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**Thomas Höbel**

**Laity and Participation: a Theology of Being the Church**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**2002**

**ABSTRACT**

The basic assumption of this thesis is that there should be a theology of the laity that is truly positive, ecumenical and catholic. The prime concern, therefore, is less with specific contents and more an exploration of the dimensions such a new theology should incorporate and how it could be achieved.

At the beginning we observe that, regarding contents as well as “hermeneutics”, currently most lay theologies are dominated by negatives. Therefore, I suggest we explore participation in the sense of “being the Church” rather than “doing something within the church”.

Opening sections look at appropriate coordinates for a biblical foundation for lay theology, while a brief overview of church history explores how and why the current status quo of the laity came about.

In view of this, the main parts then focus on how a more positive presentation of lay participation can be achieved.

Part two explores Roman Catholic lay theology, discussing relevant official documents from Vatican II up to the present and also “unofficial” positions presented by Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, Leo Karrer, and Medard Kehl.

To get at least some ecumenical perspective, this is complemented in Part three by an exploration of lay issues in Anglicanism, including ARCIC I and II.

Part four explores the laity in liberative theologies, particularly their approaches to being the Church in the world, orthopraxis, authenticity as well as base communities as new forms of being church.

In Part V, building on my earlier discussion and criticisms, I offer an alternative model for developing a positive definition of the laity including the image of the Church as a spoked wheel.

My central claim is the inadequacy of present discussions and the need to develop a theology that starts from the vocation of the Church as a whole and stresses the interdependence of clergy and laity with neither subordinate to the other.

# Laity and Participation: a Theology of Being the Church

Thomas Höbel

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Durham

Department of Theology

2002



31 MAY 2002

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that no part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or any other university. I also confirm that the thesis conforms to the word limit set out in the Degree Regulations.

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## Acknowledgments

ACTOR: Nothing . . . just nothing. Meaningless. It's empty.

WRITER: The ending?

ACTOR: Of course. What are we discussing? We're discussing the ending.

WRITER: I admit it's unsatisfying.

ACTOR: Unsatisfying? It's not even believable. The trick is to start at the ending when you write a play. Get a good strong ending and then write backwards.

WRITER: I've tried that. I got a play with no beginning.

ACTOR: That's absurd.

WRITER: Absurd? What's absurd?

ACTOR: Every play must have a beginning, middle, and end.

WRITER: Why?

[Woody Allen: *God (a Play)*]

That this thesis finally does have a beginning, a middle and an end and that its contents hopefully will not be classified as absurd, is due to my indebtedness to many people without whose support, inspiration and critical encouragement the writing of this thesis would have been impossible. Many thanks to all.

I could not have wished for a better supervisor than Professor David Brown. His constructive criticism, his attention to detail as well as to overall coherence and his encouragement and support have helped me to clarify my ideas and develop my thoughts in the best possible way. I am also grateful for all the financial, academic and personal support I received from the Department of Theology in Durham. I owe particular thanks to my internal examiner Prof. Ann Loades as well as Prof. Andrew Louth, Prof. Douglas Davies, Dr. John Arnold, Dr. Peter Philips, Dr. Loren Stuckenbruck, and Dr. Alan Suggate; many thanks also to my external examiner, Dr. Geoffrey Rowell. Special thanks also to Margaret Parkinson who in her friendly, patient and competent way ensured that I found my way through the maze of university bureaucracy.

To St. John's College Durham I owe thanks for the award of the Nowell Rostron Scholarship as well as for all the benefits I got as a resident tutor. I am very grateful for all the inspiration, encouragement and above all the friendship I received from all members of staff as well as from my fellow students. I thank in particular Prof. Stephen Sykes, Dr. Chloe Starr, Dr. Gillian Boughton, Robert Scott-Biggs, Dr. Scott Masson, Nicola Morley, Rachel Jepson, Matthew Eddy and all my friends from the Postgradcentre.

I am also indebted to the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, especially its director Dr. Florian Schuller. Without their generosity I could not have attended three extremely interesting and stimulating conferences.

I also want to thank my friends back home for staying in touch with me over the last three years, for listening patiently and with interest to my ideas, and for encouraging me not to give up.

Finally, my thanks go to my parents, my brother, my sister and to Sophie. They have supported me in every possible way without questioning my unusual decision to do a PhD in England. With great gratitude for their encouragement, patience, endurance and inspiration, I dedicate this thesis to them.

## List of Abbreviations

### A) Roman Catholic Church Documents

- AA = *Apostolicam actuositatem* – Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity  
CD = *Christus Dominus* – Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops  
CIC = *Codex Iuris Canonici*, The Code of Canon Law, promulgated January 25, 1983.  
CL = John Paul II: *Christifideles Laici. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*, December 30, 1988.  
EN = Paul VI: *Evangelii Nuntiandi. Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World*, December 08, 1975  
GS = *Gaudium et Spes* – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World  
IQC = John Paul II: *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest*, August 15, 1997.  
LCS = Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, October 15, 1982.  
LG = *Lumen Gentium* – Dogmatic Constitution on the Church  
NA = *Nostra Aetate* – Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.  
PO = *Presbyterorum Ordinis* – Decree on the Ministry of Priests  
POP = Paul VI: *Populorum Progressio. Encyclical on the Development of the Peoples*, March 26, 1967  
SC = *Sacrosanctum Concilium* – The Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy

### B) Anglican and Ecumenical Church Documents

- AAC = General Synod, Board of Education: *All Are Called. Towards a Theology of the Laity*. London: CIO Publishing, 1985.  
CaC = ARCIC II: *Church as Communion*. London: Church House Publishing, 1991.  
CCE = *The Canons of the Church of England*. London Church House Publishing, 2000 (6<sup>th</sup> ed.).  
EP = House of Bishops of the General Synod: *Eucharistic Presidency*. London: Church House Publishing, 1997.  
FR = ARCIC I, *The Final Report* (1982), (all quotations taken from: Hill, Christopher, & Yarnold, Edward (eds.): *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*. London: SPCK, 1994)  
GA = ARCIC II: *The Gift of Authority* (1998), (all quotations taken from: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/Arcicgf3.htm>)  
LiC = ARCIC II: *Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church*. London: Church House Publishing, 1994.  
PCS = *Together in Mission and Ministry. The Porvoo Common Statement (Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches)*, October 1992.  
WOB = *Working as One Body. The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England*. London: Church House Publishing, 1995.

## C) Other Abbreviations

- AngCom = Wingate, Andrew, & Ward, Kevin, & Pemberton, Carrie, & Sitshebo, Wilson (eds.): *Anglicanism. A Global Communion*. London: Mowbray, 1998.
- BEC = Basic Ecclesial Community (some quotations also use CEB)
- CDF = Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith
- EAC = Evans, Gillian R.: *Authority in the Church: a Challenge for Anglicans*. Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1990.
- ESPF = Etchells, Ruth: *Set My People Free. A Lay Challenge to the Church*. London: Fount, 1995.
- GPC = Greenwood, Robin: *Practising Community. The Task of the Local Church*. London: SPCK, 1996.
- KKK = Rahner, Karl, & Vorgrimler, Herbert: *Kleines Konzilskompendium. Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums*. Freiburg: Herder, <sup>23</sup>1991.
- KWW = Kaye, Bruce: *A Church without Walls. Being Anglican in Australia*. Victoria: Dove, 1995.
- LibTheol = Hennelly, Alfred T. (ed.): *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
- ThI = Rahner, Karl: *Theological Investigations*. (23 vol.) London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1961-1992.

## Preface

Hector: Cassandre! Cassandre!

Cassandre: Qu'y a-t-il?

Hector: Tu me fais rire. Ce sont toujours les devineresses qui questionnent.

(Jean Giraudoux: *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, I/9)

“It is always the prophets who ask the questions.” Hector’s scorn and sarcasm is directed at Cassandra’s failure to produce an oracle without being asked to do so. For Hector, her question is an indication that she is not a real prophet. Hector’s suspicion towards soothsayers who constantly fail to make (correct) predictions seems only natural and perfectly justified. But, asking questions does not inevitably discredit a prophet. On the contrary, there are times when it indeed requires prophetic vision to see which questions are necessary and need to be asked. To get new insights and to develop theological thinking further it is therefore sometimes necessary to re-think the questions.

It is precisely such a re-consideration of lay theology and the type of questions we raise that this thesis intends to do. Hence, I do not attempt to present any kind of list of what the laity should or should not do, what they ought to be allowed to do and what not. There is already a huge amount of literature dealing with these issues. However, not much is written about how lay theology is or should be done; the hermeneutics of lay theology is, so to speak, a largely unexplored territory. In view of this, I will try to address three basic questions (to what extent they prove to be prophetic remains to be seen):

What is the current content of lay theology?

How and in what framework is this content discussed?

To what extent do present proposals lead to a positive, ecumenical and in this sense catholic theology of the laity?

Obviously, it is far beyond the scope of a single thesis even to outline all questions and issues involved here. Hence I shall limit myself to contemporary lay theology, covering roughly the period from Vatican II up to the present. For the same reason, I shall focus mainly on my own denomination, that is Roman Catholicism, yet not without utilising a large amount of comparative material from the Anglican Communion and from liberative theologies. Of course, it would be interesting and desirable to discuss more than two denominations. However, within the given boundaries of a thesis this is impossible without running the risk of becoming superficial.



The first part explores basic questions of the status quo of contemporary lay theology. It also looks at appropriate coordinates for a biblical foundation for such a theology as well as treatment of the issue in the Church's past. In the second part I discuss current Roman Catholic concepts of lay participation, such that are presented in official church documents and such as are put forward by academic theologians. These ideas are challenged and contrasted with Anglican views in Part three and with more practical aspects suggested by liberative theologies in Part four. In the light of these results, I will propose a model of thinking about the Church that could lead to a more positive theology of the laity, one that discusses lay participation as a theology of being the Church.

# Part I: Point of Departure, General Perspective and Framework

## 1.1 Theology of the Laity – a Theology of “Negatives”?

If someone were to produce a hit-list of the currently most often discussed topics in theology, particularly in Roman Catholic theology, it is very likely that issues concerning the laity and lay participation would have a good chance of being near the top. However, though with different focus, in other denominations the role and position of the laity are also extensively debated<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, since I have started working on this thesis, one aspect has become increasingly apparent to me. A lot of material that is produced under the label of “lay theology”<sup>2</sup> is in fact largely a theology of negatives. As far as I can see, there are two basic negatives to be found in many lay theologies. First, a number of such theologies express and highlight many negatives of the current state and position of the laity in the different churches. This could be called a “negative of content”. Second, there is also a negative dimension in how theologies of the laity are actually produced. This could be summarised, in the broadest sense, under the label of “negative of hermeneutics”. Although it is not always possible to separate both types of negatives – they are closely linked with each other – for the sake of clarification and illustration, I shall discuss them individually.

### 1.1.1 Negative of Content

Only few people would seriously consider denying that during the last decades there have been a number of positive developments regarding the laity. However, there is still a remarkable absence of a positive definition of the laity as such. Frequently they are still simply defined as the non-ordained. Thus, the numerical majority of all the churches is defined by what these people are not. Admittedly, many books emphasise that this negative definition is to be nothing more than a working definition based on a

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<sup>1</sup> This includes debates in the Protestant traditions that have a theology of the people of God but struggle with a concept of the ordained ministry.

functional description of the laity, that this negative approach is not to be taken as an ontological definition of the laity. Though there are, equally, many authors who acknowledge that such a negative definition is rather problematic, convincing attempts of positive definitions are almost impossible to find. One reason for this may be that theologies of the laity often do not begin with the whole Church as such but with the distinction between laity and clergy. Thus, these theologies are built with the focus on difference and not with stressing unity and common ground. Still, it must be admitted that it is extremely difficult to define or describe positively who or what the laity actually are. There have even been some promising suggestions that the term laity should be abolished<sup>3</sup>. To use an analogy, no state has a term for the non-government; why, thus, should there be a term for the non-ordained people in the Church? "Citizen", one notes, applies to all the people, the governed as well as the government. Yet, if this approach is followed, there is then the need to create a sound theology of the ordained ministry not as being simply opposite to the laity but as emerging from a lay people of God. It also leaves open the question who and what the non-ordained people are and what their specific vocation is.

Apart from the question of definition, a further issue dominated by negatives is concerned with what the laity cannot do, about what they are not allowed to do. Here, the focus is often on those areas which are, supposedly or really, not open to the laity. These debates are frequently led with an assumption, varying in degrees of explicitness, that the clergy intentionally, illegally, and unnecessarily withhold possibilities for participation from the laity. Or, from the perspective of the ordained ministry, that the laity claim or have taken over tasks that they cannot fulfil due to their lay status. Consequently, lay theologies are quite likely to convey a basic sense of confrontation, of the laity against the hierarchy or vice versa.

To a large extent these negatives refer to the laity in the institutional churches. Three major areas of negatives can be detected in this context.

First, it appears that a number of theologies still make a, more or less, clear-cut distinction between the laity and the institutional church. It is a distinction that seems to imply that the laity are considered not to be fully members of the institution; as if they were somewhat outside the institutional church. This is reflected in the fact that training

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<sup>2</sup> "Theology of the laity" and "lay theology" are used as interchangeable phrases; both meaning "theology about the laity".

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stevens: *The Abolition of the Laity* (1999).

for the ordained ministry is in many places still described as “going into the church”. The distinction between the laity and the institution does not have to be a problem. But, when such a distinction forms the basis for excluding the laity of some aspects of church life, it is then that it starts to become problematic.

The second negative is the role and participation of the laity in the liturgy and worship. Again, the possibilities for liturgical participation are frequently described as being too restricted and limited. Probably one of the best known examples is the debate in the Roman Catholic Church about the right for the laity to preach at any service. Still it is not always the clergy who are the restricting factor. It also happens that laypeople themselves refuse to accept forms of lay participation, for example the refusal to receive communion from lay eucharistic ministers. In addition, there is also at times the difficulty of finding those laypeople who are actually willing to become actively involved in the liturgy and worship. The element of qualification is also to be considered. However, such participation is in some cases not simply a matter of changing rules of minor importance. Before anything, the theological contents of what is being celebrated must be considered. Liturgical participation is not only about “co-performing” in the form of the liturgy but rather sharing in the celebrated contents. Consequently, “increased” lay participation may not depend on more laypeople doing something but, I suspect, it is rather a question *how* and with which attitude the liturgy is celebrated.

The third area of negatives concerns lay participation in church governance and leadership. Thus, in many churches there is the demand for more democracy or, at least, more democratic structures. Particularly in the Catholic Church, though not exclusively, many people call for more synodical elements with proper lay representation and participation. Here it is also often emphasised that there is not enough consultation of the laity, particularly on topics such as politics, ethics, environment and so forth. What adds to the problem is that, on the one hand, a number of people do not know enough about church structures to understand the procedures in the institutional churches and, on the other, there are indeed procedures that are simply not laid open by church authorities<sup>4</sup>, which, in consequence, further the notion of secrecy, of something that is kept away

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. the way bishops are appointed in the Roman Catholic Church.



from the people. As a result laypeople feel excluded even from a passive<sup>5</sup> form of participation in church governance.

Finally, it is often stressed that the main field for lay activity is the everyday world. The laity are described as those who live and work in the world. Yet, this is often regarded as placing the laity on the periphery of the Church because the Church is simply equated with the institution. It is frequently overlooked that the Church is more than just the institution. Therefore, working in the world is often not considered, particularly by the laity themselves, to be participation in the Church, as it does not involve explicit “churchly” activities. This final negative of content leads directly to a second group of negatives, those of hermeneutics.

### 1.1.2 Negative of Hermeneutics

To avoid a misunderstanding of terms: “negative of hermeneutics” is used here to mean negatives in the way lay theologies are developed, the approaches taken and the perspectives of writing such theologies; “hermeneutics” is used here in the broadest sense possible.

So, what do I mean by saying that lay theologies suffer from negatives of hermeneutics? All the above negatives of contents have an influence on how people think about and write theologies of the laity and vice versa. As negatives in contents are often the starting point, these theologies then are frequently focusing only on small and very specific problems and so leave out a number of important theological dimensions. In addition some perspectives and approaches can be extremely narrow, thereby missing valid aspects elsewhere.

Thus, first of all, many lay theologies are mainly concerned with what the laity are doing or should be doing. The question who or what the laity fundamentally and essentially are is not addressed. The discussion focuses on *doing* and not on *being*. Yet, should the matter of being not precede that of doing?

Similarly, one preferred starting point is the distinction and difference between the clergy and the laity. The whole Church as such is only very occasionally at the centre of the debate. It seems that there is more the attempt to get from individual groups to

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<sup>5</sup> “Passive” is understood here to mean that people would have no direct influence in the proceedings but would at least know what is happening. This would be similar to not being allowed to attend a meeting but one is at least given the agenda beforehand and the minutes afterwards to read.

the Church instead of arguing from the whole Church to the individual members, and their various ministries and vocations; put more theologically, the laity are discussed quite detached from ecclesiology. There is a further aspect. Ecclesiology is, or at least should be, looking at the Church in all dimensions of time. That is to say, the Church should be seen in the present situation in light of its biblical and historic foundations as well as from the perspective of its teleological orientation and eschatological goal, which together form the basis for the Church's vocation today. The same should be applied to lay theologies. Yet, these time dimensions, as well as the theological aspects that go with them, are often omitted. This is not to say that there cannot or should not be some research that specialises and focuses on specific aspects. The problem with several lay theologies is not that they specialise but that they omit to put these particular questions into the context of the wider framework of a full ecclesiology and all the theological implications that go with it.

The laity form undisputedly the numerical majority of *all* churches. However, there is virtually no volume on lay theology that addresses the issues from an ecumenical point of view. Apparently there is the silent, but in my view wrong, assumption that the laity do not need to be discussed, as they are supposedly not an issue that separates churches.<sup>6</sup> One cannot but note, however, a remarkable absence of an ecumenical theology of the laity. Consequently, there is also not much that could be called a truly catholic (in the meaning of all inclusive) lay theology. Naturally, lay participation is in most cases to be realised locally. Hence, this necessitates a high proportion of strongly contextualised theology here. Still, as there is only one Church that is realised in different concrete churches and those churches actually can only exist because there is the one Church, so is it that there must be local lay theologies which, however, also require, presuppose and should derive from an ecumenical and truly catholic theology of the laity.

Classifying the majority of lay theologies as theologies of negatives is not meant to be a polemic lament. Rather it suggests that other approaches are conceivable that could open up new perspectives to understand better the role, state and being of the laity. To achieve a sustainable catholic theology of the laity, it is absolutely essential that theologians embark on a process of re-thinking the contents of lay theology as well as the way such a theology is done.

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<sup>6</sup> Such a position can be found in ARCIC I. Cf. Part III, chapter 8.

## 1.2 From Being to Doing: Ecclesiology as Foundation for Lay Participation – an Attempt at a Positive Approach

If lay theology is not to be a theology of negatives, how can such a positive approach be achieved? Just putting aside all the negatives mentioned above is simply not enough, for this only gives the direction but not a positive starting point.

I started writing this thesis with the working title *Laity and Participation: a Theology of the People of God* which suggested that lay participation was a kind of subsection within the theology of the people of God. In other words, I started off with the assumption that lay participation can be discussed very much on its own, rather detached from ecclesiology. I simply assumed that a theology of the people of God would be partly the result of solving questions concerning lay participation. However, during my research I have become increasingly convinced that a positive approach to lay theology must proceed from being to doing, that is from ecclesiology to participation. This applies to content as well as to the way the issue is discussed. Ultimately, a theology of lay participation is not the starting point but the result of a theology of being the Church. From this perspective, the first concern is not the difference between clergy and laity but the uniting and common elements of all members of God's people. Once we understand who we are or should be, it will be also clear what we should do.

This view leads to a series of questions. The answers to those indicate the basic framework for developing a lay theology that is essentially global, ecumenical, and catholic<sup>7</sup>. First, what is the Church? Second, who and what are the people in the Church? Third, what is the mission and vocation of the Church? It is only when we understand what "people of God" essentially means that we can start thinking about the different groups within this people. However, such an approach also requires careful reflection on what the mission and vocation of the Church is because this common task determines the particular ministries of the individual which are necessary for the Church to fulfil her mission. This entails the need to consider the contribution of *all* the various branches of theology and also its more practical dimensions such as canon law, ethical and social teaching, as well as pastoral theology. A positive lay theology can never be

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<sup>7</sup> To avoid misunderstanding, I use "global" in the sense of geographically universal, "ecumenically" to mean "including all churches and denominations", and "catholic" as "universal, all including" in the broadest sense. When speaking of Roman Catholicism I use "Catholic" (With a capital C).

purely abstract. The laity are not an academic experiment but an essential part of the Church. Thus, the life and reality of the Church should always be the decisive guideline.

Similarly, it is crucial that the Church is not equated with the institutional churches; the Church is also to be found beyond the boundaries of institutions. Thus the world must be included as well; the suggestion should be avoided that the world is a kind of church-free entity; the Church is not of the world but in the world and exists for the world. Though I will show later that the concept of the laity being described by their so-called secular character is problematic, it also has positive aspects insofar it highlights that participation in the Church is not limited to participation in the institution. Admittedly, locating the laity in the world has been abused as a justification for restricting lay participation within the institutional churches. However, I think, it is the secular dimensions of lay life – if interpreted the right way – that can lead to a far more positive concept of lay participation and to a broader understanding of Church activities.

This leads to a further question. Is lay participation actually about *being* or *doing*? Generally speaking there seems to be a greater emphasis at present on doing than on being that I would consider a limitation of the understanding of lay participation. Being part of the Church precedes participating by doing. Such needs emphasising if the concept of participation is to go beyond the institutional church. For if lay participation is fundamentally a matter of being, then the whole way of living has to be considered as such and not only explicit churchly activities. This is not to disregard the aspect of participation as doing. However, what the laity do, or should (not) do, cannot be and should not be so much the point of departure but the result of a theology of the being of the laity.

Finally, but probably most importantly, this demands a rethinking of orientation and focus. Being based on the theological concept of the people of God, a theology of the laity must ultimately be written in the light of the laity's relation to God within and through the Church. Such a theology is the result of reflections on how the laity relate to God as constituent members of his people and what consequences this has for the being, living and doing of the laity within and beyond the institutional church. In this context it might well be worth re-thinking and re-considering how the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are presented. Ultimately, such an approach might allow us to anticipate what it could mean to think about laity and participation as a question of being the Church.

## 1.3 A Theology of the Laity in the Light of Scripture – Some Key Aspects

### 1.3.1 General Comment

Looking for a biblical foundation of a theology of the laity might seem the most obvious starting point. Yet, obvious as this method may appear, there are some severe objections to be raised if one is not to fall prey to cheap biblicism or a superficial misinterpretation of Scripture. First and perhaps most important of all, one might ask whether it is at all possible to write a biblical theology of the laity if the whole Bible does not even know the term laity.<sup>8</sup> Is there not a great danger of reading something into the text that is not there? Admittedly, a theology of the laity need not depend on the use of the actual term itself. Yet conclusions have to be drawn with great care and textual sensitivity as the theological concept of the laity developed only with the churches becoming institutions in time. This is not to say that there were no structures in the early churches; they certainly knew different functions. However, it is problematic to speak of a clergy/laity distinction in the modern sense. Also, the theological concept of the people of God precedes the New Testament, the notion of people experiencing the reality of God.

A second objection to the method mentioned above is that the Bible is not concerned with presenting blueprints of organisational structures. To put it very crudely, the Bible is not the narrative version of any code of church law. On the contrary, the New Testament shows a significant absence of systematic discussions of regulations for the structure and organisation of the Church. Concrete ideas are mentioned, but only for very specific problems in particular churches.<sup>9</sup>

What is more, any sound biblical theology of the laity cannot ignore that there are two thousand years of history and more between the historic context of the biblical texts and our present-day situation. Thus, the apostle Paul was writing for relatively small Christian communities, many of which were founded by him. All of these were faced with the political reality of the Roman Empire. The young Church was still far

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<sup>8</sup> For the problem with an etymologically based lay theology cf. Osborne: *Ministry. Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (1993), 7-40. Cf. also Neuner: *Der Laie und das Gottesvolk* (1988), 25-41.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Paul's instruction regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Similarly, Gnllka argues that ordering of the communities (*Gemeindeordnung*) in the pastoral letters is more an emergency ruling (*Notverordnung*) than an permanent law. (Cf. Gnllka: *Neutestamentliche Theologie* (1989), 105.)

from having established a united and centralised organisational structure. The dominant feature was still that of variety between the communities and rather loose connections between the individual local churches. The geographical centre for the Church was still Jerusalem. In contrast, today the Roman Catholic Church alone has several hundred million members, and is spread out over all continents. The local churches are faced with political systems ranging from democracy to dictatorship. It is self-evident that neither Paul nor any other biblical author could foresee or provide answers for all the questions we are faced with today. This does not devalue the importance of Scripture. Yet, it stresses that Scripture is not an a-historic entity. This makes it vital that the discussion of Scripture is complemented with an analysis of historic developments as well as the theological and pastoral situation of the present time.<sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that I discuss biblical issues here under the headline of framework and point of departure. For it is exactly this that Scripture fundamentally provides. It is, however, for the same reason that biblical theology cannot be used as a kind of matrix for theological proof-reading of modern systematic theology.

There is a further aspect that challenges the idea of a purely biblical theology of the laity<sup>11</sup>, the great variety of interpretations to which the Bible is subject. Thus two major implications must be considered. First, any claim that a particular view has a sound biblical position has to be treated with great care. There is the great danger of simply choosing some texts that suit one's own position while more problematic passages are excluded. Second, the danger of *eisegesis* is always present. In this case it is particularly the danger of reading more systematic theology into the text than is actually sustainable. Whereas biblical texts can provide a rough outline for questions concerning the laity, they do not supply answers for every single detail.

It is for these reasons that in the following two subsections I will not try to construct a theology of the laity based on the exegeses of a few individual verses. What I will do instead is outline some basic principles and a framework that can serve as a rough guideline for such a theology today. To do this I will examine some "classic" texts, such as Galatians 3:28 and 1 Peter 2:4-10, as well as some passages usually less commonly cited.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Brown: *Discipleship and Imagination* (2000), 2: "While Scripture is entitled to the first word, it is not necessarily to be given the last." Cf. also p.9: "The Bible remains indispensable for Christian discipleship, but the danger is that too great a burden is placed on it. Like everything else in our world it emerged within a specific context [...]."

### 1.3.2 Old Testament

Though there are limits to using the Old Testament as a major resource for ecclesiology, it is part of our history of salvation and can therefore not simply be ignored. This is even more so as "People of God" is a term and concept which Christianity has inherited and taken over from the Old Testament.

It is certainly more than coincidence that the Bible begins with an account of the creation. The position of the two texts, Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Genesis 2:4b-25, emphasises that here something absolutely fundamental is said about the world and in particular human beings. Both texts are not identical; still, there are some relevant aspects they have in common.

First, the world, indeed the whole creation, is not an accident of physics and chemistry, but is truly a creation. What is more, the text says, "God saw all he had made, and it was very good." (Gen 1:31) This leaves no other option for Christians than to consider the world as something very positive and to treat it with loving care. In addition, in both texts mankind is commissioned to "cultivate and take care of the world" (Gen2:15; cf. also Gen 1:28).<sup>11</sup> It is obvious that this must have consequences for how the churches treat the world. As the people of God the Church has to be aware of this task of cultivating and preserving the creation. This implies a particular vocation for every member of the Church who engages in secular affairs that touch on ecological issues. This clearly constitutes a specific task for the laity working in the world. The world is neither a religion-free nor church-free, least of all a God-free zone. Consequently, engaging in the world with such a creational attitude is a fundamental form of participating in and being truly and faithfully the people of God.

Yet, there is a second and equally important aspect in these texts from Genesis. Together with the world also human beings are created by God. They are created in his image as male and female (cf. Gen 1:27). This puts all human beings in a direct parental relationship with God which entails a creational equality of all human beings. Man and

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<sup>11</sup> Without wanting to return to the laity/clergy opposition, but the same problem is faced by a sound theology of the clergy.

<sup>12</sup> This is even more important as the "good" is not so much a ontological but an eschatological and teleological quality of the world which is designed good for reaching final salvation. Cf. Westermann: *Genesis I/1* (1974), 229: "Jedenfalls ist das 'gut' nicht im Sinn einer festzulegenden und konstatierbaren Qualität, sondern in einem funktionalem Sinn gemeint: 'gut für...'. Die von Gott gut geschaffene, gut erfundene Welt ist die, in der und mit der Geschichte zum Ziel kommen wird, die den Sinn der Schöpfung erfüllt."

woman, they are both<sup>13</sup> and together<sup>14</sup> created in God's image. All are equal. This is also true for the view on creation presented in Genesis 2:4b-25. "For the creation of the woman is the climax of the Yahwist's creation account. In contrast to the animals, [...] the woman is described as 'the helper fit for him'. The woman is the man's equal, a partner rather than a creature to be dominated."<sup>15</sup> It cannot be denied that the hierarchical interpretation of this text has often been the dominant reading; however, "it has always been challenged by a parallel tradition that saw Genesis 1-3 advocating gender egalitarianism."<sup>16</sup> What is more, Westermann's analysis<sup>17</sup> shows that the text on its own, if it is not instrumentalised to justify a certain worldview, suggests an egalitarian reading which is the line I follow here.

From this perspective it becomes obvious that subordination and inequality must be alien to the Church. There is not one person who is worth more than any other; "our identities are interdependent and are to be experienced in 'solidarity, mutuality, and equality'."<sup>18</sup> Inevitably, the Church can only be a community of equals. Thus, whatever the ideal description or definition of the laity and the clergy may be, it cannot possibly ignore this fundamental equality.

There is also a third aspect. It is God who creates human beings. God is the active being. Having a relation with God is primarily and first of all a gift and grace from God and not a human achievement. Thus no institutional church can give or mediate this relation. It can only articulate God's already given gift. However, in this sense the institutions and concrete communities are of utmost importance. For God has created man not to be a lonely individual but to live in community. Human beings are commissioned to be stewards for the whole creation. Yet, this also implies a rejection of indi-

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, 218: "Alle Menschen hat Gott 'zu seinem Entsprechen', d.h. so geschaffen, daß etwas zwischen dem Schöpfer und diesem Geschöpf geschehen kann. Dies gilt dann jenseits aller Unterschiede zwischen den Menschen."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, 221: "Der Mensch ist hier als Gemeinschaftswesen, als ein zu zweit Existierender gesehen, und so etwas wie Menschlichkeit kann es dann auch nur bezogen auf den zu zweit existierenden Menschen geben."

<sup>15</sup> Flanders: *People of the Covenant* (1988), 90.

<sup>16</sup> Kvam: *Eve & Adam. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (1999), 7. This volume contains an extensive anthology of hierarchical and egalitarian readings of Genesis 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, 316f: "Was ist damit über das Verhältnis von Mann und Frau gesagt? Die Erzählung in Gen 2 spiegelt ein kulturelles Stadium, dem die hohe Bedeutung der Frau für das Menschsein des Menschen bewußt war. [...]"

Mit der 'Hilfe, die ihm entspricht' ist weder das Geschlechtswesen Frau [...] noch die Frau als Arbeitskraft zur Hilfe beim Ackerbau gemeint; jede solche Einschränkung verdirbt den Sinn dieser Stelle. Es ist die personale Gemeinschaft von Mann und Frau in umfassendem Sinn gemeint, zu der sowohl die körperliche wie die geistige Gemeinschaft von Mann und Frau, die gegenseitige Hilfe bei der Arbeit, das gegenseitige Verstehen, die Freude aneinander, das Ausruhe aneinander gehören."

<sup>18</sup> Flanders, *Covenant*, 90.



vidualism, for every human being is called to serve the whole of humanity. Thus, also in the Church all activity and work must aim at the whole community. Participation is not to further egoistic ambitions but the welfare of the whole Church, all of humanity as well as the whole of the creation.

This distinction between gift and grace on the one hand and achievement on the other becomes also tremendously important when one looks at the Old Testament roots of the concept of the people of God. Thus, Israel is told, "you are a people consecrated to Yahweh your God; of all the peoples on earth, you have been chosen by Yahweh your God to be his own people" (Dtn 7:6; cf. also Ps 135:4). Israel is God's people. Yet, this is not because of Israel's achievements. God is the one who chooses his people. If the Church claims to be the people of God, then it must be in the tradition of Israel. What is more, it should be noted that the word "λαός" in the Septuagint refers exclusively to this one people of God and to being a member of this people. The term "λαός" does not denote any subdivision within the people of God.<sup>19</sup> Above all, the Bible always speaks of *the* people of God.

The Church is thus primarily defined through being and not through doing. The Church is essentially constituted not by human achievements but through being chosen and created by God. Therefore, any question of participation cannot have its prime focus on internal structures, rather such debates must concentrate on what it means to participate in the gift of being called and chosen by God. Only then can one turn to the issue of doing something in and for the Church. Consequently the whole Church must be orientated towards God as its centre. Any ecclesiology that tries to put either the laity or the hierarchy or anything else in the centre must, therefore, be rejected as theologically invalid. The book of Exodus unfolds further what it means to be the people of God:

"if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine. For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." (cf. Ex 19:4-6)

The interpretation of this passage, though, is far from undisputed. While Aelred Cody argues that "kingdom of priests" means "a nation whose rulers are priests"<sup>20</sup>, by contrast, Walter Brueggemann asks,

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Neuner, *Laie*, 26: "Im Gegensatz zum außerbiblischen Griechisch ist in der Septuaginta laos nun aber die Bezeichnung nicht irgendeines Volkes, sondern eines ganz bestimmte Volkes, nämlich des Volkes Israel."

<sup>20</sup> Cody: *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (1969), 178.

“if Israel is to be a priestly kingdom [...], we may wonder priestly for whom or to whom? On the one hand, the answer is to Yahweh [...]. But on the other hand, perhaps this nation is offered as priest for other nations as mediator and intercessor for the well-being of the other nations of the world.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite all differing interpretations, it is still possible to make some basic observations for a theology of the people of God.<sup>22</sup> Being chosen by God opens up the possibility of being holy. It cannot be earned but God’s choice calls for a faithful response from human beings. Obeying the commandments is a consequence of being called. These rules are there to orientate the people towards God not towards some form of hierarchy.<sup>23</sup> The whole people is a kingdom of priests, but it is only so *as a whole* people.<sup>24</sup> Thus, if the Church is indeed the new people of God, then it cannot tolerate tendencies that do not have the whole people of God as the fundamental principle in mind.<sup>25</sup>

It is only in the light of being God’s people that living under the law becomes understandable and makes sense. As the Mosaic law illustrates, participating in the Jewish religion is largely a way and mode of living one’s life. Participation is far more than simply performing sacrifices and cultic worship. Rather, religion is life and life is religion. This way of participating through everyday life certainly demands reflection on what participation in the Church indeed means. Is it only participation in worship and liturgy or is it, particularly for lay participation, a way of life? Do we nowadays perceive not enough space for lay participation because we no longer allow religion to reach in all areas and parts of life? The Old Testament does not give a decisive answer, but its understanding of living under the law points out a possible direction for lay theology.

Regarding the priesthood, we find a number of partly competing concepts in the Old Testament. These range from a well-established priestly caste in the temple of Jerusalem, to priests of the various sanctuaries throughout the land, such as Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). Generally, the priests are the experts on the proper performance of rituals and sacrifices. Yet, the claim to exclusiveness regarding lay participation varies consid-

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<sup>21</sup> Brueggemann: *Theology of the Old Testament* (1997), 431.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of the textual problems involved cf. Houtman: *Exodus. Vol. 2: Chapters 7:14-19:25* (1996), 444-448. Houtman writes (445f): “Israel is not priestly kingdom and a holy nation until it is obedient to YHWH [...]. All in all, ‘priestly kingdom’ and ‘holy nation’ contain a register of tones: Israel is the people having a direct relationship with YHWH, a people ruled by YHWH himself, obligated to carefully heed his precepts.”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Houtman, *Exodus*, 446f.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Houtman, *Exodus*, 446.

<sup>25</sup> Exodus 19:4-6 must not be overlooked, as it is quoted in 1 Peter 2:4-10. This provides essential insights for the interpretation of the passage in 1 Peter. Obviously 1 Peter does not refer to the

erably.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Saul is reproached by Samuel for performing a sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam 13:8-15) whereas the sacrificial acts of Noah (Gen 8:20), Solomon (1 Kings 8:62ff), and Elisha (1 Kings 19:21) appear to be acceptable. Therefore it seems that within the Old Testament that a clear cut distinction between the “laity” and the “clergy” on a purely functional/liturgical basis can be questioned.

This leads directly to the role of the prophets in the Old Testament and their relation to kings and priests. Undoubtedly, the priests were tremendously important in Israel; they were, so to speak, the ordained clergy.<sup>27</sup> Looking at the trial of Jesus there can also be no doubt that the priestly caste in Jerusalem formed a powerful group and hierarchy, in the literal sense of holy and priestly rule. Similarly, the kings of Israel, though they differed in faithfulness to Yahweh, were not only secular rulers. Being king of Israel had clearly also a religious dimension<sup>28</sup> that implied an almost quasi-clerical status. Thus it is Solomon who says the prayer of dedication for the temple and not the priests (cf. 1 Kings 8). At first sight this looks very much like the modern day distinction of clergy and laity; the normal people are not involved, the religious governance is in the hands of the clergy and some selected laypeople who are almost no longer lay in the full sense. Yet, there are also the prophets in the Old Testament. In many cases the prophets are not from the caste of priests and they are never a royal person; they are, though not exclusively, what we would call laypeople.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Amos is the best-known case; he is not a priest but “one of the shepherds of Tekoa” (Amos 1:1). What is more the Old Testament also speaks of women as prophets.<sup>30</sup> We may know only of a small number of female prophets, such as Deborah and Huldah in the book of Judges; however, it is enough to make the silencing of women in the churches more than problematic. It is obvious that at the time of the Old Testament prophets could utter a critique regarding the established religion and that the establishment would at least give them a hearing, though it would not always listen to them. In summary,

“the Hebrew prophet in a sense stood over against both priest and king, not as their enemy but as their critic. [...] Prophets were not expected to be bound by correctness or purity of ritual, nor could they be obligated to the king. Their mes-

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clergy/laity-debate but to the concept of the whole of Israel as a royal priesthood. Thus, we are faced with a crucial passage from the NT that can easily be misread if the context is not observed.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Cody, *Priesthood*, 12: “A descriptive definition of Israelite priesthood made on the basis of sacrifice is insufficient, and in fact misleading for the early period.”

<sup>27</sup> “Ordination” has to be understood in a very broad sense, such as membership of the tribe of Levi.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. David who was chosen by God to become king,

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mowley: *Guide to Old Testament Prophecy* (1979), 17f: “the prophets were men of very different types”. Ezekiel and Isaiah are probably the most famous priestly prophets.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Sawyer: *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets* (1993), 72f.

sage was to be unhindered [...]. In the development of prophecy, Israel intended not to destroy neither priesthood nor kingship, but to maintain vitality and flexibility in both these establishments. Hence prophecy kept Israel's institutional life under the vigorous scrutiny of intense ethical and moral criteria [...]."<sup>31</sup>

Is it indeed not remarkable that the Old Testament reports more of those people outside the establishment than about those within? In my view, this clearly indicates that the Church today also needs the element of prophetic critique and constructive opposition from outside. What is more all the true prophets were called exclusively by God himself. Such calling is not dependent on any form of ordination. As Mowley puts it, "one of the criteria [...] by which to recognize a prophet was the special call to proclaim the word of god unconditionally."<sup>32</sup> However, this prophetic ministry is not just one task among others, but it is rather a factor that determines the whole way of life. To use again Mowley's words,

"the word of God cannot be separated from the lives they [the prophets] had to live. [...] Yet on its way it catches up the prophet into its path so that his life and experience become inseparable from it and he is no longer an uninvolved transmitter of the word but a man whose whole personality is bound up with the task of proclamation."<sup>33</sup>

In the light of this argument is certainly worth reflecting on the prophetic role and vocation of the laity and how this can be properly exercised and lived out.

### 1.3.3 New Testament<sup>34</sup>

The New Testament is the Church's book about Jesus Christ and not Christ's book about the Church.<sup>35</sup> Like the Old Testament, it must not be mistaken for a blueprint of the Church that contains every single detail of how the concrete realities of the individual churches have to be. In addition, the New Testament is not just one book but consists of different parts which vary a great deal in terms of when, with which inten-

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<sup>31</sup> Flanders, *Covenant*, 294. Though correct, Flanders seems to present a perhaps too idealistic picture. Thus, Brueggemann reminds us that "prophets are uncredentialed [...], it is inevitable that they are challenged and that they must seek to give some justification for their utterance." (Brueggemann, *Theology*, 628. Cf. also p.649)

<sup>32</sup> Mowley, *Guide*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Mowley, *Guide*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> This section intends to present basic scriptural coordinates for a positive lay theology. That is why the overall picture is a rather positive, perhaps at times one-sided reading. Even though they are not explicitly mentioned here, this does not deny nor ignore that in the New Testament we also find accounts of power struggles and manipulative uses of power. For a good discussion of these problems, cf. Shaw: *The Cost of Authority. Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament* (1983).

<sup>35</sup> For an excellent discussion and summary of the complex issues regarding the Church in the New Testament see Roloff: *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament* (1993).

tion, and for whom they were written. They reflect different stages of development of the early Church. Consequently, the New Testament presents not just one uniform model of Church but it offers a pluriform approach. What is more, the majority of texts is not concerned with rules, regulations and laws but with proclaiming the Gospel as the good news. Hence, it can be argued that only those debates on clergy/laity are legitimate if they serve the proclamation of the Gospel. Similarly, it is also important to see that there is not simply *the* Gospel. The three synoptic gospels have a different focus than John's gospel. Whereas the latter stresses the mystery of the incarnation and consequently develops a high Christology, the previous three concentrate more on the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Still, those positions are not exclusive but complement each other. This is relevant for a theology of the laity as the foci of the four Gospels leave no alternative for ecclesiology but concentrating on those two central truths of salvation – the inauguration of the “already-not yet” present kingdom of God as well as the truth of Christ's incarnation, passion and resurrection. Ecclesiology, and together with it lay theology must be, on the one hand, christocentric and, on the other, it must make the realisation of God's Kingdom in the world its main task. The Church is never an end in itself but exists to fulfil this mission and vocation.

The healing ministry of Jesus, together with his feeding the multitudes, shows that his mission is not to reject the world but to transform it. Jesus led his disciples not out of this world but rather gave them an example of how to work for the kingdom of God in the world. Living in the world, therefore, in the full awareness of being part of this world-transforming mission is not participation on the periphery of the Church but right in the very heart of her essential vocation. Participation means therefore primarily being a living symbol of God's kingdom and of being the people that has Christ as its centre. The world, thus, is the place of the Church and for the Church. This does not mean that the Church is to follow the world in everything. Rather the Church is called in this position to retain a critical distance from the world and transform it towards God's Kingdom. If the laity are indeed those members of the Church who live mainly in the world, then their worldly “Church-being” must be the most fundamental form of participation in the Church, for it is here that the vocation of the Church is fulfilled. Any inner-ecclesial activity is almost of secondary importance in that view if it does not have any impact in the world. Participation is therefore a dimension that determines the whole being of a member of the Church and not just a few activities side by side with others.

Yet, what enables followers of Christ to have some impact in the world? Two answers can be found in Matthew. The first is Peter's profession of faith in Matthew 16:13-19. Not Peter's achievement but his profession of faith make him the rock and foundation for the Church. Still, even this profession is not Peter's own deed but given to him by God.<sup>36</sup> As this passage from Matthew is frequently used to argue for papal or episcopal primacy, it may appear misplaced in a section on the laity. Still, does this dialogue between Peter and Jesus not highlight a far more fundamental principle for participation than "simply" justifying papal primacy<sup>37</sup>? The honest and faithful profession of faith, which in itself is a gift from God, seems to be the essential prerequisite for any participation in the Church. In fact participation without such a profession seems impossible. This view seems to be underlined and supported by the scene that follows shortly afterwards in Matthew where Jesus tells his apostles: "In truth I tell you, if your faith is the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt 17:20) Faith and not formal membership in the group is decisive for the disciples. The most telling example of this view is found in Mark:

"John said to him [Jesus], 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon afterwards speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.'" (Mk 9:38-41)

Such passages inevitably require a re-thinking of how we understand membership in the Church. Is it, hence, not possible, although the majority of people will be explicit members of an institutional church, that there are people who are also members of *the* Church without being members of *a* church, as long as they faithfully profess faith in Christ and work orientated towards the community?<sup>38</sup> While we certainly need some rules and regulations in order to cope with many practical issues, these must not distort and unnecessarily limit our understanding of what faithfully following Jesus Christ and participation in the Church indeed can mean and be.

In connection with community, there is one further aspect. According to Mark, Jesus sends the Twelve out in pairs (cf. Mk 6:7). Proclaiming the Gospel is a mission not

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mt 16:17.

<sup>37</sup> This is not to claim that the interpretation regarding papal primacy is undisputed however, but this question is irrelevant in the present context.

<sup>38</sup> This is not to be confused with Rahner's idea of "anonymous Christians". In contrast to Rahner's model, these people are only outside an institution but otherwise they are explicit Christians in a community.

to be accomplished by individuals but by people working together. Thus, cooperation must be a key feature of churchly activity; it cannot be that the laity work against the clergy and vice versa. Only in a joint effort is it possible to proclaim the Gospel faithfully and effectively.

In view of passages such as Matthew 23:8-12, the titles used in the churches for the ordained ministries must be reviewed.<sup>39</sup> In the early Church “brothers and sisters” was the predominant title, whereas in many denominations today the clergy are addressed as “Father X”. Of course, and quite rightly, this can be interpreted to reflect the pastoral care for the parish, particularly if it is viewed together with titles such as “curate”, “pastor”, or the German “Seelsorger”. However, there are also numerous titles that suggest quite a different understanding. Thus the Pope is more often called “Holy Father” than “servus servorum dei”, cardinals called “Eminence”, bishops “Excellence” and so forth, while in the Church of England we find titles such as “Venerable”, “Very Reverend” or even “Right Reverend”<sup>40</sup>. Do such titles not suggest that there are not only functional differences in the churches but also ones implying status? Admittedly there have been historical reasons for the development of these titles. Yet, is it indeed justifiable that we still maintain them today, if we want to be faithful to Scripture? Is it not the case that “Father” insinuates teaching from above the community whereas “Brother or Sister” would suggest teaching from within, that is, like an equal? Such a change would not diminish the authority of those called to be teachers in the Church, but, it would indicate that their vocation for a specific task does not change their status as equal fellow Christians. For ultimately, all have the one Father in heaven and the one Teacher, Christ (cf. Mt 23:9-10).

The day of Pentecost has often been described as the moment the Church was born. Admittedly it is most unlikely that Acts 2:1-41 presents a historical account of that occasion; it is rather a theological statement about the Church spelling out some crucial elements for its self-understanding. First, and most important, it is the Holy Spirit that constitutes the Church. Only after they have received the Spirit, do the apostles dare to proclaim publicly the Gospel. Yet, the Spirit is given as a gift from above and not earned as a merit for some achievements. Second, it is not the apostles speaking in different

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<sup>39</sup> In Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus is speaking to the crowds and his disciples. He is criticising the scribes and the Pharisees for placing themselves above the “normal” people. Whereas the scribes were part of the religious establishment, the Pharisees, however, were a lay group. Consequently, it might be well worth reflecting if this passage is not actually rejecting religious elitism of any kind, lay as well as clerical.

languages but the Spirit that makes them understood universally (cf. Acts 2:6.11). Unity is also a gift from God. Third, the apostles are not the centre of the message but only the servants of it. Therefore all the debates on ministry and lay participation must never be guided by personal ambition but must aim at being a true and faithful witness to Christ.

Acts 2:42-47 then presents a short description of the very early Church. Considering the conflicts and controversies told in the Pauline letters and elsewhere in the New Testament, there can be little doubt that this is an idealised depiction of the early Church. Instead of presenting an historic account, it is much rather an expression of what the Church community should look like according to Lucan theology. Central to this view is a community of love.

Yet, this does not mean that there was no structure in these churches. Paul certainly knows of various ministries and vocations which however involve all members of the Church. No office can ignore or disregard the vocation of others. As 1 Corinthians 12 states,

“now Christ’s body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole. And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers... after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues. Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? [...]” (1 Cor 12:27-30)

Undoubtedly, for Paul, the Church is largely a charismatic community. The different ministries and vocations are all gifts of the spirit. A similar list is found in Ephesians 4:11-13. Although the lists are not completely identical, there is one common aspect: all true gifts of the Spirit are to serve the community and the ultimate goal is “to build up the Body of Christ” (Eph 4:12; cf. also 1 Cor 14). What is more, the list in 1 Corinthians 12 is followed by the “hymn of love” (1 Cor 12:31-13:13). Paul introduces the hymn with the exhortation, “Set your mind on the higher gifts. And now I am going to put before you the best way of all.” (1 Cor 12:31) The dimension of love in the Church, reflecting God’s love, is not only the greatest gift of the Spirit. It also transcends all other gifts and charisms. Hence, whatever a person does in, as or for the Church, love is inevitably the crucial qualification for any office and ministry in the Church. Neither ordination, nor position nor authority are decisive but true love for the Church and all the people in her.

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<sup>40</sup> In German, priests used to be addressed as “Hochwürden”. The official title today is still “Hochwürdiger Herr...”; bishops are even “hochwürdigster Herr...”.



Similarly, unity is to be a central feature of the Church. However, such unity depends not on a centralised structure but on the one central orientation in and of the Church. As Paul exhorts the Corinthians:

“I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to have factions among yourselves but all to be in agreement in what you profess; so that you are perfectly united in your beliefs and judgements. [...] What I mean is this: every one of you is declaring, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Has Christ been split up? Was it Paul that was crucified for you, or was it in Paul’s name that you were baptised?” (1 Cor 1:10.12-15)

There is only one centre for the Church and that centre is Christ. He is the only true authority in and of the Church. Paul derives the force and strength of his argument not from his vocation as an apostle but from the truth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, any activity in the Church must be in the name of Jesus Christ. This is the source and origin of the unity of the Church – the truth of the salvation in Christ. As the Church is given this centre, no member of the Church nor any structural element can be beyond criticism. Thus it is necessary that there is proper criticism and constructive opposition on all levels. In his confrontation with Peter (cf. Gal 2:11-14), Paul has set the precedent for such opposition. Yet, the criterion for critique was not Paul’s authority versus Peter’s but the fact that Peter’s “behaviour was not true to the gospel” (Gal 2:14). Nobody is to judge easily about others. However, there are instances that do require opposition, even to the apostle Peter. Yet, what is more important, Peter obviously listens to Paul’s criticism. This indicates that a faithful teaching authority must always also be a listening authority, which is not beyond critique.

In the letter to the Galatians we find one of the two most often cited passages in connection with the laity – Galatians 3:28. The other, which I shall discuss later on, is 1 Peter 2:9. However, it is important to read this verse not out of context. Paul writes,

“but now that faith has come we are no longer under a slave looking after us; for all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you that has been baptised has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female – for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:25-28)

It should be noted that Paul is not developing a sociological argument. He is talking about the essential state of every person in the Church. As Lietaert Peerbolte puts it,

“Paul does *not* argue that there are no longer any differences between Jew and Greek, [...] male and female. Paul’s argument is that these differences no longer

matter *in Christ*: the members of the Christian congregation are all united in Christ and within this Christian community social differences no longer matter.”<sup>41</sup>

In this respect Paul is presenting an ontological argument. Thus it is possible and necessary to argue for equality in the Church as long as such a demand considers the complex meaning of equality in the New Testament. Equality in Paul must be read in the context of light of the example set by Christ.

“For what most certainly can be deduced from his life and teaching is [...] equality of regard, as distinct from equality of status: a unique and irreplaceable value assigned to each and every human being, with everyone he encountered valued and affirmed, his critics included, since reasoned argument is itself a form of affirmation.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus, if it is difficult to derive from the context of Galatians 3:28 any consequences about the distribution of ministries in the Church as the text is not referring to this at all, making use of this text in a clergy/laity-debate is rather problematic. Still, this does not render the passage irrelevant for the issue of participation. For Paul’s argument shows clearly that participation is primarily a matter of being and only then of doing. However, his view of being a member of the Church also has implications for the behaviour and acting of Christians. As such we are all “clothed in Christ”. Thus every Christian is called to make Christ visible in the way we are and live. Each member of the Church is to be a living symbol and icon of Christ so that anybody who sees a Christian should see Christ.

It is quite telling, if it is from this perspective that one reads the vision of the last judgement in Matthew 25:31-46, where the institutional church does not feature at all. It is about being the Church in the world and in everyday life.<sup>43</sup> What is more, this eschatological vision highlights that participation in the Church is primarily not something in addition to the normal life but the fundamental mode of structuring the everyday normality. Ultimately, the whole life is to be one single act of participation.

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<sup>41</sup> Peerbolte: “Man, Woman, and the Angels in 1 Cor 11:2-16” (2000), 79.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, *Discipleship*, 15. Cf. also pp.12-19 for an illustrating exploration of the issues regarding equality in the New Testament.

<sup>43</sup> Although some claim that in this passage “brothers” refers only to members of the community, I follow Schnackenburg’s interpretation who convincingly argues for a broader conception of “brothers”. Cf. Schnackenburg: *Matthäusevangelium 16,21-28,20* (1987), 251f.: “Die ‘Geringsten’ sind seine Brüder. Der Brudergedanke, ursprünglich auf die Gemeindemitglieder bezogen [...], kann im Horizont des Weltgerichts auf alle Menschen ausgedehnt sein. Wenn man aufgrund von Stellen, wo sich ‘die Kleinen’ auf die Jünger Jesu, christliche Sendboten oder geringe Gemeindemitglieder beziehen (Mt 10:42; 18:6.10.14) unter den ‘Geringsten’ nur Christen oder christliche Missionare verstehen will, übersieht man, daß ‘auf den Namen eines Jüngers hin’ (10:42) hier fehlt. Im Gericht über ‘alle Völker’ ist [...] die universale Völkerwelt am Ende der Tage im Blick.”

A similar picture is found in that other “classic verse of lay theology”, 1 Peter 2:9. Again the context is crucial. Surely, this verse prepares the ground for the concept of the common priesthood<sup>44</sup>. Yet, the context demonstrates that 1 Peter 2:9 is not about the distinction between the common and the ordained priesthood,<sup>45</sup> but that the text speaks of the whole Church as such.<sup>46</sup> From this perspective the text does give an indication what it means to be the Church, what participation is about. Thus we read further down in chapter two, “always behave honourably among gentiles so that they can see for themselves what moral lives you lead” (1 Pet 2:12ab), and “it is God’s will that by your good deeds you should silence the ignorant talk of fools.” (1 Pet 2:15) The question here is not what one does *in* the Church but what one does *as* the Church. Again doing is a result of being the Church, as a particular way of being in the world. Also, the text does not speak about verbal preaching. Missionary work consists foremost not, in the literal sense, of lip-service, but life-service. It is the lives of the Christians and not the words that are to be convincing. Participation in the Church is not so much talking about Jesus’ message but living the Gospel.<sup>47</sup>

This analysis has shown that although the New Testament does not provide a detailed prescription and blueprint of what proper lay participation is supposed to be, it does provide us with some fundamental aspects of what it means to be the Church. It is probably in Paul’s speech before the council of the Areopagus that we are presented with the densest summary of such participation. It ultimately means that it is through Christ “that we live, and move, and exist” (Acts 17:28) in God.

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<sup>44</sup> This passage only prepares the ground it does not explicitly formulate a theology of the common priesthood. This is the result of later theological reflection. Cf. Brox: *Der erste Petrusbrief* (1979), 108-110.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Brox, *Petrusbrief*, 105: “Die VV 4-10 sind ganz deutlich am Thema des erwählten und heiligen Gottesvolkes (nicht des/eines Priestertums) orientiert.” Cf. also Brox, *Petrusbrief*, 104: „der 1 Petr interpretiert in seiner relativen Kürze das Christsein mit den verschiedensten anschaulichen und eindrucksvollen Bildern; die Rede von der Priesterschaft steht als eine bildliche Version unter den anderen da und wird nirgends im Brief auf eine andere (sc. buchstäbliche) Applikation festgelegt [...]. Der Begriff ist also aus dem Text 2,4-10 und seiner semantischen Struktur zu erklären. Dessen leitende Pointen sind aber [...] Erwählung und Heiligkeit [...]. Priesterliche Eigenschaften, Aufgaben oder Sphären im wörtlichen Sinn sind nicht angesprochen [...]“

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Schelkle: *Die Petrusbriefe* (1970), 64: “Alle haben eine Aufgabe der Verkündigung (1 Petr 2:9). Die Kirche ist als ganze priesterlich, insofern jeder ihrer Gläubigen unmittelbar zu Gott ist. Hierin liegt auch die königliche Freiheit begründet und gewährleistet.”

<sup>47</sup> Doubtless verbal testimony is also important, as 1 Peter 3:15 states, “always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.” Yet, such verbal testifying is not described as the prime ambition but as a reaction to questions caused by the Christian lifestyle. (Cf. Brox, *Petrusbrief*, 160). It is also important to note the readiness for such testimony is required and demanded of every Christian, regardless whether a person is ordained or not. (Cf. Brox, *Petrusbrief*, 160: “Die Rechenschaft über die Hoffnung ist hier jedem Christen zugetraut und keine Sache spezieller amtlicher oder ‘fachlicher’ Kompetenz.”)

## 1.4 Laity and the C(o)urse of History

The previous section has highlighted basic biblical aspects why there is the Church and what the Church is about. In this sense, the Bible provides the theological-ontological contents for the Church. In contrast, a survey of church history can give us some indication why the churches are as they are today. These two elements of Scripture and history are inseparably linked. There has never been a church that was detached from a specific historical and concrete situation. Also the people writing theology were determined by their times and the questions their circumstances posed. Theology today, therefore, has to take these aspects into account. Basically, this requires the careful distinction between changeable traditions and doctrinal Tradition (the latter as used most often in Roman Catholic theology). The question therefore must be whether theological positions that were answers to specific controversies in the past are still adequate expressions today or whether the circumstances have changed so much that we have to look for different approaches and concepts. At the risk of stating the obvious, because things are old they do not necessarily have to have become obsolete and, vice versa, newness alone does not guarantee that ideas are indeed better.

Here is not the place to present a full history of the laity. What I intend to do is to outline some basic aspects of the treatment of the laity in the course of church history,<sup>48</sup> and attempt to evaluate whether the course of history has been a curse for the laity or whether it has furthered them. One reason for limiting myself to a very basic and general outline is that there is hardly any position concerning the laity that cannot easily be affirmed as well as refuted by individual incidents in history.

As I have said above, at the beginning of the Church there was no clear notion of the laity as a separate group within the Church nor was there any theological concept for and of the laity. What the church did have right from the beginning is the view that different people have different charisms and that there are different tasks to be fulfilled in the Church and for it. Equally, there have always been leaders who reserved certain powers to themselves.<sup>49</sup> However, initially the local communities were possibly so small that there was no further need for explicit and codified structures and organisation. Yet,

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<sup>48</sup> For good summaries of the history of the laity cf. Karrer: *Die Stunde der Laien* (1999), 17-145; Neuner, *Laien*, 42-155; Osborne, *Ministry*; Eastwood: *The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful* (1963).

<sup>49</sup> Already Paul considered himself to have the authority to settle disputes in communities and to lay down rules for them.

as that church began to grow and spread throughout the Roman Empire, we also find the first elements of institutional organisation. It is most probably fair to say that the need for organisation (in all aspects of the life of the church) led to the development of what we now know as the clergy. In this respect the laity can be considered almost as the “by-product” of this development.

Thus, it could be argued that there is only a teaching office in the Church because there was the problem of heresies in the early Church.<sup>50</sup> This happened when the Church was already too big for all members to take active part in such debates. Hence for the Council of Jerusalem it was still possible to have a rather “informal” structure. By the time we get to the councils in the fourth century, we can observe a development that made it necessary that leaders or official delegates of the communities would attend assemblies which were to clarify positions and eradicate heretical views. In this sense, it was a matter of practicality that bishops also became the chief teachers of local churches because for these councils to have any real impact it was essential that the assembly as well as the people sent there had the authority actually to make binding decisions. At the same time councils were not only a matter for the clergy. There were also laypeople present at the councils. Indeed in many cases it was the emperor, himself a layperson, who convened the council. Some councils were not even called with the intention of finding theological truth but of re-establishing order and peace in the empire. In contrast, there were basically no laypeople involved in Vatican I, which was a purely clerical council. The picture for Vatican II is not much different. Obviously there were reasons and causes for this shift that councils became a matter only for the clergy. The question now is whether the arguments involved in that development can still be sustained today; and if not in which direction change would be desirable. Is it possible to go back to compositions of councils of the early church or do we have to keep the structure history has produced? Or, alternatively, should structures be derived from modern systems of communication and management?

It is always difficult to point out exactly when major changes in history appeared and what the precise causes were. Still, regarding the laity there are some key dates to be considered. The first stage certainly was during the time of the early Church when she eventually became independent from Judaism. Christianity was still rather small in numbers, though already some forms of episcopal leadership began to develop. Not long

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<sup>50</sup> This is neither to deny nor to ignore that people like Peter and Paul had some form of teaching authority. However, it seems problematic to me to simply equate them with a formal magisterium.

after that the Church is faced with the first serious heresies which required authoritative doctrinal debates and decisions. This was undoubtedly a crucial step in the emergence of a formal group of professional theologians and teachers in the Church. It may well be a side effect of this development that the laity are seen as the untrained and uneducated people.<sup>51</sup>

A second decisive phase is Constantine's edict of tolerance for Christians, and the time after Theodosius the Great made Christianity the state religion in the Roman Empire. It is during this period that bishops and clergy become also servants of the state and of the imperial administration; ecclesial power is now combined and increasingly linked with secular power. As a result the Church is becoming more and more an institution. Not only does the Church grow in numbers, as the official state religion there is also the need for more organisational and administrative structuring of it. This is another factor that led to the development of a hierarchy distinct from the rest of the people. Again it is not theological reasons that lead to this development but the Church's relation with the state. It is well known and does not need repeating here that these changes led eventually to the laity in a sense being forced to be increasingly passive in the institutional church. This ultimately resulted in the famous *dictatus papae* of Gregory VII, dated March 1075. In it Gregory declared that everyone including secular rulers were subordinate under the papal primacy. In this view the Church is no longer a community of equals. On the contrary the institutional church comes fully to reflect the values and assumptions of the feudal society of medieval Europe. Indeed, the Pope considers himself to be at the top of this pinnacle above even the emperor. Boniface VIII went one step even further. In his bull *Unam Sanctam* he declared that submission under the Pope in Rome is necessary for all human beings to reach salvation<sup>52</sup>. In addition, in the bull *Clericis laicos* he solemnly states that now laity and clergy, as in the times of the old church, have become bitter enemies.<sup>53</sup> With the papacy of Boniface VIII the laity are finally completely pushed to the periphery of the Church. Lay participation in the institutional church is reduced to a minimum. Basically the Church is identified solely with the hierarchy. Indeed, the hierarchy and the whole institutional church, in a sense, have become the ecclesial version of the Roman Empire; as successor of the Imperial household only the hierarchy matters and the laity are just the plebs. For modern

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<sup>51</sup> It should be added that this process already began in the New Testament time with people like Ignatius.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Neuner, *Laie*, 68.

Christians this is a view no longer tolerable. Nevertheless we cannot simply reject everything in that development as wrong and unfaithful to the Gospel. Gregory VII and Boniface VIII were as much people of their time as we are children of our age when we interpret today this part of Christian history. Are these problematic conceptions of ecclesiology not actually a warning that proper ecclesiology cannot simply be complacent when considering the signs of the times? Important as they may be, if they become the exclusive criterion for our theological thinking we are in the danger of being as short sighted as we might think Gregory and Boniface to have been.

To give a fair and balanced presentation we must also see that so far only one side of church history has been shown, even though it is probably that side that became more dominant. Quite in contrast to Gregory VII and Boniface VIII, was Pope Gregory I (590-604) a man who assumed and obviously deserved the papal title of "servant of God's servants".<sup>54</sup> Equally, it would be wrong to conclude that there was no "pro-lay" thinking at all. Marsilius of Padua (1270-1342) advocated a strong and powerful laity as well as papacy subordinate to ecumenical councils. He argued "for the dependency not only of the pope upon the general council, but also of the council upon the laity and hence upon the whole 'church.'"<sup>55</sup> Therefore the council should be elected by all believers and it should also be composed of laypeople as well as priests.<sup>56</sup>

On a similar note, for William of Ockham, "the church in having an exclusively spiritual role is subject to a lay ruler for its temporalities and does not hold them by canon law"<sup>57</sup>. Taking a broader perspective, Ockham argues that "the very universality of the church makes it open to lay participation and in case of necessity or utility subject to lay coercion or direction, as in the case of electing or summoning a general council."<sup>58</sup>

Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham are two representatives of a theological theory that came to be known as conciliarism and the conciliar movement. Basically conciliarism is the doctrine of the primacy of a general council over and above the pope.<sup>59</sup> It would seem highly problematic to claim that conciliarism is a lay movement.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Neuner, *Laié*, 68.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Markus: *Gregory the Great and his World* (1997), 72-75 & 91-96.

<sup>55</sup> Gewirth: *Marsilius of Padua and Medieval Political Philosophy* (1951), 286. Cf. also: Salembier: "Marsilius of Padua".

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Gewirth, *Marsilius*, 286.

<sup>57</sup> Leff: *William of Ockham* (1975), 617f. Cf. also: Turner, W.: "William of Ockham".

<sup>58</sup> Leff, *Ockham*, 640.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Smolinsky: "Konziliarismus", 579: "Unter Konziliarismus (konziliare Theorie) versteht man im Hinblick auf die höchste Gewalt und Einheit in der Kirche die Lehre von der Oberhoheit des Generalkonzils über dem Papst." Cf. also p. 580: "Johannes Quidort von Paris [...] gab dem Generalkonzil das Recht, einen dem Wohle der Gesamtkirche schadenden Papst abzusetzen".

Nevertheless, it shows that ideas of synodical and less hierarchical church structures are not just an invention in the wake of rising democracies but that such concepts have been discussed for a long time. In this context also such movements as the Waldenses<sup>60</sup> have to be mentioned. These tried to stress the need for and importance of preaching, including preaching by the laity, as well as a lifestyle of poverty for the sake of the Gospel.

Another major step for the theology of the laity was undoubtedly the Reformation in all its variations all across Europe. There has never before been such a challenge to the established Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers re-introduced the concept of the common priesthood of all believers. They also brought back the vernacular into the Church as well as the communion under both kinds for all the people. This allowed the “common” people to participate on a much broader and deeper scale. The Reformation thus opened up many fields for the laity that had become closed and taken away from them previously. Unfortunately, the Reformation brought about these changes only in the churches that split with the Roman Church; within the Roman Catholic Church positions were not changed a lot; some positions were even hardened. The Reformation also made the Bible more accessible for many people. Preaching was now in the hands of far more people. Still, it must also be asked whether or not this did not create a new form of “clergy-like” elite. Was there indeed a change or was it simply a shift from distinction on the grounds of ordination to distinction on the grounds of education? It is not impossible that this enforced the understanding of the laity as the uneducated people.<sup>61</sup> However, the fact is that the Reformation opened up the debate on the institutional church, showing that there is more change possible than was previously acknowledged. In addition, since the Reformation there have been different churches and, together with it, various models of the Church in practice. Of course, this is a scandal for Church unity. However, it is also a constant reminder that *the* Church is an ideal reality that is only realised by proxy in concrete churches; that all churches are *semper reformanda*.

The Reformation was a challenge from within the Church. The next major challenge came from outside from the Enlightenment. If in the Reformation the ques-

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. “Laienbewegung” (p.355f) and “Waldenser” (p.624f) in: Andresen: *Wörterbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (1984).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Dülmen: “The Reformation and the Modern Age”, 208f: “A convinced Protestant could only be someone who could read the Bible and above all, in so far as he was able, could understand church doctrine, which called for a long process of assimilation.” Cf. also Moeller: “Stadt und Buch. Bemerkungen zur Struktur der reformatorischen Bewegung in Deutschland”, as well as Scribner: “How many could read?”.



tion was *how* the Church should be, now the debate was *whether* or not there should be a church at all, and if not, what rationale should replace the Church and the faith. This had far reaching implications for all churches. A number of these also became of great importance for the laity. With the emphasis on logic, science and reason there also came more education for all people. Of course, the level of education was still very low in large parts of society. Yet, it was then that at least basic education for all became a real possibility. Consequently, the opposition between clergy as the educated class and the laity as the uneducated began to crumble. The Enlightenment was followed by industrialisation. This caused not only major changes in societies all over Europe, it also confronted the churches with the so-called "social question". As institutions, the churches failed for a long time to provide adequate responses to the social problems of that time. In consequence, laypeople started to form their own groups and unions. Thus, the age of the industrial revolution brought about an increasingly active laity, yet these people started to work quite independently from the institutional churches. Attempts like Catholic Action which sought to regain control over such liberated laity proved not to be very successful. However, it took until Vatican II before the laity were, so to speak, officially acknowledged to have an important apostolate of their own.

So far this has been a rather Roman Catholic account of European Church history. In the Church of England the picture was somewhat different, yet, not completely. Through parliament and synodical structures that gradually have been developed the English Anglican laity, at least some of them, have always been involved in Church government right from the start. In the 1850s, for example,

"Anglicanism continued to exercise great influence. Prime Ministers took great pains over the exercise of church patronage – particularly the appointment of bishops. [...] This was the age of great Anglican lay people [...] whose immense energies were channelled as much into ecclesiastical cause as they were into politics."<sup>62</sup>

Still, it might be asked if such active engagement was indeed motivated by religious or ecclesiological interests or whether it was simply a political necessity. For "political groups saw it as their highest duty to maintain the union of throne and altar. The Church established by laws was, at least in England, effectively governed by Parliament as a kind of lay assembly, and had been ever since the suspension of the Convocations on 1717."<sup>63</sup> Even though this indicates that there was some form of lay participation in the government of the Church of England, it must also be observed that this was lim-

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<sup>62</sup> Morris & Macleod: "Scholars, Slums and Socialists", 223.

ited to a very small section of the laity and that it was perhaps more politically than theologically motivated. This changed “around the time of the Enabling Act (1919), creating a new Church Assembly”<sup>64</sup> and finally with the General Synod in 1970. However, it would be naïve or even wrong to conclude that this solved all questions regarding lay participation. As Kenneth Hylson-Smith observes,

“the Church Assembly [...] had various shortcomings, and most notably the lack of full participation by the laity in discussions and decisions on the church’s doctrine and worship. In 1969 the Synodical Government Measure [...] provided for [...] synodical government throughout the Church of England [...]. The General Synod [...] was to encourage and facilitate full participation by the laity; and the diocesan and deanery synods were to give the laity the opportunity for a greater involvement in local church life [...].

In 1964, Leslie Paul had presented a report [...] entitled *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy*. [...] The report also stressed the need for the laity to exercise ministry, and it recommended a pastoral lay apostolate with street organisations based on house communions. It was a tragedy that reform did not take place on the wake of the report; and it took twenty years to implement its recommendations [...].”<sup>65</sup>

However, Hylson-Smith’s summary also shows that greater lay participation in church government does not automatically guarantee a greater flexibility and faster reactions to changed circumstances. Synodical structures, desirable as they may be, are as well in the danger of becoming introspective and short sighted as purely hierarchical, clerical forms of church government.

However, the Church of England in its outward appearance and in its structures, despite such lay involvement, still seemed largely clerical dominated and clergy centred until at least the second half of the twentieth century. It may also be observed that the laity have still not really appeared as a central topic for theological reflections and writing. It would be unjust, though, to put the blame simply on the Anglican clergy. As David Hempton observes for the middle of the nineteenth century, “Robert Bickersteth, the long-serving Evangelical Bishop of Ripon [...], made frequent appeals for working-class Anglicans to take more responsibility for church extension. Predictably, he found that working men were more eloquent in their criticism of the Church of England’s shortcomings than they were desirous of reforming them.”<sup>66</sup> This is not the place to speculate about the reason for this reluctance on the side of the laity, but it must be acknowledged that it was not always the laity who were excluded but they themselves who did not want to get involved. Perhaps the situation and history becomes

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<sup>63</sup> Norman: “Church and State since 1800”, 277.

<sup>64</sup> Norman, “Church and State”, 287.

<sup>65</sup> Hylson-Smith: *The Churches in England. Vol. III: 1883-1998* (1998), 249f.

<sup>66</sup> Hempton: “Religious Life in Industrial Britain, 1830-1914”, 316.

more understandable if paired with an observation made by Frank Turner, regarding evangelical Christians in Britain at about the same time. He writes:

“evangelicals seeking to affirm real religion through emphasis on lay activity had discovered that efficacy outside the church proper [...]. For evangelical religion the family [...] constituted the centre of Christian nurture. [...] The household was the scene of family prayers and devotions. The Bible, along with evangelical devotional literature, provided the text for family-oriented religious training. [...] In some cases there also existed a darker side to this family faith. It might involve harsh discipline, personal and physical and psychological mortification [...]. Many British Christians whose personal theology did not mesh with those of evangelicals nonetheless still embraced the model social expectations of the evangelical family.”<sup>67</sup>

From this account we can see that lay participation may be also inhibited by factors to do with the laity themselves.

As a result of the British Empire, there are today many individual Anglican churches in the former colonies with forms and structures very close to those of the Church of England but that have also been influenced by the different cultures and traditions all over the globe. Obviously, this also influenced approaches to the laity. Another interesting issue is the involvement of laypeople in missionary work. It would be an idealised and distorted picture to claim that the missionary work was done mainly by the laity. There have also been strong movements to keep it in the hands of the clergy.<sup>68</sup> Still, the need for medical care opened a field for the laity and made their participation increasingly necessary and demanded. As Peter Williams describes it: initially

“medical missionary work had been resisted in the first half of the century, [...] but the reality that medicine broke down barriers in areas of hostility was also persuasive [...]. In the 1880s and 1890s, [...] many doctors and medical students were applying to the societies to serve, significantly as doctors and not as clergy who also happen to be doctors.[...]

The employment of lay missionary doctors was one sign of the breakdown of the clerical domination of missionary work.”<sup>69</sup>

Without wanting to overstretch the point, this participation of the laity in mission through the medical profession shows that engaging in secular affairs does not put laypeople at the edge of the churches but actually positions them at the frontline of evangelisation and missionary work. The example of those doctors shows the importance and also responsibility of being as the Church and for the Church in the world. In this sense secular character might have indeed a very positive implication and meaning for the laity.

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<sup>67</sup> Turner, F.: “The Victorian Crisis of Faith and the Faith that was Lost”, 20f.

<sup>68</sup> For a brief summary of the ups and downs of lay participation in the mission cf. Williams: “British Religion and the Wider World: Mission and Empire”, 381-405.

Finally in this brief look at church history we need to reflect on the concept of participation itself. Each change in the relation and position of the churches to society and politics brought with it also a different view of, as well as a demand for, participation. Thus in the early Church becoming and being a Christian meant dedicating one's whole life to Christ and the Church. Until the edict of Constantine (313AD), it was very dangerous to be a Christian. This demanded an extremely high level of commitment. Yet, the focus of this commitment was less on particular activities than on the preparedness to stand up and confess one's faith even at the cost of one's life. When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire it was simply opportune and a political necessity for many to convert to Christianity. Consequently, there was no longer such an intensity of commitment and dedication demanded from the average Christian. In addition, church life, liturgy and worship also became institutionalised, formalised, and gradually more detached from the people. In this respect, there is the beginning of a lower level of so-called lay participation. Still, this is only one side of the issue. With the Roman Empire steadily becoming a Christian state everyday life also began to be formed and "regulated" by Christian ideas and became Christianised. Many pagan customs and traditions were adapted and transformed into Christian ones. Thus, living within the social framework of the Empire as a Christian state was to some extent participation in the Church, as it determined largely the shape and structure of this framework. In a sense, the Church and Christianity were not just a part of society among others, but they were rather the underlying principle and mode of how everything in society was shaped. Even in today's Europe all our major holidays are basically Christian feasts. In the time of the Reformation this basic framework was not destroyed. Despite all changes and upheavals, Christianity remained the determining and shaping factor for European societies. Without suggesting any romantic ideas of a golden age for a Christian society, I suspect that basically until the age of Enlightenment participation in the normal social framework was also, at least on a superficial level, participation in the Church. Even though the laity were de facto excluded and prevented from active influence on the institutional church, so to speak, there was no part of life that was outside the Church. Yet, although this is a possible modern interpretation of history, it is diffi-

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<sup>69</sup> Williams, "Mission", 400f.

cult to say today to what extent people consciously perceived their way of life as participation in the Church.

The age of Enlightenment, followed by the industrial revolution, changed this social structure completely. No longer was Christianity the sole and basic principle for society. With the Enlightenment there came the change from a “seven out of seven days”-religion to a “one out of seven”-religion. Christianity no longer determined the whole life and structure of society. Consequently, participation in the Church was no longer a matter of being, let alone a way of life, but something in addition to the everyday life. Participation became an optional activity, and almost a hobby. It is such an understanding of participation that gave rise to the questions of rights: who has the right to restrict the personal freedom of individuals in the exercise of their hobbies?

Modern societies pose questions and problems unheard of before in history. Still, if lay theology is to be faithful to the essence of the Church it must be a theology that has a properly developed synchronic perspective as well as a diachronic view. History helps to understand the way that led to the situation we are faced with today, but it can only in a very limited range show the direction we should take towards the future. Thus, history can show why there is a theology of the laity and why it is as we know it but it cannot show us how lay theology in the future ought to be.

It is in this light that demands for greater or more lay participation must be questioned. What do we mean by “more” or “greater” – quantity or of quality? Would it not be more appropriate to speak of a different form and understanding of lay participation? Our brief survey has shown that the laity as such, as well as a theology of the laity are partly the by-product of a theology of the clergy, and that the course of history has produced something that in some sense does not really exist. It is in this respect almost the curse of history as we have to deal theologically with the laity only because of the way the theology of the clergy has developed. From this perspective it is not surprising that lay theology has been for a long time the theology of the “not-clergy” and that is why it is questionable whether there is any realistic chance of developing a positive theology of the laity within such a context. It is therefore necessary to redirect the debate away from the distinction between clergy and laity towards the whole Church as such. This does not mean disrespect or disregard for the historical developments in the Church and churches but it forbids the romanticising or idealising of any specific period of Church history; and this includes just as much the present time.

## 1.5 Questions and Perspectives – First Results

The results of these first reflections and surveys make it necessary to phrase many aspects and perspectives more as questions than as statements or facts. Yet, in my opinion, all these questions together give some indication in which direction lay theology could be developed further.

The introduction approached the question from four different angles. The first section serves as a *descriptive* account of the state of affairs. Current theology of the laity is basically a theology of negatives regarding contents as well as hermeneutics and method, thus preventing theologies of the laity from being truly catholic theologies. They are in most cases still geographically or denominationally too limited to be called catholic.

In view of this the second section tried to outline a more *prescriptive* agenda. The third section conceded that the Bible does not present a theology of the laity as such, but the Bible does present a picture of what humanity as well as the Church are to be. We can therefore, within limits, deduce who the individual members of the Church are, what the role of the various groups in the Church as the people of God could and should be. Yet, these conclusions do not describe a legal framework for the Church nor its institutional structure. The Bible is only prescriptive in the pastoral tasks set before the Church, offering, so to speak, an ontological and teleological outline; organisational and legal aspects are largely left open. It is thus impossible to construct a modern theology of the laity solely from Biblical arguments without running the risk of falling prey to biblicist approaches. It was therefore also necessary to look at the development of different views in the course of history.

Although generalisations in history are always dangerous, it seems fair to say that the first eleven hundred years of church history were a period of an emerging theology of the clergy. It was only in the wake of this development that lay theology also came into being. What is more, lay theology developed in opposition to the theology of the clergy. For a long time the theological position and status of the laity evolved with every right that was claimed by the clergy. To put it very bluntly, the laity was only defined and discussed to clarify and secure the position of the clergy. As apparently many developments regarding the clergy were driven by secular interests and profane political goals, it seems fair to remark that to quite a considerable extent theology of the laity is a prod-

uct of the curse of history for many developments led to theological positions that were not specifically anti-laity but rather explicitly pro-clergy. This poses serious problems for modern theology. Our historical circumstances and situations have changed so much that it is very difficult to apply older approaches regarding the laity to the Church in the modern world. It is therefore of utmost importance to discern between immutable and changeable aspects of our theological inheritance. Yet, history on its own does not present a solution. Only if we see the inherited lay theologies in the light of historical circumstance together with the Biblical demands, to the extent we can know them, and with the present situation of the Church in mind, is it possible to develop a dynamic theology of the laity that can lead also into the future.

In summary, Biblical and historical perspectives offer essential and existential aspects on which to found modern theologies. Yet, if viewed on their own, they do not allow us to develop a full and catholic theology of the laity. As far as contents goes, these approaches sketch out essential and initial perspectives for lay theology insofar as they generate questions that have to be faced by modern attempts on the subject. In that sense the Bible and history are not only the point of departure but they also form the basic framework for theological reflections on the laity. Yet, by no means do they answer all questions concerned.

Without any claim to completeness, this leaves us with the following basic questions:

- Is it at all possible to overcome the dominance of negatives in lay theologies?
- Apart from history and Bible, what are the sources for positive lay theology?
- Is a theology of the laity actually necessary or would it not suffice to have a proper ecclesiology, with the Church as the People of God, and the ordained ministry properly defined within this? Are the laity in fact not a redundant theological concept?
- If the concept of the laity is retained: what could be a positive definition of the laity?
- How can theology overcome the hierarchical pyramid as the basic model for the Church? How can we think about ecclesiology, and in particular the laity, in a way that it is acceptable and adequate for Christians living in modern democracies while remaining faithful to the biblical and historical foundation?
- How can lay theology be based on ecclesiology as such and not on the difference between clergy and laity?

- How can an ecclesiological concept of lay participation be achieved that focuses on the meaning of “being lay” instead of “doing something as a layperson”?
- Regarding the element of “doing”, how can the debate be re-focused from the right to perform various tasks to the best way for fulfilling the vocation given the Church as a whole?

The main chapters of this thesis will address the key aspects of these questions, discussing contemporary Roman Catholic and Anglican concepts of lay theology together with models found in liberative theologies. It is on the basis of this wider frame that I hope to offer my own suggestions towards a theology of the laity in the final part.



## Part II: The Laity in Roman Catholic Theology

### 2. The Laity in the Documents of Vatican II

#### 2.1 Introduction

It was fifteen years after the conclusion of Vatican II that Bernard Kelly writes: "If in the third chapter the offices proper to the hierarchy are discussed and only after that the role of the laity, the reason is not that these latter are simply the non-officeholders. It is that their office is different, even while fully Christian."<sup>1</sup> What at first sight seems to be just a summarising introduction to a chapter of Kelly's book points out a number of issues.

First, Kelly's statement implies the existence of offices proper only to the hierarchy and others proper only to the laity. To a large extent, this difference is simply a result of historical development within the church<sup>2</sup> throughout the ages. However, what the precise difference between hierarchy and laity is in essence and, thus, what the offices exclusively proper to each group are, is highly disputed among theologians, clerical and lay alike.<sup>3</sup>

Second, Kelly's emphasis that laypeople are not non-officeholders clearly points out that the office of the laity as expressed by Vatican II was still not undisputed at the time of writing. In the twenty years since the publication of Kelly's book the notion of such an office has become far more accepted. Yet, what this office is, or should be, is still anything but uncontroversial.

Third, most striking is the fact that Kelly found it necessary to state that laypeople are "fully Christian". Obviously, the idea that laypeople are subordinate to the hierarchy and in that respect not fully but inferior Christians had not been overcome then.

These three issues indicate the major questions for the position of the laity in official church documents from Vatican II up to the present:

- What is the nature and vocation of the Church today and what are the implications of this for the laity and their participation?

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly: *Lay spirituality* (1980), 2.

<sup>2</sup> "church" is used to refer to the Roman Catholic Church or any other specific denomination(s); "Church" to *the* universal and catholic Church.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Osborne's analysis of the foundation of hierarchy and ministry in: Osborne, *Ministry*, 7-113.

- How do these documents define the laity, their apostolate and office?
- How does the office and apostolate of the laity relate to that of the hierarchy?
- Finally, do these documents offer indeed a positive theology of the laity?

## 2.2 A Few Remarks on Approaching the Documents on Vatican II

Vatican II can only be understood in its historical context, in particular the unfinished business of Vatican I, the theological and pastoral heritage of Leo XIII, and, particularly, Pius XII, who between *aggiornamento* and strict centralism, indirectly prepared the grounds for Vatican II. All this cannot be repeated here<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight at least some essential aspects.

### 2.2.1 The Announcement of the Council

“John XXIII was elected pope in October 1958. Barely three months later he announced his Ecumenical Council (together with a synod for the diocese of Rome and the reform of the Code of Canon Law) on 25 January 1959”<sup>5</sup>.

That Vatican II was planned as an ecumenical council shows the importance John XXIII wanted the council to have. This is even more remarkable as usually “which councils [...] were ecumenical was determined not by the pope, but by their reception in the Church at large.”<sup>6</sup> Considering that there have been only 20 ecumenical councils, including Vatican I<sup>7</sup>, it becomes obvious that John XXIII had an enormous project in mind. Clearly, John XXIII’s “*aggiornamento*” aimed for a reform that would launch the Church into the present and prepare it for the future.

The announced reform of the Code of Canon Law shows clearly that John XXIII thought of the postconciliar church as a church that could not go on within its old legal framework, that would require a new legal constitution. The church’s view of the laity is one of the points that illustrates this correlation between the two reforms ex-

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed history of Vatican II see: Alberigo & Komonchak: *History of Vatican II* (1995 (vol.1)/1997 (vol.2)) and Hastings: *Modern Catholicism. Vatican II and After* (1991). See also: Schoof: *Breakthrough: Beginnings of the New Catholic Theology* (1970).

<sup>5</sup> Hebblethwaite, P.: “John XXIII”, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Walsh, M.: “Councils in Christian History”, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Walsh: “Councils”, 19: twenty Ecumenical Councils according to Roman Catholic lists.

plicity. Whereas the code of 1917 was in no way a fitting legal vehicle for the theology of Vatican II, the code of 1983 is inconceivable without the achievements of Vatican II.

### 2.2.2 A “New Type” of Council

There is a further aspect in which Vatican II differs from its predecessors: “It has often been said that he [John XXIII] did not really have any very clear idea of what he wanted from his Council; and as far as *contents* goes that may be true. [...] But he had a very clear idea of the *manner* in which his council should be conducted.”<sup>8</sup> Thus in the official convocation of the council, *Humanae Salutis*, Pope John stressed the “need ‘to discern the signs of the times’”.<sup>9</sup> In his opening speech<sup>10</sup> of the council, on 11 October 1962, John XXIII gave a programmatic outline of this different manner, of the type of council he wanted Vatican II to be.

The Pope emphasised that it was to be positive council. Thus he begins his speech: “Gaudet mater Ecclesia – the mother Church rejoices.” It was Pope John’s wish and vision that the church would approach the present problems and the tasks of the future with confidence.<sup>11</sup> John XXIII wanted Vatican II to be a mainly pastoral council. However, developing of new pastoral concepts also demanded some rethinking of doctrinal positions. In the words of John XXIII, the council’s concern was

“that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously. [...] The Church must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.”<sup>12</sup>

Though Vatican II was meant to be mainly a pastoral council, the fathers of the council discussed pastoral issues as well as dogmatic issues. However, “it is not easy to separate the two. The more dogmatic statements were surely ventured upon chiefly for pastoral purposes, while the more pastoral initiatives invariably contain within them considerable theological presuppositions.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the pope made it very clear himself that it was not the task of the council simply to repeat statements of previous

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<sup>8</sup> Hebblethwaite, “John XXIII”, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Hebblethwaite, “John XXIII”, 29.

<sup>10</sup> For the full text cf. Abbott: *The Documents of Vatican II* (1967), 710-719.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Abbott, *Vatican II*, 712.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Abbott, *Vatican II*, 713f. As the analysis will show, it is this perspective that influenced many of the council’s statements regarding the laity and their apostolate.

<sup>13</sup> Hastings, Adrian: “The Key Texts”, 56.

councils but to find new ways of expressing faith and doctrine, ways that would have modern thought as their point of departure:

“Christians [...] all over the world expect a leap forwards in doctrinal insight and the education of consciences in ever greater fidelity to authentic teaching. But this authentic doctrine has to be studied and expounded in the light of the research methods and language of modern thought.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, John XXIII in his opening speech inaugurated a new language of conciliar documents. He wanted to end the traditional condemnation of errors by promoting affirmative teaching of faith instead:

“The Church has [...] frequently [...] has condemned them [errors] with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnation.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus also when speaking of the laity we should be able to expect such affirmative language.

In any case, Vatican II should not be seen as the end of a discussion but as the beginning of a constant reform of, and in, the church to adapt it to the needs of the times while, at the same time, remaining true to its foundation in Christ. It was along these lines that John XXIII wanted his council to work. Thus, this should also be a guideline to assess issues regarding the laity in the documents of the council as well as in all postconciliar documents that claim to be grounded in the teaching and spirit of Vatican II.

### 2.2.3 The Relevant Documents

The attempt to discuss the concept of laity in the documents of Vatican II immediately raises the question which documents need to be considered. Looking up ‘Laity’ in the index of *Kleines Konzilskompendium*<sup>16</sup>, the first impression is that all documents are indeed relevant. Yet, a closer look reveals that the four documents most important concerning the issue of laity are

- *Sacrosanctum Concilium - The Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy*. this document tells a lot about self-understanding of the council and the church. Being the first

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Abbott, *Vatican II*, 715.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Abbott, *Vatican II*, 716.

<sup>16</sup> Rahner & Vorgrimler: *Kleines Konzilskompendium* (1991). (=KKK)

document of Vatican II, it should also be seen as the foundation for the documents of the council.

- *Lumen Gentium - Dogmatic Constitution On The Church*: this document presents the council's new vision of the Church, outlining also the structure of the post-conciliar church.
- *Apostolicam actuositatem - Decree On The Apostolate Of The Laity*: this is the conciliar document focusing on the lay apostolate.
- *Gaudium et spes - Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World*: this document is unique amongst all documents ever produced by a council. It is a dense summary of the pastoral self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church.

However, these four documents must not be seen as detached and independent from the whole body of documents, even though not all the documents have the same authority and quality.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it is also well worth looking at a few chronological aspects<sup>18</sup>:

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 11 Oct. 1962  | Opening of the Council<br><i>1. Session: Beginning of Discussions</i>              |
| 22 Oct. 1962  | On Liturgy   |
| 1 Dec. 1962   | On the Church<br><i>2. Session: Beginning of Discussions</i>                       |
| 30 Sep. 1963  | On the Church  |
| 5 Nov. 1963   | On Bishops<br><i>End of 2. Session: Promulgation of</i>                            |
| 4 Dec. 1963   | Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy<br><i>3. Session: Beginning of Discussion</i>   |
| 15. Sep. 1964 | On the Church  |
| 18. Sep. 1964 | On Bishops   |
| 6 Oct. 1964   | On the Apostolate of the Laity.  |
| 20 Oct. 1964  | On the Church in the Modern World<br><i>End of 3. Session: Promulgation of</i>     |
| 21 Nov. 1964  | Dogmatic Constitution on the Church<br><i>4. Session: Beginning of Discussions</i> |
| 21 Sep. 1965  | On the Church in the Modern World<br><i>Promulgation of</i>                        |
| 28 Oct. 1965  | Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church                     |
| 18 Nov. 1965  | Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity  |
| 7 Dec. 1965   | Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World                            |
| 8 Dec. 1965   | Conclusion of the Council  |

This order of events is important because it reflects also the train of thought of the council. The starting point is the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, thus stressing the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hastings, "Key Texts", 56.

<sup>18</sup> All dates taken from KKK, 34-36.

view of the Church being essentially sacramental; having its centre in the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. The council's pastoral focus can be seen in the fact that the discussion of the dogmatic issues in *Lumen Gentium* went hand in hand with the debate on major pastoral points. It should also be seen that the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* was discussed late and promulgated at the end of the council; thereby making it, at least partly, the council's pastoral summa.

## 2.3 Sacrosanctum Concilium - The Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy

“The sacred Council has set out to impart an ever-increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call all mankind into the Church's fold. Accordingly it sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.” (SC1)<sup>19</sup>

These are the very first words of Vatican II. In SC1 the focus is clearly on the present and the future and not on the past. It is remarkable that the council acknowledges the necessity to “adapt more closely to needs of our age”. This states the positive orientation of the council as well as it implies that the church admits not being close to the needs of the times at the time up to Vatican II.

However, there is another aspect in SC1. The final target for the whole Church, not only the Roman Catholic Church, must be the “union of all who believe in Christ”. Vatican II was aware that it could be only a truly Ecumenical Council if it was ecumenical in its approach towards the questions raised. Beyond that, Vatican II also considered itself as truly catholic, that is all including, calling “all mankind into the Church's fold” (SC1), Christians and non-Christians alike.

It is self-evident that such an approach and intention also required a substantial rethinking of the view on the laity, for there are many parts of the world where there are hardly any priests and laypeople do most of the work.

SC2 highlights two important aspects. First, thus continuing the ideas of SC1, in the liturgy the mystery of Christ is celebrated and made visible. It is as if in the liturgy salvation and redemption were materialised. The liturgy is, equally, also an expression

and revelation of the “real nature of the true Church”(SC2). Yet, the Church is not an abstract entity. It is built of humans. This leads to the second aspect of SC2. Everybody is called to participate. The Eucharist is “the outstanding means whereby *the faithful* express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ” (SC2; my italics). The document does not say the priest or the clergy, it states unmistakably “the faithful”, that is every member of the Church. Therefore everybody, clergy and laity alike, must have an active role in the liturgy<sup>20</sup>. It is in this context that SC28 must be read: “In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.”(SC28) This may, at first sight, seem like a restriction on lay participation in the liturgy. Yet, considering the almost total exclusion from any participation of the laity in the liturgy before Vatican II, SC28 must be regarded as a great opening of the liturgy to the laity. This interpretation is supported by the document itself: “Let provision be made that some sacramentals, at least in special circumstances [...], may be administered by qualified lay persons.”(SC79) Still the problem remains unresolved which parts are proper only to the laity and which only to the ministers. A similar problem arises in SC41: “The bishop is to be considered as the high priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and dependent.”(SC41) If there are parts of the liturgy that are proper to the layperson only, as expressed in SC28, how is it possible that only the faithful are dependent on the bishop as high priest? Why is not the bishop also dependent on the laity?

A careful discussion of these issues is so important because we are dealing here with one of the central aspects of the Church, because “Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations” (SC7) and Christ’s presence is not limited to liturgical celebrations with a priest. Christ is also present in lay congregations.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.4 Lumen Gentium - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

*Lumen Gentium* is not a new dogma. Although “dogmatic constitution” implies that this document is considered as the authentic teaching of the magisterium with the

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<sup>19</sup> To avoid excessive footnotes, all quotations from official documents are given in the text (abbreviation, number). For Vatican documents the standard abbreviations based on the Latin titles are used.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. SC14: “full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else”.

highest doctrinal authority behind it<sup>22</sup>, *Lumen Gentium* is neither infallible nor final doctrine. Yet as the council's dogmatic constitution, it explores the essence of the Church and its universal mission.

The structure of the document is of great importance, particularly the order of the first four chapters. *Lumen Gentium* starts off with a basic description of the mystery of the Church. The second chapter focuses on the People of God as whole. It is only after these fundamental statements that the different groups of the People of God are discussed, in the third the hierarchical structure of the Church, particularly the ministry of bishops, and in the fourth chapter the laity. In other words, *Lumen Gentium* begins with the common ground of all being the Church and unfolds the different ministries therefrom. It must be added that the tone of the first two chapters is distinctively different from the third and fourth chapter. Whereas the document begins with a Scripture based ecclesiology it seems to return to old concepts and methods in chapter III and IV<sup>23</sup>.

According to LG1 the fundament of the Church is Christ. The Church is 'just' a reflection of this light of Christ. Obvious as this may seem, a brief look into history reveals that Christ was not always at the centre of ecclesiological thought.<sup>24</sup>

It is rather telling that throughout the documents of Vatican II and particularly in *Lumen Gentium* the lowest frequency of Biblical references and the highest frequency of references to other church documents and councils is to be found in the passages on hierarchy and papal primacy.<sup>25</sup>

However, the Church is not only a reflection of Christ but also the sacrament of God's Kingdom.<sup>26</sup> As such, it "has received the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom." (LG5). This is why, on the one hand, the Church is an eschatological sign pointing to the coming of God's Kingdom at the end of time. On

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. SC7 & Matt. 18:20.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. KKK, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Antón: "Postconciliar Ecclesiology", 415: "The dynamics of the opposition between sociojuridical, abstract, and apologetic ecclesiology that was prevalent since the time of the counter-Reformation and the new ecclesiology, rooted in Scripture [...] and concerned with communion, which eventually prevailed in the Council, did not make the synthesis hoped for possible. We must acknowledge the ecclesiology of Vatican II [...] presents a certain juxtaposition of both ecclesiological trends, as can be easily seen by comparing the first two chapters of *Lumen Gentium* [...] with the second two [...]."

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Osborne, *Ministry*, 481. "in post-revolutionary papal, curial and episcopal statements, [...] Jesus is not presented as the touchstone of discipleship; loyalty to church leadership is presented as the touchstone."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. LG18-29, in particular LG21 & LG 22, cf. also CD1-6.



the other, it is the Church where this kingdom is to become visible here and now. This teleological framework also sets the agenda for lay participation.

What this kingdom will finally be is beyond explicit description and thus also the Church can only be described in images. Before presenting its own image, *Lumen Gentium* lists the old and well known images of the Church: “sheepfold, [...] the village of God, [...] the building of God, [...] His family; the household of God, [...] the holy temple, [...] the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb”(LG6). The final and central image in *Lumen Gentium* is the pilgrim Church, the pilgrim people of God (cf. LG9).

After this rather general description, the second chapter<sup>27</sup> presents a more detailed picture of the People of God. LG10 probably contains some of the most important sentences of Vatican II, the sentence stating the common priesthood of all Christians:

“The baptised [...] are consecrated as [...] a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness [...]. Therefore all the disciples of Christ [...] should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”(LG10)

This priesthood of all baptised is the common matrix for all Christians. Supported with six references to the New Testament, LG10 states “an apostolate, in which all Christians, whether unordained or ordained, share and share equally.”<sup>28</sup> This common priesthood was the basis for the theology of Vatican II and must consequently be the basis for theology since then. Any view on the role of the laity that tries to go behind this must therefore be rejected.

LG10 also mentions the difference between the priesthood of all and the special priesthood of the ordained clergy:

“Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest [...] teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, [...] in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.”(LG10)

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. LG2-4.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. LG 9-17.

<sup>28</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 557.

One notes that in this second part of LG10 no reference to the New Testament is found.<sup>29</sup> The footnotes only refer to Pius XI and Pius XII. There is quite some emphasis on power and authority. More positively, it shows that the apostolate of the laity and that of the ordained clergy are inseparably linked and interdependent on and of each other. The hierarchy cannot detach itself from the laity and vice versa. It is against this background of the common priesthood as common matrix that *Lumen Gentium*, in the third chapter, describes the hierarchical structure of the Church.

LG19 portrays the Church as being built on the foundation of the Apostles. In LG20 the Episcopate is shown as the successors of the Apostles. The existence of the Church today is proof that in one way or another the work of Apostles has been continued up to the present. However, Osborne reminds us that “from a historical analysis there has never been an immutable definition of ‘episkopos’ within the Christian tradition.”<sup>30</sup>

LG25 deals with the question of infallibility. Here it must be asked how this infallibility ascribed to the pope and to the collegiate of bishops relates to the notion of the Church as whole being infallible.

“The entire body of the faithful [...] cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith when ‘from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful’ they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.” (LG12)

Moreover, this raises the question of how the laity are involved in reaching infallible statements.

*Lumen Gentium* undoubtedly sees bishops as the leaders of the Church. However, they are leaders not as representatives of the pope but as “vicars and ambassadors of Christ” (LG27). They are also called to support the apostolate of the laity and to let the laity support the bishops: “let bishops, therefore, make every effort to have the faithful actively support and promote works of evangelisation and the apostolate.”(CD6)

And: “Finally, the fathers of the council think it would be most advantageous if these same departments [of the curia] would listen more attentively to laymen who are outstanding for their virtue, knowledge, and experience. In such a way they will have an appropriate share in Church affairs.”(CD10)

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<sup>29</sup> In contrast, the early period of Old Testament knows a purely functional and not ontological description of the priesthood which then “was not a state but a function or craft, and that a man was priest not in virtue of any sort of ‘ordination’ but because he was actually exercising priestly functions.” (Cody, *Priesthood*, 59). Does this not question the position expressed in LG10?

<sup>30</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 570. Cf. also 571-574.

The fourth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is completely dedicated to the church's doctrinal view on the laity: "Everything that has been said above concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike. But there are certain things which pertain in a special way to the laity [...] by reason of their condition and mission." (LG30) Although the chapter begins with contrasting the laity with the hierarchy, the attempt to give a positive and affirmative picture of laity is beyond doubt. The laity are said to have their own condition and mission. The novelty of this approach towards laity can only be grasped if LG30 is contrasted with previous ecclesiological documents because these texts "aim more at indicating limits rather than at taking a positive stance in favour of laypersons"<sup>31</sup>.

LG31 tries to answer what precisely this condition and status of the laity is: "The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church." (LG31)

However, Rahner stresses that LG31 is not to be understood as an ontological description of the laity. Rather, LG31 was designed as a 'provisional' definition to be used only in the context of and together with chapter four of *Lumen Gentium*<sup>32</sup>. The main problem with LG31 is that it does not positively say what actually the ontological characteristic of laypeople is. "The theological basis and the details of the tasks of the laity given in the conciliar texts add nothing specific to the status and the tasks that are common to all Christians"<sup>33</sup>. *Lumen Gentium* obviously wants to further the role of the laity but it lacks a clear definition of laity. However, *Lumen Gentium* may not present a clear idea of the ontological and theological status of laity, but it tries to be more explicit about the mission of the laity.

"What specifically characterises the laity is their secular nature. [...] They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and [...] of family and social life [...]. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function [...] they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven." (LG31)

This is more than just a description of the mission of the laity. It also ascribes a place to the laity in the world and in the Church and, thereby, it also sets out to redefine to relation of the Church to world. Church and world are not to be two separate enti-

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<sup>31</sup> Magnani: "Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?", 580.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. KKK, 116: "Artikel 31 versucht eine Definition des 'Laien', die aber die grundsätzliche theologische Frage nicht lösen soll, sondern nur zum Gebrauch in Kapitel IV zusammengestellt wurde." Cf. also Bausenhardt: *Das Amt in der Kirche* (1999), 277f: „So beschränkte man sich auf eine ‚typologische‘ Definition des ‚Laien‘, die deutlich machen sollte, von wem in den Ausführungen – ‚hier (hic)‘ (LG31) – die Rede sein soll.“

ties. The laity are to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular. The laity are to bring the Church into the world and the world into the Church. Yet, engaging in secular affairs is not outside the Church but it is a crucial and essential form of being and living the Church.<sup>34</sup> In other words,

“the lay apostolate is a direct participation in the mission of the Church, and is not simply a participation in the mission of the hierarchy [...]. Therefore, the laity has something also to contribute to the life of the Church and not simply to the transformation of the world in the so-called temporal order [...]. The traditional division of labour – clergy in the ‘sacristy’ and laity in the world – is artificial and even false.”<sup>35</sup>

It goes without saying that this new concept of laity demands not only a re-thinking of the relation of hierarchy and laity but also a new approach to the understanding of clergy. Laity and hierarchy are supposed to support and strengthen each other. They should try to work together in every possible way:

“The laity [...] should openly reveal to them [spiritual shepherds] their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children. [...] The laity should [...] promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church of God and brothers in Christ. [...] Let the spiritual shepherds recognise and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church [...], allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative.”(LG37)

Interestingly, while the content of LG37 suggests somewhat equal collaboration, the terminology of “children” for the laity and “rulers” for the clergy, seems to indicate a strong notion of inequality and subordination.

In addition, *Lumen Gentium* makes it perfectly clear that the final aim of any form of participation must never be personal ambition but the building and strengthening of the Church (cf. LG37).

## 2.5 Apostolicam actuositatem - Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity

In contrast to the two constitutions *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam actuositatem* is ‘only’ a decree, that is a document with not quite as much authority as the constitutions. However, one notes that *Christus Dominus*, dealing with the

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<sup>33</sup> Magnani, “Theological Status?”, 598.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. LG33.

<sup>35</sup> McBrien: “The Church (Lumen Gentium)”, 93.

pastoral office of bishops, is also 'only' a decree. Thus, these two documents have the same status of authority and their contents also should be treated as equally important.

In the first paragraph of *Apostolicam actuositatem* the importance of the lay apostolate is acknowledged: "The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it. Sacred Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the very beginning of the Church (cf. Acts 11:19-21; 18:26; Rom 16:1-16; Phil. 4:3)." (AA1) It should be noted that the lay apostolate is given a proper biblical foundation.

The lay participation is considered of utmost importance, particular as in some parts of the world, due to the lack of priests, the laity are in fact running the Church and are keeping it alive (cf. AA1).

There are another two important aspects in AA1. First, the apostolate of the laity is seen as a work of the Holy Spirit who is "making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances." (AA1) Being the work of the Holy Spirit, the lay apostolate cannot and must not be denied its legitimate position in the Church. Second, as a consequence of this, the fathers of the council saw that this would need a change of the canon law where it touches the issues of lay participation. The new understanding of the lay apostolate, its nature and basic principles, "should be regarded as norms when the canon law, as it pertains to the lay apostolate, is revised." (AA1)

*Lumen Gentium* stated the common priesthood of all baptised. *Apostolicam actuositatem* adds to this the idea of an apostolate of all: "the Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ [...], to enable all men to share in His saving redemption [...]. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate [...]." (AA2) Central for the apostolate of the laity is "their activity directed to the evangelisation and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel." (AA2)<sup>36</sup>

The second chapter describes the objectives of the lay apostolate. Again this is linked with Christ's redemptive work which is proclaimed and carried on in the Church. This is also the framework for the lay apostolate. "In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the Christian laity exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world". (AA5)

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. also AA7.

A tremendously important aspect is mentioned in AA6: "It is especially on this level that the apostolate of the laity and the pastoral ministry are mutually complementary."(AA6) The point of discussion cannot be whether laity or hierarchy are more important but how both can work together to fulfil the mission of the Church.

Chapter III deals with the various fields of the apostolate:

"The laity carry out their manifold apostolate both in the Church and in the world. [...] We wish to list here the more important fields of action, namely, church communities, the family, youth, the social milieu, and national and international levels. Since in our times women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."(AA9)

This may seem just like repetition that the laity find their special vocation in "engaging in temporal affairs"(LG31). Yet, there are two more aspects in AA9. First, AA9 locates the lay apostolate "both in the Church and in the world". Therefore it could be argued that AA9 goes beyond LG31 insofar that AA9 does not limit the lay apostolate exclusively to the secular field. Second, AA9 is one of the very few statements mentioning explicitly women<sup>37</sup>. Above all, it acknowledges the apostolate of women in its own rights. Women are described as equal in the apostolate of the laity without being limited to their role as mother and wife.

AA10 ascribes to the laity a positive and essential role: "Their [the laity's] activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness."(AA10)

On top of that, AA10 points out another dimension of the lay apostolate. It is not limited to some small-scale participation in the individual community, rather the laity should "strive to extend it [their co-operation] to interparochial, interdiocesan, national, and international fields. [...] the daily increase in mobility of populations, reciprocal relationships, and means of communication no longer allow any sector of society to remain closed in upon itself."(AA10) Unfortunately, the document remains rather vague how this national and international participation is to be carried out. It is not clear whether laypeople ought to work in institutions run by the hierarchy or whether the laity is to create a kind of international lay network, or both.

The following article focuses on the apostolate of the married people and families which "is of unique importance for the Church and civil society."(AA11) The document stresses the significance of this apostolate as parents are to be the first cate-

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<sup>37</sup> The index of KKK (p.699) has got only five entries under "woman" for all documents of Vatican II.

chists of children. Here the document indeed illustrates what the concept of the secular nature of the lay apostolate really means: The married people should work

“to ensure the preservation of these rights in civil legislation and to make sure that governments give due attention to the needs of the family regarding housing, the education of children, working conditions, social security, and taxes; and that in policy decisions affecting migrants their right to live together as a family should be safeguarded.”(AA11)

Doubtless, the lay apostolate is to be carried out through participation in society. It is self-evident that this also necessitates an active participation as citizens, such as using the right to vote etc. However, there are also ways of being an active layperson in a closer environment, such as

“the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves better for marriage, catechetical work, support of married couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged”.(AA11)

A decisive aspect of the lay apostolate is mentioned in AA13:

“The apostolate in the social milieu [...] is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others. [...] *For there are many persons who can bear the Gospel and recognise Christ only through the laity who live near them* [my italics].”(AA13)

It is an undeniable fact that many people hardly ever go to church. Thus they encounter the Church only either through the media or through people around them. It is here where each layperson is called to be a witness and to carry out his and her apostolate. Ordained priests hardly have a chance of reaching people that more or less have left the Church. It is where people live and work that the laity “fulfil this mission of the Church in the world especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world”(AA13).

Lay participation is and must be about exercising the apostolate in all aspects of life. This also includes that the laity cannot ignore people who are of a different denomination etc.: “Catholics should try to cooperate with all men and women of good will to promote whatever is true, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever loveable”(AA14). Unfortunately, this ecumenical dimension of the lay apostolate is not unfolded much further, neither here nor in most of the other documents concerning the laity.

Chapter four looks at the various forms of the apostolate: “the laity can engage in their apostolic activity either as individuals or together as members of various groups or associations.”(AA15) While the council obviously acknowledges the right of the laity

to form groups and associations to carry out the apostolate, the decree makes it perfectly clear that the hierarchy wants to remain in control of these lay groups. The laity have only got the right to found groups as long as they are “maintaining the proper relationship to Church authorities”.(AA19)

Chapter five of *Apostolicam actuositatem* deals with aspects of order. Thus, the lay apostolate

“should be incorporated into the apostolate of the whole Church according to a right system of relationships. [...] the spirit of unity should be promoted in order that fraternal charity may be resplendent in the whole apostolate of the Church, common goals may be attained, and destructive rivalries avoided. For this there is need for mutual esteem among all the forms of the apostolate”. (AA23)

Naturally, “destructive rivalries” are to be avoided. However, this is true for the hierarchy no less than for the laity. Interestingly, the following paragraph states that “certain forms of the apostolate of the laity are given explicit recognition by the hierarchy, though in various ways.”(AA24) Again the hierarchy puts itself above the laity. Is this not a position that actually causes the rivalries which are condemned in AA23? In AA24 there seems to be a concept of two lay apostolates. On the one hand, there is the apostolate that has been discussed above. On the other, “the hierarchy entrusts to the laity certain functions which are more closely connected with pastoral duties, such as the teaching of Christian doctrine, certain liturgical actions, and the care of souls. By virtue of this mission, the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical control in the performance of this work.”(AA24) There seems to be two competing concepts of a lay apostolate, one in its own right and the other strictly subordinate within the framework of the hierarchy.

AA25 demands that “special care should be taken to select priests who are capable of promoting particular forms of the apostolate of the laity and are properly trained. [...] they should promote proper relations between laity and hierarchy.”(AA25)

Promoting “proper relations between laity and hierarchy” is open to many different interpretations. These can range from the priest controlling the laity to the priest collaborating with the laity. Nevertheless, it is good that the need is recognised for specialised pastoral care in connection with some aspects of the lay apostolate. However, the specific contents of this care for the laity is not spelt out.

The last chapter of the decree is about the formation for the apostolate. It is not difficult to agree with Rahner that this is probably not the best part of the document.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. KKK, 388.



“The formation for the apostolate presupposes a certain human and well-rounded formation [...]. Well-informed about the modern world, the lay person should be a member of his own community and adjusted to its culture. [...]

In addition to spiritual formation, a solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics, and philosophy adjusted to differences of age, status, and natural talents, is required.”(AA29)

It is positive that the fathers of the council want the laity to be educated for their apostolate. However, in my opinion, AA29 is far too idealistic and unrealistic as to what formation can be achieved simply on practical grounds. Still it is true, particularly for full-time pastoral workers, that “various types of the apostolate demand also a specially suitable formation.”(AA31) AA29 may be too idealistic, yet, without proper training the laity will find it very difficult to carry out its apostolate.

## 2.6 *Gaudium et Spes* - Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

“When the Pastoral Constitution [...] was approved overwhelmingly by the fathers of the Vatican II [...], the council endorsed a document unprecedented in conciliar history [...]. Its unprecedented character derived from the pastoral concerns of the council as originally conceived by John XXIII.”<sup>39</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* is undoubtedly the document of Vatican II. What a novelty this document actually is, can only be grasped if one considers the situation of theology in the years before the council. Thus, Yves Congar was highly criticised and, indeed, silenced for some time for his ideas put forward in *Lay People in the Church*. However, there the issue of the Church in the world and the secular character of the lay apostolate are only of minor importance<sup>40</sup>. *Gaudium et Spes* does not only take up many of Congar’s ideas, it goes far beyond them.

One of the most striking features of the constitution is that it does not only address Christians, but “the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.”(GS2)

This is also reflected in the structure of part I of *Gaudium et Spes* which is divided into four chapters: 1. “The Dignity of the Human Person” (GS12-22); 2. “The Community of Humankind” (GS23-32); 3. “Human Activity Throughout the World” (GS33-

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<sup>39</sup> McDonagh: “The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)”, 96.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Congar: *Lay People in the Church* (1965). Not even twenty percent of this book deal with the issue of the laity in the world. Rather, the world is mostly seen as something that is to be overcome.

39); 4. "The Role of the Church in the Modern World" (GS40-45). One notes that it is only in chapter four that the document talks about the Church. The Church is linked with the whole of humankind. This is clearly a more open vision of the Church. This, however, also implies a new and broader understanding of the catholicity of the Church. There can be no doubt that with this document the church opened the dialogue with those who are not part of it.<sup>41</sup>

Part II, "Some Problems of Special Urgency", is divided into five chapters: 1. "Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and the Family" (GS47-52); 2. "The Proper Development of Culture" (GS53-62); 3. "Economic and Social Life" (GS63-72); 4. "The Life of the Political Community" (GS73-76); 5. "The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations" (GS77-90).

With *Gaudium et Spes*, definitely a new era of theological thought has begun. No other document proposed such a positive, albeit at times almost naïve, view of the world. No longer is the world something that needs to be overcome and transformed. Considering that the laity are viewed as the link between the Church and the world, it therefore seems strange to find in the document a

"drastic reduction to *only six instances* of the term 'layman' in the text [...]. This goes against the current thought of *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam actuositatem* which would have emphasised the reference to the laity precisely in the Constitution that spoke of the relationship between the Church and the world, and thus dealt closely with the area that had formerly been designated as the 'distinctive' sphere of the laity."<sup>42</sup>

Thus Magnani goes on to conclude:

"It is as if the Fathers had realised that the task of ordering temporal things toward God [...] is now seen to be *distinctive of the whole Church and not only of lay people*, or not to be attributed to them exclusively or to an excessive degree."<sup>43</sup>

The intention to open up the Church as a whole to the world is undoubtedly to be welcomed. However, Magnani certainly highlights a crucial problem. If the world is the field for the whole Church, what then is the specific field for the laity?

Apart from these rather general observations it is necessary for the purpose of this thesis to look at some paragraphs in more detail.

GS19 deals with the problem of atheism. One observes:

"believers themselves frequently bear some responsibility for this situation. [...] To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doc-

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. KKK, 425: "Man darf ohne weiteres sagen, daß die Kirche mit diesem Dokument höchstamtlich den Dialog mit denen, die ihr institutionell nicht angehören, aufgenommen hat im Sinn eines echten Dialogs".

<sup>42</sup> Magnani, "Theological Status?", 600.

<sup>43</sup> Magnani, "Theological Status?", 600f.

trine, or are deficient in their religious, moral or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion.”(GS19)

GS19 does not mention the laity explicitly, the reproach applies to clergy and laity alike. Yet, it cannot be missed how closely this is linked to AA13: “For there are many persons who can hear the Gospel and recognise Christ only through the laity who live near them.”(AA13) The task for the laity is not only to fight against atheism but to live in way that does not give other people cause to turn to atheism.<sup>44</sup> It is the lives of the faithful that should be the examples that prevent the spread of atheism. The point is adumbrated in GS28 and GS42. The latter paragraph highlights two aspects. First, it is the Church’s task to take care of those in need. Unquestionably this includes active lay participation. Second, the Church is detached from any existing “political, economic or social system” (GS42). Consequently, the Church has no obligation to be in favour of one system or the other. Hence it can also challenge existing systems by acting as a kind of counter system. Thus, particularly in secular affairs, the laity are not only called to work within already existing frameworks. The laity are also called to stand up against systems that do not further the whole of humankind.

The opening line of GS43 reiterates the importance of the Church being active in the world. In addition, GS43 stresses that Christians are of the world and not of the world at the same time; being a Christian must not be limited to a kind of detached Sunday worship. Every one of the faithful must be a Christian seven days a week. There should “be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties, neglects his duties toward his neighbour and even God [...]”(GS43) GS43 then goes on to emphasise again the mostly secular character of the apostolate of the laity.

“Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen. [...] Laymen should also know that it is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city; from priests they may look for spiritual light and nourishment. Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution [...]. Rather, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role.”(GS43)

Here, rather in contrast to the strong emphasis on hierarchical superiority elsewhere, the document stresses the clergy’s duty to help and support the laity in carrying out their mission. GS43 goes even so far as to admit that the hierarchy is not competent to advise and lead the laity in all fields of their apostolate. Yet, although GS43 gives the

lay apostolate a certain independence not to be found in the other documents of Vatican II, it also again states that secular affairs are not exclusively the field of the laity. This, however, raises again the question whether the 'secular character' can indeed be an adequate criterion for defining laity and for a theology of the laity.<sup>45</sup>

McDonagh's comment on GS43 seems to me just and fair.

"It [GS43] [...] may be insisting on too sharp a distinction between clergy and laity. However, it did help to cope with two traditional difficulties, the tendency of bishops and clergy to interfere improperly in political and social affairs and the tendency of the laity to separate sharply their Sunday worship and their work lives."<sup>46</sup>

Part II of *Gaudium et Spes* turns its attention to "a number of particularly urgent needs characterising the present age [...]"(GS46) This reiterates the strong pastoral character of the council. It also acknowledges the limited validity of the second part. Proper pastoral theology cannot be detached from its particular social and historical context. As Rahner puts it, the document had unavoidably to be imperfect if it was not to become pure doctrine of eternal validity that does not have to say anything to the people within the contexts concerned.<sup>47</sup>

The first chapter about "Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and Family" contains many controversial topics, including the role of women, sexual ethics, and the understanding of the essence of marriage. Although this is not my main focus, there are nevertheless some relevant aspects for the question of lay participation.

The last two decades have seen an increasing number of singles, divorces and one-parent families, besides a greater appearance and acceptance of homosexuality and many other forms of long-term relationships, as well as growing demands for the right of homosexual couples to adopt children and so forth. This surely is a challenge for the Church, clergy and laity alike. Every Christian must face these questions in the case of elections and referendums. However, it is also in everyday life that families have to be supported, which begins with caring about neighbours and so forth. The challenge for lay participation here is obvious.

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<sup>44</sup> cf. above the discussion of 1 Peter 3:12.15.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Bausenhardt, *Ami*, 278: „Der ‚Weltcharakter‘ verliert als Differenzmerkmal in dem Maße an Bedeutung und Plausibilität, als die Kirche die Welt [...] zum Faktor ihrer Selbstbestimmung macht, sich selbst als ‚sacramentum mundi‘ versteht und ihrer Heildienst gerade Weltdienst vollzieht.“

<sup>46</sup> McDonagh, "The Church in the Modern World", 104.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. KKK, 424f: "Wenn Fachtheologen der Konstitution vorwerfen, sie sei 'unausgereift' und 'unvollkommen', so ist damit [...] genau das Richtige gesagt. Ein 'ausgereifter' Text wäre unvermeidlich von jener platonischen Klarheit, prinzipiellen Strenge und ewigen Gültigkeit, die bei einer solchen Thematik dem Menschen nichts sagen."

The next chapter looks at “the Proper Development of Culture”. Again, its vision might be called too optimistic.

“There is an increase in the number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the authors [...] of the culture of their community. Throughout the whole world there is a mounting increase in the sense of autonomy as well as of responsibility. [...] This becomes more clear if we consider the unification of the world and the duty which is imposed upon us, that we build a better world based upon truth and justice.”(GS55)

It seems questionable whether we are indeed moving toward a unification of the world. What is certainly true is the perception of a greater sense of autonomy, at least in the western world. However, the fathers of the council made it quite clear that they want an active participation of every faithful in this process. Thus, it is here that we find one of the few remarks about women that does not see them only as wives and mothers. “Women now work in almost all spheres. It is fitting that they are able to assume their proper role in accordance with their own nature. It will belong to all to acknowledge and favour the proper and necessary participation of women in the cultural life.”(GS60)

The third chapter looks at some aspects of the “Economic and Social Life”. The laity are not explicitly mentioned here. Yet, from its context, there can be no doubt that this chapter sets the agenda for the lay apostolate:

“the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. [...] While a few enjoy very great power of choice, the majority are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in [...] conditions unworthy of the human person. Hence, many reforms in the socioeconomic realm and a change of mentality and attitude are required of all.”(GS63)

Despite further economic and scientific development, these demands are still not fulfilled. If it wants to be faithful its mission, the Church cannot and must not put up with systems that create these social and economic injustices. Engaging with secular affairs, the laity must see themselves as being within as well as outside the economic system around them. Therefore, part of the lay apostolate must be, while working within a given economic system, a rethinking and challenging of precisely this system in order to work toward social and economic justice for all. Thus, “an effort must be made, however, to avoid regarding certain customs as altogether unchangeable, if they no longer answer the new needs of this age. On the other hand, imprudent action should not be taken against respectable customs [...], provided they are suitably adapted to present-day circumstances [...].”(GS69) It is within this framework that proposals from

theologies of liberation must be discussed; that a truly catholic theology of the laity must necessarily also pay attention to the voice of liberative theologies.<sup>48</sup>

Chapter four is closely linked with the previous chapter. This is, however, not surprising, as political and economic structures cannot be completely separated from each other. Every Christian is basically part of two communities, that of the Church and that of the political community wherever he or she lives. Being a Christian is simply incompatible with an absolute individualistic way of life. (cf. GS74) Therefore, “all Christians must be aware of their own specific vocation within the political community.”(GS75)

The fifth chapter, finally, focuses on “the Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations”. This chapter is obviously set against the background of the, then still existing, Cold War. Yet, despite its end, many aspects of this chapter are, unfortunately, still valid and necessary. Thus also the army is a place for the apostolate of the laity. Still, *Gaudium et Spes* does not advocate a theology of a just war but puts its emphasis on the avoidance of conflict. For this, the document outlines some basic requirements and perspectives:

“to build up peace above all the causes of discord among men, especially injustice, which foment wars must be rooted out. Not a few of these causes come from excessive economic inequalities [...]. Other causes of discord, however, have their source in the desire to dominate and in a contempt for persons. And, if we look for deeper causes, we find them in human envy, distrust, pride, and other egotistical passions.”(GS83)

That the laity can and must contribute substantially here to prepare the grounds for peace is obvious. In addition, this shows that a truly proper theology of the laity must be an ecumenical theology as the problems causing war and preventing peace are and have to be faced by Christians, particularly laypeople, of all denominations.

## 2.7 Vatican II – the Foundation for a Global, catholic, and Ecumenical Theology of the Laity?

Vatican II “was the first Ecumenical Council to deal with the position and function of lay people as a dogmatic and pastoral chapter of fundamental significance”<sup>49</sup>. It was certainly the first major step towards a more positive official lay theology. However,

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. the discussion in Part IV.

<sup>49</sup> Magnani, “Theological Status?”, 595.

it must be asked to what extent Vatican II offers a lay theology that is not only official Roman Catholic theology but that also contains potential for being truly positive, global, catholic and ecumenical.

As shown above, the council provided some major new ideas regarding ecclesiology. The image of the "pilgrim people of God" allows a theology which "is set unambiguously in the middle of human history and experience."<sup>50</sup> As Gregory Baum puts it, "the Council moved the Church from a static to a more dynamic self-understanding; the Council recognised God present in history as Voice and Empowerment touching the entire human family"<sup>51</sup>. As a consequence of this, "the postconciliar Church is faced with the problem of distinguishing what is immutable in it from what is mutable, and of maintaining substantial faithfulness to its origins while at the same time remaining open to the circumstances of the historical moment."<sup>52</sup> Still, this problem is outweighed by the advantages of this new ecclesiological position. The Church considers itself no longer "a Church set apart from the world within an institutional Christendom, but a Church that enters into profound solidarity with the experiences of human society."<sup>53</sup> Still it is also here that we have to highlight a serious limitation of the documents of Vatican II which is, particularly noticeable in *Gaudium et Spes*, their "European or first world character. [...] The attention to third-world or second-world situations is [...] merely occasional."<sup>54</sup> In this sense the council's documents have not fully achieved a catholic perspective. Nevertheless, the council brought reforms "that have profoundly changed the way in which the Church thinks of itself and is perceived by others."<sup>55</sup> Undoubtedly,

"it is the Council's stress upon the Eucharist-Church relationship that provides the root for its theology of local churches; wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, there is the Church present [...]. Nothing of this was to be found in mainstream pre-conciliar Roman ecclesiology [...]."<sup>56</sup>

*Lumen Gentium*, in this respect, is certainly one of the great achievements of Vatican II. Particularly the rediscovery, or the newly stated old truth, that the Church is built upon Christ, that the Church is a reflection of the light of Christ, has been of groundbreaking importance for modern ecclesiology. For the council clearly "christology is the

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<sup>50</sup> McDade: "Catholic Theology in the Post-Conciliar Period", 422

<sup>51</sup> Baum: "Faith and Liberation", 75.

<sup>52</sup> Antón, "Postconciliar Ecclesiology", 420f.

<sup>53</sup> McDade, "Post-Conciliar Period", 422.

<sup>54</sup> McDonagh, "The Church in the Modern World", 110.

<sup>55</sup> Kavanagh: "Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)", 71.

<sup>56</sup> Hastings, "Key Texts", 59.

basis of ecclesiology, not vice versa”<sup>57</sup>. Yet, a major problem for lay theology is that this basic concept of the Church is not applied to the discussion of the hierarchy. Generally speaking, “chapter III of *Lumen Gentium* is unaffected by even the main lines of New Testament scholarship regarding the early Church. The chapter assumes, for example, that Jesus gave the company of his original disciples a kind of ecclesiastical blueprint from which they were to build an entire structure.”<sup>58</sup> This resistance to accept the result of modern scholarship does not only weaken the authority of *Lumen Gentium*. It is also damaging to the Roman Catholic Church itself internally and externally. Educated lay-people within the Roman Catholic Church find it very hard to come to terms with an institution using arguments that are simply contrary to known fact. It also does not further ecumenical dialogue.

As shown, *Lumen Gentium* basically operates with two different ecclesiologies simultaneously. The image of the pilgrim people of God did not replace the concept of a strongly hierarchical and clerical church; rather, the council used both concepts side by side. Thus the pastoral necessity of an actively participating laity is acknowledged and favoured while simultaneously there is the attempt to maintain a hierarchical structure that excludes the laity from many aspects of the institutional church. This, so to speak, bifocal approach to lay theology has caused major problems up to the present. Above all, *Lumen Gentium* leaves an essential problem unresolved. There is no final answer

“whether or not [...] the Council gives any truly typological indication [...] of the presumed ‘specific character of the laity’ [...]. [...] we may ask what status and specific theological area should be assigned to a ‘theology of the laity’ that does not come down to a mere collection of pastoral questions.

The lack of any examination of these questions, or the fact of simply taking them for granted without proper consideration, is one of the reasons for the confusion still reigning in the contemporary debate.”<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the documents claim that there is an ontological difference between the “normal” faithful and the ordained priest that “they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree” (LG10). On the other, “the laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; [...] they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.”(AA3) However, it remains unresolved what exactly this ontological difference is. The documents of Vatican II discuss the lay apostolate at length, stating what the laity should do, but they do not answer the question who and what the laity essentially are. As Osborne observes: “the basic inconsistencies of the theological opin-

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<sup>57</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 480.

<sup>58</sup> McBrien, “The Church”, 93.



ions regarding 'ontological difference' prevent a teaching on 'ontological difference' to be the vital or fundamental key in distinguishing ordained baptised Christians from non-ordained baptised Christians."<sup>60</sup>

Hence, the theological basis of Vatican II for the discussion of the apostolate of the laity as opposed to that of the ordained clergy needs to be questioned as well as the implicit and explicit claims of superiority for the hierarchy.

This leads to problems in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* where the more active participation of the laity is recognised as "the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit"(AA1). It seems questionably then why there is the need to stress that the "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule His Church (cf. Acts 20:28) is an essential element of the Christian apostolate. No less necessary is co-operation among various projects of the apostolate which must be suitably directed by the hierarchy."(AA23) To put it in slightly cynical words: is guidance by the Holy Spirit not enough so that supervision and direction by the hierarchy is necessary on top of it? This is certainly not to say that the lay apostolate should be completely detached from the hierarchy. It simply seems odd and contradictory that the hierarchy should always want to control work initiated by the Holy Spirit himself. If the apostolate of the laity was indeed initiated by the Holy Spirit, would this not rather demand co-operation of the laity and the hierarchy based on an equal partnership? For, "if baptised-eucharistic Christians have a mission and ministry given to them by Jesus himself, then there is a certain as yet theologically undefined autonomy to their exercise of this mission and ministry."<sup>61</sup> However, this immediately leads to further question: what is the field, in a way exclusively, proper to the apostolate of the laity?

"In the wake of Vatican II, many lay ministries in the church's liturgy itself are seen as the proper role of the baptised-eucharistic Christian.

There has been, however, a strong move to keep the 'lay' person in the secular area, and this secularity has been proposed as his or her specific difference, [...] as his or her specific mission and ministry within the people of God."<sup>62</sup>

It is the secular area that *Apostolicam Actuositatem* presents, almost exclusively, as the field for the apostolate of the laity. Liturgical participation is hardly mentioned at all. This leads Francine Cardman to the following, rather negative conclusion:

"The council could not conceive of church and world as integrally related. Instead, it had to resort to the laity as the link between world and church, so that the laity

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<sup>59</sup> Magnani, "Theological Status?", 603.

<sup>60</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 581. For the full discussion of this problem cf. pp. 527-581.

<sup>61</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 557.

<sup>62</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 563.

‘consecrate’ the world and ‘infuse it with a Christian spirit,’ while the clergy tend to the church, governing, teaching and sanctifying the faithful. That the pattern of distinguishing church and world [...] should reflect and reinforce the contrast between clergy and laity is, therefore, not surprising.”<sup>63</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is great danger for the hierarchy and the laity, both alike, of falling prey to a fight for power while forgetting their true mission. However, whether the theological position on the laity is indeed as negative as Cardman and Walsh put it, seems doubtful to me. Admittedly, stressing the secular nature of the laity (cf. LG31) omits issues of liturgical participation and problems of leadership. Yet, there is also another view to it. By emphasising the secular nature of the laity, the council makes it perfectly clear that the lay apostolate is far more than participation in liturgy and leadership.<sup>64</sup> By stressing its secular character, lay participation becomes an essential element of the catholicity and universality of the Church’s mission. The Church is not limited only to the sacred but is also particularly and actively present in the secular area. Thus, as long as it is not seen as the exclusive field, the council is right to stress the secular character of the laity.

However, there is a further problem related to this. First, it is questionable whether “secular character” is indeed a category that can be used for a *theological* description, whether it is at all usable and sufficient as a foundation for a theology of the laity. Second, particularly in *Gaudium et Spes*, secular affairs are seen as the field for the whole Church and not only for the laity. Consequently it is rather problematic to use “secular character” as the distinctive element in a theological description of the laity.

In addition, though engaging in secular affairs is certainly a task proper for the laity, it must not devalue or diminish lay participation in liturgy and worship. This is of particular importance in areas where the church is relatively young and where there is still a great need for inculturation. As Kavanagh puts it, the

“recent upsurge in calls for inculturation of Christianity [...] in Africa and the Far East, carries with it anthropological issues not covered by the more usual theological, historical and pastoral approaches. One may anticipate fearsome mistakes being made without some well-learned anthropological lessons being attended to as inculturation proceeds.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cardman: “‘The Church would Look Foolish without Them’: Women and Laity since Vatican II”, 110. Kathleen Walsh notes how crucial the question of power is. Cf. “The Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*)”, 155

<sup>64</sup> Many lay groups, such as the German “Kirchenvolksbegehren” etc., demand more lay participation. However, “more participation” is often demanded only for the field of liturgy. The secular as a field for the apostolate is sometimes not even seen. For me, there is also a need for the laity themselves to rethink what participation indeed is.

<sup>65</sup> Kavanagh, “Liturgy”, 71.

Yet, much of the work involved with inculturation is done by laypeople, as Africa and the Far East are parts of the world with a very small number of ordained clergy. Here it is necessary that the laity really get in involved with liturgy. The laity must not become a victim of "a certain clericalism which has now spread idiosyncrasies to new ranks of lay minister and liturgy committee members."<sup>66</sup> Lay participation should be real participation in its own right. The laity should not be just a substitute for an absent priest nor should they become a kind of pseudo-clergy. It is here that "secular character" can function as a necessary corrective; however, a corrective for laity *and* clergy. "The centre of theology can no longer be the Church's experience of its inner holiness."<sup>67</sup> In this sense, the council certainly has prepared the way for a new way of being the Church and the Church being in the world.

Still, we also see only the beginnings of such a theology. Many problems have not yet been addressed or solved. In summary, Vatican II has not provided a catholic and ecumenical theology of the laity but it has made a substantial contribution towards such a theology.

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<sup>66</sup> Kavanagh, "Liturgy", 72.

<sup>67</sup> McDade, "Post-Conciliar Period", 440.

### 3. Paul VI

#### 3.1 Introduction

Paul VI was pope from 1963 until 1978. He was the pope to conclude Vatican II. Even more important he was the pope during the first years after the council. This was the time of considerable changes in the liturgy, of a growing liberation theology and of new steps in ecumenical dialogues. However, it was also Paul VI who published *Humanae vitae*. Leaving aside the discussion of its contents, the way it came into being showed that laypeople may have become members of councils advising the pope, but the pope still could act against a considerable part of his advisors. Obviously, he was still in a position to act independently in a way that is not free from appearing to be arbitrarily. The debate showed that the role of laypeople in Vatican committees and congregations is still not clearly defined.

Paul VI did not produce any major document dealing specifically with the laity. However, the two encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* contain a number of important aspects that should be considered in this context; not least of all because *Evangelii Nuntiandi* expresses an, at least partly, official Vatican view of base ecclesial communities (BECs).

#### 3.2 Populorum Progressio

*Populorum Progressio*<sup>68</sup> was promulgated on March 26, 1967. It has two major chapters, "I: Man's Complete Development" (POP6-42) and "II: The Common Development of Mankind" (POP43-87). These two headlines suggest that *Populorum Progressio* is addressed not only to Christians but to the whole of mankind. This is also reflected in the opening address that is "To the Bishops, Priests, Religious, and Faithful of the Whole Catholic World, and to All Men of Good Will" (POP1). It is thus made clear that the Church today must have a truly global and, in this sense, catholic vision if it is to be the true Church.

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<sup>68</sup> Paul VI: *Populorum Progressio*. Encyclical on the Development of the Peoples, March 26, 1967. (=POP Number)

As *Populorum Progressio* does not address particularly the laity why should it nevertheless be important for this thesis? The answer is that it deals with issues that Vatican II attributed largely to the laity. It stresses also the need for “concerted action”, that is, of working together and not against each other. It might already at this point be asked whether such a perspective allows maintaining a clear-cut distinction of different realms for the laity and the clergy or whether not a new model of co-operation would be necessary.

The Church obviously has to be in the world and has to act in the world. Yet, it is neither in the world nor of the world that the Church finds her ultimate goal and reason for being. Consequently, for Paul VI, development is not “restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, [...] it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man.”(POP14)

Thus, solidarity of all human beings is essential. “It is not just certain individuals but all men who are called to further the development of human society as a whole. [...] The reality of human solidarity brings us not only benefits but also obligations.”(POP17) Obviously, this issue of solidarity should also be applied to the churches. Therefore, it should be asked whether changes are demanded just for personal ambition or for real progress and development of the Church.

In line with many other Vatican documents, Paul VI then also emphasises that “man is not really himself, however, except within the framework of society and there the family plays the basic and most important role.”(POP36) Thus the family should also be seen, in all its dimensions, as one of the major fields for the lay apostolate.

On a more practical note Paul VI writes: “We certainly rejoice over the fact that an ever increasing number of experts are being sent on development missions by private groups, bilateral associations and international organisations.”(POP71) However, it is not only for the missions that there is a need for experts. It should also be asked to what extent lay experts are to be consulted and taken seriously when it comes to decisions of church leaders.

In POP75, Paul VI expresses his gratitude and appreciation for missionary work done by the laity. This leads to article 80, stating that development is an issue for “every individual and every nation must face up to this issue”(POP80). Turning then to the members of the Catholic Church the document goes on,

“lay people must consider it their task to improve the temporal order. While the hierarchy has the role of teaching and authoritatively interpreting the moral laws [...], the laity have the duty of using their own initiative and taking action in this

area—without waiting passively for directives and precepts from others. They must try to infuse a Christian spirit into people's [...] daily behaviour, into the laws and structures of the civil community.”(POP81)

This paragraph demands an independently and actively acting laity. However, if the laity are not to wait “passively for directives and precepts from others” it means that the laity also have to interpret moral laws and so forth themselves. In other words, the teaching office is the hierarchy’s responsibility but not exclusively theirs.

### 3.3 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*<sup>69</sup> was promulgated on December 8, 1975, that is, in the last years of Paul VI’s papacy. Again, the exhortation does not focus explicitly on the laity. Yet it is about evangelisation and the role every Christian has to play in this mission. In that respect it is of utmost importance for the question of the role and participation of the laity in the context of the mission of the whole Church.

According to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “the Church [...] has had the single aim of fulfilling her duty of being the messenger of the Good News of Jesus Christ”(EN2). Therefore it must be a prime objective “to make the Church [...] ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people”(EN2). According to EN6, this mission of the Church is based directly on the ministry of Jesus himself. The task of evangelising is not only the duty of a few but of every believer in Christ and his Gospel. “Moreover, the Good News of the kingdom [...] is meant for all people of all times. Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must *communicate* and spread it.”(EN13) [My italics]

One notes that Paul VI uses “communicate”. The Gospel cannot be imposed and forced on other people. However, should this not also be reflected in the way teaching and doctrine is spread within the institutional church? Should there not be a greater emphasis on communicating teaching instead of dictating it from the top downwards? In addition, evangelisation is not just an optional choice for the Church. “She exists in order to evangelise [...].”(EN14)

This allows two basic conclusions. First, evangelisation is a task also proper to the laity. It is not reserved for only the ordained ministers. Everybody in the Church

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<sup>69</sup> Paul VI: *Evangelii Nuntiandi. Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World*, December 8, 1975. (=EN Number)

should be an active evangeliser. Though this is not the same as to say that everyone should do exactly the same. Second, if the laity are also to evangelise, they equally have the right, and also duty, to preach, at least to some extent. Evangelisation is certainly outward looking to non-Christians. However, "the Church [...] begins by being evangelised herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, [...] and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love."(EN15)

Now, what exactly is evangelisation? "For the Church, evangelising means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new"(EN18). Yet it would be a too narrow understanding if "all strata of humanity" were taken only in a geographical sense. Evangelisation is also to affect and upset "mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, [...] sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation."(EN19) It is self-evident that such an understanding commissions the laity to become active evangelisers in all aspects of their daily life. However, as the daily life is different for every person, so does evangelisation need inculturation in many different forms. For "the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures."(EN20)

However if evangelisation is to reach into the daily life of the people and peoples, then it is equally necessary that the normal life with all its problems be taken into the Church. Thus liberation from and fight against oppression must be on the top of the agenda for ecclesial activities (cf. EN29&30). However, despite the great importance of liberation and development the Church

"must not ignore the fact that many, [...] who are [...] involved in the problem of liberation, in their wish to commit the Church to the liberation effort are frequently tempted to reduce her mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centred goal; the salvation [...] would be reduced to material well-being."(EN32)

Particularly for the laity this implies that living out the "secular character" must not be detached from its religious foundation and orientation.

In order to be able to achieve these goals, Paul VI stresses there is no perfect system and that any system must be kept dynamic and flexible if it is to serve humans properly. "The Church [...] is conscious that the best structures and the most idealised systems soon become inhuman [...] if those who live in these structures or who rule

them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook.”(EN36) This point should be addressed and taken seriously by the institutional churches themselves, as they are equally not immune towards the danger of becoming such an “inhuman” system.

EN46 then states, “side by side with the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the other form of transmission, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important.”(EN46) Although this section does not mention the laity, it is more than obvious that it is particularly the laity in their daily life who must perform this “person-to-person” evangelisation.

In the context of some ambivalent comments on popular religion. The Pope draws some interesting conclusions:

“Pastoral charity must dictate to all those whom the Lord has placed as leaders of the ecclesial communities the proper attitude in regard to this reality [...]. Above all one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values, be ready to help it to overcome its risks of deviation.”(EN48)

Paul VI uses neither the word hierarchy nor clergy. Taking into account that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* later turns to BECs, it can be assumed that “leaders of ecclesial communities” may well include laypeople, too. Therefore, it could be argued from this section and the context of the rest of document that there might be a legitimate case for, at least some, lay leadership in the Catholic Church.

There can be no doubt that EN58 is among the most important articles for this thesis. EN58 deals with base communities. It begins with acknowledging and also implicitly approving the fact that there is a great variety of such communities. Yet it would be wrong to interpret this as a general and uncritical approval of BECs. Paul VI distinguishes two basic types. First, there are communities that

“come together in a spirit of bitter criticism of the Church, [...] to which they set themselves up in opposition as charismatic communities, [...] inspired only by the Gospel. Thus their obvious characteristic is an attitude of fault-finding and of rejection with regard to the Church’s outward manifestations [...]. By following these lines their main inspiration very quickly becomes ideological, and it rarely happens that they do not quickly fall victim to some political option or current of thought [...].”(EN58)

Such groups are rejected. In Paul VI’s view, these communities

“can well be called *communautes de base*, but in this case it is a strictly sociological name. They could not [...] be called ecclesial *communautes de base* [...]. This name belongs to the other groups, those which come together within the Church in order to unite themselves to the Church and to cause the Church to grow.”(EN58)

The document then presents a list of criteria for a community to be a proper BEC:



- that they seek their nourishment in the Word of God and do not allow themselves to be ensnared by political polarisation or fashionable ideologies [...];
- that they avoid the ever present temptation of systematic protest and a hypercritical attitude, under the pretext of authenticity and a spirit of collaboration;
- that they remain firmly attached to the local Church [...] and to the universal Church, thus avoiding the very real danger of becoming isolated within themselves, then of believing themselves to be the only authentic Church of Christ, and hence of condemning the other ecclesial communities;
- that they maintain a sincere communion with the pastors whom the Lord gives to His Church, and with the magisterium which the Spirit of Christ has entrusted to these pastors;
- that they never look on themselves as the sole beneficiaries or sole agents of evangelisation [...] but [...] accept the fact that this Church becomes incarnate in other ways than through themselves;
- that they constantly grow in missionary consciousness, fervour, commitment and zeal;
- that they show themselves to be universal in all things [...].”(EN58)

Admittedly, a superficial reading of EN58 might leave the impression that it is dominated by a rather restrictive tone. Yet, a more careful reading shows that EN58 is actually very positive about BECs. What is rejected is any tendency that might endanger the unity and mission of the Church. Thus, not critique as such but just a “hypercritical attitude” is rejected. Equally, despite the strong emphasis of unity and the rejection of sectarianism, it is stressed that there is and has to be diversity in the Church. EN58 expects only that the BECs will maintain unity with the pastors of the Church. It does not demand the presence of the clergy in the BECs. In other words, the BECs are indeed a field for the laity.

EN62 then reiterates the need for inculturation. This is undoubtedly of great importance where Christianity is a minority religion. Yet, as Mary Milligan writes: “we might think of ‘inculturation’ as applying especially to Africa, Asia and Latin America [...]. And yet, the question of inculturation, of the relationship of the Gospel and culture, must be addressed in all places where the Christian message is proclaimed and lived.”<sup>70</sup> Likewise, it is essential to reflect how lay participation can be properly inculturated also in the context of a pluralistic first world society.

Thus, a truly evangelising church must always take two aspects into her account: the addressees of the Gospel message and the message itself.

“Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, [...] if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelisation risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it [...].”(EN63)

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<sup>70</sup> Milligan: “Inculturation, Feminism, and the Dialogue with Rome”, 138.

In order that the Church can fulfil her task of evangelisation, the clergy has number of duties. They have

“to proclaim with authority the Word of God, to assemble the scattered People of God, to nourish this People with [...] the sacraments, to set this People on the road to salvation, [...] and unceasingly to keep this community gathered around Christ faithful to its deepest vocation.”(EN68)

Though EN68 certainly expresses the notion of leadership, interestingly, the basic tone is not that of dominating authority but of pastoral care, of a leadership as service to the People of God. EN70 then turns attention to the laity: “Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community - this is the specific role of the pastors - but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world.”(EN70) Again the laity is positioned in the world with the primary task of engaging in secular affairs. Still, it is noteworthy that lay activities in the church are not excluded. EN70 merely states that this is not the primary task for the laity. It does not favour a hermetical separation of the sacred and the secular. Instead the collaboration of the laity and the clergy is approved, appreciated, and emphasised.

“Hence the active presence of the laity in the temporal realities takes on all its importance. One cannot, however, neglect or forget the other dimension: the laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community [...].

We [...] see so many pastors, religious and lay people, [...] seeking ever more suitable ways of proclaiming the Gospel effectively. We encourage the openness which the Church is showing today in this direction [...].”(EN73)

Finally, “the work of evangelisation presupposes in the evangeliser an ever increasing love for those whom he is evangelising.”(EN79) The driving force for the Church and thus also for lay participation must be love and not power and authority.

### 3.4 Comment

Both documents, *Populorum Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, are certainly far from being revolutionary papers. They do not present major new ideas concerning the laity. Nor do they come up with a new ecclesiology. Yet they are still important for their contents, perspective and vision.

Generally, it is to be appreciated that both documents do focus on the mission of the Church and not on the preservation of Church structures. A particular strength of the documents is their attempt to find the correct balance between unity and diver-

sity, and are far from confusing unity with uniformity. By acknowledging this necessary diversity it opens the way to a truly catholic perspective.

There is also clear intention of presenting a truly catholic perspective by turning the attention towards the oppressed and less developed peoples and nations. Equally it is the whole Church that is to evangelise and not just a small elite of some kind or another. Thus, even if the documents do not focus specifically on the mission of the laity, they still make it clear that the laity cannot be excluded. They too are to evangelise.

There is also the clear understanding that development is an issue concerning the whole of the Church. Yet positive as this may be, it somewhat undermines the notion of separating the sacred and secular along the lines of clergy and the laity. Thus it shows once again that 'secular character' is not the most useful way for making the distinction.

In addition, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has unmistakably a very positive, though not uncritical attitude toward BECs. It is clearly expressed that they are not the answer to all the ecclesiological questions of our time. Still, the undeniable importance and success of BECs in the process of evangelisation is acknowledged and appreciated.

All in all, both documents focus on pastoral issues and not on rules of church discipline and their interpretation and application. Consequently, the perspective is hardly backward looking at all. In this respect both documents, particularly *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, have a clear eschatological perspective. Both documents are not dealing explicitly with major lay issues. However, in terms of style, wording and perspective these documents have certainly set a positive example of how issues concerning the laity can be addressed and dealt with.

## 4. John Paul II

### 4.1 Christifideles Laici

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

The “‘Vocation and Mission in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council’ was the topic of the 1987 Synod of Bishops”(CL1)<sup>71</sup>. “At the conclusion [...] the Synod Fathers [...] requested that at an opportune time, a conclusive papal document on the topic of the lay faithful be offered to the Universal Church.”(CL2) *Christifideles Laici* is consequently this requested document.

Furthermore, though the laity have been mentioned elsewhere since the council, *Christifideles Laici* is the first post-conciliar papal document that deals exclusively with the laity. To put the document in the right context, one must remember that it is presented as a result of the 1987 synod of bishops. Yet,

“during [...] the Synod we have not only rejoiced in the participation of the lay faithful [...], but even more so in that the progress of the Synodal discussions has enabled us to listen to those whom we invited, representatives of the lay faithful from all parts of the world, [...] and to profit from their experience, their advice and [...] suggestions [...].”(CL2)

The fact that the laity were present and able to speak at the synod at all is undoubtedly a positive move forward. Yet, it is still nothing more than a beginning. For, despite the fact that this synod was about the laity, the lay representatives were not full participants. It was the synod that “invited” the laity. They were only to give advice and present suggestions. Admittedly, full lay participation at a synod of bishops might be expecting at little bit too much and may be not quite appropriate, as such a synod is, by definition, not a meeting of the lay faithful. However, as the analysis of Vatican II has shown, the lay apostolate touches areas that are beyond the reach of the hierarchy. Thus the question arises whether a synod of bishops is indeed the correct body to discuss the vocation of the laity properly or whether such a topic would not require a different type of assembly, one of clergy and laity together on an equal level.

The basic structure of the document is as follows: Chapter I, “The dignity of the lay faithful in the Church as mystery”, tries to give a description of who and what the laity actually are. Chapter II moves on to “The participation of the lay faithful in the life of the Church as communion”. Chapter III then turns its attention to “The coresponsi-

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<sup>71</sup> John Paul II: *Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici*, December 30, 1988. (=CL number).

bility of the lay faithful in the Church as mission”, highlighting several fields of and for lay participation. Chapter IV, “Good stewards of God’s varied grace”, attempts to sketch out the different groups among the laity and their specific vocations. Finally, chapter V looks at “The formation of the lay faithful” before concluding with the appeal to “take up anew the missionary endeavour”(CL64).

#### 4.1.2 Summary

*Christifideles Laici* lays claims to a biblical foundation for the ideas proposed. Yet, it is rather telling the way Scripture is used. This is most obvious in its opening paragraph.

“THE LAY MEMBERS of Christ’s Faithful People [...] are those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the labourers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel: ‘For the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. [...]’ (Mt 20:1-2).

The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord’s vast vineyard and the multitude of persons [...] who are called and sent forth by him to labour in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. Mt 13:38), which is to be transformed [...] in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.”(CL1)

It must be asked whether it is only the laity who are called to work on God’s vineyard. To put the question the other way round, where, according to this interpretation, is the hierarchy working? In addition, this interpretation of the parable is a rather distorting reading of the text; it is not about who is supposed to do what. The crucial point is that all labourers get the same wage, regardless of how long they actually worked. This way of using Scripture does not help to increase the acceptance of such documents like this.

However, it is important that the necessity of lay participation is acknowledged. “You go too. The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy [...]: laypeople as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.”(CL2)

CL3 repeats the urgent need for active participation of every Christian, for “if lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. [...]

[...] ‘And about the eleventh hour he [...] found others standing; and he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ [...]’ (Mt 20:6-7).

Since the work that awaits everyone in the vineyard of the Lord is so great there is no place for idleness.”(CL3)

The urgency for the laity to participate actively in the Church cannot and should not be denied. Yet, the tone of CL3, with its repeated rejection of idleness, suggests almost that the laity are not willing to participate. However, one is tempted to ask whether it is not often also the hierarchy that in fact prevents the laity from becoming involved. This is not the place for a polemic exchange of commonplaces. Still, if there is a lack of lay participation, it is essential to find the reasons why.

The introduction goes on in CL4 to CL6 to list some of the main problems of our time; first, "Secularism and the Need for Religion"(CL4), then "The Human Person: A Dignity Violated and Exalted"(CL5), and, finally, "Conflict and Peace"(CL6). It is particularly in these fields that the laity are to become active. However, aspects such as the role of the laity within the church, in addition to the laity being the Church when engaging in secular affairs on behalf of the Church, are not mentioned in CL4-6. There is also no reference to lay participation in ecumenical issues.

Chapter I tries to identify and describe who and what the lay faithful actually are. Thus, first of all, CL9 praises the positive tone of Vatican II and that the council asserted "the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery."(CL9) Although this is a positive achievement, it also highlights the scandal that the church took almost two thousand years to get to this assertion.<sup>72</sup> However, *Christifideles Laici* does not provide a new and really positive definition of the laity. It only repeats the definition of LG31, stressing the secular character of the laity. CL9 then turns to baptism as the basis to describe the nature of the lay faithful:

"Incorporation into Christ through faith and Baptism is the source of being a Christian in the mystery of the Church. [...] Therefore, only through accepting the richness in mystery that God gives to the Christian in Baptism is it possible to come to a basic description of the lay faithful."(CL9)

Doubtless, baptism must be considered. More so as "with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, the baptised share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ"(CL13). Yet, baptism is the common matrix for all Christians, laity and clergy alike. Thus, it seems almost impossible to get a description of the specific character of the layperson from this approach. The same can be said for CL10-13.

In line with LG10, CL14 states that "the lay faithful participate [...] in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King."(CL14) What the essence of this participation in Christ's threefold ministry is, is presented only in rather vague terms.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Part I on the history of the laity.

Above all, this participation is again common to all Christians. There is no satisfactory definition of what is proper only to the laity. CL15 tries to solve this problem by stressing the secular nature of the laity.

“But among the lay faithful this one baptismal dignity takes on a manner of life which sets a person apart, without, however, bringing about a separation from the ministerial priesthood or from men and women religious. The Second Vatican Council has described this manner of life as the ‘secular character’: ‘The secular character is properly and particularly that of the lay faithful.’”(CL15)

To say the least, this passage is not without its problems. Here “secular character” is used as the distinction between the laity and the ministerial priesthood. In other words, “secular character” is simply the opposition to being ordained. Yet, the phrase “takes on a manner ... which sets apart” implies a strange line of thought. It sounds as if there were a state of being Christian that is neither clerical nor lay and from which a decision is made in one direction or the other. Yet, is it not more proper to say that all baptised are, first of all, lay faithful and that those who become ordained or enter religious orders set themselves apart from and for the laity? It gets even more complicated further down in the same paragraph: “all the members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension but in different ways. In particular the sharing of the lay faithful has its own manner of realisation and function, which [...] is ‘properly and particularly’ theirs.”(CL15)

If it was left rather unclear what “secular character” might possibly mean, this sentence renders it even more unintelligible. If “secular character” means being in the world, but not only the laity are to be in the world, why and how can it be the significant and decisive character to describe the laity? Consequently, the description of the laity’s position in the Church as being “fundamentally defined by their newness in Christian life and distinguished by their secular character”(CL15) gets in danger of becoming meaningless.

Chapter II begins with a repeated stress that the Church is to be understood as a community, for there is

“a living and life-giving communion through which Christians [...] are the Lord’s very own [...].

From the communion that Christians experience in Christ there immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another: all are branches of a single vine, namely, Christ.”(CL18)

It is only within the framework of communion that one can reflect on the laity’s “mission and responsibility in the Church and in the world.”(CL18)

CL20, then, touches on the sensitive issue of diversity: "Ecclesial communion is [...] at one and the same time [...] characterised by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities."(CL20) Such diversity is most certainly necessary if the Church is to fulfil the manifold tasks of modern times. Yet, a necessary diversity of duties is not to be confused with or to be abused as the foundation of superiority of some duties because "that what distinguishes persons is *not an increase in dignity, but a special and complementary capacity for service.*"(CL20) CL21 then claims to "turn our thoughts to ministries and charisms as they directly relate to the lay faithful and to their participation in the life of Church-Communion."(CL21) However, this paragraph does nothing more than present the lists of ministries and charisms found in 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:7, 11-13, and Romans 12:4-8, only to conclude, "these and other New Testament texts indicate the diversity of ministries as well as of gifts and ecclesial tasks."(CL21) What the specific ministries proper to the laity are, remains unsaid. In this respect, this paragraph is deeply unsatisfactory.

Quite in contrast to this, CL22 makes it perfectly clear, in astonishingly explicit language, that the clergy is still seen as superior: "In a primary position in the Church are the ordained ministries [...]. In fact, [...] the Lord Jesus chose and constituted the apostles - [...] origin of the Hierarchy - to form and to rule the priestly people."(CL22)

It has already been argued above that this understanding of the hierarchy and its foundation is rather problematic. Similarly, it is not easy to see why the "lay faithful, in turn, must acknowledge that the ministerial priesthood is totally necessary for their participation in the mission in the Church"(CL22). This line of argument presupposes that the common priesthood of all is derived from the ministerial priesthood of the ordained clergy. Yet, this is in contradiction to the far more convincing argument that any priesthood is derived directly from the threefold ministry of Jesus Christ.

CL23, then, returns to the position that, "because of their Baptismal state and their specific vocation [...] the lay faithful participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ."(CL23) The exhortation seems to apply a twofold line of thought using in each case what is more suitable, despite obvious contradictions between the two positions.

CL23 also looks into the participation of the laity within the church, particularly in the liturgy:

"the Pastors, [...] can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of Orders. [...] However, the exercise of such tasks does not make Pastors of the lay faithful:



in fact, a person is not a minister simply in performing a task, but through sacramental ordination.”(CL23)

Yet, the question must be asked if performing a ministry is not a ministry what is it then? Moreover, the document goes on to say that “the liturgical celebration, in fact, is a sacred action not simply of the clergy, but of the entire assembly. It is, therefore, natural that the tasks not proper to the ordained ministers be fulfilled by the lay faithful.”(CL23)<sup>73</sup>

This positive acknowledgement of lay participation, however, is immediately followed by the discussion of the dangers of this development; “the tendency towards a ‘clericalization’ of the lay faithful and the risk of creating, in reality, an ecclesial structure of parallel service to that founded on the Sacrament of Orders”(CL23) and an “abusive recourse to a presumed ‘situation of emergency’ or to ‘supply by necessity’”(CL23). It seems like an expression of fear about the possibilities the exhortation itself has opened. Admittedly, there might be the tendency among some laypeople to adopt a kind of pseudo-clerical attitude. Yet, this is outweighed by far by the gains from proper lay participation in the liturgy. Besides, there is hardly any part of the world where there is an oversupply of ordained clergy. Thus the argument of abusing the “situation of emergency” seems not really justified.

Following chapter IV of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, CL28&29 state that laypeople can participate in the Church either as individuals or as groups. CL30 offers some “‘Criteria of Ecclesiality’ for Lay Groups”:

- The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness [...].
- The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church’s Magisterium [...].
- The witness to a strong and authentic communion in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible centre of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, [...] and in ‘mutual esteem for all forms of the Church’s apostolate’.”(CL30)

Again, these criteria favour an image of Church that is dominated by a strong hierarchy and the demand of a “filial relationship to the Pope” expresses a supposed superiority of the hierarchy. Yet, if the laity are full members of the Church and have an apostolate in their own right, should the communion with the pope not be expressed differently?

Chapter III discusses “The Coresponsibility of the Lay Faithful in the Church as Mission”. CL34 expresses concern about the growing need to re-evangelise many, pre-

viously Christian, countries. The laity's "responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response [...] to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society."(CL34)<sup>74</sup> This is certainly a major task for the laity. However, the document goes on to say that the re-evangelisation "will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life"(CL34). Admittedly, this is an essential prerequisite for a successful mission. Within the paragraph, one gets the impression that this "separation" is one of the main reasons for the need to re-evangelise. Yet, it is certainly not correct to put all the blame on the laity.

"The Church is called [...] to serve all humanity."(CL36). Thus, the laity are obliged "to work towards the Christian animation of the temporal order."(CL36) Some of the areas to carry out this obligation are listed in CL37-44. According to CL37, "to rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person makes up an essential task [...] of the service which the Church, and the lay faithful in her, are called to render to the human family."(CL37) Hand in hand with the dignity of every person goes the "inviolability of human life"(CL38), and that laity, "having responsibility in various capacities and at different levels of science as well as in the [...] legislative and economic fields must *courageously accept the 'challenge' posed by new problems in bioethics.*"(CL38)

The chapter finishes with a call to the laity to participate in the necessary transformation of culture for an increasing realisation of God's kingdom. (cf. CL44) This is certainly a task requiring active lay participation. Yet, it definitely demands also a careful and sensitive handling as it contains the danger of intolerance and arrogance towards other cultures, particularly when they are connected to another religion. Respect for other cultures and for religious freedom is absolutely essential.

Chapter IV explores the variety of vocations of several groups among the laity, which are "not only linked to age, but also to the difference of sex and to the diversity of natural gifts, as well as to careers and conditions affecting a person's life."(CL45) The chapter begins with "Young People, Children and Older People": "Young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelisation and participants in the renewal of society. Youth is a time of an especially intensive discovery of a 'self' and 'a choice of life'."(CL46)

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. also SC28.

<sup>74</sup> Besides, this also raises questions of tolerance and respect for other religions.

Though correct in theory, in reality CL46 presents a far too idealistic and too western image of youth. For most of the young people in third world countries there is not much of a choice. Their lives are dominated by the daily struggle to survive. A similar comment might be made about its attitude to children and the elderly.

The second major part of chapter IV is on men and women. CL49 acknowledges the "indispensable contribution of women to the building up of the Church and the development of society"(CL49) and "the urgency to defend and to promote the personal dignity of woman, and consequently, her equality with man."(CL49) However, it seems doubtful that "if anyone has this task of advancing the dignity of women in the Church and society, it is women themselves"(CL49). This position has to be questioned, because it is often not a question of the women not wanting to participate but the men not letting them participate. This is tellingly illustrated in the same paragraph, when the document acknowledges the positive participation of women throughout history<sup>75</sup> while at the same time repeating their exclusion from ordination. A demand for full and active participation of women that is immediately followed by such a restriction of precisely this participation is not necessarily most convincing.

The document then lists some examples for women's participation such as

"women on diocesan and parochial Pastoral Councils as well as Diocesan Synods and particular Councils. [...]"

In the more specific area of evangelisation and catechesis the particular work that women have in the transmission of the faith, not only in the family but also in the various educational environments, is to be more strongly fostered."(CL51)

These certainly are some positive opportunities for an active participation of women. Thus it becomes even more difficult to understand why, "while she is to fulfil her duty to evangelise, woman is to feel more acutely her need to be evangelised."(CL51) Is a laywoman less Christian or less Church than men? Finally, two central tasks for women are listed: "first of all, the task of bringing full dignity to the conjugal life and to motherhood. [...] Secondly, women have the task of assuring the moral dimension of culture, the dimension, namely of a culture worthy of the person, of an individual yet social life."(CL51) While the first task again stresses the old ideal of women as wives and mothers, it is unintelligible what the specific feminine dimension of the second is to be.

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<sup>75</sup> "Both in her earliest days and in her successive development the Church [...] has always known women who have exercised an oftentimes decisive role in the Church herself and accomplished tasks of considerable value on her behalf."(CL49)

It might be asked whether this is not a too positive and apologetic reading of history.

Discussing issues concerning “The Sick and the Suffering”, the document presents Paul as an example to be followed:

“The words of the apostle Paul ought to become their approach to life or, better yet, cast an illumination to permit them to see the meaning of grace in their very situation: ‘In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church’ (Col 1:24). Precisely in arriving at this realisation, the apostle is raised up in joy: ‘I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake’ (Col 1:24). In the same way many of the sick can become bearers of the ‘joy inspired by the Holy Spirit in much affliction’ (1 Thes 1:6) [...]”(CL53)

With all due respect to a theology of the cross, to speak of the “joy of suffering” is bordering the perverse.<sup>76</sup> The misquotation of Colossians 1:24 does not further the force of the argument. In Colossians 1:24, Paul is not speaking of illness and disability but of suffering as a result of persecution due to his missionary work. In my view, this argument of CL53 has to be rejected not only for its contents but also for its questionable use of scripture. Similarly, CL54 does not refrain from repeating a dangerously positive attitude towards suffering. I am definitely not advocating the opinion that the sick and suffering are useless to society. Yet, the above interpretation of sickness and suffering is a eulogy of pain that is too detached from the reality of those who experience pain and suffering and so cannot but adversely affect the work of the laity, for example doctors and nurses.

It is easier to agree with the second half of CL53 which reminds the laity of their commitment in the caring for the sick and suffering. Such care, so CL54, must also include pastoral activities “capable of sustaining and fostering attention, nearness, presence, listening, dialogue, sharing, and real help toward individuals in moments when sickness and suffering sorely test not only faith in life but also faith in God”(CL54).

Chapter IV finishes with a paragraph on “The States of Life and Vocations”, putting great emphasis on the difference and, at the same time, interrelation between each state of life and its proper vocation.

“Thus the lay state of life has its distinctive feature in its secular character. It fulfils an ecclesial service in bearing witness and, in [...] recalling [...] the significance of the earthly and temporal realities in the salvific plan of God. In turn, the ministerial priesthood represents [...] the permanent guarantee of the sacramental presence of Christ [...]”(CL55)

It may be linguistically knit picking, yet, it should be noted that for the laity only an “ecclesial service” is mentioned whereas the ordained priesthood is ascribed the representation of “the permanent guarantee of the sacramental presence of Christ”. This

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. also the problematic claim of CL47 that the suffering of children is “a source of spiritual enrichment for them”.

appears to me as an expression of an image of Church where the hierarchy is clearly dominant.

Finally, Chapter V explores "The Formation of the Lay Faithful in the Lay State". The opening paragraph says, "in this dialogue between God who offers his gifts, and the person who is called to exercise responsibility, there comes [...] the necessity, of a total and ongoing formation of the lay faithful"(CL57). Nonetheless, however, this need for learning and changing should be applied to every Christian, clergy and laity alike. The same applies to the following paragraph: "The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfil one's mission."(CL59) Every Christian, not only the laity, must daily discover and re-discover his or her true vocation. This is true for every stage of life, disregarding gender, age, or race.

CL61 explores the formation of the laity in a little bit more detail.

"God is the first and great teacher of his People [...].  
[...] The lay faithful are formed by the Church and in the Church in a mutual communion and collaboration of all her members: clergy, religious and lay faithful."(CL61)

The paragraph goes on to unfold how the sentence above is to be understood:

"First of all the Church is a teacher, in which the Pope takes the 'primary' role in the formation of the lay faithful. [...] Therefore, not simply the words coming directly from him, but also those transmitted by the various departments of the Holy See call for a loving and receptive hearing by the lay faithful."(CL61)

Likewise, the bishops are presented as the main teachers of faith in their dioceses. (cf. CL61) Admittedly, further down CL61 allows for some contribution to this formation by the laity themselves. Still, their formation is to take place almost exclusively within the framework of the hierarchical structure of the church and under the supreme authority of the pope. However, this poses a major problem as Vatican II had acknowledged that the lay apostolate is partly also outside the hierarchy. How is the formation for these areas to fit into the framework outlined above? How is the above concept of an obvious superiority of the hierarchy to be compatible with an apostolate of the laity in its own right? This concept of formation shows clearly that the question of who the laity are and where they are in the Church is still unanswered.

The document concludes that

"while this 'Christian *newness of life*' given [through Baptism] to the members of the Church, constitutes for all the basis of their participation in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ [...], it receives expression and is fulfilled in the lay faithful through the 'secular character' which is 'uniquely and properly' theirs."(CL64)

Again, this conclusion expresses the need for an active participation of the laity. Yet the theological basis for such participation and the essential understanding of laity cannot be seen as satisfactorily answered and expressed. Theologically *Christifideles Laici* is far from being “a conclusive [...] document on the topic of the lay faithful”(CL2).

## 4.2 Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Quite a different type of document is the *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*<sup>77</sup>. Concerning its authority, it is not on the same level as the documents of Vatican II or *Christifideles Laici*. Nevertheless, it must be considered, as it is a very recent Vatican statement on the laity. Even more so, as it indicates a somewhat changed attitude towards the laity.

“The scope of this present document is simply to provide a clear, authoritative response to the many pressing requests [...] seeking clarification in the light of specific cases of new forms of ‘pastoral activity’ of the non-ordained on both parochial and diocesan levels.”(IQC, Premise)

The *Instruction* has two main parts. First, it lays down theological principles for the relation of the common priesthood of all believers and the ordained priesthood. It then presents some “Practical Provisions” how those principles are to be applied.

### 4.2.2 Summary

First of all, it must be noted that this *Instruction*, although it discusses issues affecting lay participation, is not addressed to the laity. “This text [...] is entrusted for its faithful application, first of all to the Bishops most affected by the issues raised.”(IQC, Premise) If the laity are expected to collaborate with the hierarchy, should not they then be included in documents like this? This non-inclusion in the address seems to suggest that the laity are still seen as the object of the hierarchy rather than the subjects of their own apostolate.

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<sup>77</sup> John Paul II: *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest*, August 15, 1997. (=IQC, section & number).

Before analysing the document in some detail, there is a general observation to make. The *Instruction* is quite different from *Christifideles Laici* in style and tone. Indeed, it is even more different when it comes to references. In the text and the footnotes, there are more than sixty references to the CIC, twenty-seven to documents by John Paul II, twenty-six to other Vatican documents, twenty-four to Vatican II, and only nine to the New Testament. This clearly shows that here lay participation within the Church is obviously considered less a theological issue but far more an issue for Canon Law. In addition, the *Instruction* uses the New Testament hardly at all; it is basically a declarative application of the CIC. Yet, if there were more scriptural based arguments, it would make ecumenical disputations far easier.

The *Instruction* begins with stating the importance and necessity of lay participation. (cf. IQC, Premise) Actively participating laypeople are and must be an integral part of the Church. The Church is not Church without the laity. Quoting the 1987 Synod of Bishops the *Instruction* goes on:

“The Holy Spirit [...] has inspired new aspirations towards holiness and the participation of so many lay faithful. This is witnessed, among other ways, in the new manner of active collaboration among priests, religious and the lay faithful; by active participation in the Liturgy [...] and catechesis.”(IQC, Premise)

Yet, despite this assertion of lay participation in liturgy and so forth, the *Instruction* immediately goes on to repeat that “the priority of the task of the New Evangelisation [...] requires that, today in particular, [...] there be also a full recovery of the awareness of the secular nature of the mission of the laity.”(IQC, Premise) What remains unclear is the meaning of “a full recovery”. Considering the rest of the document, as the analysis will show, this must be interpreted as accusing the laity of forgetting the secular nature of their mission and of trying to take over tasks reserved for the clergy. Hence, the basic intention is not to further lay participation but to restrict it. Thus, the document is very keen to stress that various forms of lay participation are only permissible in the case of an extreme shortage of sacred ministers.

“It must be noted [...] that in many Particular Churches the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the pastoral ministry of the clergy has developed in a very positive fashion. [...] In situations of emergency and chronic necessity [...], some of the faithful, despite lacking the character of the sacrament of Orders, have acted appropriately and within their proper limits, in dealing with these realities.”(IQC, Premise)

Undoubtedly, the laity should assist and help where there is a shortage of ordained ministers. However, lay participation cannot be limited only to these cases. They must be considered alongside with lay participation under “normal” circumstances. Lay

participation must not be reduced to fill the gaps of ordained ministers. Yet, the *Instruction*, instead of suggesting proper forms for lay participation, takes the negative approach by stressing the need for limitation because of supposed abuses (cf. IQC, Premise).

This introductory premise is followed by an outline of the basic theological principles underlying the *Instruction*. First, it looks at “The Common Priesthood of the Faithful and the Ministerial Priesthood”. Acknowledging baptism as the common basis and accepting the common priesthood of all faithful, the document sets out to highlight the difference between this and the ministerial priesthood: the

“diversity exists at the mode of participation in the priesthood of Christ and is essential in the sense that ‘while the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace, [...] the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood... and directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians.’”(IQC, Principles 1)

This understanding of priesthood may be accepted or not. However, it is not easy to see, why it follows from the above quoted position that “the ministerial priesthood ‘differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful.’”(IQC, Principles 1) This first paragraph finally describes the basic characteristics of the ministerial priesthood as follows:

“a) the ministerial priesthood is rooted in the Apostolic Succession, and vested with ‘potestas sacra’ consisting of the faculty and the responsibility of acting in the person of Christ [...].

b) it is a priesthood which renders its sacred ministers servants of Christ and of the Church by means of authoritative proclamation of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments and the pastoral direction of the faithful.”(IQC, Principles 1)

Considering the striking emphasis on power and authority for the ministerial priesthood, one is tempted to ask whether the position presented is really intended to serve the mission of the Church or whether it is simply to justify a strong and dominating clergy. Under the headline of “Unity and Diversity of Ministerial Functions”, the *Instruction* goes on to develop and unfold further the understanding of the ordained ministry (cf. IQC, Principles 2). Yet again, the focus is not the way in which the laity can participate in this ministry and support it but how and why their participation should be restricted, particularly where the laity were given special rights due to the lack of priests. These restrictions are supposedly necessary because “in some instances, such [special rights] have given rise to an idea of the common priesthood of the faithful which mistakes its nature and specific meaning. Amongst other things, it can encourage a reduction in vocations to the (ministerial) priesthood [...].”(IQC, Principles 2) Maybe, some laypeople have a wrong conception what their proper participation should and could be.



However, blaming them for decreasing numbers of ordinands is a non-sustainable conclusion. This problem is far more complex than that.

Finally, before turning to practical provisions, the *Instruction* asserts that the CIC regulates the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the pastoral ministry. (cf. IQC, Principles 4) Yet again, instead of dealing with the positive aspects of these possibilities, the *Instruction* talks about avoiding as well as eradicating “situations of abuse and disciplinary irregularity in pastoral practice”(IQC, Principles 4). The tone of this paragraph almost suggests seeing the laity not as a supporting element of the Church but almost as a threat to it. The theological principles at the beginning of this instruction are far from encouraging laypeople to become more actively involved. The tone almost insinuates that there is a desire to reduce the participation of the laity.

The section on practical provisions begins with a discussion of the need for an appropriate terminology. The problem, so the *Instruction*, is that

“for some time now, it has been customary to use the word ministries not only for the officia (offices) and non-ordained (functions) munera exercised by Pastors in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, but also for those exercised by the lay faithful in virtue of their baptismal priesthood.”(IQC, Article 1)

A terminological clarification might be useful to gain better understanding of the issues involved. However, is it not also possible, that this is actually not a problem of terminology? Could the reason for this “confusion” not be that the common and the ordained priesthood cannot be as clearly distinguished from one another as the Vatican authorities would like to have it; that the two priesthoods are far more interwoven than the document suggests and allows? However, the *Instruction* is obviously more concerned with its own conclusion that the “temporary deputation for liturgical purposes [...] does not confer any special or permanent title on the non-ordained faithful.” (IQC, Article 1)

Article 2 focuses on the ministry of the word. Right at the beginning it reaffirms that the exercise of this ministry “its respective functions is properly that of the Bishop of each particular Church since he is the moderator of the entire ministry of the Word in his Diocese and it is also properly that of his priests who are his collaborators.”(IQC, Article 2) Nonetheless, the *Instruction* allows a lawful participation of the laity in this ministry. However, under normal circumstances they do not have the right to preach. “Preaching [...] by the non-ordained faithful can be permitted only as a supply for sacred ministers or for those particular reasons foreseen by the universal law of the Church [...]”(IQC, Article 2).

This issue is discussed further in Article 3, which declares unmistakably that “the homily [...] during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist must be reserved to the sacred minister, Priest or Deacon to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful”(IQC, Article 3). Yet, “this exclusion is not based on the preaching ability of sacred ministers nor their theological preparation, but on that function which is reserved to them in virtue of having received the Sacrament of Holy Orders.”(IQC, Article 3) This argument is certainly in line with the general logic of the document. However, in my view, the question of preaching ability is discarded too easily. Still, despite this strict exclusion of the laity from preaching, the *Instruction*, in a rather vague definition, permits some lay participation: “A form of instruction designed to promote a greater understanding of the liturgy, including personal testimonies, [...] is lawful [...]”(IQC, Article 3)

Article 4 is about the “Parish Priest and the Parish”. Again, the emphasis is on the exclusion and not on the involvement of the laity. “Indeed, the office of Parish Priest can be assigned validly only to a priest (cf. Canon 521, § 1) even in cases where there is a shortage of clergy.”(IQC, Article 4) In case of extreme shortages there is the possibility for the laity of “*participatio in exercitio curae pastoralis* and not directing, coordinating, moderating or governing the Parish; these competencies [...] are the competencies of a priest alone.”(IQC, Article 4) Yet, it is stressed again that these are provision only “*ob sacerdotum penuriam* and not for reasons of [...] ‘advancement of the laity’, etc.”(IQC, Article 4).

Article 5 tries to outline “The Structures of Collaboration in the Particular Church”. First of all, it declares that in the Council of Priests there are no non-ordained people. Then it goes on, “diocesan and parochial Pastoral Councils and Parochial Finance Councils, of which non-ordained faithful are members, enjoy a consultative vote only and cannot in any way become deliberative structures.”(IQC, Article 5) It is questionable why though, for example, in Parochial Finance Councils the laity should have only a consultative vote. Is it not quite likely that a number of laypeople in these committees are more competent in financial matters than the presiding priest? The *Instruction* then declares that “it is for the Parish Priest to preside at parochial councils.”(IQC, Article 5) Again, rules and hierarchical power structures are put above pastoral needs and questions of competence.

Article 7 states that “in some places in the absence of priests or deacons, non-ordained members of the faithful lead Sunday celebrations.”(IQC, Article 7) It should be noted that it only states “lead” and not “may lead”. Thus it is not absolutely clear

whether Article 7 is only describing the current situation or whether this is supposed to be a permission of such celebrations. However, it is strongly emphasised that “such celebrations cannot substitute for the eucharistic Sacrifice and that the obligation to attend mass on Sunday [...] is satisfied only by attendance at Holy Mass.”(IQC, Article 7) Unfortunately, the document fails to acknowledge that for a great number of people there is no possibility to fulfil this obligation, that such celebrations lead by laypeople are the only ones offered. Again a legal view dominates over pastoral needs.

In this context, Article 8 turns its attention to the “Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion”. The *Instruction* does not deny the possibility for laypeople to act as extraordinary ministers. Yet again, the main concern is that of stating the limits for this ministry.

“certain practices are to be avoided and eliminated where such have emerged [...]:  
— extraordinary ministers receiving Holy Communion apart from the other faithful as though concelebrants; [...]  
— the habitual use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass thus arbitrarily extending the concept of ‘a great number of the faithful.’”(IQC, Article 8)

Similarly, the *Instruction* allows in the absence of a priest and only within strict boundaries the laity “to assist at marriages”(IQC, Article 10) and “to afford the Sacrament of Baptism”(IQC, Article 11). Article 12, on funeral services, comes to a similar conclusion.

“It is thus desirable that Priests and Deacons [...] should preside personally at funeral rites [...], so as to pray for the dead and be close to their families, thus availing of an opportunity for appropriate evangelisation.  
The non-ordained faithful may lead the ecclesiastical obsequies provided that there is a true absence of sacred ministers and that they adhere to the prescribed liturgical norms.”(IQC, Article 12)

It is well worth noting that Article 12 is one of the few instances where the *Instruction* actually uses a pastoral and not a legalistic argument. In the conclusion, the document declares that its object is

“to outline specific directives to ensure the effective collaboration of the non-ordained faithful [...] while safeguarding the integrity of the pastoral ministry of priests. ‘It should also be understood that these clarifications and distinctions do not stem from a concern to defend clerical privileges but from the need to be obedient to the will of Christ, and to respect the constitutive form which he indelibly impressed on his Church’”(IQC, Conclusion).

Not only is the essence and contents of this “constitutive form” disputable, but in the light of the “arguments” of this document this conclusion does not sound convincing. Above all, the *Instruction* indicates a legalistic understanding of the laity which is anything but a positive lay theology.

## 4.3 CIC (Codex Iuris Canonici)

### 4.3.1 Introduction

It is not the aim of this thesis to provide a comprehensive analysis of the CIC. Yet, the *Code of Canon Law*<sup>78</sup> is so closely linked with Vatican II that it cannot be ignored.<sup>79</sup> The “Promulgation” of the CIC unmistakably depicts the Church as “ecclesia semper reformanda”. “Over the course of time, the Catholic Church has been wont to revise and renew the laws of its sacred discipline so that [...] these laws may be truly in accord with the salvific mission entrusted to the Church.”(CIC, Promulgation)

The emphasis on the church as a dynamic entity that is to be adapted to changed and changing situations is obviously a reflection of the Council’s concept of the Church as the pilgrim people of God. As it is built upon a dynamic image of the Church, the CIC itself must be understood as a document that is subject to change.

It is of utmost importance to bear in mind that the CIC is less a theological document than a set of rules for ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>80</sup> Still, the discipline put forward in the CIC allows insight into the ecclesiology lying behind it.

As I have shown, *Lumen Gentium* presents two ecclesiologies. The CIC does not solve this problem, it just uses both concepts. The claim is that the new code is based on the teachings of Vatican II, such as the “teaching by which all members of the People of God share [...] in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, with which teaching is associated also that which looks to the duties and rights of Christ’s faithful and specifically the laity”(CIC, Promulgation). The “Promulgation” distinguishes between the “faithful” and the “laity” without explaining what this difference should be. In contrast, the documents of Vatican II use “faithful” and “laity” as interchangeable terms. This clearly indicates that there is still a need for a fundamental description or definition of the laity.

In the opening line, the Promulgation speaks to “Our Venerable Brothers the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons and to the other members of the People of God”(CIC, Promulgation). It should be asked why this document gives a detailed list of the clergy while the laity together with the religious are just mentioned as

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<sup>78</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, promulgated January 25, 1983. (=CIC, can.).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Part II, section 2.2.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Osborne, *Ministry*, 46.

the “other members”. To a layperson this sounds like “and the rest”, even more so, as apparently only the ordained clergy are called “brothers”.

### 4.3.2 Summary

The most relevant canons concerning the laity are in “Book II: The People of God”. Part I (of Book II) looks at Christ’s faithful. It begins with the obligations and duties of all Christ’s faithful followed by the obligations and duties of the lay members of Christ’s faithful. The final section of Part I is on the sacred ministers. Part II discusses the hierarchical constitution of the Church. In other words, the code begins with a description of the common matrix of all believers, and only then focuses on the different groups of the faithful.

“Christ’s faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ through baptism, are constituted the people of God. For this reason they participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world.”(CIC, Can.204 §1)

As all faithful through baptism share in the threefold ministry of Christ there is consequently “a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ’s faithful. Because of this equality they all contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ.”(CIC, Can. 208). In addition, this equality extends not only to a common baptismal dignity but to a common call of all faithful to fulfil the vocation of the Church.<sup>81</sup>

Yet, can. 208 is not free from ambiguity, particularly when seen in the context of can. 207: “By divine institution, among Christ’s faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics - the others are called lay people.”(CIC, can. 207 §1) Can. 207 §1 is certainly positive when it states that the ordained ministers are “among” and not above the people of God.<sup>82</sup> Problems are caused by the second half of the sentence that, rather negatively, labels the laity simply as the “others”, the rest, thus

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Demel: “Statisten oder Protagonisten? Die Rechtsstellung der Laien auf dem ekklesiologischen Prüfstand”, 98: „Die fundamentale Gleichheit unter allen Gläubigen bezieht sich somit nicht nur auf die eine gemeinsame Taufwürde, sondern auch auf die eine gemeinsame Tätigkeit, nämlich den Sendungsauftrag der Kirche zu erfüllen.“

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Demel, “Statisten”, 98: „Die geistlichen Amtsträger bzw. Kleriker sind geweihte bzw. ordinierte Gläubige; sie stehen nicht über den anderen Gläubigen und diesen gegenüber, sondern gehen aus der Gemeinschaft aller Gläubigen hervor. Deshalb spricht c.207 §1 davon, dass es ‚unter den Gläubigen‘ geistliche Amtsträger gibt. Diese Formulierung hebt die fundamentale Gleichheit aller Glieder hervor, die trotz der Unterscheidung zwischen Klerikern und Laien nicht aufgehoben ist.“

insinuating almost that the clergy are more important than the laity.<sup>83</sup> In other words, “the laity are still ‘other’, their contribution to the building up of the Body of Christ, by implication is not of ‘divine institution’ nor is it ‘sacred’. The laity are defined, not definers, and this seriously limits the concept [...] of ‘genuine equality of dignity and action’.”<sup>84</sup> All in all, can. 207 §1 does not present any truly positive contents towards the definition of the laity; rather the term “laity” just serves to state borders and differences between groups.<sup>85</sup>

This ambiguity regarding equality becomes most obvious in can. 212: “Christ’s faithful, conscious of their own responsibility, are bound to show Christian obedience to what the sacred Pastors, who represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith and prescribe as rulers of the Church.”(CIC, can. 212 §1) Although can. 208 – 223 have the headline “The Obligations and Rights of All Christ’s Faithful”, in can. 212, quite in contrast to the definitions of can. 204 and can. 208, the faithful are described here as a group opposite and subordinate to the pastors. Obviously, the CIC is operating here with two concepts of the term “faithful”. This distinction between faithful and pastor/church authority is also maintained in the can. 213 – 216 and in can. 221 – 223. Again, this shows that the terms “laity/faithful/ministers” are still not satisfactorily defined and, above all, that there is still a big gap between the theory of inner ecclesial equality and its realisation.

According to can. 221,

“§1 Christ’s faithful may lawfully vindicate and defend the rights they enjoy in the Church, before the competent ecclesiastical forum [...].

§2 If any members of Christ’s faithful are summoned to trial by the competent authority, they have the right to be judged according to the provisions of the law, to be applied with equity.”(CIC, can 221)

This paragraph appears like the guarantee of a fair trial. However, as B.Quelquejeu points out, this is not the case for the code of procedure of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; actually it “explicitly contradicts a substantial number of the inalienable rights universally recognised by contemporary societies as guarantees of a fair trial before an impartial tribunal.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Demel, “Statisten”, 98: „In Widerspruch dazu [i.e. the first half of can.207] steht aber der zweite Halbsatz, in dem die Laien gleichsam abwertend als die ‚übrigen (sc. Gläubigen)‘ bezeichnet werden. Dadurch wird der Eindruck erweckt, als wäre die Existenz der Kleriker vorrangiger als die der Laien“.

<sup>84</sup> Walsh, K., “Apostolate”, 153.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Demel, “Statisten”, 99: „Damit hat der Begriff ‚Laie‘ im CIC/1983 keinerlei positiven Inhalt, sondern dient lediglich der Abgrenzung.“

<sup>86</sup> Quelquejeu: “Acceptance of the Rights of Man, Disregard for the ‘Rights of Christians’: The Inconsistency of Rome”, 122f.

Under the headline “The Obligations and Rights of the Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful”, title II dedicates the can. 224 –231 to the laity. Can. 225 functions as a summary:

“§1 Since lay people [...] are deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right [...] to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ.  
§2 They have also [...] the special obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, particularly in conducting secular business and exercising secular functions, they are to give witness to Christ.”(CIC, can.225)

Although §2 emphasises the secular dimension of this apostolate, the phrase “they have *also*” entails that the laity’s apostolate is not exclusively in the secular world but within the church as well. Can. 225 leaves no doubt that the laity have an apostolate in their own right. Thus can. 226 states the apostolate of marriage and family life, can. 227 freedom in secular affairs, can. 228 the possible admission to ecclesiastical offices and functions, can. 229 “the duty and the right to acquire the knowledge of Christian teaching”, and can. 230 the possibility of becoming lector, commentator or cantor. In these canons, the CIC certainly does provide possibilities for an active lay participation. However, it must not be overlooked that the CIC also clearly states the limits of these liberties and opportunities. Thus according to can. 227 the laity “are to heed the teaching of the Church proposed by the magisterium, [...] they must be on guard, in questions of opinion, against proposing their own view as the teaching of the Church.”(CIC, can. 227) In addition, this canon seems to imply that “Church” is a term opposed to the laity and that this term is almost identical with “magisterium”. Similarly, in can. 228 it is the “sacred pastors” who admit the laity. In other words, lay participation is dependent on the pastors’ willingness to let the laity participate. Thus, Quelquejeu summarises,

“having examined the rights conceded to the faithful laity, [...] one must emphasise the extremely restricted nature of the rights thus conceded. All ‘powers’ remain, in reality, a clerical monopoly, a fact which makes a formality (*i.e.* of no effect) the equal dignity of all [...], and allows the inegalitarian and clerical constitution of the Roman Church to survive almost intact.”<sup>87</sup>

In addition, it should be noted that rights of the laity are basically only a repetition of the rights of all faithful. There are basically no rights that apply only to the laity. All that is left are opportunities for the laity. However, it must not be overlooked that, despite all criticism, this section on the laity does after all exist. Though it needs im-

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<sup>87</sup> Quelquejeu, “Inconsistency”, 120f.

provement, it is at least the first attempt ever to give the laity and their participation<sup>88</sup> a legal framework.

It should be noted that part II of book II of the CIC on “the Hierarchical Constitution of the Church” does not have any section on the place of the laity within this framework. It seems doubtful to me that a legal constitution of the church can be justified that does not include all its members.

Admittedly, the CIC’s primary aim is to provide rules for the church’s discipline. Still, it is worth reflecting why in can. 331 – 335 “The Roman Pontiff” and can. 336 – 341 “The College of Bishops” “power” is mentioned several times, whereas there is no reference to pastoral issues and duties.

Concerning the Synod of Bishops, can. 342 states: “These Bishops, by their counsel, assist the Roman Pontiff in the defence and development of faith and morals [...]. They also consider questions concerning the mission of the Church in the world.”(CIC, can. 342) Although it is the laity who are to accomplish their apostolate in the world, it is still for the hierarchy to decide about this mission. This undermines the notion of a lay apostolate in its own right. If the laity are to carry out the mission of the Church in the world, they should also be involved in discussions concerning issues of this mission.

#### 4.4 Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith<sup>89</sup>

This document not only predates the previously discussed documents of the papacy of John Paul II, it also is not written by the Pope but by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Hence, though being an important document it does not claim papal authority. However, it illustrates several important aspects for the issue of lay participation. Thus, though only briefly, I will discuss it.

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Demel, “Statisten”, 103: „Das Negative an diesem speziellen Pflichten- und Rechkatalog für Laien ist die Tatsache, dass er an vielen Stellen eine Doppelung zu den Rechten und Pflichten aller Gläubigen darstellt und im Grunde genommen keine spezifischen Rechte für die Laien enthält. Denn nach Abzug der für alle Christen [...] geltenden Rechte und Pflichten gibt es keinen spezifisch laikalen Rechtsanspruch mehr, sondern nur noch einige laikale Möglichkeiten. [...] Trotz dieser berechtigten Kritik ist dennoch anzuerkennen, dass hier zumindest ein Ansatz gemacht wird, den Laien eigene Rechte und Pflichten zu formulieren, und dass hier von Laien erstmals im Rahmen der Kirchenverfassung und am ekklesiologisch richtigen Ort gehandelt wird.“

<sup>89</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, October 15, 1982. (=LCS number).



*Lay Catholics in Schools* tries to apply the documents of Vatican II to lay Catholics teaching in schools. It begins with a statement that lay Catholics “who teach [...] in schools have become increasingly and deservedly important in recent years”(LCS1).

Throughout the text, *Lay Catholics in Schools* clearly acknowledges that the laity have a place in schools out of their own right and not just to compensate for a lack of clergy. The presence of lay Catholics in schools is important because they are not only teachers but also, and equally important, “witnesses to the faith in what can only be described as a privileged environment for human formation.”(LCS4) Thus, teachers “perform a very important task for the Church.”(LCS5) After re-emphasising the secular nature of the laity’s apostolate in LCS 7-9, there is a slight but interesting shift of focus in LCS10. “Since it is properly part of their [the laity’s] vocation, they should by their initiative and creativity, their competent, conscientious and ungrudging contribution help to ensure that the People of God will be able to distinguish clearly between evangelical and counter-evangelical values.”(LCS10) The document speaks unmistakably of teaching the People of God. Thus, according to LCS10, the laity are also called to teach within the Church. Though such teaching might focus on secular issues, it is still a teaching function of the laity within the Church. This aspect becomes even more important when LCS10 is read together with the previously analysed documents that appear to reserve the teaching office in the Church to the hierarchy.

The double existence of the lay teacher in the Church and in the world is finally summarised in LCS24:

“The Lay Catholic is a person who exercises a specific mission *within* the Church by living, in faith, a *secular vocation* in the communitarian structure of the school [...]. Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they *share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church*; they cannot regard themselves as cut off from the ecclesial complex.” [my Italics] (LCS24)

Above all, the “Catholic educator is called consciously to inspire his or her activity with the Christian concept of the person, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church.”(LCS18) Not only is LCS18 one of the very few sections that actually mentions the hierarchy or the magisterium, it is also, quite in contrast to the later documents, far more careful in its wording; there is no reference to subordination or obedience and instead LCS18 speaks of “*communion* with the Magisterium”. This is certainly a quite positive and more encouraging wording than *Christifideles Laici* presents.

In addition, each school is a community. This has consequences for the Catholic teacher. “The professional structure itself offers an excellent opportunity to live – and

bring to life in the students – the communitarian dimension of the human person.” (LCS22) In this context, *Lay Catholics in Schools* demands in LCS32 a unity of life and faith, of theory and praxis. “Conduct is always more important than speech for students in their period of formation. The more completely an educator conforms to the ideal that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated.” (LCS32) This essential identity of teaching and lived faith is of utmost importance as the example of lay Catholics is increasingly often identified with the Church as such. “In today’s [...] world, it will frequently happen that the presence of lay Catholics in these schools [that is non-Catholic schools] is the only way in which the Church is present. [...] The Church can only reach out to certain situations or institutions through the laity.” (LCS48) Undoubtedly, it is here that the laity face a demanding challenge that is, only and exclusively, pertinent to the laity. Above all, participation and evangelisation are fundamentally seen as a mode of being and only then are they an issue of doing.

The lay Catholic teacher is not only working for the Church, he or she can also expect support from the Church. Thus, “contemporary world conditions should be inducement for hierarchies [...] to support existing groups, movements, and Catholic Associations of lay believers engaged in education [...]” (LCS75) It is quite interesting that this paragraph does not speak of “the hierarchy” but of “hierarchies”. This appears to allow a certain notion of pluralism within the Church.

The document demands strongly that the laity are to participate actively and that they are to take great responsibility, not only in secular schools but also, and particularly in Catholic schools.

“The laity should have a genuine share of responsibility for the school [...]. To achieve this kind of participation [...] several conditions are indispensable: genuine esteem for the lay vocation, sharing the information that is necessary, deep confidence, and, finally, [...] turning over the different responsibilities for teaching, administration, and government of the school, to the laity.” (LCS78)

Finally, the document concludes with a profoundly positive view of the role of the lay Catholic teacher:

“Lay Catholic educators in schools [...] constitute an element for great hope for the Church. The church has great confidence in them, entrusting them with the task of gradually bringing about an integration of temporal reality with the Gospel [...]. Thus they [the laity] can show that they are his [Christ’s] co-workers in the various forms and methods of the Church’s one apostolate [...]” (LCS81f)

## 4.5 Comment

It seems only natural to expect that during the papacy of John Paul II ideas of Vatican II should have been implemented and developed further. It is not unreasonable to expect also such a development for the theology of the laity and their participation. However, the general impression seems to be that the dominant tone is that of restriction and a movement back towards a strongly hierarchical sense.<sup>90</sup> Though there is good reason for such criticism, speaking of an all negative period would be missing some essential aspects.

There can be no doubt that the laity are no longer just the object of pastoral care and ecclesiology. Rather they have become the subject of ecclesial life. Still this greatest advantage and positive development certainly also highlights one of the greatest remaining problems. Official Roman Catholic theology is still far from having developed a positive theology of the laity. There are a number of fundamental deficiencies.

First of all, there is still no positive definition of the laity. The new CIC does not get beyond the laity as the non-ordained, that is the laity are still defined here in opposition to the clergy. *Christifideles Laici* emphasises the secular character as the main lay element. Yet, it falls short of providing a convincing description of what this "secular character" might be. In addition, many aspects describing the laity also apply to the clergy and thus do not provide a deeper understanding of the laity as such.

This lack of definition entails a second major problem. In contrast to Vatican II, the more recent documents, particularly the *Instruction* from 1997, are dominated by a rather negative approach. Instead of unfolding what the laity can do and how they can collaborate, the *Instruction* concentrates on defining the boundaries for lay collaboration, emphasising what the laity cannot and must not do. This gets close to the language of "anathemas" Vatican II tried to overcome. It is more than obvious that this approach and such accusing language do not encourage laypeople to become more actively involved in the Church. Moreover, this negative tone causes further tensions between the laity and the hierarchy. Another aspect adds to this problem. As Herbert Vorgrimler puts it, "the fate of many official documents, produced with best intentions, is to be forgotten as soon as they are published, because they strike those to whom they are ad-

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Pree: „Das kirchenrechtliche Kernprofil des hierarchischen Amtes“, 57: „Lehräußerungen und rechtliche Dokumente des Ap. Stuhles aus den beiden letzten Jahrzehnten scheinen – im Unterschied zu den Texten des Vat. II selbst – in den Augen vieler das hierarchische Element der Kirchenverfassung und

dressed as patronising and remote, and do not seem to take them seriously as subjects in concrete situations.”<sup>91</sup> This is certainly true for the 1997 *Instruction*. Where lay participation and collaboration are simply reduced to an object the hierarchy has to legislate for and to regulate. The notion of the laity having an apostolate of their own right seems to be pushed into the background.

Regarding the contents of lay participation, the documents obviously try to come up with some rules, or to be more precise, they try to outline some groups among the laity and their specific vocations and tasks. It is however problematic that most of the suggestions do not take into account the reality of social structures in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For most parts, they are actually not universal, global, and catholic documents, but just Roman, Western documents. As already Vatican II has been accused of a predominantly first world orientation, documents produced more than twenty years later should have been aware of this problem and should have tried to overcome this deficiency.

Also rather questionable are some suggestions about the contents of lay participation. Particularly, the remarks in *Christifideles Laici* concerning children, the sick and suffering can only be rejected. In an age of mass starvation, increasing child abuse, and growing poverty among old and handicapped people to speak of the “joy of suffering” or to call it “spiritual enrichment” is simply no longer acceptable. Evil and suffering must be addressed as such, and it is the task of every Christian to work against them and not to reduce them with euphemisms. If the Church is to operate within the reality of this world it must also address the problems it has there and then.

Admittedly, *Christifideles Laici* seems to favour active women in the Church. The document certainly points out aspects of participation for women. However, it is also here that the clearest and most explicit restriction for participation is to be found. No opportunity is missed to stress that women cannot be ordained to the priesthood. Though this is a topic not centrally related to this thesis, it does raise an issue concerning lay participation. Why does an appeal for greater participation of laywomen have to go hand in hand with a statement excluding them from ordination? In my view, this implies a fear that an increased participation of laywomen might make it impossible to exclude them from ordination in the long run. Thus, it is not surprising, despite a number

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der kirchlichen Ämter ungleich stärker zu betonen als die nichthierarchischen Momente wie Kollegialität, Partizipation und Mitverantwortung oder Synodalität.“

<sup>91</sup> Vorgrimler: “From *Sensus Fidelium* to *Consensus Fidelium*” (1985), 9.

of other tasks, the main focus of women's participation is still centred around marriage and motherhood. Apart from that, for some aspects described as specific tasks for women, it is difficult to see what the particular feminine dimension of these should be.

A third problem area is the foundation of the arguments presented. As I have shown, the use of Scripture in *Christifideles Laici* is at times rather questionable, to say the least. Obviously, this rather weakens the force of some of its arguments considerably. This becomes particularly problematic in ecumenical meetings. These cannot be conducted without a proper use of scripture based on the results of exegesis. In addition, a questionable use of the Bible makes the Vatican unnecessarily vulnerable to critique. To put it slightly cynically, sceptical people, within and outside the church, might go so far as to conclude that the authors of such a document are either not able to use the Bible properly, or that they abuse it deliberately. Both points of view are disastrous for the Vatican as well as, and even more so, for the Church as a whole. Equally problematic is the development mirrored in the argumentation of the 1997 *Instruction*. Here the laity have been reduced from a pastoral issue to a matter of correct application of Canon Law. This is not only questionable in itself, it also complicates ecumenical approaches.

The increasing participation of the laity in the wake of Vatican II has been viewed repeatedly as the work of the Holy Spirit. If this was really the conviction of Church officials, it becomes difficult to understand why such a restrictive document as the *Instruction* of 1997 was necessary, why it was not produced in a more positive tone.

However, it would be too one-sided if the positive aspects were not also acknowledged. The revised *Code of Canon Law* of 1983 is certainly a step forward in the direction of a church adapted to the needs of modern times. Much of the teaching of Vatican II has been incorporated into the new CIC. However, like Vatican II, the revised code should not be seen as the end but as the beginning of a process to reform and revitalise the church. Thus, any evaluation of the new CIC must also consider the changes from the 1917 code to the 1983 code. Considering the shift from canon 107 of 1917 to the corresponding canon 207 of the 1983 code, it seems fair to say that "in the wording of the 1983 code, one senses a much more careful and sensitive approach to the various exegetical, historical and theological issues than one finds in the wording of the 1917 code."<sup>92</sup> Still, the new code does not go beyond stating the difference between laypeople and clerics. It is far from explaining positively what this difference actually is.

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<sup>92</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, 45.

All in all, the 1983 code is a positive beginning though it gives no reason to be over-enthusiastic or complacent, as Quelquejeu concludes:

“Only a consistent long-term course of action, co-ordinated on an international scale, can in the end divert the direction of ecclesiastical customs and the institutional procedures of the Roman Church in the direction of Christian liberty [and equality (T.H.)]. It would be a grave mistake to underestimate the weight of obstacles which one must learn to measure and remove in order to make any significant progress.”<sup>93</sup>

The discussion of *Lay Catholics in Schools* may seem, at first sight, almost superfluous. Still, *Lay Catholics in Schools* must not be overlooked, as, on the one hand, it clearly highlights the recent shift in curial and papal approaches to lay participation. On the other, this document demonstrates that the curial congregations actually can and do sometimes come up with a very positive attitude towards the laity.

As I have shown, *Lay Catholics in Schools* is extremely positive about lay Catholic educators. What is more, lay Catholics are not only welcomed as teachers in order to compensate for a lack of clerical teachers but because teaching is a vocation proper to the laity. It is undoubtedly a part of the lay apostolate. Yet, the document also acknowledges a certain vocation for the laity to teach within the Church. This, therefore, undermines claims for the teaching office being exclusively reserved to the hierarchy.

Yet, there is another point to be observed – the relation between the hierarchy and the laity. *Lay Catholics in Schools* makes it very clear that the hierarchy and the laity are to be collaborators in a shared missionary task. The document is extremely carefully worded regarding hierarchical authority. There is a strong notion of equality between the hierarchy and the laity. Moreover, the document avoids any suggestion of the laity being subordinate to the hierarchy. It can only be with such an attitude that encouragement would be given to the laity to participate more actively in the mission of the Church. Though it is not only a language problem, *Lay Catholics in Schools* indicates that a new lay theology also requires a different vocabulary for official theology.

In summary, during the papacy of John Paul II many ideas of Vatican II have led to further official acknowledgement of the laity. However, instead of developing the dynamic ecclesiology of the pilgrim People of God further, the last years have seen an increasing codification and legalisation of the issues concerning lay participation. There is still a lot of work to be done if Roman Catholic position is not to degenerate once more into a quite static and unhelpful theology of the laity.

## 5. Unofficial Positions -“Non-Roman” Roman Catholic Views

### 5.0 Introduction

Having so far discussed official positions regarding the laity as they are to be found in church documents and the like, this chapter now turns attention to unofficial propositions within the Roman Catholic Church. However, “unofficial” is not to be mistaken to mean amateur, marginal or heretical. “Unofficial” is used here to describe positions submitted by professional theologians who do not speak as official, authorised representatives of the Vatican but from their individual point of view.

Official documents are usually set against a specific context, which, for obvious reasons, entails a more limited and restricted approach. In contrast academic theologians in their works often have a broader approach to the questions so that it is frequently in their writings where alternative but equally legitimate positions are suggested.

It would be a futile attempt to discuss all major positions which are currently discussed. In this respect my choice might undoubtedly be called arbitrary. However, I think that the following selection reflects some basic views and ideas of the post-Vatican II era. As concepts from liberative theologies will be discussed separately in Part IV, I present here only theologians from a western, first world background: Küng (as a critical theologian with regard to Rome and the hierarchy), Rahner (for his outstanding contribution to Vatican II and Catholic theology in general during the last century), Kar-rer (as a contemporary, lay, pastoral theologian who dedicates a lot of his work to issues concerning lay theology) and finally Kehl (for his attempt to write an ecclesiology based on the *communio* concept of Vatican II).<sup>94</sup>

It should be self-evident that I do not claim to give a comprehensive account of the whole ecclesiology of each writer. My intention rather is to highlight some fundamental ideas these theologians have suggested and to show their relevance for a theology of the laity.

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<sup>93</sup> Quelquejeu, “Inconsistency”, 130f.

<sup>94</sup> As the distinction between official/unofficial is not so clear cut in Anglicanism, Part III distinguishes in the respective sections between general aspects and individual positions.

## 5.1 Hans Küng

Hans Küng has been professor of dogmatic and ecumenical theology. In this section I will discuss Küng's positions concerning ecclesiology and the laity as they are presented in his two books *The Church*<sup>95</sup> and *On Being a Christian*<sup>96</sup>. Küng's controversies with the Vatican authorities are well known and do not need to be discussed here. However, it should be mentioned that both books discussed predate the final stages of this conflict. Still, both works already anticipate a later increasingly critical attitude, in particular towards Roman authorities. Although I will focus mainly on *The Church*, *On Being a Christian* has a number of aspects that go beyond *The Church* and need therefore to be added.

*The Church* begins with the "the Church as it is". The second chapter is on "the Coming Reign of God". Here Küng explores the relation between Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God, the question of the foundation of a Church<sup>97</sup>, and aspects of the Church as the eschatological community of salvation. Küng then explores in a third chapter "the Fundamental Structure of the Church". Interestingly, this is not a discussion of the hierarchy but of three major images of Church: the Church as the People of God, as the creation of the Spirit, and as the body of Christ. In the fourth chapter Küng asks what it means for the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. In the final chapter, he then turns to "the Offices of the Church". It should be noted that this chapter begins with a section on the priesthood of all believers and only then looks at ecclesiastical offices as ministry. It is not difficult to see that this line of thought clearly focuses on the basic nature of the Church and on what all believers have in common. It is equally obvious that such a structure is certainly not setting out to favour a strongly hierarchical church.

For Küng the basic starting point of any reflection on the Church is the fact that there is a difference between the fundamental essence of the Church and her historical form. However, "1. Essence and form *cannot be separated*. [...] 2. Essence and form *are not identical*."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Küng: *The Church* (1968).

<sup>96</sup> Küng: *On Being a Christian* (1977).

<sup>97</sup> Remarkably Küng does not say *the Church*.

<sup>98</sup> Küng, *Church*, 4f.





Despite the problems of determining what is form and what essence, Küng has certainly a valid point insofar as he highlights that not everything in the Church is actually part of its permanent essence and is therefore open to debate and change.

Another basic view for Küng is the issue of believing in the Church.

“To say that we do not believe *in* the church means that we are the Church. As the fellowship of believers the church is in no way different from us. [...] *We* are the Church, and we *are* the Church. [...] If we are the Church, then the Church is a sinful and pilgrim Church, and there can be no question of idealising it.”<sup>99</sup>

No doubt, all people are the Church. However, it must be asked where in Küng’s line of thought the Church finds expression as more than just the sum of all the members.

For Küng, the central message of Jesus is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The Church is essentially linked with this proclamation of the Basileia of God and it has to work to help making the Basileia reality.<sup>100</sup> Yet, just as Jesus’ preaching of the gospel precedes the Church, so does God’s call predate individual faith. Thus, the Church “cannot exist without the decision and the faith of individuals; but these are preceded by God’s call.”<sup>101</sup>

It is thus with good reason that Küng puts the etymological analysis of “church” and “ecclesia” in this context. The origin of “Church” was “the Byzantine Greek form *κυριχῆ* [...] which means ‘belonging to the Lord’”<sup>102</sup>. The other term used is derived from *ἐκκλησία*. According to Küng,

“God gathers together and *ekklesia* therefore becomes a community *of God* [...]. [Thus] the *ekklesia* is the congregation of those previously chosen by God, who gather round God as their centre.”<sup>103</sup>

There seem to be three key aspects in this understanding of Church. First of all, God is at the centre of the Church. God calls the people and they accept God as their focus. Secondly, God’s activity precedes any human activity. Thirdly, answering God’s call does never lead to individualism but leads to community with God and with other believers. Consequently, any model that does not have God as its centre must be questioned.<sup>104</sup> It is self-evident that a positive lay theology must also reflect and consider these aspects.

This, then, leads to another key term, the Greek word for people, *λαός*.

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<sup>99</sup> Küng, *Church*, 33.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Küng, *Church*, 95.

<sup>101</sup> Küng, *Church*, 86.

<sup>102</sup> Küng, *Church*, 81f.

<sup>103</sup> Küng, *Church*, 82.

“In the New Testament the word λαός is at first used in the same way as in the Septuagint: people in the sense of nation and [...] then in the specific sense of people of God, to describe Israel as opposed to the heathen [...]. But then the New Testament goes a decisive step further [...]: λαός is used for the fellowship of the disciples, for the community of Jesus Christ.”<sup>105</sup>

It is this understanding of the People of God that forms the basis for Küng’s discussion of the Church as the People of God. It is through God’s call that every single member of the Church initially belongs to this people. Yet, what seems more important for Küng is that

“the Church is always and in all cases the whole people of God [...]. All members of the Church are equal in this. [...] If the church is the true people of God, it is impossible to differentiate between ‘Church’ and ‘laity’, as though the laity were not in a very real sense ‘laos’. This would be a clericalising misconception of the Church [...].”<sup>106</sup>

This concept of a strongly non-clerical and egalitarian church seems to be at the heart of Küng’s ecclesiology. It forms the basis for all his further arguments, particularly when he is discussing the different ministries and offices. Thus, Küng writes,

“there are within the New Testament people of God differences [...]; there are different charisms [...] and functions. But however important these differences may be, they are never characterised with the words λαός or λαϊκός, and they are secondary by comparison with the idea of fundamental equality.”<sup>107</sup>

Another crucial aspect is that all believers participate in the gift and gifts of the Spirit who “is at work not only in the offices of the Church, but [...] in the whole people of God.”<sup>108</sup> From this point of view, obviously any attempt to regulate or judge charismata becomes a questionable enterprise, to say the least.<sup>109</sup> Neither is charisma reserved only for a small privileged group nor can there be any restriction on what actually has to be considered a charisma. Still, Küng also offers a crucial criterion for charismata.

“The entire New Testament carefully avoids using secular terms of office to describe functions in the community [...]. Instead, [...] the New Testament speaks of ‘service’ (διακονία). [...] The charism cannot be subsumed under the heading of ecclesiastical office, but all Church offices can be subsumed under the charism.”<sup>110</sup>

That is why Küng understands the Church as a fundamentally charismatic community. Both words are important: the community has to respect the different charismata of the individual members while at the same time each has to use his or her

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<sup>104</sup> E.g. the hierarchical pyramid with the pope at its top.

<sup>105</sup> Küng, *Church*, 120.

<sup>106</sup> Küng, *Church*, 125.

<sup>107</sup> Küng, *Church*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> Küng, *Church*, 176.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Section 2.7, my comment on AA23

<sup>110</sup> Küng, *Church*, 187.

charism for the benefit of the community and not for egoistic purposes. However, whereas it is rather easy to see the application of Küng's view to a local community, practical and organisational needs on a more global level might necessitate perhaps also a more structural approach.

Despite his emphasis on the participation of the whole People of God, however, Küng stresses that "the greater number of believers is not automatically a sign of true faith"<sup>111</sup>. Truth is not always a matter for a majority vote. This must be particularly remembered in demands for more synodical elements in the institutional churches. Yet, despite his criticism of the hierarchical magisterium he remains very vague how it could be adequately modified. Küng does not offer any concrete suggestions for lay participation here.

Although just mentioned in passing, it should also be observed that Küng notes that

"lay confession has at all events a long tradition behind it, [...] and up to the time of Dun Scotus it was general in Western theology to regard lay confession in emergency as an obligation. Albert the great considered that lay confession has true sacramental character [...]."<sup>112</sup>

One has certainly to distinguish between a general rule and lay confession in the case of emergency. However, in times of declining numbers of priests it is particularly the latter scenario that needs to be addressed; even more so as it is not difficult to imagine circumstances when it is impossible to wait for the arrival of an ordained priest. If all members of the Church are to have a full sacramental life, this question of lay confession surely cannot be ignored. However, if there is to be a kind of "permanent" lay confession available similar to lay eucharistic ministers, it must be asked whether such people would in fact remain still lay.<sup>113</sup>

For Küng, apostolicity is a key character of the Church. Yet, for him, "the whole church, not just a few individuals, is the followers of the apostles. [...] This [apostolic succession] must be understood in terms of substance, not just of history [...]."<sup>114</sup> The difference between the official Vatican position and this approach is not difficult to see. However, Küng's view on that point is a good complement to the Vatican position, particularly as Küng helps to avoid a clericalisation of the Church. *All* and not just the clergy stand in and participate in the apostolic succession.

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<sup>111</sup> Küng, *Church*, 242.

<sup>112</sup> Küng, *Church*, 336.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Rahner's discussion of this problem in the following subsection.

<sup>114</sup> Küng, *Church*, 355f.

The final part of *The Church* is on the offices of the Church. Again, Küng sets out with a programmatic statement: "The Church must be seen first and foremost as a fellowship of faith, and only in this light can ecclesiastical office be properly understood."<sup>115</sup> The question what the Church *is* clearly precedes considerations how the Church should work and how it should be structured. Consequently, Küng starts his reflection on ecclesial offices with some reflections on the common priesthood. He stresses that "it is essential that the positive significance of the priesthood of all believers is realised [...]. It makes sense only if every member of the community can and really does exercise priestly rights and functions."<sup>116</sup> Yet, sharing in the common priesthood does not only grant *rights* to the individual Church member, it contains also the *duty* to exercise this priesthood.

The first key element of the common priesthood is, so Küng, direct access to God: "Faith, baptism and the receiving of the Spirit together form the basis of the universal priesthood of all believers. [...] Every believer, as member of the community, [...] has an ultimately direct relationship with God [...]."<sup>117</sup> Küng shows that even though this common priesthood conveys direct access to God, it does not lead to religious individualism. On the contrary this priesthood, is and can be only exercised in, together with, and for the community of all believers.<sup>118</sup> This community aspect also indicates, though Küng does not explicitly say so, that the promotion of lay participation is far from being wholly identical with the concept of equal opportunities in today's business world.

A second major aspect of the common priesthood is that all are called to make spiritual sacrifices, such as "prayer, praise and thanksgiving, penitence, justice, kindness, love, the knowledge of God. [...] These offerings are not part of worship in a sanctuary, but worship in the world, in the middle of everyday life [...]."<sup>119</sup> This seems to be a crucial element. Being a priestly people does not simply mean that everybody is to exercise some priestly function in formal and liturgical worship, but it is a fundamental and essential description of the being of the whole people of God that must have consequences in all aspects of life. It is this view that shows that the question of lay participation is about is a way of life. A third aspect is that the "priesthood of all believers in-

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<sup>115</sup> Küng, *Church*, 363.

<sup>116</sup> Küng, *Church*, 372.

<sup>117</sup> Küng, *Church*, 373.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. also Küng, *Church*, 381.

<sup>119</sup> Küng, *Church*, 373f.

cludes not only the witness of actions, [...] but also the specific witness of the word”<sup>120</sup>. Yet, one notes the order of actions coming before words.

The fourth aspect is that all who share in the common priesthood have the power to baptise and also the forgive sins<sup>121</sup>. In addition, “the *whole* Church is given the power to eat the Lord’s body and drink his blood, and *every* Christian is fundamentally empowered to take an active part in this eschatological meal [...]”<sup>122</sup> It is certainly a good perspective to stress the participation of all believers in the Eucharist. However, Küng remains rather vague how this is actually to be realised and what the priestly dimension of the individual’s participation is. He does not distinguish between the laity taking over traditionally “clerical functions” or a different style of liturgical worship.

It is only after establishing this common ground that Küng turns to the ecclesiastical office as ministry. He certainly is strongly in favour of a community of charisms. Yet, he also concedes that communities always had some kind of organisational structure. “For Paul the community is a community of charisms, but this does not mean disorder [...]. While there is clearly no ruling class with absolute power and authority [...], there is certainly a hierarchy dictated by the different ministries which members of the community performed.”<sup>123</sup>

What is more, the common priesthood and the ordained one obviously cannot be separated.<sup>124</sup> Still, it would be wrong to conclude that therefore the ordained priesthood is a summary of the common priesthood in one person.

“Men receive a special call to public ministry on behalf of the community as a whole [...] through ordination. [...] The individual Christian must turn in first instance to his neighbour, who has need of his priestly ministry. The pastoral ministry is connected with the community as a whole [...]”<sup>125</sup>

For Küng, the distinction of the two priesthoods is to a large extent a question of vocation, whether one is called to serve the *whole* community or not. Whether or not this distinction on its own is enough to describe both priesthoods can be disputed. However, this view definitely helps to overcome the distinction of laity/secular and ordained/sacred. Küng offers a model here that shows simultaneously the distinctiveness as well as the interrelatedness of the two priesthoods. Nevertheless, Küng leaves the question unanswered what the distinct character of the laity is.

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<sup>120</sup> Küng, *Church*, 375.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Küng, *Church*, 379f.

<sup>122</sup> Küng, *Church*, 380.

<sup>123</sup> Küng, *Church*, 398.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Küng, *Church*, 436.

<sup>125</sup> Küng, *Church*, 438f.

In his book *On Being a Christian* Küng repeats a number of ideas from the earlier book. Still, there are also quite a few further thoughts relevant for our question.

For example, starting from Mk 9:40 Küng writes:

“‘He who is not against us is for us.’ This is directed against his [Jesus] disciples’ claim to be an exclusive group. He takes under his wing a man who is outside the circle of the disciples – ‘outside the Church,’ as it were – who acts charismatically in the name of Jesus and who must not be forbidden to do so. [...]

The following of Christ therefore is not a privilege of the group of disciples.”<sup>126</sup>

Küng highlights that there is a great danger of misunderstanding discipleship and consequently ordained ministry. “Discipleship is the *opposite of hierarchy*: hierarchy means ‘sacred dominion,’ discipleship means service with nothing sacral about it. [...] Discipleship is a call, not to rule, but to *service*.”<sup>127</sup>

This has some practical consequences. Participation in the Church is not limited to the ordained ministry. There is a great variety of tasks and ministries to be fulfilled by all the members of the Church. For Küng, the charismatic dimension of the Church is absolutely crucial. Although regulations such as the CIC can provide practical guidelines for many questions arising, they can neither limit the working of the Spirit nor can they possibly foresee all possible charisms and vocations. Obviously, this understanding of charisms has consequences for Küng’s view on office, ministry and priesthood. With service as the key term, Küng strongly advocates the use of *ministry* instead of *office*. He is particularly careful on that point as *office* always contains the notion of authority and power, a particularly sensitive issue in an entity that has love and service as its constitutional basis. As he puts it, the

“exercise of power in the Church can be justified only in virtue of *service* [...]. Such power, as it arises from service, is genuine (primarily intrinsic) *authority*.

There is no opposition therefore between power and service, but only between the exercise of power as domination and [...] of power as service. Exercise of domination [...] is the opposite of service and is an *abuse of power*.”<sup>128</sup>

What is important to see is that for Küng the question is primarily not who exercises the power but how the power is exercised. The question of who is of secondary importance; even more so as the same principle for the use of power would apply in a less clericalised form of Church government. It is against this background that Küng argues for a rethinking of the use of the term *priesthood*.

“Instead of talking about ‘priesthood’ [...], it would be more correct here to choose functional designations. Even in the New Testament presiders, overseers,

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<sup>126</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 280f.

<sup>127</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 282.

<sup>128</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 486f.

deacons, elders, pastors, leaders are mentioned. [...] If we want a general term for all these ministries, we might use 'ministry of leadership' or 'ministry of presiding' in the Church, the holder of the ministry being known as 'leader' or 'presider' [...]."<sup>129</sup>

Hence, Küng does not reject an episcopal Church structure. However, the episcopate on its own must not become detached from the people in the Church nor must it be mistaken for the full Church when without the other members.

"The presbyteral-episcopal Church constitution [...] must therefore leave room [...] – at least in principle – for other possibilities which existed in the New Testament Church. This observation has important implications for the mission: a valid eucharistic celebration, even without a presbyter, is possible in principle [...].  
for ecumenism: an acknowledgement of validity of ministries and sacraments is required even for the Churches whose leaders are not historically within the special 'apostolic succession'."<sup>130</sup>

This is not to say that these implications regarding the issue of lay participation must become the norm. However, in times of declining numbers of clergy these issues and possibilities must be addressed anew.

Finally, regarding leadership and Church government, Küng offers some suggestions for possible changes, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church.

"Church leaders should carry out their tasks as a whole not hierarchically but competently [...]; they should provide for more democracy, autonomy, humanity among all ranks in the Church and strive for better collaboration between clergy and laity.

Bishops [...] should be elected [...] in the light of needs of the diocese concerned by representative bodies of the clergy and laity.

The Pope too, [...] should be elected by a body consisting of bishops and laypeople which [...] would be representative of the *whole* Church, not only different nations [...].

'Laypeople' (parishes and dioceses) should have the right, not merely to offer advice, but also to share with their leaders in a well-balanced system with spheres of authority clearly marked out [...].

Women should have at least the dignity, freedom and responsibility in the Church which they are guaranteed in modern society: equal rights in canon law, in the Church's decision-making bodies [...]."<sup>131</sup>

Küng does not try here to suggest an ecclesiology of either clergy *or* laity but one of clergy *and* laity together *in collaboration*. The fundamental basis for this is that participation in the Church is not a matter of choice for the Christian. On the contrary, participation is part of the very existence of each Christian:

"I am not staying in the church *although* I am a Christian. It is *because* I am a Christian that I am staying in the Church."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 488.

<sup>130</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 492.

<sup>131</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 526f.

Küng's *The Church* and *On Being a Christian* were certainly not written as a theology of the laity. Still, in my view, it would be promising to think about the laity under these two headings. Küng has undoubtedly offered many insights in this direction. He is also very perceptive in picking up problem areas. Unfortunately, however, his criticism does at times not suggest positive ways forward but rather conveys a sense of an underlying tension and an attitude of "having an axe to grind" with Vatican authorities. Instead of engaging with the church as it is, Küng often just contrasts this with the church as he would like it to be. At times one could be even tempted to ask whether Küng indeed envisaged a more lay-orientated church or whether he is rather simply presenting an anti-hierarchical model. In this sense, it is a pity that at times he expressed himself in some extreme forms that effectively ensured that he was not heard. Küng has undoubtedly offered many good ideas. Yet the old laity/clergy opposition has not been overcome in his writing by a more positive paradigm.

## 5.2 Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. Yet, the sheer quantity of his works makes it virtually impossible to discuss extensively his theology. In this section, therefore, I simply try to highlight some essential aspects and arguments of Rahner's theology as they are found in a number of essays, all of which are taken from *Theological Investigations*<sup>133</sup>, and *Foundations of Christian Faith*<sup>134</sup>.

Although written before Vatican II, Rahner states some basic features of his ecclesiology in his discussion of Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis Christi*<sup>135</sup>, presenting a strongly sacramental understanding of the Church. "The Church is in a certain sense the Proto-Sacrament; this means, however, that she is, in her whole concrete, visible and juridically verifiable appearance, a real sign and embodiment of the salvific will of God"<sup>136</sup>. This understanding emphasises some basic aspects. First, the Church cannot be separated from the salvific will and saving activity of God; the Church is God's institution. How-

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<sup>132</sup> Küng, *Christian*, 525.

<sup>133</sup> To avoid excessive footnotes all references to *Theological Investigations* are given as (ThI Vol.).

<sup>134</sup> Rahner: *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1976/ trans. 1995).

<sup>135</sup> Rahner: "Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*" (ThI II), 1-88.

<sup>136</sup> Rahner, "Membership", 73.



ever, secondly, the Church is not just some abstract entity but has and, necessarily must have, a concrete form and place in this world and in history. Thus, the Church in essence reflects the mystery of Christ's incarnation, being true God and true man. Yet, for Rahner, this understanding of the Church is preceded by a christological and incarnational concept of the People of God. "By the fact that the Word of God became man, humanity has already in advance become ontologically [...] the people of the children of God."<sup>137</sup>

The people of God is more than just any institutional church. In this view all humanity is, though some more explicitly than others, the people of God. Being a member of this people is grounded not in any merit or formal membership but in the basic nature of being human. Thus, "the Church is meant to be a further expression [...] of the very fact that in Christ the human race is the people of God."<sup>138</sup>

This incarnational ecclesiology seems to be one fundamental aspect of Rahner's theology. It also precedes any hierarchical aspect of the constitution of the Church.

On a completely different note, though in the same essay, Rahner makes a short but interesting remark about

"the *potestas iurisdictionis* [...] and the *potestas ordinis* [...]. These two powers cannot be regarded as two sides of one and the same thing which must always run parallel to each other. It is for instance possible [...] to have a 'power of jurisdiction' without there being a 'powers of orders' ([...] e.g. of a legitimately elected Pope, who has however not yet been consecrated Bishop [...]); and, on the other hand, there can be cases of a 'power of orders' without a 'power of jurisdiction' [...]."<sup>139</sup>

Admittedly, Rahner's examples are somewhat extreme cases. Still, a number of official positions can be and have to be challenged in the light of this argument. Is it, for example, the case that only a ordained priest can have full juridical powers in a parish? Is it really necessary that priests deal with administrative and judicial issues instead of fulfilling pastoral duties? What possibilities does this perspective open up in the view of a growing shortage of clergy? In the light of this argument, the issue of Canon Law in relation to the Church in the world must also be addressed.

"Because someone does not have a divine right in a certain respect and in a particular case this does not mean that the Church herself may not invest him with this right in the form of a *ius humanum* [...]. Thus it is conceivable that [...] the rights of the laypeople might be further extended [...], since in the long run this is the only way in which layman can be brought to consciousness of his duties in and on behalf of the Church."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Rahner, "Membership", 82f.

<sup>138</sup> Rahner, "Membership", 84.

<sup>139</sup> Rahner, "Membership", 6f.

<sup>140</sup> Rahner, "Freedom in the Church", (ThI II), 105f.

Admittedly, the CIC of 1983 has brought a number of such changes for the laity. However, Rahner has still a valid point here. Should not Canon Law be the result of theological reflections instead of the point of departure? It seems to me that Rahner's argument quite rightly challenges the fundamental nature of documents such as the above discussed *Instruction* of 1997. Instead of trying to make reality conform with the existing Canon Law, should the Law not better be adapted to the needs of the given pastoral situation? Finally, Rahner writes that the laypeople have "duties in and on behalf of the Church". What is more, Rahner's paragraph seems to indicate that the laity also can act on behalf of the Church quite independently from the official Church authorities. It is also for this reason that Rahner warns that

"the Church must be on her guard not to appear [...] as a clerical, religiously camouflaged kind of totalitarian system. [...] every individual, community and authority must, indeed, be fitted into the whole structure of the Church and subordinated to the highest authority in the Church; but this does not mean that the members of the Church [...] cannot and ought not have their own relatively individual functions [...]"<sup>141</sup>

There are three important points. First, active participation in the life of the Church is not the privilege of a few but is open to any of her members. Secondly, this participation is realised locally and sometimes independently from the central authorities. Thirdly, unity is dependent neither on centralisation nor on uniformity.

Certainly a key text for the question of this thesis is the essay "Notes on the Lay Apostolate"<sup>142</sup>. Rahner starts off with the problem of actually defining the layperson.

"The concept of 'layman' [...] has nothing to do with that of the 'profane' or 'ignorant', of someone who [...] is [...] the mere object of hierarchic powers. [...] For a layman in the theological sense is one of the λαός of God [...]. The notion of 'layman', therefore, does not mark the boundary between the sphere of the profane and the sphere of the sacred and sacral; rather, it refers to someone who has a *definite* position *within* the one consecrated realm of the Church."<sup>143</sup>

Rahner makes it clear that laity in the theological sense is not a negative term; being a layperson is first of all not a question related to ordination but to membership in the People of God; being lay precedes any question of ordination. What is more, there can be no opposition between the laity and the Church. They are the Church. Rahner's attempt to give a positive description of the laity begins with a specific view of the secular dimension of lay life.

"The layman is a Christian who remains in the world, not in the sense of the profane [...], but in the sense that the layman must have a specific task towards the

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<sup>141</sup> Rahner: "The Dignity and Freedom of Man" (ThI II), 259f.

<sup>142</sup> Rahner: "Notes on the Lay Apostolate" (ThI II), 319-352.

<sup>143</sup> Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 319.

world and in the world which determines his 'status' in the *Church* and not merely in civil life."<sup>144</sup>

Rahner's interpretation of "secular character" does not see the laity as profane. On the contrary, they share in the common priesthood of all believers. What is different or specific about the laity is the direction and orientation of how they exercise their vocation. It is the laity who bring the world into the Church and simultaneously it is them who are the Church in the world.

Concerning lay participation in the church, Rahner points out that in this discussion a careful distinction should be made whether, through the respective form of participation, a layperson actually remains lay or whether somebody thereby becomes a cleric, even if he or she is not officially called so.<sup>145</sup> Thus, one needs to distinguish between lay participation as layperson and a layperson sharing in the tasks of the ordained ministry. Rahner argues in this context that "the hierarchical ministry has [...] powers in which the layman cannot participate in any way, unless he becomes himself [...] a holder of hierarchical functions and thus ceases to be a layman."<sup>146</sup> However, Rahner points out also that

"the teaching and discipline of the Church show that she is conscious of her absolute power of being able to divide the fullness of her hierarchical ministry according to its individual functions and to make divisions even within a single function, and thus to make others share in this ministry in different degrees."<sup>147</sup>

It appears thus that the concept of ordained clergy could be far more diverse than it is at the moment. There are, at least in theory, a number of degrees of ordination conceivable which could allow people to participate in the Church on various levels. This view certainly limits in one sense that which could strictly be called lay participation, but, on the other hand, it could also provide a lot of opportunities for being adequately the Church.

In an attempt to offer a positive description of the lay apostolate, Rahner suggests the following:

"It [the nature of the lay apostolate] is the kind of concern for the salvation of others incumbent on every baptised Christian by the duty of love of neighbour and through the force of this love in the place in the world which belongs to him, without participating in the hierarchical ministry and apostolate. [...] Every Christian has been given the right and duty by baptism and confirmation, without any

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<sup>144</sup> Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 322f.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 327; cf. also p.320f: "whenever the Church gives someone [...] some part of the power distinguishing clergy from laity, and does so [...] habitually, and as constituting a calling and office, she makes him a cleric, whether we would apply this term or not."

<sup>146</sup> Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 331.

<sup>147</sup> Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 331.

further commission, to bear witness to his Faith and even to concern himself with the salvation of his neighbour.”<sup>148</sup>

This description has to be seen in the context of Rahner’s whole argument. It is not that the laity cannot share in certain ministries. But, if they do, they stop being lay and are thus excluded from this definition. Therefore, despite all positive potential in this concept, the problem remains that ordination is the basic criterion for distinguishing between laity and clergy. In other words, this view retains the definition of the laity as the “non-ordained”.

Another point is that the commissioning to the lay apostolate is grounded in baptism and confirmation. The exercise of this vocation does not depend on any commissioning from the hierarchy. The “lay apostolate must be exercised in all the situations which constitute the layman’s place-in-the-world.”<sup>149</sup> However, Rahner also emphasises that the exercise of this ministry must take potential risks into account as well. Everyone trying to be and live the Church must consider the appropriateness of his or her means and actions.<sup>150</sup>

Regarding the lay apostolate in the world, Rahner stresses that every Christian has the duty to fulfil his apostolate “in such a way that he occupies the very place in public life which he has as *man* [...] and also as what he really is, viz. a Christian.”<sup>151</sup> In this context, it is important to see that it is often the layperson who is far more experienced and qualified than a priest to deal with secular affairs.<sup>152</sup> It is here that Rahner makes one ultimately important point: “When we speak [...] of a development of the law regarding laypeople, we do not refer [...] to the drafting of laws with a multitude of paragraphs but to begin with, only to the following: if someone is entrusted with a task, *he* should also be allowed to fulfil it.”<sup>153</sup>

Doubtlessly, it is often not a new written law that is needed but simply that the people should be given the chance to do what they can do and in an appropriate way. As Rahner observes, “he [layperson] does not need to become paralysed in mute and respectful passivity whenever the clergy happens to find this more convenient.”<sup>154</sup>

This seems to me a point of tremendous importance. It is not the fact that they cannot do everything they want that often puts laypeople off. Rather, they feel frus-

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<sup>148</sup> Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 339.

<sup>149</sup> Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 341.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 341.

<sup>151</sup> Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 342.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 349.

<sup>153</sup> Rahner, “Lay Apostolate”, 350.

trated when they have the feeling that the extent and range of their participation is dependent on seemingly arbitrary decisions by the clergy. Again, it should be observed that participation is to be more than explicitly churchy activities and covers areas where the question of clerical permission becomes irrelevant. Participation is, in my view, often not limited by a missing permission but by a too narrow understanding of the meaning of participation.

There can be no doubt of Rahner having a strong conviction that there are unchangeable elements in the Church which are essential to her nature and being. However, he was also able to acknowledge that within this framework of unchangeable elements there is space and often need for theological (in theory as well as in practice) experiments if the Church is to adapt adequately to new circumstances.<sup>155</sup>

This point is of great importance. If the development of new theological ideas is necessarily, at least in parts, experimental, in other words if there cannot always be complete certainty with new theological ideas, then it follows that it cannot only be in the centre where new theology is developed. It is expected that experiments be carried out in reality and not in theory. Thus, some theological ideas have to be carried out at local or grassroots level in order to see whether they are actually sustainable ideas. Doubtless, some may be found to be not so. However, so Rahner, this decision is often not possible on a purely theoretical basis. Thus, it is essential that with respect to new ways of life in the Church and new ways of expressing the contents of doctrine as many people as possible be involved. It ought to be an issue of all the people in the Church *together*. Consequently, there is a legitimate claim for a national synod to develop specific answers that are not necessarily applicable everywhere else.<sup>156</sup>

Another important aspect is the concept of power in relation to the Pope. Here Rahner asks, "how we can say that everything in the way of juridical powers in the Church depends upon the agreement or tolerance of the pope, when the Church manages the appointment of her supreme juridical head [...] without the collaboration of a pope."<sup>157</sup> Rahner's remark shows that there might be a lot of unreflected assumptions the discussion of which could open up a number of new ecclesiological perspectives.

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<sup>154</sup> Rahner, "Lay Apostolate", 351.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Rahner: "Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church" (ThI XIV), 22f.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Rahner: "On the Theology of a 'Pastoral Synod'" (ThI XIV), 121.

<sup>157</sup> Rahner, "Pastoral Synod", 126.

In addition, there may be circumstances where it is opportune for bishops to extend rights concerning decision making in the Church. Such a change might require new laws in the Church. The important point here is not that things must be changed in that direction immediately. The crucial aspect is that such changes are theologically possible and cannot therefore be categorically excluded. This is even true for the episcopal office. Hence, "we have to allow for the wide range of possible variations [...], in which [...] the episcopal office can be given concrete embodiment."<sup>158</sup>

For Rahner, it could even be debated whether the episcopal office must indeed be vested in individuals or whether the "episcopal authority could be borne by a *collegium*."<sup>159</sup> Such a *collegium* may be desirable or not. The point is that it is, at least in theory, theologically conceivable. Thus, it should also be asked whether or not a number of official positions are in fact as exclusive as they are presented. Similarly regarding the priestly ministry, Rahner again argues that it is theologically also conceivable to have subdivisions in the sacramental order, "such as would correspond to the needs of the age"<sup>160</sup>. This does not yet say *how* ministries could be reshaped but it makes it unmistakably clear *that* such changes would be possible. However, from the point of view of the whole Church, such a change is not to further the personal ambition of the individual but it could open up possibilities for a greater variety in the way people serve the church according to their abilities and vocations. It is also for this reason that the question of participation must be seen in the full ecclesial context and cannot just be a one-sided question for the laity or the ordained ministry.

Another important aspect is that of opposition in the Church. Opposition is in Rahner's view nothing negative. On the contrary it is absolutely vital. "The Church's self-understanding and its own faith do not merely permit the Catholic to have an oppositional relationship to the Church [...] or make this unavoidable. An attitude of this kind is actually required of us."<sup>161</sup>

However, much one may agree with Rahner on this point, from a lay perspective a more fundamental question must be asked: how is such necessary criticism to be articulated? Are there indeed structures in the Church that allow and make it possible for proper criticism to be heard and taken seriously? It seems to be a basic problems, particularly but not exclusively, of the Roman Catholic Church that it lacks structures to

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<sup>158</sup> Rahner: "Aspects of the Episcopal Office" (ThI XIV), 188.

<sup>159</sup> Rahner, "Episcopal Office", 191.

<sup>160</sup> Rahner: "How the Priest Should View his Official Ministry" (ThI XIV), 210. Cf. also p.208.

make criticism heard. Therefore, Rahner argues for a change in the presentation of official doctrine.

“The Roman authorities apparently proceed from the assumption that they have just to state correct doctrine and issue correct edicts, appealing to their formal authority [...]. But [...] they must see to it, not only that they are right, but also that they are seen to be right [...]. They ought to interpret their authority to contemporary believers persuasively.”<sup>162</sup>

This is easily misread. It is not that the Roman authorities have no right to state doctrine. However, Rahner makes it very clear that official statements should also take their recipients into account. It is not *what* is said that upsets people but *how* things are said. Official documents containing more arguments than plain statements could be a first step in that direction. Equally an official language that reflects modern life would be desirable. This problem of finding sound and sustainable as well as convincing formulations leads also to another, equally serious problem. As Rahner asks, “has it really become clear theologically that the faith that saves is not the faith of the creeds and articles of belief, but the faith that actually lives in the heads and hearts of contemporary Christians?”<sup>163</sup> That this has implications for all debates on lay theology as well as ecumenism is obvious.

A further aspect, Rahner highlights, is that the need for structural change must not be taken as an excuse to apply uncritically external standards to the Church. Thus, the necessity of greater participation of all people in the Church is not simply to be equated with a democratisation of the Church. Dioceses and national churches

“neither can nor should simply copy the decision-making ‘democratic’ structures in the secular field [...]. What is important in the concrete is the necessity [...] for collaboration of churchpeople in the life of the Church [...]. And today [...] the real efficacy of the Church’s ministries [...] depends largely on the free collaboration of churchgoers themselves. This however is not to be expected, unless the people are obviously involved to the greatest possible extent in the decision-making of the institutional Church.”<sup>164</sup>

Again, Rahner emphasises it is not either clergy *or* laity but the whole people of God *together* working to fulfil the Church’s mission. Everyone in the Church needs the others in order to fulfil successfully their individual vocation. Yet, Rahner is not suggesting that suddenly everything should be open to majority votes. Lay participation in decision-making bodies of the Church is not identical with changing the Church into a base democracy. Nonetheless, it is equally unrealistic to expect increasing participation

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<sup>161</sup> Rahner: “Opposition in the Church” (ThI XVII), 129.

<sup>162</sup> Rahner: “Mysterium Ecclesiae”, (ThI XVII), 146.

<sup>163</sup> Rahner: “Third Church?” (ThI XVII), 225.

<sup>164</sup> Rahner: “Structural Change in the Church of the Future” (ThI XX), 122f.

of the people "if it is to be merely informal; it [this participation] needs juridical and visible structures which themselves are not in every case necessarily dependent on the good will of the office-holders strictly so called."<sup>165</sup> The changes Rahner proposes would undoubtedly be a step forward. However, it should not be overlooked that all his ideas are more or less changes from top down. Positive as they may be all these changes discussed so far would be imposed from the hierarchy. Rahner does not involve the laity in the process of change but only in the results.

*Foundations of Christian Faith* has certainly a central position in Rahner's theology. It is almost like a condensed version of his thoughts and ideas. What is more, this volume has a strong anthropological perspective, and, on the other hand, it sets out from the faith of the individual person. This attitude is reflected in its basic definition of the Church.

"Jesus Christ knew himself to be the 'absolute mediator of salvation,' the inauguration of God's kingdom and the eschatological climax of salvation history. The historical continuation of Christ in and through the community of those who believe in him, and who recognise him explicitly as the mediator of salvation in a profession of faith, is what we call church."<sup>166</sup>

Essentially, so this definition, the Church, first of all, is a reality within the world and not just something abstract. Secondly, every Christian believes as an individual but within and as member of a community. Thirdly, the Church is anything but static. It is the profession and proclamation of faith that makes a community the Church.

This is why any ecclesiology cannot possibly start with church structures. The point of departure must be the nature of the Church as the community of believers. Similarly, ecumenical dialogue must not remain on the level of structure. The discussion should begin with a clarification of the nature of the Church as such. Also, is it indeed possible, from this perspective, that the differences regarding the concept of the ordained ministry, can have the importance some ecumenical conversations suggest and insinuate them to have? For Rahner it is possible and necessary that the churches learn from another.<sup>167</sup> This applies also and particularly to issues regarding lay participation.

Finally, everyone is a member of the Church and thus a part of the Church. It is therefore not surprising that human weakness and failure are to be found in the Church. However, this should not get people to turn away from the Church but to remain inside and keep working for the final goal of the Church. As Rahner puts it,

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<sup>165</sup> Rahner, "Structural Change", 123. Cf. also p. 124.

<sup>166</sup> Rahner, *Foundations*, 322.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, 367.



“if we look at the church from outside [...] then we have not grasped that we are the church, and basically it is our own inadequacies which are looking at us from the church. [...] For the victory of God’s grace on us men who together are the church is won right here [...]. It is won inside it and not outside.”<sup>168</sup>

Compared with Küng, Rahner is certainly more affirmative in his reflections, without being less critical. Rahner also expresses better the notion of the laity being the Church in the world. In this sense he looks more beyond the institutional church than Küng does. As shown, Rahner has made a number of positive suggestions that could be elements of a positive lay theology. It is therefore rather a pity that Rahner has never dedicated a whole volume to the laity, thus giving his thoughts the necessary theoretical framework. Yet, some of Rahner’s ideas still mirror a highly hierarchical understanding of the Church. Whether this ultimately can form the basis for a positive lay theology may be disputed. Also, though Rahner mentions some ecumenical aspects, his concept of the laity remains mainly within the framework of Roman Catholic theology. There is not much of a catholic (or universal) lay theology. As a further problem it must be observed that quite frequently Rahner does not leave the realm of academia. In other words, he puts forward positive theoretical suggestions without, however, indicating how they could possibly be put into practice. Yet, on the level of theory, Rahner has certainly indicated that the scope of lay theology could be much larger than usually thought.

### 5.3 Leo Karrer

In this section I will discuss some aspects of Leo Karrer’s *Die Stunde der Laien*<sup>169</sup>, one of the most recent major publications on the subject. In addition, the author is also one of the best known German speaking theologians regarding lay theology. Karrer is currently professor of pastoral theology in Fribourg (Switzerland). Above all, the volume also highlights some basic problems of how the debate on laity is conducted.

It is quite illuminating to see how Karrer develops his argument. He begins by looking at the laity in the course of history. At some length he analyses the period of Catholicism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The part on history finishes with discussing the effects caused by the emergence of pluralism, the changes brought by Vatican II and, finally, with tensions and problems faced by the laity in the postcon-

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<sup>168</sup> Rahner, *Foundations*, 390.

iliar period. He concludes that at present there is, on the one hand, a laity aware of their own apostolate and eager to participate in the life of the Church and, on the other, still no changes in the institutional church.<sup>170</sup> This concludes the first half of the book.

In the second half of *Die Stunde der Laien*, Karrer summarises first the positions of important theologians such as Congar, Rahner and Schillebeeckx. Karrer then asks where the place of Christian praxis is for the laity. It is a reflection on where and how the “secular character” is to be put into practice. This leads him to reflection on the institutional church as the place for active lay participation. His key argument here is the demand for a synodical structure for the church. Karrer ends his book with an outline for some spiritual perspectives for the laity.

It should be noted that Karrer does not offer any formal definition of the laity. This is quite striking for a volume dealing specifically with the laity. Though he tries to show many positive possibilities for the laity, Karrer appears to operate to a large extent with the term “laity” in the sense of non-clergy. As a consequence, unfortunately a lot of his ideas are presented and developed from the perspective of the laity in opposition to, or at times even against, the clergy. Nonetheless, Karrer also illustrates some more positive aspects of what being lay could mean. In a kind of reinterpretation of “secular character”, Karrer understands laypeople as Christianity’s essential guarantee for remaining actively in touch with the world as well as the bridge between God and the reality of the here and now.<sup>171</sup> Consequently, it must be the whole community, and not just the clergy, that is the active subject of pastoral care.<sup>172</sup> That is why, for Karrer, being the Church must also partly evolve from the base, out of popular religiosity. Inculturation means also that the Church must be rooted in the everyday life of all the people.

For Karrer, there are no plausible reasons to exclude laypeople from participation in and responsibility for church leadership. For ultimately the crucial issue is not, so Karrer, what the laity may or may not do but who or what they are in the institutional

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<sup>169</sup> Karrer: *Die Stunde der Laien* (1999). All quotations are my translation.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 145: „Christen erfüllen das Zeugnis der Kirche dadurch, dass sie die Lebensabsicht Gottes für die Menschen im persönlichen wie im gesellschaftlichen Bereich geltend machen. Aber nüchtern ist festzustellen, dass dieser bewusstseinsmässigen Entwicklung und dem inzwischen in fast allen Bereichen von Laien mitgetragenen kirchlichen Leben noch keine institutionelle Änderung gefolgt ist.“

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 158: „Im Leben der Laien als Christen [...] materialisiert und objektiviert sich gleichsam das Handeln der Kirche in einer Vielfalt und Differenziertheit, ohne die die Wirklichkeit auch in der Kirche nicht angemessen zu sich selber kommen kann. Die Laien garantieren gewissermaßen diesen Wirklichkeitsbezug und darin die Welthaftigkeit des Christseins.“ Cf. also p.160: „Letztlich ist das Christentum gerade zu wirklichkeitssüchtig, denn es geht um die konkrete Welt als dem Ort und Raum, wo Gott ankommen will. Die Brücke dazu sind in der Kirche die Laien bzw. alle Glieder der Kirche.“

and empirical church.<sup>173</sup> Karrer advocates, thus, a synodical model of interacting collaboration between diverse charismatic elements and a necessary ministry of unity on all ecclesial levels, that is the ministry of priests, bishops and pope.<sup>174</sup> However, he simultaneously emphasises that a synodical church structure is not to be confused with the concept of the Church becoming a base democracy. The intention is not to create a church without a pope, bishops or priest, but to achieve full participation of all the people in the church.<sup>175</sup> This line of argument does not see the hierarchic ministry as the problem but rather the fact that in the course of history the hierarchic system has become the social structure of the church(es).<sup>176</sup> In order to achieve more and better participation of all people in the church it is essential that the institutional churches establish and ensure lines and channels of communication on all levels, and between them in all directions so that there can be a proper exchange of information and opinion to make, ultimately, a live-giving discussion in the churches possible.<sup>177</sup>

Karrer complements this more structural approach with a demand for a different spirituality for the laity that is a more positive understanding and concept of asceticism (“Aszese der Entfaltung”). In this context asceticism is not understood as a fight *against* something rather it is action and involvement *for* something.<sup>178</sup> Hence the basic idea is that in order for life to flourish in a community everybody has to live with certain limitations and boundaries. Yet, such limits should not lead to a negative attitude but ought to be consciously sought to further life for all. Thus, the criterion for a proper ascetic lifestyle is whether or not it leads to a liberating experience of finding oneself, of

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 184.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 266: „Es geht nicht nur um die Frage, was die sog. Laien *tun* dürfen, sondern wer sie in der institutionellen bzw. empirischen Kirche *sind*.“

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 266: „Beim *synodalen* Kirchen-Modell handelt es sich um eine gegenseitige Verschränkung und Bindung der charismatischen und lebendigen Vielfalt [...] mit den unverzichtbaren Diensten der Einheit auf allen kirchlichen Ebenen, also mit den Diensten von Pfarrer, Bischof und Papst.“

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 268f: „Mit dem synodaler Kirchenordnung ist weiss Gott keine Kirche ohne Papst, ohne Bischöfe und ohne Pfarrer gemeint. Wohl aber ist die Überwindung einer institutionell-empirischen Kirche angestrebt, in der die Wahrheitssuche und die kirchlichen Entscheidungen ohne Volk Gottes (*sensus fidelium*) bzw. ohne die sog. Laien erfolgen.“

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 269: „Das Problem stellen nicht die hierarchischen Dienste dar [...], sondern das hierarchische System als geschichtlich gewordene Sozialform der Kirche.“

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 279: „Damit Partizipation zu einem echten Lebenszeichen und zu einem Lebensprozess der Kirche und in der Kirche wird, sind nicht nur die Institutionen der Meinungsäußerung, der Entscheidungsfindung und Beratung sowie der Mitentscheidung [...] nötig, sondern auch der Kreislauf der Informationen und zwar in alle Richtungen der Kirchlichen Ebenen und des Meinungsspektrums.“

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 308.

coping with reality and of finding sense.<sup>179</sup> To a certain extent, this understanding of ascetism is Karrer's attempt to give "secular character" a positive interpretation. For such ascetism should not lead to attempts of leaving the world behind but to engage with it and all its problems.<sup>180</sup> This is why the ultimate question regarding the laity has to be a question about the Church and our understanding of being a Christian, an understanding that must not exclude the world and its problems.<sup>181</sup>

There can be no doubt that Karrer with his suggestion of synodical church structures in combination with a creative and liberating ascetism has tried to sketch out how such a positive understanding of the laity and their participation could be put into practise. These proposals undoubtedly contain a lot of positive and promising elements. However, it is also necessary not overlook the problems and limitations of Karrer's approach. First of all, even though Karrer concentrates on the laity, he does not really offer a new and positive definition of the laity. He certainly does not overcome the old approach of discussing the laity in opposition and contrast to the ordained clergy. Consequently a lot of the discussion in the book is dominated by a negative approach; to a large extent Karrer's book is still a representative of doing lay theology as a theology of negatives. Various passages simply do not get beyond lamentation about what the laity would like to do but which they cannot do because the hierarchy prevents it.

A second problem, in my view, is the absence of a real ecumenical perspective. It is difficult to understand why a volume that advocates synodical church structures does not utilise the rich experience of the Anglican Communion. Similarly, Karrer speaks a lot about the laity in relation to the people of God. However, as the validity of baptism does not depend on denominational boundaries, there should be some reflection on a multi-denominational laity united through the one, shared baptismal grace. Yet, such dimensions of lay theology are not discussed here. In this sense Karrer's book does not offer a catholic view of the laity but only a limited Roman Catholic one. Thereby it ignores and forgets a major dimension of being a lay Christian in the secular sphere which is at best catholic but never only Roman Catholic.

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 309: „Das Kriterium rechter Aszese ist, ob sie zu einer Bewältigung der Wirklichkeit führt und zu einem befreienden Prozess der Selbstfindung und der Entfaltung zur Freiheit für andere“.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 310: „Aszese meint also gerade nicht Weltflucht, sondern vielmehr Verantwortung für sich, die Menschen und ihre Welt. [...] angesichts der Menschheitsprobleme wie z.B. Hunger, Not, Krankheit und Ungerechtigkeit sind persönlicher Einsatz und Solidarität gefragt. Und solches Engagement ist ohne Aszese und Selbstbescheidung nicht möglich.“

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Karrer, *Stunde*, 153: „Im Grunde genommen [...] ist die Frage nach den Laien eine Frage nach der Kirche und nach dem Verständnis von Christsein.“ Cf. also p. 153.

A third problem is the absence of a systematic theology of the laity. The book offers a whole range of interesting and promising ideas regarding the laity. However, it fails to present any kind of coherent theology of the laity within a catholic and universal theology of the Church. Thus, most noticeably, Karrer asks only, as I mentioned above, what the laity are *in* the institutional church; he does not begin with the more fundamental question what it ultimately means *to be* the Church. The focus of the discussion is still too much on the institutional church and not on the existential realisation of the catholic Church.

This is certainly not to reject the individual proposals of the book. However, it illustrates the basic problem how lay theology is currently discussed. In my opinion, Karrer is a representative of a still “negative” lay theology. To give the proposals their full weight and to unleash their full potential it would be absolutely necessary to approach the issue from a ecclesiological holistic view. I certainly agree with Karrer that the laity have to be the subjects and not the objects of the ecclesial thinking and pastoral care. However, Karrer does not seem to offer an approach that can lead to a systematic, positive theology of the laity.

## 5.4 Medard Kehl

Medard Kehl is currently professor of dogmatic theology at the university St. Georgen in Frankfurt (Germany). In this section I will discuss his book *Die Kirche*<sup>182</sup> because it offers an ecclesiology that has *communio* as its central focus. Kehl presents an ecclesiology that is on the one hand very critical and open to discussion and on the other also tries to be very careful and to consider all possible implications. *Die Kirche* has four parts. Kehl begins by clarifying his perspective, the concept of Church as found in the documents of Vatican II. The second part looks at the Catholic Church as it actually is in the present situation. The third part is a historical approach to the Church from the time of the New Testament up to the present. The fourth and final part is a systematic summary of the results so far and also a discussion of present problems and questions in the light of the previous results.

For Kehl the communion of the Church is a reflection of the ultimate *communio* of and within the Trinity. It is for this reason,

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<sup>182</sup> Kehl: *Die Kirche. Eine Katholische Ekklesiologie* (1994). All quotations are my translations.

“in order to realise better this unity of contents and form of *communion*, that an extensive participation of all in all aspects of the life of the Church is necessary. All believers form the communal subject of the Church. Being simply the object of official church leadership is no longer acceptable for believers of such an ecclesial spirituality.”<sup>183</sup>

This statement is not to be confused with a definition of the nature of the Church. However, it shows clearly, on a different level, that all believers are members of the Church.

Admittedly, there has been the danger of forgetting that the laity are also part of the Church. Yet, a new theology of the people of God should not make the opposite mistake of excluding the clergy. It is against this background that Kehl suggests the following definition of Church:

“The Catholic Church understands herself as the sacrament of God’s *communio*. As such the Church is the community of believers that is unified by the Holy Spirit, orientated and formed towards the Son Jesus Christ, and, together with the whole creation, called to the Kingdom of God the Father. This community is simultaneously synodical and hierarchical in structure and constitution.”<sup>184</sup>

This definition is absolutely central for Kehl’s thinking. There is no room for individualism or exclusion in the Church. With regard to time the Church must live out all three dimensions. Thus, in the present the church must live towards the future of the eschatological goal of God’s Kingdom without losing her historical foundation in the history of salvation that has its climax in Jesus Christ. Concerning Church structures, Kehl does see the need for a priestly governing body but not without the full participation of all other members of the Church as well. Thus, it is absolutely vital for the Church to have well-established structures of communication.<sup>185</sup> In addition, as part of her basileic dimension and nature, the Church must be a Church for and of the poor.<sup>186</sup> The preferential option for the poor is not a matter of choice but part of the Church’s innermost being. A fundamental consequence of this must be a *relational ecclesiology*. Such

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 37: „Um diese gesuchte Einheit von Gehalt und Gestalt der *Communio* besser realisieren zu können, bedarf es [...] einer umfassenden Partizipation an allen Lebensvollzügen der Kirche. Alle Glaubenden bilden das gemeinschaftliche Subjekt der Kirche: Mit der Rolle des Objekts amtlicher Leitungsfunktionen können sich Glaubende dieser Kirchenspiritualität nicht mehr zufrieden geben.“

<sup>184</sup> Kehl, *Kirche*, 51: „Die katholische Kirche versteht sich als das Sakrament der *Communio* Gottes; als solche es bildet sie die vom Hl. Geist geeinte, dem Sohn Jesus Christus zugestaltete und mit der ganzen Schöpfung zum Reich Gottes des Vaters berufene Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden, die synodal und hierarchisch zugleich verfaßt ist.“

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 52.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 86.

an approach looks not so much at the borders that describe the Church but at the relations in and through the Church that form her very nature.<sup>187</sup>

Yet for Kehl, the Church is also hierarchical. However, he does not use the word “hierarchical” in the usual sense. For him “hierarchical” indicates that there needs to be a ministry of dynamic unity. However, a ministry working for unity is directed against unity-destroying particularism. It is not to be an uniformity imposing body.<sup>188</sup> Thus, not the hierarchical aspect but the fundamental equality of all people in the Church is the essential ecclesial basis. This equality is primarily a work of the Spirit. That is why Kehl complains that the constitutional structure of the Church is still too much based on absolutism and monarchical structures. There should more emphasis and practical realisation of episcopal collegiality to complement papal powers.<sup>189</sup>

Thus Kehl also argues that the ordained ministry can exercise its full representing function only within the framework of the fundamental equality of all believers. Never must the ordained office be identified with Christ. The offices in the Church are there to serve the community.<sup>190</sup> Kehl is very critical of the formulation concerning the two priesthoods as they are used in LG10; not the difference but the relation of the two priesthoods should be stressed and seen.

“The ministerial (ordained) priesthood is the sacramentally elevated sign for what is, on the level of contents [...], shared by all believers which is the realisation and making present of the salvific and saving service of Christ in our world. To serve this general and common mission, to keep it alive and make it efficient and efficacious on a structural level, that is the mission of the special priesthood.”<sup>191</sup>

The continued distinction between clergy and laity as if they were two detached entities and not two aspects of the same people is thus for Kehl the fundamental schism

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<sup>187</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 94: „Die katholische Kirche hat sich [...] auf den [...] Weg gemacht, sich grundlegender durch *Beziehungen* als durch Abgrenzungen zu definieren [...]. [...] Demnach existiert die Kirche als Volk Gottes vor allem *in* und *aus* den verschiedenen Beziehungen (nach innen *und* außen), durch die sie als das soziale Subjekt des Glaubens konstituiert wird.“

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 105: „Das einheitsstiftende und integrierende Moment innerhalb der *Communio* soll mit dem (allerdings nicht sehr geeigneten) Begriff *hierarchisch* ausgesagt werden. Seine Bestimmung ist es aber gerade nicht, die differenzierte Vielfalt der Gemeinschaft uniformierend einzuengen, sondern den stets genauso drohenden Neigungen zum Partikularismus verbindlich entgegenzutreten und die Kirche in einer lebens- und handlungsfähigen Einheit zu bewahren.“

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 109: „Genau dies [stronger episcopal collegiality] müßte aber auch positiv-rechtlich viel präziser im Sinn eines wirksamen strukturellen Gegengewichts gefaßt werden, damit die Kirche sich nicht faktisch doch weiterhin vornehmlich an dem verfassungsrechtlichen Modell der absoluten Monarchie orientiert.“

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 112.

<sup>191</sup> Kehl, *Kirche*, 114f: „Das amtliche Priestertum ist das sakramental hervorgehobene Zeichen für das, was inhaltlich [...] *allen* Gläubigen gemeinsam zukommt, nämlich die Vergegenwärtigung des Heildienstes Christi in unsere Welt. Dieser *allgemeinen* Sendung zu dienen, sie auch strukturell wirksam zu ermöglichen und lebendig zu halten, das ist die Sendung des besonderen Priestertums in der Kirche.“

in the Church.<sup>192</sup> Consequently, Kehl argues that the term “laity” in the sense of non-ordained is actually as superfluous as the term “non-government” in the secular sphere; it is enough to have the people of God and a terminology to describe those who have special vocation to leadership and so forth.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, Kehl considers the secular character of the laity as it is expressed in the documents of Vatican II not to be a normative and dogmatic statement but simply to be an empirical description of a phenomenon that indicates that no sphere is excluded from God’s reign and influence.<sup>194</sup> Thus, the term “laity” can only be seen as an aid to describe certain phenomena in the Church. “Laity” must not be seen as denoting a state or order. The official ministry only fulfils its mission and vocation to that degree to which it is integrated and related in reciprocal collaboration with the Christian life of all believers. Only such integration will ensure that real *communio* comes about. Insisting on sacramental power and so forth only continues the dividing distinction and opposition between clergy and laity and thus obscures the *communio* character of the Church.<sup>195</sup>

It is also in the light of this argument that the question of the *sensus fidelium* must be addressed. For the teaching office of the Church can only fulfil its duty and be an element that creates unity if it reaches its decisions within a generally accepted structure of teaching, reaching, and establishing consensus. If there are no such structures or if they are not recognisable for all the people, then the teaching office itself endangers the unity of the Church.<sup>196</sup> Thus, so Kehl, the Church as *communio* must be a communal and communicative entity of all the faithful. This entity must integrate all aspects of everyday life as well as it must establish and maintain communicative relations with the world around. Faith is not to be safeguarded against the world but must find its place in the life of the world.<sup>197</sup> This, however, does not rule out that the Church has also the duty to challenge the ways of the world. Still, as the historic presence of the Church is rooted and placed in the world it is essential not to forget that many forms in which the life of

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<sup>192</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 118.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 120.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 122.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 125: „In dem Maß wie das Amt sich demütig in des gemeinsame Christsein aller Gläubigen, eben in die *communio* von gleichrangigen Brüdern und Schwestern im Glauben einfügt, wie es also [...] zu einer partnerschaftlichen Kooperation bereit ist, wird auch seine in der sakramentalen Weihe begründete Letztverantwortung im Bereich der Verkündigung, der Sakramentenspendung und der kirchlichen Einheit problemlos anerkannt und mitgetragen. Alles andere birgt dagegen die Gefahr in sich, die alte, ressentimentweckende Opposition zwischen *Klerikern* und *Laien* zu verewigen und den Gemeinschaftscharakter der Kirche zu verdunkeln.“

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 150f.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 199.



the Church finds its expression are often changeable and not permanent.<sup>198</sup> This view involves openness towards unity expressed in pluriformity, acknowledging and overcoming those many elements that are euro-centric and so forth. However, the Church is not only euro-centric but often and in many parts male-centred. For this reason, though not exclusively, there is a need to rethink the language used in the Church. True participation means also and often foremost that *all* people participate and are included in the language. This is, however, more than a matter of gender inclusiveness or political correctness.

Participation means also to take new ecclesial forms such as BECs seriously. The communities in Latin America have shown how the ministry of the priest can be split up and exercised by a number of people. Yet, it is not only the practical change in structures that is necessary. If the Church is to move forward it also requires a change of attitude on all sides – for the laity the willingness to take up responsibilities and for the clergy to share their powers with all people.<sup>199</sup> Many developments in the BECs are to be welcomed particularly in light of attempts to compensate for the decreasing number of clergy. However, at the moment, there is the danger that this process leads to a diminishing sacramental life in such communities because they are more and more deprived of the Eucharist. Thus, Kehl demands, it is necessary to reconsider the conditions for the ordination to the priesthood.<sup>200</sup> This is not about the laity performing clerical tasks, it is about changes for pastoral reasons. In addition, BECs or similar groups do not always have to come from the poor or the base of the Church. On the contrary, Kehl shows that such new structures have been introduced in Africa by church authorities with great success. These small communities seem to have great missionary effect and apparently include all sections of the parishes.<sup>201</sup> These communities are perhaps not a model for all parts of the world. However, in contrast to many stereotypes, prejudices and common places, it shows that it is not only from below but also from above that very positive reforms in the Church can come.<sup>202</sup> Positive lay theology does not necessarily have to be in opposition to church authorities. It simply takes the courage to try out something new.

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<sup>198</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 206f: „Wir müssen in der Kirche lernen, den Charakter des Vorläufigen vieler unserer kirchlichen Lebensformen zu akzeptieren.“

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 230.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 231.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 234f.

As a striking example of new forms in the Church, Kehl mentions some of the North American pastoral letters. These letters are not only new in contents but also in method. They show how the teaching office can indeed be in dialogue with the people concerned. The first draft for a letter was published that had been written by a commission of experts. This was then presented to the congregations asking them to comment on it. These responses led to a second version that was also presented for discussion. Finally a third and final version was produced.<sup>203</sup> This illustrates how the people can be taken seriously without turning the Church into a base democracy. Kehl does not deny the importance of a central teaching authority. However, he makes it unmistakably clear that this authority must not become detached from the people it is addressing, that communication with the people requires listening as much as it requires speaking.

In the final part of *Die Kirche*, Kehl discusses some crucial and controversial issues concerning modern ecclesiology. What is worth noting is that Kehl does not begin his reflections on the ministry in the Church with the differences but with that which all people share and have in common. Through baptism and confirmation all believers, through the working of the one Holy Spirit, share in the threefold ministry of Christ as prophet, priest and pastor. This excludes any concept of superiority of some Christians above others. Yet, it does not exclude the idea and reality of a specific service for this common mission of the Church.<sup>204</sup> Therefore it is the task of the priest to keep the community together by keeping them in and with Christ.<sup>205</sup> In this context, Kehl points out that there has been a change in official Catholic terminology insofar as the distinction between “munus, ministerium, officium” has become less clear. A close examination of official texts reveals that the strict distinction between laity and clergy is no longer maintained. For Kehl this is a very positive result partly brought about by the change to *communio* as the ecclesiological key term.<sup>206</sup> However, the question must also be asked whether there has only been a change in terminology or whether there has actually been

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 234: „Sie [small Christian communities in Africa] entstanden nicht von unten, von der Basis, sondern primär von oben her, auf Initiative von Priestern, Ordensleuten, Katechisten, Bischöfen und der Vereinigten Bischofskonferenz von Ostafrika (Amecea) hin.“ Cf. also p. 440.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 259f.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 432: „In Taufe und Firmung bekommen alle Glaubenden durch den [...] gleichen Hl. Geist teil am dreifachen Amt Christ als Prophet, Priester und Hirte [...]. Dies schließt zwar eindeutig eine Überordnung einzelner Christen über andere aus, nicht aber einen besonderen Dienst an dieser gemeinsamen Sendung der Kirche.“

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 438: „Dienst des Priesters [...]: In der Kraft des Geistes hält er die Gemeinde beisammen, indem er sie bei Christus hält.“

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 439.

a change in attitude (among clergy and laity alike) and in the way churches in fact act and work.

How far these changes could go can be seen in Zaire where Cardinal Malula introduced the "office" of a lay leader of a parish.<sup>207</sup> Again, it is not necessarily a new Canon Law that is needed but the courage to fully use the potential that already is offered within the existing legal framework.

Yet, it is not only in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, that is in churches that are either relatively young or geographically far from the European centre, that new concepts of living the Church are developed. Also in Europe there are new models to be found. One of these is the idea of "leading a parish in co-operation"<sup>208</sup>. The basic idea is that ministry and service of leadership is shared as far as possible. For Kehl, the central aspect of the idea is that instead of emphasising the differences between the laity and clergy, this model focuses more on what people have in common. Not the boundaries of what people can do and are allowed to do but the common ground what all can and may do becomes the centre of attention for developing pastoral concepts and structures.<sup>209</sup> This does not only create greater participation for all people in the Church, it also takes pressure off the ordained ministry and thereby allows them to concentrate on the actual task of their ministry and service in the Church. In other words, greater participation of all does not mean diminishing the importance of the ordained ministry but actually freeing this ministry to fulfil its proper vocation.

There is still a long way to go for all people to dare to experiment with new ways of being and living the Church and for the Church authorities, though not only for them, to confront and support such experiments as open-minded as possible and to allow them the time and space they need.

Kehl does not and cannot provide answers for all current questions and problems facing Catholic ecclesiology. However, his exploration of *communio* indicates many

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<sup>207</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 440.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 445f.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Kehl, *Kirche*, 445f: „Gemeindeleitung in Kooperation. Statt einer in den vergangenen Jahren immer wieder versuchten Abgrenzung zwischen verschiedenen pastoralen Berufungen wird endlich das Gemeinsame programmatisch in den Vordergrund gestellt. [...] Konkret bedeutet dieses Konzept: Das Leitungsamt in der Gemeinde, das im Lauf der Geschichte für immer mehr Aufgaben verantwortlich geworden ist, wird stärker als bisher *ausdifferenziert*. Dadurch soll einerseits die Mitverantwortung der ganzen Gemeinde für die Seelsorge stärker geweckt werden, und andererseits kann die Vielfalt der seelsorglichen Aufgaben auf verschiedene Träger verteilt werden, so daß der Dienst des Priesters und auch der anderen Hauptamtlichen im ganzen menschlich lebbarer wird.

possibilities and directions ecclesiology could take so that the Church might become more truly the people of God, formed of the laity and clergy together.

## Part III: The Laity in Anglican Theology

### 6. An Anglican Perspective on Laity

#### 6.1 Introductory Remarks

Having discussed Roman Catholic positions on the laity, I shall now turn my attention to views on the laity within the Anglican Church. There are a number of good reasons to do so. In many aspects, such as liturgy and ordained ministry, the Anglican Churches seems to be very similar to the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, at the same time, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism are obviously quite far apart when it comes to issues such as the role of women, structures of church government and so on. In other words, there is a good chance that Anglicanism provides a number of thoughts and ideas to challenge Roman Catholic positions. Thus, looking at Anglican concepts can have a very stimulating effect for the ecumenical discussion of lay participation.<sup>1</sup>

However, there are also some limitations and problems that should be considered. First of all, being a German Roman Catholic layperson, I was able to write the previous part from first hand experience. In contrast, my view and knowledge of the Anglican Churches is necessarily that of an outsider. This is not to be understood as entailing a negative attitude, it is just to express the state of affairs. A second aspect is the question whether it is at all possible to speak of a single Anglican perspective on the laity. Would it perhaps not be more accurate to speak of Anglican perspectives? As illustrated above, there is no such thing as a unanimously accepted opinion on the laity in Roman Theology. To me, however, there seems to be an even greater diversity within the Anglican Churches. For, the Anglican Communion is not just *one* church but a great number of individual churches that can be quite different from one another<sup>2</sup>. Thus, it is rather difficult to present a concise and comprehensive Anglican theology of the laity. Still, I will try to highlight some basic aspects, to give a just and fair representation of Anglican perspectives. For this I shall work along three central questions that have also played an important part in the Roman discussion of the topic.

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, other denominations should also be considered. Unfortunately this is not possible within the limits of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> This diversity is reflected in the essays by authors from all over the world, in: Wingate et al. (eds.): *Anglicanism. A Global Communion* (1998).

First, who and what are the laity? What makes a person a layperson? Second, from an Anglican perspective, what is the range and what are the limits of lay participation? What is seen as the specific lay apostolate? Finally, closely related to the first two questions, which issues are currently at the centre of debate regarding lay participation in Anglicanism?

Finally, before addressing the issues concerned in some detail, there is one central aspect of Anglican theology to be considered: its diversity. Approaching Anglican theology from outside, one is faced with an almost incomprehensible variety of views and positions. Still it would be inadequate to consider this diversity as a weakness of Anglican theology. Rather,

“the Anglican Church seeks to maintain a balance between the local church and the universal catholic Church of which the national or local church congregation is a particular manifestation. [...] [...] the distinctive insights of each tradition [...] can inform and complement each other to produce an unrivalled richness in ways of understanding and expressing the grace of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Jonathan Baker illustrates that it is precisely this diversity within the Anglican Communion that can draw the attention to open questions and, on the other hand, can help to see the great number of possibilities of addressing and solving theological issues. In my view, it is on account of this variety that Anglican theology and Roman Catholic theology regarding the laity should be discussed together. Where the latter can offer more in terms of church structure and stricter organisation, the former can show the multitude of possible and legitimate options. Viewed together, both denominations have the potential to learn from each other and to complement one another and so eventually leading to a broader and fuller theology of the laity.

## 6.2 An Anglican Definition of the Laity?

Is there in fact an Anglican definition of the laity? This question certainly summarises the first impression of a non-Anglican trying to understand the Anglican concept of the laity and the ecclesiology that goes with it. As Philip Thomas puts it:

“Quite apart from well-known differences which make it difficult to ‘read off’ any ecclesiology which would be acceptable to all Anglicans, there is also a notable re-

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<sup>3</sup> Baker: “Churchmanship”, 123f.

luctance on their part to acknowledge any peculiarly Anglican dogma – of the Church or of anything else.”<sup>4</sup>

This theological diversity and, perhaps at times, vagueness certainly causes problems for anybody trying to describe any particular point of Anglican “doctrine”. Yet, this must also be noticed as one of the basic characteristics of Anglican theology. Thus, not even the document *All are Called. Towards a Theology of the Laity*<sup>5</sup> offers any explicit and final definition of the laity. Yet, there are a number of aspects found in between the lines<sup>6</sup> that allow us to sketch some definition of the laity.

It is worth noting the opening paragraph of *All are Called*:

“Because all human beings are made in the image of God, they are called to become the People of God, the Church, servants and ministers and citizens of the Kingdom [...]. [...] God’s wonderful grace and love offer us all this common Christian vocation. [...] the call is there for all without exception. [...] There is no special status in the Kingdom [...].  
Nor does our calling – our vocation – depend on any kind of *ordination*.”<sup>7</sup>

Although a few lines further down baptism is presented as the common basis for a common call, the point of departure is not baptism but creation. This is an immensely important aspect. The equality of all human beings, because all are created in God’s image, is the foundation for an equal and common vocation of all. This “creational vocation” predates the “baptismal vocation” of the People of God. Thus, it can be said that the Anglican theology of the laity rests not only on the common vocation in baptism but on the creational equality of all humans. This concept of equality seems to be a fundamental aspect of Anglican lay theology. Yet, there are apparently two levels of equality. First, creation is the foundation for the equality between all human beings. Second, baptism constitutes and demands the equality between all members of the Church: it is this second level of equality on which the concept of equality within the Anglican Communion rests.<sup>8</sup> What is more, this equality is not touched by ordination. As Stephen Sykes puts it,

“to understand the relationship of baptism to ordination it is essential to distinguish between identity and role. To be a ‘member’ of Christ is a matter of identity;

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas: “Doctrine of the Church”, 220.

<sup>5</sup> General Synod, Board of Education: *All Are Called. Towards a Theology of the Laity* (1985). (=AAC)

<sup>6</sup> Apart from AAC and Wingate’s *Anglicanism*, this chapter is mainly based on:

- House of Bishops of the General Synod: *Eucharistic Presidency* (1997). (=EP, number)
- Robinson et al.: *Layman’s Church* (1963).
- Sykes & Booty (eds.): *The Study of Anglicanism* (1988).

<sup>7</sup> AAC, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also EP, 18.

to be a priest is a matter of role. It is for this reason that [...] no priest ever ceases to be a lay person. No one ever gets 'beyond' baptism."<sup>9</sup>

Not only does Sykes present the laity as an important and essential part of the Church, this concept also makes the often highly problematic opposition of hierarchy and laity almost impossible. Here, the laity and the clergy are part of the same body of Christ. The Church must under no circumstances be solely identified with either the hierarchy or the laity. Most importantly, this view contains not only a rather different understanding of the laity but of the Church as such. Thus, in 1963, the then Bishop of Woolwich, John A.T. Robinson, noted:

"A truer doctrine of the priesthood of the laity, or rather of the *Laos*, is [...] being recovered in our day. But this conception must also [...] be balanced equally firmly on the other side by [...] 'the laity of the priesthood'. The whole Church, ordained and unordained alike, is called to be a lay body [...], [...] which is immersed in the world. [...]"

Furthermore, this conception of the genuine laity of the priesthood is an important corrective [...], if we are not to think of the laity in purely Church-centred terms."<sup>10</sup>

Generally speaking, this definition of the laity is much broader than that of LG31. The laity are not simply the non-ordained, but the People of God. Every member is simultaneously lay and priestly.

In contrast to Roman Catholic tendencies of stressing the difference between the ordained clergy and the laity, Anglicans seem to focus more on the one ministry that the clergy and the laity have in common. Thus, Douglas Rhymes argues, despite

"the nature of the ministry of the laity and its connection with that of the ordained laity who are the clergy, [...] the important thing to remember in all this is that there is only one ministry – the ministry of the laos, the people of God – [...]"<sup>11</sup>

This double focus on unity and equality in diversity is not only a demand of the Anglican laity but is also acknowledged and accepted by the Anglican clergy.<sup>12</sup>

On notes that Anglican theology apparently tends not to talk so much about the laity *in* the Church but to focus on the issue of *being* the Church. Already in 1963, Kathleen Bliss called her book on the laity *We the People*<sup>13</sup>. It is also in this book that it becomes most obvious how closely the question of defining the laity is interwoven with the issue of an adequate image of Church. Although *We the People* contains a chapter "Who are We? How Define 'Lay'?"<sup>14</sup>, there is no new theological definition of the laity

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<sup>9</sup> Sykes: *Unashamed Anglicanism* (1995), 188f.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson: "The Ministry of the Laity", 19f.

<sup>11</sup> Rhymes: "The Place of the Laity in the Parish (i)", 23.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. EP, 24&28. EP was not published by a lay group but by the English House of Bishops.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bliss: *We the People* (1963).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bliss, *People*, 65-72.



to be found in these pages. Bliss offers only a sociological definition of the “layman as the Christian who earns his living in a secular calling and not in the service of the Church.”<sup>15</sup> Bliss stresses that this definition must be taken for what it is, that is, a sociological definition. It must not be abused for any form of theological definition.<sup>16</sup> Thus, instead of a new theological definition of the laity, Bliss discusses images of the whole people of God.<sup>17</sup> For Bliss, a theological definition of the role of the laity and their participation can be nothing else than a definition of the nature and task of the whole people of God. As far as I can see, Ruth Etchells summarises quite a representative position for Anglican thought:

“The task of the Church is to persuade that world that it is [...] the object of his [God’s] love, redeemed by the power of Christ’s cross. The People of God is the People of God in the midst of a world redeemed.’  
[...] And so we come to [...] the primary task of the People of God: it is that of *believing* in the hidden work of God. That is what defines us as God’s people. And our second task follows from this: The Church – *the whole laity* ... who actually live in the world, [...] they are those who ought to suggest that God’s great work of salvation is gradually overhauling all opposing forces and showing up the glory of God’s great design for the world.”<sup>18</sup>

### 6.3 Aspects of Lay Participation in the Anglican Communion

As the introduction has shown, instead of asking how the laity do participate in the Church Anglican thought seems to focus on the question how the laity are the Church. A rather telling example is the catechism of the Province of Southern Africa<sup>19</sup>. There the section on the Church precedes that on the ministry. However, it is only in the latter that the laity are mentioned explicitly. The section on the Church mentions only the whole people of God.<sup>20</sup> However, more important is what number 77 states, “The ministers of the Church are laypersons, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.”<sup>21</sup> One notes that the laity are mentioned as ministers and before the ordained ministry. It could

<sup>15</sup> Bliss, *People*, 62. Cf. also Bliss, *People*, 67.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Bliss, *People*, 68: “To accept a sociological definition [...] is a corrective because it reminds us how often it is just this person who earns his living in the world who is absent from those places and bodies where ‘the laity’ are said to be [...]. But if it is used as a substantive definition of laity, then its use marks a capitulation to non-theological terms and the abandonment of the attempt to define laity positively and theologically.”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bliss, *People*, 73-94, chapter 6 “The People of God”.

<sup>18</sup> Etchells: “Notes towards a Theology of *Laos* – The People of God”, 30f.

<sup>19</sup> The Church Province of Southern Africa: “The Catechism”, 69-88. All references given by the number within the catechism.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Church Province of Southern Africa, “Catechism”, no 66.

<sup>21</sup> Church Province of Southern Africa, “Catechism”, no.77.

well be that this is to indicate that the ministry of the laity is the ministry shared by all members of the people of God and, so to speak, precedes the ordained ministry. Yet, what is this ministry of the laity? It

“is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world according to the gifts given to them; and to take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church.”<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, this definition ascribes a central role for the laity; their ministry is described without any reference to obedience to the ordained clergy. The laity seem to exercise their ministry rather independently. Yet it would be wrong to conclude that there are no limits to lay participation in the Anglican Communion. Generally speaking, there seem to be three major areas of lay participation that need to be explored: first, liturgy, second, the laity within the institutional Church, and third, the laity *as* the Church in the world.

### 6.3.1 Anglican Laity and Liturgy

Liturgically celebrations and worship are of utmost importance within the Anglican Communion; as Bruce Kaye writes, “the Anglican way is a liturgical way.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, it would be wrong to interpret this as a uniformistic or formalistic way. Although there is a necessary stress on form, it is not the central issue. This place is taken by faith. Thus, “the way in which the liturgy is expressed varies greatly amongst Anglicans, [...] but the core liturgical character protects the orthodoxy of the faith, the involvement of the people as a whole, and the orderliness of the worship.”<sup>24</sup>

However, it seems also fair to add that at first sight in many Anglican Churches liturgy is seen as the task of the ordained clergy. Yet, this does not always exclude the laity from active participation in the liturgy and worship. As David Hope observes, “‘liturgy’ means ‘work of the people’. Indeed, one of the main themes of liturgical reform [...] has been that *public worship is the business of everyone, not just of the presiding or officiating minister.*”[My italics]<sup>25</sup> Again, for Michael Vasey, “worship is a corporate activity. [...] Worship involves a large group of people who are participants”<sup>26</sup>. Although at times lay

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<sup>22</sup> Church Province of Southern Africa, “Catechism”, no.78.

<sup>23</sup> Kaye: “Anglican Belief”, 50.

<sup>24</sup> Kaye, “Anglican Belief”, 50.

<sup>25</sup> Hope: “Liturgy – the Work of the People?”, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Vasey: “The Anglican Way of Worship”, 83.

participation was pushed more in the background, this concept of collective participation is indeed part of a longstanding tradition within Anglicanism. The “principle of contemporary liturgical renewal corresponds with [...] the liturgical centre of early Anglicanism. [...] Cranmer was clear that worship was something done by priest and people together. The principle of participation was essential for common prayer!”<sup>27</sup>

There can be no doubt that this understanding of participation is one of the main reasons why it is the liturgy that makes the local church most visible. “The very fact of worship constitutes a local congregation.”<sup>28</sup> Participation, though, is not only what a person does, but also what happens to a person in the liturgy. As Vasey writes, “Christian worship is not simply about meeting, teaching or singing although all of these are important; it is about encounter with God.”<sup>29</sup>

In *We the People*, Bliss still presents a rather clerically orientated view of worship. Yet, it is here that she, perhaps unintentionally, provides the ground for a somewhat different form of lay participation. Bliss writes: “If worship is to be the central activity of the Church, then the laity must moderate their claims on the clergy for pastoral care, ‘activities’ and ‘saying a few words at ...’ in such a way that they can give to public worship all that it demands of private preparation.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the more liturgy rests in the hands of the clergy, the more other tasks within the Church must be in the hands of the laity in order to allow the clergy to fulfil their liturgical duties properly. This would mean that a more clerical dominated liturgy does not eliminate lay participation but would simply shift it to other tasks and fields.

Since the writing of *We the People*, things obviously have changed in the Anglican Communion. Today, this longing for participation culminates in some people even demanding lay presidency at the Eucharist. Yet, at present, this demand is still at the margins and has been clearly rejected by the House of Bishops in England. In *Eucharistic Presidency* the Bishops strongly argue in favour of clerical presidency. They do so by resting their arguments particularly on the ecclesiological context of sacramental presidency.

To my knowledge, this is also the common position within the Anglican Communion all over the world apart from the Archdiocese of Sydney. However, it is of tremendous importance that the English bishops, despite their rejection of lay presidency,

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<sup>27</sup> Thompsett: “The Laity”, 254.

<sup>28</sup> Bliss, *People*, 128.

<sup>29</sup> Vasey, “Anglican Worship”, 84.

do not rule out the possibility of legitimately challenging this position. It appears almost as if the discussion was encouraged in order to clarify why the present position should be maintained.<sup>31</sup> From an ecclesiological point of view, this is a very significant statement as it, on the one hand, expresses a clear and strong position of the bishops and, on the other, it leaves the possibility to reopen the discussion if there should be need to do so.

Without wanting to outline the whole debate for and against lay presidency at the Eucharist, one aspect should be noted, as it illustrates a basic principle in the discussion how and in which way the laity can actively participate in the liturgy. The argument in question is the view that there could be, "instead of ordination, some form of authorisation or licensing of a local deacon or lay person to preside at the Eucharist"<sup>32</sup>. The important point here is not that the English bishops do not share this but the reasons that they use against it. The bishops perceive some fundamental differences between licensing/authorisation and ordination:

"Licensing/authorisation in this model is the recognition of a person for a particular work in a particular community; it is limited as to duration, place and circumstances. Ordination is (potentially) unlimited in these respects for it is for service in the universal Church. [...] The second difference concerns pastoral oversight. Authorisation to preside at the Eucharist is one thing; ordination to overall pastoral responsibility for a community is another. Eucharistic presidency [...] properly flows out of the commission to pastoral oversight [...]. The third difference concerns the way in which each is conferred. Authorisation is a juridical act; ordination is first and foremost a liturgical act [...]. The proper way to 'authorise' leaders of communities who will thus preside at the Eucharist is through the laying on of hands and prayer, i.e. through a liturgical event [...]."<sup>33</sup>

In other words, according to the English bishops, there are acts that require a *juridical authorisation* whereas others need *liturgical authorisation*. The bishops also take great care to consider in their conclusion the context of the individual liturgical act. The question of the Eucharistic presidency is not detached from the issue of communal oversight. Certainly the question here must be, in the case where laypeople become liturgically authorised whether they then still remain laypeople and do not become at least partly ordained. Thus, the question is not whether laypeople can be, obviously in the proper way, authorised for a certain tasks but whether they then still are laypeople and whether or not different forms of ordination are conceivable.

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<sup>30</sup> Bliss, *People*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. EP, ix.

<sup>32</sup> EP, 57.

<sup>33</sup> EP, 58.

In addition, though rejecting lay presidency, the English bishops are prepared to accept and welcome other forms of lay participation in the liturgy that are distinctively lay, such as the office of Lay Reader. Also laypeople are “allowed to officiate at Morning and Evening Prayer, preach at any service, preside over the Ministry of the Word at a Eucharist [...] and assist the president with distribution [...]”<sup>34</sup>

This list of possible lay participation in the liturgy is not completely unlike a possible Roman Catholic equivalent to it. However, there are a few striking differences. First, although laypeople may read at mass, in the Catholic Church they may not preside over the Ministry of the Word. Second, in the Roman Catholic Church, the laity are still not allowed to preach at any service. Without favouring one position or the other, it still proves that there is scope for quite different rules for lay participation. Third, and this is probably the most significant difference, there is Anglican terminology. Vatican documents tend to speak of things the laity can do. Often the tone of these documents suggests that it is more about what the hierarchy allows the laity to do or what the hierarchy thinks the laity is permitted to do. Quite in contrast, the Anglican bishops speak of “the office of Lay Reader”, that is, they speak of a lay office. This implies a far stronger position for the laity in the liturgy. Lay Anglicans are not only allowed to fulfil several tasks in the liturgy. They also have an office in the liturgy proper to them as laypeople.

### 6.3.2 Anglican Laity within the Institutional Church

The discussion of lay participation within the church is not limited to the issue of liturgical participation; it extends to all dimension of the institutional church. Yet, before looking at some specific issues, Michael Nazir-Ali draws our attention to an ecclesiological perspective that provides a crucial aspect for Anglican reflections on variety and unity of church structures.

“A properly Anglican ecclesiology also results in a recognition of the multi-cultural and multi-contextual nature of both the local and the universal Church. [...] [...] In each culture and context, Christian leadership is inevitably affected and shaped by the patterns of other kinds of leadership in that situation. [...] this should not surprise us, but we should also be prepared to criticise these patterns in the light of our calling as servants of the servant king.”<sup>35</sup>

Apparently, a contextual diversity is absolutely necessary for Anglican ecclesiology. Yet, such inculturation and contextualisation must never lead to an ecclesiology

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<sup>34</sup> EP, 5.

that is detached from its roots. Ecclesiology must always be based and centred on God and the history of salvation. Naturally this also applies to any discussion of lay participation in the institutional church.

At the centre of the debate is often the question how and to what extent the laity can become involved in the administration and governing of a particular church. Yet, before looking at lay participation in church governance, we need to consider the bishops and their relation to the laity. For this issue precedes in a way any discussion of lay participation in whatever form. Thus Paul Avis argues that bishops should

“speak for – and to – ordinary Church people [...]. It must be possible for ordinary church members to identify with their leaders and to sense that their leaders identify with them. The morale of lay folk in the parishes is raised by leaders who by word and deed affirm the value of the everyday parish-based way of being a Christian.”<sup>36</sup>

Thus, before thinking about lay participation, it is essential that church leaders as well as all other church members develop and display an attitude that is not dominated by power but by the understanding that all are part and members of the one Church. This attitude must also be reflected in the language and communication within a particular church. It is only after such general attitudes and communication principles have been explored that further aspects of lay participation within the institutional church should be addressed.

It is undoubtedly here that the Church of England has a model of lay participation to offer. Already in 1947, the then Archbishop of York, Cyril Garbett was observing that consultation of the laity was something that has been part of the Church's tradition since her beginning.<sup>37</sup>

At the time he was writing the official body of Church government, of which the laity were a part of, was the Church Assembly. This was superseded by the General Synod in 1970, in which the laity were given a much larger role. Like the other two houses (bishops and clergy) the House of Laity is elected for a period of five years.<sup>38</sup> Although of minor importance, it should not be missed that it is a lay person, the Queen, who calls the assembly of the General Synod. Although the House of Laity cannot call a meeting of the General Synod by themselves, neither can the bishops nor the clergy. The unique English model with the head of state as the head of the church, or

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<sup>35</sup> Nazir-Ali: “A Worldwide Communion”, 64.

<sup>36</sup> Avis: *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (1992), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Garbett: *The Claims of the Church of England* (1947), 166.

<sup>38</sup> For further details cf. Jenkins, Steve (ed.): *Introducing the Church of England: The General Synod*.

more accurately 'Supreme Governor,' is obviously neither without problems nor is it undisputed.<sup>39</sup> However, it shows that a lay head of church is not at all unthinkable.

To understand the importance of the General Synod for lay participation within the church it is necessary to see what the General Synod does and can do. There are three main functions for the General Synod. First, "setting the rules and regulations of the Church is the primary task. This legislative work covers many areas of church life from difficult decisions about the ordination of women to more routine matters like the retirement age for clergy"<sup>40</sup>. Second, the Synod has to deal with issues concerning the relation to other churches and religious groups. Finally, "subjects from education and unemployment to health, social and racial justice and the stability of family life are of concern to Christians. The Government takes note of what the Church of England and other Churches say in their national synods and assemblies."<sup>41</sup>

Certainly one of the most significant changes since the time of Garbett is that today the House of Laity is also to be consulted on matters of doctrine.<sup>42</sup> The bishops cannot simply prescribe doctrine. The consent of the laity is required. It could be said that in contrast to the Roman Catholic tradition the perspective is turned round. "In Anglicanism, laypeople matter. They do not exist to support the clergy; instead the clergy exists to support the laypeople. [...]"<sup>43</sup>

Yet, with regards to participation in church governance, if there were only the General Synod, it could be argued that this meant lay participation in a body that is important but to some extent removed from everyday life within the church. However, within the Church of England there is lay representation and participation also on diocesan and parochial level.

"Diocesan synods usually meet three times a year and, again, have the three houses of bishops, clergy and laity."<sup>44</sup> Similarly, every deanery has its own synod with elected lay members. General Synod members are voted in by members of deanery synods.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, on parish level, there is the parochial church council. "Its primary duty is 'to co-operate with the incumbent *in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church*

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Buchanan: *Cut the Connection* (1994), chapter 7 "The Monarchy", 134-151.

<sup>40</sup> Jenkins, *Introducing*.

<sup>41</sup> Jenkins, *Introducing*.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. "Synodical Government", 1569.

<sup>43</sup> Edwards: "What Anglicans Believe", 65.

<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, *Introducing*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Introducing*.

[...].”<sup>46</sup> [My italics] Parochial parish councils were created in 1921. Until then the only official representatives of the laity in each parish had been the churchwardens. Although the parochial church councils have taken over a number of the duties previously fulfilled by churchwardens, the latter still are important for parishes particularly for the issue of lay participation.<sup>47</sup>

One of the key aspects of this system is that the laity themselves elect their representatives for the respective bodies. It is not for the clergy to select people they would like to have in the synods; the lay members are truly representatives of the laity. In addition, this system of interrelated bodies of church government provides essential structures for communication within the church. Thus, decisions from the General Synod can be passed down to the dioceses and parishes without appearing as opinions dictated from above, which are beyond discussion. Likewise, there is a way, if need be, for drawing the attention of the General Synod to issues raised on parish level. Thus, this way of decision-making allows to be put into practice the “principle of open access to the criteria”.<sup>48</sup> In addition, it must be seen that all these bodies, generally speaking, are not limited to just one aspect of church government, such as finance or social issues, but that they are to help “promoting [...] the whole mission of the Church”<sup>49</sup>. Surely, in the Church of England the laity can and are expected to participate on all levels and in all issues of church government.

Yet, it is not only in the Church of England that the laity can participate in church government. “The serious inclusion of laity in governance is now standard throughout Anglicanism.”<sup>50</sup> For example, the role of the laity in the United States is particularly prominent.<sup>51</sup>

However, it would be wrong to conclude from the structures outlined above that Anglicans see their church as a kind of religious democracy. As Peter Whiteley puts it:

“The Church is [...] a closely related body of separate but distinct elements, and any system of government must [...] recognise the existence of these separate elements, but also provide for their efficient functioning together. The place of the

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<sup>46</sup> “Parochial Church Council”, 1223.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. “Churchwardens”, 353.

<sup>48</sup> Sykes, *Unashamed*, 173.

<sup>49</sup> “Parochial Church Council”, 1223.

<sup>50</sup> Thompsett, “Laity”, 253.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sykes, *Unashamed*, 153.



laity in church government does not depend on any theory of democracy, but on the fact that they are one of these essential elements.”<sup>52</sup>

What is important in this comment is that lay participation is seen not as a demand on the grounds of a theory of government but rather because of the basic and essential definition of the laity. Simply being a layperson contains the right to participate in church government.

Although things have changed quite considerably since 1963, it still worth reflecting briefly on a remark about diocesan synods by Michael Bruce: “it is rather important to realise that the bishop *never really acts as a bishop until he has listened to his advisers.*”<sup>53</sup> Admittedly, it might be somewhat idealistic or naïve to think that bishops would indeed always listen. However, on a theoretical level, Bruce mentions an essential point. That is, even if bishops are the people to make the final decisions, they are not to ignore their advisers. To turn the argument round, non-bishops are to be involved in the process of decision-making. Ultimately, a teaching Church presupposes a listening Church. Yet,

“this does not mean ‘the clergy must listen to the laity’; it means that the Church gathered for worship and teaching, including the laity in their churchly frame of mind, must listen to the People of God in the world, [...] and also to the non-Christian neighbour in the world.”<sup>54</sup>

Bliss is definitely right to stress that all discussion about participation and church structures must never dominate over the actual universal mission of the Church. Although necessary, introspection must not become the main focus for the Church.

Obviously, this is only a brief outline of lay participation within Anglican churches. Still, as far as I can see, it shows that within the Anglican Communion the laity have a number of possibilities to become active in church government. It has become equally clear that structures within Anglicanism certainly also cause dispute and disagreement. However, what is important is the obvious demonstration that it is possible to have a hierarchically structured church that incorporates lines and means of communication that enable effective lay participation on all levels of church government.

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<sup>52</sup> Whiteley: “The Layman’s Place in Church Government”, 51.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce: “The Layman and Church Government”, 66.

<sup>54</sup> Bliss, *People*, 132.

### 6.3.3 Anglican Laity as the Church in the World

“Christian worship and effective Christian love will always emphasise ‘Monday morning’. [...] And we need more about Monday morning in our ordinary Sunday worship than we commonly have.”<sup>55</sup> Mark Gibbs expresses in his lines a basic concept of Anglican self-understanding. The Church cannot and must not be reduced to Sunday worship detached from real everyday life. “The Christian today [...] is neither called to be so identified with the world that he cannot speak to it, nor to be so remote from the world that it cannot speak to him. He is called to a ‘holy worldliness’ – to the redemption of the world for Christ”<sup>56</sup>. Thus, Robinson stresses, “the ministry of the laity is the ministry of God *both* within the structures of the Church *and* within the structures of the world.”<sup>57</sup> It is here that there is a significant difference from the teaching of Vatican II. Whereas the tone of some documents of Vatican II stressed that the laity were to engage almost exclusively in secular affairs, the Anglican position emphasises lay participation in the world *and* in the Church; focusing on the laity *as* the Church in the world.

Anglicans are definitely aware of the need to be the Church within a specific cultural context and a particular situation. Thus, Penny Jamieson states a fundamental principle of being the Church today. There is “the challenge of particularity, the challenge of the Incarnation, of God with us in all times and all places.”<sup>58</sup> Subsequently, many issues within the Anglican Communion are and must be discussed within the framework of particular situations or problems. This is illustrated in *Anglicanism: A Global Communion*<sup>59</sup>, where the third section mentions a great number of different and particular issues. It seems that Anglicans strive for Catholicity not with centrally produced doctrine that claims universal validity but by trying to consider all issues on a more individual basis, though still within the framework of the Anglican Communion as a whole; put in more abstract terms, instead of unity through uniformity of theology and social teaching, the focus is on unity in diversity.

Yet, if the laity are to engage in these diverse situations, they must be trained and educated to live the ministry in their particular state of life. It is therefore, much in line with Vatican II, that Mark Gibbs stresses the need for the laity to be educated to be

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<sup>55</sup> Gibbs: “Ministries Outside the Parish”, 22f.

<sup>56</sup> Rhymes, “Place of the Laity”, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, “Ministry”, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Jamieson: “Women, Church and Ministry in the coming Decade”, 358.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wingate, *Anglicanism*, “Section Three: The Church in Society”, p. 197-293.

Christians in the Church and as Church in the world for “adult Christian commitment means an *informed* commitment [...]”<sup>60</sup>.

Yet, Gibbs highlights a fundamental difficulty of this perspective:

“All this, however, assumes that such laity are still actively connected with one parish or another. And this is a false assumption. [...] I want to suggest that we reckon much more seriously than we do with the considerable army of our fellow citizen who sincerely [...] call themselves Christians [...], but who have opted out of institutional Church membership.”<sup>61</sup>

Admittedly, such non-institutional Christians, not to be confused with non-baptised people, pose problems for the institutional church, not least for the fact that it is difficult for the institution to get in touch and together with these people. However, it is remarkable that this non-institutional group is recognised at all as a big and important part of the laity; what is more, *All Are Called* offers a rather positive, though realistic, approach to this group and refrains from looking down on it. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is seen at work in them.<sup>62</sup> It may sound somewhat contradictory to discuss this group in the context of lay participation as this group could be seen not as participating in the church at all but as working aside of it. Yet, just because they are outside the institution they are not inevitably to be seen as outside the Church.<sup>63</sup> As Gibbs puts it, “if they are in any way at all responding to the call of Almighty God, then they are in some sense [...] part of the great Church”<sup>64</sup>.

Here again appears the image of the listening church. If the Church really wants to be in dialogue with the people it must listen first without imposing rules and regulations on them right from the start. However, more important than that is the ecclesiological perspective that underlies this view. Such an ecclesiology transcends institutional and denominational concepts of the Church by far. Gibbs’s view seems to be based almost on an equation of Church with the kingdom of God; an understanding of Church that tries to be, in the literal sense, truly catholic. Thus the inclusion of non-institutional Christians in the question of lay participation is a necessary and logical consequence and definitely a step towards a positive lay theology.

This leads to another important point concerning the laity in the world, one closely related to the issue of catholicity.

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<sup>60</sup> Gibbs, “Ministries Outside”, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Gibbs, “Ministries Outside”, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. AAC, 67.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Part I, the discussion of Mk 9:38-41.

<sup>64</sup> Gibbs, “Ministries Outside”, 24f.

“The word ‘ecumenical’ has come to have a rather narrow meaning, appertaining to relations between the various Christian Churches. The *oikumene* is, however, the whole inhabited world [...].

Ruth Etchells [...] has described a true layperson as one ‘whose centre is outside the Church, in the world’. A true layperson then should have a truly ‘ecumenical’ viewpoint.”<sup>65</sup>

There is much to be said for this broad understanding of ecumenical. “Being ‘ecumenical’ in the widest sense does lead on inexorably to realising the importance of being ‘ecumenical’ in the narrower sense of seeking closer unity between the Churches. To put it bluntly, the mission of the Church demands that we are one.”<sup>66</sup> Laypeople in the world are facing the same problems regardless of their individual denominations. If the laity are to engage in the world as Christians and if they are to be convincing, then it is of utmost importance that they are one, that a unity of Christians becomes perceptible. In addition, it is the laypeople being ecumenical in this wider sense that can help the churches to avoid being too narrow-minded.

“It is the particular role of the layperson to look at the task of the Church from the point of view of life in the world. We must be prepared to draw on our insights and experiences and use them both to correct or even counteract ‘churchy’ activities”.<sup>67</sup>

## 6.4 Anglican Laity: Current Issues

Obviously, this section cannot present a concise account of all the issues of lay participation that are currently debated within the Anglican Communion. However, there seems to be a number of key topics and questions which I will try to address here.

Generally speaking, there seems to be a very positive and to a large extent very encouraging attitude towards lay participation within Anglicanism. Still, “it has to be admitted that very many of our [Anglican] laypeople would frankly ‘rather not be called’. When they are told that they are ‘ministers’ [...] they are not only uncomfortable with such language, they do not wish to be committed to such responsibilities.”<sup>68</sup> This, however, is not to imply that the laity are simply too lazy or reluctant to get involved. Many people are or, at least, feel not strong enough to participate. This problem is acknowledged in *All Are Called*: “we must find ways of challenging those who need to be stirred

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<sup>65</sup> Mayland: “Theology of the Laity – An Ecumenical Viewpoint”, 39.

<sup>66</sup> Mayland, “Ecumenical Viewpoint”, 40.

<sup>67</sup> Mayland, “Ecumenical Viewpoint”, 41.

<sup>68</sup> AAC, 6.

while at the same time affirming and helping those for whom such calls to action are as yet too overwhelming.”<sup>69</sup>

This problem is definitely not a monopoly of the Anglican Communion.<sup>70</sup> It is always tremendously important to ensure that people are not put off because of too big demands that are put to them. Neither the Church nor the laity are monolithic entities. Their diversity and complexity must be taken into consideration when the promotion of lay participation is discussed.

#### 6.4.1 Liturgy and Current Issues

A more active participation of the laity in the liturgy is almost inconceivable without changes in liturgy and forms of worship. However, the clergy and bishops cannot simply be blamed for slowing reforms down or preventing them.

“So often it is the laity themselves who refuse to make any changes in the ordering of things because that is what they have been used to. But the standard by which we judge our worship is not ‘what I have been used to’ but ‘what does modern man in the world [...] need if he is to see the relevance of worship and life and if the needs of his soul are to be met?’”<sup>71</sup>

Inevitably, liturgical changes also demand willingness and acceptance on the side of the laity. This brings us back to the need for an educated laity. Only if the laity are able to understand what the liturgy is ultimately about, only if they are able to separate form from content will the laity be able to accept proposed changes and be able to propose sound changes themselves.

Equally, not every change is indeed to be seen as progress. As Leslie Paul demonstrates on a very small, yet significant point:

“I think often of the procession up my church aisle on a Sunday morning of two [...] parishioners, bearing the Elements [...]. True, it gives the laity a ceremonial role, but the truth is we have not presented these Elements. Somebody [...] has [...] prepared ‘our’ gift for us. [...] we ought to be aware of the possibility that even in new lay roles like that [...] we may be producing a new sort of hypocrisy about what we are doing.”<sup>72</sup>

It must certainly be asked whether and, if so, to what extent changes make liturgy and worship more authentic and relevant for the people. There is no point in replacing a gesture or phrase that has become meaningless with one that is different but

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<sup>69</sup> AAC, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Clearly, this applies to various aspects in this section, although it will not be always explicitly stated.

<sup>71</sup> Rhymes, “Place of the Laity”, 39.

<sup>72</sup> Paul: “The Place of the Laity in the Parish (ii)”, 48f.

equally irrelevant. This goes hand in hand with another aspect. "By inventing the special offices of readers, deaconesses, elders, and others, laypersons whose ministry is out of the common run are drawn into the status and mores of ordained or quasi-ordained ministry."<sup>73</sup> Perhaps it is not so much new offices that are needed but rather a different style in how liturgy is celebrated.

Another question in this context is the issue of liturgical language. Admittedly, this is not exclusively a lay issue. However, proper and true lay participation can only be achieved if the laity can also participate in the language of the liturgy and worship. Thus, Kwok Pui-lan summarises the problem:

"The issue of inclusive language in worship concerns more than masculine images and pronouns [...]. It also brings into sharp focus the question of whose culture, imagination, and experiences are excluded or completely left out. [...] A critical issue facing the Anglican Church [...] is how the Book of Common Prayer can be enriched by the cultural diversity of the Anglican Communion."<sup>74</sup>

Kwok Pui-lan does not only demand gender-inclusive language but an all-inclusive, so to speak catholic language for the liturgy. "Much of the religious language used in Anglican worship is anthropomorphic. [...] Much of the liturgy needs to be changed to affirm that human beings are an integral part of creation, all beings are interrelated, and God is immanent in creation."<sup>75</sup> Such a change of language might also help to see and create a closer link between liturgy and everyday life.

However, it must also be observed that despite best intentions some changes actually can exclude people from participation because what is intended to further participation is perceived as imposing forms to which people cannot relate. As David Martin notes in the context of the Book of Common Prayer/Alternative Service Book discussion: "so far [...] the question has never been asked: what does it *mean* for people to lose the Church, and what violation do people undergo when the house of consolation and reprieve is taken over by alien rites?"<sup>76</sup> In the case of introducing the Alternative Service Book, the "motives were mostly good: the encouragement of participation, the inauguration of a new start [...]. The 'wrong' came about by a fusing and mixing together of diverse good intentions."<sup>77</sup> Another basic problem behind this is that many changes are not changes introduced at the behest of the people, but changes supposedly for the people but imposed from outside. This almost inevitably leads to resentment and

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<sup>73</sup> Dyson: "Clericalism, Church and Laity", 16.

<sup>74</sup> Kwok Pui-lan: "Inclusivity, Language and Worship", 66.

<sup>75</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, "Inclusivity", 67.

<sup>76</sup> Martin: No title given, 24.

<sup>77</sup> Martin, 25.

a feeling of exclusion. To avoid that changes are seen as clerically imposed it is necessary, so Ruth Meyers, to put into practice “theories of religious evolution which see as a key feature of modern religion a heightened self-awareness with respect to symbols. [...] Doubtless this is not true for every contemporary Christian. But rising educational levels [...] may have brought about a larger population able to participate actively in a process of evaluation of proposed liturgical texts.”<sup>78</sup> However, ultimately the issue will have to be faced whether laypeople are only to evaluate proposals or whether they should not also help phrase liturgical texts themselves.

#### 6.4.2 Anglican Laity within the Church – Current Issues

Clearly, lay participation within the institutional church<sup>79</sup> is not merely a matter of quantity but also of quality and efficiency. Lay participation must not be equated with keeping the laity busy with pseudo-important tasks. For this reason the questions by Rhymes are indeed necessary and should be put to all the churches on all levels: “Are we expecting our lay people to spend all their evenings sitting on endless committees [...] or filling up every night of the week with clubs and organisations [...]?”<sup>80</sup>

Important as an increased lay participation may be, it “must always reflect this proviso: for the better realisation of its vocation; for the life of the world. For the church does not exist for itself, but to be a witnessing community, whose witness is meant for the enhancement of all creaturely existence.”<sup>81</sup>

In this context, Paul highlights another aspect to be considered: “It is really frightfully difficult to understand how the Church of England works [...]. For the ordinary layman [...] this really is a stumbling block.”<sup>82</sup> How are laity to participate in an institution if they cannot understand its structure? In addition, a too complicated structure might prevent people from seeing where they could become active. A similar problem arises when looking at the Anglican Communion as a whole. It is an extremely complex entity. “Such openness and freedom leads on to the potential for considerable

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<sup>78</sup> Meyers: “Liturgy and Society”, 172.

<sup>79</sup> Parts of this subsection presuppose a very high level of commitment. Some aspects even entail almost a kind of “professional laity” in the sense that they work fulltime for the church. Doubtless this is not and cannot be the norm for the majority of the laity. However, these aspects are discussed here to highlight what structural possibilities for the laity are, at least theoretically, conceivable, though the level of practical realisation of those may vary for the individual layperson.

<sup>80</sup> Rhymes, “Place of the Laity”, 25f.

<sup>81</sup> Hall: *Thinking the Faith* (1991), 445.

frustration and misunderstanding, especially among ecumenical partners.”<sup>83</sup> This does neither further lay participation on a more global level nor a more catholic perspective.

Undoubtedly, one of the more challenging concepts for new forms of community structure is the so-called *Total Ministry*, which sets out from the common priesthood of all believers and consequently tries to redefine quite radically the role of the ordained ministers.

“The sacrament of Baptism draws individuals into a community empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform all the functions necessary to the fullness of Christian life [...]. [...] the purpose of the ordained ministry is to facilitate the ministry of the whole Church, not to act in its place.”<sup>84</sup>

Here, there is a strong notion of the ministry of the ordained clergy being to help all the people to minister themselves. This concept certainly requires a very high degree of lay participation. It could almost be said that in this model the clergy participate in the ministry of the laity:

“ministry is the calling of the congregation, and leadership does not rest in the clergy but in the congregation’s elected representatives. [...] Diaconate, priesthood and episcopate are in the end not restricted to a clerical caste [...], but describe modes by which *all* Christians live in the world.”<sup>85</sup>

According to John Kater<sup>86</sup>, this model of leadership has been put into practice quite successfully. The question is how such a model, designed for individual parishes and congregations, can be applied to the level of a diocese or a national church.

Whereas *Total Ministry* is obviously a more radical proposal, Mark Birchall presents a short list of some more basic possibilities for shared leadership, such as pastoral teams, house groups, head of department teams, and so forth.<sup>87</sup>

Such diversity is simply a pastoral necessity. Parishes in different parts of the world need different forms of communal leadership. “The variety of approach arises inevitably from the varying gifts of the clergy and laypeople concerned, and from the vitality or otherwise of the local congregation. The more traditional its expectations, the more time and care must be taken in introducing new ideas.”<sup>88</sup> Above all, great care must be taken to ensure that new concepts do not overload or “over-church” laypeople, for there are limits to the amount of time and energy they can put into church activities

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<sup>82</sup> Paul, “Place of Laity”, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Deuchar: “The Role of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Anglican Communion”, 111.

<sup>84</sup> Kater: “Alternative Patterns for Ministry: North and Central America”, 127.

<sup>85</sup> Kater, “Alternative Patterns”, 128.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Kater, “Alternative Patterns”, 126-129.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Birchall: “The Case of Co-operate Leadership in the Local Church”, 54.

<sup>88</sup> Birchall, “Co-operate Leadership”, 54.



on top of their everyday life. Also, the discussion of lay participation in leadership should not dominate over the more pressing issues of being the Church in the world.

In this context attention must be drawn to the fact that in many cases lay participation in leadership means male lay participation. Despite many Anglican churches now ordaining women, the actual leadership of the Church remains in the hands of men. Thus, “an increasing number of women believe that the Church would more closely represent the body of Christ if leadership were shared more equally between men and women and if the concerns of women were more clearly understood.”<sup>89</sup> This appears to be an essential issue especially, though not exclusively, in the so-called Third World countries for it is here that an improved and furthered role of women within the Church could have a positive impact on the role of women in society at large.<sup>90</sup> Finally, “the vision of women within this Communion is to point to a style of leadership that has less in common with the ‘rulers of this world’ and more with the servant Lord”<sup>91</sup>. There may be no guarantee that women are immune against falling prey to the hunger for power. However, they are certainly right to highlight necessary changes in order for the Church to become more the Kingdom of God.

### **6.4.3 Anglican Laity as Church in the World – Current Issues**

Despite some differences in theological emphasis and perspectives between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, being engaged in secular affairs has traditionally been considered the domain of the laity in both denominations. In the Anglican Communion the point of discussion, insofar as there is a theological question, is whether the laity are as individual Christians or as Church in the world. In dealing with secular affairs, the question is not so much what is the task of the laity and what is reserved for the clergy. Rather, the question is what are the most urgent issues to be dealt with. However, these are as diverse as the earth is. Hence any attempt to present a full list of all possible tasks for the laity would inevitably fail. Therefore, in the context of discussing lay participation, I will only point out some issues that highlight crucial aspects of engaging in secular affairs, such as focus and range.

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<sup>89</sup> Wilde: “Working with Women in the Congo”, 286.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. also the following subsection.

<sup>91</sup> Jamieson, “Women, Church and Ministry”, 360.

Not only in the institutional church but also for the laity as Church in the world, one of the key topics is undoubtedly the debate on the role of women in the Church. As the majority of Anglican churches now ordain women, the focus of debate has shifted to some extent. Whereas Catholics focus strongly on women's ordination, lay Anglican women address issues that are, in traditional terminology, more lay issues. As the following paragraphs will illustrate, lay participation of women has many more pressing problems to address than "simply" that of ordination.

In many parts of the world women are still regarded as inferior. As I have already indicated, it is here that the Church has to play a major part to promote equality of women. Thus, Brigalia Bam, when writing about South Africa, describes a situation that is true for many parts of the world:

"It was obvious that we should be concerned about the place of women in the Church. This within the context of the role of women in our new society where legislation assures them their equal place, but attitudes still remind them of the secondary nature of that position. [...]  
[...] If the Church is to be a change agent [...], bringing about the healing of our nation through reconciliation, it has to be a model of the sought-after society where we are sisters and brothers under God."<sup>92</sup>

The basic claim behind this is that the Church should be a challenging force to develop true equality and justice for everybody. Yet, in order to be able to address the problems, it is essential that the Church begins to acknowledge the existence of the problems that are to be faced. However, this is one of the main points of criticism brought against the Church concerning the situation of women. As Esther Mombo illustrates:

"Although the Kenyan Anglican Church, like most other Churches, is known [...] as a voice for the voiceless, its own structure renders it incompetent as a good example in dealing with most issues that concern women. [...]  
Most women do not reveal mistreatment [...] because the Church is silent or because it will deny its occurrence. The Anglican Church in Kenya has denied the existence of marital rape."<sup>93</sup>

The accusation here is that the Church refrains from putting the demand for justice into practice. Yet, to be fair, this is certainly a point of criticism that could be applied, in one way or another, not only to the Anglican Communion but also to every church. This also shows that secular affairs cannot be the exclusive category used to describe the lay apostolate. For only if women can participate as equals within the churches, is there a chance that the churches can convincingly contribute to bringing

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<sup>92</sup> Bam: "All about Eve: Woman of Africa", 351f.

<sup>93</sup> Mombo: "Resisting *Vumilia* Theology", 220ff.

about true equality for all also in society at large. Therefore all attempts to ascribe a specific field of action to one group or the other must carefully consider the implications involved. As in the case of the African women, lay participation in the institutional church might in fact have to precede participation in secular affairs. Generally speaking, this shows that there cannot be a final and absolute definition of the field for the lay apostolate.

However, Mombo highlights another important aspect of lay participation in the world. It is the question of priority. Mombo illustrates the problem clearly with the example of the Mother's Union in Kenya:

"Since the aim of MU [Mother's Union] is to promote and support women to be 'good mothers and wives', it seeks to develop Christian values and foster positive attitudes among the families. Because of its strong emphasis on the 'traditional family', MU sidelines certain categories of women such as single mothers."<sup>94</sup>

Now, there is nothing wrong with an organisation within a church promoting values of that church.<sup>95</sup> However, the value any group promotes does not allow looking down other people. Thus Mombo criticises that the promotion of the 'traditional family' may lead to neglecting of women in need who do not fit into the categories of the Mother's Union. According to Mombo, "one would expect the issue of violence against women to be a priority to the MU [...]. However, [...] MU gives an impression that its members are not violated and if they are, it is because the individual has a problem in managing her family."<sup>96</sup>

To put the argument in more theoretical terms, some groups are too introspective and too selective in their choice of priorities and targets. When the laity are engaging in the world, they must have two points of departure, their Christian perspective *and* the situation of world as it really is and not as they would like to have it. Lay participation as Church in the world must always take great care not to fall prey to the danger of trying to solve some problems by excluding them from their agenda.

Especially in Africa and Asia, there is good reason for stressing the healing ministry of the Church. "Its purpose has been to bring to people in need all that can be done to relieve suffering [...]. In all parts of the world there are Christian centres seeking to make men and women whole, including many that are ecumenically based [...]."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Mombo, "Resisting", 221.

<sup>95</sup> It is far from my intention to discredit the Mother's Union. It serves merely as an example here to illustrate problems that every Christian might fall prey to.

<sup>96</sup> Mombo, "Resisting", 221.

<sup>97</sup> Storr: "The Healing Ministry of the Anglican Church", 271.

It is certainly in the field of health care that particularly the laity are to play their part. Moreover, Fannie Storr also reminds us that the needs of the people must supersede denominational differences. Here the laity as God's People have indeed an ecumenical and catholic ministry that needs theological reflection and official acknowledgement. This is why there must be an ecumenical lay theology, for secular affairs are virtually never mono-denominational but ecumenical. The issue of healing ministry shows that the range and ecumenical dimension of lay participation in the world must never be underestimated.

This is, finally, also one reason why another important field for lay participation, or to be more precise for the Church engaging in the world, has to be ecological issues. Although the theology of creation has always been a part of Christian teaching, environmental issues have not always topped the agenda.<sup>98</sup> Yet, "there is no way of avoiding environmental crises globally and locally."<sup>99</sup> Again, the laity are to be active on all levels. However, so Christabel Chamarette, there is also another positive side effect to the Church becoming more 'Green'.

"The demonstration of relevance of faith to the needs of society and political issues is not unrelated to young people feeling that the Church and faith are relevant to their world and seeking active involvement in political activism as an expression of their faith."<sup>100</sup>

Above all, the Church engaging in ecological issues can have a double effect. First, working for the environment is also exercising a form of healing ministry. It also shows the relevance of the Church for the modern world. Second, there is the chance of this engagement bringing the world back into the Church. The more relevant the Church appears to the world the more people might be inclined to come to the Church. This illustrates, above all, that reflections on lay participation as "engaging in secular affairs" must consider how such participation could help to show the continuing relevance of the Church for the modern world. Thus, Chamarette's conclusion is not only correct for ecological aspects but generally for the laity being the Church in the world:

"The authentic body of Christ is a prophetic church which plays an active role in community [...] concerns and has a particularly Christian, biblical or spiritual perspective to offer. [...] The Anglican Church has taken steps by acting as a prophetic voice to address the unwillingness of governments to act on these crucial ecological issues sometimes only on an individual basis but also at a congregational, Church leadership and community participation level."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Chamarette: "An Anglican View of Ecological Issues in the Australian Context", 197.

<sup>99</sup> Chamarette, "Ecological Issues", 201.

<sup>100</sup> Chamarette, "Ecological Issues", 198.

<sup>101</sup> Chamarette, "Ecological Issues", 201.

Ultimately, not only the Anglican churches should be such “prophetic voices” in the world but all Christians, laity and clergy alike, from any denomination.

## 7. Anglicanism and Laity: Individual Positions and Perspectives

As the previous chapter has shown, there is no such thing as a single official Anglican theology, also the Anglican Communion is not just one centrally organised and structured church. Thus, generalisations have to be treated with great care and, unlike Roman theology, the distinction between official and unofficial positions is not always so clear.

So far, therefore, I have tried to sketch out a rough framework of what appears to be the main aspects of lay theology in the context of the Anglican Communion. This chapter now tries to outline some individual positions and perspectives. Without any claim to completeness, my intention is to indicate the range and scope of Anglican thought regarding the laity. First, I look at Canon Law, illustrating some basic differences between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The second section then discusses *Working as One Body* because this document allows some insight into the ecclesiological self-understanding of the Church of England. The following sections attempt to highlight specific aspects of Anglican lay theology, such as authority in the Church, or specific perspectives, such as the view of the Australian Bruce Kaye.

### 7.1 Anglican Canon Law

Canon Law can hardly be the main source for lay theology; nonetheless it should be the result of theological reflections. So, the different constitutions of churches will also reveal something about their ecclesiological self-understanding and how this is put into practice in each institution.

Before concentrating on the laity it is necessary to observe some basic differences between Anglican Canon Law and the Roman Catholic CIC. To begin with, there is no such a thing as one common Anglican Canon Law. There are some common aspects within the Anglican Communion but this must not be mistaken for a universal code of law. In contrast to the one CIC in Roman Catholicism, the Anglican Communion has mainly particular or local laws and constitutions. Therefore, I will outline only some basic shared aspects and concentrate mainly on the Canon Law of the Church of England.

Compared to the CIC there is a remarkable absence of a legal definition of the laity within Anglicanism; thus many Anglican churches do not have any definition of the laity in their laws.<sup>102</sup> For example, the *Canon Law of the Church of England* has a whole section on “lay officers of the church” (= section E)<sup>103</sup> but it does not offer a definition of the laity as such. “Laity” simply appears as a term that apparently does not require any further legal definition. It seems to be taken for granted that the meaning of “laity” is clear. For the purpose of Canon Law “laity” appears to be understood, by some implicit agreement, as people “who are not episcopally ordained ministers in holy orders and as such [...] the parochial laity consists of all non-ordained residents of a parish.”<sup>104</sup> This implicit definition seems to be in close proximity to the CIC’s can.207. However, the Church of England’s definition has not been codified. It is just a working definition and not a legal statement as such. If at all, the debate is on membership and not on the status, role, and being of the laity. As a result, this leaves a certain legal ambiguity regarding the Anglican laity. Hence, due to the lack of definition it is very difficult for the laity to claim certain positions or rights. This might appear as rather negative for the laity. However, with no proper rules at hand it is also difficult for the clergy to exclude the laity on legal grounds. Consequently, a restrictive document such as the Vatican Instruction of 1997 is virtually impossible within Anglicanism. Yet, at the same time the question is whether and to what extent Canon Law can and should reflect development in theological positions. As Doe describes the discrepancy in the Church of England:

“Though theologically the church has moved towards an enhanced view of the laity [...], there is no separate treatment of the laity in the law of the Church of England [...]. Rights of lay people are extensive but the Church of England prescribes no comprehensive canonical ministry for the laity [...].”<sup>105</sup>

However, the Church of England is no exceptional case. This “legal” absence of the laity is apparently widespread throughout the Anglican Communion. As Doe explains, “an obvious lacuna in Anglican canon law is a developed treatment of the common ministry of the laity. [...] seldom does the law of churches present a distinct compendium, under a separate title, of the particular rights and duties of non-office holding lay people.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Doe: *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion. A Worldwide Perspective* (1998), 160f.

<sup>103</sup> All my comments here are based on *The Canons of the Church of England* (2000 (6<sup>th</sup> ed.)). (=CCE)

<sup>104</sup> Doe: *The Legal Framework of the Church of England* (1996), 222. Cf. also Hill, M.: *Ecclesiastical Law* (1995), 217.

<sup>105</sup> Doe, *Legal Framework*, 221.

<sup>106</sup> Doe, *Canon Law – A Worldwide Perspective*, 164.

Admittedly, it might be desirable that theological developments were reflected in Canon Law. Yet, as there is still a lot of theological uncertainty about the being and ministry of the laity it is perhaps advisable to be careful instead of codifying some preliminary results. Nevertheless, it is quite astonishing that laity are still largely not part of the legal framework of Anglican churches.

However, in contrast to this absence of the laity in general, Anglican laws are rather more specific about lay officers in the church.<sup>107</sup> Thus, in the Church of England the laity are seen as an integral part of the church government.<sup>108</sup> As lay offices are listed those of Churchwarden<sup>109</sup>, Reader<sup>110</sup> and Lay Worker<sup>111</sup>. Though all these offices require official licensing, this is not to be confused with ordination. There is a strong emphasis that wardens, readers and lay workers remain laypeople. Their licensing is clearly no ordination: However, is this actually the perception of the public? Does the act of official licensing not contain the possibility that some laypeople are put aside and thereby constitute a group that might be misunderstood as a pseudo-clerical status? In any case, ultimately it matters that these offices should help to ensure that the mission of the Church is fulfilled and not so much whether people might confuse licensing and ordination.

What is also interesting, is that in the sections on these lay offices in the Church of England there is no stress on obedience to a hierarchy. The emphasis seems to be more that these people are office holders in the Church than people working “under” a member of the clergy.

Another interesting aspect is the status of deaconesses who “may accept membership of any lay assembly of the Church of England.”<sup>112</sup> This poses an interesting question: if deaconesses have received at least some form of ordination and, at the same time, they can be part of the laity, at least in some respect, does this in consequence not question positions that stress ordination as the sole basis for the lay/clergy distinction? The canon on deaconesses seems to put this distinction into some grey area.

This short and sketchy discussion of Anglican Canon Law has shown that there are certainly questions and problems that need to be addressed. However, it has also shown that there are definitely some alternatives to the Roman model of Canon Law.

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Doe, *Canon Law – A Worldwide Perspective*, 172.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. CCE, A6.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. CCE, E1-3.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. CCE, E4-6.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. CCE, E7&8.



Particularly the question must be asked to what extent the ministry of the laity needs to be regulated and codified and how much can be left open. Yet, the other side of the problem is whether rules that do not take into account a large portion of the relevant church can indeed claim to be a proper legal framework for that church. The question is whether the different codes of law are indeed codes of the respective churches or just codes of and for the clergy. Thus Doe summarises the English law, when compared to the CIC:

“The law of the Church of England is lagging behind theological developments which recognise the centrality of the ministry of the laity. It contains no comprehensive statement of common lay rights and duties similar to that in Roman Catholic canon law. In this sense it fails to guide the laity in its ministry. This may be seen as a distinct advantage: the assumption is that the Church of England has chosen to place few duties on the laity [...]; the consequence is a greater degree of lay freedom.”<sup>113</sup>

## 7.2 Working as One Body

*Working as One Body*<sup>114</sup> is the report of the Archbishops' Commission on the organisation of the Church of England. It is essential for the analysis of this paper to bear in mind its status. It is a report written by a commission containing various recommendations for possible structural changes to overcome some of the complexity of the Church of England's organisation. WOB has by no means the same status as *Eucharistic Presidency* or the documents of Vatican II. Still, the members of the commission were all highly qualified theologians; many of them are ordained clergy. It is, therefore, certainly fair to take the ecclesiology of WOB to represent mainstream Anglican thought.

The report begins not immediately with the recommendations for restructuring but it uses the first two chapters to develop an ecclesiological framework for these recommendations. It is this framework that is of particular interest for the discussion of the laity in Anglican theology.

However, one should note a further basic detail: calling the report *Working as One Body* indicates its general ecclesiological attitude. There are many people and groups in the Church. Likewise, there is also a multitude of gifts. However, different as they

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<sup>112</sup> CCE, D1.5.

<sup>113</sup> Doe, *Legal Framework*, 250.

may be, ultimately they must work together and complement each other as they are all part of and share in the one vocation of the one Church. It is in the light of this basic proposition that the first two chapters, “the organisation of the Church in the light of the gifts of God” and “the mission of the Church and the task of this commission”, must be seen. Thus the report begins with a general but fundamental statement on the self-understanding of the Church of England.

“The Church of England is part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The Archbishops’ Commission made this its starting point: the understanding that the Church is an integral part of the mystery of God’s reconciling work in his world, and an embodiment of the presence of God in his world. [...] It [the Anglican tradition] combines leadership by bishops with governance by synods representing bishops, clergy and laity.” (WOB1.1)

This first paragraph is looking at the Church of England as a whole. In order not to miss essential elements of this paragraph, it is necessary to read it together with the following paragraph that looks slightly more at the individual in the Church of England.

“The Anglican tradition calls for every member of the Church to share responsibility. [...] we all need to have a right relationship with those who discharge the responsibilities of the leadership on behalf of the whole Church. We need to know that those who have been called to these responsibilities are properly accountable but we need to feel able to trust them to use their own gifts faithfully in the furtherance of the gospel and the service of the Church.” (WOB1.2)

It seems fair to say that those two paragraphs contain some essential aspects for Anglican ecclesiology. The Church of England considers itself as part and embodiment of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. As such it is part of “God’s reconciling work”. Thus, it is ultimately God who is at work in the Church. Though the Church is not a human creation, as an institution the Church of England must nevertheless have a structured form of church government. Yet, although there is episcopal leadership, the bishops are not detached or independent from synodical structures. Thus throughout the report the phrase “bishop-in-synod” is frequently used. There is not a single member who is not called to share in the Church’s mission.

This has also implications for the understanding of the Anglican Communion, because “in some ways it is the diocese, not the parish, that is at the heart of Anglican organisation. [...] Each diocesan bishop is, in a very real way, autonomous in his (or her) own diocese.”<sup>115</sup> Yet, if a bishop in his diocese is, from a theological and not an

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<sup>114</sup> *Working as One Body. The Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England* (1995). All references given as (WOB number).

<sup>115</sup> Scaats: “Orders and Officers of the Church”, 192.

administrative point of view, the highest ecclesiastical unit in the Anglican Churches, and if laypeople are an integral part in the government of the individual dioceses, then it can be said that the laity participate up to the highest levels of Church government in the Anglican Communion.

Still, even more important, further down WOB 1.1 emphasises that church government is never an end in itself but it exists to enable "Christian discipleship". Thus, the emphasis is not on obedience of the people but on the leadership serving the people. Another aspect is that of responsibility. It is all the people in the Church who share responsibility for the Church. Yet, there are also some people who, as a consequence of their vocation and ministry, have a special responsibility to carry. The framework for this special or particular responsibility is worth noting. On the one hand, such a responsibility should be supported and carried by the trust of the other members of the Church. On the other, people with such special ministries are not above the other people but are accountable for how they exercise their ministry. This aspect of accountability of leaders towards all the people in the Church (and not only to God) appears to be more developed and more explicitly expressed in the Anglican tradition. Yet, it might be that precisely such an element of explicit accountability could help to overcome the notion, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, that hierarchical structures are patronising and do not take people seriously.

Before addressing the question *who* is doing what in the Church of England, the report asks *what* is actually to be done. In other words, before reflecting on the diversity of ministries and vocations WOB looks at the mission of the Church as a whole. This mission is

"to be *one*, that is to proclaim and to embody the reconciliation [...] in Christ; to be *holy*, to have about it the marks of the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit; to be *catholic*, that is to be [...] for all people, at all times, in all places; and to be *apostolic*, to witness to the authentic and liberating gospel as taught by the apostles." (WOB1.7)

Yet, the Church is not only to look back at its foundation. It must also work in the present for the future. Thus, adaptation of the truth of salvation to changing circumstances is essential and unavoidable. Therefore, WOB 1.8 continues that "the Church must be a learning community. [...] Thus the Church is a school in which the gift of teaching is acknowledged, but in which all the teachers are themselves pupils, enjoying mutuality of encouragement and correction." (WOB1.8)

It is important that teaching and learning are inseparably interrelated and that this is a mutual process that involves all people in the Church. The theological basis for this is that all are fundamentally equal for “from baptism derives the radical equality of status enjoyed by all the baptised.” (WOB1.10) This obviously has implications for the basic structure of the Church as an institution. The Church

“is not a democracy [...]; nor is it a line-management hierarchy [...]. So far as status is concerned, there is none higher than that of being baptised into Christ. The basis of the Church’s polity can only be that of the recognition of the many diverse gifts graciously given to God’s people, to be used co-operatively to his glory and for the salvation of humanity.” (WOB1.16)

This is also the reason why synodality is of such importance in the Anglican tradition. It is “the idea of leadership by an episcopate which has consulted with, and *gained the consent of*, both their fellow clergy and the laity.” (WOB1.18, my italics)<sup>116</sup> The laity are not only to be consulted but also their consent is to be gained. The Anglican tradition seems here to go one step further than the Roman Catholic tradition. Still, it must be asked how this consent is to be gained, particularly if we follow K ung’s argument that the majority does not necessarily indicate the right way.

The second chapter of the report looks at the mission of the Church of England. It identifies a threefold mission of worship, service and witness.

“Worship is the response of the creature to creator [...]. The traditions of spirituality, worship and sacramental life are indispensable to the identity of the Church of England.” (WOB2.3)

“Service to the community is the second aspect of the [...] tripartite mission. [...] The two are inseparable. Worship without active love in the world leads to spiritual ghettos.” (WOB2.5)

Already the first two aspects make it clear that for Anglicans the question of participation in the Church cannot be solely about liturgical functions. The Church is only where liturgy and life in the world relate and influence another. Yet, the third aspect must also not be ignored.

“Witness is the third element of the Church’s mission. [...] it is clearly fundamental to the early Church’s understanding of its task. [...]

One of the most potent ways by which the early Christians witnessed was by the new form of corporate existence, embodying a distinctive personal lifestyle – a ‘life worthy of God’ [...].” (WOB2.14f)

In my opinion, this paragraph points out one of the most crucial aspects of the debate about lay participation in all denominations. Active participation in the Church does not begin with special duties or particular ministries. Rather, participation is first

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. also WOB2.28: “The bishop must exercise his role in consultation with his fellow bishops and the lay and ordained people of the national Church.”

and most important of all a matter of being. Thus, being a Christian and living accordingly is the actual beginning and fundamental dimension of what constitutes participation in the Church. This step must precede any further form of participation.

In the third chapter the report turns to some structural problems in the Church of England. Admittedly, at first sight these problems are often of a practical nature. However, they also highlight in which way an increased lay participation could cause more damage than help to the Church. In WOB3.4-6, the report lists some basic current problems, such as too many “autonomous or semi-autonomous bodies with [...] overlapping functions” (WOB3.4) causing confusion and duplication of effort, too much work is tied up with committee, a lack of coherence on national level and so forth. Ultimately, “while many people participating in the Church’s governance can stop things happening, few [...] can make things happen.” (WOB3.6)

This list of problems illustrates that more and better lay participation is not primarily about an increased number of committees or more members in the existing ones. It is essential that the discussion of this context includes the issue of dealing with tasks in a proper and efficient way. Likewise, it is also extremely important that all efforts of various bodies in the Church are coordinated as well as possible. Consequently, “it is crucially important that the Church has the means to communicate effectively what it is doing at all levels.” (WOB3.24) However, not only communication structures are necessary but there is also the need for openness in the church. Any tendency towards secrecy should be avoided at all levels of the institutionalised church.<sup>117</sup> In connection with these more practical issues, the report stresses that it is absolutely vital “that things are done at the right level, so that nothing is done by the national machinery of the Church which in ecclesiological terms should rightfully be done [...] at the diocesan or some other level.” (WOB3.32) Thus, the report recommends that more work should be organised according to the doctrine of subsidiarity. Obviously, this recommendation also applies to lay participation.

Chapter five presents a more detailed proposal of what has by now become the Archbishops’ Council. The report makes it very clear that the council is not to be a solely clerical body but it is to consist of bishops, clergy and laypeople. (Cf. WOB5.8) It is indeed remarkable that qualification and not ordination is to be a key criterion: “Although it seems likely that the finance chairman would be lay and the ministry chairman

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<sup>117</sup> This is certainly an issue to be addressed within the Catholic Church regarding issues such as appointment of bishops, the genesis of Vatican documents, and so forth.

a bishop, there would be no prior requirement other than that these important posts should be filled by the person (lay or ordained, male or female) best qualified for the job.” (WOB5.12) Admittedly, defining the criteria for determining the best-qualified person is a problem in itself. However, it is undoubtedly remarkable that the issue of these appointments is not based on the difference between clergy and laity.

Regarding the practical work of the council, WOB expresses a basic assumption that, in my view, should be the basic question for any participation in the Church, regardless of whether it is a matter of clergy or laity.

“The many people who serve on Church bodies at the national level undoubtedly feel committed to what they do, but often they do not carry any personal responsibility for delivering in practice the ends which they have willed. Moreover, there can in some instances be too ready an assumption that the purpose of someone’s membership of an organisation is to guard a particular interest [...] rather than to work positively for the advancement of a shared purpose of the Church.” (WOB5.23)

This seems to be an absolutely crucial question. What is the motivation behind participation in the Church? Is it the intention of fulfilling the Church’s vocation and mission or is it the need to boost the ego or to defend a particular party line regardless? The aspect of responsibility is also worth noting. A greater level of responsibility might commit people more to their tasks. However, there is also the danger that the fear of too much responsibility might put off some from taking up some position within the Church. While there is much to be said for the connection between doing something and being responsible for it, the other side of the coin should not be overlooked either.

Chapter six deals with the General Synod. From an ecclesiological point of view, this is a most interesting entity for it is to be an assembly that “embodies the theological principle [...] that the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church as a whole.” (WOB6.8) That is why

“the Church must have a national body to govern, and facilitate its work. If it is to be true to itself, an Anglican church must incorporate within such a body the episcopal leadership [...], and representatives of the clergy and laity. Those elements must be present if decisions on matters of controversy [...] are to be acceptable as reflecting the mind of the Church.” (WOB6.11)

This attitude is certainly a perspective that takes the notion of the *sensus fidei* seriously. The mind of the Church cannot be determined for the laity but only with them. This obviously has consequences for the understanding of the episcopal office:

“The bishops are best placed to propose broad directions [...]. But they would do so in consultation with the General Synod [...] because the Church has a tradition of communal as well as personal and collegial, episcopal [...]. The tradition of ob-

taining the consent of the Church recognises that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to the whole Church.” (WOB7.6)

It is certainly one of the strengths of this report that it always views structures in the context of the purpose of the whole Church. This is essential if ecclesiological debates are not to become fragmentary, distracted or sidetracked. Yet, bearing this larger framework in mind is also crucial for a positive debate on lay theology. The laity must always be seen, and can only be seen, in the context of the people of God as a whole.

### 7.3 Gillian Evans: *Authority in the Church*

The full title of Gillian Evans' book is *Authority in the Church: a Challenge for Anglicans*<sup>118</sup>. This is a clear indication that authority is not undisputed amongst Anglicans. Evans allows some insight into the issue of authority in the Anglican tradition and in particular how the role of the laity fits into that discussion. It is from this perspective that Evans enables a deeper understanding of Anglican lay theology.

Evans begins with reflecting on the concept of Anglican identity. She looks at this identity within the Anglican Communion and in the relation to other churches throughout the ages. For, perhaps, so Evans,

“we [Anglicans] should be finding that as our consciousness of the universality of the Church in our own day grows through ecumenical contacts and conversations, so must the awareness of the unity we share not only with earlier Anglicans but with all Christians in every age.”<sup>119</sup>

What Evans here does is basically to stress that every discussion of identity as well as authority must be based on the full awareness of the apostolicity and catholicity of the one Church. This is her basic and essential framework. Yet, as a further dimension, catholicity and apostolicity demand a synchronical as well as diachronical perspective. In addition, the latter does not only mean living the present in the light of the past, but entails also the consideration of future aspects. Consequently, “the Church has the freedom to discover what works best in a given situation, to be open to change, within the framework of God's purpose.”<sup>120</sup> The Church must adapt properly and adequately to the circumstances. However, it must never lose sight of its foundation. Thus,

“the characteristics of Christ's own exercise of authority are the model for the exercise of authority in the Church. [...] The power which is lodged in the Church

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<sup>118</sup> Evans: *Authority in the Church: a Challenge for Anglicans* (1990). (=EAC)

<sup>119</sup> EAC, 3.

<sup>120</sup> EAC, 18.

must, then, be the 'paradoxical power of the crucified', [...] reflecting both lordship and the service of Christ [...]. [...] most of the problems which have arisen about the exercise of authority in the church through the ages have been provoked by the suspicion that the lordship was outweighing the service."<sup>121</sup>

Christ's own ministry is *the* model for the Church. However, it is a model in terms of content not of form. Jesus Christ did not give his disciples a blueprint how the institutional side of the Church was to be organised. The institution must always be organised in the framework of the present reality of this world. Yet, this has consequences for Church structures:

"such this-worldly ordering will necessarily be provisional, in three senses: it will have reference to needs which will not be the same in the life to come [...]; it will be in part mutable ([...] at the practical level no arrangement in Church government can be regarded as permanent); it will be imperfect."<sup>122</sup>

There is no disrespect for Church structures in this. However, such structures are never an end in themselves. On the contrary, they are to serve the Church. Evans is therefore right to stress the provisional character of ecclesial structures.

Another key aspect of authority in the church is the priesthood of all believers and its relation to the ordained ministry. "At baptism every Christian receives a commission for ministry, which may be fulfilled in a multitude of ways [...]. All these ministries, taken collectively, make up the 'priesthood of all believers', and all Christians share equally in this common priesthood [...]."<sup>123</sup>

This is absolutely crucial. Although every believer has a share in the common priesthood, it only reaches its fullness as a communal ministry. It is only in community that the common priesthood is fulfilled. Yet, so Evans, this communal dimension applies also to the ordained priesthood, which should never be detached from the community it is to serve.<sup>124</sup> No ministry is exempt from this link with the community nor is it above the community, not even the episcopal office. Thus in the Church of England "the bishop is called 'to work with' his people 'in the oversight of the Church'. [...] The bishop has no powers apart from the community within he serves, and every member participates in his authoritative actions."<sup>125</sup> This is why collegiality does not necessarily only refer to the college of bishops but also means the bond between all faithful.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> EAC, 18.

<sup>122</sup> EAC, 19.

<sup>123</sup> EAC, 23.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. EAC, 23.

<sup>125</sup> EAC, 28.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. EAC, 41.



Looking at the exercise of authority in the Church throughout the centuries, Evans highlights that the calling of a Church council and membership in such a council was by no means always restricted to the ordained clergy. It was often kings who called councils.<sup>127</sup> Also, laypeople in councils are nothing new. That is one of the reasons why the laity have become integral parts of diocesan synods. In addition, the membership as such is not the problem but the way these synods are organised. "In the synodical structure the *laos* is divided into classes or 'houses' in manner which created an artificial class of 'laity' from those who are not bishops or clergy. That does not ease the problems of anticlericalism."<sup>128</sup>

From a theological point of view, Evans' comment is certainly worth thinking about. However, she does not sketch out how things could be changed, particularly if the episcopal leadership is to be maintained as she clearly desires it should be.

In this context, Evans makes the interesting suggestion that increased lay participation should not necessarily lead to more formal offices for laypeople:

"what is needed is not a thoroughgoing systematisation of the role of the whole people of God but rather a clear recognition of its indispensability, and the development of as many and various ways of exercising it as possible. [...] A balance of the formal and the informal is as important as a balance of the roles of oversight and of consensus, ordained and lay ministry [...]."<sup>129</sup>

Being and living the Church is as important and indispensable as structuring the institution. I think that Evans has highlighted a fundamental point. Not everything in the Church must, should or can be structured. Thus, "the structures in use at any given time in the Church's decision-making may [...] take many forms. The only things which are essential are the balance between the exercise of the ministry of oversight and the active involvement of the whole community."<sup>130</sup>

Evans does not offer a concrete model how this concept is to be put into practice. However, even without a practical model, she presents a theoretical and theological framework for discussing lay theology positively.

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. EAC, 44.

<sup>128</sup> EAC, 53f.

<sup>129</sup> EAC, 89f.

<sup>130</sup> EAC, 94.

## 7.4 Robin Greenwood: *Practising Community*

What Robin Greenwood presents in *Practising Community*<sup>131</sup> is certainly a very specific and particular approach to the question of ministry. As the subtitle indicates, Greenwood's focus is the task, vocation and ministry of the local Church. It is exactly this perspective that highlights a crucial aspect. Lay theology cannot be produced on its own. It must always be seen in the context of the whole church. It is from here that Greenwood's argument derives its strength as it is based on the task given to the whole Church present in the local church. The question of lay participation is ultimately what their contribution can be in fulfilling this vocation of the local church. Finally, even though Greenwood writes as an Anglican for the Church of England, there are many issues put forward that are equally true and worth reflecting on in and for other Christian denominations.

Central for Greenwood's understanding of local ministry are six key elements:

- “1. There is a biblical and theological imperative for collaborative ministry. [...]
2. Ministry belongs to the whole people of God by virtue of their baptism into Christ.
3. There is a common calling to all God's people to share in the service (ministry) of their local church.
4. The local church is the universal Church present in each locality.
5. The Trinitarian understanding of God and the theology of the Body of Christ point to a community of diversity in which all are entrusted with a ministry of costly reconciliation.
6. The role of the ordained ministry is to serve and service the whole ministry of the people of God.”<sup>132</sup>

The essential aspect of this definition is the fact that it is not a matter of choosing some aspects. Each element presupposes and, at the same time, demands the other five. Still, it should be highlighted here that the fundamental underlying themes are the notion of equality within God's people, the ministry of the whole people of God not just that of a small elite, and that this view is based on Scripture as well as on the fundamental experience of the history of salvation. Obviously, such a view has consequences for the relation of the laity and clergy. For him, equality, cooperation and togetherness are the key terms.

“It [local ministry] signals the end of an era in which the ministry of the clergy [...] was supreme. Now it is possible to say that there is no need of polarities – either clergy or laity. Both together, equally in partnership are being called by God for mission and ministry in and through the local church.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Greenwood: *Practising Community. The Task of the Local Church* (1996). (=GPC)

<sup>132</sup> GPC, 5f.

<sup>133</sup> GPC, 13.

To put this concept into practice Greenwood suggests the model of a *Local Ministry Team*. It should be added that Greenwood's suggestions are not purely theoretical speculations but his reflections are based on practical experience of working with such teams in a number of parishes in England. It appears that these teams have a great potential for a new understanding of ministry in and of the Church. For

“the essence of a Local Ministry Team is that it involves lay and ordained working together. [...] It links the local with the diocesan and the wider Church. [...] All teams work [...] are there to enable the ministry of others, to lead where appropriate, and above all to help others explore their own faith and grow. On a regular basis team members are asked to teach others what they have recently learnt. Team members must not serve more than three terms in office so the team naturally evolves and regenerates.”<sup>134</sup>

This model has certainly many positive aspects for how the ministry of the Church can be realised. First of all, although this model focuses on the local church, the model does not forget to link the local ministry with the catholic dimension of the Church. Second, in addition to this ecclesiological strength, it is very positive that here the laity and clergy work together. What is more, the idea is not that there should be now a group monopolising the ministry instead of the previously one ordained person who was somewhat set apart from the congregation. Rather, the activity of the team is directed towards the whole local church and beyond in order to enable everyone to fulfil his or her particular ministry. Third, this model acknowledges that neither the clergy nor the individual layperson knows everything. It stresses that the team is as much a learning group as it is leading and teaching others. Finally, membership in the team is not a lifetime appointment. This structure of constant renewal ensures that the team does not, so to speak, fossilise, that it is not always the same people who are active and that the team is enriched through ideas and experiences from new members. This concept can help ensure that the team keeps its vision open and, more importantly, never stops listening to what is happening in all the different parts of the local church.

Concerning lay theology there is one more crucial aspect. “Helping the clergy” can be a misleading phrase and suggest an inferior role for the ministry of the laity. Therefore,

“the Local Ministry Scheme moves beyond this stage to empowering every person equally, but differently, for collaborative responsibility. Team members themselves can take some time convincing that they are not in ministry at the mere goodwill of the clergy. For this reason the term ‘pastoral assistant’ is unhelpful. [...] it suggests

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<sup>134</sup> GPC, 14f.

that the laity are merely helpers of the clergy – ‘assistants’ rather than colleagues with specific but parallel ministries.”<sup>135</sup>

Greenwood is not arguing that the laity should take over all the tasks of the clergy. Rather he advocates an understanding of responsibility that is shared equally between clergy and laity.

He also stresses that Local Ministry also needs the ministry of the episcopate.

“The communion of Christians is rooted not only in the sacraments, word and local fellowship, but in the ministry of the episcopate. [...] If we are to talk in terms of centres at all, it is best that each local church should consider the Church to be two-eyed. Yes, of course where the bishop has his seat will be an important place, but [...] spiritually, *wherever* there is local mission and local Eucharist, there also the world Church has a ‘centre’.”<sup>136</sup>

For Greenwood the question is not either bishop or laity or local congregation but one as well as and together with the other. For him the aspect of communion is as crucial<sup>137</sup> as the interrelatedness of the different aspects of ministry.<sup>138</sup>

For Greenwood, it is the communion of the Trinity that demands *communio/koinonia* to be *the* key term for ecclesiology.<sup>139</sup> This communion must be realised within any particular local church, but also in the relation of local churches with each other and with the universal Church. Neglecting one of these two aspects means missing an essential point of such a Trinitarian ecclesiology. This is particularly true for any discussion of the Church’s ministry and structures. Thus, Greenwood suggests an ecclesiological compass in order to help determine the Church’s life today.

“The Church’s agenda [...] involves making connections in any one time and place between:

- the inherited tradition of 2000 years of Christian experience triggered by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- the promised presence of the Holy Spirit leading to the truth.
- the kaleidoscope of contemporary context.
- and the invitation to live in and work for, even now, God’s passionate desire for fulfilment of the whole creation.”<sup>140</sup>

This ecclesiological compass certainly does not answer all questions and problems in connection with the Church’s ministry. However, it is indeed a useful tool to avoid theologies that overemphasise one aspect and thereby distort the whole picture. It is for this same reason that Greenwood maintains, “ministry and church cannot be

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<sup>135</sup> GPC, 20.

<sup>136</sup> GPC, 27.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. GPC, 30f.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. GPC, 39.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. GPC, 48.

<sup>140</sup> GPC, 59.

separately defined”<sup>141</sup>. Equally, as the ministry is a task for the whole church, all members must be subjects and not objects of ministry. Likewise it follows that there can be no lay theology without and detached from a proper theology of the Church.

However, it is obvious that such a rethinking of ministry also requires some reflections of the role and task of the clergy. In this model where all ministries are inter-related “the parish priest has the particular task of being a distributing focus for the ministry team and the whole Church.”<sup>142</sup>

Regarding the structure of local churches, Greenwood’s model has undoubtedly a lot to offer. It is particularly good that he indicates how his ideas are to be put into practice. Nevertheless, one should also observe that Greenwood’s model is based on partly questionable assumptions. Basically, he is only looking at the explicit communities. The aspect of “Church in the world” is lacking to a considerable degree. The explicitly “churchy activities” are clearly presented as the dominant form of participation. It is almost as if the laity are expected to spend all their spare time doing work for the local church. There is hardly any expression of the fact that participation is also and primarily a way of life and not simply a “hobby-like” activity. Also, though Greenwood’s book still appears basically open-minded, the over-emphasis of the local church contains the danger of this perspective becoming ideological which can lead in turn to such practising communities becoming too introspective and almost sectarian in the sense of “no salvation outside our community model”.<sup>143</sup>

### 7.5 Bruce Kaye: *A Church Without Walls*

Bruce Kaye’s *A Church Without Walls*<sup>144</sup> is not discussed here because the laity is his main focus but rather because his book offers an approach that, though related to British theology, equally reflects the particular situation of the Anglican Church in Australia. This has the potential to suggest theological ideas not to be found in the European context.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> GPC, 61.

<sup>142</sup> GPC, 66.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. the tendency detectable in: Astin: *Body and Cell. Making the Transition to Cell Church* (1998).

<sup>144</sup> Kaye: *A Church without Walls. Being Anglican in Australia* (1995). (=KWW)

<sup>145</sup> It is not for this thesis to analyse the reasons for the genesis and evolution of these ideas. My analysis of Kaye intends only to present a broader picture of Anglican views on the laity.

For historical reasons the Church of England has always had its, more or less, secure place in English society. However, in Australia that role is far from being clear. Being a relatively young nation, the Church also has had to establish and work for its place.

“We [Australian Anglicans] have often been tempted to give up this ‘church in society’ tradition for a sectarian citadel. But to yield to such a temptation would be to separate ourselves from the profound strength in our Anglican tradition of our emphasis on the Incarnation as God’s presence in the world. It would also mean losing the vital truth that the church is a godly community of humanity where the distinction between clerical and lay is only a means to a more important end.”<sup>146</sup>

This paragraph contains some fundamental aspects of Kaye’s ecclesiology. The Church is essentially from God and orientated towards God and the distinction of clergy and laity is an instrumental one and not an existential one in this context. To speak, thus, of lay or clerical is not primarily an ontological question but one of trying to fulfil the vocation of the Church. Quite interesting in this context are the “Fundamental Declarations” of this church which, while mentioning some obvious commitments, also list one on which Kaye makes a remarkable comment: the commitment to “preserving the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons. [...] It is important to observe that the church simply undertakes to preserve this order. It does not thereby commit itself to a particular theological view about this order.”<sup>147</sup>

Admittedly it might be good to keep things open for necessary changes. However, it must be asked if there is no theological content to the threefold ministry why it should be preserved at all. Also, the people as the Church are not mentioned here. Yet, the laity in Australia have as a matter of fact had a role in the government of the church right from the beginning in 1847. However,

“there is little in the present constitution to tell us how this church views [...] the interactions of the lay people with society. In a sense that ought not surprise us too much, since this constitution is really about the domestic government of the church, not about its vocation and mission in the world. [...] therefore, the constitution gives us a somewhat misleading picture of the roles and interaction of the lay Christian Anglicans in society. The constitution is describing [...] a *vehicle* for the Christian mission, rather than the Christian mission itself.”<sup>148</sup>

One notes positively that Kaye does not equate the institution with the actual Church. However, this constitution and Kaye’s interpretation also raise a number of questions that do apply here but must also be faced by any other ecclesiology and lay theology. First, does Kaye’s view actually represent the “standard” reading of this con-

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<sup>146</sup> KWW, 7.

<sup>147</sup> KWW, 54ff.

stitution? Second, are the so-called normal people capable of making this distinction or do they simply perceive the Church as a mainly clerical body? Third, is it indeed possible, and if so, is it advisable, to have a constitution that considers only one side of the Church? Is a constitution that ignores the mission of the Church really a desirable one? Fourth, if it is to be a vehicle for mission and if the laity are an essential part of this mission, how can they be not included in the constitution? Is Kaye not perhaps contradicting himself there? Obviously, this constitution is not without its practical and theological problems.

These are ecclesiological questions that the church in Australia has to face. However, there also seems to be the theological potential to allow necessary improvements and changes.<sup>149</sup> It is in the light of this that Kaye interprets the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons and in particular the claim of their scriptural foundation. For historical scholarship, so Kaye,

“the notion that three orders of the kind being referred to here [in the Ordinal] are to be found in the New Testament seems entirely indefensible. What is more defensible is the idea that this kind of ministry might be seen to be *compatible* with what one finds in the New Testament. That does not say that there are not other patterns of ministry [...]”<sup>150</sup>

As Kaye again puts forward a position that allows great flexibility, the question must be asked what “compatible” means. Still, it is essential to see that Kaye’s main argument here is that the New Testament does not provide a blueprint for the institution church but rather presents what should be seen as the content and essence of the Church. This openness towards adaptation might well lead to the assumption that Anglican theology in Australia must have developed a powerful concept of the people of God as a whole, together with an appropriate lay theology. However, this is not the case. On the contrary,

“the Australian Anglican theological tradition shares with the modern generation the great problem from which Anglican theology around the world suffers, namely, the absence of a rigorous theology of the laity and of lay vocation. [...] the theological appreciation of the role of the laity, and a sense of Christian vocation in and of a pluralist society, has sadly gone begging.”<sup>151</sup>

A reason for this theological problem could be that religion and everyday life have become increasingly separated. Or possibly many people take religion nowadays as a place where they can escape from the daily routine. In any case this is why Kaye la-

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<sup>148</sup> KWW, 63.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. KWW, 73.

<sup>150</sup> KWW, 76f.

<sup>151</sup> KWW, 113.

ments the “clericalisation of theology”<sup>152</sup>. Australian theology focuses too much on the needs of the clergy while the laity as Church in the world are forgotten.<sup>153</sup> It should therefore be asked whether we conceive of lay participation of a way of mastering the daily routine or whether it is an attempt to flee it.

With regard to the clergy/laity distinction Kaye highlights a most interesting perspective, which results from the self-understanding of the Church in Australia.

“The church here is a community of Christians in which the lay/clergy distinction does not belong to the essential character of the church but is of practical benefit for it. [...] It seems to me, therefore, that the litmus test for a modern ecclesiology in Anglicanism is the role of the laity and the account that is given in that ecclesiology of the broader social and political framework with which the Christian community is located.”<sup>154</sup>

While there is much to be said for this approach in order to develop further an Anglican understanding of ecclesiology, it is particularly note-worthy that Kaye considers the lay/clergy distinction only to be of practical benefit for the Church. Taking into account that this distinction is often seen as something more negative, it would have been desirable if Kaye had spelt out his understanding in a bit more detail. However, from the context, it appears that for him the distinction is primarily a functional one and not an ontological one, and is only of secondary importance for Australian theology.

Looking at the development of the Anglican Church in Australia, Kaye makes a very critical remark concerning the development of lay ministries.

“Bishop Perry in Melbourne began the process of involving lay people in the conduct of church services. [...] it had the disastrous consequence that lay vocation in society was displaced by the development of lay ministry in the church. Because the challenge of developing a lay vocation has proved to be too difficult for us Anglican Christians in Australia [...], we have taken the soft option and developed lay ministry in the church.”<sup>155</sup>

As the tasks of being the Church in the world are so manifold and various, it is admittedly difficult to define what constitutes participation in the Church in that context. However, Kaye is unmistakably right in pointing out that this can be no excuse for leaving such questions aside. It would probably be fair to say that the danger perceived in the Australian Anglican Church is also present in many other churches and denominations. It is therefore absolutely crucial to develop an ecclesiology that also includes the dimension of the Church in the world because otherwise there is always the danger of being too narrow-minded in ecclesiological reflections. It is also for this reason that

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. KWW, 115.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. KWW, 149.

<sup>154</sup> KWW, 162.

<sup>155</sup> KWW, 202f.



Kaye is quite opposed to the continued discussion about lay presidency because it distracts from more urgent questions.<sup>156</sup>

The point is not that the laypeople should do nothing in the liturgy. On the contrary, active participation is essential. Yet, this participation must be put in the right framework and understanding of lay vocation. Thus,

“if we keep trying to make lay people church ministers, we will never come to terms realistically with our Christian obligation to engage with modern Australian society [...]. And until we assert the integrity, propriety and priority of lay vocation in society, we will never discover an appropriate role of service and servanthood for the ministerial order in the church.”<sup>157</sup>

Kaye’s argument may easily be misinterpreted as an argument for re-clericalising the Church. However, his goal is not clericalisation but fulfilling the vocation of the Church in the widest sense. In that respect he is certainly right to challenge current debates on lay participation. No such debate can avoid the question whether or not and to what extent it is only inward looking, focusing, as it does, on the institutional Church and not on the church in the world. That is why for Kaye participation of the laity in the liturgy must evolve from the participation in the world.

“Liturgy is [...] the enactment of our story [...]. By our involvement in this event we are building the faith which we seek to follow in our vocation in society. In that sense, liturgy is at once orderly, through the touchstone of the Prayer Book and the leadership of the ministry, and at the same time creative, in the quality of the participation and the imagination and style of our activities together. Perhaps it is because we have given such a central place to *The Book of Common Prayer* [...] that we have become so preoccupied with thinking that liturgy is equivalent to the use of a book. So our liturgy becomes a head-down, looking at the book, page number kind of event. That is a dramatic distortion of liturgy.”<sup>158</sup>

It is certainly not for me to judge on the appropriateness of this critique of a particular use of the Prayer Book. Yet, what needs to be considered is the point Kaye is making about liturgy in general and about participation in particular. Any participation and in particular that of the laity ought to begin with bringing the experience of everyday life into the liturgy. It is only then and through this “life-sharing” that liturgy becomes what it should be. Liturgy must not be mistaken for a set of formulae. If these formulae do not form a symbiosis with the life of the people gathered, then it is dead. What Kaye is arguing for, and I can only agree with him there, is that the discussion of lay participation in the liturgy must not be limited to who is doing what. The whole existence of all people concerned must be the framework for this discussion.

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. KWW, 203f.

<sup>157</sup> KWW, 204.

<sup>158</sup> KWW, 206.

However, if the laity are to engage in that way as Church in the world and, consequently, as the world in the Church, then they also need support and training that is adequate to their Christian vocation and to the needs placed before them in the society where they live. Thus,

“any kind of support for lay vocation must be accessible for the people for whom it is intended. A program which presumes taking a year off from their ordinary vocations simply does not begin to come to terms with the legitimacy of the demands that are placed upon the laypeople and their families by their occupations and civic obligations. [...] Lay theology means making the Christian understanding and insight available to those whose vocation is located in society and its institutions.”<sup>159</sup>

It has become a popular slogan in education to pick up people from where they actually are. This is and should be true for lay training and support too. It is not only the language and presentation that has to fulfil this requirement. It is also the organisation and structure that has to pass this test. What is more, if offers for lay training are tailored to suit the reality of the people in question then also the people are probably more likely to accept these offers and to have the feeling that they are taken seriously.

Taking all these aspects into account, Kaye sees the urgent need for a change in theology: “we need a theology [...] which is radical in the sense that it goes to the fundamental questions of our faith and understanding. It is [...] a question [...] of discovering God in the midst of the realities in which we now live in society.”<sup>160</sup>

## 7.6 Ruth Etchells: *Set my People Free*

The previous perspectives all more or less originated as books about ecclesiology with lay theology as secondary emphasis. Ruth Etchells takes quite a different approach. She goes the opposite way from the laity to ecclesiology. In *Set my People Free*<sup>161</sup>, lay theology and ecclesiology are intrinsically linked and interwoven.

Again it is the book's title that expresses a fundamental aspect of Etchells' argument. *Set my People Free* is the title for a lay challenge to the Churches. The wording of this title as well as Etchells' whole argument stresses that the core of lay theology and of lay participation is not about creating something new but about liberating powers and ministries that have always been present in the Church. This approach, however, requires a double perspective. On the one hand, it is necessary to investigate and research

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<sup>159</sup> KWW, 230.

<sup>160</sup> KWW, 232.

into the present and future of the Church to detect what changes are needed. On the other, it means looking into the history and tradition of the Church to see what is already there to fulfil these demands. Consequently, instead of an either/or-approach, Etchells repeatedly argues “that to be true to its Lord the church must be open to being a both/and church, with all the flexibility of possible structures that implies [...]”<sup>162</sup>

One aspect on which Etchells is particularly insistent is that the laity’s “non-churchy” activities should also be seen as part of their contribution to the witness and mission of the Church. “Yet there is a widely experienced imbalance between the value churches put on the ‘churchly’ activities of their lay members, and on their secular avocations, which often are almost disregarded as contributory to or part of the ‘kingdom’”<sup>163</sup>. It is obvious that this requires a change of attitude among the clergy as well as among the laity themselves. If the laity are indeed called to work in the world then this must also be acknowledged as an activity equally ‘churchly’. In this context Etchells highlights a possible ecclesiological misconception of the Church as something like Noah’s Ark. For

“the Ark was never meant to be the permanent home of the faithful! Could it be that as ‘church’ we have been clinging to the Ark even when it has reached the land we should claim in God’s name, instead of going into that world God declared his love for [...]?”<sup>164</sup>

For Etchells, quite rightly only an ecclesiology that overcomes this Ark-attitude can provide the theological ground and understanding that worldly activities can be and are indeed one form of participating in and being the Church. It is indeed only then that “lay” will no longer simply mean “those not ordained” but that being lay is perceived as “the active state of living the secular life to the glory of God [...] because it is a place – perhaps *the* place – where God is at work.”<sup>165</sup> It is for this reason that the clergy and the laity must work together because it is only if they are together that they become indeed the Church. Therefore the clergy should work with the laity and for them. The aim is not to act on behalf or instead of the laity but to help them to live and fulfil their calling.<sup>166</sup> Such a view does not reject any institutionalised form of church nor does it rule out the participation of the laity in the institution. Yet, it demands strongly a shift in focus and direction. Instead of concentrating on the institution as such there should be

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<sup>161</sup> Etchells: *Set My People Free. A Lay Challenge to the Church* (1995). (=ESPF)

<sup>162</sup> ESPF, 11f.

<sup>163</sup> ESPF, 14.

<sup>164</sup> ESPF, 41.

<sup>165</sup> ESPF, 58.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. ESPF, 60f.

more emphasis on the institution furthering the mission of the whole people of God.<sup>167</sup> In marked contrast to Greenwood, Etechells perceives lay participation far more as a way of living. There is only a secondary focus on extra activities in the explicit church community.

In this context, Etechells makes a remarkable comment. She points out that there is often the danger of over-resourcing the laity. While the laity do need resources, it is absolutely crucial "that such resourcing does not become so time-demanding, professionalising and ecclesiastically enculturating that they lose their lovely worldly immediacy and develop the very 'church-speak' which is such a barrier between the world and so many clergy and 'churchly' people."<sup>168</sup> In addition, Etechells outlines that not only laity in the world are at times "over-churched" but also that formal worship is often "worldless" in a sense that the secular vocation of the laity is not reflected at all. Admittedly liturgical worship is and should be, at least in parts, a counterpart to everyday life. Still, the world could be included, Etechells suggests, perhaps by "a twice-yearly service, once of re-commissioning, once of thanksgiving, when banners flaunted are of service at home, in business, in education, in being jobless and still serving God, in the health service, and so on."<sup>169</sup>

This does not require the liturgy to be re-written or re-invented. On the contrary, this concept simply wants the everyday life of the laypeople in the world to become an integral and acknowledged part of liturgical worship. If liturgy does not stretch out into the life of the world, there is the danger of behaving like the elder brother of the prodigal son (cf. Lk15), "working in God's local estate, the institutional church, preoccupied with its daily business, and gradually losing any real sense of grief over our missing siblings."<sup>170</sup> It is for this reason that the Church must never become detached from the world. Ultimately, the "work of the laity in the world, and the work of the laity in the church, are two faces of the same activity."<sup>171</sup> However, it means also that there is, so to speak, no church-free zone in God's creation. There is no boundary where the work of the Church stops. Consequently, we must think about lay participation in the widest framework possible.

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. ESPF, 62f.

<sup>168</sup> ESPF, 67.

<sup>169</sup> ESPF, 70.

<sup>170</sup> ESPF, 89.

<sup>171</sup> ESPF, 93.

Generally speaking this demands a great openness from everyone who tries to live his or her Christian vocation. As Etchells explains, the “first ‘experiencing God’ most unchurched people do is through the companionship of lay Christians, and they experience God only when those lay Christians offer unconditional friendship, as Jesus himself did.”<sup>172</sup> This attitude of openness towards others is absolutely crucial. For such an openness can realise what is meant when we speak of the Church as a community founded on love. Yet, there is one more aspect to it. In addition to what we as Christians, and in particular as laity, in the world do, it is far more important how we fundamentally are. Hence, for Etchells, regarding the role of the laity in the world, “there is no dividing line between evangelism, ‘telling the story’, and social engagement, ‘living the story’ in social relationships.”<sup>173</sup>

Ultimately all the work done in the Church, for the Church, and as the Church is determined by the basic “tension between the church as living expression of God’s love, having transcendental goals, and the church as an institution in the world, having immediate objectives.”<sup>174</sup> Both sides are important and cannot be ignored. On the one hand, concentration on purely secular objectives contains the danger of turning the Church into some kind of humanitarian charity organisation. On the other, exclusively focusing on transcendental goals easily leads to losing touch with reality. It is for this reason so crucial that laity and clergy, people inside the institution and outside in the world, are aware of their interdependence and of the need for collaboration.<sup>175</sup> So far the argument presented might give the impression that Etchells sees only little value in lay activities within the institutional church. Yet, this would be missing her point. She tries to highlight that such activities must be the consequence of and based on work in the world. It is this secular background that makes readers, laypreachers and lay workers so special for the Church. Thus, so Etchells,

“the glory of these people is that they belong equally in the secular world and in the institutional church, in a way no one else does. All of them have been publicly commissioned and accredited to certain liturgical and pastoral functions in the church: *but on the strict understanding that they keep also their secular identity* as workers in the world [...].”<sup>176</sup>

It is in these people that “church in the world” and the institutional church merge into one. This makes these people so important. It is here that a fruitful discus-

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<sup>172</sup> ESPF, 111.

<sup>173</sup> ESPF, 114f.

<sup>174</sup> ESPF, 135.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. ESPF, 136f.

<sup>176</sup> ESPF, 147.

sion of lay participation could possibly start. In addition, this perspective also might take into account that the amount of time and energy laypeople can offer for extra churchy activities is somewhat limited.

However, Etchells is also aware that she partly presents an ideal that has not yet been realised. One such aspect is that of the “selection process” for ordination. Etchells rejects the term “selection” as invalid. This may sound like a minor issue. However, there is an important subtext to it as this terminology also mirrors some basic attitudes regarding the understanding of ministry in the Church. Thus Etchells argues that the word “selection”

“suggests the ordained are a ‘select’ group, and this is the first step towards an inappropriate attitude to themselves and to the laity [...]. What we currently call ‘selection’ is actually ‘discernment of calling’ [...].

There should be a Board of Discerning Ministries to which all should come who feel that God is calling them to distinctive and fully committed service for him. It would involve equally the possibilities of ordained service, ‘churchly’ lay service, and ‘non-churchly’ lay service. [...] It would be to discern in each individual the particular and distinctive high calling to which God was summoning them [...]”<sup>177</sup>

Etchells argument is far more than a nitpicking fight about terminology. She shows that it is still most often only the clergy that is perceived to have a special vocation. What Etchells suggests is that the vocation of the laity should actually be taken seriously. Whereas ‘selection’ suggests that there is the distinction between having a vocation and not having one, ‘discernment’ takes a vocation as given, and only tries to explore the orientation of the individual vocation. Etchells’ approach may well be a way of overcoming the unhealthy competition and distinction between clerical and lay vocation. Both vocations are fundamentally part of the one vocation of the Church. Yet, the latter is not a result of the sum of the two previous ones. In this respect, Etchells certainly has sketched out a way to set the people in the Church free to *do* and, in that sense, *be* their ministries.

## 7.7 Comment

Clearly, taken individually, none of the authors and documents discussed in this chapter can be classified as *the* Anglican theology of the laity. However, together they highlight the range of Anglican lay theology, its positive elements as well as the more questionable aspects.

First of all it must be observed that Anglican lay theology shares with Roman Catholicism a strong denominational orientation. Ecumenical aspects are scarce, almost non-existent.

Second, in contrast to official Roman Catholic positions, documents such as WOB seem to take lay participation in church government for granted. What is even more important, WOB suggests that appointments for some positions of church government do not have to be linked to the question of ordination. This is certainly a challenge to rethink some Roman Catholic positions. The discussion of Anglican Canon Law has brought a similar result.

Third, according to Evans, it is not only a question *that* the laity participate in the exercise of authority in the churches. This issue must also always cause us to think about *how* such authority is exercised, even when it is a matter of laypeople so acting.

Fourth, it should be observed that Evans, Greenwood and at times Kaye too focus strongly on participation within the institutional church. Regarding this issue there are many good suggestions in their books. However, there is always the underlying danger of "over-churching" the laity, and in consequence presupposing participation that requires an unrealistic amount of time and energy. On the other hand, these suggestions tend to overlook the key aspect of living the lay apostolate in the world.

Fifth, although Kaye shows some awareness that engaging in secular affairs is essential for the laity, still he does not get much beyond the stage of raising the questions. In addition the situation of the Anglican church in Australia well illustrates how inculturation of lay theology is not just an issue for Third World countries, but also for first world countries. A Christian society cannot be taken for granted.

Finally, Etchells' book is a good complement to the other positions in this chapter for various reasons. She does not only try to overcome the notion of the layperson as the non-ordained, she also tries to integrate the secular affairs of the laity into ecclesiology. Likewise she tries to avoid focusing exclusively on the institutional church. Above all, she actually discusses the laity as such and not just as a secondary aspect of ecclesiology. Her book can certainly be a good starting point to overcome what I perceive as a major problem in Anglican theology. There are many good and promising ideas regarding the laity. However, rather regrettably, there are not many attempts to put these together into a systematic theology of the laity.

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<sup>177</sup> ESPF, 167f.

## 8. Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Dialogue

### 8.1 Introduction

So far the question of the laity has been addressed only within the context of each denomination individually. However, lay theology must also consider ecumenical dimensions and aspects. Thus, this chapter looks at the laity as they are depicted in the texts of ARCIC I and II.

The birth, or rather the conception, of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission is to be seen in the *Common Declaration*<sup>178</sup> of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in 1966. The expressed intention was “to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.”<sup>179</sup> ARCIC I began its work in 1969. In 1981 it published the *Final Report*<sup>180</sup>. The “Preface” to the *Final Report* clearly states the method and intention of ARCIC I. The work was carried out “in the spirit of Phil. 3.13, ‘forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead’, to discover each other’s faith as it is today and to appeal to history only for enlightenment, not as a way of perpetuating past controversy.”<sup>181</sup> Therefore, the *Final Report* is to be considered a document that is mainly looking forward to the future instead of dealing with the past. This implies also the need to develop a new, so to speak ecumenical, language. Such a new theological language might also find new ways of expressing a theology of the laity.

## 8.2 ARCIC I

### 8.2.1 The Final Report

The introduction to the *Final Report* states clearly that fundamental to all the statements is “the concept of *koinonia* (communion)”<sup>182</sup>. The heart of Christian *koinonia* is “union with God in Christ Jesus through the Spirit”<sup>183</sup>. However, it is not just a com-

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<sup>178</sup> Reprinted in Hill & Yarnold (eds.): *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* (1994), 10-11.

<sup>179</sup> *Common Declaration*, 11.

<sup>180</sup> ARCIC I, *The Final Report* (1982). (=FR, Section, Number).

<sup>181</sup> FR, “Preface”, no number given.

<sup>182</sup> FR, “Introduction”, 2.

<sup>183</sup> FR, “Introduction”, 5.



munion of individuals with God but there is also to be communion between all believers themselves. This communion has some basic features:

“the community is established by a baptism inseparable from faith and conversion, that its mission is to proclaim the Gospel of God, and that its common life is sustained by the eucharist. [...] The Church is the community of those reconciled with God and with each other [...]. It is also the reconciling community because it has been called to bring to all mankind [...] God’s gracious offer of redemption.”<sup>184</sup>

It is important to see that this understanding of *koinonia* predates, as it were, any further understanding of the Church. Any ecclesiology has to be compatible with this understanding of *koinonia*. It is also worth noting that here nothing is said about differences between the laity and the clergy. It would be wrong, though, to conclude that there is no difference. The *Final Report* is clearly far from doing that. However, it is essential to see that the point of departure is not the question what separates the people but what vocation they have in common. This is also stressed in the section on the Eucharist: “When we gather around the same table [...] and when we ‘partake of the one loaf’, we are one in communion not only to Christ and to one another, but also to the mission of the Church in the world.”<sup>185</sup> It is the whole People of God that is gathered round the Eucharistic table and it is also the whole People working in the world. One obvious question to ask is what implications this view might have for the Vatican understanding of the laity as located mainly in the secular field.

The section on ministry begins with the statement that there is a “diversity of forms of ministerial service [...] all of which are the work of one and the same spirit.”<sup>186</sup> Articles 5 and 6 then turn the attention to the New Testament, recalling that “within the New Testament ministerial actions are varied and functions not precisely defined. Explicit emphasis is given to the proclamation of the word and the preservation of apostolic doctrine, the care of the flock, and the example of Christian living.”<sup>187</sup> However, article 5 also stresses that considering these ministerial functions “some form of recognition and authorisation is already required in the New Testament period for those who exercise them in the name of Christ. Here we can see elements which will remain at the heart of what we today call ordination.”<sup>188</sup> In any case, the New Testament period was not a time free of authority and oversight. It is conceded that “the early churches may

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<sup>184</sup> FR, “Introduction”, 8.

<sup>185</sup> FR, “Eucharist”, 4.

<sup>186</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 2.

<sup>187</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 5.

<sup>188</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 5.

well have had considerable diversity in the structure of pastoral ministry, though it is clear that some churches were headed by ministers who were called *episcopoi* and *presbyteroi*.”<sup>189</sup>

It is obvious that from the beginning of the Church not all people were doing everything. Likewise, it is equally obvious that the form in which authority, ministries and oversight have come to be exercised have also been subject to change and development. Consequently, it should be possible to ask and demand that outward structures, not to be confused with the essential contents, should be changed if circumstances necessitate it.

Section II of “Ministry” turns its attention to the ordained ministry. According to article 7, “the goal of the ordained ministry is to serve this priesthood of all the faithful.”<sup>190</sup> This article thus emphasises that *within* the Church there are *two* ministries. However, these two are closely interrelated and are to serve the *one* mission of the Church.

In contrast to this, article 10 presents a rather surprising wording when stating: “Church and people have continually to be brought under the guidance of the apostolic faith.”<sup>191</sup> For, looking at the view expressed above, the question arises who these people are. Are they the non-baptised? If so, it would seem rather unconnected to the text to mention them here. On the other hand, if “people” is to mean the laypeople, this would imply a rather questionable opposition of Church and laity. There may be a tension between competing understandings in different sections of the text.

This seems confirmed in article 13. The ministers are members of the church community and, at the same time, they are set over and against the people in the Church.

“Not only do they [ordained ministers] share through baptism in the priesthood of the people of God, but they are – particularly in presiding at the eucharist – representative of the whole church in the fulfilment of its priestly vocation of self-offering to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12.1). Nevertheless their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood [...]. It exists to help the Church to be a ‘royal priesthood [...]’ (1 Pet 2.9).”<sup>192</sup>

Consequently, ordination is seen to denote the

“entry into this apostolic and God-given ministry [...]. Just as the original apostles [...], so those who are ordained are called by Christ in the Church and through the

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<sup>189</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 6.

<sup>190</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 7.

<sup>191</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 10.

<sup>192</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 13.

Church. Not only is their vocation from Christ but their qualification for exercising such a ministry is the gift of the spirit”<sup>193</sup>.

It is certainly not to be denied that the exercise of certain ministries within the Church needs the assistance and gift of the Spirit. However, a question to be addressed is whether people are either called to a full priestly and ordained ministry or none at all, or whether it is conceivable and possible that people are only even called to some part of a priestly ministry.

The section on the ministry was agreed and first published in 1973. In 1979 the “Elucidation” on this section was published. According to article 1, “Ministry” has been criticised for being too clerical and focusing too much on the issue of ordination without working out properly the difference between the two priesthoods. By way of explanation article 2 claims that the “priesthood of all the faithful [...] is not a matter of disagreement between us.”<sup>194</sup>

There are some serious questions to be asked. First, can the issue of ordination indeed be addressed without looking at the priesthood of all believers? Second, if the issue of the common priesthood was really that undisputed as the document would like it to be, why is it then that there is such a big theological debate about the laity and lay participation going on in both churches? Without denying the good intention of ARCIC, it seems that the document takes an undisputed basis for granted that is not necessarily there.

The general tone of the section “Authority I” is that the teaching authority in the Church should be and is in the hands of the ordained ministry, particularly in the hands of the bishops. However, the bishops are not to exercise their ministry detached from the people. “The perception of God’s will for his Church does not belong only to the ordained ministry but is shared by all its members.”<sup>195</sup>

According to the document, the role of the ordained ministry is to discern the signs and manifestations of the Spirit. The role of the community is to “respond and assess the insights and teaching of the ordained ministers. Through this continuing process of discernment and response, [...] the Holy Spirit declares the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the faithful may live freely under the discipline of the Gospel.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> FR, “Ministry”, 14.

<sup>194</sup> FR, “Ministry”/Elucidation, 2.

<sup>195</sup> FR, “Authority I”, 5.

<sup>196</sup> FR, “Authority I”, 6.

This understanding presupposes a culture of dialogue within the Church. It also implies openness towards structural change, that is, a very dynamic ecclesiology with a strong emphasis on dialogue.

Hence, reception of council decisions means the “fact that the people of God acknowledge such a decision or statement because they [...] discern a harmony between what is proposed to them and the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church.”<sup>197</sup>

Like the section on ministry, “Authority I” has been criticised for focusing too much on the ordained ministry. The reason why there is such an emphasis of, and focus on, the structure and exercise of the authority of the ordained ministry is, we are told, “that this was the area where most difficulties appeared to exist. There was no devaluing of the proper and active role of the laity.”<sup>198</sup> However, the document simply takes for granted what the “proper role of the laity” is, and that it is clear that their role is properly only such a passive one.

A few concluding general observations concerning the *Final Report* seem appropriate. Throughout the document the word “laity” is hardly ever used. Instead it speaks of “faithful”, “people of God” and so forth. This is certainly one way of overcoming the debate of clergy and laity. It is particularly helpful to avoid the use of “laypeople” in the sense of non-ordained. However, having said that, the analysis of the text has also shown that, despite all good intentions to include and appreciate the laity and their apostolate, the document still focuses too much on the ordained ministry and takes too many issues concerning the laity for granted and to be already solved.

### 8.2.2 Responses to the Final Report

The *Final Report* does not have the status of an official document, neither of the Anglican Communion nor of the Roman Catholic Church. The paper was sent to the respective Church authorities for discussion. An official ratification has not happened so far.

There are two issues linked with the responses that need to be considered. On the one hand, the content of the responses has to be discussed. On the other, one also

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<sup>197</sup> FR, “Authority I”/Elucidation, 3. Cf. also FR, “Authority II”, 25: “the assent of the faithful is the ultimate indication that the Church’s authoritative decision in a matter of faith has been truly preserved from error by the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>198</sup> FR, “Authority I”/Elucidation, 4.

needs to comment on the genesis of some of the responses, as this process also indicates a certain kind of attitude within the churches. Of course, there is still a lot of work to be done and many problems have not even been addressed. However, on the whole all the responses welcome the progress that has been made by ARCIC I.

The Church of England published its response in 1985<sup>199</sup> with the rather telling title *Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIC*. Two things are important. First, the work of ARCIC cannot be seen completely detached from other ecumenical dialogues on world level. Second, *Towards a Response* makes it clear that this reply does not have to be the final word but just another step in the ecumenical process. As a very positive development of BEM the response welcomes the fact that

“great emphasis is put on the interrelation of the ministry of the whole people of God and the ordained ministry [...]. This excludes any notion that ministers can act as autocratic or impersonal functionaries.

We welcome this opening of the ministry section with its holding together of the two models of ministry within the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God.”<sup>200</sup>

Admittedly these two paragraphs are speaking about BEM. However, it would be rather surprising if the Church of England welcomed this interrelation in BEM and rejected it in ARCIC documents. For, the *Final Report* also emphasises the same interrelation of the two ministries. Thus it could be deduced that the Church of England is quite in favour of a strong lay participation, even in fields that traditionally might have been viewed more as a field exclusively for the ordained ministry.

Turning its attention to ARCIC I, though the response points out that a good intention and a positive attitude does not necessarily mean a solution of all the problems. Thus it states, “it is of course easier to make statements about lay involvement and dispersed authority than to define the precise relation and interdependence of the lay and ordained.”<sup>201</sup> This is certainly a weakness that the document does not get beyond theoretically stating a positive attitude towards the laity. There is no indication in the *Final Report* how this attitude is to be put into practice (although the question is whether ARCIC actually could have provided a satisfying answer). However, the response outlines a framework for such an interrelated co-operation between the ordained and the laity.

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<sup>199</sup> *Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIC* (1985). All quotations given by number and not by page.

<sup>200</sup> *Towards a Response*, 85 & 86.

<sup>201</sup> *Towards a Response*, 224.

“The interpretation of the gospel in diverse cultures [...] is a responsibility laid on the whole Church [...]. The *sensus fidelium* is a vital element in the comprehension and declaration of God’s truth [...]. [...] lay participation in the realm of authority is not simply confined to participation of a few laypeople in synodical bodies. There is an interconnection between the role of a trained, spiritually formed and participating laity and the vernacular use of Scripture and the preaching of the word in the liturgy.”<sup>202</sup>

This sounds as if the laity were to contribute considerably to the process of inculturation. If this were true, it would certainly throw a different light on the understanding of the secular character of the laity. In this case, it would be the laypeople that bring, indeed “inculture”, the Gospel within the world.

The *Final Report* is criticised partly because it focuses too much on the question of primacy and consequently neglects elements of dialogue in the Church. Looking at their different historical experience the response states that Anglicans are “inclined to understand decision-making by authority in terms of a developing dialogue, including criticism and response, rather than as monologue.”<sup>203</sup> This critique reflects the fact that Anglicans have quite a lot of experience with participation on all levels of decision-making. This different experience should not be seen as dividing the churches. Rather a critical evaluation of this experience could indicate possibilities and potential dangers in changes that may occur in the Roman Catholic Church. The same paragraph of the response highlights that if both churches are to have a healthy culture of dialogue, they need to find the difficult balance between the church authorities intervening in a debate either both too fast and too strictly or else far too late.<sup>204</sup> It would certainly be a good opportunity for both churches to learn from the experience of the other.

Another response to ARCIC I came from the Executive Committee of the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion<sup>205</sup>. Here the major point of critique is that “the priesthood of all believers is acknowledged [...], but not their ministry. Moreover, in so far as the ministry of the laity is mentioned, it seems to be exercised in the church; the ministry of God’s people as servants and witnesses in the world is overlooked.”<sup>206</sup> Admittedly, that was not the main topic of ARCIC I. However, the question is to what extent, if at all, any ecclesiology and theology of the ministry can be separated from the Church’s service in and to the world. In addition this response highlights that

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<sup>202</sup> *Towards a Response*, 224.

<sup>203</sup> *Towards a Response*, 232.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. *Towards a Response*, 232.

<sup>205</sup> Executive Committee of the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion: “An Extract from an Open Letter to the Anglican Communion” (all references given by page in Hill/Yarnold).

<sup>206</sup> Evangelical Fellowship, “Open Letter”, 289.

the difference between the common priesthood and the ordained one is far from being clarified.

So far I have discussed issues related to the content of responses to ARCIC I and the *Final Report*. When turning to the Roman Catholic responses, it is not so much their content but the form and way of response that needs to be discussed.

Admittedly, there is much praise and positive acknowledgement in the Roman Catholic responses. However, there are still aspects that seem inconsistent with the agreed contents of the *Final Report*. Thus, Christopher Hill writes in his book on ARCIC I: “the practice of publishing responses from Episcopal Conferences was eventually suspended at Rome’s request. This reflects the continuing inner Roman Catholic debate about the authority of National Episcopal Conferences *vis a vis* the central authorities.”<sup>207</sup>

Maybe the Vatican authorities had some reason for insisting that some responses were not published. Still, this request also reflects a strongly centralistic attitude and understanding of power and authority. In this context it is important to read the reaction of the French Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity to the Vatican’s Response to ARCIC I<sup>208</sup>. There the French commission writes: “We regret that the final [Vatican] Response seems to take no notice of the important comments expressed in 1985 in the replies of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales and our own Conference”<sup>209</sup>. If the Vatican can more or less completely ignore the opinion of Episcopal Conferences, does this not raise doubts to what extent bishops outside Rome are taken seriously? What is more if this is the way the Vatican deals with bishops how much less can the laypeople trust the Roman authorities that they will be consulted and heard? Does such a behaviour and attitude of the Vatican not inevitably provoke mistrust?

Finally, and this applies to ARCIC I and ARCIC II alike, if the laity are indeed to be taken seriously and if they are to participate, why is it then that the only non-ordained persons in both commissions were Dr. Mary Tanner (Church of England) and Sister Dr. Mary Cecily Boulding (Roman Catholic)? In addition, Dr. Boulding being in religious orders is in strict terms not even a layperson. Would it not have been more appropriate that on the issues concerning all the faithful, particularly on the discussion of

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<sup>207</sup> Hill, C.: “The Scope of this Book”, 4.

<sup>208</sup> French Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity: “Concerning the Holy See’s Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I” (references given by page in Hill/Yarnold).

the two priesthoods, that laypeople also had been heard? I suspect that more lay participation in ARCIC could help to avoid the danger of a distorted picture of the laity. The documents of ARCIC present a rather positive view of the laity, they are certainly in favour of strong lay participation. However, there is still a substantial lack of an systematic ecumenical lay theology.

### 8.3 ARCIC II

Despite of all its achievements, at the end of ARCIC I a number of question were still not answered and indeed many not even discussed. Thus, “the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) was established in 1983 as a result of the joint statement made by Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie in Canterbury in May 1982, of their intention to continue the official dialogue between their two Churches.”<sup>210</sup> Consequently, ARCIC II began its work even before a number of responses to ARCIC I had been published.

#### 8.3.1 Church as Communion

The first document of ARCIC II is *Church as Communion*<sup>211</sup>, which does a lot of groundwork for the following documents: “We believe it is time now to reflect more explicitly upon the nature of communion and its constitutive elements. This will enable us to meet the requests that have been made for further clarification of the ecclesiological basis of our work.”(CaC1)

Fundamental for ARCIC, I and II alike, is the understanding of Church as communion, “that the Church is a dynamic reality moving towards its fulfilment. Communion embraces both the visible gathering of God’s people and its divine life-giving source.” (CaC3) With reference to Scripture this is emphasised and developed further in CaC7: “the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the fact that God wants his people to be in communion with him and with each other.” (CaC7) This shows two essential aspects. On the one hand, there is the personal and direct communion of every

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<sup>209</sup> French Commission, “Concerning the Response”, 173.

<sup>210</sup> ARCIC II: *Salvation and the Church* (1987), 2 (Introduction).

<sup>211</sup> ARCIC II: *Church as Communion* (1991). (=CaC Number)



single believer with God. On the other this also implies and demands that there is to be communion among the believers. What is more, as all believers have the same communion with God, the fundamental principle for the communion of all believers must be that of equality. "All those who are united with the death and resurrection of Christ have equal standing before God." (CaC9) However, if all believers are fundamentally equal, the logical consequence is also that all should be equally active. This is not the same as to say all should do the same things. Yet, a view that there can be an active and a passive group of believers is not compatible with this notion of equality. "In the New Testament the word *koinonia* [...] ties together a number of basic concepts such as unity, life together, sharing and partaking. The basic verbal form means 'to share', 'to participate', 'to have part in', 'to have something in common' or 'to act together'." (CaC12)

However, it is important to see that fundamental equality and participation of all believers is not to be confused with a formless entity or any kind of anarchy. There is still the need for structure and order: "This community of the baptised [...] finds its necessary expression in a visible community. [...] The integrity and building up of that fellowship require appropriate structure, order and discipline" (CaC15).

The crucial point is the structures are to be appropriate. However, it must therefore be legitimate to demand a change of structures that were once good and appropriate but with changed circumstances have become more of an obstacle than a help. This is even more important since the community of believers ultimately exists to assist, participate and collaborate in God's purpose which is "to bring all people into communion with himself within a transformed creation" (CaC16). The Church's vocation "is to embody and reveal the redemptive power of the Gospel [...]" (CaC18)

It is undoubtedly this vocation that should form the basis for any discussion of who is to do what in the Church. Any structure that is working against this vocation is consequently to be rejected. It is for this reason that there is a unavoidable need for inculturation (cf. CaC27) and adaptation to new circumstances. "As the social setting of the Christian community changes, so the questions and challenges posed both from within and from without the Church are never entirely the same." (CaC28) Thus traditions should be respected but the question "since when" must never be detached from the question "why".

CaC32 then returns to the problem of lay participation in the teaching office of the Church:

“Responsibility for the maintenance of the apostolic faith is shared by the whole people of God. [...] The task of those entrusted with oversight [...] is to foster the promptings of the Spirit and to keep the community within the bounds of the apostolic faith [...]. The community actively responds to the teaching of the ordained ministry, and when, under the guidance of the Spirit, it recognises the apostolic faith, it assimilates its contents into its life.” (CaC32)

Not only is the reception of teaching through all the faithful essential, but also, their reception is almost a kind of yardstick whether some teaching is part of the apostolic faith or not. CaC32 also presupposes some kind of active discernment by all the believers. However, it is left open how this is to work and function. It surely cannot be the idea that all official teaching has to be approved by some referendum.

Speaking of the episcopacy, we are told: “this ministry of oversight [...] is grounded in the life of the community and is open to the community’s participation in the discovery of God’s will.” (CaC45)

It is obvious that this paragraph is strongly in favour of an episcopal church structure. Yet, all the arguments for the ministry of oversight and for the episcopate are brought forward without using terminology related to authority and obedience but presented as a service to the community. As far as the wording of the document is concerned this is certainly a step forward. But even so is the language still not too strongly authoritarian and hierarchical? “Oversight” suggests suspension rather than equality of respect.

### 8.3.2 Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church

On the basis of Church as Communion, ARCIC II produced *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*<sup>212</sup>. Here we are told:

“communion means that members of the Church share a responsibility [...] for ensuing moral perplexities with integrity and fidelity to the Gospel. Within this shared responsibility, those who exercise the office of pastor and teacher have the special task of equipping the Church and its members for life in the world [...]. The exercise of this authority will itself bear the marks of communion, in so far as a sustained attentiveness to the experience and reflection of the faithful becomes part of the process of making an informed and authoritative judgement.” (LiC97)

Sadly, this paragraph suggests a church government that is still largely in the hands of the ordained ministry. However, it is equally evident that this paragraph avoids a language of power and inequality. On the contrary, it is emphasised that the teaching

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<sup>212</sup> ARCIC II: *Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church* (1994). (=LiC Number)

office is to listen and to serve. This is certainly a new and open approach to the understanding of the episcopal office. Using an analogy to a modern state: most citizens will not be concerned that they can vote on every decision of the government, yet, the people certainly, and in my opinion quite rightfully, expect that the government listens to their concerns and needs.

On the question of Church unity one notes that instead of starting and focusing on dividing issues ARCIC set off by establishing the common and undisputed ground. Only then began discussion of the differences between the two churches. It seems to me that this method could also be a possible way forward for future lay theology: not a theology of the laity that sets out to abolish the ordained clergy or whose main purpose is confrontation, but a theology that begins with what all the people in the Church have in common before looking at the differences between clergy and laity. That is the reason why the absence of the laity as the people of God in ecumenical documents is so unacceptable.

### 8.3.3 The Gift of Authority

This document<sup>213</sup> summarises aspects of previous ones as well as develops a number of further positions and views. A fundamental attitude is already stated in the title. Authority is, before anything else, a gift from above. Real authority is not something the Church gives itself but is given to it by the Spirit. This understanding has to be the basis for any discussion and exercise of power in the Church.

Another aspect that has also been mentioned elsewhere is the double relation in the Church. According to GA12, the individual believer does not need the Church as mediator between God and the individual person, but being a believer in Christ implies and demands also a relation with the Church. This is of great importance as it is in this community that the apostolic faith is handed down throughout the ages under the guidance of the Spirit. "Tradition (paradosis) refers to this process. [...] This tradition, or handing on, of the Gospel is the work of the Spirit, especially through the ministry of Word and Sacrament and in the common life of the people of God." (GA14)

Tradition is not in the hands of just a few people in the Church. Rather, it is an issue that concerns all members of the Church. In addition, faithful tradition is not a

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<sup>213</sup> ARCIC II: *The Gift of Authority* (1998). (=GA Number)

human achievement but a work of the Spirit. However, there is another crucial aspect. "The Church has the responsibility to hand on the whole apostolic Tradition, even though there may be parts which it finds hard to integrate in its life and worship." (GA24)

Although proper ecclesiology should be dynamic, GA24 stresses that this not to be confused with being selective. There may be a different emphasis on things or various ways of expressing and practising things but still it must be the full Tradition. It is also for this reason that lay theology must be worked out in a proper ecclesiological framework. Thus in order for the Church to remain true and faithful to its origin but also to its mission, GA28 demands that "in each community there is an exchange, a mutual give-and-take, in which bishops, clergy and lay people receive from as well as give to others within the whole body." (GA28) Those in the teaching office cannot fulfil their task and duty if they do not listen to all the other people in the Church. Thus, again an ARCIC document demands a church structure based on dialogue.

It is against this background that *Gift of Authority* stresses the importance of *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* as well as the relation of both to the ministry of *episcopo*.

"Those who exercise *episcopo* [...] must not be separated from the 'symphony' of the whole people of God [...]. They need to be alert to the *sensus fidelium* [...], if they are to be made aware when something is needed for the well-being and mission of the community, or when some element of the Tradition needs to be received in a fresh way. [...]

The bishops, the clergy and the other faithful must all recognise and receive what is mediated from God through each other. Thus the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God and the ministry of memory exist together in reciprocal relationship." (GA29&30)

Admittedly, it was already in *Lumen Gentium*<sup>214</sup> that the importance of the *sensus fidelium* for the infallibility of the Church was stated. However, compared to *Lumen Gentium*, GA29&30 stress that the *sensus fidelium* is fundamentally interrelated with the teaching ministry of the episcopal office. Episcopate is not to be carried out over and against but only together and within the *sensus fidelium*.

Consequently, the *Gift of Authority* calls for synodality as a basic principle in the Church.

"The term synodality (derived from syn-hodos meaning 'common way') indicates the manner in which believers and churches are held together in communion as they do this. It expresses their vocation as people of the Way (cf. Acts 9.2) to live, work and journey together in Christ who is the Way (cf. Jn 14.6)." (GA34)

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. LG12.

Synodality, as GA34 shows, is not to be confused with democracy. Synodical structures do not necessarily imply that everything is open for debate and majority vote. However, it does stress that all can get involved, participate, and share a common vision. "In the local church the Eucharist is the fundamental expression of the walking together (synodality) of the people of God. In prayerful dialogue, the president leads the people to make their 'Amen' to the eucharistic prayer." (GA36) This notion of equality in the Church together with the view of different ministries that are to complement each other is certainly the general tone and perspective of the ARCIC documents. However, in my view, this could also provide a basis for developing a theology of the laity that combines a mature and full participation of laypeople alongside an ordained clergy. For this reason GA38 does not reject the idea of synods of bishops. However, it presupposes that bishops have listened to the *sensus fidelium* before taking their decisions.

The *Gift of Authority* ends with a list of questions that still remain open. These also indicate problem areas that confront any attempt to develop an ecumenical theology of the laity. Thus the Anglicans are asked:

"Is the Communion also open to the acceptance of instruments of oversight which would allow decisions to be reached that, in certain circumstances, would bind the whole Church? When major new questions arise which [...] require a united response, will these structures assist Anglicans to participate in the *sensus fidelium* with all Christians? [...] Anglicans have shown themselves to be willing to tolerate anomalies for the sake of maintaining communion. Yet this has led to the impairment of communion manifesting itself at the Eucharist, in the exercise of episcopate and in the interchangeability of ministry." (GA56)

On the other side, the Roman Catholic Church has to face these questions:

"is there at all levels effective participation of clergy as well as lay people in emerging synodal bodies? Do the actions of bishops reflect sufficient awareness of the extent of the authority they receive through ordination for governing the local church? Has enough provision been made to ensure consultation between the Bishop of Rome and the local churches prior to the making of important decisions [...]? In supporting the Bishop of Rome in his work of promoting communion among the churches, do the structures and procedures of the Roman Curia adequately respect the exercise of episcopate at other levels?" (GA57)

### 8.3.4 Comment

As the analysis has shown, the ARCIC documents contain much that could be of great importance on the way towards developing a modern, sound and sustainable lay theology, in particular to develop an ecumenical theology of the laity.

The basic method of ARCIC was to use a language that was not, so to speak, contaminated by the history of division between the two churches. As I have already pointed out, it is particularly promising that the documents contain a different language in the area concerned with authority. It is here that on the whole phrases that emphasised power above and over others have been replaced, as well as phrases which are closely related to a feudal society.

But not only did ARCIC try to come up with a kind of new theological language, the documents also bear witness to a different perspective on how theology is done. Instead of beginning with the differences among the people in the churches, ARCIC tries to start with those aspects that all share or have in common. In other words, ARCIC explores the common ground first and only then discusses and analyses the differences. It is not difficult to see that such a view furthers the notion of equality in the church.

ARCIC, though, does not understand itself as an end but as the beginning of a process. There is a lot of scope for discussion and change. The contents of the documents are therefore always to be considered more as suggestion than as summary.

Even so, although the work of ARCIC was an undoubtedly positive development, the discussion of the responses to ARCIC has also shown that the "official" churches may at times fall behind these documents. So far not all the positions are actually implemented and endorsed. Still ARCIC is a beginning that allows one to hope for further developments in the future.

## Part IV: Laity in the Context of Liberative Theologies

### 9.1 Introduction: A Different Perspective

The previous chapters discussed the laity in the context of individual denominations. This chapter looks at the issue in the context of liberative theologies. It attempts to approach the subject from a different perspective, or to be more precise, from a number of different perspectives that could be fruitful for the discussion of a theology of "Being the Church". Three aspects are of particular interest.

First of all, Vatican II opened a new direction for Catholic theology, the Church interacting with and engaging in the world. The (post-)conciliar view has been that the church should be in the world and that with and through the laity the world should come into the Church. However, one weakness of the conciliar documents is their First World perspective, paying hardly any attention to the Third World at all. Admittedly, Paul VI addressed the problems of the Third World in writings such as *Populorum Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Yet, the more recent papal documents, especially those on the laity, are set almost exclusively against a First World background. This too narrow view poses problems for the churches' claim to universality and catholicity. Admittedly liberative theologies could be accused of having an exclusive Third World approach, thereby excluding the First World. But they are best seen as complementary theologies and so as a corrective to First World concepts.

The second aspect is very closely related to the previous one. Western theology, particularly Roman Catholic theology, can be generally characterised as centralised. Liberative theologies, on the other hand, are ways of doing theology from the people to the centre,<sup>1</sup> so to speak, from the bottom to the top. Yet they do not attempt simply to replace one one-way street with another. It is rather the attempt to produce something like a dual carriageway.

This aspect of centralisation leads directly to my third point. Liberative theologies are not only from the people, by the people, and for the people, there is also no single theology of liberation as such. It is always set in a very specific geographical and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Boff, L., & Boff, C.: *Salvation and Liberation* (1984), 28: in liberative theologies the people is seen as "agent of its own liberation [...]". The intellectual element – the clergy, pastoral ministers – must function in 'organic articulation' with these bases."

social context. Official Church documents are often, out of sheer necessity, abstract and general, whereas theologies of liberation always evolve out of a particular situation. Thus they make quite different demands of ecclesiology. The issues are thus not the development of universal rules or concepts of doctrine but rather answers to a very concrete reality.

Yet, with all due respect for the questions raised by liberative theologies, this chapter does not and cannot hope to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of liberative theologies. I will only discuss aspects that appear to be of importance for a theology of the laity. Issues such as Marxism and its use in liberative theologies will thus not be given consideration.

I will begin with a short outline to clarify the terms “liberation theology” and “liberative theology”. This is followed by the question of how the laity can be defined in such a theological context. The following two sections are almost two sides of the same problem. First I look at the question of the relation between liberation theology and the universal church, a particular Latin American and Roman Catholic issue, and second with the particular Asian problem in mind of creating authentic theology. It is in the framework of contextualisation that the opposition of orthopraxis and orthodoxy will be discussed. I will finally look at two issues of particular importance, basic ecclesial communities and women’s theology.

Asian, African, and Latin American theologies are not necessarily dependent on each other nor are they derived from another. Still, there are many similarities that have been developed independently from one another. I will discuss the issues here under topical and not geographical headings. So if only one continent is mentioned without explicitly stating the uniqueness of the position it is assumed that it is roughly the same for the other parts of the Third World without the implication that they are necessarily dependent on one another.

## **9.2 Liberation Theology and Liberative Theologies**

### **9.2.1 Terminology**

Before anything, it is necessary to clarify a few terms. “Liberation theology” has come to be widely used among Third World theologians regardless of whether they are from Latin America, Africa, or Asia. However, despite the common theme of liberation,



their ways of doing theology as well as their ideas and positions are often quite diverse and independent of one another. "Liberation theology" in common usage is primarily associated with Roman Catholicism and Latin America, and there are indeed good reasons for this perception. To keep the different geographical and topical directions apart, I will therefore use "liberation theology" for Latin America and "liberative theology" either as an umbrella word or for such theologies in Africa and Asia.

Though liberation and the preferential option for the poor were the main topic already at the conference in Medellin, liberation theology became an "official" theological term in 1971 with the publication of Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*<sup>2</sup> as the first book on this topic<sup>3</sup>. However this does not mean that liberation was not a theme for theology before then. Still, most of what is explicitly labelled liberation theology evolved initially in the mainly Catholic context and situation of Latin America.<sup>4</sup> According to Christian Smith, it is within the Roman Catholic Church "that liberation theology has found its most profound expression."<sup>5</sup> Considering theological development in other parts of the world and in other denominations Smith's view needs some qualification. He is right only insofar as the Catholic theologians in Latin America were the first to engage in systematic reflection on liberative theology. However, this is not surprising for the majority of the Christian population in Latin America is Roman Catholic.<sup>6</sup>

For liberative theologies outside Latin America the context is quite different, as Phillip Berryman clearly illustrates:

"The Christian churches in Asia and Africa share certain characteristics that set them apart from Latin American Christianity. They are largely the product of the missionary expansion of European churches during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [...].

Christians in Asia confront a vast variety of socio-economic and historical contexts [...] and religious contexts [...]. Christians in Africa also confront widespread diversity [...].

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<sup>2</sup> All my quotations are taken from the revised edition from 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Biancucci: *Einführung in die Theologie der Befreiung* (1987), 104f: "Die Anfänge der Theologie der Befreiung liegen in den sechziger Jahren. [...] Große Aufmerksamkeit erreichte diese Theologie durch das erste Buch zum Thema, das Gustavo Gutierrez Anfang der siebziger Jahre veröffentlichte." Cf. also p. 27-35.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief outline of the distribution of Christian denomination in Latin America cf. Escobar: "Lateinamerika", 157-163.

<sup>5</sup> Smith: *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* (1991), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Protestants too, though, play a role as with the outstanding Protestant liberation theologian Jose Miguez Bonino (cf. *LibTheol*, xxiv – xxv). For an account of Pentecostal theology cf. Petersen: *Not by Might nor by Power. A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (1996).

African theologians speak of coming to a fuller comprehension of 'African anthropology,' their continent's particular sense of human being [...]. Asian theology involves encounters with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and other traditions[...]."<sup>7</sup>

Doubtless, theologians in Africa and Asia have to deal with an external diversity of contexts as well as an inner-Christian one. Yet, while largely true, Berryman fails to note the way in which more recent Liberation Theology in Latin America has also had to come to terms with surviving indigenous religion in its own continent.

### 9.2.2 Liberation in the Context of Theology

So far there is no generally accepted definition of liberative theology or of liberation in the context of theology. Considering the complexity of the issue, this is not surprising. Yet, a number of useful "working definitions" have been suggested. Thus Gutierrez writes: "liberation theology is 'a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God.'"<sup>8</sup> A few things are important. It is "a reflection" that is to say, liberation theology has no claim to exclusiveness, and it is not the only way of doing theology. More important, it is a "reflection on praxis". It is a theology that includes and focuses on the people, that is the laity, who live and practice their faith. Finally, "in the light of the word of God" makes it clear that liberation theologies are first of all scriptural based.

Yet, it is not just a reflection on any Christian praxis. Liberation theology "is an attempt to read the Bible and key Christian doctrines with the eyes of the poor. It is at the same time an attempt to help the poor interpret their own faith in a new way."<sup>9</sup> The key phrase is *option for the poor*, which means

"the engagement of the poor in their own personal, socio-economic and political liberation. [...] liberation theology is accountable to the poor and to the church as the people of God [...].

Nonetheless, the 'option for the poor' also describes the religious commitment and evangelical bias of all who take the side of the poor [...]."<sup>10</sup>

There are two aspects to be seen. First, to commit oneself seriously to liberative theology involves taking the world seriously and acting accordingly. "Faith cannot be neutral when the life and death of the people are in question. Political and ideological

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<sup>7</sup> Berryman: *Liberation Theology* (1987), 164.

<sup>8</sup> Gutierrez, *A Theology*, XXIX.

<sup>9</sup> Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 4f.

<sup>10</sup> Linden: *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?* (1997), 6.

choices and options cannot be sidestepped.”<sup>11</sup> Second, liberative theologies demand a very active people of God. Its success literally depends on an active participation of the laity as well as that of the clergy. As Gutierrez stresses: “faith energises my actions in history and makes me take that history seriously, since it is impossible to be a Christian outside history. [...] It is an understanding [...] that [...] one cannot be a Christian in these times without a commitment to liberation.”<sup>12</sup>

Finally, and of crucial importance to understand liberative theologies, the shift of the theological focal point has to be seen. Whereas Western theology concentrates on the *nonbeliever*, the critical problem for liberative theologies is

“the *non-person*: the one who has been dehumanised through poverty, oppression, and domination [...]. Liberation theology, then, struggles not with God’s existence but with God’s character. [...] The God of liberation theology is [...] intimately involved with and totally invested in human history.”<sup>13</sup>

It is self-evident that this perspective has tremendous consequences for the understanding of ecclesiology and the role of the laity.

### 9.3 A Shifted Perspective and the Definition of the Laity

As shown previously, in much Roman Catholic theology as well as in Anglican thinking, systematic reflection starts with attempts to define the laity and their lay status and then derives from these definitions more or less strict rules regarding what the laity can and cannot do. Generally speaking, the basic question is who is allowed to do what. In contrast to this, Third World theologians appear to begin their reflections with the problems the laity are facing and possibilities of how these can be resolved. Thus, the fundamental question is what has to be done and who is the best person to do it. Consequently, the pressing problems of the Third World push debates about the ontological difference between clergy and the laity very much into the background. As Dom Helder Camara stated:

“The continent’s ‘number one problem’ [...] is not vocations to the priesthood, but underdevelopment. We must not insult God by attributing the shortage of vocations to the objective and systematic refusal by his sons in Latin America to follow the light. [...]

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<sup>11</sup> Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 129.

<sup>12</sup> Gutierrez (1968): “Toward a Theology of Liberation”, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Emergence*, 32.

The man in a sub-human situation is not in any condition [...] to train for the priesthood, since understanding and willing become a reality only at a certain level of human life.”<sup>14</sup>

Archbishop Camara is certainly not arguing that vocations to the priesthood are not important. However, he makes it absolutely clear that life worthy to be called human life for all the people has a higher priority.

This clearly sets the agenda for lay participation in the process of liberation. As the bishops wrote at Puebla: “laypersons are not to be passive executors but rather active collaborators with their pastors [...]. Clearly, then, it is the whole Christian community [...] that is the responsible subject of evangelisation, liberation, and human promotion.”<sup>15</sup>

However, it is equally obvious, particularly in Latin American, that there is a gap between the reality and the theoretical conception of an equal collaboration of the laity, the clergy and the hierarchy. For example, the traditional structures of the Roman Catholic Church can pose a problem, as it is stressed by some Peruvian theologians in the wake of Vatican II:

“It is of fundamental importance for this [the church’s] work that relationships with the hierarchy not be kept on the level of command and compliance, but on the interpersonal and community level [...]. We see difficulties involved here because the positions of both priest and the lay person are now in constant flux – due to the fact that the church has only recently begun to adapt itself to our concrete historical situation.”<sup>16</sup>

Admittedly, there are people in all Christian churches, lay and clergy alike, who oppose liberative theologies and who, therefore, also eye with suspicion the active participation of the people in the process of liberation. But the Provincials of the Society of Jesus have emphasised: “We must not only work *for* the laity, we must also work *with* them. [...] we must help them to channel their immense energies into the work of transforming our continent.”<sup>17</sup>

Liberative theologians make it perfectly clear that whatever forms lay participation takes, they must serve the whole People of God. Lay participation is not there to satisfy individual ambition.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Camara: *Church and Colonialism* (1969), 126.

<sup>15</sup> Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops: *Evangelisation in Latin America’s Present and Future* (1979)

Puebla Final Document, “Evangelisation, Liberation, and Human Development”, 233.

<sup>16</sup> Peruvian Organisations (1968): “The Role of the Laity”, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Provincials of the Society of Jesus (1968): “The Jesuits in Latin America”, 81.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Peruvian Organisations, “Laity”, 85.

## 9.4 Liberation Theology and Universal Church

Liberative theologies are inseparable from their context. Each liberation theology is set against a very specific context that can vary considerably one from another. This leads to the question how such theologies relate to the rest of the world and to the universal Church. This may seem as having nothing to do with the question of lay participation. Yet, it is here that the question is of particular importance. How, for example, are the efforts of a Christian working for land reform in Brazil related to the social teaching of the Catholic Church as a whole? The issue must be discussed so that a strong contextualisation of a local church does not lead to a break up of church unity. Equally it must be asked how global structures can help to further and support local Christian action.

The controversies over the two Vatican instructions on liberation theology<sup>19</sup>, the disputed ecclesiology of Leonardo Boff<sup>20</sup>, and over Ernesto Cardenal being a priest and cabinet minister at the same time are well known and do not need to be repeated here at length. Yet these controversies highlight that the relationship between necessary local actions and a centralised structure is far from clear.

Thus the 1984 *Instruction* demands that "all priests, religious, and lay people who hear this call for justice and who want to work for evangelisation and the advancement of humankind will do so in communion with their bishop and with the church"<sup>21</sup>. In 1982 John Paul II had stressed that "it is around the bishop that the unity of the faithful should be built up in the concrete."<sup>22</sup> There is no need to object to this view in principle. However, at least two questions remain. First, it is not said how this can be put into practice. Second, there have been a number of cases in Latin America where bishops took side with the rich and powerful. What are the people working for liberation to do in this case? Is there not the danger that bishops can become the sign of disunity and be at odds with a more fundamental desire on part of the church at large to identify with the poor?

If that suggests a critique of the hierarchy, it is possible also to turn the critique on the leaders of liberation theology themselves. For, although it is ultimately a theology

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. CDF (August 6, 1984): *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'* & CDF (March 22, 1986): *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. CDF (March 11, 1985): "Notification Sent to Fr. Leonardo Boff regarding Errors in His Book, *Church Charism and Power*" &

Boff, L. (1984): "Defence of his book, *Church: Charism and Power*".

<sup>21</sup> CDF, *Instruction on Certain Aspects*, [all quotations from: LibTheol, 393-414], 409.

for the people by the people, almost all first generation leaders of liberation theology were “1. Internationally educated, usually in Europe or the United States; 2. Ordained priests, ministers, or bishops; [...] 4. Ecumenically – rather than confessionally – oriented; [...] 10. Driven by a concern with the poor and oppressed.”<sup>23</sup> However, even more modern volumes such as *Mysterium Liberationis*<sup>24</sup> have virtually no lay contributor. What is more those laypeople that write about liberation theology are most often not the so-called ordinary people but rather those who belong mostly to the academic elite. In this sense it is certainly wrong to speak of liberation theology as a lay movement. However, it must also be observed that currently it is perhaps only the academic elite and the clergy who are in the position to engage in this discussion because “normal” people have perhaps neither the education, the time nor the money to do so.

Also one notes that the absence of lay theologians is apparently not perceived as a problem. At least it is not articulated as such. This may be because there are no laypeople writing. However, it might also indicate that liberation theology represents a way of being the church where participation means fighting against the common problem of poverty and not fighting for personal promotion. Hence Quiroz Magana describes the ecclesiology of liberation theology:

“Another important discussion [...] centres on whether the church described in the ecclesiology of liberation is the authentic church of Jesus or an alternative church [...]. [...], the answer of liberation church is that in Latin America becoming the church of the poor and being committed to the cause of their liberation is experienced not as an alternative, but as a calling of the entire church.”<sup>25</sup>

This is also why the emphasis on participation at grassroots level should not be equated with a rejection of a universal church structure. As Paul Sigmund puts it, “at no point did the liberation theologians reject the hierarchical structure of the church. [...] The moral teaching authority of the church (the *magisterium*) is not in question, only its application and interpretation where it has been removed from actual experience and distorted by power interests.”<sup>26</sup> Thus the bishops of Peru stressed, after emphasising the unity of the church: “the contribution of the church to the process of change demands a profound internal renewal of its way of working.”<sup>27</sup> In this sense, more lay theologians

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<sup>22</sup> Pope John Paul II (1982): “The Bishop: Principle of Unity”, 326.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Emergence*, 170.

<sup>24</sup> Ellacuria & Sobrino (eds.): *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (1993).

<sup>25</sup> Quiroz Magana: “Ecclesiology in the Theology of Liberation”, 191.

<sup>26</sup> Sigmund: *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads* (1990), 180f.

<sup>27</sup> Bishops of Peru (1971): “Justice in the World”, 133.

might be a possibility to balance such hierarchical power interests as mentioned by Sigmund.

Finally, Harvey Cox points out what could be a different understanding of unity in this context:

“What kind of ‘oneness’ in the church might the approach liberationists represent eventually lead to? Probably never again to the attempt to devise a single, all-encompassing theological formula – however minimal – to which everyone everywhere must subscribe. Rather, it could lead to the culturally and theologically pluralistic church Rahner once foresaw, united not from the past or from the top, but by its hope for that which is yet to be.”<sup>28</sup>

Such a concept of unity based to a large extent on the eschatological hope of the Church is certainly worth considering. It is equally worthwhile to consider different forms of lay participation from this perspective. Thus a basic criterion for such varied lay participation must be whether or not they really do serve this eschatological hope. Looking at this diversity of lay ministries liberation theologies have produced, it must also be considered whether and to what extent central regulations for the laity are indeed necessary and/or even possible. Similarly, the lack of lay liberation theologians is clearly not a redundant question, but that there are more pressing issue for lay participation than that.

## 9.5 Asia and the Question of Authenticity

In Asia Christian theology is confronted with a rather different problem. Here the question is how theology can be authentically integrated into the multi-cultural and multi-religious context of Asia. “A priest [...] put up a large poster on the wall of his parish church which read ‘Jesus is the answer’. But next morning he woke up to find that some mischievous (or ingenious?) boys had scribbled below: ‘But what is the question?’”<sup>29</sup> Christianity has been present in Asian for more than four centuries now, but it has had very little impact. This raises the issue whether there is any question for Jesus to answer in Asia or whether Christianity has failed to listen to the questions of Asia. Both might be true. On the one hand, Christianity tried to answer questions that had already been answered by the great Asian religions. On the other, Christianity was more concerned with increasing the numbers of church members than with listening to the peo-

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<sup>28</sup> Cox (1988): “Oneness and Diversity”, 440.

<sup>29</sup> Wilfred: “Images of Jesus Christ in the Asian Pastoral Context”, 59.

ple's needs. Yet it is absolutely essential for theology to be not only authentically Christian but also to be authentically inculturated. This double authenticity is the prerequisite if Christian faith is to make sense for the people of Asia and they can properly participate. Structures that are perceived as alien do not and cannot further participation. Therefore, attempts to create authentic Asian theology are necessary to make full participation of the people possible.

In my opinion, there are two main issues. First, there are external issues, that is elements found in Asian theology but which are considered extraneous. These must be overcome or replaced by authentically Asian elements. 'Internal issues', the second subsection, explores characteristically Asian elements that must be integrated into authentically Asian Christian theology.<sup>30</sup>

### 9.5.1 External Issues

#### 9.5.1.1 Colonialism

A major issue for Christianity in Asia is to overcome the colonial past. "The basic contradiction which church presence in Asia has to confess is that it came to power, with the all-too-worldly power of the colonialists [...]. So it could never convincingly take its role as a counter-culture for the marginalised and downtrodden in Asia."<sup>31</sup> Christianity entered Asia not with the message of liberation but together with and supported by foreign colonial powers.<sup>32</sup> Despite the end of colonialism as a political structure, "the colonial mentality still lingers in the churches. [...] The image of the church that is held by Asian Christians to this day is very much part of the western package brought in earlier."<sup>33</sup> Peter Lee points out that this is still reflected, for example, in the hierarchy of the church that has its titles and ranks based on feudal Europe.<sup>34</sup> Lee does not reject the necessity for structure but he demands that the structures of the church should be adapted to the respective social and cultural context so that it does not alienate the people in the churches.

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<sup>30</sup> There is no theology anywhere in the world that is exempt from this question of authenticity. I focus on Asian Christian theology simply as it offers most illustrating examples of the issues involved.

<sup>31</sup> Sahi: "Dance in the Wilderness", 111.

<sup>32</sup> Although this subsection looks mainly at the issue in the Asian context, one should note that the same is also true, for example for those Latin American countries that still have a large native population, such as Peru, Bolivia or Mexico.

<sup>33</sup> Lee: "Between the Old and the New", 129.

<sup>34</sup> cf. Lee, "Between", 129f.



The imperialistic and colonialistic past of the churches in Asia makes it perfectly understandable, even necessary, that Asian theologians look for a different and new starting point for Christian mission in Asia. This is why

“in the twentieth century the burgeoning of anticolonial, anti-Western sentiment has seen the development of forms of Christianity divested of foreign cultural baggage and leadership, a step vitally necessary to the survival of Christianity in Asia. [...] No theology will deserve to be called ecumenical in the coming days which ignores Asian structures.”<sup>35</sup>

Doubtless this is a fully justified starting point. It is certainly worth asking whether the above mentioned ecclesiology based on the Church's eschatological hope might not be a way of overcoming the colonial past of Asian Christianity. It might transform the perception Asian people have of Christianity for the better, in the sense that they could thus relate far more to the message of salvation and in consequence participate deeper in the people of God. Nonetheless there are also aspects that are not exclusively and colonial Western but universal and could be easily adopted into Asian theology. De-Westernisation of Christianity should not lead to an almost sectarian Asian Christianity that ignores the universal dimension of the Church.

### 9.5.1.2 Language

There is also the problem of language. From the Semitic languages in the West to Japanese in the East, there are seven major linguistic zones in Asia.<sup>36</sup> English is *the* lingua franca, but it is also

“a language other than the mother tongue of Asian people. [...] Asian theologians [...] face a serious dilemma here. On the one hand, without using their own particular mother tongues their encounter with ‘language-events’ of the Bible can hardly be authentic. On the other, without using English they cannot communicate with each other in the larger living community of the Asian world.”<sup>37</sup>

Although theologians like C.S.Song have started to write in their mother tongues there is currently no alternative Asian language to replace English. However, language is not only the problem for Asian academic theologians, it also touches on the people's participation in the language events of the Bible. As Klaus Klostermaier writes:

“I began to understand [...] the impossibility of our Bible translations. Not even one essential term was translated in such a way that a Hindu from his background

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<sup>35</sup> Fern: *Third World Liberation Theologies* (1986), 77.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Pieris: *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (1988).70.

<sup>37</sup> Samartha: “The Search for New Hermeneutics in Asian Christian Theology”, 122f.

could understand unambiguously what it was all about. [...] the Hindi of our Bible translations was 'no Hindi', but a 'foreign language'."<sup>38</sup>

If the people in Asia are to be able to participate in the Church with their whole being, then the Christian message must be communicated in the languages of Asia, and the Christian faith be expressed adequately in their own language. Otherwise it will remain detached from their lives.

### 9.5.1.3 Liturgy and Worship

It is self-evident that proper and active participation of the people also requires authentic forms of liturgy and worship; that an authentically Asian liturgy must include Asia's religious and cultural inheritance as well as Asia's social context. Thus Tissa Balasuriya's calls for "an action-orientated liturgy, focusing on the efforts of the oppressed to achieve their own liberation. An authentic liturgy for today must reflect such themes as food, clothing, shelter, health, work, family, justice [...]."<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Chung Hyun Kyung demands that "the future of Asian women's spirituality and theology must move [...] toward life-centrism."<sup>40</sup> In *Struggle to Be the Sun Again*, Chung gives some good examples of how the women's struggle can be integrated into liturgy and prayer.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, there is also the need to develop authentic Asian forms of Christian worship. "The question of culture is not merely one of external forms of expression [...]. Culture expresses the soul of a people."<sup>42</sup> In Loh I To's article on contextualisation of church music in Asia, there is a further aspect to this:

"Contextualisation is above all [...] the revelation of the mystery of God's creative power shown in His creation [...]. And it is our participation in God's continuous creation, letting God transform our culture and arts into dynamic media that will effectively communicate and express the meanings of the Gospel to our people today."<sup>43</sup>

For such a participation in the contextualisation of God to be effective, it is necessary that it is done in the language of the people. However, Loh highlights a further problem namely that "most Asian Christians already feel at home in singing Western

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<sup>38</sup> Klostermaier: *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (1969), 53f.

<sup>39</sup> Ferm, *Liberation Theologies*, 84. Cf. also Balasuriya: *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (1979).

<sup>40</sup> Chung: *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (1991), 113f.

<sup>41</sup> cf. Chung, *Struggle*, 40f, a liturgy that expresses Asian women's understanding of sin under patriarchal society.

<sup>42</sup> Balasuriya, *Eucharist*, 146.

<sup>43</sup> Loh I To: "Toward Contextualisation of Church Music in Asia", 183f.

hymns [...]. The majority of our congregations need to be assured that their indigenous cultural expressions are also acceptable to God.”<sup>44</sup>

Obviously, here is a major task to be fulfilled to achieve authentic lay participation. Yet, while this may seem to be a great opportunity for Christianity, this hope of inculturation is not without problems and dangers as Aloysius Pieris rightly stresses that

“‘instrumentalising’ a non-Christian culture in the service of Christianity can be embarrassingly counterproductive, resulting as it does in a species of ‘theological vandalism’ [...]. Inculturation of this type smacks of an irreverent disregard for the soteriological matrix of non-Christian religious symbolism, and [...] of being a disguised form of imperialism.”<sup>45</sup>

This leaves Asian theology in an, as yet, unresolved dilemma between the need for inculturation and the danger of disrespecting other religions and cultures. Still, in order to make full participation of the people possible it is essential that this question is faced and not avoided. Participation is absolutely essential as it is only through the participation of all that we can speak of proper liturgy and worship.

#### 9.5.1.4 *Philosophy*

Since the early days of the church, the language and categories of Greek philosophy have been used to express Christian theology. Basically, there is nothing wrong with that. However, it is almost impossible to use Greek philosophy in an Asian context. As Virginia Fabella observes, “we are still depending on Nicea and Chalcedon whose formulations are largely unintelligible to the Asian mind. Thus the true significance of these councils is [...] the underlying challenge they pose to us to have our own contemporary culturally based christological formulations.”<sup>46</sup> There is definitely a need to find a suitable substitute for Greek philosophy. However, Pieris’ warning (cf. above) must be considered in this context, too, for

“the separation of religion from culture [...] and religion from philosophy [...] makes little sense in an Asian society. [...] culture and religion are overlapping facets of one indivisible soteriology [...]; it is both a philosophy that is basically a religious vision, and a religion that is a philosophy of life.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Loh, “Church Music”, 187.

<sup>45</sup> Pieris, *Asian Theology*, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Fabella: “Christology from an Asian Woman’s Perspective”, 217.

<sup>47</sup> Pieris, *Asian Theology*, 52.

It is right and necessary for Asian theologians to substitute Greek philosophy with their own thinking if their theology is to be authentically Asian.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise it will never be an Asian Christianity by the peoples of Asia, it will remain a Western Christianity in Asia. However, it is equally obvious, and Asian theologians are aware of the problem, that they cannot simply apply existing Asian philosophy. This awareness probably makes the construction of authentic Asian theology more difficult. Yet, this more careful approach of construction seems to be more promising than any short-sighted pseudo-solutions.

### 9.5.2 Internal Issues

So far I have focused on external issues that the construction of authentically Asian theology faces in order to make proper participation of the people in Asia possible. Generally speaking, these could be termed de-Westernising Asian theology. By looking at internal issues, I shall now examine what issues have to be included into an authentically Asian theology. I will focus on two major aspects most relevant for lay theology: rooting Christian theology in the social context of Asia, and the question of doing Christian theology in the multi-religious context of Asia.

#### 9.5.2.1 Social Context

One of the most urgent and important tasks for Asian theology, as for all liberative theologies, is to be rooted in the social reality of Asia. "And the most striking characteristic of the situation is the *massive poverty*. [...] Jesus is relevant to Asia, not because the bulk of the Asian masses are *non-Christians*, but because they are *poor*."<sup>49</sup> There can be no authentic Asian Christian theology except one that is for, of, and by the poor. It must be a theology that includes the poor as those who write and do their own theology, not as objects but as subjects of theology.

"Generally speaking, religions in India, including the Christian religion, have functioned as bastions safeguarding power, privileges and exploitation practised by the

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<sup>48</sup> Though not discussed here, there is also the issue to what extent Greek philosophy is still an adequate instrument for theology in the West.

<sup>49</sup> Wilfred, "Images", 51f.

ruling caste and class.”<sup>50</sup> What is worse, “even the caste system has found its way into the ranks of Christians.”<sup>51</sup> Thus Sebastian Kappen concludes of the counter-culture which was started by Jesus, that the “natural allies in contemporary India are those social and political forces that seek to supersede both casteist and capitalist culture.”<sup>52</sup> Thus Asian theology is and has to be, right from the start, a fundamentally political theology. Lay participation in Asia will also always go hand in hand with political engagement. *The Christian message in Asia* must be that of a liberation that includes several aspects.

Above all, Asia is not one monolithic body. Each country has its own cultural, religious, and social history. Each country faces its own particular problems demanding different priorities.

A typical ‘national’ liberative theology is the Korean *minjung* theology. Here the “Asian Christ appears with a ‘han-ridden body’. ‘Han’ is [...] a sense of *resignation* to inevitable oppression, *indignation* at the oppressor’s inhumanity, *anger* with oneself for being caught up in that hopeless situation... ”<sup>53</sup> Pieris emphasises that such *minjung* theology evolved amongst the oppressed and tortured groups of Korea. “*Minjung* theology was a theological appropriation of a *minjung* Christianity which, in turn, was a Christian appropriation of the (non-Christian) *minjung* tradition.”<sup>54</sup> Because Korea was not colonised by a Western power but by Shinto-Buddhist Japan, in contrast to the rest of Asia, Christianity was not perceived as the ally of the colonisers.<sup>55</sup> *Minjung* theology reflects this unique context of Christian theology in the historical and social context of Korea. It is a theology that begins with the situation and experience of the people.

It is, therefore, not surprising that in the Indian context liberative theology has to be quite different. In India, Christianity was the religion of the colonisers. Probably the greatest problem in India is the caste system and this one finds reflected in “*Dalit Theology*. ‘Dalit’ means broken, trampled upon, destroyed ... obviously by the nefarious system of discrimination between the so-called high, low and scheduled castes in India.”<sup>56</sup> In contrast to *minjung* theology, *Dalit* theology has even to struggle to be accepted within the church and to find its place there.

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<sup>50</sup> Witvliet: *A Place in the Sun* (1985), 161.

<sup>51</sup> Kappen: “Jesus and Transculturation”, 173.

<sup>52</sup> Kappen, “Transculturation”, 173.

<sup>53</sup> Pieris: “Does Christ Have a Place in Asia?”, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Pieris, “Place in Asia”, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Pieris, “Place in Asia”, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Pieris, “Place in Asia”, 37.

“For the great majority [...] of Christians are claimed to be Dalits, but 90% of church leadership [...] is alleged to be in the hands of a minority of ‘upper-caste’ Christians! The broken Christ has no place even in the church, which, therefore, could not be the body of *that* Christ.”<sup>57</sup>

However, there is a further important element in *Dalit* theology. As Pieris puts it: “the broken Christ whom they [Dalits] identify themselves with, follow behind and minister to, is for the most part non-Christian!”<sup>58</sup> This last aspect raises an important question: though the goal must be proper contextualisation, how secularised and politicised may this Asian Christ become and still be authentically Christian? Where are the boundaries between political Christian theology and pure social ideology merely disguised in Christian words? One also notes an practical aspect in this context concerning lay participation at a more global level. As Pieris observes, there are some “massive ‘development’ programs with which Asian churches [...] consolidate themselves into Western oases [...] thus forcing a non-Christian majority to depend on a Christian minority for material progress.”<sup>59</sup> Certainly, particularly lay Christians are called to engage in secular affairs and this doubtlessly includes action on a global level. Yet, care must be taken that “aid programmes” indeed bring liberation and not dependence. The ultimate goal is participation and life for all people in Asia and not just for a few.

However, no theology will ever be truly rooted in the Asian social context that does not include Asian women’s perspective. Yet, I will discuss this important issue in a separate section.

As the examples have shown, authentically Asian Christian theology has to take into account the complexity of Asia’s social context while ensuring that the focus on social context does not lead to neglecting of the theological dimension. It is only such a theology that will ultimately prepare the ground for full participation of the people.

### 9.5.2.2 *Religious Context*

Authentically Asian Christianity needs also to be rooted in the religious context. Asia is not a religious vacuum. It is the home of Buddhism and Hinduism. These religions have shaped Asian cultures for centuries. Christianity is still a minority religion in

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<sup>57</sup> Pieris, “Place in Asia”, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Pieris, “Place in Asia”, 38f.

<sup>59</sup> Pieris, *Asian Theology*, 75.

Asia, with just 3% of the population claiming to be Christians.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Pyun Sun Hwan demands that

“a fulfilment theory which regards other religions as *preparatio evangelica* [...] must [...] be overcome. [...] Christianity must give up the past proselytism and should have an open attitude in order to have dialogue with other religions, standing on an equal basis.”<sup>61</sup>

Put thus, this undoubtedly raises the question whether this view leaves any room for missionary work. Yet, it is fair to point out that Christianity, particularly in an Asian context, has to respect other religions. It has to accept and acknowledge that there is some truth in other religions. Thus Vatican II declared in *Nostra Aetate* that God and truth are also to be found in other religions, mentioning explicitly Hinduism and Buddhism (cf. NA 2). Thus mission can never be separated from true and honest dialogue. Asian Christianity must find its place between dialogue and mission. However, it is important, not to forget that this discussion is not a solely intellectual and academic game. As Wilfred puts it: “we are dealing with realities which essentially involve people, and where people are involved there is society, culture, etc. No significant discourse about mission and dialogue and their interrelationship can be made without placing these within the society and its processes.”<sup>62</sup>

Wilfred continues by pointing out that this dialogue is taking place on a macro and on a micro level.<sup>63</sup> For example, the macro level does involve dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism as a discussion on an academic level between theologians. Nonetheless, although this discussion level is necessary, Wilfred considers the discussion at micro level to have priority.

“The lived religiousness of the people [...] contrasts with the universalisation and abstraction made at macro level. [...] Since people express their religiousness in everyday life through prayers, rituals, celebrations, symbols, etc. dialogue would mean being [...] a participant in such religious experiences and manifestations of our neighbours. It could mean some kind of sharing in the worship of the neighbour, without however being syncretistic.”<sup>64</sup>

It is important to consider this point because in the traditional religious culture of Asia, there is no such distinction between life and religion as it is often made by Western Christians. In Asia, religion and life are inseparable. Wilfred, therefore, surely

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<sup>60</sup> cf. Ferm, *Liberation Theologies*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Pyun Sun Hwan: “Other Religions and Theology”, 64.

<sup>62</sup> Wilfred: “Dialogue and Mission in Context”, 23. Despite his Western name, Wilfred is in fact Indian.

<sup>63</sup> cf. Wilfred, “Dialogue”, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Wilfred, “Dialogue”, 24f.

marks the way theology in Asia has to go. In addition it also shows that 'secular character' is anything but a useful category to describe the laity in the religious context of Asia.

However, Christian theology has also to consider the issue of mission. This seems to be one of the most difficult issues for Asian theologians. They are involved in dialogue with other religions, but they also have to explain and proclaim the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Christianity without falling prey to exclusivism or theological imperialism. What makes the situation even more difficult is the fact that Buddhism and Hinduism have no problem with integrating Christ into their thinking. The message of salvation is nothing new to them. For Stanley Samartha, therefore, a possible solution is to move from "'normative exclusivism' [...] toward a position of 'relational distinctiveness' of Christ, *relational* because Christ does not remain unrelated to neighbours of other great religions and *distinctive* because, without recognising the distinctiveness of the great religious traditions as different responses to the mystery of God, no mutual enrichment is possible."<sup>65</sup>

Instead of a christocentric concept of salvation, Samartha favours a theocentric concept:

"Christians must come to a clearer grasp of the uniqueness of Jesus. [...] Elevating Jesus to the status of God or limiting Christ to Jesus of Nazareth are both temptations to be avoided. The former runs the risk of an impoverished "Jesuology" and the latter of becoming a narrow "Christomonism." A theocentric Christology avoids these dangers and becomes more helpful in establishing new relationships with neighbours of other faiths."<sup>66</sup>

As a theoretical concept, this seems to be very promising. However, Samartha does not give concrete examples on how to realise his concept. His concept presupposes well-educated and open-minded people. His idea is in the danger of being incomprehensible for normal, particularly poor and less well educated people.

Samartha's approach shows that Asian theologians are aware of the problem and the need to develop an authentically Asian Christology which does justice to the demands of dialogue and mission. However, there is still a long way to go before this can be a Christology of the people and not above their heads.

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<sup>65</sup> Samartha: "The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in a Multireligious Culture", 105.

<sup>66</sup> Samartha, "Cross", 114. To avoid misunderstanding, Samartha does not reject orthodox Christology but simply aims at a careful distinction between Jesus and Christ.



### 9.5.3 Relevance

Having discussed the question of authenticity at some length, readers may ask what the relevance of this question might be. Of course, the situation of Christianity in Asia is rather specific. Still there are many aspects that apply also to various other parts of the world in one way or another. For example, Europe is no longer a purely Christian continent. Secular ideas and other religions are present as well. All the attempts to create authenticity are also a way of preparing the ground for proper participation of the people as nobody will wholeheartedly participate in something that is ultimately alien to him or her. Nonetheless it has also become apparent that the quest for authenticity to enable participation in a particular local church must not become detached from the question of participation in *the* one catholic Church. It is for this reason that theological reflections on lay participation can never be final, as Fabella writes about her Christology: "what I submit as my christology as an Asian woman [...] is subject to additions and revisions, [...] the task of christology is ongoing and never really finished."<sup>67</sup>

## 9.6 Orthopraxis versus Orthodoxy

In the previous sections I have frequently used the phrase "doing theology". This was done with good reason as it points to a constitutive element of liberative theologies, its emphasis on orthopraxis over orthodoxy. This does not imply that liberative theologians do not reflect upon orthodoxy, nor are orthopraxis and orthodoxy seen as mutually exclusive opposites. Yet, it stresses the direction of thought within such theologies. From this perspective, theology has, thus, to be closely linked with the daily life of the people and how they live their faith. This is to be the ultimate point of departure for theological reflection. It is also here where participation of the people is to begin. According to Gutierrez, "the intention is to recognise the work and importance of concrete behaviour, of deeds, of action, of praxis in the Christian life."<sup>68</sup>

Yet, one also ought to consider Juan Luis Segundo's warning about misconceptions of the idea of orthopraxis. It is important to prevent people from

"falling into two superficial and mistaken preconceptions. The first one is that liberation theology comes out of practice. And the second one is that it makes orthopraxis, instead of orthodoxy, the main criterion for its solutions. [...] But at least

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<sup>67</sup> Fabella, "Christology", 221.

<sup>68</sup> Gutierrez, *A Theology*, 8.

serious theologians in Latin America [...] do not aim at reducing theology to more or less superficial and spontaneous answers to the problems which Christian people perceive in their everyday life".<sup>69</sup>

It is obvious that concepts developed in liberative theologies need to be adapted to specific situations in their respective contexts. However, Segundo stresses that this is the application of, and not the primary task for, such theologies. They are still systematic theological reflections, but reflections that focus on the context and the people they are encountering in the real world. The emphasis on orthopraxis is thus not an attempt to turn theology into a manual for religious short-term solutions. Rather, it stresses the context against which a specific theology is done and this theology must be applicable for the given context. "Liberation is both prior to pastoral work and the outgrowth of pastoral work. It is both theory-*for*-praxis and theory-*of*-praxis."<sup>70</sup> It is in this framework that Chung demands that

"Asian women theologians should realise that we are the text, and the Bible and tradition of the Christian church [...] the context of our theology. [...] Of course we Asian Christians must open ourselves to learn from the authentic collective memories of Jewish and Christian people in the West, but not to the degree that the latter become the totalitarian dictators of spiritual meaning. The Bible becomes meaningful only when it touches our peoples' hearts"<sup>71</sup>.

This is why, although liberative theologies share the common goal of liberation, "Christians committed to the struggle for liberation will probably diverge from one another in practice."<sup>72</sup> Yet it is this diversity derived from a unity based on a common, eschatological goal that outlines perspectives on how participation of the people, particularly the laity, can be perceived. A theology that focuses on orthopraxis, without giving up concern for orthodoxy, has to concentrate on laypeople and their participation, for it is the laity that put such theology into practice. Still, such a theology also has to focus on the unifying elements of faith. A theology based on orthopraxis must also continue to take orthodoxy seriously.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Segundo (1983): "Two Theologies of Liberation", 356

<sup>70</sup> Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 82.

<sup>71</sup> Chung, *Struggle*, 111.

<sup>72</sup> Assmann: *Practical Theology of Liberation* (1975), 71.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. King (ed.): *Feminist Theology from the Third World* (1994), 16f.

## 9.7 Ecclesiological Aspects

### 9.7.1 Need for change

Liberation theologians are not always in line with Roman theology and so there are quite a number of points of disagreement. Still, liberation writers maintain "a belief in a highly decentralised but still hierarchical church."<sup>74</sup> It is here that the question of authenticity becomes extremely important. As Pablo Richard puts it, "it is not a question of radically breaking with the West but of dialectically moving beyond this colonial past, so that Christianity can become indigenised and take root in the Third World."<sup>75</sup>

In all liberative theologies, and in particular its feminist versions, there is the call for "sustained efforts to discover new ways of being Church, of being in the world as the visible presence of God's reign [...]."<sup>76</sup> The key issue is not to have a new abstract ecclesiology but to put the message of liberation into ecclesial practice. Hence, the central question is how people are to be this liberating Church. It is for this reason that liberative theologies have based a lot of their thoughts on the teaching of Vatican II where the Church is seen as the pilgrim people of God. If that suggests a respect for church authority, this remains in creative tension with the other side of this theology for, as Berryman stresses, what liberation theologians "insist on is that church structures and procedures, even sacraments and worship, take their significance from the primary experience of God among the poor, and not the other way around."<sup>77</sup>

The view is that church structures should be there for the people and not the people for church structures. Thus the 1987 Consultation on Asian Women's Theology suggested instead of a hierarchical ecclesiology a circular understanding of church:

"our theological image of the church is a circle of God's people in which Jesus the Christ is the centre. There are various inequalities in Asian society, based on sex, class, race [...]. But in this circle, all the people are the same distance from Jesus Christ, guaranteeing full equality and human dignity. Jesus Christ being the alpha and the omega, this community, [...] this circle, aims for the final completion which is the Christian hope."<sup>78</sup>

As an alternative to the hierarchical understanding of Church this circular model is well worth thinking about, particularly as this model does not aim at the past but the future of the Church. Still, it must also be observed that this model remains on the level

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<sup>74</sup> Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads*, 180.

<sup>75</sup> Richard: "Liberation Theology: A Difficult but Possible Future", 508.

<sup>76</sup> Mexico Conference: "Final Document on Doing Theology from Third World Women's Perspective" (1986), 39f.

<sup>77</sup> Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 159.

<sup>78</sup> Conference Statement: Consultation on Asian Women's Theology (1987), 154.

of theory. There is no indication given how it could be put in practice. It might be an ideal worth aiming for but the model seems partly too idealistic and abstract ever to become fully realised.

It is against this background that demands for change, for different forms of church, for more and different lay participation are made. This need for change is not only a demand made by the laity but is also acknowledged and supported by the bishops of Latin America. Thus they write in the Puebla Final Document "Base-Level Ecclesial Communities": "What we need now is still more clerical openness to the activity of the laity and the overcoming of pastoral individualism and self-sufficiency. [...] We still find attitudes that pose an obstacle to the dynamic thrust of renewal."<sup>79</sup>

Although, the Puebla document leaves no doubt that there is still a long way to go, the bishops also saw reason for optimism. Thus they write: "In the direction of greater participation, there has been an increase of ordained ministries (such as the permanent diaconate), non-ordained ministries, and other services such as celebrators of the word and community animators. We also note better collaboration between priests, religious, and lay people."<sup>80</sup> Greater lay participation is certainly encouraged here. However, it is also worth noting that the question of change is not discussed on the basis of clergy *or* laity but on the assumption of the laity *and* the clergy working together as collaborators. At least in theory this seems to be a concept that shows a possible way forward, allowing greater lay participation in a hierarchical church while at the same time overcoming a concept of hierarchy that presupposes of one group dominating over the other.

### 9.7.2 BECs

Within the context of liberative theologies a number of new forms of ministries and participation have been developed, such as ministers of the word, lay educators, community works and so forth. Yet, the most important development is the creation and emergence of basic ecclesial communities (=BECs). Known also as grassroots communities, basic ecclesial communities, base communities, spontaneous groups, basic

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<sup>79</sup> Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops: *Evangelisation in Latin America's Present and Future* (1979)

Puebla Final Document, "Base-Level Ecclesial Communities (CEBs), the Parish, and the Local Church", 249f.

communities and so forth, such communities are found in Latin America, Africa and Asia. "The common phenomenon [...] is the *new way of being the Church*."<sup>81</sup>

### 9.7.2.1 *A new way of being the Church*

There is no definite date when BECs came into being. However, from the late 1950s onwards they began to appear in Latin America. Equally there is no clear and final definition of what BECs actually are. Still there are some common features that all these communities share. Arthur McGovern suggests three based on the components of the term "Basic Ecclesial Communities".

"The communities vary in size, usually between ten to thirty persons in a group. They come together about once a week to read scripture, to pray, to sing hymns, and to discuss problems and how to act upon them. [...]"

The groups are 'communities,' not just weekly discussion groups. They strive to form a mutual support group, sharing each other's cares and struggles. In some cases they represent the principal life of the church, though they generally retain a linkage to a parish [...].

The communities are 'ecclesial.' [...] faith constitutes their common base and their reason for forming. [...]"

These communities are 'of the base' in a sociological sense primarily. They constitute the poor, simple, marginalised persons [...]. Thus the poorest sectors of society have the 'good news preached,' or more accurately they share actively in discussing the word of God in their lives [...]. They also begin to recognise their potential for organising together to work for social change."<sup>82</sup>

McGovern highlights a number of aspects that are equally relevant for the issue of lay participation. First, BECs are located on the level between the individual family and the local parish as a whole, the level that is most relevant for the majority of the laity. Second, BECs demand a rather high level of commitment from their members. In contrast to specific groups, such as bible study groups, youth groups, and so forth, participation in BECs affects the whole life. Third, social and political activities are an integral part of BECs. However, their reason for coming together is their shared faith and not just a common social or political cause. Finally, BECs are active entities. While in some cases the impulse to form such groups came from the institutional church, they are communities run and sustained by the people for the people.

Compared to the whole church, BECs are relatively small in numbers. It would be a wrong perception to think that all active Christians in the Third World were mem-

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<sup>80</sup> Puebla Final Document, "Base-Level Ecclesial Communities", 249.

<sup>81</sup> Ponnunmuthan: *The Spirituality of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Socio-Religious Context of Trivandrum/Kerala, India* (1996), 25.

bers of BECs. Still, particularly for the Latin American context the emergence of BECs has led to new life in the local churches. There has been the danger that the BECs and the institutionalised church might drift apart and become two different churches. Yet this danger has been avoided. As Leonardo Boff writes,

“each of these two expressions of the one Church has come to understand its specific mission. The larger institutional Church has adopted the network of base communities and today offers the newer entity services that only an organised institution can offer, conferring its universality upon these communities [...]. For its part, the network of base communities has restored the larger Church to its status as a community [...].”<sup>83</sup>

Yet, there is more to it. The impact of BECs is not only limited to inner-ecclesial aspects. Selvister Ponnunmuthan shows that in the Indian context BECs are not only communities of the poor, in some cases BECs bring rich and poor people together, as well as people from other religions.<sup>84</sup> “The participation of people from different rites shows that the ordinary people are able to think beyond the *Rite*. The presence of Hindus in the coastal BECs is really a breaking down of not only caste barriers but also religious barriers.”<sup>85</sup> In this respect, BECs are not only a new way of being church but they also contribute to the formation of a new society. In view of this, Pieris even goes one step further, demanding not only the furthering of basic *ecclesial* communities but

“the building up of ‘kingdom communities’ or ‘basic human communities’ wherein Christian and non-Christian members strive together for the dawn of *full humanity*. ‘Full humanity’ is not only the common ideal of their strivings, but also the christological title by which the Christian members of such communities would recognise and confess the One whose disciple they boldly claim to be.”<sup>86</sup>

This proposal demands careful reading, because otherwise this maybe easily misread as what the *1984 Instruction* has rejected as a false “tendency to identify the kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement and to make history itself the subject of its own development, as a process of the self-redemption of humankind”<sup>87</sup>. Doubtless this concept has a strong political dimension. Nonetheless it is essentially grounded on faith in the incarnation of Christ. Politics are not put before common belief, rather this concept shows the broadest political and human application of what it means to believe in the incarnation. While for some this may reek of syncretism, it is an ecclesiological perspective not easily to be dismissed. In a sense it is a trans-religion ec-

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<sup>82</sup> McGovern: *Liberation Theology and its Critics* (1989), 202. Cf. also EN58.

<sup>83</sup> Boff, L.: *Faith on the Edge* (1989), 194f. Cf. also Boff, L.: “Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church”, 133 & 139f.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Ponnunmuthan, *Spirituality*, 201 & 228f.

<sup>85</sup> Ponnunmuthan, *Spirituality*, 229.

<sup>86</sup> Pieris, *Asian Theology*, 126.

clesiology with far reaching implications for a theology of membership and participation in the people of God.

### 9.7.2.2 *Laity and Leadership*

One essential common feature needs to be noted, that the leadership of the BECs is in the hands of the laity. BECs are often “led by lay ministers known as ‘delegates of the Word’”<sup>88</sup>. Yet it is not only the laity taking over the leadership of the community. It is also a different type of leadership. “The very fact that lay people, either the father or the mother of the house where the meeting is held or an animator, presides over the BEC gathering sheds light on the great change in the nature of leadership.”<sup>89</sup> It is mainly a “non-dominating leadership”<sup>90</sup> Hence, there is, or at least should be, a strong sense of equality among the members of a BEC; at least in theory, leadership is not in the hands of only few people. Leadership in BECs is often also exercised by women. As Maria Bingemer points out: “With the word of God [...] as their only wealth, the women of the Latin American poor are taking over the leadership and the administration of the great majority of the increasing number of biblical groups and basic ecclesial communities”<sup>91</sup>. But one might still ask about the extent to which their agenda is set by the parish clergy, or by those who organise them into groups.

Hence, Mary Rees also acknowledges that BECs offer good possibilities for women to participate in the leadership. Yet she is a bit more cautious how this theoretical chance is put into practice:

“Women are very much present in these communities and hear God speaking in their favour [...].

But feminist theologians also deplore the frequent absence of women in charting the course the CEB [=BEC] movement is to take. For the most part, women are still second-class citizens in the CEBs, where male-centred traditions continue to persist. For instance, CEB leadership is usually male, as are those who represent the community to the larger church.”<sup>92</sup>

Rees shows that in theory the BECs are a good concept. Yet, they are still far from having achieved equal participation of men and women.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> CDF, *Instruction on Certain Aspects*, 405.

<sup>88</sup> Linden, *Liberation Theology*, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Ponnumuthan, *Spirituality*, 213.

<sup>90</sup> Ponnumuthan, *Spirituality*, 197.

<sup>91</sup> Bingemer: “Women in the Future of the Theology of Liberation”, 476

<sup>92</sup> Rees (1984): “Feminist Theologians Challenge Churches”, 386f. Cf. also Ferro: “The Latin American Woman: The Praxis and Theology of Liberation”, 32f.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. also Yong Ting Jin: “New Ways of Being Church”, 198-206.

Another aspect is the relationship of lay leaders of the BECs and the hierarchy. Particular in more conservative Catholic circles there were initially and still are some reservations against BECs and lay leadership. However, as the example of Trivandrum/India shows, there is also a great potential for the Church when the hierarchy and laity work together. In Trivandrum

“each BEC is linked with the parish, the Vicariate and the Diocese. To vitalise the network there are gatherings for parish level animators, Vicariate level animators, as well as those at the diocesan level. [...] It is because of this network that to communicate a message in any part of the Diocese it is enough that eleven co-ordinators of the Vicariates be informed. The impact of such a communication network is such that the Bishop’s pastoral letters cannot go unnoticed. The same thing happens in a parish [...]”<sup>94</sup>

It is more than obvious that such a network also provides the structures to communicate in both directions. Such a network can enable creative dialogue on all ecclesial levels and across these levels. Though one might ask to what extent this is an ideal and to what extent it is a reality also in other dioceses.

It is equally obvious that lay leadership does not set out to exclude ordained priests from the BECs. However, there is a change in the role of the priest: “The priests in the BEC gatherings become more listeners than speakers. [...] formerly priests invited the people to the Church and now people gather and invite the priest to the BEC gatherings.”<sup>95</sup> This is not to diminish the role of the priest but to emphasise a different attitude. The priest is no longer the leader nor is he above the laity. Rather, in the BECs the laity and priest together can become the one people of God.

### 9.7.2.3 *Liturgy and Worship*

Besides lay leadership, another basic feature of BECs is their new forms of liturgy and worship. Again, in the BECs liturgy and worship are to a large extent in the hands of the laity. Even more so as the lack of ordained clergy is usually presented as one of the main reasons why BECs came into being.

Almost a modern legend by now, the following story is reported as one of the origins of BECs:

“In 1956, [...] in Northeast Brazil, a woman complained to her bishop, Angelo Rossi: ‘At Christmas, the three Protestant churches were lighted and crowded [...]. But our Catholic church was closed and dark. Why don’t we get any priest?’

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<sup>94</sup> Ponneumuthan, *Spirituality*, 205.

<sup>95</sup> Ponneumuthan, *Spirituality*, 220.



Bishop Rossi, stung by the complaint, decided to train 'popular catechists' to keep parishes alive when priests were absent, to conduct 'Mass without a priest' [...]. Within a year, 372 lay catechists had been trained, and by 1960, 475 BECs had formed in the area [...]."<sup>96</sup>

Leaving aside the question whether this story is true historically or not, it still highlights some basic aspects. First, right from the start liturgy celebrated in the community was to be a key feature of the BECs. Second, the laity were and still are the main leaders of the liturgy. Third, there was a remarkable collaboration of the hierarchy and the laity. The hierarchy provided the training for lay leaders and catechists. The communities, however, as the phrase "had formed" suggests, were not imposed by the hierarchy but emerged from the people themselves. Finally, the whole event as such must be seen.

"The liturgy has a predominant place. It is the place for festivity, for celebration of life [...], where the experience of faith is expressed not only with the mouth and in words, but with all the body's resources, singing, gestures, and dance [...]."<sup>97</sup> In other words, in the BECs there is a living and lively liturgy and a liturgy of life. In this way, liturgy becomes a "shared celebration of life"<sup>98</sup>.

The possibility is discussed of laypeople presiding at the Eucharist as extraordinary ministers<sup>99</sup>. However, it must be seen that the argument is not about who is allowed to do what. The main focus of the argument is the understanding that the Eucharist makes the Church in the individual parishes fully present and it is the people's desire to be able to celebrate the Eucharist. Thus Berryman argues,

"if the 'front lines' of the church are with the base community, it would seem fitting that the people should be able to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly. If a 'priest shortage' makes that impossible, the Catholic system for preparing and ordaining priest should be [...] re-examined. In itself, celebrating the Eucharist does not require years in the seminary [...]. Why not, then, change the church's discipline and allow people from the community – women as well as men – to be designated and ordained?"<sup>100</sup>

It is unlikely that the Catholic Church will have lay presidency at the Eucharist in the foreseeable future. It is certainly also legitimate to ask whether this would actually be desirable and whether lay presidency would really solve the problems. Yet the questions raised by liberative theologies show clearly that the basic concern should not be a cen-

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<sup>96</sup> Smith, *Emergence*, 106.

<sup>97</sup> Bingemer, "Women", 485.

<sup>98</sup> Boff, *Faith on the Edge*, 89. Regarding the important role of women in this context cf. Aquino: "Women's Participation in the Church", 192-197.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads*, 84.

<sup>100</sup> Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 78f.

tralised and uniform doctrine based on tradition but the pastoral needs of the people; that church discipline is to serve the people and not vice versa.

Finally, the liturgical celebrations in the BECs have also an impact on the liberative theologians' view on the sacraments. Again the underlying theme is that of orthopraxis in the broadest sense. Thus, sacraments are not to be seen exclusively in the context of the Church.

“In the sacraments the Kingdom is already present. Their effectiveness is not only *ecclesial* (establishing a link to the church) but *basileic* (on the order of the Kingdom or *basileia*). They [...] move toward the transformation of the society in the direction of the Kingdom of God. For this reason the sacraments must be made effective in history [...].”<sup>101</sup>

However, if this view is turned round, it could be argued that working for the Kingdom of God in a secular field has also a sacramental dimension. In this case the work of the laity would be sacramental work, too. It is for this reason that Victor Codina argues for a stronger integration of sacramentals into the teaching of the church.

#### The sacramentals

“comprise the sacramental practice that is most widespread and deeply rooted in the people, and they differ from one circumstance and place to another. [...] They are often led by lay people themselves [...]. They are a symbolic expression of desire, of faith, of piety, of trust in the God of life. Through them is expressed the evangelising potential of the poor.”<sup>102</sup>

The crucial question is not whether the laity can celebrate all of these sacramentals<sup>103</sup> themselves or whether they require the presence of a priest. What is far more important in this context is the fact that through the sacramentals the people bring their lives into the church while the church reaches into their lives. Through this, life, church, and religion become deeply interwoven.<sup>104</sup> Yet, it is obvious that the more interwoven they are the more can and do the people participate. It is also in this context that the role of the priest is newly defined. The priest is seen not only in relation to the sacraments or from an ecclesial perspective. He is now placed in the horizon of the Kingdom of God. This highlights other aspects of the priestly ministry.

“Mercy is [...] the constitutive element of Christian priesthood of the faithful and of the priestly ministry. The priest is [...] above all the man of mercy to the poor

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<sup>101</sup> Codina: “Sacraments”, 223.

<sup>102</sup> Codina, “Sacraments”, 225.

<sup>103</sup> There is no definitive list of sacramentals. However, Codina illustrates the range of what might be considered as sacramentals, cf. “Sacraments”, 225: “Some [sacramentals] are linked to the defining moments of life [...], to places [...], to the agricultural cycle [...], to specific moments [...]. A whole range of symbols are mixed together [...]. They are often led by lay people themselves; at other times they require a qualified presence of the ministers of the church. [...] They are a symbolic expression of desire, of faith, of piety, of trust in the God of life.”

<sup>104</sup> On the re-vitalising of sacramental life in BECs, cf. Boff, “Characteristics”, 138

and sinners. This [...] orients the priesthood to the Kingdom. [...] Evangelisation, sacraments, practice, and so on, should all be orientated to this horizon.”<sup>105</sup>

Putting the question of ministry in the context of the Kingdom of God is not enough to solve all the questions concerning the laity as the People of God. However, it shows another way of approaching the question. Though two thousand years of Christian heritage cannot simply be ignored, this past is not an end in itself. The ultimate goal must be orientation towards realisation of the Kingdom of God. To discuss the laity and their participation from this perspective might certainly help the Church to find new possibilities for action.

## 9.8 Women’s perspective<sup>106</sup>

As there is not only one liberative theology, so is there not only one women’s theology of liberation. Thus the Women’s Conference in Mexico wrote in 1986 about the process of liberating women: It

“happens differently in the three continents. In Latin America, women organise themselves around survival strategies. In Africa, the rebirth of women takes place in their struggle to overthrow the oppressive elements in traditional African cultures and religions [...]. In Asia, the struggle is centred in rediscovering the pride of being woman, in building womanhood and humane communities, and in fighting against political, and sexual injustices.”<sup>107</sup>

The one foundational problem that is common throughout the Third World is the women’s “state of double oppression – by their socio-economic situation and by their sex”<sup>108</sup>. What is important to see, as the Mexico conference stressed, is that women need liberation, yet, they do not want to be liberated but want to liberate themselves. It is not only to be liberation *of* women but also liberation *by* women.

Equally feminist theologians emphasis that they are not setting out on a crusade against men with the goal to replace patriarchy with matriarchy. Their fight is *not against* men but *for* full humanity. Although writing specifically about the Asian context, Christine Tse points toward the direction ecclesiology should take from a Third World feminist perspective:

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<sup>105</sup> Codina, “Sacraments”, 230.

<sup>106</sup> A personal note: I am a white First World male theologian. Despite this “handicap” I will try to be as just as possible towards the proposals by feminist theologians. However, I will not discuss issues concerning women’s ordination; not because I would consider this question as unimportant, quite the contrary, but because I am looking only at the laity in this thesis.

<sup>107</sup> Mexico Conference, “Third World Women’s Perspective”, 37f.

<sup>108</sup> Bingemer, “Women”, 474.

“Women are called to restore inclusiveness, equality, and harmony in the church [...]”

Asian women have long suffered oppression from patriarchal structure. They do not want to counteract this by replacing it with a matriarchal structure [...]. Instead they are promoting an inclusive structure. This [...] inclusiveness is not only essential for the Asian women’s movement but also a key element for the Asian people’s movement to liberate themselves from oppression of all kinds.”<sup>109</sup>

Thus Betty Govinden argues, that “the point that is often forgotten is that the ministry of women is not there for itself, but for the enhancement of the Church’s mission”<sup>110</sup>. Without full participation of women the task of liberation will remain unfinished. “The new cosmological order that the Third World clamours for includes unhampered feminine participation in religion and revolution.”<sup>111</sup> It is against this general background that the individual aspects of the feminist perspective of liberative theologies must be seen.

To begin with, it is worth noting where feminist liberative theology is actually done. Although liberative theologies claim to be for and by the people, it has not automatically included women’s issues, as Ana Maria Bidegain writes:

“We [female theologians] [...] had to become male, or at least present ourselves as asexual beings.

This was also the framework in which the theology of liberation came into being. Obviously, then, that theology was not going to address the situation of women in the church and society. [...]

Today, [...] a battle is being waged for a new, male-female relationship. Very timidly, a feminist theology is being sketched within the current of liberation theology”.<sup>112</sup>

This shows that despite all good intentions liberation theology was also bound up, at least to some extent, with the social environment around it. Although trying to counteract oppression liberation theology had difficulties comprehending the full range of oppressive structures around it. However, things have started to change, although not without struggle and often with strong opposition from men. There is a growing number of female theologians. Yet, women are far from being equally represented.<sup>113</sup> In rather general terms, it seems that in Latin America the number of female theologians is still quite low whereas in Africa and in particular in Asia feminist theology is further developed and better organised. Still the problem remains that “few churches actively encourage women to study theology. [...] Until now, the church’s theology has been done

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<sup>109</sup> Tse: “New Ways of Being Church: A Catholic Perspective”, 39.

<sup>110</sup> Govinden: “No Time for Silence: Women, Church, and Liberation in Southern Africa”, 291.

<sup>111</sup> Pieris, *Asian Theology*, 109.

<sup>112</sup> Bidegain: “Women and the Theology of Liberation”, 114.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Ferro, “Woman”, 24 & 28.

by men, and women's experience and spirituality has had no place in their work."<sup>114</sup> The Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and *In God's Image*, the Asian magazine for feminist theology, are promising signs. However, they are hardly more than that so far.

Yet, women do not only have to fight for their place in academia. Equally, the women's place in church leadership is far from being the norm or reality. This was also stated by the Mexico Conference in 1986: "In all three continents, [...] though we [women] constitute a strong labour force within the heavily institutionalised Church, we are powerless and voiceless, and in most churches are excluded from leadership roles and ordained ministries."<sup>115</sup>

Frequently, the issue of leadership is closely interwoven with that of ordination. Particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, though not only there, women are excluded from leadership because they supposedly cannot be ordained. Yet, it is also worth noting a brief aside by Tse. Of course the institutional churches are slow to change but "because many women are as traditional as men, they themselves are not changing so far, sometimes even hindering other women from changing."<sup>116</sup> In other words, a change of the institution alone is not enough.

Tse also offers a different perspective for the discussion of ministry: "To be inclusive is to see ministry as flowing from gifts rather than as based on gender."<sup>117</sup> This suggestion is well worth considering. It takes the issue of ministry out of the lay/clerical opposition and puts it in the framework of charism, the present pastoral situation and the ultimate goal of any ecclesial activity here and now that is the realisation of God's Kingdom. In this context Tse describes an attempt to develop a new model of ministry in Asia.

"The recent attempts within the Catholic Church in Asia to team up both priests and women for spiritual direction [...] have produced new and very positive experiences. [...]

[...] Priests who are working as co-partners on the team or priest who favour such spiritual direction have remarked with enthusiasm about how they have been enriched by the co-operation of women. [...] In fact, members of the church – even males – are now beginning seriously to question the patriarchal system [...]. They recognise that women can help restore such values as friendship and intimacy to the church."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Conference Statement: Consultation on Asian Women's Theology, 152.

<sup>115</sup> Mexico Conference, "Third World Women's Perspective", 39.

<sup>116</sup> Tse, "New Ways", 40.

<sup>117</sup> Tse, "New Ways", 40.

<sup>118</sup> Tse, "New Ways", 40.

It would be certainly naïve to think that this model is without problems and already universally accepted. However, it seems to me a promising step forward because the question of *male or female* and *clergy or layperson* has been replaced with the mode of *humans together*.

It is essential to see that this call for more and different participation of women is understood not only as an ecclesiological problem but also as an issue that demands a rethinking of Christology. For “women are deprived fuller participation in the life of the Church because the Church assumes a christological premise which declares that Jesus as male was a necessary precondition of Christ’s being what he was and doing what he did.”<sup>119</sup> Monica Melanchton consequently perceives as the pressing task of theology, particularly such that is done by women, “to assert and emphasise the humanness of Jesus, rather than his maleness.”<sup>120</sup> According to Ahn Sang Nim, it is because the Church is to represent and is to be the body of Christ that “men and women should participate equally in all its activities, committees and gatherings.”<sup>121</sup> Lily Kuo Wang strongly emphasises that neither gender nor race but “God’s calling is the most important thing. Women should become ministers or church leaders only because of God’s call. Women do not become leaders or ministers to threaten men.”<sup>122</sup>

However, the problem of women participating in the Church is not restricted to the question of leadership and ordination. In many countries throughout the Third World women are denied the fundamental prerequisite of participating at all, that is to say there are still many places where women have not even the status of a full human being. Thus, “traditionally, in Taiwan society, women had no status. Instead, they were regarded as property of men and at best, their subordinate. [...] In the whole, women were treated as non-persons.”<sup>123</sup> As the long lists of examples in Chung’s *Struggle to Be the Sun Again* and various chapters of King’s *Feminist Theology*<sup>124</sup> show, this status of women is not peculiar to Taiwan. There is an enormous task for the Church to help women so that they are treated, respected and accepted as full persons and full human beings. An increased participation of women in the churches might be one step toward this goal. To exclude women from participation in Third World countries is getting dangerously

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<sup>119</sup> Melanchton: “Christology and Women”, 18.

<sup>120</sup> Melanchton, “Christology”, 18.

<sup>121</sup> Ahn Sang Nim: “Feminist Theology in the Korean Church”, 133.

<sup>122</sup> Wang: “Ecclesiology and Women: A View from Taiwan”, 31.

<sup>123</sup> Wang, “Ecclesiology”, 24.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Chung, *Struggle*, p. 38. & King, *Feminist Theology*, particularly chapters 9-16.

close to accepting the oppression of women in society outside the church. That any truly Christian church cannot put up with such a state of affairs is self-evident.

Finally, it is necessary here to reconsider the image of the woman as mother. As Chung puts it drastically: "The womb is praised but not those who have wombs. Most of the so-called higher world religions condemn women's menstruation as dirty or polluting."<sup>125</sup> Although seldom ever put in this way in the modern West, the assumption perhaps still lies not far beneath the surface and it is against this widespread misconception Bingemer argues that the body of the woman is a living Eucharist.

"Feeding others with one's own body is the supreme way God chose to be definitively and sensibly in the midst of the people. [...] It is his [Jesus'] person given as food; it is his very life made bodily a source of life for Christians. But it is women who possess in their bodiliness the physical possibility of performing the divine eucharistic action. In the whole process of gestation, childbirth, protection, and nourishing of a new life, we have the sacrament of the Eucharist [...] happening anew."<sup>126</sup>

From this perspective being a woman gets a sacramental dimension. Yet, such a perspective demands more respect for women. Menstruation should not render women ritually unfit. On the contrary it should be seen as a holy symbol of the ability to give life to others. Against this background many positions and arguments need to be rethought.

This leads to a further aspect of feminist liberative writing. "Feminist theology is not a struggle simply to be women but to be human beings. So it is not a struggle for women to be above men, but for women and men to be equal."<sup>127</sup> There is particular stress on the biblical foundation that all human beings should be equal.

"Asian Christian women in the early twentieth century began a self-conscious effort to re-examine the Bible [...]. They emphasised that women and men are created in the image of God, Jesus treats women fairly and with compassion, and the Apostle Paul states that there is neither male nor female in Christ."<sup>128</sup>

This lack of, and need for, equality is also acknowledged by male theologians. Thus Boff writes: "We are one another's' sisters and brothers. Siblings are equal."<sup>129</sup>

Thus the "Consultation on Asian Women's Theology" concluded in 1987:

"The Church and its institutions have been heretical [...] in not using the gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to all the members of the church. We challenge the church to show in its life that it believes the Gospel – that women as well as men are created in the image of God, that women as well as men are saved and set free by Jesus the Christ, and that because women and men are baptised into one Lord Jesus Christ, distinctions between men and women [...] should not affect the life

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<sup>125</sup> Chung, *Struggle*, 70.

<sup>126</sup> Bingemer, "Women", 486.

<sup>127</sup> Ahn Sang Nim, "Feminist Theology", 128.

<sup>128</sup> Kwok Pui-lan: "The Emergence of Asian Feminist Consciousness of Culture and Theology", 96.

<sup>129</sup> Boff, *Faith on the Edge*, 99.

of the church. God calls the church to share in the struggle for liberation of all people, especially women. The church can only do so when it ceases to oppress its own members, and let those of its members who suffer oppression in society direct its mission.”<sup>130</sup>

## 9.9 Liberative Theologies – An Alternative for the Laity?

As we have seen, the term “Liberative theologies” denotes a multitude of different theologies. Their common goal is to overcome oppression of any kind. They do not set out to create a new Church or a new theology as far as content goes. What is different is the way theology is done. The key elements are the emphasis on orthopraxis over orthodoxy, the stress on contextualisation, and that such theologies are done both *for* the people and also *by* the people. Such theologies presuppose a great amount of participation of all members of the church, laity and clergy alike. Also the direction of doing theology is different. In liberative theology there is not a centralised uniform body of doctrine that has to be applied to all situations. Instead theological reflection begins with the reality of the oppressed. It tries to help the poor without patronising them. As Enrique Dussel observes:

“what is really needed [...] is to re-create Christianity [...], consisting of small base communities with the creative capacity to take on their customs, ancestral religions [...], their own ethos. This would be a ‘polycentric’ Christianity. It would be decentralised and go beyond the confines of European or North American experience [...].

[...] Liberation theology is the theoretical expression of these aspirations of peoples who have the same right as Mediterranean culture in the first three centuries to create a Christianity that is a true expression of themselves.”<sup>131</sup>

Dussel is well aware that the realisation of such ‘polycentric Christianity’ will take a long time. However, in the emerging BECs throughout the Third World a first move in this direction can be seen. Combined with a healthy understanding of church unity, there is much to be said for Dussel’s model. As this chapter has shown, there has already been opened up a great potential and opportunity for lay participation by the development so far. Undoubtedly, the greatest strength of liberative theologies regarding lay participation is that they have shifted the focus from “Who is allowed to do it” to “What needs to be done and how can it be achieved”.

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<sup>130</sup> Conference Statement: Consultation on Asian Women’s Theology, 153f.

<sup>131</sup> Dussel: “The Ethnic, Peasant, and Popular in a Polycentric Christianity”, 247.



However, it would be naïve and short-sighted to think that liberative theologies could become an alternative to conventional theology without creating new problems or without leaving a number of questions unanswered. Thus, Ponnumuthan asks what happens if a diocese is structured in a way that nobody is excluded from the BECs:

“The automatic membership has both positive and negative effects. Positively we can say that all are included in any one of the BECs and negatively a member need not be a participant in the BEC which in turn demands personal commitment. [...] The question is how far a *member* can remain, without participating in the BEC gatherings. What is the reaction of the participants towards non-participants? Are the BECs tempted to say that there is salvation only through BECs?”<sup>132</sup>

Is it indeed a realistic perspective to expect full commitment of all members of the Church? Do liberative theologians not sometimes have an all too positive view of People of God? And, as Ponnumuthan notes, is there not also the danger that laypeople themselves exclude one another?

Another issue so far hardly addressed at all is the question of how the concepts and ideas of the liberative theologies can be applied to a First World situation. Despite the more than justified call for an inclusive church, there has not much work been done to bring the Third and the First World together. However, if any theology is to have a global impact, it must not ignore neither the Third World nor the First World.

In addition, liberative writers have come up with many good suggestions which indeed sound very promising, yet they do not go so far as to sketch out how they could be put into practice; like traditional theologies, liberative theologies are not immune to the danger of oversimplification.<sup>133</sup> Thus, also all their suggestions must be carefully examined and studied as to whether, and to what extent, they actually do represent the reality they claim to be dealing with.

Looking at liberation theology from a more sociological point of view, Smith highlights another aspect that must not be overlooked. Smith acknowledges that liberation theology is basically a mass movement at grassroots level with strong participation of the oppressed and poor. However,

“before the liberation theology movement [...] could mobilise its members to exert pressure to transform society, it had to institutionalise its ideology and action strategy in the Church. And this first, critical step of the movement was carried out not by powerless, excluded masses [...] but by theological elites in the context of a powerful, well-established organisation [...]”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ponnumuthan, *Spirituality*, 258f.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Gutierrez, *A Theology*, 155.

<sup>134</sup> Smith, *Emergence*, 234.

I have repeatedly stressed that liberative theologies consider themselves to be doing theology *for* the people *by* the people. Yet, Smith is absolutely right to emphasise that *by the people* does not imply that the institutional Church does not participate in the liberative movements. Thus, it would be a misinterpretation of history and reality to describe liberative theologies as exclusively lay theologies. There is indeed an increasing number of lay theologians getting involved with these movements. Also on the grass-roots level the numbers of actively participating people is growing. The importance of animators in BECs and that of catechists must not be underestimated either. Still, it must be seen that the majority of liberative writers, particularly the male theologians, are members of the ordained clergy. It is here that one of the great strengths of liberative theologies becomes most obvious: the collaboration between clergy and the laity. Thus Camara proclaimed already in 1969:

“There is no substitute for his [layman] mission in the church [...]. We shall respect his freedom of choice: diverse positions and diverse opinions in the questions under discussion demonstrate a spirit of initiative and a search for authenticity. This is not a breach of unity but rather a desire to live in different ways the meaning of incarnation. [...]

All of us – clergy, religious and laity – let us form in Christ the community of the church which is open, welcoming, eager for sincere dialogue.”<sup>135</sup>

Camara makes it perfectly clear that diversity, particularity, authenticity, and unity do not necessarily exclude one another but that they should be in fact mutually complementary to one another. The same should be true for the relationship between the clergy and the laity. Both are members of the same and one People of God. There is not one Church for the laity and another for the clergy. There is a healthy emphasis in liberative theologies that there is only one salvific mission for the Church and all members of the Church have to share the responsibility for this together. Yet, it must also be said that the question is not addressed who actually the members of the People of God are. Of course, there is the so-called “preferential option for the poor” but this cannot function as a definition for God’s people because this would also constitute an exclusive definition. It seems that it is simply taken for granted that everybody knows who the People of God are.

Undoubtedly, liberative theologies have offered and opened up many new perspectives and possibilities for the laity. Yet the question remains whether they can really be alternative theologies for the laity. As I have shown, such theologies are not without problems and they also raise quite a few new questions. In that respect they cannot be

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<sup>135</sup> Camara, *Church and Colonialism*, 15.

alternatives for the laity that could replace traditional or more Western theology. Still, liberative theologies have much to offer for the laity at least as a complementary corrective to other theologies. It is in this sense that Gutierrez's programmatic demand for theology and a new-old understanding of church should be seen:

"The church of the poor in Corinth sets the standard for us: the proclamation of the kingdom of God requires, and feeds, a language for speaking about God. [...] Liberation theology originates in an objective: to bring the message of Christ alive in and on the basis of situations in which massive and inhuman poverty reigns. [...]

The task of liberation theology is one that we must carry out while daily sharing the life of a people who are experiencing an especially harsh situation. [...] we as Christians must bear witness to the kingdom of life."<sup>136</sup>

An unresolved problem of Catholic theology remains in the distinction between the sacred sphere for the clergy and the secular for the laity. Liberative theologies with their emphasis on the eschatological basileic dimension of doing theology and being church might have a perspective to offer that could overcome this problematic distinction. For liberative theologies leave no doubt that any participation in the church or for the church in the world has to serve the kingdom of God. The sacred has necessarily to serve the secular. There is still a long way for the church to go but liberative theologies have certainly pointed out what the direction might, could, and should be.

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<sup>136</sup> Gutierrez: *The Truth shall Make You Free* (1990), 172-174.

## **Part V: Towards a Theology of Being the Church – Possible Perspectives**

In view of the various theological concepts and problems concerning the laity and lay participation discussed so far, this part tries to outline some perspectives on what a future theology of the laity and consequently a theology of the people of God could be. Inevitably, this thesis can only indicate some basic possibilities. It cannot be an attempt to present a complete and comprehensive, let alone a final, theology of the laity. Any such attempt would be doomed to fail right from the start because the different issues are so much interrelated that it is virtually impossible to deal completely with one issue after another. On the contrary, we should rather work in circles, that is to say, to start with one issue, from there discuss the other aspects and then in the light of these results as is necessary readjust and readdress the point of departure. If ecclesiology is expected to adapt to the needs of each time and age, then the rethinking of theological questions can never stop.

Consequently, in this final part I first look at issues concerning the definition of the laity, at the problems and possibilities. Then, I ask how this fits into the context of a wider ecclesiology. Finally, I try to sketch out some consequences for Roman Catholic theology as well as for ecumenical dialogue. However, this order of thought is not the only possible way. Strictly speaking, for each chapter the other two are to some extent its prerequisite as well as its consequence. Thus, these final chapters should actually be seen as three aspects of one chapter that form a kind of circular thought requiring constant re-thinking and re-adjusting.

### **10. The People of God: Towards a Positive Definition of the Laity**

#### **10.1 The Point of Departure: Present Problems**

As developing a theology of the people of God is apparently a circular process, it is, above all, very difficult actually to determine where such a theology should start. Consequently, instead of *Laity and Participation: a Theology of Being the Church* should we

not rather say *A Theology of Being the Church: Consequences for the Laity and their Participation*? There can be no theology of the laity that does not also discuss the whole people of God and vice versa.

Yet, three further aspects are contained in the title itself. First, who or what are the laity? Second, what is the actual meaning of participation and what is the point of participation? Third, what is the relation between the laity and the Church as a whole? In addition, there are some more questions that need to be addressed; such as: in which theological discipline is lay theology to begin? Is it a biblical, historical, systematic, dogmatic, pastoral, or canonical issue? What is more, can there be a denominational theology of the laity before an ecumenical one has been developed or is it to be the other way round? In the light of the discussion in the previous chapters, I suspect that this second set of questions cannot be answered with either-or; it rather requires a both/and attitude as advocated by Etchells. Surely, for practical reasons, any theology has to start at one end or the other, but it would be wrong to remain there and not discuss the other side. To give a practical example. There is a lot of theological writing about the laity in individual churches or denominations. Yet, there is virtually no attempt at all to look for those things that could be learnt from other denominations, of utilising their positive and negative experiences. In fact, there is basically no ecumenical study of the laity.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a limitation that is true for all churches and theological schools. A more ecumenical approach could help to avoid the development of positions that may be acceptable within one's own church but ultimately lead to further separation from other churches. The same is true for the other questions. Thus, although any work will have to focus on some aspect or discipline, in order to avoid a too narrow perspective it is always essential to see what implications one's own propositions have on other disciplines and where and how these can challenge the ideas presented.

## 10.2 What is Participation?

Another question at the beginning of this chapter has to be the actual meaning of *participation* and in particular in this context the meaning and extent of *lay participation*. Regarding lay theology the latter term is used on all sides extremely often, not to say that

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<sup>1</sup> Not even such a comprehensive and current work as *Die Stunde der Laien* by Karrer takes any notice of what issues are addressed outside the Roman Catholic Church.

the term is overused or even abused. However, it is essential that these terms are clarified, if not the terms as such then at least their usage in a specific context, for without such clarification it is very difficult to develop a theology of lay participation.

Before looking at the theological implications, it is essential to examine the literal meaning of the term "participation" itself a little closer.<sup>2</sup> The term denotes nothing static but something dynamic. There is no such thing as static or passive participation. What is more, participation is nothing that is granted to the subject from outside. It is an activity (in the broadest sense of the word)<sup>3</sup> that affects the subject itself and originates from within the subject. Consequently, participation is something a subject does out of its own right; participation in the sense of doing is to be a result of participation in the sense of being part of and having a part in.<sup>4</sup>

As each Christian is a part of the Church, he or she has the duty and right to participate in that way that is contained in this fundamental structure of being a Church member.<sup>5</sup> Putting the question of the definition of the laity aside for the next section, the three realisations of this fundamental participation are participating, first, in the world, second, as a layperson in the institutional Church, and, third, as a layperson in the ordained ministry of the Church. Admittedly this division into three realisations is not the only way possible but it has certainly the advantage of following the structure of many discussions on the topic. Still it is also essential to be aware that ultimately these three realisations are just aspects of the one and only participation that does exist. To put it in slightly more straight forward terms: the question who can do what in the Church is actually the question who is the individual Christian, what is his or her part in the Church and what activity does this part require or allow. Hence, any participation in the Church<sup>6</sup> cannot initially be regulated by rules. Rather, if there are rules, they must be deduced from the being of the person in question. Rules do not determine the members

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. above my discussion of Rahner: "Notes on the Lay Apostolate". I follow mainly his line of argument.

<sup>3</sup> "Active" is used here in the meaning of "not passive", which is not the same as "doing a lot".

<sup>4</sup> Cf. "Participation" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "1. the action or fact of [...] having or forming part of, the partaking of substance, quality, or nature of some thing or person. [...] 2.b. [...] the active involvement of members of a community [...] in decisions which affect their lives and work." Note that the OED knows "participation" as doing but gives it only as a second meaning.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) (=BEM), "Baptism 6": "baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. [...] When baptismal unity is realised in one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the [...] love of God."

<sup>6</sup> Obviously, this also applies to the ordained ministry.

but the being of the member conditions the creation and application of rules and regulations.

From this perspective we must ask *as who* or *in what* a person participates. After emphasising the equality of all members of the Church throughout this thesis, this may sound a bit like a contradiction of the previous suggestions. Yet, equality in the Church does not rule out diversity nor does it demand uniformity. There are different dimensions of membership and commitment that also form the basis for different forms and fields of participation. This issue can be approached from two sides that, however, eventually lead to the same result. It is either possible to explore the state of an individual Christian and try to deduce which forms of participations are proper to such a state, alternatively, one asks what state of being and commitment is required by a specific form of participation. Thus a theology of the people of God has to establish what is the common ground of all people and what, if they indeed should exist, are the specific differences between various forms of being. Taking a creational view, all human beings share the fact that they are created in the image of God. This is the first basis for participation. The next step is to ask who of all humanity is part of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Vatican II has claimed that the true Church subsist in the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> However, it has also become a general principle to accept baptism of every church and denomination as valid. If baptism is, so to speak, the entrance into the Church, then what are the implications for the participation of all those baptised who are not in union with Rome? We cannot simply claim that they do not participate in the Church. This brings us back to the need for an ecumenical approach to lay theology. However, one should also note that this raises the practical question of who or what institution is to produce such an ecumenical lay theology. Can the Roman Catholic Church, for example, address this issue without appearing to be patronising non-Catholic laypeople? How and how far can we currently cross denominational boundaries without endangering the self-understanding of a particular church?

Finally, we need to ask which form of participation is rooted in basic Church membership through baptism and which does require some form of "further" ordination. As a result one might ask whether there is also a form of participation that is no longer proper to those who are ordained. That is, is there an element or form of partici-

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<sup>7</sup> To avoid distraction, the notion of the anonymous Christian and its implication for participation are not discussed here.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. LG8.

pation that is only proper to laypeople, one that the ordained ministry cannot fulfil? As the problem with “secular character” has shown, such a clear cut distinction is ultimately probably neither sustainable nor desirable. I strongly suspect that we should better speak of only one participation in the Church that is realised with different emphases.<sup>9</sup> However, before this concept can be spelt out in some more detail it is necessary, as I have shown, that there is some definition of the laity, which is a positive definition that goes beyond stating what the laity are not.

### 10.3 Towards a Preliminary Definition of the Laity

So far I have been using the phrases “positive definition” and “preliminary definition” of the laity. This is to indicate the current problems of such a definition as well as the direction it could and should take. The analysis of Roman Catholic and Anglican documents has shown that either it is simply assumed that it is obvious who and what the laity are or, though at times wrapped in a slightly more positive wording, the laity are defined by what they are not and that is as the non-ordained. This contains some fundamental problems.

The ministry of all the faithful and that of the ordained clergy are intrinsically and inseparably linked. Yet, how is one to develop and sustain a theology of the ordained ministry if its intrinsic counterpart is not clarified as well? It is obvious that any theology of the ordained ministry also requires a theology of the ministry of all the faithful. It is not enough to state that there is the common priesthood of all believers and that this is different from the special or ordained priesthood. If there is the claim that the two priesthoods are different, then it must be also explained what the essence of both is and what the differences exactly are. On the other end of the spectrum, not defining the laity or simply taking their status for granted and clarified is equally no basis for a theology of being the Church. It is therefore necessary that a definition of the laity states what in essence is common to all believers and then from there it is to spell out the special role of the ordained ministry. Still, this allows only a partial definition of the laity for it remains a definition in relation to the priesthood and it does still not describe positively the laity as such.

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<sup>9</sup> This questions only the usefulness and sustainability of such clear cut distinctions on the basis of an exclusive “either/or”. It does not deny that there are tasks in the churches that doubtlessly require



The second problem is directly linked with the first one. Many attempts to define the laity still stick to the old traditional view that the laity are those who are not ordained. This view, although there have been some positive developments during the last decades, is still predominant in Vatican documents. Thus the analysis of the 1997 *Instruction* has shown that the document mentions the common priesthood but all claims and regulations are grounded on the issue of ordination stressing mainly what the laity as the non-ordained cannot do. It is certainly not difficult to see that it is not a promising basis for a theology of the laity if they are defined by what they are not. In addition, all definitions are based on the attempt to explain the difference between the laity and the ordained priesthood. At times one might get the impression that all people are first ordained priests and the laity are those who have lost their ordination. This is certainly not intended but it is the way these documents come across at times. The point of departure is almost exclusively the ordained priesthood which ultimately means that definitions concerning the people of God are based on difference and not on unity. It is for this reason that I would suggest that a proper definition of the laity has to begin with a definition of the whole people of God as the common matrix.<sup>10</sup> It is only then that the attention should turn to the common priesthood and the ordained ministry. Even so, it remains to state what the laity are in their own right and not only in opposition to the ordained priesthood.

Finally it is also necessary to ask whether there is actually a need for the laity to be defined as such or whether they cannot be taken as identical with the people of God and only the ordained clergy needs some kind of special definition.<sup>11</sup> As I said in the introduction, in any state there is a government and there are the people or citizens. However, there seems to be no need for a term that describes the normal citizens as non-government. Yet, what is needed is a description of the rights and duties of all the citizens. Still these duties and rights also (should) apply to the people in the government. From this perspective one might argue for the abolition of a distinctive term for the laity. Still, even if a term for the laity remains in use it might be worth considering alternative terms, for at least in English "laity" and in German "Laien" suggest a state of amateur and lack of knowledge rather than being a member of the people of God. In that respect the use of "faithful" in modern Vatican documents is certainly to be wel-

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theological knowledge nor does this reject a ministry of oversight which is to give a lead on certain issues.

<sup>10</sup> For example, starting with baptism would provide the common ground within a particular church as well as a common basis across denominational boundaries.

comed as it is not burdened with such negative connotations and, at the same time, it expresses the positive common ground of being a member of the Church faithful to Christ and living from this perspective.

To sum up, a positive definition of the laity should indicate what all faithful, laity and clergy alike, have in common. On this basis it should then show what the specific lay character is and it should finally spell out the relationship of the common priesthood to the ordained one.

Before myself attempting a suggestion for a definition of the laity, there is another aspect to be considered. A definition at this stage must not be confused with anything near an immutable dogma. Any definition at this point can be nothing more than a "preliminary" definition that needs to be reconsidered after looking at the consequences for ecclesiology and ecumenical dialogue. Also, if it is further maintained that the laity are those who live their life in the world, then any definition and theology that is derived from it must remain open to change in order to be able to adapt and react to the signs of the times. The Church lives in the present, founded on Scripture and tradition. However, there is also an eschatological goal for the Church: her basileic orientation. In order to reach this goal the Church must, while remaining faithful to her foundation, be open to change and adaptation in future contexts. Thus, there cannot be a final definition of the laity as such. In this respect any such definition will always remain, at least to some extent, preliminary.

One final remark, the following definition is written from an inner-ecclesial perspective. It is not designed to answer any questions concerning the people outside the Church, and it is not intended to say anything about truth and salvation in respect of members of other religions.

My proposal might run along the following lines:

The people in the Church are the people of God. They are united through baptism in the common faith in the triune God who has revealed himself irrevocably in Jesus Christ. Through baptism and the reception of the Spirit all members of the people of God share in the common priesthood of the Church<sup>12</sup> and the vocation to fulfil the Church's mission wherever they are and whatever their state is. In this sense the whole

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stevens: *The Abolition of the Laity* (1999).

<sup>12</sup> Priesthood is here not understood as the sacrificial priesthood of the Old Testament, but rather along the line of argument found in BEM "Ministry", 17: "the Church as a whole can be described as a priesthood. All members are called to offer their being 'as a living' sacrifice' and to intercede for the

people of God is a priestly people. All members of this people are fundamentally equal though the individual mode of living out a vocation can be different. Within this one people of God, the laity are those people who live out this vocation mainly in their everyday surrounding of the world. The laity fulfil this vocation as full members of the Church and in their own place out of their own right and their own calling. Within the people of God there are also members called to a special service in the ordained priesthood. It is their mission to serve the Church, by and through serving others in the fulfilment of their vocation. These ordained people are also called clergy. The vocation of the laity and that of the clergy are essentially related; they do not exclude but complement and require each other. As there is only one Church with one vocation a complete separation of the fields of the two priesthoods should not be allowed to exist. They are two realisations of the one priesthood of Christ.

Admittedly, even this definition cannot avoid ordination as one criteria for the difference between the laity and the clergy. Where my proposal differs is in the suggestion that ordination is not seen as the sole criterion for the distinction. Moreover, the definition does not begin with ordination but with the common matrix for all believers in the Church.

However, it is not enough simply to have a different definition of the laity. It is essential that such a definition is also put into practice and that it goes hand in hand with a different model of Church, for a theology of the laity cannot be separated from ecclesiology and a theology of the whole people of God.

## **11. Some Suggestions for a Different Theology of the Laity**

### **11.1 A Dynamic Model of the Church**

There is no such thing as the perfect model of the Church. Any image will remain somewhat imperfect, (over)emphasising one aspect and ignoring others<sup>13</sup>. Yet, this should not keep us from rethinking how the Church can be described faithful to her essence and simultaneously adequate to the needs of the present situation.

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Church and the salvation of the world." Cf. also the official commentary to paragraph 17 as well as *The Porvoo Common Statement*, 32i.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dulles: *Models of the Church* (1976).

Before suggesting my own model, I will explain what weaknesses I think to perceive in current models of Church or in the way they are expressed. First of all, particularly in Roman Catholic theology but also in some Anglican positions, it often appears as if the laity and the hierarchical clergy were two entities opposed to each other and rather detached from each other. A lot is written about the hierarchical structure of deacons, priests, and bishop. However, hardly ever is it spelt out how the laity fit into this system. It seems at times that there could be a hierarchy without any laity. There is more emphasis on the differences between the laity and the clergy than there is work done to show their interrelatedness and complementarity. In addition, when the ordained ministry and its threefold structure are discussed, the language and images used often reflect the pyramidal structure of society in medieval or feudal Europe. As this model of society has become, at least partially, outdated, likewise it has become increasingly problematic as an image for the Church in our own day. What is more if *communio* is indeed to be the key element of modern theology and living ecclesial reality, as so much contemporary theology urges, it does not seem advisable to use images that stress separation instead of collaboration.

A second problem is the absence of God. Much is said and discussed regarding the Church as universal sacrament, how it is to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God, who is the ultimate teaching authority and so forth. However, it is quite astonishing that very little is said about how God fits into such models. Thus, for example though not only there, Roman Catholic theology focuses quite extensively on the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops. Yet, how they relate to God as the ultimate authority is less often discussed. In my opinion, a model of Church should also explicitly state the relation of the Church as a whole to God as well as that of every individual member of the Church.

I would suggest we think of the Church as a wooden wheel with spokes and a metal band around. Admittedly, in the age of internet and space travel this may sound a bit old-fashioned and possibly outdated at first. Nevertheless, I think this image can help to illustrate several issues regarding the laity.

For a first explanation this model is applied without making any distinction whether it is parish, diocesan, or world level. An attempt of differentiation will be made later on.

The first aspect of the Church as a wheel is the centre or the hub. Whatever wheel you take it must be centred around the hub. The wheel can only function prop-

erly if the hub is exactly in the centre. An off-centred wheel is rather useless. In ecclesiological terms this means that the Church is ultimately to be centred around God and Christ, for, if anything, the Church must be Christo-centric and thus theo-centric. Whatever material the wheel is made of, whatever design it is made to, a proper wheel must be centred around the hub. Likewise, no Pope, no bishop, no other person, no structure but God is and must be the ultimate centre and hub of the Church. What is more, though the hub is absolutely essential, it is not tangible. The hub is there but you can only see it if the wheel around it is there. Similarly, it is only through the Church's presence that God becomes visible and perceivable.<sup>14</sup> However, the hub itself is also emptiness to some extent. In the case of the Church, we can perceive God through it, but this does not give God in our hands. God is there in contact with us but he is also the absolute other who is not limited in any way. As the Church we are orientated towards God but we can never usurp God's unique position and role.

Having clarified the hub, it is now time to turn attention to the wheel itself. If we pursue this image of a classic wagon wheel, in my interpretation the spokes and the wooden parts of the frame around should be identified with the laity and the metal band with the clergy. This perspective successfully highlights and emphasises certain key aspects. First of all, neither clergy nor the laity are the full people of God without the other. Without the spokes there is no wheel, and without the metal band the wheel will soon fall to pieces or wear out. Both parts though distinct in their function and structure are related to one another, depend on one another, and support one another. Still, the crucial focus is that the metal band as well as the spokes, that is clergy and laity, share necessarily and unavoidably the only possible hub which is God. Similarly reflecting on the amount of wood in relation to the metal band, the laity are numerically also the majority in the Church. Although the wooden frame holds the individual spokes partly together, one notes that there is also the need for a stronger frame around it. Applying this one might say that the clergy has the ministry of unity, but not exclusively. Rather, ordination becomes a commissioning to unite and focus the whole people of God around the one and only centre. In this sense the celebration of the Eucharist indeed becomes the ultimate service of unity with God, for the Eucharist centres the whole people of God, laity and clergy alike and together, around God's table, thereby uniting all indi-

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<sup>14</sup> To avoid the suspicion of religious intolerance: throughout this part I am speaking from an inner-ecclesial perspective. There are clear limitations to this interpretation of the analogy regarding the possibility of encountering God outside the Church and in other religions.

viduals into the one people of God. This may perhaps be seen as putting the clergy in a somewhat superior position. However, the band does not deprive the spokes and the other wooden parts of their function but supports them and vice versa; while the metal band holds the spokes and the wooden frame together and keeps it in focus, the band also needs the wood to stabilise itself. Thus, the Church needs the ordained ministry to promote unity within it. Equally to keep the people of God centred around God, it is not less important that the laity support and give stability to the clergy. Through this form of collaboration and interrelated coexistence, it is possible that the wood can, yet only for some time before it also suffers, compensate for a weakness in the metal band of the wheel, whereas the band can still provide stability despite a broken spoke. Similarly, clergy and laity are not detached from each other but support each other. Each can for some time and up to a certain extent compensate weakness or fault in the other. Still, it is equally clear that if this task of compensation goes beyond a certain limit the whole wheel will fall to pieces and perhaps be irreparably broken. The same thus applies in respect of the relation between the laity and the clergy.

Finally, a further aspect needs mentioning. A wheel is always a wheel. Yet, a wheel is not an end in itself. On the contrary, its purpose is to move other things. Thus, it is actually made to serve another purpose and task. Equally, the Church and in particular Church structures are not there as an end in themselves but to move things and people. The Church structures are to support the mission of the Church; the wheel of the Church only begins to fulfil its vocation if it helps to proclaim and make real the truth of salvation. An overgrown wheel with flowers in a garden is a nice thing to look at, but it is not what the wheel has been made for at first. Similarly, if the Church stopped moving the world towards God's kingdom, it would be perhaps a nice thing to look at, but it would certainly fail its vocation.<sup>15</sup>

So far the wheel has been used to describe the people of God as a whole without making any difference to individual and particular (or local) churches.

The discussion in the previous chapters has shown that one level cannot exist separated from the others.<sup>16</sup> It is not a question of superiority and inferiority, as these are incompatible with the notion of equality in the Church. It is a matter of different and complementing participation in the one mission of the Church. Coming, thus, back

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<sup>15</sup> Hence orthodoxy and orthopraxis together are necessary, there can be no doctrine without praxis and also no praxis without doctrine.

to the wheel, the relation of parishes to the diocese and bishop could be illustrated as the spokes to the metal band. Parishes, that is the whole of a parish with the laity and the clergy together, might be seen as the spokes and the bishop as part of the metal band. Again the crucial point is that the parishes are not orientated towards the bishop but together with the bishop and through his ministry they are and remain focused on God as the hub. In this perspective the sacramental ministry of the bishop is not power over the people of God but a ministry of service to the people and with them. Equally, the episcopal teaching office is not an instrument to force subordination of the people under the bishop but a service of guidance so that the wheel of the Church does not become, in the literal sense, ec-centric, that is off-centred. What has been said here for the relation of parishes to the bishop and diocese equally applies to dioceses in relation to a national church or on the world level.

It has been stressed that the wheel entails a dynamic understanding of Church.

However, for the Church to be dynamic it is also necessary to consider its horizontal dimension. In other words, what is the relation between individual parishes, or dioceses and so forth? To stretch the image a bit further, one wheel does not make a wagon. This needs at least two wheels. One wheel on its own can move but it basically cannot transport anything. For this a wagon is necessary. It is not my intention to over-interpret the image, but one aspect seems crucial for this model of Church. For a wagon to go smoothly without going off the track it is necessary that constituent wheels have the same size and that all wheels are focused to the centre. In contrast, it is not essential that all wheels are of exactly the same design and structure. For the Church to be the wagon that moves towards the Kingdom of God it is not necessary that all wheels, that is the individual and particular churches, parishes and so forth, are identical in every respect. Yet, they must all have the same hub in the right place and wheels of the same axis should have the same size. Thus, it is not essential that the Church is structured in exactly the same way all over the world.<sup>17</sup> Yet, it is essential that the focus is always towards God and that from there each church, parish, diocese is working for the vocation and mission of the Church. It is obvious that this view has also implications for ecumenical dialogue. Instead of one common Church structure, unity in the Church would

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Part IV the discussion how Third World liberative theologies can relate to and be applied to First World situations.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the similarities and, at the same time, differences between the BECs in the Third World and the house churches in the USA and Great Britain. For a more detailed description of First World house

be consequently based on working together in the same mission of the Church like two wheels on one axis. In other words, the basic perspective for ecclesiology and ecumenical dialogue in this model is the eschatological and teleological orientation of the Church. However, the question remains still unanswered how different these “two wheels” can be without disturbing or hindering the movement of the whole Church. Also, how different can two wheels of one wagon be and still be seen of the same wagon and not as some kind of wrong replacement? These are certainly questions that need to be addressed. Yet, it would take the image of the wheel too far if it was to explain and answer them. These issues obviously indicate also the limits of this model.

After these two steps of interpretation it is now necessary to ask in bit more detail what the implications are for the relation of the laity and the clergy according to this model.

## 11.2 Some Implications for the Relation of Clergy and Laity

To understand fully the implications of the wheel model for the relation of the laity and the clergy it is first of all of utmost importance that this model be not seen as detached from everything else but rather viewed along with the definition of the people of God, the laity and the clergy as suggested above. Thus, a fundamental principle for the people of God is equality. Yet, as shown, equality is not to be confused with uniformity. There are distinctive tasks for each part and member of the Church. Yet, this distinctiveness does not allow any form of inequality in terms of status or rank. Different vocations do not constitute a basis for superiority or inferiority within the Church for neither clergy nor laity owe their essential vocation and orientation towards God primarily to the other.<sup>18</sup> However, the model has also shown that on a secondary level both help each other to remain focused towards the hub. Equally, clergy and laity should complement and support one another. In the same way, both groups are drawn together in the celebration of the Eucharist where all gather round the one centre. As the Eucharist is *the* great momentum of unity and focus of the whole Church, it is certainly justified, that as the norm, the eucharistic presidency should be a task for the

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churches cf. Banks: *The Church Comes Home* (1998). Also, though perhaps a bit ideological in his approach, Astin: *Body and Cell* (1998).



ministry of unity, that is for the clergy. However, as the image has shown, it is not exclusively the clergy who fulfil this ministry of unity and focus. There is also a wooden frame in the wheel as well. Thus, given the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and considering the increasing shortage of clergy, it might be fair to ask, whether there is not a pastoral argument for an exceptional presidency at the Eucharist of those laity who have been commissioned to some ministry of unity in order to compensate such clerical shortage. Still, as the wooden frame of a wheel is of a different shape than the spokes, it is also clear that these people would require special training and some form of commissioning or ordination. This not advocating a purely functional understanding of ordination. Rather, it illustrates the possibilities contained in a different way of thinking about the Church. If we do not perceive the Church as the sum of clergy and laity, which entails a strictly either/or distinction between the two, but begin the theological reflection with the vocation of the Church as a whole and the best possible realisation, we might come to see, at least in theory, laity/non-ordained and clergy/fully ordained as two ends of a whole spectrum of variations. Examples of such a thinking can be seen in models such as non-stipendiary ministers or the permanent diaconate. In other words, the focus of the discussion should not be a clear-cut distinction between clergy and laity but a best possible fulfilment of the vocation of the Church.

Still, the question of lay presidency at the Eucharist is not necessarily the most crucial one for a theology of the laity. Lay theology does not mainly rest on the question how the laity can fulfil the duties and tasks of the ordained clergy. The primary focus is the laity as laity yet still as Church. This is why I wrote above, "the laity are those people who live out this [of the Church] vocation in their everyday surrounding of the world. The laity fulfil this vocation as full members of the Church and in their own place out of their own right and their own calling." Lay participation happens first of all in the world. This implies not extensive missionary work on top of everyday life. On the contrary, it is exactly this everyday life that should derive its values, style and mode from being a member of the people of God, that is a lifestyle that gives others cause to ask the hope of Christians (in the sense of 1 Peter 3:15).<sup>19</sup> This is what can be expected from every member of the Church; it is so to speak a shared common vocation. Anything beyond that is probably a special vocation, by which I do not only mean the call to the priest-

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<sup>18</sup> To use the wheel-analogy rather literally, as any part of the wheel is made by somebody that is not part of the wheel, equally any vocation is given to the Church by God and not generated within by any ministry or office.

hood or religious life.<sup>20</sup> It is simply the serious willingness to do something more for the Church in addition to a “normal” Christian life. This is particularly important to be considered when and how lay participation is discussed. For a lot of attention is given to the so-called secular vocation as well as the apostolate of married people. Yet, in the context of modern society, there is a further aspect that also deserves mention. Thus Michael Drumm reminds us that “one notable group is missing – those who are single (unmarried) and are not ordained or members of religious orders.”<sup>21</sup> Surely, not all singles are so because of a free and voluntarily decision. There is an equally large number who are single by circumstance. Still, with all the emphasis on the importance of the Christian family or the ordained ministry, singles “are the most neglected group of people in the history of the church.”<sup>22</sup> For this reason it is essential that lay theology also reflects how their vocation can be acknowledged, celebrated and supported; even more so as this group is most likely to live out its apostolate mostly in secular surroundings. It is in fact often the single who make the greatest contributions as the Church in the world.

However, this independent secular dimension does not rule out the possibility for laypeople to participate also in duties that might at first sight be more associated with the ordained ministry. Coming back to the wheel, particularly the relation between the wooden frame and the metal band, we might perhaps perceive ordained/non-ordained not as two mutually excluding absolutes but as if they were seen as the two ends of a scale of possibilities. This could include concepts of part-time clergy, or “*viri probati*” as it is sometimes discussed within the Roman Catholic Church. Doubtless, this will require some form of training and in some cases commissioning or a kind of partial ordination. However, such realisation of being the Church would certainly go beyond a more traditional understanding of lay participation as such. Likewise, we have to ask if, and to what extent, such a diversified expression and realisation of the theological concept of the threefold ministry is indeed possible, practically feasible, and also desirable.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Part I, “New Testament”.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Drumm & Cunning: *A Sacramental People. Vol. II: Healing and Vocation* (2000), 63f: “There are three clear vocations in the Catholic Church – to married, priestly and religious life. [...] All three demand that one’s energy and efforts be put at the service of others; [...] they require commitment for life [...]” Cf. also Etchells’s discussion of “selection” versus “discernment of vocation”.

<sup>21</sup> Drumm, *Sacramental People*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Drumm, *Sacramental People*, 65.

## 12. Consequences: Some Perspectives

So far I have suggested a new definition of the laity and another model of the Church. However, this has all remained rather abstract. It now remains for this chapter to outline some consequences this proposed view could have, first of all for Roman Catholic theology and, following from that, secondly, for the ecumenical dialogue. Obviously, what is presented here, is and can be nothing more than a rough outline of consequences, highlighting some core issues. Yet, as I have already said above, although these issues are treated here as consequences, they are to a large extent also prerequisites for the above definition and model to be realised. It is essential that these “consequences” are not considered as the end of a discussion but as the starting point for a practical adjusting and reassessing of the definition and the model of the wheel. All these suggestions can only have their full impact if they are viewed together, with the courage to try things out in practice<sup>23</sup> and with the openness to constant rethinking as the Church learns through constant rethinking.

### 12.1 For Roman Ecclesiology

Application to Roman Catholic ecclesiology should be taken in its broadest meaning and not limited to systematic or dogmatic issues, but includes also pastoral, practical, and canonical aspects. Since Vatican II the predominant model of the Church has been the pilgrim people of God. This has been complemented with *communio* as a key term in ecclesiology. These are undoubtedly steps that are to be welcomed, not only from a Roman Catholic point of view but also from an ecumenical perspective. Yet, this change also leaves some questions. Why is the main focus of theology still on the difference between the laity and the clergy? Why is the debate on participation and collaboration more often based on the CIC than on pastoral aspects and on the mission of the whole Church? Why is there so little attention paid to what all members of the Church have in common? Why is there still such stress on obedience, power and authority, although supposedly basic equality reigns in the Church? It would be no problem to extend this list of questions. Yet, it is not my task to compile a collection of problems in

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. above, Section 5.2, Rahner on the necessity of experimentation in theology.

Vatican ecclesiology. My question is what can be done to overcome some of these problems, particularly those that are closely related to the laity.

If the wheel is to represent the Church, and if the distinction between clergy and laity is to be maintained, then it becomes obvious that there can be no laity without the clergy and vice versa, if they are to be the Church. Both groups, if they can indeed be called this, together form the Church. It seems advisable therefore to me to start theological reflection with the Church as such. Thus a first step of theology should be to establish what all members of the Church have in common. Only then should the attention turn to the differences. Instead of working "top down", that is from the Pope or the magisterium through the bishops and clergy to the laity, this would be a theology that had its point of departure not in a system of power and authority but in the common and shared membership in the people of God. It would be thus an ecclesiology that looks first at the way every member participates in the Church and its mission through being a part of it, before specific vocations and duties were discussed. Going back to images, instead of having a pyramidal model of the Church, which is more or less derived from feudal society, the stress would be on one people of God that shares a common centre and moves together in one direction.

Consequently, there should be a major shift for the whole question of participation. The centre of discussion should not be canon law or other rules, but the mission of the whole Church and how all people in the Church *together*, and not one against the other, can best fulfil its mission. This does not deny the need for rules and regulations. The size of churches today forbids such demands. A concept of "back to the New Testament" in the sense of a purely charismatic church without structures is a naïve, romantic view, contrary to historical fact.<sup>24</sup> Yet, it should be stressed that rules are there to assist and support the Church in her vocation. Rules are not prior to a specific situation and, even more so, they are not prior to the mission of the Church. On the contrary, regulations should be formed out of the demand for an adequate structure of the Church in a particular context with the vocation of the Church as the main focus.

One practical consequence of this different direction for theology would be a changed and different attitude towards the discussion of ordination. In my view, there is much undeveloped potential in a theology of baptism and confirmation as a basic ordination to the common priesthood. Such a theology should precede a theology of special

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Part I, the discussion of the complex problem of a purely biblical ecclesiology.

ordination, as it does in simple biographical terms insofar as a person is first baptised, then confirmed, and only after that ordained. It is not wrong to show the specific significance of ordination to the priesthood or episcopal office. However, this should be complemented by showing the limitations of the ordained ministry in secular affairs and by exploring how this ministry is entwined with the common priesthood of all believers.<sup>25</sup> What I would like to see is some emphasis on the sacrament of confirmation as the ordination of the candidates to the lay apostolate with full responsibility for the individual operating in his or her own place. This could emphasise the common mission of the two priesthoods, as well as the sacramental dimension and commissioning of the secular vocation. While receiving confirmation from an ordained person, the confirmed is called to an apostolate he or she has in his or her own right that does not need any further commissioning from the ordained clergy but originates from being a member of the Church. Fulfilling such an apostolate is participation in the fullest sense of the word.

The discussion of the consequences so far, particular that of the last two paragraphs, indicates that there is a need for further exploration of what lay participation actually means and to what degree it should be seen as limited. The basic assumption behind this question is that so often lay participation is taken as synonymous with laypeople doing things usually done by ordained clergy. This is not wrong. Yet, it is only one aspect of lay participation. Rather, lay participation is, before anything, participation as laypeople in the Church. Of course, there is the need to reflect why certain duties or tasks are considered intrinsically to require ordination and thus cannot be performed and fulfilled by laypeople.<sup>26</sup> Yet, this is not the sole content of the issue. It is necessary to (re-)discover that living as a faithful Christian in the world, giving living witness in everyday life, is perhaps the major and most common form of valid and valuable participation in the Church. Thus, the Roman authorities could further this view if their documents did not stress that much the authority and power of the hierarchy and the magisterium but also made it apparent that lay participation in secular affairs is not subordinate to the hierarchy but complementary to the ordained ministry.<sup>27</sup> What is more, it would be desirable if those documents could indeed stress that both forms of participa-

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. the laity participating in developing theological suggestions and thoughts on politics, environmental issues or other ethical questions such as genetic engineering.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the different structures and rules for chairing various committees in the Church of England compared to the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>27</sup> It is thus necessary to reconsider the continued use of "hierarchy". While the term in itself is neutral or can be interpreted positively, in the course of history "hierarchy" has accumulated such negative

tion are of the same value. Yet, it is not only the Roman hierarchy that is in need of a readjusted perspective. There is also a tendency among some parts of the laity who seem to think of lay participation only in terms of participating in the ordained ministry. Generally, there should be greater stress on the fact that the Church is more than a hierarchical institution where the only form of participation is that in liturgy or government. This is not to exclude the laity from Church government; on the contrary they have got a lot to contribute. Yet, we must be careful not to have a too narrow understanding of Church. This is also why a definition of the laity as the non-ordained is to be rejected (even though it is factually correct within its limits) because it subconsciously furthers a restricted view of lay participation, directing the attention to participation in the ordained ministry.

As I have shown the primary form of participation is actually *being* part of the Church. As a consequence, all activities of Christians done and performed as Christians are in one way or another participation in the Church. Thus, being a bishop or a Vatican official is different but neither above nor below working for the poor somewhere in the world. There is no point in having a teaching ministry if this teaching is never put into practice or if it never listens to the people living their faith in daily life. Yet, these “normal people”, for obvious reasons, often do not have the time for extensive theological studies themselves. Thus they also need the guidance and teaching of others. It is a matter of reciprocal relations. It is for this reason, as the analysis of liberative theologies has shown, that it cannot be orthopraxis *or* orthodoxy but it must be orthodoxy *and* orthopraxis.

Consequently, it is also necessary that there is some form of substantial lay participation in leading the Church. First of all, in secular affairs the laity are the Church in places and circumstances that are not reached by the hierarchy. Thus, it is here that we have a somewhat non-hierarchical Church. Yet, if the teaching office is indeed to be a catholic office it has also to incorporate these areas. Thus the hierarchy must consult and listen to the laity in these areas. Second, the opposite is also true. The laity cannot do or know everything. Thus they must also listen and talk to and with the hierarchy. Therefore, a good culture of dialogue and reciprocal communication is essential for the life of the Church. This is even more important in respect of Church unity. For, if the

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connotations that perhaps only a change terminology might be able overcome some of the problems involved. Terminological alternatives could be “ministry of unity, service, ordained ministry” or the like.

laity and hierarchy do not communicate, there is a serious danger of the two groups falling apart and thus effectively undermining any real sense of Church unity.

It is against this background that the language used in the Church must be considered. On a general level, great care should be taken when anybody speaks about the Church that the perspective is never too narrow; that “church” is never used only to describe the hierarchy, the institution, or buildings. Equally, being a member of the Church must not be limited to formal worship and explicit actions in the institutional reality of the Church. In addition, it is important for laypeople to learn to speak of the people in the ordained ministry not as their enemies or opposites but as their co-participants in the one Church.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, it is most urgent to reflect upon the language used in official Church documents. As I have extensively shown, these documents are often dominated by idioms and phrases that belong to the realm of power and domination and consequently further inequality and separation. It is often more the language than the actual contents of a document that makes it appear as oppressive, insensitive, or patronising. If all members of the Church are fundamentally equal in rank and “worth”, then this must be also reflected in the official language. The ARCIC documents have set a good example of how language can be changed while maintaining fundamental contents. It is difficult to understand why Vatican documents still use a language that is more appropriate to an imperial court than to an office that calls itself a ministry of service.<sup>29</sup> Positive lay theology, one of being the Church, does not have to reinvent ecclesiology but it certainly must reflect on the language it uses.

A very promising suggestion in this context has been made by Elisabeth Braunbeck in her attempt to rephrase can.207 of the 1983 CIC. Instead of defining the laity as opposed to the clergy, Braunbeck tries to come from a general definition of the people of God to the role and status of the priest. According to her, can.207 could be reworked to read:

“Within the priestly people of God there are some faithful, who, according to divine institution, are called through the sacrament of ordination to the ministerial office for others. In the law they are also called clerics.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Milligan: “Inculturation, Feminism, and the Dialogue with Rome”, 148: “If we fail to see ‘Rome’ as a collection of human beings like ourselves, [...] wanting what is best for God’s people but often ignorant or inept and even unique in their ways of proceeding, then dialogue will in fact become impossible. We well know that limited vision, struggle for power, manipulation of people [...] are not limited to one side of the Atlantic.”

<sup>29</sup> Cf. discussion of address in CIC and of IQC that is not even addressed to the laity at all.

The common priesthood of all believers and the priesthood of service, though different, are necessarily orientated to one another in building up the ecclesial communio."<sup>30</sup>

It may be disputed whether this is the perfect definition of the clergy or not. Yet, it is a very good suggestion insofar as it starts with the common ground and then moves to the special ministry of the priesthood of service. This does not only overcome the negative definition of the laity but also indicates an understanding of the ordained priesthood as service for the whole people of God. Braunbeck's definition also accepts the notion of difference between the two priesthoods, but she does not unfold this any further.<sup>31</sup> Yet, what makes Braunbeck proposal so interesting is that, while she does not deny the importance and value of ordination and the notion of ontological difference between clergy and laity, her starting point is the common ground of the people of God. Her model allows for difference without making the opposition between two groups the fundament of her argument.

It is collaboration between the laity and the clergy that should be the ideal for any Church. One way to further this desired collaboration, without actually any major change in Church structure, would be an end to secrecy in the Vatican. This is not the same as changing the Church into a democracy. Yet, many people would feel less patronised, excluded and that they have at least some form of passive participation if there was more openness and accessibility to criteria and proceedings. I have previously mentioned the very questionable procedures if someone is accused of false teaching. This legal procedure based on secrecy and disrespect for basic rights is in fact incompatible with the basic nature of the Church. Of course, disputes in doctrine must be clarified, but whether methods that call the former Inquisition to mind are appropriate seems doubtful to say the least. Another issue in respect of secrecy is the appointment of bishops. More openness and explanation regarding episcopal appointments might help to overcome the notion of arbitrary decision which suit only Roman interest. Above all, is it indeed possible to claim that such appointments should be the sole decision of the Pope when history proves that bishops have often in the past been elected by the peo-

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<sup>30</sup> Braunbeck: *Der Weltcharakter des Laien* (1993), 357 (my translation):

„Inmitten des priesterlichen Gottesvolkes werden einige Gläubige kraft göttlicher Weisung durch das Sakrament der Weihe zu geistlichen Amtsträgern für die anderen bestellt; diese werden im Recht auch Kleriker genannt.

Das gemeinsam Priestertum aller Gläubigen und das Priestertum des Dienstes sind, obgleich unterschieden, in der Auferbauung der kirchlichen *communio* notwendig aufeinander hingebordnet.“

<sup>31</sup> Not discussing the difference any further might be seen as evading the problem. However, it might equally be the acceptance that the difference cannot fully be described.



ple or the clergy of the individual diocese? In my opinion, some change in favour of the people would help to ensure that bishops come to be regarded once more as the pastors of their dioceses rather than the delegates of Rome.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, if collaboration is to be a basic principle, then it is also important that in practical terms it is possible for laypeople with an limited amount of time to get involved. Thus, participation must always begin on a local level. Yet, what is also important, if the laity are indeed to collaborate with the local clergy, is that there should be a limit in terms of size to a parish. For, how can a parish priest work properly with the laypeople if the parish is simply too big to know all the people? Surely, there are practical problems such as the shortage of priests. However, only if parishes are not too big can the laypeople and the priest work together on a personal level.

No doubt, other issues could be mentioned. All I have sought to illustrate is some aspects that need to be addressed within the Roman Catholic Church, in order to develop a theology of the laity that is not based on difference and structures of authority but on equality and together being the people of God.

## 12.2 For Ecumenical Dialogue

It is obvious that a lot of the consequences suggested in the previous section are equally applicable for other denominations. However, there are also some specific consequences for the ecumenical dialogue.

Basically, the primary concern must be that the laity are also included in ecumenical discussions. This inclusion should be reflected two ways. First, it would be desirable, particularly in discussions on such issues concerning the life of the laity, that laypeople should be more involved. It is simply indefensible that there are virtually no laypeople involved in ARCIC. Second, the laity must also be included in the contents of ecumenical documents. As the analysis of ARCIC I and II has shown the discussion centres largely around the ordained ministry with very little consideration for the laity at all. Admittedly, it is the understanding and interpretation of the role of the ordained ministry that causes major problems in ecumenical conversations. Yet, this cannot be an excuse for ignoring the common basis of all believers and the necessary complement of

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<sup>32</sup> This does not claim to solve all problems. If bishops were elected by the people, there might be the danger of sacrificing spirituality or real theological concerns for the sake of popularity or gaining votes.

the common priesthood as it is realised in the life of the laity. This is even more important as an exclusive focus on the ordained ministry always contains the danger of an over-clerical understanding of the Church which ultimately can lead to a distorted ecclesiology. Therefore, it is equally true for any ecumenical dialogue what has been said above, that ecclesiological reflection should start with the one Church and the common ground of all believers. It is then from the common acceptance of baptism as the ordination to the common priesthood that the discussion of the ordained ministry of service can follow. In other words, any debate on the laity and the clergy must necessarily be preceded by consideration of the whole people of God as such.

In addition the ecumenical dialogue can also serve to provide experience of other church structures. That is to say, looking at the other denominations involved, each church can learn from the positive and negative experience of the other.<sup>33</sup>

Still the crucial issue is that if ecumenical dialogue is to lead to Church unity, this can never be done without the laity because without them it would remain no more than a unity of the clergy and not of the whole Church. Also, is it not possible that the majority of the people of God in the various churches share more and have more in common than the ordained ministry? Some indication of this can be seen in the fact that a lot of laypeople do not take any notice of ongoing ecumenical dialogues on an official level. Church unity can only be achieved if the discussion is in fact about the whole Church and not just some sectors.

This leads to one more aspect. Dialogue on an official level is necessary and good. Documents such as the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine on Justification*<sup>34</sup> between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church are undoubtedly great ecumenical achievements. Yet, even despite all the publicity it received, how much does such a document matter to the majority of the people in the churches? Many laypeople may have heard of this particular document but I suspect it probably has not affected them very much for the problem involved is too detached from their daily Christian life. What is more, there is good reason to assume that the majority of the laity does not even hear about many other ecumenical documents. Does this mean that the laity are mainly non-ecumenical? I do not think so. It rather shows that there is a different form of ecumenism on a grassroots level in everyday life which must not be forgotten or

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Any change has to be introduced after careful consideration of the gains as well as the potential problems.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the different experiences with synodical structures in the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

overlooked. It is what I would call “secular ecumenism” – the ecumenical dimension and realisation of the lay apostolate in the world. However, this aspects still seems to be largely ignored or forgotten in all the debates on sacramental theology and ordination. Yet, it is exactly here, in the so-called everyday life, that most contact and meetings between Christians from other denominations as well as encounters with non-Christians happen. Such secular ecumenism becomes even more pressing if one recalls that most secular challenges put to Christians cannot be met and dealt with on a purely one-denominational basis; the ethical responsibility of the mass media, for example, is not just a Catholic problem, energy politics do not only affect Protestants, dealing with poverty and starvation is by no means exclusively an Anglican “privilege” and so forth.<sup>35</sup>

Admittedly, at times the laypeople themselves may not be aware of this ecumenical dimension of their daily life. Still, it is vital that this dimension is theologically explored. Otherwise, there is the danger that ecumenism on this level mutates into an attitude of no concern either for the differences between the churches or for any consideration of what one’s own position actually is. The present discussion of this issue contains the potential that real ecumenical reflections become blurred. The laity must be included as subjects fully participating in the dialogue and also as objects of the ecumenical reflection, for there is only one People of God and that necessitates an ecumenical and truly catholic perspective.

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<sup>34</sup> The declaration was signed October 31, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Matthew 25:31-46. This vision lists in fact only “secular” activities as criteria for judging the faithfulness of the Christians.

## Epilogue: A Biblical Vision on Being the Church

“It was an old and rather poor church; many icons were without settings; but such churches are the best for praying in.”

(Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, “Epilogue”)

At the end of this thesis I cannot embark on fresh issues. What, however, I can do, is re-express my underlying conviction that there is a lot of theological potential to be discovered if the issue of laity and participation is not seen on its own but discussed within a theology of the whole people of God, if in short laity and participation are integrated into a *theology of being the Church*. Such an approach might well entail major changes in ecclesiology and bring about a rather different reality in the Church. What this new reality of Church would look like is yet to be seen. However, Dostoevsky has given us a criterion for such a “new” Church. It has to be an entity and reality that is “best for praying in”. For prayer is not just saying the words but also living them and putting them into practice. In this sense, with the Lord’s Prayer the Bible does give us a vision of how we are to be the Church and how we should then think about laity and participation.

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

As all human beings have the same heavenly Father, equality must be an essential characteristic of the people of God. Likewise, the one and only centre of the Church must be God, whose glory it is to proclaim, and of whose grace, love and mercy it is to be a living symbol.

*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

The Church has to continue the work of salvation. In the awareness of and respect for its foundations, the Church has to be obedient to God’s will, making his rule a reality. While there is an undoubted eschatological dimension to God’s rule, it is not to be a “pie in the sky” but we have work for it in the here and now. This means that the laity have to see the secular world not as something bad that will vanish in the future, but as place where they have to make it tangible that God’s reign has already begun.

*Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.*

Salvation comes from God, but being the Church we have to be a community of salvation. Participation hence means to live and work against poverty and oppression as well as to live and work for reconciliation and peace. Such participation in the Church must reach out into the world. The secular world where the laity primarily operate is thus God's world.

*And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the Evil One.*

The Church is not free from temptation. Despite best intentions, anybody in the Church might have a too narrow vision what it means to be the Church. We all might become a victim of misguided ambition, manipulation and so forth. Participation necessarily must have a charismatic element and pray for the guidance of the Spirit to avoid one group trying to "control" an other.

*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever.*

All glory belongs to God. Participation – being the Church – means giving glory to God. In the words of John's Gospel: "It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples." (Jn 15:8) Hence, we should ultimately think about participation as sharing in the realisation of Jesus' promise "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." (Jn 10:10)

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