradition "suggests a retrogressive mentality." This could be for some, but surely not all, even if people come from a very different comprehension of the Christian faith. In today's world, many Christian values are out of fashion, and to speak of solidarity, real peace, justice, not in the name of a particular ideological program but in the name of the Christian commitment can be taken by many as idealistic, utopic, and naïve.

These comments come from a person who is not an expert in patristics, in systematic or dogmatic theology, but in biblical theology in Latin America—a place where full-time professors of theology are also preachers and sometimes even pastors in parishes. This means that the way of doing theology is closely related to the faith of people in the church who attend Sunday service and look for counselling and orientation in their lives. Therefore the task is to interpret the gospel in accessible ways and relate it to their lives so that these words can help them enter into a creative relationship with the challenges of the world.

Of course, every theologian deals with questions of their own context, whether of faith or worldly challenges and needs. A theology that builds its discourse away from the people runs the risk to become a sophisticated piece of thought but unworthy of the church. John McGuckin's paper helps to place the orthodox tradition in a wider perspective.

Hermeneutical Key

The way Irenaeus of Lyon established his interpretative key is interesting and at the same time problematic. It is interesting because it puts in the hands of the Christians the entrance to the doctrine and the correct reading of the scriptures. In order to read and understand properly the message of

the scriptures, readers have to put their minds but also their faith into the enterprise. It is clear that nobody can interpret the gospel from outside the faith they proclaim. But there are some problems. First, the church can fall into the temptation of not hearing the voices from outside. Throughout history the Spirit often spoke through people who were outside the church, showing new ways and revealing the truth sometimes hidden to others. Second, there is an issue of the “conflict of interpretations,” in the words of Paul Ricoeur.¹ In others words, people committed to the gospel assume a very different interpretation of a text or a doctrine to be the right one, while others disagree. Every one of them may refer to many sources to back up their words, but still the question persists because both of them *are inside the church*. In the past, this dilemma was solved by calling the other a “heretic.” The question today is whether the hermeneutical key of Irenaeus can sustain different approaches to the doctrine within the Christian church.

Apostolic Succession

It was a happy surprise to read the affirmation that apostolic succession “is not primarily a matter of succession of individual bishops one after another but the succession of the apostolic teaching from the time of the apostles to the present.” It is a theological mistake to say that the Protestant churches have not the apostolic succession because the chain was broken in a particular period of the history. The succession has to be understood not as a chain of people (bishops) but as the succession of the apostolic faith, or apostolic teaching. Where the Christian faith is present, where there are martyrs and people who live and die illuminated by the gospel, the Holy Spirit is active and so is the church. However, how can Christians remain faithful to the apostolic succession and at the same time recognize the presence of the true church in different Christian traditions and practices that include their understandings of theological sources of authority?

Orthodoxy *Is* the Tradition

It was not a happy surprise to come across the affirmation that Orthodoxy *is* the tradition, “synonymous with the Tradition.” It is hard to agree that the church—or rather any church—is so perfect that there is almost no

1. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (London & New York: Continuum, 1989).

distance between its testimony and the demand of the gospel.² Is the church clean of every sin or are believers still struggling against temptation? In the light of the ambiguous history of the Christian church, can believers present themselves to the world as the community possessing “the mind of Christ” without any doubt, without any distance? In the Christian understanding it is important to recognize that all are on the way to becoming the true church at the end of times, when the Lord separates “the sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:32). Affirming that we are the true tradition (I say this not just for the Orthodox theology but also for many other churches) looks as if we were—as in that text—sitting in the throne of Jesus distributing blessings and curses to the nations.

The Scriptures

Among the hierarchies of importance, the scriptures stand at the head, not because “they were the first written,” “but the Church existed before the Scriptures.”³ This reminds us that the church recognized the texts of the New Testament, the evangelical writings, for “practical,” almost material reasons: the timeline of history is an important criterion of authority; the fact that the church had to choose between different texts, selecting some and rejecting others, is also important and seems to give authority to the scriptures. From the point of view of a biblical scholar, and one of the Old Testament, it seems difficult to leave this affirmation without a comment. First, authority of the scriptures emerges not from the fact that they are the oldest documents but because of their content and message. Then a question arises: Can the hypothetical reconstruction of ancient history account for such a crucial aspect of theology? For example, the letters of Paul are believed by most New Testament scholars to be older than the text of the gospels. Are there any conclusions based on this fact related to the authority of a particular text? Second, the affirmation that the church existed before the scriptures does not take into account the Old Testament texts. The

2. Editor’s note: Here Pablo Andriach expresses his own assessment without taking into consideration what the Faith and Order ecclesiology document says about the difference regarding sin in different churches. The Orthodox conviction in this context is that the members of the church sin but the church itself, grounded by Christ, is sinless. See the “box” on “The Church and Sin” in *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005), following paragraph 56 on page 33.

3. The phrase is Benjamin Warfield’s. See his “The Authority and Inspiration of the Scriptures” at matthiasmedia.com/briefing.

Hebrew Bible existed from the 5th to the 4th BCE. Even its Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX) is older than the church by two or three hundred years. From the theological point of view, it is evident that most of the New Testament texts have to be read in relation to the Old Testament stories. Without invoking the shadow of Marcion, this statement needs to be explored again.

4. Tradition and traditions in the Oriental Orthodox Churches

Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim

Mashlmonutho and Yode

The word or term used for “Tradition” in Syriac is *mashlmonutho*, which is different in meaning and roots from the term used for “traditions,” which is *yode*. By using the term *mashlmonutho*, one feels the depth of the term and the authority that underpins it.

The use of the term *mashlmonutho* in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (SOCA) reflects its limited flexibility in terms of change, development, or modernization. On the contrary, with the use of *yode*, authority in the church can suggest some changes, modernizations, substitutions, or replacements. Therefore, in SOCA, which is a family member of the Oriental Orthodox churches, there is a complete separation and differentiation in meaning and concept between Tradition and traditions. This difference in concept and use has been expressed and enshrined linguistically, helping to eliminate any confusion and exchangeability in use of these terms.

According to the Syriac dictionaries, treatises, and writings of the church fathers, the word *mashlmonutho* means the religious and ecclesial arrangements, which were passed from hand to hand and from generation to generation, and reached the contemporary generation of the SOCA intact.

The history of SOCA claims that it is a church of Tradition. This is because it depends on Tradition as much as it depends on the teachings of the New Testament, considering the New Testament as the written part of Tradition. The rest remains oral and unwritten Tradition. This oral tradition was practiced and kept alive among members of the church and transmitted orally from generation to another. It was and still is an integral and important part of the teaching of the SOCA today.

The Oral Tradition in the New Testament

Many verses in the New Testament reflect the importance of oral Tradition. Our Lord Jesus commanded his apostles to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47).

Jesus’ commandment to his apostles proves that the written Tradition, the New Testament, is not the only or main part of their mission. All the apostles embarked on their evangelical mission to the world. They carried the good news to all the parts of the globe they were able to reach. Only a few of the apostles used writing as a medium to document and transmit what they witnessed, experienced, knew, or heard from Jesus Christ. There were clear testimonies in more than one verse in the gospel of St John: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book” (John 20:30). St John reiterated this: “But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

St John went further to highlight the importance of oral Tradition to his mission and teachings: “Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12).

Oriental church fathers gave special importance to oral Tradition relying on the teaching of St Paul the apostle. In St Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he remarks, “About the other things I will give instructions when I come” (1 Cor. 11:34). Tradition is more apparent in St Paul’s teachings to his pupil Timothy: “Guard the good treasure entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:14). St Paul instructed Timothy: “Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:13). St Paul, in his apparent interest in oral teaching, its survival, and its continuity, reminds his entrusted disciple Timothy, “What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well” (2 Tim. 2:2). To the Romans, St Paul writes in his letter: “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted” (Rom. 6:17).

The Essence of Tradition in the New Testament

Neither the SOCA nor other members of the Oriental Orthodox churches have a specific document dealing with Tradition and traditions. However, Tradition remains in essence, as Jesus Christ promised: “Yet when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own accord, but will speak whatever he hears and will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13-14). Such a divine promise is an integral source for the great appreciation and respect Oriental Orthodox churches have for the Tradition. Especially given that Jesus Christ neither wrote about nor commanded his disciples to document what they heard and experienced during their time with him.

Furthermore, St Paul the apostle in his second letter to the Thessalonians highlighted the importance of two types of Tradition, the Oral and the written, when he said, “So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2:15).

At times Tradition reflects the meaning of heritage or cultural heritage. Most of the teachings of the church, liturgies, and what was agreed and adopted in its councils regarding the organization of worship and structures came down through the generations from the time of the apostles and early church fathers. This Tradition was carried out by different means, in writing, oral exchanges, and practices. The process of this transmission was not documented by the Holy Bible or by church historians. However, the church Tradition today—unlike the early church—exists mostly in written form: the holy liturgy, the hymnody and psalmody, rules and regulations for fasting, and various feasts.

Authority on Tradition

Which authority makes those Traditions acceptable, canonical, and sacred?

The church itself, which accepted and considered the holy scriptures divine and canonical, the same church can consider the received Tradition sacred and canonical. The church differentiates between written and unwritten Tradition. According to the gospel, Jesus Christ never wrote anything, but what he taught and did was kept, used, and implemented by the disciples. Thus the Tradition in the church is not a mere addition, appended

to the teachings of Jesus, which the world received through the Holy Bible. Rather, it is an essential and vital part of the teaching of the church.

Tradition in the Church Today

The foundation of Tradition in the church has two main sources: the apostolic Tradition and the ecclesial Tradition. In all the “Common Declarations” that were issued at the end of the successive visits by patriarchs of Oriental Orthodox churches to different popes of Rome since 1970s, these two Traditions were highlighted.

The claim and emphasis on the role of the Tradition in the church is a confirmation of the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and the keeping and protection of the truth. It is apparent from all communiqués that Tradition is not only a voice of the past, but also a voice of the present and the future, and that all these teachings are alive forever in the church. Therefore, Tradition is a charismatic event, a permanent and uninterrupted declaration of the teachings of the truth. It is clear from all common declarations that tradition is alive. Tradition is not a part of those human-made practices, habits, or customs.

A Response to Yohanna Ibrahim Gregorios

Anne-Louise Eriksson

In his article “Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition? Ecumenical Prospects for the Lutheran Churches,”¹ American scholar Mickey Mattox starts by quoting C. S. Lewis who, in the science-fiction novel *Out of the Silent Planet*, describes how a person is taken to another planet. And when this person first sets eyes on that new planet, he is unable to see anything. Lewis writes: “He gazed about him, and the very intensity of his desire to take in the new world at a glance defeated itself. He saw nothing but colours—colours that refused to form themselves into things. Moreover, he knew nothing well enough to see it: you cannot see things till you know roughly what they are.”

Metropolitan Gregorios’s paper raises many questions, and I have to admit that, as I come from a different planet, I am not sure I can understand everything, although my hope is that the faith we share in Jesus Christ as our saviour and redeemer is of such significance that it creates a recognizable *common ground*. Most of all, this glimpse into a new and different world is inspiring as a theological point of departure. It confirms the realization that *everything* we as humans experience is always mediated through history and context, and therefore always is an expression of context-dependent interpretation.

The first point here has to do with how the difference between *mashlmonutho* and *yode* is defined. *Mashlmonutho* (Tradition with a capital T) is said to be entirely different “in meaning and roots” from the term *yode*, which is used for traditions (with a small t). And by this differentiation one can feel the depth of what is implied by (capital T) Tradition and the “authority that underpins it,” as opposed to the depth and authority underpinning traditions, it seems.

For the Lutheran Church of Sweden, on the contrary, the thought that tradition (with a small t) has its root in Tradition (with a capital T) is a vital source of comfort. This way of thinking is part of the very understanding of

1. *The Gift of Grace*, ed. N. H. Gregersen, B. Holm, T. Peters, P. Widmann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

what it is to be a church. If that were not the case, if the tradition that the Lutheran Church of Sweden represents were not rooted in Tradition (with capital T), it would not be the Christian church.

From a Lutheran perspective, reference to Tradition with capital T does not occur often outside of the ecumenical discourse. Lutherans prefer to talk about the gospel or rather *evangelion*, which etymologically is different from tradition. However, the need of underscoring that a church-tradition is rooted in the Tradition/*evangelion* becomes evident from the fact that the churches of the Reformation from the beginning talked about themselves as evangelical churches. And the Church of Sweden still in its church order defines itself as an evangelical Lutheran church. Here are three questions to ponder in the context of the above-mentioned: What does *yode* lack that makes it so entirely remote from *mashlmonutho*? Does it sound acceptable that Tradition (with capital T) is rendered with *evangelion*—that is, the Word of God, or using the terminology from Montreal 1963: “the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church”? And, most importantly, where are churches today in relation to Montreal 1963?

Much has happened since 1963 that has widened the gap between the churches: The understanding of the meaning of hermeneutics, epistemology, and historicity has to a great extent changed the Western mind-set in a way that makes it more difficult to reach a mutual understanding on how the word of God presents itself to the world today. And since the 1960s the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have repeatedly made it clear that they do not recognize churches of the Reformation as churches. This, in other words, means that the Orthodox and Roman Catholics do not recognize that “protestant” churches are rooted in *evangelion*, the gospel—that is, Tradition. So where does that leave the churches in relation to Montreal? Is the language from Montreal still fruitful?

My next point has to do with the distinction between oral and written traditions, which leads to the issue of the authority of the “fathers” of the church.²

Despite the fact, mentioned above, that hermeneutics, epistemology, and historicity have widened the gap between churches during the last four decades, late-modern hermeneutics also provide certain means to find a

2. As a woman and feminist, I find the language of the “Fathers of the Church” to be problematic. It is important that we show the same sensitivity to the concerns and needs of women, as we do for other groups and interests within the ecumenical movement.

common ground. For example, the Lutherans have always understood the holy scripture as having a “preeminent status as the word of God.”³ But the awareness that the Old and New Testaments largely emerged as oral tradition and then were recorded at certain points in history and that the process of canonization was a long process that not always withstood the changes of time and persons lessens the difference between written and oral traditions.

The word of God speaks to us through the scriptures, but not only through the scriptures. *Evangelion* is the living word of God that is “traditioned” through the history of the church. The scriptures are an authority insofar as they express *evangelion*, and *evangelion* can at times also be recognized in the writings of the fathers. Therefore the significance attributed by Mar Gregorios to the oral tradition or to the fathers is acceptable for someone grounded in the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

But there are still pending questions calling for clarification:

Mar Gregorios distinguishes between dogmatic fundamentals and confessional Tradition, on the one hand, and ecclesial Tradition that in turn is divided into oral, written, and practical tradition, on the other hand. Is this all about *mashlmonutho* throughout, or is some of it *yode*?

Can fundamental and confessional tradition, like ecclesial tradition, be both oral and written?

Where is the place of the fathers in this order? Do they belong to both oral and written Tradition, within both dogmatic confessional Tradition and ecclesial Tradition in all its three forms?

And why the fathers and not some other theologians of the church? By what criteria did the early church judge? How can one be sure that these criteria were not influenced by a struggle for power that had nothing to do with *evangelion*: A struggle where some members of the church—for example women, but also other marginalized groups and traditions not connected to politically or financially powerful groups—could not make their voices heard?

It seems impossible to separate between traditions (in the sense of history, culture, heritage, power struggle) and the Tradition with capital T.

So what is *mashlmonutho* and what is *yode* in the eucharistic practice that has been developed in the Syriac Orthodox Church? And more importantly: By what criteria can that question be answered? This is an important

3. “Scripture and Tradition” from the American Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue 1995. Available at: http://ecumenism.net/docu/luth_rc.htm.

question, not so much for evaluating the eucharistic practice in SOCA, and not for evaluating or comparing oral tradition with written tradition—everything is oral tradition in a sense—but it is important in relation to the theme of this consultation, that is, the question of the importance of the hermeneutics of the fathers and their authority. Saying that the church is made authoritative because it is “rooted in” or “contains” Tradition (*mashl-monutho*) and at the same time that the church can judge about what is and what is not Tradition does not make a valid argument because it is a circular argument. And perhaps this is a point where we completely diverge, but it might also be the case that I have missed something because it is not visible to an eye of a stranger.

It has become common lately to divide human history into a pre-modern, modern, and late- or postmodern. Making distinctions is always tricky, and using a language of “pre” and “post” often seems to imply an evaluation. It seems better to be modern than pre-modern; and better, in the sense of more developed, to be postmodern than modern. Or vice versa. The scapegoating of the postmodern understanding of reality has been severe in many churches. But whatever can be said about postmodern thinking, it reveals that in more and more societies (predominantly Western societies but others as well) authority is undermined. This is a fact that is difficult to deny.

This consultation elaborates on “The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church: A Common Source of Authority, Various Received?” The issue at stake is not whether all can agree on a common corpus of authoritative teachers, but on the very understanding of theological authority. Therefore my final question is the following: What does it mean that someone in the church has authority? What does it mean that an early “father” of the church, or a later witness, or a contemporary bishop, or a common priest and teacher holds authority?

A Response to Yohanna Ibrahim Gregorios

Anoushavan Tanielian

From this presentation by Mar Gregorios one can easily observe that Tradition and traditions reflect the uninterrupted continuity of the teaching of Christ within the church, and their manifestations in various aspects of life. As Bishop Hilarion points out, “spirituality, sacramental life, canons of the ecumenical councils and patristic teaching indivisibly represent The Tradition.”¹ Tradition in Middle Eastern and especially in the biblical context has two major phases: first, receiving a truth from previous generation, and second, delivering it to the next generation/s. The introductory verses of St Luke attest this approach: “Just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:2-3) Throughout the last two millennia this process of transmitting the living word in written and oral forms has been a dynamic way of connecting generations with a clear sense of identity as the people of the new covenant, under the providence of the one and triune Godhead.

That early church Fathers understood Tradition in the same way is very clear from their writings: Irenaeus of Lyon’s statement in this regard is illustrative:

The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnated for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God. . . . As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world,

1. Bishop Hilarion, “Proposals for the Future Direction of the Hermeneutics Study,” *Faith and Order at Crossroads, Kuala Lumpur 2004: The Plenary Commission Meeting*, ed. Thomas F. Best (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 285.

yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of *the tradition* is one and the same. For the Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. . . . Nor will any one of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in the point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on *the tradition*. For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little, diminish it.²

The church Fathers, led by the Holy Spirit, delivered not only the scripture but also the most precious treasures of the oral Tradition. In the words of St Basil:

The beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us in a mystery³ (1 Cor 2.7) by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. . . . We bless, both the water of Baptism and the oil of the Chrism, and moreover the baptized (*bytizomenon*) himself. From what written commands? . . . And the dipping the man thrice, whence came it? And all the other accompaniments of Baptism, the renunciation of Satan and his angels, from what Scripture came they? Come they not from this unpublished and secret teaching, which our fathers guarded in a silence with which no prying curiosity might meddle, having been well taught to preserve the sanctity of the mysteries by silence? For how could

2. Iraeneus, *Against Heresies*, Book I (Ancient Christian Writers vol. 55), 48-50.

3. Editor's note: 1 Cor. 2:7. Whether there is or not here a conscious reference to St Paul's words, there seems to be both in the text and in the passage cited an employment of *mustyrion* in its proper sense of a secret revealed to the initiated. See Basil, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (NPNF)*, 2nd series, vol. 8, p. 41.

it have been right to publish in writing the doctrine of these mysteries, which the unbaptized are not even allowed to look upon?⁴

With this understanding the Armenian Church, as a member of the Oriental Orthodox family of churches, has embraced the validity and decisive role of Tradition and traditions—namely, the holy scriptures, the teachings of the apostles, the creeds, the writings of the holy Fathers, the first three ecumenical councils, the liturgy, the menologies, the lives of the holy Fathers—in shaping its dogma, liturgical, sacramental, and spiritual life. The Armenian Church regards the holy scriptures as the production of the Tradition, yet it is very careful to distinguish the uniqueness of the former. The Bible is the authority *par excellence* in the church. In the words of our 11th-century ecumenical church Father Catholicos Nerses *Shnorhali* (the Gracious), “Our Church’s Tradition is established by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures.”⁵ The same understanding is expressed by 20th-century theologian Arshak Der Mikelian, who says: “The Armenian Church does not elevate Tradition over the Scriptures, rather she gets benefit from it in order to remain faithful to the Holy Bible on the apostolic main path. She remains faithful towards both as a true apostolic church.”⁶ With the same understanding, Catholicos Karekin I, former vice moderator of the WCC, states: “The main source of faith is the Scriptures, yet Tradition is inseparable from it.”⁷

As in the Syrian Orthodox Church, the same development of traditions along with the Tradition has been observed in the Armenian Church. The divine liturgy has gone through a very complex development over the centuries. The very fact that some parts are introduced as late as in the 18th century reflects the understanding of church fathers that the Holy Spirit continuously guides the church in its worship.

With the same approach, the biblical understanding of praying seven times a day,⁸ which has been the main foundation of the liturgy of hours, is

4. *Ibid.*, 40b-42a.

5. Nerses Shnorhali (Gracious), *General Epistles* (in Armenian) (Etchmiadzin: 1865), 222.

6. Arshak Ter-Mikelian, *The Catechism of the Armenian Church* (in Armenian), 2nd ed. (Tehran: 2003), 337-38.

7. Rev. Karekin Sarkissian (formerly known as Karekin II Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, then Karekin I of All Armenians), *Systematic Theology, Pastoral Theology, Christian Ethics* (in Armenian), (Canada: 2005), 52.

8. “Seven times a day I praise you” (Ps. 119:164).

elaborated throughout the centuries. The basic readings of the Psalms followed by prayers are enriched with new elements uplifting the souls of the participants.

Handing on Tradition along with traditions is a reminder of the belief that as creation itself cannot be regarded God's finished work but is in continuous formation under his providence until the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, likewise Tradition and traditions, originated from the same source, are in perpetual formation renewing the life of the church in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Every generation participates in the receiving/living/transmitting process of the Tradition by facing the challenges of their own time in the very spirit of the apostles, the martyrs, the saints—and, strengthened by them, marching in the footsteps of our Lord.

I would like to conclude my remarks by sharing with you a tradition from the life of the Armenian Church. I wear a string on my right wrist with seven knots. The origin of this tradition lies hidden somewhere in antiquity. On Holy/Maundy Thursday, during the service of *Tenebrae*, we read seven passages from the holy gospels, depicting our Lord's betrayal, trial, and passion. During each reading, the faithful make a knot with the string (seven all together), and then wear the string either for forty days, until the feast of the ascension, or throughout the entire year. This tradition may sound very superficial, nonsensical, or even a remnant of paganism, yet it is deeply rooted in the biblical tradition. By wearing this string, the believer is fulfilling the spirit of the Tradition, commended to Moses: "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. . . . Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead" (Deut. 6:6-9).

5. “Ancient Authors,” “Ancient Fathers”: The Place of the Patristic Theologians in the Anglican Tradition

John St-Helier Gibaut

This paper explores the doctrinal location of the Fathers from the 16th century to the most recent Lambeth conference. It will briefly examine historic Anglican use of the Fathers, and will give more substantial attention to current Anglican application of the Fathers. While an important study might include a survey of the ways in which particular Anglican theologians use the Fathers, this paper examines the more ecclesial usages represented in liturgical texts, Lambeth conference reports and resolutions, texts emerging from the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The last three will be recognizable to Anglicans as three of the four “Instruments of Communion” identified in the Virginia Report of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the 2004 *Windsor Report*, and the 2008 St Andrew’s Draft Covenant.¹

The Role of the Ancient Fathers in Anglicanism

From the 16th-century formularies to the present, Anglicans have maintained that the ancient authors of early Christianity play an ongoing and authoritative role in the life of the church. Within the classic Anglican triad of the sources of authority—the scriptures, Tradition, and reason—the ancient authors are located within the category of “Tradition,” though always under the controlling authority of the scriptures. Indeed, many

1. Another significant instance of Anglican use of the Fathers is in the agreed statements of the various bilateral dialogues. The most recent statement of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God*, makes extensive use of the Fathers, especially from the Greek tradition. Henry Chadwick notes that “the discerning reader of the Final Report of ARCIC I (1982) will notice many echoes of patristic tradition.” Henry Chadwick, “Tradition, Fathers and Councils,” *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes et al., rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1999), 114.

Anglican theologians have used ancient authors, such as Augustine, to point to the scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation.

The preface to the 1550 Ordinal in the *Book of Common Prayer* states: “It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” This classic Anglican statement on the threefold ministry rests first on the biblical witness, and then on the ancient authors, the Fathers of the early church. Likewise, the prefaces to the historic *Book of Common Prayer* from 1549 to 1662 make common referral to the “ancient Fathers.” Although the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are heavily influenced by the teaching of St Augustine, he is never named, nor is there any explicit appeal to the authority of the ancient authors, except in one instance where Jerome (Hierome) is cited in defence of the Church of England’s particular stance on the deuterocanonical books.² Nevertheless, the same Canons of Convocation of 1571 which authorized the Articles of Religion in their final form also declared the works of the Fathers to be doctrinally authoritative in the Church of England.

There have been certain eras in the history of Anglicanism in which the ancient authors were used more than in other times. For instance, in the 16th, 17th, and 19th centuries there were significant appeals to the authority of Fathers of the church. These centuries were also ones of significant tension and hostility, when the writings of the ancient authors were marshalled in support of the Church of England against the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, against the Calvinist tradition in the 17th, and by the Oxford Movement and later Anglo-Catholic apologists in the 19th. For instance, the Tractarian project of *The Library of the Fathers* (1838-1885) reproduced English translations of the works of the “Catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops,” which dealt with catholic doctrine of episcopal succession, ecclesiology, and sacramental theology. The educative dimension notwithstanding, promoting the works of the ancient authors clearly had a polemical basis as well in supporting the Tractarian agenda.³ Early 20th-century Anglican writers on episcopacy likewise made direct appeal to the ancient Fathers in defense of particular points of views

2. Article VI.

3. The principal Fathers used in the *Library of the Fathers* were Augustine, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Cyril, and Ambrose. See Michael Chandler, *An Introduction to the Oxford Movement* (New York: Church Publishing, 2002), 41

on the necessity of episcopacy⁴ at a time of new relationships with non-episcopal churches, including various plans of union.

Anglicans have historically been keen students of the patristic period, and in the forefront of patristic scholarship, at least within the English-speaking world. For instance, the monumental 19th-century editions of *The Library of the Fathers*, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and *Post-Nicene Fathers* continue to hold a place in contemporary scholarship. Editions and translations of the writings of the Fathers in the English language bear witness to an Anglican engagement with the Fathers. One thinks of prominent Anglican patristic scholars such as J. D. N. Kelly, Henry Chadwick, Joanne McWilliams, Richard Norris, Benedicta Ward, and Rowan Williams.

A scholarly work important to mention is one commissioned by Resolution 66 of the Lambeth Conference of 1988⁵: *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources*, edited by G. R. Evans and J. Robert Wright.⁶ The first chapter, entitled “Christian Beginnings: 96-451” contains 55 extracts from the writings of the ante-Nicene, Greek, and Latin Fathers. The ancient authors include Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Eusebius, Melito, Irenaeus of Lyon, the *Didache*, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil the Great, Egeria, John Chrysostom, (a heavy dose of) Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Innocent I, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril of Alexandria, Vincent of Lérins, liturgical texts, and conciliar teaching. The second chapter, “The One Church: 451-1054,” includes in the patristic section Leo the Great, the Rule of St Benedict, and Gregory the Great, as well as conciliar teaching. Besides being commended by a modern Lambeth conference, the selection of authors was made by an Anglican Communion-wide editorial board. The fact that such a handbook exists in the first place is a significant indication of the place of the ancient authors in contemporary Anglicanism. Even more significantly is the fact that these key representatives of the ancient authors are held as constitutive elements of the Anglican tradition.

4. For instance, are bishops of the *esse* or the *bene esse* of the church?

5. “This Conference encourages the publication of the proposed Handbook of Anglican Sources, which will reflect the catholicity of our tradition from the beginning and the concerns of the worldwide Anglican Communion today.” Resolution 66, in *The Truth Shall Set You Free: The Lambeth Conference of 1988, The Reports, Resolutions & Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 1988), 238.

6. G. R. Evans and J. Robert Wright, eds., *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources* (London: SPCK, 1991).

While there is an historic appeal to the Fathers and an undeniable Anglican interest in their teachings, questions raised are: What ways are the ancient authors authoritative for Anglicans? How are they used by contemporary Anglicans? And, most basically perhaps, which Fathers? And which parts of their teachings? And lastly, what kind of authority do they exercise?

In answering these questions for his 16th-century critics, John Jewel, the great Elizabethan apologist for the Church of England, clearly articulates an authoritative role of the ancient authors. Jewel's definitive *Apology for the Church of England* (1562) is a veritable anthology of patristic citations, both Greek and Latin, in defense of the Church of England against post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism. Yet Jewel consistently places the writings of the Fathers under the primary authority of the scriptures, using the witness of Fathers themselves to make this point. For example, in his *Treatise of the Holy Scriptures* he wrote:

They were learned men, and learned fathers; the instruments of the mercy of God, and vessels full of grace. We despise them not, we read them, we reverence them, and give thanks unto God for them. They were witnesses unto the truth, they were worthy pillars and ornaments in the Church of God. Yet may they not be compared with the word of God. We may not build up on them: we may not make them the foundation and warrant of our conscience: we may not put out trust in them. Our trust is the name of the Lord. And thus we are taught to esteem the learned fathers of the church by their own judgement. . . . St Augustine says . . . 'Neither weigh we the writings of all men, be they never so worthy and catholic, as we weigh the canonical scriptures.' . . . I could shew many the like speeches of the ancient fathers, wherein they reverence the holy scriptures: as to which only they give consent without gainsaying.⁷

Edward Pusey, answering his critics in the 19th century, wrote that the church's use of the patristic sources is "not to the Fathers individually, or as individuals, but as witnesses; not to this or to that Father, but to the whole body, and agreement of Catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops."⁸

7. John Jewel, *A Treatise of the Holy Scriptures*, in Evans and Wright, eds., *The Anglican Tradition*, 154.

8. In Chandler, *Oxford Movement*, 41.

More recently, Robert Runcie, when Archbishop of Canterbury, added another layer to an Anglican understanding of Tradition, which for him includes the creeds and the writings of the Fathers. Runcie writes:

Tradition, the third of our pillars, is now recognized less grudgingly as an essential part of our understanding of the gospel. It is through tradition that we have fellowship with our own past and learn to recognize our own voice. Tradition is the community’s language. If our faith is to be judged and corrected from anywhere beyond the individual Christ heart, it is to our tradition we naturally turn.⁹

Lastly, as the late Henry Chadwick, one of the greatest Anglican theologians of the 20th century has written, “In modern Anglican theology, as in modern Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy, the appeal to the Fathers remains a living force.”¹⁰

Liturgical Evidence, Part I

Given the place of liturgy as a source of doctrine in the Anglican tradition, the natural place to start is the liturgical calendar and liturgical prayer. What ancient authors are named in the calendar? And what is said of them in the collects and other liturgical prayers proper to their commemoration?

In the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, the following ancient authors are named: Hilary of Poitiers (January 13), Gregory the Great (March 12), Benedict (March 21), Ambrose (April 4), Venerable Bede (May 27), Augustine (August 28), Cyprian (September 26), and Jerome (September 30). The 1662 prayer book makes no provision for a liturgical observance of the Fathers named in the calendar by way of collects or other proper prayers. Nonetheless, certain observations can be made. First, the eight ancient authors are all Latin Fathers. The majority are from the 4th century, with Cyprian representing the 3rd century, Benedict and Gregory representing the 6th, and Bede the 8th; Bede for many scholars represents the close of the Patristic age.

Revision of the prayer book in the 20th century included revision of the liturgical calendar. For instance, the 1918 Canadian *Book of Common*

9. Robert Runcie, *Authority in Crisis? An Anglican Response* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 37.

10. Henry Chadwick, “Tradition, Fathers and Councils,” 114.

Prayer expanded the traditional list to include John Chrysostom (January 27), Ignatius of Antioch (February 1), Athanasius of Alexandria (May 2), Gregory of Nazianzus (May 9), Justin Martyr (June 1), Basil the Great (June 14), Irenaeus of Lyon (June 28), and Clement of Rome (November 23). Again, there are no liturgical propers. This list, now at 16 Fathers, is indicative of a broadening of an Anglican reception of the ancient authors, including many more ante-Nicene Fathers, and a much more significant number of Greek Fathers.

The 1959 Canadian prayer book added more medieval and post-Reformation teachers and authors, but they are beyond the scope of this consultation. Added to the list of the patristic Fathers are Leo the Great (April 11), Hippolytus of Rome (August 13), and Clement of Alexandria (December 4), bringing the number of ancient Fathers to 19.¹¹ Significantly, by the mid-20th century liturgical propers were established in the prayer book for “Doctors of the Church”:

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant *N.*, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.¹²

More recent liturgical revisions have produced an even more substantive list of patristic Fathers, who are referred to as “Teachers of the Faith.” The most recent Canadian calendar from the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services* includes 20 ancient authors with the addition of Gregory of Nyssa (March 9), and Cyril of Jerusalem (March 18); Hippolytus was dropped. Expanded liturgical propers further accent the role of the Fathers in the life of the church. The Canadian church, for instance, on the memorial of Augustine of Hippo on August 28, prays:

God, ancient of days and forever new, you are the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the hearts that serve you. Remember, we pray, your servant Augustine, and grant us so to rejoice in his teaching and holy life, that we may set our minds on

11. As well, the actual dates of commemoration have been modified in many instances.

12. *Book of Common Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 317-318.

the beauty of your truth and order our desires by the rule of your Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.¹³

In the Anglican tradition a liturgical text duly approved by appropriate canonical authority is not just doxological but also an authoritative “standard of doctrine and practice.” Liturgical calendars within Anglican prayer books are, thus, also authoritative when they identify the lives and teachings of the ancient authors as examples and witnesses in the present time.

In summary, the liturgical calendars identify authoritatively—and perhaps even canonically—the list of ancient authors whose lives and teaching bear witness to the faith, and who are to be included in the prayer of the church today. From the beginning of the 20th century the list of Fathers has grown extensively, and is more broadly representative of the patristic tradition of East and West, and of ante and post-Nicene Fathers.¹⁴ This is in marked contrast to the list of eight Latin Fathers in the classic calendar of the 1662 prayer book. Today, the vast majority of the ancient authors are Greek and ante-Nicene (many of whom wrote in Greek).

How then the ancient authors are used in contemporary Anglicanism?

Instruments of Communion

Lambeth conferences

A survey of the resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences from 1867 to 1998 reveals no overt use of the ancient Fathers in Anglican decision-making at the Communion level; not a single ancient Author is appealed to in the entire *corpus*. There are, however, consistent appeals to Tradition.

In the reports of the most recent Lambeth conferences, the treatment on Tradition conspicuously lacks any reference to the ancient Fathers. The “Report on Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns” of the 1988 Lambeth Conference contains a section entitled “The Christian Inheritance: Elements of Authority,” which expounds eloquently on the place of Tradition as “the

13. *For All the Saints: Prayers and Readings for Saints Day According to the Calendar of the Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1994), 259.

14. The seven Latin Fathers include Hilary of Poitiers, Bede, Benedict, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Jerome, and Ambrose of Milan; Hippolytus was omitted. The six Greek Fathers include Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nissa, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius. The seven ante-Nicene Fathers include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, and Clement of Alexandria.

living and growing ‘mind’ of the Church that has from generation to generation been formed and challenged by the scriptural Word in the process of appropriating that Word in liturgy, life and teaching.”¹⁵ The influential and authoritative formulae of the living tradition of the church include classical eucharistic prayers, popular hymns, “not to mention the ecumenical Creeds, which stand alongside the Scriptures themselves as summaries of their essential message.”¹⁶

Similarly, the 1998 Lambeth Conference made no specific mention of the ancient Fathers in its resolutions or section reports. The “Virginia Report” treats Tradition very much in the same vein as its 1988 predecessor: “Tradition is not to be understood as an accumulation of formulae and texts, but the living mind, the nerve centre of the Church. Anglican appeal to tradition is the appeal to this mind of the Church carried by the worship, teaching and the Spirit-filled life of the Church.”¹⁷

Lastly, there was no appeal to the Fathers in *Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections from the Lambeth Conference 2008*.¹⁸

Anglican Consultative Council

Under the auspices of the Anglican Consultative Council, a number of major initiatives have recently been undertaken in response to current crises in the Anglican Communion. The ACC has published the *Windsor Report* of the Lambeth Commission on Communion (2004), a draft Covenant (2008), an important study in canon law across the churches of the Communion by the Anglican Communion Legal Advisers Network (2008), and a report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (2008).

The report of the Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (2004), makes three references to the ancient Fathers. In an historical survey, the report notes that the Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “looked back explicitly to the Bible and the early Fathers, and had every intention that their theology would be ‘catholic’ in the sense

15. “Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns,” in *The Truth Shall Set You Free: The Lambeth Conference of 1988, The Reports, Resolutions & Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 1988), 102.

16. *Ibid.*, 102.

17. “The Virginia Report,” in *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 32.

18. Anecdotally, however, I can report that in Bible study groups and in Indaba discussions, there were often references made to particular ancient authors and their teachings.

of sharing the faith of the universal Church.”¹⁹ In a subsequent historical observation the report notes: “The emphasis on scripture grew not least from the insistence of the early Anglican reformers on the importance of the Bible and the Fathers over against what they saw as illegitimate medieval developments; it was part of their appeal to ancient undivided Christian faith and life.”²⁰ Lastly, the section on the historical development leading to increased responsibility on the meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion notes:

This request draws on that theology of wider apostolic and episcopal leadership which is expressed in the New Testament by the apostles themselves (e.g., Paul, writing with authority to various churches including some that he had not himself founded), by such writers as Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus and Cyprian, and in subsequent centuries by the recognition of the role of the great sees of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Rome and Jerusalem.²¹

While it would be of interest to comment on each of these assumptions, what is important for this study is to comment on the use of the Fathers for the Lambeth Commission. The Fathers seem to play an historical role alone; their witness is never marshalled in the recommendations of the Commission for the Anglican Communion today.

Appended to the *Windsor Report* is a proposed Covenant to provide common principles of communion, recognized instruments of communion, and ways of living together. The most recent version of an Anglican Covenant, the 2008 *St Andrew’s Draft Covenant*, makes considerable appeal to Tradition. It never makes a particular appeal to the ancient Fathers.²²

The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion (2008) of the Anglican Communion Legal Advisers’ Network sets out to identify one hundred elements of canon law held in common by the churches of the Anglican Communion. Within these principles, the

19. The Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), p. 32.

20. *Windsor Report*, p. 38.

21. *Windsor Report*, p. 44.

22. Since 2008, it is important to note the final text of “The Anglican Covenant” approved in November, 2009. It can be found at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/index.cfm>. It too makes considerable references to the catholic and apostolic faith and to the historic creeds, but with no appeal to the ancient authors.

place of the ancient Fathers as sources for doctrine is clearly upheld in the canon law tradition in the churches of the Anglican Communion. One of the categories of the principles of canon law common to the churches deals with the sources of doctrine. Principle 49 twice lists the ancient Fathers among the sources of doctrinal authority:

49.1 The faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ is taught in the Holy Scriptures, summed up in the creed, and affirmed by the ancient Fathers and undisputed General Councils.

49.4 The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordinal 1662 are grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures.²³

The Kuala Lumpur Report of the third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *Communion, Conflict and Hope* (2008), is intended to provide a theological framework within which global Anglicanism can confront differences and diversity in a time of conflict.²⁴ As historic standards of Anglicanism, the text identifies the Thirty-nine Articles, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.²⁵ There is no mention anywhere in this important text of the place of the ancient Fathers as historic standards. Although the Gnostic gospels, the Montanists and Arius are cited (not positively!) I could not find a single reference to an ancient author. While there are ample references to the history of the Church, there is little on Tradition itself as a source of authority in the text of the theological commission.

Archbishop of Canterbury

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury (2002-2012), will be used as the exemplar of this particular instrument of communion. Given his quite distinct contribution as an Anglican thinker, it may at first appear tricky to distinguish the person from the office. However, the language of *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* describes the exercise of ordained ministry

23. *Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008), pp. 57-58.

24. *Communion, Conflict and Hope: The Kuala Lumpur Report of the Third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008), p. 5.

25. *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, §98, p. 43.

as “personal, collegial, and communal.”²⁶ The “Virginia Report” takes this triad and applies it to episcopal ministry.²⁷ Since the “personal” is an integral part of any ministry, including that of *episcopus*, it is both unwise and unnecessary to distinguish too exactly the person from the office.

Dr Williams is a recognized authority on the Fathers of the church, who are important influences in his pastoral, theological and ascetical writings. One of his commentators, Rupert Shortt, suggests that St Augustine is probably Dr Williams’s most significant intellectual influences.²⁸ The first and second editions of *Arius* are a permanent contribution to patristic scholarship. His *Silence and Honey Cakes: The Wisdom of the Desert* (Oxford, 2003) brings to life for modern readers the desert fathers and their teaching.

His 2007 *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief* is a lucid and compelling rendering of the classical creeds. He draws on a variety of sources and examples to illustrate his point, mostly from the Bible but also many drawn from contemporary life, the Reformation, and even the medieval church. With the exception of a brief reference to a desert father, I could not find a single appeal to a patristic author.

An important aspect of Archbishop Williams’s primacy and ministry as an instrument of communion are the sermons, retreat, and presidential addresses at the 2008 Lambeth conference. These opportunities to address the bishops set the tone for the gathering and are hailed as one of the principal causes of the success of the conference. There were isolated instances when he appealed to the witness of the ancient authors. In his third retreat address he appealed to the writings of Ignatius of Antioch and his enigmatic saying that “bishops are pleasing to God when they are silent,” which Dr Williams used to illustrate how the bishop’s stillness or silence allows God’s word, not the bishop’s, to come through.²⁹ The fourth retreat address began with a quotation from Tertullian, and continued with appeals to the desert Fathers and St Benedict.³⁰ Within the three presidential addresses, there was no explicit appeal to the Fathers.

26. Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 25-26.

27. “Virginia Report,” 35.

28. Rupert Shortt, *Rowan Williams: An Introduction* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 34.

29. Rowan Williams, *God’s Mission and a Bishop’s Discipleship* (Lambeth Conference, 2008), 16.

30. *Ibid.*, 18-20.

It would be unreasonable to expect an appeal to the patristic Fathers in every sermon, address, book or article from an archbishop of Canterbury. The ancient authors are not, after all, the Bible. Within the larger context of the Lambeth conference resolutions since 1867 and in the conference reports of the past 20 years, the fact that there were so few references to the Fathers in Archbishop Williams's works may be indicative of contemporary Anglicanism's reticence to seek support and perspective in the patristic era, despite Chadwick's assertion that in "modern Anglican theology . . . the appeal to the Fathers remains a living force." That so many other sources are used further highlights the lacuna. The materials emerging from the Anglican Consultative Council suggest a similar reticence, although the Fathers figure as important in the history of doctrine. It is ironic that at a time when Anglican liturgical calendars contain more Latin, Greek, and ante-Nicene Fathers than ever before, their witness and teachings appear to play such a limited practical role in this unparalleled time of crisis and evolution within the Anglican Communion.

On the other hand, it may be that the real influence of the Fathers for modern Anglicans is no longer to be as a source for polemical disputation, or the justification for the restructuring of instruments of communion, or even for theological reflection on the same, but where the church is most overtly itself, namely prayer. Dr Williams, for instance, has introduced countless Christian readers to the desert Fathers. But the deeper influence of the Fathers in the life of the Anglican Communion is not in books, but in the event of liturgical prayer.

Liturgical Evidence, Part II

Anglican liturgical tradition has always shown some dependence on the ancient authors from the 16th century to the present. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the principal author of the prayer book, was steeped in the Greek and Latin Fathers. The most well-known instance is the "Prayer of St Chrysostom" from the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. From the 1559 it is identified as the "Prayer of St Chrisostom"—the only prayer to be associated with a particular source. In the 16th-century prayer books it appeared at the end of the Great Litany, and from 1662 onwards it concluded Morning and Evening Prayer. From the 19th century, great scholarly efforts have been expended on the provenance of the (short-lived) epiclesis in the eucharistic prayer of the 1549 prayer book, most chiefly in liturgies of St John

Chrysostom, St Basil, and the 4th-century *Euchologion* of Serapion. The overwhelming evidence does not point in the direction of either of the Eastern Fathers or to the patristic era in general.³¹ What is most significant is an almost instinctual Anglican yearning to find roots in the ancient Fathers for the Anglican liturgical tradition. This is seen most noticeably in a series of fringe Anglican liturgical rites from the non-jurors of the 17th and 18th centuries, which made extensive use of Eastern texts associated with particular Fathers.³²

Some of these fringe rites, however, exerted an important influence on 20th-century Anglican liturgical revision, which made direct use of liturgical texts from the Eastern Fathers. The preference for the Eastern liturgical patrimony springs from the direction of the liturgical movement, and also the ecumenical movement with a clear preference for trinitarian patterns of prayer and ecclesiology most clearly expressed in the Eastern liturgical tradition.³³ The extent of this borrowing in different rites from the Divine Office to the various sacramental rites across the Anglican Communion can be found elsewhere.³⁴ In the 1985 Canadian *Book of Alternative Services*, two of the eucharistic prayers are recensions of two anaphoras associated with ancient Fathers: Hippolytus and St Basil.³⁵ Fragments of the anaphoras of St John Chrysostom and St Basil are sprinkled throughout the various eucharistic prayers. Most importantly, the very trinitarian shape of the anaphora is inspired with the Antiochene anaphoral structure associated with the divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great; this particular shape is common to all the new eucharistic prayers, and is increasingly reflected across the Anglican Communion.

31. See John Gibaut, “Gifts from the Orient: Eastern Textual Influence in the Development of Anglican Liturgy,” *Logos* 41-42 (2000-2001), 276-280.

32. See *ibid.*, 281-88.

33. See also the findings of the eucharistic theology group of the 1995 International Anglican Liturgical Consultation: “The Western Eucharistic rites have not always given full expression to our Trinitarian faith. The classical forms of Eucharistic prayer in the East have an explicitly Trinitarian structure which became lost in the West. It is not found in the Roman Canon, nor was it part of the awareness of most of the Reformers. More recently, we have returned to the pre-Cappadocian custom of addressing the Eucharistic prayer to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.” David Holeton (ed.), *Renewing the Anglican Eucharist: Findings of the Fifth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Dublin, Eire, 1995* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1996), 9-10.

34. See John Gibaut, “Gifts from the Orient,” 291-314.

35. Eucharistic Prayers II and IV respectively.

The theological, pastoral, ecumenical, and liturgical reasons for the particular choice of the anaphoral structure, and indeed, the actual anaphoral texts of the Greek Fathers, are many. In the end, however, they come down to liturgical texts that rest on the authority of the ancient Fathers of the church, notably, Hippolytus, John Chrysostom, and Basil the Great. While contemporary Anglican theologians and instruments of communion make an uncharacteristic non-appeal to the writings of the ancient authors, the bishops and synods that have authorized the revised liturgical texts have not. Thus, ordinary Anglican believers who gather for the eucharist Sunday by Sunday are shaped by the ancient authors in ways they are unlikely to identify through their encounter with the Triune God in the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ. It is in the living patrimony of the *lex orandi* of the ancient authors, the ancient Fathers, that the *lex credendi* of 21st-century Anglicans is shaped at its most profound and organic level. Here the liturgy bears witness to the historic and yet contemporary Anglican instinct that the ancient Fathers are a living force, a grounding and an affirming authority for the biblical faith in the Triune God and our redemption in Christ Jesus.

A Response to John St-Helier Gibaut

Natasha Klukach

Canon Gibaut's paper considers the place of the patristic authors in the Anglican tradition primarily from a liturgical perspective, and in light of three of the four instruments of communion—the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth conference, and the Anglican Consultative Council. This approach has much to recommend it. While certainly a historical survey of Anglican patristic scholarship would yield valuable contributions to the study on the authority of the early Fathers in the church, it is not here that Anglicans find their common life. It is most fitting, therefore, that liturgical considerations should constitute the central feature of an examination of the evidence of patristic sources in Anglican tradition.

Canon Gibaut's paper offered some interesting observations concerning the appeals to patristic authors throughout the history of Anglicanism. That so often surges in the popularity of these authors and their usage in theological texts and ecclesial documents coincided with periods of conflict and polemical exchange offers an intriguing insight into the development of the churches of the Anglican Communion over the centuries. It *is* rather ironic that in the present time of crisis within the Communion, no such overt appeals to patristic authors are apparent. Canon Gibaut's observation that this may actually signify a real shift in how contemporary Anglicans are being influenced by the Fathers, and that this influence can now be located in the event of liturgical prayer, is a particularly helpful insight and overall orientation of the paper.

There is a further area of liturgical experience that could be added to Canon Gibaut's discussion as an important source of patristic influence. Anglican hymnody, even in contemporary expression, offers ample evidence of the significance of both Eastern and Western texts of the patristic period. The 19th-century Oxford Movement, to which Canon Gibaut has referred, was a time of patristic rediscovery and, very importantly, of translation. Of the many translators at work in this period, most prolific was John Mason Neale, a scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge and later

priest in the south of England. Not only did Neale contribute greatly to the Church of England's understanding of the Orthodox churches, but he translated hundreds of Latin and Greek hymns by authors such as Ambrose of Milan, Prudentius, John of Damascus, Ephraim the Syrian, Synesius of Cyrene, and Gregory the Great, many of which have been in subsequent use in hymnals throughout the Anglican Communion. Because of the work of Neale and his contemporaries, generations of Anglicans have become familiar with the poetry and hymns of the Fathers. Prudentius's words of the 4th century, for example, are frequently sung in the Christmas season in the hymn "Of the Father's love begotten."¹ Plainsong melodies, both those of the patristic period and those of the later medieval period, were similarly rediscovered and brought into greater usage. *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, originally published in England in 1861, reflects this rekindled appreciation for medieval and early church material. *Common Praise*, hymnal of the Anglican Church of Canada published in 1998, contains 22 hymn texts from the church Fathers, of both Latin and Greek sources. Its predecessor, published in 1938, contains 37.

The spirituality that has developed within Anglicanism is varied and rich, reflecting the theological, historical, and cultural diversity of the Communion. Within this aspect of the Anglican Church, too, evidence of patristic influence may be discerned. The history of monasticism within the Anglican Church is tumultuous with the suppression of the monastic orders within the Church of England following the Reformation, including the seizure of property and forcible removal of monks and nuns. It was in the 19th century that monasticism found its place again in the Anglican tradition, with a wide range of orders for men and for women mainly in England, but before long throughout the Communion. The various orders present today—including Benedictines and Franciscans—may, in fact, take their primary historical reference from the monastic experiences of the medieval period. But all, in their own ways, also intentionally reflect a much older spirituality and community life drawn from the earliest roots of monastic life in the Patristic period. The rediscovery of monasticism in the Anglican tradition has become an identified area of common heritage and experience in ecumenical dialogues with Roman Catholics and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox.

1. For example, see Anglican Church of Canada, *Common Praise* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), hymn 132.

The spirituality of the early church has similarly been brought to life by Anglican authors captivated by the writings and lived experiences of this period. Evelyn Underhill, for instance, was influenced by the spirituality of the early church and by philosophical and patristic sources including Plotinus, Origen, Augustine, and Pseudo-Dionysius and brought these to 20th-century Anglicans. Rowan Williams, as Canon Gibaut has discussed, has been extremely attentive to this period as a source of spiritual inspiration, in particular in his book *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another* (2005), which draws so heavily upon the teachings of the desert fathers and mothers.

In bilateral ecumenical dialogues of the past half-century, Anglicans have quite intentionally identified and named the shared influence of the patristic period with a number of the dialogue partners. For instance with the Roman Catholic Church, the ARCIC text *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* draws heavily upon patristic authors as it examines Christ and Mary in the ancient common tradition. The document references a significant number of the Fathers, including Justin, Ignatius of Antioch, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine, and, not surprisingly, offers particular attention to the title of *Theotokos* and the Christological debates at the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. The appeal to this shared history and sources of authority functions as an important foundation upon which the collective affirmations about Mary are made. The agreed statement on Christology emerging from the Anglican–Oriental Orthodox dialogue in 2002 (which remains under consideration by the churches) similarly makes significant appeals to the patristic period, most notably in referencing “the teaching of our common father Saint Cyril of Alexandria.”² And, as Canon Gibaut’s paper notes, the most recent statement to emerge from the Anglican Orthodox dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God*, makes extensive references to the Fathers, including Origen, Basil the Great, Maximus the Confessor, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John of Damascus among many others.

2. Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission, *Agreed Statement on Christology*, Section 2, at: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/oriental/docs/2002christology.cfm>.

A Response to John St-Helier Gibaut

Antoine Arjakovsky

The paper by Canon Gibaut presented a universalistic evolution of the Anglican patristic horizon from the 16th century to our days as well as demonstrating a more liturgical than intellectual presence of the patristic heritage in the modern Anglican conscience. This twofold statement suggested three short responses. The first one concerns the notion of the pillar of the Tradition. The second deals with the meaning of the meta-confessional synchronic dimension of the patristic revival. And finally, the third is a suggestion to reread together not the works of the Fathers in their entirety as was done in Bristol 1967,¹ but some of their statements that prevent Christians today from engaging with the Fathers in an intellectual dialogue.

The notion of the pillar was used by Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1980–1991), to underline the importance of the patristic Tradition alongside the holy scriptures and the “Reason.” This case does not seem to take into account the great revival in patristic studies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, one can no longer separate the scriptures from their interpretation. One cannot too radically separate the life of the church from the realization of the fragments of this life by God’s people according to different historical rhythms and contexts. Christ showed the pilgrims of Emmaus that the scriptures do not make sense except in the light of the one who is the way. In the same way one cannot bring back into question the radiance of truth held by the Cappadocian Fathers in the face of the partial truth of Arius, but likewise one cannot say that the victory of the Cappadocians at the council defeated forever Arian heresy in the history of God’s people. This is why in order to define the sources of authority in the church it would be better today to take up the formulation of the Dombes Group in their document *Un seul Maître / The Only Master*.

1. *New Directions in Faith and Order*, Bristol 1967, Reports, Minutes, Documents, Faith and Order Paper no. 50 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968)

Three modes of exercising authority constantly interact in the life of the church and of Christians:

God's supreme authority exercised in the individual conscience, in its intimate and ultimate decisions;

The authority which proceeds from Scripture received as revelation and interpreted by the tradition;

Lastly, the authority exercised by institutions that desire to serve and regulate Christian faith and life, the ecclesiastical magisterium (Catholicism) and synodal authority (Protestantism).²

This new synthesis and hierarchization of the authority of the patristic tradition allows us to depart from the age of confessionalism in the church and to bring the Fathers of the church up to date in a more creative and free manner, and not only in a liturgical way or by simply identifying them.

Due to a more insightful synthesis between the scriptures, Tradition, and reason, today one can better respond to the question that the theologians of Faith and Order put forward in Montreal in 1963 (paragraph 53).³ The hermeneutical key is well found in the Tradition of the Fathers and councils, but this key is not set in action either by infallible humans or a meteorite that fell from the sky. It is the result of the dynamic action of the Spirit and *in itself is subject to a history*. Therefore, it is possible to distinguish between the history of the church and the memory of the church. For this reason the criterion of the truth that makes the consensus of the Fathers possible is a notion capable of evolving according to a given time.⁴

The Orthodoxy of Christian Tradition can be defined according to the four modes. Each of them has its eternal truth and contextual grounding. First of all, the orthodoxy of faith was lived out in the first three centuries of church history as a proper worship (*pravo-slavie*). Beginning from the 4th century and especially during the debates prior to the Council of Nicea, the Orthodoxy was lived out as an ability to point out towards the true faith. Since the 7th Ecumenical Council and especially since the victory of the Orthodoxy in 843 the criterion of the Orthodox faith has become

2. Groupe des Dombes, *Un seul Maître, L'autorité doctrinale dans l'Eglise*, 14 (Paris: Bayard, 2005), 18. Quoted from the English translation by Catherine Clifford, p. xxi.

3. *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, The Report from Montreal 1963*, ed. P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer, Faith and Order Paper no. 42 (London: SCM Press, 1964), 53.

4. S. Bulgakov, "Dogma i dogmatika," *Zivoe Predanie* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1937). See also, A. Arjakovsky, *Church, Culture and Identity, Reflections on Orthodoxy in the Modern World* (Lviv: UCU Press, 2007).

the faithful memory. This latter representation of the Orthodoxy prevailed in Europe of modern times at the moment when faith and reason were detached from one another. The Orthodox believers of the East, on their part, put emphasis on the remembrance of councils and Fathers of the Eastern Church transmitted in the liturgy, whereas the Orthodox faithful of the West have placed their loyalty either in the papal primacy for some, or in the truth of the holy scriptures for others. It was not until the 19th and 20th centuries, thanks to the patristic and liturgical revival and due to the new encounter of the East and the West, that the fourth definition of the Orthodoxy as the life in Christ through the Holy Spirit has emerged in all the more visible way among major Christian denominations. This dyadic paradigm of life in Christ within the Spirit certainly is not new. Father Serge Bulgakov rediscovered it in the famous expression of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon about “the two hands of the Father.” But it permits us both to actualize the experience of the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and to express the turnaround of the ecclesiological conscience in the 20th century, which is personalistic, sophiological, and trinitarian at the same time.

Such dynamic understanding of the Orthodoxy offers a good basis for us to answer the question in paragraph 55 of the Montreal document.⁵ Today integration in the common Tradition (with capital T) of witnesses of other traditions, and particularly of those of the modern Anglican tradition quoted by Canon Gibaut, John Jewel, or Rowan Williams, does not seem to be a problem. In fact, it is possible to determine in a new way what they agreed on, even if these witnesses themselves were not fully aware of it sometimes.

The second comment concerns the synchronic dimension of the patristic revival in different denominations. Canon Gibaut refers to *The Library of the Fathers* (1838-1885) by the Tractarians, a document that coincides in time with the patristic revival found in works of Kiréevski and Soloviev.⁶ In the 20th century the collection entitled *Sources Chéretiennes* (Christian Sources) is contemporary with the writings of George Florovsky and Paul Evdokimov. And if Canon Gibaut points out the gaps in the patristic grounding of the Anglican tradition, one could make similar remarks about the history of the Orthodox Church. Anglican theologian William Palmer went to Russia in 1840-1841, driven by a keen desire to discover in the East

5. Ibid., 54.

6. Vladimir Soloviev, *Le développement dogmatique de l'Eglise* (Moscou, 1886; Fr. trans., Paris: Desclée, 1991).

the living heritage of the patristic tradition. At the same time he brought a message from his hierarchy in favour of eucharistic rapprochement with the Orthodox Church. But his disappointment was as great as his enthusiasm when he discovered that the Russian Church of the times of Nicolas I was far from the proclaimed tradition of being loyal to the ecumenical councils and the Fathers of the church. Nicolas Zernov, who studied the correspondence between Khomiakov and Palmer, had to acknowledge that the observations of the Anglican theologian were fair and objective.⁷ The patristic revival, inherited from the philocalic renewal, is a recent phenomenon in the Orthodox world. It dates back to 1860 through 1940. It is a revival that made possible the establishment of the Commission on the Ecumenical Dialogue with the Churches of the Anglican Communion during the Council of the Russian Church in 1917, the later meetings of the Anglican and Orthodox theologians in the framework of the fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius in 1930s, and finally the official dialogue between the churches since the 1970s.

This response is in full sympathy with Canon Gibaut's opinion that intellectual rediscovery of the Fathers and the common attachment to the patristic liturgical devotion caused an evolution of the *lex credendi*. The same is true as well for the Orthodoxy.

The Anglican intellectuals are already rediscovering the patristic notion of participation, similarly to the Radical Orthodoxy movement. Even though Rowan Williams quotes little of the fathers of the Church, he contributes to introducing their symbolic and iconic approach to the world. In his book *Lost Icons*,⁸ in total fidelity to the thought of V. Lossky and S. Boulgakov, the great masters of neo-patristic synthesis that he knew so well, Rowan Williams suggests ways that would allow men and women of the 21st century to discover the sense of humanity and in its centre the face of the resurrected one.

Likewise, the Orthodox are rediscovering on their part the priority—which is patristic as well—of the personal conscience, of hypostasis, based on the *doxa*, on the common opinion. Such rediscovery is essential for it allows us to open ourselves more fully to the dialogue and to the prophetic movements: the notion of *théologoumenon* by Bolotov and Boulgakov, and the emphasis by Vladimir Lossky on the concept of the “critical spirit of the

7. N. Zernov, “Angliiski Bogoslov v Rossii imperatora Nikolaia Pervavo (W. Palmer, A. Khomjakov),” *Put* 57 (Oct. 1938), 58-83.

8. *Icons perdues, réflexions sur une culture en deuil* (Fr. trans., Paris: Cerf, 2005).

Church” calling to discernment between the transitory and the essential; or even the recent document of the Russian Orthodox Church on the human rights. This, no doubt, promotes a new rapprochement between the Orthodox and Anglican churches. The praise of Rowan Williams given in public on 4 August 2008 at the Lambeth Conference by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware in the press is a wonderful illustration of this, as is the invitation by Rowan Williams to Metropolitan John Zizioulas to open this conference.

Revisiting Some of the Positions of the Fathers

The insistence of Canon Gibaut on the omnipotence of Augustine in the Anglican memory brings this paper to my third and final remark. As long as a hermeneutical key allows us to integrate the patristic heritage in a new way, and as long as this hermeneutical key is itself updated and well justified by the *criterion* of the life in Christ through the Holy Spirit, should it be possible to revisit some debatable positions of the Fathers? Should not the consensus of the Fathers be also inter-generational? The French Catholic theologian Dominique Cerbelaud has demonstrated that the notion of the original sin in Saint Augustine is a result of the misinterpretation of Romans 5. His position corresponds well to the viewpoint of the contemporary Orthodox theologians who prefer to speak of the fallen world rather than the ontologically sinful world.⁹ Such clarifications are urgently needed in order to establish a dialogue with the secularized modern thought that becomes more and more prevalent.

9. O. Clément, *Mémoires d'espérance* (Paris: DDB, 2003), 41. In *Marie, un parcours dogmatique* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 158.

6. Christian Tradition and traditions in Wesleyan and Methodist Perspectives

Ted A. Campbell

The study of the reception of the ancient Christian witness in Wesleyan and Methodist traditions has been done in the last four decades, including a dissertation and a subsequent book based on it—*John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*.¹ At Southern Methodist University in Dallas there has been an interest in the ecumenical contributions of Dr. Albert C. Outler, an American Methodist patristics scholar who helped define ecumenical views of “Tradition and traditions” and led the United Methodist Church to a significant recovery of the sense of being connected to ancient Christian traditions by way of Wesleyan roots. The United Methodist Church represents about 12-13 million of the total 35-36 million Methodists throughout the world today, and the issue at stake will be addressed from that perspective rather than the wide variety of Methodists and other Wesleyans.

It is important to realize in the historical background to this study that the term “tradition” had decidedly negative connotations from at least the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation,² and this pejorative understanding of “tradition” was linked to the typical way in which the Reformation had viewed history in general: early Christianity (especially in the New Testament period) was prized as the exemplar of true faith, the Middle Ages were deprecated as “dark ages” of corruption and superstition, and the Reformation was then understood as a heroic return to true faith.

1. Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991).

2. Cf. for example, the exhortation of the Anglican Homily, urging Christians to “search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men’s traditions, devised by men’s imagination, for our justification and salvation”: Homily 1; in John Leith, ed., *Creeeds of the Churches*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 232.

John Wesley's Uses of Early Christian Tradition

Although Methodists largely shared these inherited views of tradition, it has become apparent in the last three or four decades that Methodist founder John Wesley (1703-1791) valued the writings of Christian antiquity very highly as models of true Christian belief, practice, and above all, of Christian holiness.³ This scholarship has made it clear that John Wesley was the heir of a particular tradition of Anglican patristic study, and he consistently utilized patristic sources as informing his vision of renewal and reform in church in his age.

What, then, were the ancient Christian sources on which John Wesley relied? There were at least two occasions on which John Wesley himself laid out in a kind of schematic form his understanding of these sources. One comes in his sermon "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, near the City Road, London" (1777). After asserting that Methodism is nothing less than the religion of the Bible, Wesley then claimed continuity between Methodism and early Christian writings:

[Methodism] is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed, even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp; it is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian; and, even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius.⁴

3. Some of the literature on Wesley's patristic sources from the 1960s to the present is as follows: Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 9-10, and especially the lengthy footnote on p. 9; Robert Sheffield Brightman, "Gregory of Nyssa and John Wesley in Theological Dialogue on the Christian Life" (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1969), 45-58, and especially the appendix on pp. 359-367; Kelley Steve McCormick, "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life" (PhD dissertation, Drew University, 1983); Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity" (PhD dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 1984); subsequently revised and published as *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Kingswood Books, 1991); Roberta Bondi, "The Meeting of Oriental Orthodoxy and United Methodism," in Paul Fries and Tiran Nersoyan, eds., *Christ in East and West* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 171-184; and "The Role of the Holy Spirit from a United Methodist Perspective," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31:3-4 [1986]: 351-360; Hoo-Jung Lee, "The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley" (PhD dissertation, Emory University, 1991), especially chapter five, pp. 154-245.

4. "On Laying the Foundation . . ." etc., II:3, in Albert C. Outler, ed., *Sermons*, The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, vols. 1-4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press,

This passage is particularly revealing of Wesley's conception of ancient Christianity. Century divisions are clearly laid out, with the Apostolic Fathers (here, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp) representing the 2nd century, the quartet of Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian (all Africans) representing the 3rd century and "even" (note the surprise on Wesley's part) in the 4th century John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, "Ephraem Syrus," and "Macarius the Egyptian." With the exception of Clement of Rome and the 3rd-century quartet of Africans, the entire list is composed of Christians from the eastern Mediterranean. Conspicuously absent from this list are Latin writers Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose, although Jerome and Augustine do show up in a more general list of authors Wesley recommended for clergy to read.⁵

These lists offer a fairly good indication of the ancient Christian texts to which Wesley had access, and this can be substantiated by examining the sources to which Wesley frequently referred in his various writings.⁶ In the first place, Wesley had frequent reference to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, including Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp. Only one of these works (that of Clement of Rome) can be described as "Western" in that it was addressed from Rome. John Wesley not only edited, but produced a translation of the works of the Apostolic Fathers, published in 1749 in the first volume of his *Christian Library*.⁷ The Apostolic Fathers were of particular interest to Wesley, because some eighteenth-century critics of traditional religious belief—Dr. Conyers Middleton in particular—had argued that the age of miracles had ceased with the Apostles and that "miraculous powers" were not exercised by Christians in post-apostolic

1984-1987) 3:586. The other passage parallel to this one is in the "Address to the Clergy," I:2 (Jackson Thomas, ed., *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 10:484).

5. In the "Address to the Clergy" I:2 (Jackson, *Works*, 10:484), and even here Wesley reserves his praise for the Eastern writer Ephraem Syrus.

6. These sources are tabulated in my dissertation (see reference above, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity"), appendix 3 (pp. 324-338) and in *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, appendix 2 (pp. 125-134).

7. John Wesley, ed., *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been Published in the English Language* (50 vols.; Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749-1755), 1:3-78. My own comparison of Wesley's version and the earlier translation of (Archbishop) William Wake shows that Wesley began his work as a fresh translation, but as he progressed he relied more and more consistently on Wake's translation; William Wake, trans., *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers* (London: Richard Sare, 1693).

times. John Wesley had just finished his translation of the Apostolic Fathers when Middleton's book appeared, and Wesley wrote a lengthy defense of "miraculous powers" in the early Church based especially on his reading in the Apostolic Fathers.⁸

As the list quoted above indicates, Wesley's preference in 3rd-century authors was for Africans, two from the Alexandrian tradition (Clement of Alexandria and Origen) and two from Roman North Africa (Tertullian and Cyprian). When we turn to Wesley's preferences and selected readings in 4th-century writers, though, his particular predilection for Eastern Christianity becomes apparent. I would note at this point that Wesley's view of the 4th century was colored by his consistent belief that the Christian community had fallen from its original purity with Constantine's conversion, about the veracity of which Wesley had some doubts. "Constantine's calling himself a Christian," John Wesley wrote, "was productive of more evil to the Church than all the ten persecutions put together."⁹ Recalling the quotation above that true Christianity was expressed "*even* in the fourth century" in certain authors, one can recognize Wesley's sense that the Christian community had largely failed to exhibit true holiness in this century and true faith remained only in certain circles of 4th-century Christians.¹⁰

But just what were these certain circles of 4th-century Christians amongst whom, Wesley thought, the true faith and holiness had persisted beyond Constantine? The list above mentions John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, "Ephraem Syrus," and "Macarius." John Wesley and others of his day thought of "Macarius the Egyptian" as being one of the early 4th-century Egyptian monks. Similarly, Wesley identified the writings attributed to "Ephraem Syrus" as the work of the 5th-century Syrian Ephraem, although Father Ephrem Lash has shown in recent years that the text that Wesley utilized from "Ephraem" was in fact from a Greek author whom Father Ephrem has chosen to call "Ephrem Graecus."¹¹

8. "A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton" (1748/1749; in Jackson, *Works*, 10:1-79); cf. Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History," *Church History* 55:1 (March 1986): 39-49.

9. "Of Former Times," pars. 15-16, in Outler, ed., *Sermons*, 3:450.

10. Cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 50-51.

11. Ephrem Lash, "The Greek Writings Attributed to St. Ephrem the Syrian," in John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos, eds., *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 90-91.

Despite these problems in identifying Wesley's sources beyond the 3rd-century sources, though, it remains true that all of the writings that he identifies as representing true faith and holiness beyond the 3rd century were Eastern, and all of them were associated with monasticism (both the actual texts *and* the authors to whom Wesley may have incorrectly attributed these texts). Thus, although Wesley himself never says it quite like this, the fact is that the pockets of pure Christianity he recognized in the 4th century and beyond were exclusively those circles of Eastern Christian monks whose asceticism could be seen as a reaction against the Constantinian alliance of Roman culture and Christianity.

The "Spiritual Homilies" attributed to "Macarius the Egyptian" deserve special notice, for although Wesley read and quoted Chrysostom, Basil, "Ephraem Syrus," and other ancient authors, he actually published an edition of the Macarian *Homilies*, which followed the translation of the Apostolic Fathers in the first volume of his *Christian Library*.¹² Outler's thesis concerning the influence of Gregory of Nyssa on John Wesley relied on the theory of Werner Jaeger that the *Spiritual Homilies* were a redaction of Gregory of Nyssa's work. This theory has been generally rejected, both with respect to the Macarian literature and then further with respect to its influence on John Wesley. It is at this point that Korean Methodist theologian Hoo-Jung Lee has made an important contribution, arguing that the Macarian homilies in themselves (and not as a reflection of Cappadocian theology) should be seen as a significant source of John Wesley's doctrine of holiness and sanctification.¹³

It is instructive, moreover, to consider John Wesley's explicit thoughts on Augustine of Hippo, whose thought was so influential on Western theology in the Middle Ages and in the Reformation. Although Wesley could quote Augustine positively, and in fact did quote Augustine more than any other ancient author (especially when he could quote Augustine, for example, against Calvinists), he could also heap caustic criticism on the Bishop of Hippo Regius. "[A] wonderful saint!" Wesley wrote of Augustine on one occasion, "As full of pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him as George Fox himself."¹⁴ Wesley was convinced, for example, that Augustine's furious response to Pelagius had

12. *Christian Library*, 1:79-154.

13. Lee, "Doctrine of New Creation," 154-245.

14. "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," par. 9, in Outler, ed., *Sermons*, 2:556.

mistaken Pelagius's laudable insistence on the necessity of good works with the false notion that good works could win human beings salvation.¹⁵

Ancient Christian traditions, then, played a critical role in John Wesley's vision of Christian faith and life. They suggested the possibility that long after the age of the apostles and even after what Wesley saw as the disastrous effects of "Constantine's calling himself a Christian," true Christianity could persevere in history. Wesley saw the spirituality of eastern asceticism as reflecting faithfully the Gospel challenge to be conformed to the image of Christ, and he saw Eastern Christian theology as reflecting more faithfully than Augustinianism the universal applicability of Christ's work.

Nevertheless, Wesley's views of Christian antiquity interpreting the Christian scriptures did not become part of the doctrinal inheritance of Methodist life. It is very important to understand that, despite his high approbation of ancient Christian writers, Wesley did not have a conception of "tradition" as the term is utilized today, that is, as embracing the continuity of God's work in history.¹⁶ In this sense, Wesley's vision of Christian history saw the Christian story as significantly interrupted by the Middle Ages, however he may have modified the precise boundaries of the Middle Ages in deference to his positive understanding of Christian antiquity.

Subsequent Methodist life from the time of John Wesley through the beginning of the 20th century continued to de-value tradition in almost all forms. American Methodist works of systematic theology, many of them approved for study by the churches' General Conferences, discussed the authority of the scriptures without reference to subsequent Christian tradition.¹⁷ The rise of theological liberalism, prominent in Methodist life from

15. *Ibid.*, and cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 62-65.

16. Cf. my article on "The Interpretative Role of Tradition," in Stephen Gunter, Ted A. Campbell, Scott J. Jones, Rebekah Miles, and Randy Maddox, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); Ted A. Campbell, "The 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral': The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth," in *Methodist History* 29:2 (January 1991): 87-95; also published in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Kingswood Books, 1991), 154-161; "Christian Tradition, John Wesley, and Evangelicalism" (*Anglican Theological Review* 74:1 (Winter 1992): 54-67.

17. Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes*, which served as a first theological textbook for generations of American as well as British Methodist preachers, gives evidences of the truth and authority of the scriptures, then defends Methodist teachings grounded in the scriptures with no reference to the authority of subsequent Christian tradition. Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes: Or, a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (2 vols.; New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1854), 1:70-262 on the evidences of the truth and authority of the scriptures.

the late 19th century, contributed to an even greater suspicion of Christian history in the Middle Ages and beyond. It is fair to say that, with the exception of their regular recitation of the Apostles' Creed, Methodist life in the 19th century proceeded generally without reference to Christian history or tradition past the New Testament age, except when Methodists needed to differentiate themselves from Catholics.

The Methodist Rediscovery of "Tradition"

Despite Wesley's own appropriations of patristic sources, however, it was not until the middle of the 19th century that Anglicans and Protestants in general came to have a more positive attitude toward tradition, and it was not until the 1960s that "tradition" became a significant theological topic for Methodists, largely as a result of the work of the American Methodist theologian Albert C. Outler, who was a leader in the Montreal plenary meeting of the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission in 1963 that produced a critical report on "Scripture, Tradition, and traditions."¹⁸ The understanding of "tradition" in this report came to formal expression as doctrine in The United Methodist Church, in 1972 in a theological statement that laid out what Methodists have come to call the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral," that is, the use of the scriptures, tradition, reason and experiences as authorities in considering contemporary ethical and theological issues. The other elements of the "quadrilateral" (the scriptures, reason, and experience) had been long present in Protestant theological reflection.¹⁹ The formulation adopted by The United Methodist Church in a statement on "Our Theological Task" in 1972 reflected the precise language of the Montreal 1963 Faith and Order statement on "Scripture, Tradition, and traditions" and it made explicit reference to "contemporary Faith and Order discussions of 'Tradition and Traditions.'" The 1972 statement identified three senses of "tradition": tradition as process, tradition as reflecting the diversity (and division) of the churches, and then a "transcendent" sense:

18. Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order (Montreal 1963), report on "Scripture, Tradition, and traditions," ¶ 39; in Günther Gassmann, ed., *Documentary History of Faith and Order, 1963-1993* (Faith and Order paper no. 159; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), see esp. p. 10.

19. See my earlier study of "The 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral': The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth" in (a) *Methodist History* 29:2 (January 1991): 87-95; and in (b) Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Kingswood Books, 1991), 154-161.

In a third sense, however, “the Christian tradition” may be spoken of transcendently: as the history of that environment of grace in and by which all Christians live, which is the continuance through time and space of God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ. It is in this transcendent sense of *tradition* that Christians, who have been isolated from one another by various barriers of schism, race and rivalries may recognize one another as Christians together.²⁰

This “transcendent” sense of Tradition answers to what the Montreal Faith and Order Conference called “Tradition,” with a capital “T,” although the Montreal statement was bolder, referring to “tradition” in this sense as “the Gospel itself.”

But it is critical to note that the 1988 revision of the United Methodist statement about “Tradition” in “Our Theological Task” (and this is the statement in the current *Discipline*) deleted the earlier references to the Faith and Order discussions of “Tradition and Traditions,” it deleted the paragraph on tradition, and it focuses on tradition simply as “[t]he story of the church.” It does refer to “tradition” as “the history of that environment of grace in and by which all Christians live, God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ” but omits the phrase “the continuance through time and space of God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ.”²¹ It is difficult to argue how deliberate this alteration was, but it clearly weakens the sense of “tradition” as the continuity of divine grace through history and as, fundamentally, the Gospel itself as the central message of the church. Lacking this clear sense of a transcendent meaning of “tradition,” the term as it now appears in the statement on “Our Theological Task” has reverted back to the sense of tradition as an appendage to the Christian faith, lacking the very strong sense of Montreal 1963 or of the 1972 statement about the “transcendent” meaning of tradition.

The preface to the United Methodist doctrinal standards in the 1988 *Book of Discipline* (and subsequent *Disciplines*) does refer to “the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which is the source and measure of all valid Christian teaching.”²² This statement certainly gets at the tran-

20. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1972), ¶ 70, pp. 76-77.

21. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), ¶ 104, p. 80. I have also referred to this omission in my article on “Scripture and Tradition in the Wesleyan Tradition,” in S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Scriptural Understanding and Practice* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 165-166.

22. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1988* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1988), ¶ 101, pp. 41-42.

scendent meaning of “tradition” as it had been expressed earlier, because the core meaning of Tradition (capital “T”) was indeed “the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ.” But in this case (i.e., in the preface to the UM doctrinal standards), it is detached from the meaning of “tradition.”²³

Conclusions

Within Methodist churches throughout the world, the content of the apostolic faith, of “Tradition” with the upper-case “T,” has been expressed in the consistent use of the Apostles’ Creed. This usage is consistent between Methodist churches of the British as well as American pattern, and throughout the global reach of Methodism. The Apostles’ Creed has been described as “the symbol of Methodism.”²⁴ Just to take one example of this, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which originated in the United States in the late 18th century and early 19th century, has in its *Doctrines and Discipline* a statement opposing “formalism” in worship. But even here, the

23. I have often pondered why Dr. Outler was so bitterly disappointed by the 1988 revision of the statement about the quadrilateral in the United Methodist Discipline. I could not imagine, for example, that he would have objected formally to a doctrine of scriptural primacy, which was added to the 1988 statement, since that was already present in the Reformation-age Articles of Religion and also in the Confession of Faith. I admit that I have been tempted to attribute his objections simply to his crotchiness or perhaps worse to a selfish desire that his own words simply not be altered. But if I am correct in my intuition that Outler saw his central contribution to the quadrilateral as lying in its assertion of this transcendent sense of Christian tradition, then it may be that it was this crucial omission that most concerned him and might have led him to see the revised statement as a reversion to some kind of flat, un-normed biblicism. That is, without Tradition as the Gospel message that is itself the center of the Christian scriptures and norms the meaning of the whole Christian Bible, Outler feared, we are left with the Bible as a datum without a clear sense of its center and we are left with tradition only in the older and more pejorative sense of unnecessary and uninspired human additions to or expansions upon the sacred text or as decorative material that can illustrate biblical texts but cannot in any sense norm the reading or interpretation of them. That’s a bit speculative, I admit, but I have had a growing intuition that it was the constriction of the meaning of “tradition” that may have led Outler to his concerns about the revision of the statement on “Our Theological Task” in the United Methodist *Discipline*.

24. American Methodist hymnals include the use of the Apostles’ Creed (in the 1932 *Hymnal*, page 512, in the 1964 *Hymnal*, no. 738, and in the 1989 *Hymnal*, nos. 881 and 882); the two most recent hymnals have also the Nicene Creed (1964, no. 739; 1989, no. 880, where it appears in the first position before the Apostles’ Creed). Both the *United Methodist Hymnal* of 1989 and the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal* of 1984 give the Apostles’ Creed in the communion service and both utilize it as the means by which candidates for baptism affirm their faith (UMC 1989, pp. 7 and 35; AME 1984, nos. 799 [p. 10] and 802).

AME statement asserts that “we grant that the orderly repetition of the . . . Apostles’ Creed . . . may conduce to the attainment” of spiritual worship.²⁵

With the 1972 statement on “Our Theological Task,” The United Methodist Church made a critical move towards appropriating the meaning of Christian “Tradition” learned from the engagement with the ecumenical movement. However, the critical ecumenical sense of “Tradition” as “the gospel itself” was largely lost in the revision of this doctrinal statement in 1988. The basic content remained, but it was the word “tradition” that seems to have been the critical issue: it would seem that the older Protestant usage of the word with its heavily negative or at least indifferent connotations was, in the end, too embedded in Methodist minds to make this critical shift in the understanding of “Tradition” as embracing the core of the Christian message. This may be one of those ecumenical issues where the uses and connotations of terms in different cultural and ecclesial contexts becomes a very critical issue.

It is indeed the recognition of the core of the Christian message—the gospel itself, that remains such a critical ecumenical issue. In the words of Dr. Outler’s friend and collaborator K. E. Skydsgaard, the gospel is “The Flaming Center” of Christian faith.²⁶ In this very particular sense, Tradition as the gospel is the core and heart of the church’s message. It is, as Martin Luther said of the gospel, “the true treasure of the church,”²⁷ sometimes a hidden treasure, a mystery or secret often overlooked, but from time to time rediscovered by Christians as the key that unlocks the meaning of the Christian scriptures and of the Christian faith itself.

25. In the *Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2004-2008* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2005), 22.

26. K. E. Skydsgaard, “The Flaming Center, or, The Core of Tradition,” in John Deschner, LeRoy T. Howe, and Klaus Penzel, eds., *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 4.

27. Martin Luther, thesis 62 of the Ninety-Five Theses on Indulgences; in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1926), 1:236. English language translation in Helmut T. Lehman, general editor, *Luther’s Works* (55 vols.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 19:31.

A Response to Ted A. Campbell

Janet Scott

*The Church of Christ in every age
Beset by change but Spirit-led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead.
—Fr Pratt Green*

One of the gifts of Methodism to the wider church is its theology in song, making theology memorable, poetic, and allusive. This verse from the Methodist tradition suggests that the issue is the same for the church in every age; the struggle is the same in every place and generation. The church has to deal with change, whether this is positive or negative. It has two resources: one is the Holy Spirit, which has led it in the past and which continues to lead it and guide it in new situations; the other is its heritage, the product of the past understanding and following of the Spirit, which has to be both claimed and tested. Heritage, like change, can have its negative as well as its positive side. But the aim, and hopefully the result, of this process of testing heritage and indeed testing the guidance of the Spirit is that the church is renewed into a new life. It becomes again and again the resurrected community of the risen one.

Ted Campbell's paper exposes this process of testing the heritage: testing it through trying to understand, to explain, to empathize, to value, and to critique the work done by those in the past in their struggle to live the faith and to reconcile their heritage—Jewish, Greek and Christian—with their fresh leadings.

It is true that Ted Campbell speaks only for his own church, The United Methodist Church, when he speaks of the de-valuing of tradition; but on the basis of my own experience, I can confirm that in England not only is

the patristic period seldom mentioned but the fact that Wesley wrote of it is also forgotten.¹

Ted Campbell makes a special point about Wesley not having a conception of tradition “as embracing the continuity of God’s work in history . . . [He] saw the Christian story as significantly interrupted by the Middle Ages.” Although this is couched in Methodist terms, it highlights the issue faced by all churches that do not trace their history through time from the 1st century in a comparatively unbroken and continuous line. Christopher Hall spoke of it in relation to the evangelical tradition as an ahistorical leap.² Whether these churches sprang like Methodism from a reform within and a break with another church or sprang up comparatively independently like Quakers, Salvation Army, or many Pentecostal churches, the relation to the patristic tradition is problematic.

In what sense, if any, does this patristic tradition “belong” to contemporary time? In many cases it was rejected, criticized, or not duly recognized, especially for its work with regard to the scriptures. Indeed, to characterize the scriptures as the “word of God” is to reduce almost to invisibility the work of those humans who recognized, selected, and preserved the texts we use. The heritage that is claimed is found in the gospels and the church of the New Testament, “primitive Christianity revived,” as the 17th-century Quakers put it.

If the Orthodox and Catholic churches put too heavy an emphasis on a common historical tradition, especially if it provides the basis of structures and rituals that are not spelled out in the New Testament, there is a danger that in finding common ground they could lose contact with the Protestant, free, and other newer (in time) churches. Since the purpose of this ecumenical exercise is to be inclusive, the following suggestions can be made. Underlying them all is the understanding, as the hymn quoted above suggests, that the Holy Spirit which has worked in the church in the past continues to work and to lead all into new understandings of truth.³ The

1. For the last four years, as a tutor for ordinands at Wesley House, I have attended sessions on Methodist theology and spirituality, and as an ecumenical visitor I have attended the last two Methodist conferences. I have never heard the fathers mentioned in these contexts or seen them named in the supporting documents.

2. See Christopher Hall’s response to John Behr in this volume.

3. In Quaker tradition, “Truth” refers to God, to the power that convinces us (brings us into relationship with God), and to the way in which we should live (walking in the Truth).

various traditions bear witness to the work of the Holy Spirit in all its glorious richness; they call all into the life of Christ, the life of the kingdom, with all the continuity and discontinuity that Jesus and the apostles exemplified.

The first suggestion is that we tell stories. Our communities gather around common stories. It is a different sort of discourse. We retell our own stories as a way of making sense of the world and of passing on the values and ways of our community. Stories tell us what is expected of us. They have flexibility; they can be retold from other viewpoints so there is the possibility of new insights. When we remember stories, we re-member the community. Our churches already share the gospel story, but we do not share sufficiently the stories from our traditions. This is not just about hearing a story but about claiming it and about letting it claim us. Protestants have to receive the stories of Clement, Origen, Augustine, etc., as they have to give the stories of Wesley, Booth, Bunyan, and Fox. “Your” stories and “my” stories have to become “our” stories. In this way we meet with our brothers and sisters of former times and recognize their struggles to understand and live their faith as similar to and potentially helpful for our own struggles.

The second suggestion is to commend the word “meeting” as a translation of *ekklesia*. “Meeting” has two advantages: it suggests relationship, both with God and with the others in the community; and it has a dynamic quality—in a meeting, something purposeful happens. If the boundaries of the meeting extend beyond the visible and immediate community, one can listen to many voices as they speak the words given to them by the Spirit. In listening, we seek to hear the voice of God that lies behind, beyond, but also within the imperfect expressions of humans. The authority in any words lies not in the age of the text or the rank or antiquity of the speaker, but in the faithfulness with which the words given by the Spirit are reflected. For the only authority is that of God. All the rest, words, rituals, structures, simply bear witness to the life God gives.

The third and most important suggestion is that all speak to each other of how the Spirit at work is discerned, whether in speaking or in leading into action. Explicitly or implicitly, there is a shared understanding—whether it is called Tradition with a capital T or gospel or kingdom—that there is a life in God which all, however imperfectly, know there is a mission to which all are called and there is a Spirit that is recognizable in each other.

Any movement that relies on the Spirit has to have a way of distinguishing between what is of the Holy Spirit and what is of the human spirit.

Some of the criteria that Quakers use (though these are not formally designated) include the following:

Practice. The promptings of the Spirit are more readily recognized by those who follow the promptings they already have.

Prayer. What appears to be guidance will be personally tested.

Persistence. The Spirit will not be ignored.

Plurality. While leading may come from a lone voice, we expect it to come from different directions.

Patience. The Spirit will not be rushed.

Consistency. Tradition does not mean being the same: consistency can be of vision not of practice, or of process not of outcome.

Confirmation. Testing in a gathered meeting for worship often results in development and revision.

Practicality. An old Quaker phrase is “way opens.”

Fruit. Does it advance the kingdom? Does it lead to or show love, joy, peace, etc.?

Having such criteria does not necessarily make discerning the Spirit easy, but it provides a way in which all submit their own wishes to the judgement of the meeting and reach a confident sense of guidance.

Finally, to return to the tension between heritage and newness. All who are called are caught in this tension though some of the traditions lean more towards staying the same and some lean more towards welcoming the new. From the latter perspective, the patristic period is one where Christians, the first practitioners of this new faith, were breaking with tradition, were seeking to understand what God had done in and through Christ, and were following the guidance of the Holy Spirit for their generation both in what they taught and in how they tried to live.

As the hymn above nearly says, the church keeps on being raised and lives in the divine life.

A Response to Ted A. Campbell

Shenouda Maher Ishak

Dr Campbell noted that all of the writings that Wesley identifies as representing true faith and holiness beyond the 3rd century were Eastern and associated with monasticism. Hence, Dr Campbell was convinced to declare that “Wesley saw the spirituality of Eastern asceticism as reflecting faithfully the gospel challenge to be conformed to the image of Christ.”

In agreement with the aforementioned note of Dr Campbell, it can be added that the Christian monasticism that originated in Egypt, where St Antony is usually regarded as its founder, derives its roots from the desire of leading a life of perfection¹ and holiness.² The deserts provided greater security for achieving that goal than is normally possible in the world. Their chief aim therefore is personal sanctification by fulfilling the counsels of perfection in the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Of these, obedience³ is the most characteristic of the coenobitic life (i.e., living in community).

The earnest desire of monastics is to achieve, as much as one can, a life of continuous prayer,⁴ with fasting,⁵ reading, reciting, and meditating on the Bible,⁶ together with work.⁷ They renounced marriage in order to have no other concern but the service of the Lord.⁸ Their choice of poverty or

1. Matt. 5:4.

2. Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

3. See Heb. 13:17; Eph. 6:1; Col.3:20.

4. See Matt. 26:21; Mark 13:33; 14:38; Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20; 1 Thess. 5:17; Ps. 119:164.

5. See Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; see also Acts 14:23; Deut. 8:3, and Matt. 4:4.

6. See Deut. 6:6-9; 8:3; Josh. 1:8; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Ps. 1:2; 119:15, 18, 27, 33-37, 47, 70-72, 92-94, 96, 97-104, 105, 129-131, 135, 174.

7. Compare 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; Titus 3:8, 14.

8. 1 Cor. 7:32-35; Matt. 19:12; compare Matt. 19:27-30; Mark 10:28-30; Luke 18:28-30.

renunciation of personal property is a biblical teaching⁹ and a counsel of perfection.¹⁰

The renunciation of the world, which is the fundamental element of Christian asceticism,¹¹ is realized, in material terms, in the life of the monastics. The need for distancing themselves from the world was felt to be all the more necessary after the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, and the world in the Johannine sense of the term began to invade the church itself. "Thus the monk appeared as the successor of the martyr, a witness to the incompatibility of the world and Christian faith."¹² No wonder, therefore, that the monks themselves express such conviction and identify the kingdom of God with the monastic life.

9. Luke 12:33; 14:33; 16:13; Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 10:34; 13:5; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32.

10. Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22-25.

11. 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Gal. 6:14; compare John 15:18-19.

12. A. Guillaumont, "Monasticism, Egyptian," in *Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (1961); compare also John 15:18-19; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 3:13; also John 7:7; 14:17.

Sources for a living tradition of shared faith—

“The consultation proved to be a life-changing event, for all of us there. We all came away from it renewed in our sense that to read and to reflect on the teachers and witnesses of the early church together is to share in something of profound significance for the life of the church today. There was no lack of critical engagement with their writings, from all the participants, and there was no rosy romanticism. But there was a deep sense of participating in what is living tradition, and of hearing the voices of witnesses for Christ who were, in their time and for ours, profoundly practical and rooted theologians, living holy lives and sometimes witnessing with their dying too.”

—from the Foreword



Living and witnessing to their faith in the first centuries after the New Testament, the men and women of the early church—theologians and bishops, ascetics and martyrs—have exerted a profound influence and authority in the subsequent theological and ecclesial periods and traditions. Yet what is their significance and pull for Christians today? Can reverence for them survive critical scrutiny? What can they teach us about what is core in Christian scriptures, tradition and ecclesial life?

In this remarkable volume, theologians from a variety of confessional traditions together assess the contributions, failings, and contemporary relevance of the teachers and witnesses of the early church.

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