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## **Petrine Ministry and Christocracy: A Response to Ut unum sint**

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It is a privilege to be invited to respond to *Petrine Ministry: A Working Paper* distributed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ (USA) has prepared a thoughtful response, as have other groups and individuals, but given my interests in Johannine studies and the early Church, the Faith and Order Commission has invited me to prepare an individual response, which I am more than happy to do. I do not serve as a representative member of the NCCC, as the church body in which I serve as a recorded (ordained) minister (Evangelical Friends International) is not a member. Nonetheless, I have been invited to join the discussions on ecclesiology and Christian unity because of my research interests as a New Testament scholar and my long-term commitment to Christian unity. It is in this informal capacity that I submit my response to your timely and important explorations. Indeed, the prayer of Pope John Paul II, that the followers of Christ would be one (*Ut Unum Sint*) is my prayer as well; and my hope is that this modest response might further the vision for that unity and its actualization.

At the outset, let me say how much I appreciate the Holy Father's overall commitment to the unity of the Church. This indeed was the prayer of Jesus in John 17, and it thus becomes the effectual calling of all authentic church leaders in every generation. Yet today there stands a special window of opportunity before us, if we will seize it. In seeking to contribute to this important venture, one is mindful of historic advances made since the Second Vatican Council in the light of Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, also rooted in John 17.<sup>1</sup> One also is appreciative of how much the work of Father Raymond Brown has contributed greatly to fresh understandings of the early church and ecclesial leadership since the Second Vatican Council.<sup>2</sup> It is from the integration of these and other perspectives, in the light of sustained interest in Christocracy – the means by which the risen Christ continues to lead the church today – that one hopes to contribute to the discussions at hand.

In proceeding, I would like to comment on each of the four points mentioned in the working paper, building upon the cited words of Pope

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John Paul II. I also want to highlight affirmations of what seem to be genuinely positive advances toward Christian unity, and I hope to suggest particular ways forward where appropriate. Before doing so, however, a few comments on Petrine ministry and approaches to Christocracy in the early Church are in order. They provide an important backdrop for considering the prayer of Jesus that his followers *may be one*.

### ***Petrine Ministry and Christocracy in the Early Church***

The ministry of Peter in the early Church serves the leadership of Christ (Christocracy) rather than supplanting it. Peter indeed played major roles of leadership among the apostles, and he provided an important bridge between the ministry of James to fellow Jews and the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore understandable that after his death and the passing of other first-generation leaders, his legacy should have been preserved in the Matthean tradition (Matt. 16:17-19) and entrusted to those following in his wake. Indeed, the gates of Hades did not prevail, and his memory continued as an inspiration for future leaders within the church.<sup>4</sup> Whether the ‘rock’ upon which the Church of Christ is founded is a *person*, a *confession*, or the fact of *inspiration*, Peter’s memory became a centralizing force in the development of Christian understandings of church leadership with implications for later generations.

A great feature of Petrine leadership continues, however, not in the consolidation of authority in one direction or another, but in the affirming of the ‘royal priesthood’ of other believers and in emphasizing the chosen calling of God’s people and their being ‘living stones’ founded upon Christ the Cornerstone (I Pet. 2:4-10). Raymond Brown describes this edifying pastoral work on behalf of the scattered Christian congregations well:

1 Peter counteracted this alienation by the assurance that in Christianity Gentile converts had found a new family home with an imperishable inheritance.<sup>5</sup>

Brown goes on to say that few readers today are aware that this language of ‘royal priesthood’ was applied to *all* believers, which has great relevance and potential for today. Indeed, this aspect of Petrine ministry affirms the all-sufficiency of Christ’s Priesthood extended to the world by means of the priesthood of every believer.

Lest emerging Christian structures of leadership, however, be construed as replacing the religious structures Jesus challenges in the name of God’s active Kingdom and Reign, the primal importance of Christian approaches to leadership is Christocracy – the active and

dynamic leadership of Christ. To that end, structural leadership plays vital roles: calling people to the centre of Christian mission, calling for adherence to right faith and practice in the Church, facilitating the addressing of human needs internally and externally, and organizing worship, ministry and teaching for the furthering of ecclesial vitality. A common problem with reformers, though, is the tendency to reconstruct the very idols they had brought down,<sup>6</sup> and some of this tension can also be seen in the original Jesus movement. While the memory of Peter serves to build up structural leadership, he is also presented as being asked to forgive ‘not seven times, but seventy times seven’ (Matt. 18:21-35), to keep his eyes on Jesus (implied, Matt. 14:28-33), to serve others as he has been served by Jesus (Jn. 13:1-17), to tend and feed Jesus’ lambs and sheep (Jn. 21:15-17), and to follow Jesus supremely (Jn. 21:18-22). As the early Church began to develop structural approaches to leadership, gospel narratives and epistles alike reminded Christians of the central focus: the *dynamic leadership of Christ* at work in the world, sometimes in surprising ways.

Here one can see emphasis upon the immediacy of Christ’s leadership accompanying emerging structural models as well. For instance, the Apostle Paul emphasizes such organic models as the complementarity of spiritual gifts and the multiplicity of body parts and their functions (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:1-31; 14:1-40; Eph. 4:1-16). The necessity of connectedness to the head – Christ – and the importance of valuing the place and service of other parts of the Body of Christ are here emphasized as a means of heightening community and relationality. Likewise, ecclesial images in John include such living and dynamic metaphors as being gathered by Jesus into a *flock* and abiding in Jesus as branches are connected to the *vine* (Jn. 10:16; 15:1-17). Therefore, fluidity, connectedness, and relationality are as central to New Testament ecclesiological presentations as are aspects of structure and organization.<sup>7</sup>

Nowhere is this complement to structural leadership put as clearly in the New Testament as in the juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in John. On the one hand, Peter makes the climactic confession in John, as he does in the other gospels (Jn. 6:68-69), and he also is reinstated thrice around a charcoal fire after having denied Jesus thrice, also around a charcoal fire (Jn. 21:15-17). However, Peter is also presented as misunderstanding servanthood (Jn. 13:1-17). He is described as becoming perplexed after Jesus asked him if he loved him a third time (Jn. 21:18). Interestingly, rather than having received the Keys to the Kingdom as was the case in Matthew 16:17-19, Peter affirms the words of *Jesus* as the singular life-giving source in John 6:68. Also, while the Beloved Disciple arrives at the tomb first, he stands aside and allows Peter to enter (Jn. 20:1-8), and at the last supper and in the final

boat scene, it is the Beloved Disciple who serves as a bridge between Peter and the Lord (Jn. 13:18-30; 21:7).

Note also that Jesus indeed entrusts something to a leading disciple as a measure of ecclesial authority, but rather than entrust instrumental keys to Peter, Jesus entrusts his very mother to the Beloved Disciple at the cross (Jn. 19:25-27). If this is indeed a coin of ecclesial authority, as is the Matthean presentation of Keys to the Kingdom, the emphasis is upon relationality and familial care rather than structuralism and institutional hierarchy. Likewise, the intimate relationship of the Beloved Disciple to the Lord is presented as an ideal image of devotion for all disciples to emulate. Leaning against the breast of Jesus becomes the only way forward for Christian leaders. *Knowledge about* is no substitute for *intimate acquaintance with* the Lord.

Further, rather than limit the exemplary confession to a male who is the leader of the Twelve, confessions in John are made by Nathanael (not one of the Twelve, Jn. 1:49) and by Martha (a woman, Jn. 11:27). And, rather than limiting the apostolic commission to a singular leader like Peter, Jesus in John 20:20-23 breathes on (inspires) his followers (plural) and declares, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'; he commissions them all as his ambassadors, 'As the Father has sent me, so send I you' (plural); and he gives them the *responsibility* (not just the authority) to be forgivers of sins. Therefore, the plurality of Christian leaders in John are pneumatized, apostolized, and sacerdotalized as an expansion of emerging structures of leadership in the early church. Indeed, when Matthew 16:17-19 is compared with the Gospel of John, at least seven parallels can be identified – and they are all *different*.<sup>8</sup> Whether this is a factor of complementarity or correction, the Johannine witness points to the real issue at stake – Christocracy – the effectual means by which the risen Christ continues to lead the Church and shepherd his flock.

Here the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, the *Parakletos* (Jn. 14-16), also comes to mind. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to comfort disciples, to strengthen them, to direct them and lead them, to bring to remembrance the words of the Lord, to convict them of sin and of righteousness, and to lead them into all truth. Therefore, charisma and structure go hand in hand in the New Testament, and the Petrine and Johannine models of Christocracy should not be seen as one being apostolic and the other not. Both have their roots in apostolic memory and development.<sup>9</sup> Nor should either of them be seen as the institution of Christ to the exclusion of the other. If anything, the Spirit-based workings of the Johannine Jesus seem closer to what we have been learning about the historical Jesus, and yet both of these models can be seen to further the work and leadership of Christ in the world. What is valuable is holding these models together in tension – in dialectical

relationship – whereby structure stabilizes charisma and charisma enlivens structure. Certainly, both models reflect biblical views of how Christ might lead the Church, and therefore, Petrine and Johannine ministries must serve the larger ecclesial concern: dynamic and effective means of furthering Christocracy in the Church and in the world beyond it.

Beyond the gospels, a dynamic experience of Christocracy can also be seen to have been an acute concern of the apostles. As the early Church dealt with the issue of whether one needed to become an outward member of the Jewish faith to be a follower of Christ in Acts 15 (by means of circumcision and other outward measures), they came together in the desire to discern the will of Christ in unity.<sup>10</sup> The leadership invited varying perspectives with intentionality, seeking to discern the will of Christ, which is not divided. After all had a chance to speak and the primary concerns of various parties had been articulated, unity was achieved in clarifying the primary matters of consternation. They waited long enough to discern a common perspective on the matter, and they were able to say, ‘It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28). This was the effective result of attending and discerning the authentic leadership of the risen Lord.

A further example of pointing to unity in Christ is Paul’s challenging the partisan spirit of the Corinthian church. Whereas some claimed to be ‘of Paul’, ‘of Cephas’, ‘of Apollos’, and even ‘of Christ’ (I Cor. 1:10-17), Paul emphasized the priority of corporate solidarity in following Christ together. Likewise, Peter exalts the ‘Shepherd and Bishop of your souls’ as an extension of the ministry of Christ over his own contribution. Therefore, the leader of one sector of the Church does well to heighten the singular ministry of the Lord and to embrace the distributed ministries of others. This is the pattern of true apostolic ministry, and it points supremely to the leadership of Christ, the highest calling of Petrine, Johannine, and Pauline ministries alike.

This is why the Holy Father’s statement in *Ut unum sint* # 94 is so encouraging, that ‘...through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches’. Indeed, the first calling of structural and pneumatic ministries alike is the facilitation of the attending, discerning, and minding of Christ’s leadership in the Church. It is a matter of Christocracy – the effectual means by which the risen Christ continues to lead the Church – and this is the highest of all Christian ministries, including Petrine, Pauline, and Johannine forms of ministry.

### ***On Answering the Prayer of Jesus – Ut unum sint***

Jesus prayed *that his disciples would be one*, and furthering the unity of the church is the holy calling of every Christian leader. Indeed, the more catholic and universal the episcopal charge, the more extensive one's responsibility for Christian unity becomes. Sometimes the charge comes from the group a leader serves, and this responsibility determines one's authority in relationship to the group. At times, however, the calling comes from God, perhaps even emerging as a concern given by the Holy Spirit, and that concern should also be honored. Addressing both the organizational and vocational aspects of the church-unity concern contributes to ways forward, perhaps in ways we have not yet imagined. The question then becomes how to further the unity of the Church, even across its divisions and epochs, in answering Jesus's prayer that his followers might be one.

Indeed, the challenge of the day presents itself in the form of a world Christian movement fractured by divisions and dismembered by conflicts. The Spirit of Christ, however, is also at work in the world drawing humanity to the truth of Christ – across the divides of time, space, and groupings – and *any* who will open themselves to the gathering work of Christ will indeed be gathered into community, spiritually and otherwise. Therefore, these discussions, if they do further discerning and adhering to the will of Christ, are not simply a set of projects devised by humans, depending on our own ingenuity or abilities. They rest upon the eschatological workings of Christ in the world today, through the creativity of the Holy Spirit, making all things new internally and externally. Therein lies the centre of Christian confidence and hope.

Obstacles to unity, however, are many. The very process of defining criteria for inclusion in the fellowship of believers welcomes some and excludes others. Where the visible Church or churches are distinguished from the rest of the world, those excluded may constitute a considerable portion of the invisible and authentic Church of Jesus Christ, let alone the beloved world for which Christ died. It is also possible that some included in the visible Church might not be faithful to the way of Christ, so the visible Church cannot be said to be entirely a part of the invisible church. Thus, the tension between the invisible and visible Church persists.

#### **Reasons for Divisions**

Following are some of the understandable and good reasons for a divided Christian community, and yet, they must be faced if the vocation of Christian unity is at all to be explored and fulfilled:

*Organizationally*, Christian traditions have managed to establish themselves and to build structures for initiating, maintaining, and holding accountable their members. In a multiplicity of ways, maintaining faith and order within a church body functions so as to clarify and further the values of that group in order to insure its continuity and faithfulness to its mission. The old and the new wine both require containers, lest the wine be spilt and lost (Mk. 2:22). However, the measures used to hold a group together function also to distinguish it from alternative movements, and community maintenance itself becomes a factor in excluding other groups and individuals with alternative values. One way forward might be to appreciate the values of the community defined in membership processes, while at the same time, welcoming the fellowship of those who do not meet particular measures if they nonetheless adhere to the larger invitation to be followers of Jesus Christ, however that venture is defined.

*Theologically*, Christian traditions have rightly sought to divide truth from error, yet even as the right establishing of orthodox faith distinguishes adequate theological positions over their alternatives, unfortunate division occurs. Where the Church comes to unity on matters of faith, the result is an enhanced sense of commitment to the truth of God as understood by believers. However, part of the consequence of defining the boundaries of right belief is that it might be taken to imply that those on the outside are not believers, even if they are seeking the truth of Christ in their alternative views. Conversely, one may agree to the basic structures of orthodox faith but not be authentically walking in faithful relationship with Christ. Too often in history an outline of propositions becomes used as the test of right belief, when the most important aspect of saving and empowering faith in Christ is the believing response to the Divine Initiative – God, in Christ, reconciling the world to Godself (II Cor. 5:18f.). One way forward might be to raise up the centres of faith, rather than their boundaries, as Jesus did in pointing to the greatest of the commandments: loving God and loving neighbour. This involves a *radical* (root-centred) approach to faith, rather than a legalistic (boundary-centred) approach to right belief.

*Morally*, differences between Christian individuals and groups are even more divisive on matters of practice than they are on matters of faith. This is understandable, as aspects of practice often tend to be the implications of theological tenets. Matters of Christian morality are especially important when considering the sorts of behaviour and practices that ought to be adopted and avoided. Approaches to deciding right practice either follow from principle or from outcomes, and moral norms are the most solid when their determination is the result of both of these measures. Christian divisions along lines of moral reasoning relate



to two trajectories: abstract reasoning about what is right and wrong, and actual practice where one has or has not lived up to a particular standard. Where there is disagreement about right behaviour, the divisions will be as pronounced as the issues are important. Where one has transgressed known norms in terms of practice, the question becomes one of repentance. Repentant sinners find grace, while the unrepentant cannot be excused, lest the standards of the community be eroded unwittingly. As a way forward on matters of right practice, if groups can agree on the founding principles, and perhaps on the anticipated outcomes, greater unity may be achieved even as the particulars on moral practice are still under debate.

*Proclamationally*, the Church is potentially closer than on several other grounds. New Testament scholarship over the last century has raised up the kerygmatic message of the apostles as the basis for confessional faith in Christ Jesus, and this really does provide a way forward for all authentic believers. When the Gospel message proclaimed by the apostles is considered, a basic outline includes the following convictions:

that in the fullness of time Jesus was sent by God as the redeemer of the world, according to the Scriptures, descended from David and designated as the Son, Jesus ministered, was tried, crucified under Pontius Pilate, died, was buried, was raised again on the third day, ascended into heaven, promised to return for his followers, and reigns on high with the Father (Ac. 2:14-40; Rom. 1:1-6; I Cor. 15:3-8).

Put even more simply, saving faith in Christ involves our receiving what God has done toward us in the Christ events. One need not comprehend the mystery of God's saving/revealing action in Christ Jesus, and indeed one finally cannot, but one is invited into the fellowship of those who accept *that* God has acted savingly toward us in faith. Abraham believed God, and to him it was credited as righteousness, and this is one conviction that Christians around the world can indeed agree upon. The hope of the world lies in responding in faith to the Divine Initiative, embodied eschatologically in the Christ events.

*Sacramentally*, Christians continue to be divided, although there is something deeply ironic about this fact. Whereas the experience of Christian communion ought to be one of the most unifying and consolidating of religious experiences, it continues to be one of the most divisive subjects within the movement. Divisions are less related to whether the spiritual reality of *Koinonia* fellowship is indeed experienced by believers, or whether the believer is spiritually baptized in fire and the Holy Spirit, but they are more related to the outward means of getting there. As the central content of the divine *Mysterion* in the New

Testament (the basis for sacramental reasoning) is God's saving/revealing action in Christ Jesus, the central factor in sacramental theology and praxis is the appropriation of that divine gift experientially by faith. However people get there, the Church is ready to celebrate Christian authenticity where the Word is rightly proclaimed and the sacraments are authentically practiced (see the Lima *Baptist, Eucharist, and Ministry* document, WCC, 1982). However, there is also a place for celebrating authentic spiritual baptism (the baptism of Jesus, with fire and the Holy Spirit) and *Koinonia* fellowship where they are experienced incarnationally rather than formalistically.<sup>11</sup> Abiding in Christ and he in us is the basis for Christian baptism (Jn. 15:1-8), and where two or three are gathered in his name, there Jesus is present in the authentic meeting for worship (Matt. 18:18-20). Raising up the spiritual centre and goal of sacramental faith and praxis may provide a way forward, as authenticity of experience will ever be the central interest of formal and informal approaches to sacramental living alike.

In these and other ways, Christians have divided themselves, one from another, in ways that fracture Christian unity and damage our witness to Christ's love in the world. A divided Christian community, however, is *not* the only option. As we consider the practical and organizational values of focusing on the visible Church, we must also acknowledge the spiritual reality of the invisible Church beyond even the best of our human measures. Where attention to the visible Church focuses on aspects of inclusion and exclusion – the boundaries, attention to the invisible Church focuses upon the spiritual heart of Christian faith and practice – the centre. Rather than seeing the visible and invisible Church as concentric circles with either encompassing the other, a more adequate appraisal involves seeing these as two overlapping circles. The greater the shared congruence, the greater the inward and outward unity of the Church will be perceived and experienced, although the final degree of overlap will remain ultimately a mystery to us. Nonetheless, three groups of Christians can be acknowledged meaningfully: those who are part of the visible and invisible Church, those who are not part of the visible church but who are part of the invisible church, and those who are not part of the invisible Church but part of the visible Church.

### **Call to Unity**

Jesus calls his followers into unity along these lines in two passages in John:

The first passage, in John 10, shows how the oneness of Jesus' flock *transcends the bounds of space and outward groupings and measures*.

1. Jesus first declares the character of intimate knowing between himself and his authentic sheep. He knows his own, and they know him – just as he knows and is known by the Father. As the Good Shepherd, he lays down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10:14-15).
2. Second, Jesus acknowledges the diversity-and-unity of his flock. He has sheep yet to gather that are not of this fold, which he desires to bring into the fold that there might be one fold and one Shepherd. This implies the priority of Christian outreach – inviting our joining Jesus in the ingathering of the scattered flock of God across the bounds of space and outward measures (Jn. 10:16).
3. Third, Jesus explains the division of his true sheep from those who are not. Those who refuse to receive the divine initiative embodied in Jesus reject his signs and that which they signify – his being sent from God. Conversely, those who attend his voice and are known by Jesus follow him, and they are members of his authentic flock (Jn. 10:25-27). These statements force us to reconsider a view of the invisible Church as being contained concentrically within the circle of the visible Church. There are some members of Jesus' flock who are not currently found within our visible boundaries of the organized Church, and yet they attend the authentic voice of Jesus. Likewise, those who might appear to be inside the fold, but who neither attend the voice of Christ nor follow him, are not part of the authentic and invisible flock. Whatever the case, Jesus affirms the concern for the scattered flock of God across worldly boundaries and invites us into partnership with him in gathering them into one flock, under One Shepherd.

The second passage, in John 17, shows how Jesus's prayer for unity *transcends the bounds of time and inward faithfulness*.

1. Jesus first prays for the unity of his followers as a function of God's protection. He protected his own while he was with them personally, that none of them should be lost, but upon his departure he entrusts them to the Father's care that they would be protected by the power of God's name (and thus authority) so that they may be one as Jesus and the Father are one (Jn. 17:11-12).
2. Jesus then prays not only for those who were with them during his earthly ministry, but he prays for all believers across the spans of time who would believe on their behalf. In that sense, he prays for all generations of believers, including present ones, that they may be one as Jesus and the Father are one (Jn. 17:20-21).
3. The character of this unity is *love*, revealed before the foundation of the earth, and the result of Christian unity is that the world will know that Jesus' having been sent by the Father is an authentic

commission. Therefore, the glory given the Son by the Father is passed on to believers that they may be one as the Son and the Father are one with the result that the love of the Father and the Son and the believers will be made known to the world (Jn. 17:22-24). From age to age, the unifying work of Christ functions by the love of the Father for the Son and the obedience of the Son to the Father, which when shared by believers, immerses them in that love and thereby implicates them in that same eschatological mission. Therefore, the unity of the Church across the bounds of time is made manifest to the world by believers' making known to the world the love of the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit.

Jesus thus prays for the unity of his Church, both visibly and invisibly, and *all Christian leaders* are called to join him in that prayer; likewise, are they called to be open to being divinely used in its actualization. Jesus's prayer for oneness among his followers thus transcends the bounds of time and space. It challenges the boundaries we place on faith and practice, even for good reasons, and it raises up the centre of discipleship, which is ever a spiritual and relational reality. The question for the day is whether today's believers can follow a common Lord together in ways that incarnate the love of God at the heart of Christian mission. Rather than focusing on particular means of getting there, or the question of whether we have arrived, a common commitment to the venture itself – living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in full faith and faithfully – may pose a suitable way forward in this moment in history.

### ***Engaging the Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint****

Already in the letter from Pope John Paul II, great strides forward have been achieved toward a greater Christian unity, and this is a genuine reason for celebration among all the Churches. Therefore, in responding to each of these papal statements I want to affirm the good points being made and to suggest further considerations as a means of contributing to our explorations of Christ's truth for all believers. The responses that follow, however, are not intended to be specifically limited to the responsibilities of the Bishop of Rome. Rather, I am endeavouring to sketch a picture of the larger set of responsibilities faced by all Christian leaders in all settings. Therefore, this response endeavours to be catholic in the most universal sense, applying to Rome, but also to every other sector of Christ's Church, visible and invisible. In that sense, the following comments are as catholic and universal as they can possibly be.

## 1. Pastoral Aspects of Episcopal Service

The mission of the Bishop of Rome within the College of all the Pastors consists precisely in ‘keeping watch’ (*episkopein*), like a sentinel, so that, through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches (#94)

a) *Episcopal authority has its root in episcopal responsibility.*

The reason a shepherd has authority over the flock is that the shepherd has the responsibility to care for the flock. Likewise, if a leader within an organization is entrusted responsibility for the direction and well-being of that organization, commensurate authority deserves to accompany the entrustment. When charges of responsibility and authority are clear for leaders serving a group, the way forward is easier. When the relationship itself is in question, though, this presents a challenge. Sometimes a superintendent will feel the responsibility but not have any authority; sometimes the group will not feel it is accountable to its leadership. The question, though, becomes one of whence one’s responsibility comes. Where it emerges from the group, and the group appoints the leader, the appropriation of authority follows readily. When, however, one feels responsible for the welfare of a larger group, but that group has not granted it authority, this presents a challenge.

Where the latter is the case, several options exist. First, the bishop could play the role of the prophet. Prophets really have no authority invested by humans or groups, which is one of the reasons they also are free to provoke and to speak freely. Neither have they any investment in maintaining the status quo or their own well-being. Therefore, the bishop could simply forth-tell the truth of God as it is understood and serve the role of Ezekiel’s watchman on the tower – warning of dangers and exhorting faithfulness to the Lord. As always, the prophetic responsibility of the overseer is to speak the truth, in season and out, out of faithfulness to God and for the good of the beloved flock.

A second option is to consider one’s inward (or God-given) sense of responsibility, whether it is granted by a group or not – simply carrying out faithfully one’s mission as a means of accountability before God. Indeed, each of us is accountable to the callings we have received, and sometimes they emerge from our environments, but at other times they emerge from within. This being the case, pastoral care and support may be extended without being requested. As we have freely received, so we freely give; it need not be requested nor need it be expected as a factor of contractual responsibility for pastoral service to be offered. It can simply be extended as an expression of Christ’s love, with no expectation of return. In this sense, episcopal authority is connected to the vocation of

the servant-leader and loving concern for the flock. Love has its bonds beyond organizational contracts.

A third option is to raise questions with the larger group, inviting feedback as to how one might serve their needs on behalf of Christ. Indeed, Christ is the true Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (I Pet. 2:25), and all Christian leadership makes its greatest contribution by furthering the leadership and ministries of Christ. As is the case with this present invitation, asking for input of the extended and scattered flock of Christ around the world is an excellent place to begin in the greater work of drawing all together under the shepherding work of Christ. It also is the case that authority will be bolstered essentially because of being responsive to the needs and concerns of the world. Even when responsibilities have not been assigned by a group, episcopal authority may be exercised as a factor of service to the truth, out of concern for the welfare of the flock, or as an extension of Christ's love and care for the Church.

b) *The primary episcopal responsibility is to feed and love the sheep.* Jesus said thrice to Peter in John 21, 'If you love me, care for my lambs/feed my sheep'. This is ever the calling of Christian leadership – the care and nurture of the flock of God. That being the case, the effective superintendent 'looks over' the needs of the flock of Christ, seeking to determine what they are and how they might be addressed. This being the case, several aspects of this pastoral care follow.

First, the way of love always bears in mind what the needs of the flock are. It then seeks to address those needs, energized and empowered by the love of Jesus Christ. This is authentic Christian service, and therefore, the effective ministries of the bishop depend first upon having determined what the needs of the Church are. The motivational and organizational ventures of leadership thus become organized around serving the needs of the flock rather than trying to organize the flock to meet the needs of the ministers. Paradoxically, the finding of one's life hinges upon having been willing to first lay it down, and such is ever love's way. As Browning says, 'Such ever was love's way: to rise it stoops'.<sup>12</sup>

Second, if the needs of the Church are being met, this will necessarily involve feeding and tending the flock. Indeed, the regular care and nurture that comes from sound and edifying teaching will indeed be sustaining for the Church. This will also call for speaking the relevant word – addressing also the needs of the world, as well as the revelatory word – speaking the inspired word of Christ to his congregation. Tending and feeding also involve taking the flock to the still waters where they can drink and to the verdant meadows where they can graze. Again, the

food for the flock need not all be distributed at the hand of the shepherd, but the charge of the shepherd is to lead the flock to the places where they can indeed be fed and nourished by the bread that Jesus gives and is.

A third point follows regarding the care and nurture of the sheep that are ‘not of this fold,’ however that measure is determined. Here, the only way their needs will be met is to meet their needs. This involves listening. It involves going where they are. It involves *being* the Good News to those who might not have recognized an abstract gospel. It involves instilling a hunger for the shepherding work of Christ among those who might not have felt a need for it. The gathering of those who are not of ‘this’ fold, whichever fold is meant, is an important part of the episcopal calling Christ extends to all leaders, and his Spirit will guide the way forward in such ventures.

*c) The primary calling of all Christian leadership is not to be heard or seen, but to insure that the voice and leadings of Christ are heard and discerned in the world.*

Indeed, the true work of all pastoral leaders is not to get people to hear or listen to them, but to help people listen to and hear the voice of Christ, often made manifest in silence. Sometimes this is done by providing answers to people’s questions; sometimes it is facilitated by helping people ask better questions. Whatever the case, when the central goal is for *Christ* to be heard, the focus shifts from the human vessels to the deserving focus of our faith: the abiding voice of the risen Lord.

But how do Christian leaders help the Church attend, discern, and mind the present leadings of Christ. As well as praying that the Church would be one, Jesus also taught his disciples to pray that God’s Kingdom would come, and that his will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Too easily the Church gives up on the invitation to know and obey the will of Christ. Charisma can be abused, but so can structuralism, and likewise biblicality or traditionalism. Holy obedience runs into such obstacles as impracticality, indiscernibility, and costliness, but none of these excuses suffice.

‘Realism’ too often becomes an excuse for not following Jesus’s clear commands, and the costliness of faithfulness to the way of the Kingdom all too easily becomes an obstacle to Christian faithfulness. Yet Jesus bids his followers to count the cost, to take up the cross, and to follow him. Faithfulness to Christ is not motivated because it works; rather, it is invited because it is right. Learning to live as a perpetual ‘yes’ to Christ is the basis for all Christian maturity, and effective leadership raises that calling for all believers as well as modeling it for the world.

After deciding to become a follower of Jesus, the next challenge involves spiritual discernment as to his will and leadings in the world.

We live in an age characterized by spiritual attention deficiency, so the invitation to attend the present workings of Christ or to embrace a life of abiding in Christ indeed goes against the grain. The way to counter ‘spiritual attention deficit disorder’, however, is not to give people one more agenda item or to seek to distract them from their distractions. It is to invite people away from distraction to the centre – the life centered in Christ, whereby the voices of the world and the voices within lose their clamouring appeal by one’s learning to attend the One Voice beyond the many. The life centered in Christ is the most effective way for the sheep to be nourished and for the world to be healed, and this is the primary calling of Christ’s shepherds.

Episcopal leadership may then need to direct the flock and exert directive influence, but its goal is not to point people to itself. Its goal is to point the world to Christ, inviting one’s flock and those who are not yet a part of it to attend, discern, and mind the true Voice of the One Shepherd – Christ Jesus whose life was given on their behalf. Rather than leave Jesus in the grave, the Power and Presence of the resurrected Lord also deserve elevation as the heart of the Gospel message. With the yearning of the Baptist, Christ must become more, and we must become less (Jn. 3:30). The goal of all spiritual direction is thus to point people to the Director himself, about whom all human words are but ‘a faint and broken echo’.<sup>13</sup>

*d) Representatives of Christ in the world point to his Truth, the singular authority across time and space and corporate boundaries.*

Ultimately, there is no authority except truth (Jn. 18:36f.). Jesus said to Pilate’s question about his authority, ‘Yes, I am a King, but my Kingdom is one of truth’. Likewise, the authority of the Church and its leadership will always hinge upon their capacity to discern the truth and to articulate it in ways that are convincing. Nothing shows the failure of the truth-seeking venture more clearly than resorting to force or coercion when it comes to truth adherence. Indeed, some people ignore the truth or defy it, but the steady appeal to its enduring character bespeaks one’s confidence in it. Jesus also promised that his followers would know the truth, and that the truth would be liberating (Jn. 8:32).

The teachings of the Church, if they are true, will withstand the test of time. If they are not, they will be improved by adjustment along the way, and this is ever the challenge of seeking to express timeless convictions in timely ways. There is also a place for witness, however, even if one’s testimony is not fully received. The fact that an individual or group is ‘convinced of the truth’ on a particular subject is binding in terms of conscience. Therefore, those who organize the truth-seeking ventures of the Church should make room for the multiplicity of perspectives that



reflect the larger quests for the truth in the world. If Jesus is indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6), approximating the truth approximates Christ – and vice versa.

Here the responsibility of episcopal ministry connects with its character. Too easily, well-meaning guardians of doctrine or dogma propound their understanding of God's truth by means of coercion or manipulation. This, however, distorts the witness to truth and evokes reactions of conscience against the use of force, even when employed for commendable reasons. The reason Jesus's followers do not fight, however, is that his Kingdom *is* one of truth, and this reign *cannot* be furthered by coercive or violent means. It is furthered only by conviction, where people catch a glimpse of its veracity and are convinced that a teaching is true.

The challenge, therefore, of episcopal ministry is to connect the authority of responsibility with the authority of truth. As Christ bids us speak to the condition of the world, we have the responsibility to be faithful to that calling. And, as we are given understandings as to how God would meet the needs of the world – rooted in loving concern and care – the articulation of remedy and redemption will serve its needs in truth. Therefore, the goal of the Church is not to insist on its voice being heard, but to point people to the ultimate Word, who brings light into darkness and order out of chaos (Jn. 1:1-5). After all, we are servants of that heavenly City of God which has Truth as its king, Love as its law, and Eternity as its measure.

## 2) Ecumenical Responsibility

With the power and the authority without which such an office would be illusory, the Bishop of Rome must ensure the communion of all the Churches. For this reason, he is the first servant of unity (#94), and that Whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy (#95).

a) *Just as Jesus gathers sheep that are 'not of this fold', his superintendents must reach out to the scattered sheep of Christ around the world.*

An amazing fact of Jesus's desire to gather his sheep that are 'not of this fold' in John 10:14-30 is that he speaks of the mutual recognition of authentic relationship. His sheep know his voice, and he knows them, even before they respond to the invitation to enter the 'one' fold. This passage must give us pause about judging too readily that those outside our formal groupings of church membership are not included in the invisible flock of Christ. As we consider, therefore, how to join Jesus in the evangelistic outreach of the Gospel, we do so holding open the

possibility that those we address may already be warmed to the prevenient voice of Christ. The true Light of Christ enlightens all (Jn. 1:9), and yet, for any who believe in him, these receive the power to become the children of God, as many as believe on his name (Jn. 1:12).

As well as evangelizing the lost and gathering the scattered sheep of Christ into one fold, the work of Christian shepherds is to bring our respective flocks together under one Shepherd – the true Shepherd – Jesus Christ, the Lord. Many church-dividing issues in former generations no longer deserve to be regarded as impossible to transcend. At times, impatience with one group or another has led to the use of anathemas or excommunication on behalf of the larger group, but the regard of schismatic groups for the parent body has often been no less caustic. When Jesus prays for his followers to be one across time and space, this becomes an invitation for the fractured body of Christ to receive the healing and mending that also comes with his transformative work in the present. Effective Christian leaders can help the body of Christ and its many parts appreciate the other parts and their functions without relinquishing the primacy of being responsive to the Head. Not only does Jesus ask his under-shepherds to join him in gathering the scattered flock of God around the earth and across our time-torn histories, but he also invites us to facilitate coordination among the body parts and responsiveness of all parts to the headship of Christ.

*b) Human shepherds further the work of the True Shepherd as they bind up wounds, lead sheep to water and pasture, and protect them from danger.*

The primary episcopal responsibility will always be the caring for the needs of the sheep. Jesus as the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, and faithful shepherds from then on serve the flock sacrificially rather than fleeing, as a hireling or inauthentic shepherd might be prone to do (Jn. 10:11-13). Ezekiel exhorted the shepherds of Israel not to be self-serving but to feed the flock rather than themselves (Ez. 34), and he explained the scattering and destruction of the flock as being a function of the shepherds' neglect. Jesus exhorted Peter to love and feed the flock as an extension of his love for the Lord (Jn. 21:15-17). Likewise, Peter warns aspiring church leaders not to serve as lording it over others or out of a hope for gain or money, but as a function of shepherding care for the welfare of the flock. In this they are to be examples to others as to the authority and power of sacrificial pastoral care (I Pet. 5:1-4). Authentic and faithful shepherds care for the needs of the sheep.

Discharging effective episcopal ministry today, therefore, hinges upon identifying the needs of the flock of Christ and addressing those needs, energized and empowered by the love of Jesus Christ. Therefore,

borrowing from the imagery of shepherds and their flocks, the work of the shepherd involves binding up the sheep's wounds, leading them to water and pasture, and protecting them from danger. These ministries may be extended to members of a shepherd's acknowledged flock, but they may also be extended liberally to all sheep in need of care with no expectation of return. As we have received freely from the love of Christ, so we may give freely to others as extensions of the Chief Shepherd's care.

*Binding up the wounds of the sheep* effectively depends upon how the sheep's health and ailments are diagnosed. Sometimes, injury within the Church is covered over or driven underground in an attempt to avoid unpleasantness or embarrassment. This keeps the wounds from being acknowledged, though, and it causes further frustration and pain. The authentic and caring shepherd will make the Church a safe place to acknowledge pain, frailty, and injury, and this is an essential ingredient in Christ's healing of the world. Jesus was sent, after all, not to the well, but to those who needed a doctor, and he sent out his followers to expel people's demons, to proclaim the Good News, and to heal the sick. This too is the work of the Church today, and the binding up of the wounds of the world by furthering the healing work of Christ is the calling of every Christian leader.

*Leading the sheep to green pastures and beside still waters* also is the calling of every faithful shepherd (Ps. 23:1-3). Feeding and watering the flock of Christ involves bringing the sheep to the places where they can be nourished. Green pastures allow the sheep to graze amply – to be fed with the teaching and nourishment they need. Supported by the uplifting interpreting of the Scriptures and the edifying expounding of right doctrine, the flock of Christ will be fed by the bread of God. And, drawn near the streams of inspiration, aided by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the flock of Christ will be refreshed and empowered to meet the challenges of the day. While the shepherd need not provide all the food and drink needed directly, effective pastoral care leads the flock to the place where they can be nourished and strengthened directly by Christ.

*Protecting the sheep from harm* also becomes the responsibility of every shepherd. Maintaining alertness to the dangers in the world enables the shepherd to steer the flock clear of needless peril, as the pastor plays the role of the watchman on the tower. Likewise, the faithful pastor identifies threats within the fold, providing a more acute form of protection from that which would damage the sheep intentionally or otherwise. Indeed, the authentic shepherd refuses to leave the flock in the midst of danger, as does the hireling. Rather, love for the sheep demands binding up the wounds of the past, nourishing the flock for the present, and protecting the fold from upcoming dangers in the future. This is the

responsibility of all authentic shepherds and bishops as they serve the Chief Shepherd, whose life was given in love for the healing and nourishing of the world.

*c) As primal servants of unity, all Christian leaders are called to raise up the centers of faith and practice rather than drawing needless boundaries.*

Maintaining the unity of the flock of Christ likewise is the responsibility of every Christian leader. Some may feel that calling more universally than others, but even the shepherd of remote or distanced groups of sheep bears the charge of furthering the oneness of the flock for the well-being of the flock and the glory of Christ. While a common approach to the maintenance and furthering of unity involves the defining of boundaries, this approach also makes outsiders out of those who do not measure up; and, those who do meet criteria for inclusion face the temptations of pride and prejudice. Ironically, pride for having attained the measures of right faith and practice may itself jeopardize one's capacity to abide steadily in grace – the undeserved merit and love availed in the Christ Events. Conversely, regard for those who do not measure up becomes vulnerable to regarding 'the other' as one who is less than the object of Christ's saving love. While establishing and maintaining criteria for membership involving faith and practice are essential for any organization, including the outward church, a more effective means of approaching Christian unity is to raise up the centres of faith and practice, calling all men, women, and children to faithfulness regarding the way of Christ Jesus.

Emphasizing the centre is not an original idea; Jesus himself raised up the *centre* of God's desire for the world as being the love of God and the love of neighbour. In contrast to the cultic regulations of the Sadducees, the legalistic stipulations of the Pharisees, and the political activism of the zealots, Jesus pointed to the centre rather than the boundaries of the Divine Will. Rather than fall into the traps of legalism or formal measures of spiritual realities, the church of Jesus Christ should be able to lift up the center of Christian faith and practice today in ways that elevate our highest common purpose rather than emphasize our lowest common denominators. Raising up the *centre* of the Christian life could pose a radically new basis for Christian unity – radical because it is a striking difference, and radical because it gets at the root issue.

*d) The central feature of Koinonia fellowship – Christian Communion – is being gathered together under the all-sufficient workings of Christ, leading the church by means of the Holy Spirit.*

Full Christian communion is possible where followers of Jesus Christ are gathered spiritually in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As the Christ events – the death and resurrection of the Lord – were effected once and

for all, their appropriation is availed to all who receive them by faith. Because the real presence of Christ is available eschatologically where believers are gathered in the name of Jesus (Matt. 18:18-20), full communion is possible whenever believers open themselves to the spiritually abiding presence of Christ in the midst of the gathered meeting.

Sacramental reality is essentially incarnational in its essence. Indeed, the great *mysterion* of the New Testament upon which sacramental theology is based is from beginning to end upon God's saving/revealing action in Christ Jesus – the Word become flesh (Jn. 1:14).<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the means by which God's love is disclosed to the world will ever be the changed and changing lives of Jesus's followers. In the rending of the veil in the Temple, access to God's love and grace have been opened for eternity, and humans have no need of any other means of mediation because Christ is the sole mediator between God and the world. Human ministers may call persons to open their lives to Christ's effective work, and they may plan and orchestrate corporate experiences of worship, but the all-sufficiency of Christ's work means that he alone is the redemptive bridge between God and humanity. Therefore, forms may assist the believer, but they are never required by God. Those who open themselves to God fully and trust God fully receive God fully, and this is the sacramental Mystery of Christ's all-sufficient work.

Because full Christian communion is available to any who abide in Christ's Power and Presence, Christian unity is possible across the entire spectrum of Christian expressions and beyond. *Koinonia* fellowship is essentially a spiritual reality, and its actualization is availed solely by the operation of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of believers. As Christ gathers the universal Church by the workings of the Holy Spirit, authentic Christian communion is possible wherever believers open their lives to this abiding spiritual presence. As the 1887 Richmond Declaration of Faith reminds us, 'Worship is the adoring response of the heart and mind to the influence of the Spirit of God. It stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms; it may be without words as well as with them, but it must be in spirit and in truth (John 4: 24)'.<sup>15</sup>

### **3) Ways of Exercising Primacy**

As Bishop of Rome I am fully aware, as I have reaffirmed in the present Encyclical Letter, that Christ ardently desires the full and visible communion of all those Communities in which, by virtue of God's faithfulness, his Spirit dwells. I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while

in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation (#95).

a) *Christ indeed desires the unity of his church, and Christian leaders participate in that desire by virtue of their charge to care for the flock of Christ.*

In John 10 and 17 Christ declares his desire for the Church to be one, visibly and invisibly, and this desire applies to all in whom, by virtue of God's faithfulness, the Holy Spirit dwells. This being the case, the invitation should be extended to all believers to come together in Christian fellowship, celebrating the grace and community we possess in Christ Jesus. This invitation, however, forces us to transcend the divisions that have accompanied organizational aspects of ecclesial life. Ironically, means of determining *inclusion* likewise function to determine *exclusion*, and important as organizational measures are, they should not stand in the way of celebrating ecumenical fellowship. Differences may even exist regarding how to measure 'full and visible communion', so even these valued aspects of measuring unity must be transcended among the faithful.

Among some, full and visible communion may involve the sharing of the sacraments together; among others, it may involve reciting a common creed or confession. Among some groups still, it may involve signing a common set of ethical agreements as a precondition of membership, and some include all three of these measures. Even as attempts to cast a broad net are extended, inviting the fellowship of those groups which *confess and proclaim the Word of the Gospel faithfully* and which *partake of the Sacraments rightly* (see, for instance, the Lima World Council of Churches document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, 1982), exclusion occurs. What happens, for instance, with groups that for some reason do not feel included in this Catholic-Protestant compromise? The problem with all of these outward measures, however, is that none of them is entirely agreed upon, and none of them can be said to be an exact representation of all believers in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. This requires another measure, which may be more ambiguous, but which also may be truer. Jesus declared that the measure by which his disciples would be known visibly in the world is the love they have for one another (Jn. 13:35).

Not only the Roman Bishop, but all Christian leaders have the calling – and indeed the responsibility – to gather believers in Christ together that they may be one in Christ's love. They also have the authority to do so, because it extends out of their responsibility to care for the flock of Christ – whatever part of it they may be charged with supervising. Perhaps the outward and visible unity should be left undefined in terms of its criteria for inclusion, and the invitation should simply be extended to all who are

receptive by faith to the grace of Christ and the empowerment of his Spirit. Because Paul describes this confessional and believing measure in Romans 10:9 in open terms, believers are free to define themselves in or out of that fold, understanding that God will separate the wheat from the chaff at the end of the age. Therefore, the outward and visible sign of Christian communion could simply be affirmed on the most basic level as the aspiration to be followers of Jesus Christ and to join other Christians in fellowship, worship, and service. This becomes, then, an incarnational measure rather than a formalistic one.

*b) Particular responsibilities of Christian leaders root in serving the particular needs of those under their care, and the full and visible sign of Christian Community will ever be the love of Christ.*

If the authentic measure of Christian commitment is the love that believers show in their lives, the goal of *Koinonia* fellowship should be the embodiment of the love of Christ in the Church and in the world. This being the case, the *fruit of the Spirit* (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; Gal. 5:22-24) should be cultivated as the first concern of the outward and visible sign of the Church. Indeed, if sacraments consist of outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual realities, an incarnational measure of Christian identity has greater capacity to convey the divine than do inanimate or formal measures. If God conveyed Godself to the world, not through a token of membership or a cultic measure, but sent his Son, Jesus Christ to reveal the love and glory of the Father incarnationally to the world, it may well be that God's sacramental work continues incarnationally through the changed and changing lives of those who are immersed in the love of Jesus Christ. The implication is that the incarnational expression of sacramental reality possesses two forms of primacy: the unsurpassable capacity to convey the love and glory of God, and the inimitable authenticity of measure. While gifts of the Spirit can be imitated, and while formal aspects of membership can be donned inauthentically, the transforming love of Christ cannot be disguised. Christ-like love exists by virtue of its being demonstrated in action, and by their loving character are the authentic followers of Jesus truly known.

The particular responsibilities of Christian leaders therefore relate to how one is to best serve the needs of one's flock in helping its members abide in the transforming grace, power, and love of Jesus Christ. This endeavour will of course involve the connecting of human needs with the sufficiency of the power and presence of Christ, and therein *Koinonia* fellowship will be experienced fully. By extension, this calling applies also to the Bishop of Rome, and if his calling extends to both the Roman Catholic Church and the church universal, his care for the gathered and

scattered sheep of Christ around the world will be ordered by attending the needs of the sheep, feeding them and nurturing them with the love and sustenance of Christ.

*c) Primacy itself deserves to be reconceived, not as a factor of position, privilege, authority, or power, but as a function of stewardship, service, responsibility, and love.*

One of the challenges faced by advocates of papal primacy is the fact that the notion has been applied historically in authoritarian and coercive ways. Indeed, such expressions have also reflected leaders' understandings of ecclesial authority and how it should be exercised, just as Romans 13:1-7 has wrongly been interpreted as scriptural support for the divine right of kings, but the biblical view of Christian leadership is not one of 'lording it over' the flock of Christ. Such may be the approach of pagan understandings of leadership, but the domination-free order of God is other. It is rooted in loving concern for the flock and the calling to tend the needs of the sheep of Jesus Christ, connecting them to the Chief Shepherd. This being the case, primacy itself deserves to be reconceived, and such a reformulation cannot be articulated or exercised more effectively than by the Roman Bishop himself. This Christ-like modelling of Christian leadership – that one that lays down one's life for one's friends and for the sheep – is made manifest by the following juxtapositions.

First, Christ-like primacy is a function of *stewardship rather than position*. Indeed, positional leadership will always play a role within effectively led groups, and this is because particular responsibilities must be assigned if they are to be carried out effectively. Unless people understand who is responsible for particular responsibilities, those duties may fall through the cracks. Positional assignments and correlative authority, however, function not as a means of wielding power, but as a means of exercising proper stewardship of the group's resources and aspirations. Without the assignment of particular charges, responsibility for corporate tasks becomes diffuse, and important things fail to get done. Positional authority and responsibility, within the Church and otherwise, are functional in their design and value rather than divinely mandated. They serve the larger purpose of gathering the group under the leadership and ministry of Christ as a means of exercising proper stewardship of the flock's resources and in order to maximize the likelihood that it will be able to live faithfully into the vocation to which Christ has called it. This is the primacy of stewardship and its functionality – the authentic legitimation of positional power.

Second, Christ-like primacy is a function of *service over privilege*. Jesus calls Peter and all his disciples to wash the feet of others and to tend



and feed the sheep of Christ (Jn. 13:1-17; 21:15-17). The authentic shepherd lays down his life for the sheep in contrast to the 'hireling' shepherd, who flees in the face of danger (Jn. 10:11-13). While seeking to be a faithful overseer is an admirable aspiration (I Tim. 3:1), a leader must not use the position as a means of advantage or privilege (I Pet. 5:1-4). Rather, serving the flock of Jesus Christ should be the root of the calling rather than ambition or the desire for privilege. Therefore, service has primacy within the structures of Christian leadership, and the basis for respect and adherence to episcopal leadership is the bishop's faithfulness in Christ-like service and nurture of the flock.

Third, Christ-like primacy is a function of *responsibility over authority*. What would happen if the authority of Christian leadership were linked to the leader's responsibility to the flock and to Christ rather than seeing it as the imposing of responsibility upon the flock by those claiming positional authority? First, those who had asked the leader to carry out a charge would understand that such responsibilities imply entrusting also the authority with which to carry out one's assignment. This yokes the constituent groups to the willing entrustment of authority to their leaders. Second, where the calling is from God or within the individual rather than an organizational contract, one must be faithful to that calling whether or not authority and permission are granted by groups. Third, compliance must therefore be earned from the group on the basis of one's personal conveyance of spiritual authority as a function of one's calling. In Christ-like fashion, however, rather than attempt to 'lord it over' any individual or group, the authority of the leader should root in the truth and the capacity of truth to convince by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, Christ-like primacy is a function of *love over power*. The greatest need for reconceiving the primacy of Christian leadership is to see it as a function of sacrificial love rather than coercive power. In the world force is used to bend people to one's will, but that is not the way of Christ. Indeed, Jesus demanded his disciples put away their swords, and he declared that knowing the truth would itself be liberating (Jn. 18:11; 8:32). This also involves a paradox. Only in the laying down of power and only in the refusal to resort to force can the love and power of God be actualized. Indeed, only when the love of Christ is displayed in the carriage and being of his followers and their leaders will the authentic power of the Gospel be made visible. In all these ways, the church is ready for a new day. It is ready for an embodiment of Christ-like love, starting with its leaders and extending to all followers of Christ, would-be and actual. This will involve a fresh expression of Christian primacy of leadership because of its imitation of Christ and the way of his Kingdom.

*d) A place for catholic ecumenism appears to be growing in the world today, and the mission of the Roman Catholic Church could be fulfilled within an emerging new situation.*

With the ecumenical movement of the churches over the last century or more, a new day is breaking for the holy catholic church of Jesus Christ, and now is the time for Christian leaders of vision to attend what the Lord is doing among the churches. What that emerging situation will be like no one will be able to foretell, but the ingathering of the scattered flocks and sheep of Christ could be invited by the Roman Bishop as an extension of Petrine ministry if he were to exercise that leadership. Part of the way forward must involve finding a way to include around the table of Christian fellowship all who aspire to follow the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who have received his grace by faith, and who by grace endeavour to live in ways pleasing to him in faithfulness. This could become a radically new way of exercising primacy, and it really must come from the Pope's initiative and vision rather than any other source. If it were explored effectively, it would also alleviate one of the greatest criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church by its Christian critics – while condemning division, it sometimes produces division in the ways it cuts off those who do not adhere to its standards and modes of operation. The universal mission of the Roman Catholic Church could therefore discover fresh avenues of fulfilling its vocation within an emerging new situation that had hitherto been unimagined if we can be open to the ingathering work of Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the flock. And, the degree to which all Christian leaders – including the Bishop of Rome – facilitate the attending, discerning, and minding of Christ's leadership will be the effective determiner of Christian primacy and authority.

#### **4) An Open Ecumenical Invitation**

I insistently pray the Holy Spirit to shine his light upon us enlightening all the Pastors and theologians of our Churches, that we may seek – together, of course – the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned (#95). This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea 'that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (Jn 17:21) (#96).

a) *Indeed, the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit can and will lead ‘the Pastors and theologians of the Churches’ into the venues and forms of ministry – that the service of love might be fulfilled.*

Because the Holy Spirit is active in the churches, seeking to lead all persons into the truth of Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:13-15), pastors and theologians within the churches are already engaged in the process of being guided by the Holy Spirit into unity if we will but listen for the Spirit’s leadings. This being the case, new approaches to and venues of ministry may be emerging that will provide a new set of ways by which Christian leaders might comprehend how the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ may yet be fulfilled.

Already in the Church, the ministry of every Christian has been a concern that has gained new ground within the last several decades, bringing a renewal of Christian ministry and the vitalization of the church. Distinctions between laity and clergy have been diminished to the benefit of both groups, expanding the ministerial capacity of the Church and restoring a view of universal ministry based on biblical and apostolic grounds. Another way the Church has been moving forward is the ecumenical cooperation across organizational lines – especially significant over the last half century. After the two world wars of the twentieth century, Christians have come together in the World and National Councils of Churches, as well as in many other ecumenical ventures, and cooperation has extended across nearly all denominational and organizational boundaries. Parachurch organizations and interdenominational evangelistic and service ministries have also brought Christians together, and these movements represent the unifying work of the Holy Spirit in unprecedented ways. The church is already exercising a greater catholicity, and the challenge for Christian leaders is to find ways of working with the Holy Spirit’s historic drawing of believers into a greater sense and experience of Christian unity.

The time may also be near for leading pastors and theologians to find new ways of diminishing our divisions and heightening our common callings as followers of Jesus Christ. Indeed, especially when the focus is upon serving and worshipping Christ together or on pursuing a sense of shared mission, authentic community is actualized within those common ventures. For the love of Jesus Christ, Christian unity may be on the verge of new discoveries if followers of Jesus Christ can join together in supporting that venture at home and abroad. Even the growth of new denominations over the last several centuries has often included an emphasis upon basic Christianity, and those movements appear to have been blessed by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the time is now for the rest of the churches to gather together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ that his love for the world might be actualized within the Church and beyond.

b) *Likewise, the calling to Christian unity is larger than any individual or group can fulfill, and therefore the coming together of those who are called out of the world to follow Christ – the church – (ek kaleo = ekklesia) forms the basis for shared mission and fellowship.*

One of the hard lessons of the Church across the last two millennia is that no one group can effectively claim sole access to the will of Christ, nor can any single individual claim to speak for the entire church. Further, as the Papal Encyclical so aptly states, no individual can cause the unity of the Church to be established; rather, it can only be a function of the coming together of those who are called by Christ into community by virtue of their allegiance to a common Lord. As it is for the smallest Christian groups, so it is for the largest ones: the solitary venture forfeits *koinonia* fellowship. It is only as the Church gathers together in community that the unity of the Church, fragmented though it may be, is restored to a holistic reality.

The seeking and finding of community, however, are paradoxical endeavours. Often the seeking of community eludes us, as it is more properly described as a reality that is discovered rather than achieved. Nonetheless, joining together in common mission and service – indeed, working and looking in the same direction together, united in seeking to serve and glorify Christ as Lord, becomes a paradoxical way forward. As followers of Jesus Christ the world over come together around the common ventures of service and worship, we find it possible to diminish the divisive issues of the past, looking forward to the Christian work and callings we share together. One common calling we may ever keep before us is the desire to attend, discern, and mind the will of Christ for his followers, and our love for one another can be furthered in helping each other get there.

c) *Listening to one another as we all listen to Christ will ever be the way forward in the calling to Christian unity, and just as no one has sole access to Christ's truth, no one is without access to it, but each may contribute a glimpse of the Heavenly City, which is why listening to and sharing with one another are essential.*

Christ may indeed be leading Christians everywhere to a patient and fraternal dialogue between Christian groups and individuals, united in the common venture of seeking to attend, discern, and mind the present leadings of Christ for his followers. Aspiring to live under the leadership of Christ could indeed become an effective means of serving one another in Christian love as we join in the common ventures of discipleship together. Believing that all have access to the saving/revealing Light of Christ (Jn. 1:9) is to affirm that no person is devoid of access to Christ's present leadership, while acknowledging that we see through a glass

darkly (I Cor. 13:12) is to affirm that no individual or group has sole access to the divine truth. Therefore, we share in the common venture of serving one another in seeking to follow the leadership of Christ together, and each of us has a role to play in discerning what Christ's will might entail.

Christian leadership, therefore, will be as effective as its capacity to listen – to listen to the subtle promptings of Christ spiritually, and to listen to how others are discerning the leadings of Christ laterally. Effective listening to Christ begins with the life that is totally given to Christ and totally dedicated to living under his Lordship. The life daily submitted to Christ is also freed to attend daily the life-giving Word of Christ, as manna was gathered daily in the wilderness. Effective listening to one another begins with affirming the possibility that Christ may be speaking through the other; therefore, we attend the feeling and content of the other as though listening to the Lord. Out of the personal quest to follow Christ's will, in conjunction with deep and empathic listening to what Christ might be saying through one another, the Christian calling becomes a pilgrimage toward the Heavenly City on which we are all sojourners together. In that sense, we help one another get there, and every follower of Christ – individually and collectively – plays an important role in guiding the people of God toward the answering of the Lord's prayer: 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven'.

Within Christian ecumenical fellowship, we also become mindful that our best-laid outlines of Christian faith and practice have their shortcomings as well as their strengths. Likewise, we must acknowledge the strengths and assets of those positions with which we might disagree. God's truth will always transcend our best appraisals of it, and yet we join together in the common venture of seeking the truth of God most fully revealed in Christ Jesus. This leads us to a place of humility and openness. We are humbled in knowing the frailty of our best attempts to ascertain the divine will; and as we submit ourselves anew to the present leadership of the Resurrected Lord, we cannot but do so with an attitude of openness to and dependence upon the life-giving Word of God. After all, the *Mysterion* of the Gospel is indeed a treasure, but we embrace it in earthen vessels, showing that the transcendent glory belongs to God and not to us (II Cor. 4:7).

d) *The time may be here for a fresh consideration of the catholic vocation – extending to the Church visible and the Church invisible alike – that all may be one under the dynamic leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What is needed in the Church today is not just dialogue. Conversation is important, but for a transformative ecumenical conversation to be imbued

with energy and purpose it must be gathered around our common highest calling – seeking to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This vocation is the calling of all Christians, and any who raise it up as the central Christian endeavour will be furthering the catholic vocation of the Church. What would be welcome among believers around the world is a fresh invitation – extended to the Church visible and invisible – gathering the scattered flock of Christ around the essential Christian calling to abide under the dynamic leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ. The particulars of that leadership need not be declared at the outset, and particular stipulations of it need not be levied, but the open invitation to gather around the leadership of the Chief Shepherd would be welcome among all authentic Christian shepherds and their respective flocks.

This may lead to a fresh consideration of the *catholic vocation*. Too easily the Roman Catholic Church and other churches extending episcopal oversight to a region of the world forfeit catholicity in the ways they maintain Christian faith and order. This is not to say that faith and order should not be maintained, or that that they should be maintained in a different manner. It is simply to acknowledge the importance and challenge of holding accountability and catholicity in tension. Maintaining boundaries of an organizational church body holds its membership accountable to matters of faith and practice, and well it should – especially if exercised with graciousness and wisdom. On the other hand, the venture of catholicity is always involved in the work of outreach, evangelism, and broader pastoral care. It reaches beyond its membership, seeking to gather the sheep of the world into the flock of Christ, and seeking to gather the flock of Christ into a meaningful fellowship of love in the Holy Spirit, which is the true visible and outward sign of the Church.

The time may be upon us for a new envisioning of the catholic vocation, which transcends the structures and parameters of any and all Christian bodies, raising up the central standard of authentic Christian faith and existence: aspiring to live under the dynamic leadership of the Resurrected Lord. Jesus declared that he and the Father would send for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide his followers into all truth, and responding to that ministry is the mystical calling of every believer. Where Christian churches – even the Roman Catholic Church – have at times functioned in sectarian ways, cutting off those deemed out of step with its standards, the time is now for a new experiment in catholicity. Can the Church universal raise up and attend its highest common purpose, inviting all believers into the unity of that quest? Quite possibly; and if so, this would indeed be the launching of a *new era* in Christian unity. Lest we think, however, that such a venture is a factor of human design or initiative, it is best to see it as the eternal desire of Christ

for his Church: desiring that his followers would be one and that the world would thereby know that he was sent by the Father to accomplish his divine mission. Therefore, in drawing the Church together around the common venture of attending, discerning, and minding the dynamic leadership of the Resurrected Lord, any endeavouring to do so have already taken the first step in universal Christian obedience.

***Re-Envisioning the Catholic Vocation:  
Christian Unity Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ***

This indeed may be the day for the emergence of a new vision of catholicity, and the time may be now to call for Christian unity under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There can be no other confession or commitment as central to the life of the authentic Church than adherence to Jesus Christ as Lord. Conversely, if one is not willing to live under the Lordship of Christ, this may be a truer measure of non-participation in the Christian life than outward ones. And, whether one succeeds in doing so, the more important feature in Christian unity may be the aspiration to follow Jesus faithfully, having received his grace and empowerment by faith. Transcending all differences in measure among the churches regarding organizational membership, an open invitation to all who would receive Christ by faith and would follow him faithfully could provide a way forward in gathering the visible and invisible Church of Christ around the world.

In furthering the visible unity of the Church, the Roman Bishop could gather all Christian communions under the Lordship of Christ simply by affirming our corporal unity as members of the Body of Christ. As it now stands, limiting the scope of the Pope's influence to the Roman Catholic Church is itself something of a fragmented approach, not a catholic one. Indeed, in the defining of its outward parameters and emphasizing the outward criteria for inclusion and exclusion, the Roman Catholic Church cuts itself off from other Christian communions as well as the reverse being true. It may be the largest Christian group, but the wholeness of the body of Christ is diminished if the various parts do not retain their connection to each other under the leadership of Christ, the Head. Indeed, criteria for outward membership are vital for the maintaining of any organization, but the mistake is to assume that those outward measures replicate authentically the true and inward entirety of the Mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, particular Christian communions must find ways to celebrate the validity of other ones without compromising their own callings and convictions. This may be exercised ecumenically by the Vatican if a way is found to affirm the Christian fellowship of the larger aggregate of Christian communions the world

over, and the place to begin is simply to welcome the fellowship of all Christian groups however they might define themselves. This would entail a catholic inclusion of the visible churches, and there is no one more appropriate to gather this fellowship than the Bishop of Rome.

The same could be extended to all who would consider themselves followers of Christ, whether they are members of a church body or not. Indeed, full Christian communion implies being a part of the body of Christ, but any who abide in the truth of Christ and consider themselves sojourners in the venture of following Jesus could be welcomed into the sharing of Christian fellowship. Here the emphasis on outward and visible unity of the Church would shift from organizational criteria to the incarnational. Any who would aspire to be followers of Christ would be welcome, and the visible unity of the invisible Church – partial though it be – would simply rest in the venture of joining together in the quest to follow Jesus.

This is where a new day for the catholic vocation could be conceived. Rather than attempt to connect the invisible Church within the parameters of any visible approach to outward movements, the aspirational model – inviting all who would aspire to come together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ – could have universal appeal. Further, it could leave the definition of what it means to follow Jesus Christ open, to be settled by each person and group, while at the same time affirming the unity of the common venture. This approach would also bear within itself sufficient modesty so as to point to Christ without coming across as constricting any particular aspect of access to Christ, affirming his availability to any who receive his saving grace by faith and who are willing to live faithfully by his grace. The simpler the Gospel message, the broader the catholic appeal.

If indeed the Catholic Vocation is to be re-conceived, it should find a way to transcend particular church traditions inviting into fellowship the scattered sheep of Christ across the world's time-torn landscapes. Within this new understanding of the Catholic Vocation, several guidelines may be considered:

1. First, Christ's leadership happens inspirationally, not necessarily officially. The function of positional and official leadership, then, is to facilitate the attending, discerning, and obeying of the leadership of Christ.
2. Second, no single person or group has sole access to the leadership of Christ, and at least potentially, no one is denied access to Christ's leadership. Therefore, episcopal ministry gathers together the diversity of voices and perspectives in hopes of gaining a sense



of how Christ might be leading – even as articulated through voices tending to be overlooked or ignored.

3. Third, Christ's leadership might not be confined to particular expressions, and one cannot equate the eternal fellowship of Christ with outward measures of the church. There is always a degree of overlap between inward and outward realities, and effective Christian leadership – Petrine and otherwise – will find ways to account for such congruities and incongruities.
4. Fourth, Petrine ministry involves calling the entire world to the true Shepherd – Jesus Christ – including the Roman Church membership, but also extending beyond it. As a sign of genuine interest in Christian unity, finding ways of expressing Christian unity and solidarity of commitment to Christ beyond our outward boundaries will be an important aspect of reconciliation.
5. Fifth, functional and effectual episcopacy is more significant than historical or structural approaches to it. The shepherding work of Christ is never a guaranteed reality, nor is it an exclusively effected one; it must always hinge upon the intimacy of relationship between Jesus and his followers, communicated eschatologically through the Holy Spirit.

These types of emphases upon the primacy of Christ's leadership by the Holy Father of Rome will magnify the special character of his own leadership in ways that could lead to its being recognized even more broadly within and beyond the Roman Catholic Church. Faithfulness to his Christ-centered vocation would then contribute significantly to the reception of his being 'first among equals' in the following ways:

1. First, the spiritual maturity and power of the individual – factors in his having been chosen to serve as such a leader to begin with – would shine forth out of his personal being (*ex* = out of, *ousia* = essence/being) as a result of basic Christian faithfulness. Nothing magnifies the spiritual authority of the individual leader more than the exalting of Christ and the uplifting of others. Paradoxically, by releasing privilege and power, they are granted in return.
2. Second, the demonstration of spiritual power and wisdom will itself be evidence of the divine giftedness and ordination that comes from God alone. In that sense, the demonstration of dynamic ministry would speak for itself as the Holy Father's ministries are observed and embraced.
3. Third, the recognition of that giftedness, affirmed by the formal appointing of the Bishop of Rome to his office, carries with it unique responsibilities as mentioned above. It is in that sense,

then, that special authority flows from special responsibilities, and these connect authority of the person with that of the office.

4. Fourth, because of his unquestioned role as the head of the largest religious and political organization in the world, the Pope's religious authority is an incontrovertible reality historically and in the world today. His voice therefore is not only distinctive but unique upon the world's platforms of religion and politics. Therefore, the reality of the Holy Father's influence should be embraced by all who would like to see the Church move ahead, and the reception of such will be facilitated by his uplifting the centrality of Christ and his lordship.
5. Fifth, while the papal office carries with it particular responsibility and authority, the reception of that leadership will ever hinge upon the degree to which it uplifts the truth of Christ in addressing authentically the needs of the world for which Christ died. In that sense, following the leadership of Christ becomes a venture of catholic mutuality by which all who are committed to his lordship assist one another in exercising Christ-centred faithfulness.

## ***Conclusion***

Discerning a new understanding of the Catholic Vocation by gathering the universal Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ has several merits to it:

*First*, it is a *radical approach*. It gets to the root of Christian faith and practice without getting hung up on external measures of the inward reality.

*Second*, it is a *dynamic approach*. It assumes correctly that Christ's leadership is an ongoing and unfolding reality rather than a static one, and it affords the vitality of forward-looking progress rather than retrospective gazes or lateral glances. It allows us to keep our eyes focused steadily upon Christ, and it instills a sense of community in calling the world to a common, unfolding venture.

*Third*, it is an *inclusive approach*. Calling people together across divisions and organizational boundaries toward a common center of Christian faith and practice enables us to transcend church-dividing issues. These still remain issues to some degree, but finding unity around allegiance to Christ, however discipleship is understood or approached, can provide a way forward for the unity of the Church to be actualized.

Fourth, it involves a *functional approach*. Rather than telling people of other traditions what the will of Christ is bound to be, Christian leaders

can effectively gather people together as seekers of Christ's will for the Church and the world, and the gathered flock of Christ Jesus can be helped then to seek – and to find – a sense of his common leading in Christian community. Indeed, many a church division has been the result of decisions being made by only a partial group of believers, when those with other perspectives were not at the table to inform and accept the decision. As a functional way forward, this would be a welcome development in the life of the church indeed!

So how might a new sense of the Catholic Vocation further the effectiveness of Petrine and other Christian ministries? It might exalt the place of Christ and effectively carry out episcopal service by pointing to the leadership of the Chief Shepherd of the flock of Christ: the Lord himself. If this were emphasized, readily and humbly, many aspects of church divisions would be remarkably diminished. Will there be a Third Vatican Council? Only time will tell. But if such a gathering were to be conceived, it would do well to invite the entire flock of Christ, de-emphasizing all aspects of division among the followers of Christ. Further, it should be attempted in the endeavour to gather the followers of Christ together, seeking the highest common calling – aspiring to live faithfully under his Lordship. If that happens, not only will the body of Christ become more harmonious and complementary, but most importantly, connectedness to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ himself, will have been more firmly established. Christocracy – the effectual leadership of the resurrected Lord – is thus the interest of Petrine, Johannine, and Pauline ministries, and the furthering of this goal is the calling of every Christian. May the Spirit of Christ guide us all as we seek to know how to effectively facilitate the attending, discerning, and minding of Christ's leadership – not for our sake alone, but for the healing of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, edited and paraphrased in modern English by Dean Freiday (Newberg: Barclay Press, 1967, first published in Latin in 1676, then in translation by the author into English in 1678). In his first proposition on the foundation of true knowledge, Barclay states, '*Since the height of all happiness is the true knowledge of God ('This is eternal life; to know thee who alone art truly God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.'* John 17:3, NEB), it is primary and essential that this foundation of knowledge be properly understood and believed', p. 13. While Barclay's *Apology* did not play a direct role in the emergence of the Second Vatican Council, its concern is likewise finding ways forward in elevating the primacy of spiritual unity within the universal Church of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, this classic theological work of Friends is rooted in the same biblical text as the concern of the Holy Father for the unity of the Church: *John 17*.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to his magisterial works on the Johannine literature and other New Testament subjects, Raymond Brown's book, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York / Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1984) is one of the most helpful works for understanding structures of leadership in the New Testament era. In this book, Brown outlines seven New Testament approaches to leadership and describes strengths and weaknesses of each.

<sup>3</sup> See *Peter in the New Testament; A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann (Minneapolis/New York/Paramus/Toronto: Augsburg/Paulist, 1973); see also Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982); Michael Goulder, *St. Paul versus St. Peter; A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM, 1994); and Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> See Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel; Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* WUNT II #78, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996 and Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 237-238, where the memory of Peter's leadership provides sustenance for later generations of leaders.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, *Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> In Robert Barclay's first book, *A Catechism and Confession of Faith: A New Edition in Modern English*, edited by Dean Freiday and Arthur O. Roberts, (Newberg: Barclay Press, [1673] 2001), he accuses the Reformers of establishing and building up 'what their fathers pulled down!', p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> The mistake is to assume that there was only one model of church governance in the early church rather than a multiplicity of models. An example of this mistake is articulated by Philippe H. Menoud: '*Hierarchical Christocracy*, which is expressed here and there in different texts in the New Testament, is the very expression of the theology of the Church', in *Jesus Christ and the Faith: A Collection of Studies*, Eunice M. Paul, trans., Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 18 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978), p. 411. The point is that Christocracy functions through a variety of means rather than a singular one, the hierarchical one, and this is a point made with emphasis in John's presentation of Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

<sup>8</sup> See Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel* pp. 232-240, where these parallels are outlined (esp. Table # 20, p. 240). Raymond Brown in his commentary noted five parallels between Matthew 16:17-19 and passages in John, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii); Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible Vol. 29, by Raymond E. Brown, S.S. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 302, but a total of at least seven parallels may be inferred, and they are all somewhat different. 1) Blessedness comes from following Jesus's example of service, and from believing without having seen, rather than having made the correct confession; 2) in addition to Peter, confessions are also made by Nathanael, not one of the Twelve, and Martha, a woman; 3) Peter is named as the one whose brother Andrew was, and he is given the charge to love the sheep self-givingly; 4) that which is of divine origin is the authority to become children of God; 5) models for the Church are more fluid and dynamic – flock and vine rather than rock as metaphors; 6) Jesus imparts to the Beloved Disciple his *mother* – a model of relationality rather than instrumentality (keys) as an image of ecclesial authority – and Peter is portrayed as emphasizing the life-giving words of Jesus rather than his own (thereby returning the keys to Jesus?); 7) and finally, the collective *plurality* of Jesus's followers are inspired (pneumatized), sent (apostolized),

and ordained (sacerdotalized) by the Lord, not just Peter and his successors, in Jesus's commissioning of his followers. One wonders if the Matthean passages on the Church (16:17-19; 18:15-20) should be held together in dialectical tension – conjoining structure *and* charisma – when considering Christocratic issues in the early church and today. See also Paul Anderson, 'Was the Fourth Evangelist a Quaker?' *Quaker Religious Thought* #76, 1991, pp. 27-43. Of course, this connection is anachronistic, but many of the Spirit-based developments in the history of the church may be said to have their origin in the correct reading of the Johannine witness.

<sup>9</sup> In modern scholarship, the traditional view of John's apostolic authorship has been severely questioned, and this is at least partially due to the facts that the calling of the Twelve is not mentioned in John, and that John's emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit seems to counter emerging hierarchical structures and views claiming apostolic authority. Two points deserve mention here. First, it could be that structural approaches to leadership were being challenged in the name of Jesus' original intention for his Church precisely because the Johannine tradition harkened back to a more primitive time of organizational fluidity. Indeed, one who had been a witness to the charismatic and itinerant ministry of Jesus might have felt that the coin of apostolic authority was being hi-jacked by the structuralists *because of* an apostolic connection, not against it. Second, the claim that the earliest sure connecting of the Fourth Gospel with John the Son of Zebedee was Irenaeus, around 180 AD, has been overturned. A first-century clue to Johannine authorship has recently been discovered (see Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, Appendix VIII, pp. 274-277), and this connecting of the Johannine gospel with an unmistakable apostolic association – a full century before Irenaeus – is deserving of critical reconsideration. Here I think Brown makes a mistake in assuming that because it need not be assumed that the Johannine tradition had to have been connected to John the apostle in order to account for its historical and literary origin, it therefore was not. New evidence in favour of the traditional view demands critical consideration.

<sup>10</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture & Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*, revised ed., (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); and Eugene M. Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> One of the most important essays on the character of sacramentality is Alan Kolp's 1984 *Quaker Religious Thought* essay, 'Friends, Sacraments, and Sacramental Living', *QRT* #57, pp. 36-52. In this essay, he builds on the works of St. Augustine and Edward Schillebeeckx, arguing that the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible reality most able to convey the presence of the divine is the animate life of the person given to Christ – an incarnational sacramentology – rather than an inanimate form or symbol. See also Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, pp.112-114), 'What Is Meant by 'Sacrament'?' as an excursus into the ways Christians have narrowed, and thus divided themselves on, discussions of sacramentality.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Browning, *A Death in the Desert*, Original text in Robert Browning, *Dramatis Personae* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864). Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto. Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries. Available from <http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem272.html>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2004.

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<sup>13</sup> In one of the most remarkable treatments of living a life centred in Christ, Thomas Kelley declares, ‘What is here urged are inward practices of the mind at deepest levels, letting it swing like the needle, to the polestar of the soul....Yield yourself to Him who is a far better teacher than these outward words, and you will have found the Instructor Himself, of whom these words are a faint and broken echo.’ *A Testament of Devotion*, New York: Harper & Row (1941) p.32.

<sup>14</sup> The sacramental *Mysterion* is God’s wisdom in Christ (I Cor. 2:7), of which the apostles are stewards (I Cor. 4:1) – the Mystery of the Gospel (Eph. 6:19). Many divisions within Christianity have resulted from emphases upon particular means of sacramental practice, tying them to the ultimate Mystery of the Christ Events. The Christ Events, however, are sufficient once and for all, and celebrating their essential primacy – over and against formal representations – can become a unifying way forward for the universal Church.

<sup>15</sup> Richmond Declaration of Faith, 1887, doctrinal standard of Friends United Meeting, a jurisdiction of the Religious Society of Friends that belongs to both the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and the World Council of Churches, available from <http://www.fum.org/about/declarationfaith.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2004