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PLURALITY AND DIVERSITY AS UNITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS

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Abstract

Christianity started as a radical movement in Judaism, later spread among non-Jewish communities, and became a 'universal' phenomenon. As it encountered different cultures at different times, the pluralistic nature of Christianity broadened. The singular event that threw wide open the floodgates of pluralism was the Reformation. Influenced by political, doctrinal, cultural, intellectual and economic factors, many Christian denominations were founded. Unfortunately, these Christian confessions were at times antagonistic towards each other, condemned and persecuted each other and even waged wars against each other. This dark history of Christianity is against the prayer of Jesus to the Father for his followers: "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21) One of the means of handling the crisis of disunity of Christians is an attention to the developmental manner of being church, rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and guided by the gospel. With particular attention to the Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, this article presents a theological dogmatic approach that

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sees the unity of the ecclesial community as genuine plurality and legitimate diversity.

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Introduction

The Anglican Schism that brought an ecclesial separation between Rome and Canterbury has lasted for almost five centuries. This separation has generated doctrinal differences, different ecclesiological patterns, theological polemics and mutual intolerance. Along the way, unofficially, the Oxford Movement (1833-1845) and the Malines Conversations (1921) were some of the attempts to bridge the gap. Officially, it was in 1966 that a roadmap to unity was created. It was the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey (Archbishop of Canterbury) “to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue, which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, which Christ prayed.”¹ The dialogue body, Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), has for the past fifty years deliberated on Ministry, Ordination, Salvation, Church, Authority, Eucharist, Morals, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church – Local, Regional and Universal.

Things moved relatively smoothly with bright prospect until the year 2003 when there was the episcopal consecration of an actively gay person in The Episcopal Church (EUSA) and the blessing of a same-sex union in the diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada. Related to these is the ordination of women to the diaconate, priesthood and episcopate in some provinces of the Anglican Communion. This shifts the argument from what is ordination (subject of the *Apostolicae curae*) to who can be ordained. The crisis further evolves around teaching and binding authority.

One of the means of handling this crisis is an attention to the developmental manner of being church, rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and guided by the gospel. This article presents a theological dogmatic approach that sees the unity of the ecclesial community as genuine plurality and legitimate diversity.

¹The Common Declaration can be found in Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, ed., *Growth in Agreement I*, New York: Paulist Press 1984, 125-6.

Genuine Plurality

Plurality is God's plan for the universe and the human community. In the Genesis creation story, God says: "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so" (Gen 1:24). Living creatures are not of one particular kind, but are multi-kind. In this way, plurality is not a human invention but a part of God's plan right from the beginning. In the New Testament, the Pentecost event at Jerusalem was a gathering of many peoples from many places (cf. Acts 2:5-11). Although Jerusalem was the starting point, the fundamental nature of Christianity is plurality and universality (cf. Lk 24: 47-48; Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15; Acts 8:1). The Pentecost event at Jerusalem was significantly pluralistic: plurality of language, of people groups, and of cultures (cf. Acts 2:1-13). The universality and plurality of Christianity is in line with God's creating purpose.

The same agent, that is, the Holy Spirit, operates in different kinds of people and groups. The Holy Spirit came directly and commissioned the apostles in Jerusalem and other followers of Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost. The same Holy Spirit, without the direct intervention of the Jerusalem church, came upon the Gentiles, and Peter would ask those reluctant about the Gentile mission: "If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" (Acts 11:17).

Recent scholarship has provided a shift from the uncritical assumption of unity understood as uniformity to an attention to the plurality in the New Testament, as an expression of unity.² With specific reference to ecclesiology, a plurality in unity exists, composed of Jewish, Hellenistic, Apocalyptic and Early Catholicism as the forms of Christianity. Admittedly, such a classification is not without limitations, since it refers not to exclusive groupings but to "dimensions and emphases within first-century Christianity which all overlap and interact to some degree, but which can nevertheless

²The literature emphasizes the Pauline, Lucan and Johannine differing views on ecclesiology. See, E. Schweizer, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament Teaching Regarding the Church," *Theology Today* 13, 4 (1957) 471-483; E. Käsemann, "Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology," *Novum Testamentum* 6, 4 (Nov. 1963) 290-97; W.H. Gloer, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament Anatomy of An Issue," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13, 2 (1983) 53-8; J.D.G. Dunn, "Unity and Diversity in the Church: A New Testament Perspective," *Gregorianum* 71, 4 (1990) 629-56.

be subjected to separate analysis without resorting to unacceptable oversimplification."³

Jewish Christianity is the term that describes the earliest form of the post-Easter Jesus movement. We find this type of Christianity in Acts 1-12, where the preaching is limited to Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings. This refers to the period up to the fourth century, when "the followers of Jesus who observed ritual practices of the Mosaic Law and preserved theological traditions of Judaic origin had notable communities in Syria."⁴ In another breadth, the same term, refers to "all the NT writings, since they are all in greater or lesser degree dependent on and expressive of Christianity's Jewish heritage."⁵ In this understanding, Christianity is renewed Israel. These were the indications: "the settling of the primitive Church in Jerusalem; the symbolism of the Twelve; the Jesus-Moses parallelism; the very title *ekklesia* (whether it reflect *qahal* or *'edah*). The Jerusalem community was the Church of God as Israel had been the *ekklesia tou theou* in the desert."⁶ Essentially, Jewish Christianity was contextualized in the Jerusalem church with a specific organizational structure and ideals of community life and poverty (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35).

In general, Hellenistic Christianity encompasses all the Hellenistic influences on the whole of first century Christianity. Specifically, it describes "Christianity as it spread beyond Palestine and Judaism, the Christianity of the Gentile mission, Christianity as it came into increasing contact with the philosophical speculations, mystery cults and gnostic tendencies of the wider oriental-hellenistic syncretism of the Eastern Mediterranean."⁷ Apocalyptic Christianity looks at the

³Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, London: SCM 1990, 253-54. See also R.E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, 1 (1983) 74-9.

⁴M. Myllykoski, "James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship (Part I)," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, 2 (2006) 74.

⁵Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 254. See also J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964; B.J. Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a Hypothetical Definition," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7, 1 (1976) 46-56; S.K. Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology," in *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-1978) 410-15; R.A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity from the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, Leiden: Brill, 1988.

⁶R.E. Brown, "The Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology," *Novum Testamentum* 6, 4 (1963) 303.

⁷Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 254. See also H.D. Betz, "The Birth of Christianity as a Hellenistic Religion: Three Theories of Origin," *The Journal of*

extent of the influence of Jewish apocalyptic thought on Christianity. "How integral was apocalypticism to earliest Christianity? How distinctive was earliest Christian apocalyptic eschatology? Did it do enough to guard itself against the fanaticism which later on brought apocalyptic enthusiasm into such disrepute in the eyes of the orthodox?"⁸ Some of these apocalyptic writings are in Mark 13, Luke 21, Matthew 24, John (Revelation) and Paul.⁹

'Early Catholicism' is the examination of the emerging catholic orthodoxy with respect to their foundation in the New Testament.¹⁰ Though debatable, they are in a rudimentary form, present in the Pastoral epistles, where office roles are designated and qualifications given (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:7-9). The general characteristics of 'early Catholicism' include:

- (1) an amplified emphasis on tradition;
- (2) the collection and organization of an apostolic canon;
- (3) the replacement of the charismatic community with a hierarchically structured, institutional church;
- (4) a growing distinction between clergy and laity;
- (5) a static conception of faith, the object of which becomes an orthodox doctrine defined in opposition to various 'heresies';
- (6) an increased 'sacramentalism,' leading to a view of the church as the *Una Sancta*; and
- (7) a diminished apocalyptic perspective, characterized particularly by a fading expectation of the Parousia.¹¹

Religion 74, 1 (1994) 1-25; P. Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.

⁸Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 255.

⁹A study on apocalyptic writings in the New Testament includes, J.C. Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982; D.C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; M.L. Soards-J. Marcus, *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. Louis Martyn*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015; J.P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?: An Evaluation of the "Apocalyptic Paul" in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

¹⁰Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 255. Here we are looking at the emerging church orders of bishop, presbyter and deacon in settled communities and the decline of others such as apostles, teachers, prophets and deaconesses.

¹¹D.J. Downs, "'Early Catholicism' and Apocalypticism in the Pastoral Epistles," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67, 4 (2005) 642. For further explication of the term 'Early Catholicism' and German, *Frühkatholizismus*, see J.H. Elliott, "A Catholic Gospel, Reflections on *Early Catholicism* in the New Testament," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969) 213-23; I.H. Marshall, "Early Catholicism in the New Testament," in R.N. Longenecker-M. C. Tenney, ed., *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, Grand Rapids, MN: Zondervan, 1974, 217-31; C.C. Black, "The Johannine Epistles and the

Ecclesiologically, these forms of Christianity are not in hierarchical opposition to each other. They overlap and influence each other, hence the thought of John Paul II that “in turning to the *Oriente Lumen* with nostalgia and gratitude, we find the strength and enthusiasm to intensify the quest for harmony in that genuine plurality of forms which remains the Church’s ideal.”¹² It is from this understanding that we appreciate the various Christian denominations such as Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants – Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc. These are forms of Christianity, with individual identity, yet also have a common identity with each other. In their plurality, they express a unity in diversity or diversified unity.

Diversified unity is best expressed in Lucan ecclesiology. Lucan ecclesiology, as presented in the Acts of the Apostles, typifies a theological integration of Judeo-Christianity and Graeco-Roman Christianity. This is a Christianity that is ‘both-and,’ depicting plurality in a diversified unity. Luke integrated a beginning in Jerusalem with a high point in Rome. Instead of a polarity of either Jerusalem or Roman Christianity, Luke, in Acts of the Apostles, combines both Jerusalem and Roman Christianity. Gone is an exclusive uniformity. Christianity is practised as a welcome plurality in a diversified unity. A distinctive example is Paul of Tarsus.

The narratives of the Damascus road call him by his Aramaic name Saoul שׂאוּל (4:9; 7:22; 14:26) but this son of Abraham, is also Πάυλος (13:9), child of the Empire, and Roman citizen. Luke has him asserting his status as a zealous Pharisee with as much force as that of being a Roman citizen (22: 28). At the crossroads of two worlds, the apostle to Jews and Gentiles belongs both to Jerusalem and to Rome. This double origin constructs Paul in accordance with the Christianity whose identity Luke establishes. It is a religion that claims its Jewish origin and seeks its place in Roman society.¹³

Question of Early Catholicism,” *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986) 131-58; K.M.Y. MacDonald, “Early Catholicism,” in R. J. Coggins-J. L. Houlden, ed., *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990, 182-183; R.P. Martin, “Early Catholicism,” in G.F. Hawthorne et al., ed., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993, 223-25; H. Neufeld, “Frühkatholizismus,” in M. Buchberger-W. Kasper, ed., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. III, Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1995, 201-4; R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Doubleday, 1997, 625-26, 769-72; D. Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 423-30.

¹²John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Oriente Lumen* (May 2, 1995), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995) 746.

¹³D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian Writing the ‘Acts of the Apostles,’* K. McKinney et al., transl., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 66-67.

Luke projects a Christianity that brings together the best that Judaism and Hellenistic paganism had to offer. The Church, which had its roots in Jerusalem, continues the history of salvation already begun with Israel. In this same Church, God opens up the possibility of universality, where the Roman Empire represents the framework for geographical and political expansion. It is within this pericope that Luke presents the theological plan of “Christianity as both the fulfilment of the promises of the Scriptures and as the answer to the religious quest of the Graeco-Roman world.”¹⁴ The one Church was experienced in plurality, i.e. among Jews and Gentiles. The Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15) was to lend credence and authenticate the Gentile mission (church) – that it should be a Gentile community, and not a Jewish one. The same Lord Jesus Christ makes Peter apostle to the Jews and Paul, apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:8). Between the Jews and the Gentiles, there was no absolute uniformity of theology, but rather unity in belief in Jesus Christ.

Congar appreciates the place of diversity in unity in the theology of Möhler when he quotes,

According to Möhler, the Church is a living reality. On one hand, it is made up of living subjects, who have and live faith and love in a limited way, imperfect; on the other hand, it is an organism vivified by the Holy Spirit. Now that is not uniformity, monotony, it requires diversity that harmonises. This is the Church, it is not uniformity, but universality, that is, unity of the diversities constitutes an organic totality.¹⁵

In the ecumenical interactions, this clarion call is not for uncritical and unexamined diversity. What is welcome is expression of plurality in unity whilst eschewing the type of plurality that results in dissolution, destruction and a loss of identity. In the Scriptures, Christians are not to believe every spirit, since some of them may be false. Thus, they are to test every spirit to authenticate its origin in God (cf. 1 Jn 4:1-3). The criteria for plurality in unity is fidelity, conformity and loyalty to the apostolic faith and order grounded in the New Testament and interpreted by the ancient ecumenical councils. The difficulty has always been to determine what sort of plurality is compatible with unity and the limits of plurality so as not to destroy unity. Ultimately, the Magisterium determines which

¹⁴Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian Writing the ‘Acts of the Apostles,’* 75-76.

¹⁵Y. Congar, *Diversité et Communion*, Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1982, 224. *Pour Möhler, l’Église est une réalité vivante. D’une part, elle est faite des sujets vivants, qui portent et expriment la foi et l’amour de façon limitée, imparfaite; d’autre part, elle est elle-même un organisme vivifié par le Saint-Esprit. Or la n’est pas uniformité, monotonie, elle requiert des diversités qu’elle harmonise. S’il s’agit de l’Église, elle n’est pas uniformité, mais universalité, c’est-à-dire unité de la diversité constituant une totalité organique.*

expressions of plurality are legitimate. For Anglicans and Roman Catholics in dialogue, the constant efforts against division and uniformity will see them gradually moving towards unity while maintaining the perspective of their legitimate plurality.¹⁶

Uniformity is absorbing, for example, the Anglican ethos into the Roman Catholic, where there will be the same things done in the same way. This is not faithful to God, because the one Spirit gives a variety of gifts, each gift distinct from the other and legitimate. Therefore plurality, not uniformity is the way of being church. In their giftedness, Anglicans and Catholics can endeavour to discover and appreciate the legitimate presence of the Holy Spirit in each other.

Legitimate Diversity

Legitimate diversity has its roots in the biblical understanding of one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one body. The multiple gifts from this oneness is for unity, i.e. the building up of the body of Christ. Eventually, there are legitimate diversity of gifts for growth in unity, to mature to the measure of full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4:1-16).¹⁷ The canon of the New Testament is a classic example of a legitimate diversity. Here we have a plurality of witnesses to the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is especially the case of the four gospels, each within its own theology, community setting and time, presents the singular salvific mission of Jesus Christ.

A plethora of gospel images brings out the legitimate diversity of the same message and mission. In the ministry of Jesus Christ, he gave the same mission to different groups. There was the mission of the Twelve (cf. Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6; Mt 10:1-15). Mission with a different emphasis and location is given to a group of Seventy (Seventy-Two) in Luke 10:1-24. It can be argued that the Twelve are included in this number, Seventy (Seventy-Two), but the increase in number, more than being just a widening of the mission (gradual

¹⁶Cf. P. Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole*, London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 32.

¹⁷For biblical exegesis on this passage, with special attention to unity, plurality and legitimate diversity, see J.A. Mackay, "Church Order: Its Meaning and Implications," *Theology Today* 9, 4 (1953) 450-56; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 1984; E. Best, *Ephesians*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993; R.P. Martin, "Reconciliation and Unity in Ephesians," *Review and Expositor* 93 (1996) 203-35; J.P. Heil, *Ephesians Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*, Leiden: Brill 2007; J.A. Barnard, "Unity in Christ: The Purpose of Ephesians," *The Expository Times* 120, 4 (2009) 167-71.

universality), delineates another mission entirely.¹⁸ Instead of the close and intimate Twelve, the mission is entrusted to a larger number. This second mission, particular to Luke, is “to provide a setting for a charge transmitted independently of Mark and to foreshadow the great Gentile mission and or possibly the institution of the Christian eldership.”¹⁹

A similar reading, especially from chronological perspective, is the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). This parable is generally interpreted within the ambit of justice, just wage, economics, labour, unemployment and generosity.²⁰ An ecclesiological reading of this text is possible. The vineyard represents both the church and the world; the labourers are the various individual Christians or Christian communities called and sent to work both in God’s church and in the world. Here, although the work (mission, church) is only one, it is not entirely entrusted to the first group. Various later groups receive the same mission and at the end, the recompense is the same. The judgment on the work does not depend on the workers, but on the one who engages the workers. The same one mission is entrusted to various groups and they all carry it out in their respective ways and at different times. This is the legitimate diversity that lies at the very heart of the Church.

From the Pauline corpus, legitimate diversity is expressed in the image of a body with many parts (cf. Rom 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12-27). Here all members form an equal part of the body. Each part rightly belongs to the body. Each part is legitimately different from the other. Each is a part and none can claim to be the whole body. To the Corinthian community in particular, the notion of a body with many parts is appropriate due to their internal divisions: to preachers (1 Cor 1:12), in the gathering (1 Cor 10:18) and pride of individual spiritual gifts

¹⁸Cf. B.M. Metzger, “Seventy or Seventy-two Disciples?,” *New Testament Studies* 5, 4 (1959) 299-306; I.J. du Plessis, “The Church before the Church – Focusing on Luke 10:1-24,” *Neotestamentica* 32, 2 (1998) 343-66; Z.J. Cole, “P45 and the Problem of the ‘Seventy(-two)’: A Case for the Longer Reading in Luke 10.1 and 17,” *New Testament Studies* 63, 2 (2017) 203-21.

¹⁹F.W. Beare, “The Mission of the Disciples and the Mission Charge: Mt. 10 and Parrells,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89, 1 (1970) 2-3.

²⁰Cf. A.B. Caneday, “The Parable of the Generous Vineyard Owner (Matthew 20:1-16),” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, 3 (2009) 34-50; E. Vearncombe, “Redistribution and Reciprocity: A Socio-economic Interpretation of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20.1-15),” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 8, 3 (2010) 199-236; N. Eubank, “What does Matthew Say about Divine Recompense? On the Misuse of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20.1-16),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35, 3 (2013) 242-62.

(cf. 1 Cor 14).²¹ The individual parts form a corporate unity in Christ. Paul recognizes the Corinthian community as a local *ekklesia* that participates in and belongs to the body of Christ because its members have been baptized into Christ's body (12:13) and share his Eucharistic body (10:16). As members of Christ's body, each has a different function intended for the common good. From this emerges the concept of the Church as the body of Christ. Another understanding of the body of Christ is in Colossians (1:18; 2:19) and Ephesians (1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23). Here Christians are members and Christ is the Head. Though there are many members, they form one body in Christ. Hence the affirmation of the unity of the Church.

The above New Testament reflections are captured in ecumenical dialogue, in reference to the vision and nature of the Church. The Commission on *Faith and Order* states, "Legitimate diversity is not accidental to the life of the Christian community but is rather an aspect of its catholicity, a quality that reflects the fact that it is part of the Father's design that salvation in Christ be incarnational and thus "take flesh" among the various peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed."²² After the affirmation that within Christianity there is a legitimate diversity, the document identifies the source of legitimate diversity.

Legitimate diversity in the life of communion is a gift from the Lord. The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of complementary gifts on the faithful for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7). The disciples are called to be fully united (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37), while respectful of and enriched by their diversities (1 Cor 12:14-26). Cultural and historical factors contribute to the rich diversity within the Church. The Gospel needs to be proclaimed in languages, symbols and images that are relevant to particular times and contexts so as to be lived authentically in each time and place.²³

It is necessary to delineate the limits of diversity, for unbridled diversity in no way encompasses unity. Unacceptable diversity or limits to diversity include heresies, schisms, political ideologies and expressions of hatred that damages the unity of Christians. Such broad brushstrokes are good in principle, but the difficulty lies in their concretization. Therefore, a clear delineation of the limits to diversity is necessary.

²¹J.A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, in *Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. XXXII, ed. W.F. Albright - D.N. Freedman, Yale: Yale University Press, 2008, 475.

²²Commission on Faith and Order, *The Church: Towards A Common Vision*, Geneva: WCC Publications 2013, n. 12.

²³Commission on Faith and Order, *The Church: Towards A Common Vision*, n. 28.

Though all churches have their own procedures for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate diversity, it is clear that two things are lacking: (a) common criteria, or means of discernment, and (b) such mutually recognized structures as are needed to use these effectively. All churches seek to follow the will of the Lord yet they continue to disagree on some aspects of faith and order and, moreover, on whether such disagreements are Church-divisive or, instead, part of legitimate diversity. We invite the churches to consider: what positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?²⁴

A specific way for Anglicans and Roman Catholics is a vision beyond ecclesio-centrism which places each church at the service of the gospel of, and not above the gospel. The hierarchy of truth is another ecclesial principle that can help identify the principal elements and constituents of ecclesiality and thus overcome tendencies of division.

An area of unity in diversity is the structural organization of both Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Anglicans follow the synodal local Church model, with no universal binding authority, whereas Roman Catholics have a universal binding authority and consultative synodal structure at the local, regional and universal levels. However, synodality and primacy are not mutually exclusive, but complementary in a plurality. Thus, both the local and universal are to be embraced and each given the space to function.

Identity is another area of legitimate diversity. Generally, Anglicans are grouped as High Church, Episcopalians and the Low/Broad Church. The Roman Catholic Church consists of the Latin rite and twenty-three other rites. Following the New Testament development, these rites are to live in a unity in legitimate diversity and plurality. An area of conflict, that has led to disunity, is sexuality and morality in relation to marriage and Holy Orders. Internally even within the Anglican Communion, the marriage of same-sex partners and the ordination of gays and lesbians to Holy Orders is a cause of tension and division.²⁵ Externally it affects the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church who considers these illegitimate. The principle of unity entails a suspension of any activity in this area and a continuous dialogue and learning from each other, so that through patience, conversion and prayer, the wounds of division would be healed.

²⁴Commission on Faith and Order, *The Church: Towards A Common Vision*, n. 30.

²⁵Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) was formed in 2008 as emphasis on morality, doctrinal orthodoxy and biblical fidelity against moral compromise, doctrinal error and the collapse of biblical witness in parts of the Anglican communion.

Conclusion

The New Testament understanding of plurality in unity and legitimate diversity is reflected in the unique ways both Anglicans and Catholics perceive and carry out the mission of Jesus Christ. In reference to limits to diversity, we cannot discount the influence of non-theological factors, such as sociological, cultural, ideological, political and economic, on the self-understanding, structure and doctrines of both Anglicans and Catholics. There is therefore always the need to buttress the theological foundation that gives identity to both churches. This overcomes the danger of the politics of the church over and above the doctrine of the church.

A way of maintaining communion is through genuine intra and inter accountability. This type of communion functions in a participatory model of authority where both clergy and laity are actively involved in the service of teaching, preaching, celebrating and governing in the Church. An indispensable ingredient is spiritual ecumenism. Spiritual ecumenism takes place in the Word of God, Prayer, Worship and Liturgy. The prayer life in turn translates into how Anglicans and Roman Catholics receive, recognize and are hospitable to each other. It is at this stage that mission to the world is possible and credible. Christian unity is not the work of the Church but the Church at work – the work of God.

The challenge for both Anglicans and Roman Catholics is how they are to handle their differences, the ecclesiological outlook that makes them arrive at different ecclesiological configurations. Instead of the polemics and mutual condemnations of the past, when they misunderstood each other because they lived apart and progressed on different theological, cultural, political and sociological paths, they now have an environment of encounter where they can learn from each other and practice mutual exchange of gifts, accountability and hospitality. Instead of journeying apart, they are to journey together in their differences, accepting to be challenged, to be corrected, and to effect the necessary corrections that enable them to follow Christ. When Anglicans and Roman Catholics draw nearer to Christ, they will draw nearer to each other, forming an authentic unity in Christ irrespective of the diversity that may exist.