

of a man and a woman making love. They are charming. The text is silly enough but it whets the yearning for more of Gill's erotic work and for a serious discussion of it in the open. Gill was rightly insistent that such subject matter should be treated by a religious artist. I do not think the samples have the "feeling of coldness" which Mr Webb finds. They are not frivolous or reserved or inhibited in reference to God. In that they are right about sex and their art. Not only perennially healthy and relevant; particularly needed in our times. Gill is not an enthusiasm to apologise for. He and his work are alive, to be recognised, truly valued and learnt from in life and creative practice.

"Is the Church Licensed to Kill?"

Judith Pinnington

Postscript to a Challenge

In an article published in this journal in December 1980¹ I sought to draw out some of the moral and theological implications of a punitive attitude on the part of the Church towards a kind of minority which it could not comprehend and by which it felt challenged. Since that time it has been borne in upon me, both through experience and through discursive reasoning that the implications are far deeper and more terrible than I had thought. For that reason I beg the indulgence of readers for a further exploration. I am aware that such a fusion of introspection and exospection is spiritually dangerous, since the subjective and objective can only coincide in one who is pure in heart. Nonetheless, I feel that the effort is worth the risk.

I should perhaps explain at the outset that my own theology is rapidly developing in a radical 'materialist' direction; that is to say, my understanding of both the Gospel kerygma and Tradition is confirming my intuition that the material, and in particular our being-in-body, has normative spiritual value. I am not at all shocked by Bishop John Robinson's suggestion in the famous *Lady Chatterly* trial that sexual intercourse has precise sacramental signification. Those who cannot go along with this perspective will not

be able fully to appreciate the following argument and may even be offended by it. Reader, be warned!

In this article I wish to re-examine the notion of the 'flesh' – both ours and Christ's – in Christian tradition and to explore the drastic implications that it may have for any attempt, either by Church 'authorities' or by the Church community at large, to restrict people's access to the fleshly means of salvation. I realise that what I have to say is likely to have far-reaching implications for ecumenical *communicatio in sacris* and that it may therefore pose very delicate problems for the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions which my argument will bestride. I cannot linger, however, on that particular problematic: I must simply leave it to others to ponder.

The True Nature of Man as Flesh

"If we have a poor understanding of man and his way of behaving", writes the Benedictine Cipriano Vagaggini, "we shut ourselves off from an understanding of God's way of acting towards men, and the way in which he requires man to act towards him".² This somewhat dry and bloodless dictum is fertile in meaning, so much so that I owe to my belated discovery of Father Cipriano's study of the flesh as the means to salvation my determination to re-open the issues which I broached two years ago. Dietrich von Hildebrand once offered a pointer to the true meaning of the notion that we are made in the image of God when he contrasted the idea of *imago* with mere *vestigium* and defined the former as that by which a man's true self is perceived and verified.³ Henry McKeating recently put it in more concrete form by saying "There are some things about us that are distinctly God-shaped", i.e. including the whole of ourselves, body as well as 'spirit' or 'soul'. Indeed, no being can possibly be endowed with supernatural life except by reference to and in terms of its "natural ontological basis" – which for us means our bodiliness.⁴ This is why it is not sufficient to say in criticism of the 'imprisoned soul' idea that man is an 'animated body' possessing a soul of "much more divine origin than the body". For "corporeity . . . is on the first level of perception, attention and expression", not merely in a historical Adamite sense (first body created, then soul breathed into it) but continuously with each new person, soul and body indistinguishably one whole. Obsession with the creation of Adam can be gravely misleading for our actual condition; for with us that "first level of perception" is that of 'enspirited body' or rather of body-spirit *hypostasis*.⁵ The precise bodily constitution may not be an altogether sufficient expression of the person; but, as Merleau-Ponty, the pioneer phenomenologist, modestly put it, the body as such is "a provisional sketch for my whole being".⁶ For a Christian, there-

fore, as I see it, our material being must itself be spiritual, just as the Spirit is physical, permeating matter like a palpable rhythm.⁷ Matter and spirit, indeed, according to this view are not separate realities but modes of being, exchanging qualities like notes may change rhythm while preserving their basic pulse.⁸ According to St Gregory of Nyssa, all things have a 'transmuting power' for co-inherence, conserving balance and energy in creation.⁹

Nowhere do I know a better expression of this delicate balance than in Thomas Traherne's poem *The Rapture*:

"A Native Health and Innocence
Within my Bones did grow,
And while my God did all his Glories show
I felt a vigor in my Sense
That was all Spirit. I within did flow
With Seas of Life like Wine;
I nothing in the World did know
But 'twas Divine."

All this has implications for the quality of man's freedom. "All the elements of the world are the concrete revelation of the thoughts and intentions of God which descend in loving kindness towards men . . .";¹⁰ but man precisely because he is as an en-fleshed person in God's image is not to be controlled by nature.¹¹ God is deliberately 'anarchic', leaving man free to determine the limits of creative act, for good or ill, leaving him free to find belief in him not in dependence but in independence. Because we are strictly superfluous to God we have this dignity.¹² For us, as for Péguy (in *Eve*), supernature has become nature. We can thus choose among many possible causal deviations, even in matters avowedly pertaining to our eternal salvation, the one we wish so as to respond to the "goodness of God's gifts" with the best goodness of our own capacities.¹³ We are not stuck on a set of rails called Divine Law which permits of no alternatives. God may place building blocks in our way, but at the end of the day what matters is how we exercise our creaturely will upon them. And what through this process of discrimination we store up, as it were, in our bodiliness we will show forth bodily in final resurrection on the last Day.¹⁴ This and nothing else is the process of *theosis* – nothing more nor less than progressive incarnation or what Olivier Clément has called the "rising body". To quote Cipriano Vagaggini, "God cannot deter from observing the incarnational process once he freely decides to divinize man within the context of his modes of being and acting. In this precise sense, the incarnation is a law of divine economy . . . a connatural means for divinizing an incarnate being is it-

self incarnate. Through this means the divine is present in the human, including the senses, and operates through the human, including the sensory, in order to raise man even in the sphere of the senses to a divine level of being and acting . . . The law of sacramentality is a particular instance of the more general law of the incarnation. The laws of incarnation and sacramentality in the means used will be all the more valid the more that God in the divinization process of man treats him in accordance with the existence of his *social* nature; in such a way that individuals within the same process become conjoined with one another and interact . . . ”¹⁵

Thus what Olivier Clément has called the “dense reality of our body” is not merely a troublesome distraction. It is the only beacon of sanity which we have in a world in which so many theoretical constructs have proved to be illusions. The body, embracing the whole of human existence, responds to experience as something equivalent to personal presence. It may sometimes make perceptual or volitional mistakes in detail, but there is always an authenticity in its general responses to reality. This stands at the core of D. H. Lawrence’s philosophy of life: it is as a matter of fact deeply ingrained in pristine Judao-Christian perception. To the extent that we are uneasy about our bodies (apart that is from the way indoctrination by our teachers in the Church makes us so), it is always instinctively not because ‘we’ feel alien to them as imprisoned souls – that is a mere theological construct – but because we are afraid of “not being sufficiently transparent”, of being in an odd way engulfed in something impersonal, a flat sameness of bodily reflex which does not do justice to our unique dynamic.¹⁶ Not, as Paul put it, “that we would be unclothed, but that we would be *further* clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”. (2 Cor. 5:4).¹⁷

The importance of Christ’s Incarnation in the Church to us as fleshly creatures

We have seen already in the extensive quotation from Vagaggini the centrality of the notion of ‘incarnation’ to human bodiliness. Since the latter part of the 19th century there has been increasing use made of the concept of the “Body of Christ” in discussing the nature of the Church after centuries of relative neglect. It has been used as a springboard for the most far-reaching developments in worship and in inter-personal relations. But Bishop John Robinson, rightly in my view, took to task theologians even so eminent as Ernst Käsemann and Lionel Thornton for elaborating exalted theologies of the Church as the Body without first coming to terms with the *anthropology* on which Paul predicated the notion of the Body of Christ in the first place.¹⁸ We have seen something of

what can be said about the nature of our bodiliness in the process of salvation. We must now turn to examine how this relates to the incarnate Christ and sacramental communion with him in the Church.

“Think again”, wrote Tertullian, “about God, so concerned with and devoted to Adam’s body: with his hand, his senses, his activity, his counsel, his wisdom, his providence, and above all his affection that guided his formation of the features. In fact, in everything that came to be expressed in the human body, there was the light of Christ, the future man, shining through”.¹⁹

It is such early patristic witness that gives confidence to Vagagini to assert “The whole work of our salvation is focused upon the *caro* of the Saviour, the flesh that sends forth light”.²⁰ He is not being metaphorical, nor even is he dabbling in the deep waters of analogy. He is making a strict literal statement. The “physical body of the Son of God incarnate”, he says in another part of his book, “is and shall remain for ever in eternity the instrument of divinity, the source and pivotal point of every divine communication and consequently of cosmic unity as well.”²¹ In the redeeming and divinizing process there is a contact, therefore, not merely of mental recognition, not simply of moral quality, but a physical inter-action.²² However oblique the ‘touch’ may be compared with the “prolonged fondling” of a creaturely companion, it is nonetheless physical.²³ Christ’s flesh is dynamically interacting with ours at the levels of both volition and act.²⁴

While this may be so at every point of our being, in every breath we breathe, in every situation we enter, it is focused and anchored in eucharistic communion. “We being many are one bread and one body”, said Paul: “for we are all partakers of that one bread”. (*1 Cor.* 10:17) Gregory of Nyssa, so strong a theologian of our bodiliness, declared unequivocally that communion in the Body and Blood of Christ makes our whole being (body) ‘into’ Christ.²⁵ Symeon the New Theologian, who is treated by Canon Allchin most suggestively as a 10th century John Wesley, wrote with the most direct literalness:

“You make your home in each one of us and you live in everyone, and for all of us you become our home and we live in you . . . We become members of Christ and Christ becomes our members, Christ becomes my hand, Christ my foot, And I, wretch that I am, I am become Christ’s hand, Christ’s foot . . .”²⁶

This form of bodily contact with Christ in the sanctuary of the Church is important because it alone established objective conditions for the believer’s participation in the divine life, his becoming what St Gregory Palamas called “the temple of the whole God-

head”.²⁷ In Vagaggini’s view the eucharistic mystery is the “pivot, apex and source of all salvation” precisely because only in the eucharist is Christ’s flesh fully manifest. The eucharist is therefore the *essential* place where men die to sin and rise to divine life, even the other sacraments being appendices or applications, subsumed under the eucharistic flesh.²⁸ St Thomas was surely mistaken in suggesting that lack of opportunity to receive the sacrament was not an impediment to “obtaining from God its spiritual fruits” by simple desire. For although he may be right in a certain number of cases, his counsel encouraged a spirit of not seeking out communion whenever possible. In any case, he himself argued that receiving the Body and Blood produced its effects in a “more plenary way” than receiving by desire. In this and his notion of the eucharist as the *finis omnium officiorum* he was faithful to the patristic witness of the Pseudo-Dionysius.²⁹

If mankind thus needs to be in contact with the “life-giving flesh of Christ”, does it not follow that the Church as His Body cannot afford to pick and choose between what men are free to do and to be as heirs of salvation in the forum of the Church! Are not all human beings in urgent need of being in touch with that “unique Life’s breath” in every way possible? Perhaps it is wrong to deny the sacraments even to formal unbelievers! Readers may remember that I warned them that this might be implied in my argument.³⁰

Right at the outset of the Church’s long and chequered history in this matter, Ignatius of Antioch was quite clear in his own mind about the ultimate damage wrought by loss of communion. “Who is outside the altar [i.e. divorced from the bishop and the community of brethren participating in the Body and Blood of Christ],” he said, “is deprived of the bread of God [i.e. the meaning of life itself]”. It was not enough for Ignatius to participate in Christ secretly, although he was often in situations of imprisonment where this was sadly the only recourse for him. For to seek Christ out only in secret was not to answer to the nature of the atonement which he had wrought, an atonement in and through the Church.³¹ The object of God in the Church is precisely to witness to us palpably that “we are in very deed all that God declares He has made us (and which we knew by faith before) and so establishing and confirming us as individual persons in the faith which God has bestowed upon us.”³²

The confirming of our very personhood in the forum of the Church was something implicit in the structure of the Old Dispensation and it came out particularly clearly in the Qumran community which located the “glory of Adam” in Ezekiel’s picture of the Temple. With the new order of the Body of Christ it was specifi-

cally in eucharistic community that men and women came closest to an integral image. Communion was seen as holding us in the divine (fleshly) being and preserving us from otherwise inevitable entropy and chaos.³³ In the Orthodox Tradition baptism is understood not merely as *justifying* but also as *illuminating* and enabling an “immeasurable unfolding in glory” in the whole enspirited flesh. The baptised person must, however, stand in the midst of the worshipping community for this to become active in his life, for it is only by participating in the heavenly Liturgy through the earthly Liturgy that he can realise his glory in the End-Time. There is a parable implicit in the ideal of the ikon as an essentially *ecclesial* focus of God’s love in the Divine Energies. The light of the Transfiguration is to be sought in the inner depth of the ikon, not accidentally on its surface, for the ikon is the image of the communion of saints not simply an adjunct of worship available for private devotion.³⁴

What then are the consequences of complete or partial exclusion from eucharistic community?

There is always a danger in Christianity, particularly in its ‘Catholic’ forms, that the Church will push a sort of ‘Eutychianism’ on some individuals or groups while appearing to affirm a more balanced Christology for itself. That is to say, it will commend to such people a notion that, though they are ‘disciplined’ or ‘constrained’ in some way, they can participate in a ‘spiritual’ reality nonetheless. This, as Canon John Davies has written of his South African Anglican experience, is to remove people “from flesh into a world only of words”.³⁵ A world “only of words” is a dead, listless, unresponsive world. As Claudius says at prayer in *Hamlet*, “words without deeds never to heaven go”. Such a situation in fact deprives the victim of freedom to share in the perpetual awakenedness or watchfulness which is the nature of Liturgy, forces him or her down to the level of “brief upward glances” and “good intentions” which are in danger of becoming ‘fixed’ without the means by which life can “flow perpetually into the life of Christ”. Not even “simple good intention”, says Hildebrand, is a substitute for liturgy as “the path to the state of being genuinely awake”.³⁶ God may be stretching out his hand, but a person so constrained by the Church cannot perform the necessary act of stretching back. The way Diodochus of Photike put it was that such a person is denied a full “sense of the heart” and “flowering of flesh” and is shut out from a recovered and transfigured childhood, left instead hung impotently between conception and death.

It is not perhaps therefore too extreme to say with one Orthodox theologian who has been deeply involved in a movement to renew frequent communion as a common practice in his Church:

“God can grant us a new body at the second coming of Christ in the likeness of His own resurrection Body only so long as we are in union with His Body here and now”. That union, he added, does not come simply with faith in an invisible Christ: it *must* come with an actual physical contact and tangible relationship with the flesh of Christ. If what is sown in the ground in weakness is raised in power (*1 Cor.* 15: 42), it can only be in his view because *before* being sown in the ground (i.e. in death) it was incorporated into Christ’s own Body, the Church, “in a literal sense” and thus, through eucharist communion, contained “the power of resurrection unto everlasting life. “For Christ is “not other than the community of His brethren”.”³⁷

This writer’s imagery can be matched by an eloquent passage from Irenaeus of Lyons:

“In the fashion in which life’s root, placed in the ground, produces fruit in due time, and the seed cast upon the ground and decomposed, reappears multiplied by the Spirit of God which is in all things, and then those elements which in God’s wisdom come to be used by man, receiving the word of God, become Eucharist in the Body and Blood of Christ, so also our bodies nourished by this Eucharist, committed to the earth and there decomposed, will rise in time because the Word of God will make them rise for the glory of God the Father.”³⁸

The implications are shattering but compelling, granted an objective belief in sacramental presence. Only by the “unifying forces of light, life and love in Christ” *in the Church* through its mysteries can the divisive power of corruption and death be defeated and the cohesion of the cosmos be saved from isolation and fragmentation.³⁹ If one is ostracised and cut off by one’s community, the community that one chooses for good reason to cling to (never mind that there are other communities, including like-minded ghetto communities one *might* belong to which would not be so harsh), then one is cut off from all meaningful intercourse, one is speechless, one is dead.⁴⁰ In the view of Eberhard Jüngel, unrelatedness conduces to meaninglessness in which the victim is “as good as dead”.⁴¹ I have quoted Canon John Davies’s reaction to his experience in South Africa. There it was not necessarily a question of absolute denial of holy communion: rather, but equally damaging, it was a question of the rupture of the eucharistic community by apartheid. Communion could not be received with complete integrity, because the eucharistic community lacked complete integrity, complete openness. There are all sorts of ways, varied throughout history, in which the eucharistic community can bid fair to evacuate itself of its calling as the Body of Christ by

the way in which it treats its members, and those who wish to become its members.

How can it happen?

Setting aside the ever-present danger of manichaeism which has spread like a stain through the fabric of the Church in every age and also the element of fear or dread in face of the unknown of which I wrote at length in my earlier article, there is, it has to be admitted, a technical fault built into the nature of ecclesial tradition which makes it difficult for the Church to avoid entirely the horrific situation which I have described. I refer to the regard which is necessarily given to the authority of Church Fathers who may, for all their charisms, have been ignorant of vital truths which, though not essential to them in their day, are essential to us now. Much of the ill-treatment of church members which has occurred over the centuries (and which is often a scandal to the unbeliever) is due to too close an adherence to Church Fathers who had no clear idea of person as it applied to human beings rather than the persons of the Trinity. Writing in 1955, three years before his death, that great modern authority on the Fathers, Vladimir Lossky, confessed that he had been unable to find an “elaborated doctrine of the human person” in the patristic period of the Church. One could draw inferences if one wished from the patristic use of *hypostasis*, *Prosopon* and *ousia* in the Trinitarian debate. But that was not the same as to attribute modern pre-occupations directly to the Fathers. The notion of human person, like the notion of divine person, could not be determined by classical ontology which provided only conventional symbols for what was essentially existential and dynamic. So it was, in Lossky’s wise view, exceedingly dangerous to follow slavishly some Father like St Gregory of Nyssa on the ‘image of God’, even worse to make a generalisation from all the Fathers. Gregory, after all, like most of his contemporaries, located the *imago* in the ‘higher faculties’ (nous) only, dismissing the “cloak of skin” as beneath the dignity of God.⁴² Yet what Lossky warned against is precisely what theologians and canonists and humble parish priests have tended to do in every age. In the interests of supra-personal ends such as ecclesial uniformity or survival or the protection of the abstract sanctity of reproduction, men have applied inadequate norms of personhood and failed to look more deeply, contenting themselves with the illusion that they were ‘faithful to Tradition’.

In this matter of what it means to be a free person in the Church, it was most unfortunate that the Church followed so closely in the footsteps of Cyril of Alexandria in whose debate with Nestorius can now be seen clear evidence of a process of abstraction alien to the mind of the pre-Nicene Fathers.⁴³ Cyril’s form of

expression, though representing only a trend in its infancy, led straight into the magisterial categories of St Thomas – *gratia capitis, instrumentum, modus agendi*, etc. Thomas's obsession with schematic distinctions (efficient, instrumental, exemplary causality, for instance) obscured what was really at issue in the relation of the individual person to the Church. It helped to consolidate authoritarian bureaucracy, for which it was convenient to hold that corporeal nature was inferior to the *nature* of the spirit, and it opened the door to what might be called *minimalist piety*.⁴⁴ One has only to read so relatively perceptive an 'official' theologian as Cipriano Vagaggini to see how insidious has been the feeling of obligation to maintain consistency of tradition at whatever cost to true insight. He cannot altogether deny that "some of the Fathers" and later theologians succumbed "to the temptation of the disembodied spiritualism of Greek philosophy and Encratism"; but his double negative approach betrays just how uncomfortable it was for him to admit it, and he failed to grasp that while the Fathers may have had "splashes of light" which enabled them to stand back from their habitual attitudes on the nature of man at moments of extreme crisis they were very quickly sucked back by the groundswell of Hellenist habit which determined the way they were understood by later generations.⁴⁵ Only with a lot of hindsight can we now see the "splashes" of foresight in Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom.⁴⁶

Some practical conclusions about the way all this affects people

"Ploughmen", said the psalmist in his deepest mood of despair, "have ploughed down my back longer and longer furrows . . ." (Ps 129:3) St Andrew of Crete considerably expanded this sentiment in his lenten *Great Canon*, and a more recent poet has expanded it still further:

"Along my back they have ploughed deep
furrows; my substance is drained off in them.
They have ploughed down my back thinking me mud,
separate from nothing and part of nothing . . .
My torn coat masters in dialectic
but makes me vagrant at my own party."

The same writer speaks of there being "no glue betwixt eucharists".

This is typical of the sort of feeling that comes to someone for whom there appears no real 'communion' in the communion of faith, no real communion, that is, in the first instance for him or her, though that one lack may say something inevitably about the reality of communion throughout the Body. Such an one wakes up suddenly to find in Bonhoeffer's bitter words (and didn't he

know about it!) “all my strength . . . without my being able to do anything about it, is turned against me; really all my powers . . . fall into the enemy power and are now led into the field against me.” And the worst of it is that the enemy seems to be in one’s own army! It fosters the impression, which needs no paranoia to feed it, that one is abandoned by *all men* and therefore perhaps by God too. Life is become what Cullmann has called a “mysterious detour” in which the only convincing, heartfelt prayer is likely to be St Symeon’s prayer to the Holy Spirit “who hast separated me from all and hast made me lonely in this world . . .”⁴⁷

I have a friend who is a devout Catholic and also a transsexual. She has had a long bruising life and desperately needs acceptance in the household of faith. She has never been denied communion but she *has* frequently been made to feel that she was not wanted. Recently she pleaded with a new parish priest to ‘incorporate’ her into the parish because she was made to feel on the outside looking in, a stranger in her own house. Was she oversensitive?

A teenager in the same minority situation went to see *his* parish priest. Reporting later to his psychiatrist, he said of this encounter in the presbytery: “he didn’t help me any. He got me all confused . . . We studied about God dying on the Cross for us, and I think that if He did all that suffering I can do this suffering for Him, but I *can’t* suffer all my life like this . . . I have got to have an out . . .”⁴⁸ Although what the priest actually said is not vouchsafed, one can easily infer what it was – that this young person continue to conceal his real identity as a male, living out his life as the female he was brought up for the sake of avoiding scandal. Was *he* oversensitive? A third young person in like plight was virtually shown the door (though not in an offensive way) when she sounded out the possibility of continuing work in a Catholic bookshop in a new gender role, although it was of desperate importance to her to secure continuity of employment.

These cases are, as such, very rare indeed. But they are a paradigm of a much wider insensitivity in the Body of Christ rooted in fear – fear of the unknown, fear of scandal, a fear which makes nonsense of eucharistic communion in its fullest sense. They reveal possibly a lurking manichaeism not fully accepting our bodiliness and our free will. The advice given by the priest may have amounted to a concealed counsel of works. If so it denied the capacity of the baptised to walk “according to the new state in Christ”. In the Orthodox Tradition salvation has never been confused with works and merit; yet I doubt whether in practice an Orthodox pastor would handle such a concrete situation any differently from his Catholic counterpart. I am constantly reminded of Jesus’ stern warning in *Matthew* 5:22 when I contemplate the clumsy way in

which the clergy handle the a-typical. One can, in effect, say ‘thou fool’ to a brother or sister simply because one is oneself uncomfortable or insecure, and – as the linguistic context of that passage in *Matthew* indicates – it is a short step from treating someone as a ‘fool’ to treating him as a ‘renegade’ or an ‘impious person’.

This sort of treatment, quiet and inconspicuous though it may seem, may amount to what Simone Weil called ‘affliction’ (in contrast to straightforward ‘suffering’). It used to be the lot of lepers (think of the lepers’ squints in the walls of medieval churches through which alone they were allowed to ‘assist’ at Mass) and indeed of all those with gross physical deformities. It has always been the lot of those who didn’t ‘fit in’. Affliction is a state from which there is no escape. Like Nilus’ shirt, the causes cannot be divested without destruction of one’s very being. Such a one, as Duncan Fallowell said recently in a highly relevant context, is “born into darkness”, and generally – even if that person is a devout Christian – he or she has to find a way to whatever light is possible without the aid of very much fellowship.⁴⁹

Simone Weil thought that the automatism with which the ‘healthy’ attack the afflicted was by no means confined to animals lower in the scale than man. It was, she said, fairly natural for us humans at least to *despise* the afflicted in our hearts if not actually to tear them limb from limb. “Poor things”, we say to ourselves: “to live thus in a twilight world”. We are slowly evolving away from outright lack of sympathy for the physically deformed, but we still have a long way to go when it comes to subtler disabilities. If we reflect on the way people tend to avoid the bereaved, we can perhaps see just how deep the instinct of the socially ‘whole’ or ‘integrated’ to reject the ‘incomplete’ or ‘unintegrated’ really is. Often the victimized neither have nor seek a common interest among themselves which they can set up against common opinion. They therefore lack even the dignity of standing up for a cause. Each person, “born into darkness” suffers alone in the dark though surrounded by fellow believers.⁵⁰

Such situations, wrote Dorothee Soelle with some perception, impose silence on both the sufferer and the sympathetic observer. There is nothing to say, literally a ‘black hole’ from which nothing can escape, not even words of healing. Often such people slide calmly and quietly into an orderly suicide – either of the body or of the spirit.⁵¹ If, with Sylvia Plath, such a person can say for a time “I last – I last out”, it is not always so meaningful to say “I accomplish a work”. In the event, Sylvia Plath did *not* last out. It is doubtful that she ever did accomplish the work for which she felt herself ‘called’. The “dark tunnel” through which hurtled “visitations” and “startled faces”, finally closed around her when

her sole remaining source of 'fellowship', her husband, walked out on her. She became, by her own admission, "the centre of an atrocity", left with what her fellow (and Catholic) poet Elizabeth Jennings has called "hard invincible doubts". There was no city for her at the top of the hill, no shrine, not even a 'trading market'. Life was simply unsustainable in its isolation from 'communion', so she died. Plath was not, of course, a 'believer': she had rejected God in righteous anger as a child when her father died unnecessarily. But her experience is nonetheless a model for what happens even to devout believers in the household of faith. It is a chilling thought to contemplate amidst so much feverish semblance of togetherness in today's Church.

I would like to draw the threads of this discussion together as tightly as I can, even if it hurts.

A sacrament is an earthly action which contains an absolute value. It is a *hagnos*, a pure thing, a place of showing, of "open confessing and of honest being". We are to one another in *eucharistic fellowship* (meaning by that the whole context and not simply the cultic event) either "points of concentration" of the risen Christ or agencies of each other's stifling and death. The corollary of this is that if we withdraw ourselves from a single person in that fellowship context "we can make the whole world abhorrent to him"; for when we reject a man who seeks urgently our acceptance and respect, "we hand him over to destruction". "We proclaim all the sacraments, in fact we bring them – implicitly, that is in an inclusive and anticipatory way – to those men whom we treat with honour, whom we consider capable of more reality and being than they can show." Consequently if, within the eucharistic fellowship we deny, in whatever way, full participation in that fellowship by drawing lines of demarcation, we are in effect denying that those whom we so constrict *are* capable of more reality, *are* worthy of honour as those with whom we share the image of God.^{5 2}

In this and the previous article the main point of reference has been a particular type of minority in *our* society, a society which, in secular terms, prides itself on its respect for freedom and the dignity of man. It might well be thought that if we applied the same criteria to the situation of the Church in other parts of the world where such respect is not so evident, the case would be even more damning. For whether we look at Latin America or the USSR or South Africa or even Australia, we surely do not have to look far for evidence of ecclesiastical complicity in *spiritual murder*. It may be a matter of compliance with the wishes of a non-Christian or anti-Christian state by suspending politically troublesome priests from the exercise of their ministry, or it may be a

complicity of clergy and laity alike in the humiliating segregation of Indians, Blacks or Aborigines, tin miners, dirt-farmers or the like by an avowedly Christian state dedicated to Christ the King or the sovereign will of God. To the extent – whatever extent – that members of the Church connive at something less than the fullest fellowship of which they are capable for some of those who claim it, they are dealing out death. This, shockingly, incredibly, was the chief guilt of the white Christians in Rhodesia, most of whom were and are probably just as ‘decent’ as we reckon ourselves to be. As a group they failed the ultimate test, the challenge of total, unqualified giving, in spite of all rational as well as all irrational misgivings. The substance of some of their misgivings during the ‘Emergency’ is now perhaps finding recognizable shape and context in the present state of Zimbabwe. But that makes no difference to their ‘eucharistic’ failure.

Above all, it must be remembered that we cannot abstract the flesh of Jesus from the life of the Holy Trinity, and that the stark consequences of a rift of eucharistic fellowship which I have envisaged have to do with the fact that in the overarching context of the Trinity personal existence always presupposes a relationship with the other. The disaster is not therefore confined to the one excluded: it extends to the whole Church. Members of the Church can only be fully personal if they have nothing that they seek to possess to the exclusion of others with whom they share a common nature. They would not be able to behave exclusively did they but treat each other as persons in “absolute diversity” containing implicitly the whole of nature and not simply as individuals *more or less* like other individuals with whom they share nature out. They could not behave exclusively if they realised that true persons can only be united to the Divine by free choice in the power of the Spirit.^{5 3}

- 1 Judith Pinnington, “Sexual Minorities as a Challenge to Christian Fellowship”, *New Blackfriars*, Vol 61 (1980), pp 524-36.
- 2 Cipriano Vagaggini, O.S.B. *The Flesh: Instrument of Salvation – A Theology of the Human Body*, (New York, 1969), pp 128-9
- 3 Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Liturgy and Personality* (2nd ed. Baltimore, 1960), p 10.
- 4 *Ibid.* p 23.
- 5 Vagaggini, *op. cit.* p 19.
- 6 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenologie de la perception* (Paris, 1945), p 231.
- 7 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx O P, *Christ the Encounter with God*, (London, 1963). pp 92-93.

- 8 Metropolitan Anthony of Sourouz in A. M. Allchin (ed), *Sacrament and Image: Essays in the Christian Understanding of Man*, (London, 1967), pp 37-38; *Wisdom*, 19:18; Curt Sachs, *Rhythm and Tempo*, (New York, 1953), p 13.
- 9 In Allchin, op. cit. p 10.
- 10 Dimitru Staniloae, "Christian Responsibility in the World", *Romanian Altar Almanach*, 1973, pp 77-78.
- 11 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (London, 1957), pp 119-20.
- 12 St Maximus the Confessor, "Answer to Talasie" in the *Philokalia*, cited by Staniloae in "Divine Economy – the Basis of Church Economy", *Romanian Altar Almanach*, 1974/5, p 48; Berdyaev cited by Evgeny Lampert in *The Tablet*, 16 Nov. 1974; Metropolitan Anthony of Sourouz in Allchin, op. cit. p 36.
- 13 Staniloae, "Christian Responsibility", op. cit. pp 77-78.
- 14 St Macarius the Great, *Homilies*, V, 9 (Migne, *Pat. Graec.*, 513, CD.)
- 15 Vagaggini, op. cit. pp 130-2; cf. Olivier Clément, "Living in the Body", *Ecumenical Review*, Vol 33 (1981), pp 128-46.
- 16 Clément, *ibid.* pp 128-30. Clément comments that despite its being essentially a religion of incarnation Christianity has been largely at a loss to know how to cope with body-consciousness.
- 17 Hildebrand has written that the genuineness of being a person is to be found in the state in which a person's external being is not stamped 'inorganically' on the inner being but is a genuine projection. *Liturgy and Personality*, p 15. I am not at all happy with Siter Ruth Burrows' rather dismissive reference to "the fine control of the mind" as if self-determination was a hindrance to knowledge of God. Buddhist self-emptying of the mind is certainly dangerous, but a Christian-humanist search for balance in both body and mind seems to me to be a condition for loving. Cf. Burrows, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, (London, 1976), p 19.
- 18 J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, (London, 1952), p 10. Lossky pointed out in 1953 the difficulty which the Pre-Vatican II Roman Church had found in trying to revive the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. It was, he thought, in danger of replacing one type of totalitarianism (the juristic) with another (the psycho-ontological). By teaching that Christ, as it were, contained in Himself all human beings who were members of the Church, it somehow threatened the uniqueness of individual persons. Having escaped from a theological determinism it thus fell into a sacramental determinism. Cf. his *In the Image and Likeness of God*, (London and Oxford, 1974), p 105.
- 19 Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, 6.
- 20 Vagaggini, op. cit. p 75.
- 21 *Ibid.* p 137.
- 22 *Ibid.* p 50.
- 23 Cf Maynard Clarke's review of J. N. D. Kelly's *Jerome* in *The Listener*, Vol 94 (1975), 767 and Ruth Burrows, op. cit.
- 24 Vagaggini, op. cit. p 144.
- 25 The recusant theologian, Nicholas Sander, wrote much the same in 1566 when he argued that in the new birth of the sacramental economy both flesh and spirit are recreated so that at the Last Day the whole body ("same flesh") will rise again in virtue of it.
- 26 St Symeon the New Theologian, "Hymns of Divine Love", cited by A. M. Allchin in his *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge*, (London, 1979), p 43.
- 27 Robert G. Stephanopoulos in John Meyendorff & Joseph McLelland (eds), *The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue*, (New Brunswick, N J 1973), pp 156-60.
- 28 Vagaggini, op. cit. p 144.

- 29 St Thomas, *Summa*, III, 69 a 4 ad 2, 80 a 1 ad 3; *De Veritate*, 27 a 4 c.
- 30 Vagaggini, op. cit. pp 138-42.
- 31 Ignatius of Antioch, *Ep. Eph.* 5: 2; Vagaggini, p 71.
- 32 E. O. Taplin, *On Spiritual Gifts*, (London, 1833).
- 33 Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh in Allchin, *Sacrament and Image*, op. cit. p 41; Paul Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, (Neuchatel, 1965), p 73.
- 34 Cf. Eusebius A. Stephanou, "Can anyone claim he is saved?" *The Logos*, VIII (1975), 14; Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, (London, 1938), pp 334-5. For the reference to the ikon see Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh in Allchin, *Sacrament and Image*, op. cit. pp 40-41.
- 35 See the essay by John Davies in the forthcoming (1983) volume to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Oxford Movement, *Essays Catholic and Radical*, ed. Kenneth Leech and Rowan Williams.
- 36 Hildebrand, op. cit. pp 76-77.
- 37 Eusebius A. Stephanou, "The Medicine of Immortality: Antidote against Death", *The Logos*, V (1972), 54.
- 38 Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* v, 2.
- 39 Stephanopoulos, op. cit. p 159.
- 40 Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, (London & Philadelphia, 1975) p 76.
- 41 Eberhard Jungel, *Tod* (Berlin 1971), cited by Soelle, op. cit.
- 42 Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, op. cit. pp 112, 115, 120, 122-3
- 43 For thorough catena of quotations from Ignatius' letters, see Vagaggini, op. cit. p 69, n 15.
- 44 Cf. Vagaggini, pp 97-126; St Thomas, *Summa*, III 3 d 22 q 3 a 3 q 1 ad 3.
- 45 Cf. Vagaggini, p 65.
- 46 Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, III, 33, 57 (Migne, P. G. 26, 396, 444); Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechetical Discourse*, c. 37 (P. G. 45, 93 A - 97B); John Chrysostom, In Jo. Hom, 46, 3 (P. G. 59, 260).
- 47 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation*, (London, 1955), p 10; Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, (London, 1965) pp 78, 116, 123; Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, op. cit. pp 160-1.
- 48 Quoted in Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, (London, 1968), p 200.
- 49 Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, (New York, 1951), pp 122, 125; cf. Duncan Fallowell quoted by Tina Brown in *The Tatler*, March 1982, p 125.
- 50 Soelle, op. cit. pp 138-9. Cf. Joanna Lyall, "Quarantine of Grief", *The Observer*, 3 May 1981.
- 51 Soelle, *ibid.* pp 61. 69.
- 52 Ladislav Boros, *Meeting God in Man*, (London, 1968) pp 16, 18, 36, 68, 121.
- 53 Lossky, *In the Image*, op. cit. pp 106-9.