

IMAGES, UNDERSTANDINGS, AND MODELS OF THE CHURCH IN HISTORY: AN UPDATE

Brian Gleeson CP

Abstract

The author revisits and personally comments upon the now classic work of Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, which he first published in 1974 and updated subsequently. He recalls Dulles' interpretations of the nature and mission of the church in terms of institution; communion; sacrament; herald; and servant (1974), and in subsequent editions his synthetic model of community of disciples. To the perspectives of Dulles, the author adds recent comments upon and developments of, some of Dulles' categories, as offered by John Fuellenbach. Two additional models, as proposed by Fuellenbach, are introduced into the mix. These are 1. the church as basic ecclesial communities; and 2. the church as a contrast society. The author concludes by endorsing Dulles' earlier conclusion as still applicable, that 'by a kind of mental juggling act, we need to keep several models in the air at once'.

A study of the history of the church shows that the many different ways of picturing and understanding the church in New Testament times have continued into subsequent centuries.¹ Such a study also shows some development of at least the main NT images and interpretations. But in post-New Testament times additional ones have arisen. Some of these have tended to take centre-stage and even to eclipse and distort some of the richest NT images and understandings. This claim will be implicitly supported and illustrated by the following up-dated presentation of images, understandings, and models of the church in history.

- **Two sets of models of the church**

The principal guide for our investigation and evaluation of the relevant data will be the famous American Jesuit ecclesiologist, Avery Dulles, whose writings on the subject have already attained the status of 'classics'.² Dulles has identified in history a series of paradigms of the church, i.e. dominant models and images.

More recently, John Fuellenbach has contributed to the development of the Dulles models.³ Throughout this presentation his particular contributions will supplement those of Dulles. But he has also been promoting two additional models as particularly relevant to the emerging church of today. He has identified these as: (1) the church as basic ecclesial communities; and (2) the church as a contrast society. By becoming aware of those two sets of models, those of Dulles and those of Fuellenbach, we will have a useful framework for evaluating the church of our experiences today.

In his *Models of the Church*, Dulles has identified the dominant models in history as those of ‘institution’, ‘mystical communion’, ‘sacrament’, ‘herald’, and ‘servant’ (1974), and in the later edition of his original work, the model too of ‘community of disciples’. It is this last model, ‘community of disciples’, that Dulles, in ‘Imaging the Church for the 80’s’, the first chapter of *A Church to Believe In*, has further described and highlighted as particularly inclusive and appealing for our times. With his guidance, I will first examine (with some added explanation, comment and development both by Fuellenbach and myself) all the Dulles models one by one, and after that turn our attention to the two additional ones proposed by Fuellenbach.

A. THE CHURCH AS A ‘POLITICAL SOCIETY’

- **Meaning**

The image of the church as a ‘political society’ is that of the church as institution or organization, but in a rather extreme form. It is understood as a ‘perfect’ society, in that it is not subordinate to any other, and lacks nothing from an



Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

institutional point of view. It is also understood as a ‘political’ society, in the sense in which Counter-Reformation theologian Robert Bellarmine SJ put it, that it is ‘as visible and palpable as the community of the Roman people, or the Kingdom of France, or the Republic of Venice’.⁴

This ‘political society’ model tends to highlight to excess the external and organizational features of the church by giving a one-sided emphasis to the church’s constitution or basic set-up, to its set of rules (canon law), to its governing body, and to the members of the church as subjects of the authority of its bishops, priests and deacons. While it makes much of the rights and powers of its officials, it tends to downplay the rights and entitlements of its other members. ‘To be a good Catholic, according to the popular view,’ says Dulles, ‘is simply to adhere to the beliefs and practices demanded by the office-holders,’⁵ even though ‘to large numbers . . . the laws and dogmas of the church seem designed to control and crush rather than to nourish and satisfy the needs of the spirit’.⁶

This model dominated from the late Middle Ages until 1962, the start of the Second Vatican Council. It was particularly assertive in the Counter-Reformation period, when pope and bishops emphasized precisely those features of the church that Protestants were denying⁷ or undervaluing.

An excessive focus on external structures, on the power and right of the few to command and on the duty of the many to obey, however, leads to ‘institutionalism’, ‘a system in which the institutional element is treated as primary’.⁸ This is a type of ideology which draws lines of separation between the church that teaches and the church that is taught (overlooking the fact that the church that teaches must also be one that learns), between the church sanctifying and the church sanctified, between the church governing and the church governed.⁹ It tends to reduce the great majority of the members of the church (approximately 99%) to recipients of what the leaders impose (sometimes with penalties attached), and without the active contribution of the great majority to, and participation in, the processes involved. It clearly

divides the church into the rulers and the ruled, into ‘a society of unequals’ (from a Vatican I *schema*). It makes for a pyramidal, top-down kind of church in which all initiative and power descend from the pope through the bishops and priests to the passive people at the bottom of the pyramid. They are expected, as has sometimes been said, simply ‘to pay, pray and obey’.¹⁰ It tends to exclude lay involvement in the running of the church, in favour of what Dulles calls ‘a ruling class that perpetuates itself by cooption’.¹¹ All of this results in the church being practically identified with its leaders.

Unlike contemporary scientific exegesis of the scriptures, it claims with the Council of Trent that Jesus of Nazareth personally and permanently established the offices of bishop, priest and deacon. It asserts that every dogma (every truth proclaimed as revealed) ever taught by the church was part of the original ‘deposit of faith’.¹² It sees the role of theologians as simply to explain how all official current teachings can be found in scripture and tradition, and to expound and defend them all.¹³ It does not envisage any role for theologians of clearly distinguishing between truths of revelation and other teachings, and of preparing the way for the development of doctrines and dogmas.

But institutionalism is not the same thing as accepting the institutional element in the church, and the truth that the church cannot carry out its mission without some stable organizational features, including leaders, procedures, statements of faith and patterns of worship. ‘A Christian believer may energetically oppose institutionalism,’ says Dulles, ‘and still be very much committed to the church as institution.’¹⁴ The great Dominican ecclesiologist, Yves Congar, has deplored the effect that institutionalism had on the church before Vatican II, an era marked by a tendency to turn a study of the church (ecclesiology) into hierarchology (a study of its bishops, priests and deacons).¹⁵ But Vatican II got things right when it presented the church as mystery, sacrament, Body of Christ and People of God before saying anything about government and officials.

- **Goal**

It is clearly geared to the salvation of individuals, in the sense of getting them to heaven as the goal of their human existence, and offering them the means to eternal life along the way. Its world-view makes a sharp division between the church and the world, and between this life and the next.

- **Bonds**

In this model of church, the members are those who accept the approved doctrines of the Catholic Church, receive its sacraments, and obey its appointed pastors. They are the true Catholics.¹⁶ The criteria of membership are therefore all visible and verifiable ones. This model therefore tends to resist any idea of 'invisible membership'. In his encyclical letter on the church as the Body of Christ, *Mystici corporis Christi*, Pope Pius XII draws a line, one which will be modified by Vatican II:

Only those are to be accounted really members of the church who have been regenerated in the waters of baptism and profess the true faith, and have not cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority. . . . those who are divided from one another in faith or government cannot be living in the one Body . . .¹⁷

The logical consequence of the exclusiveness that goes with this view is that outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church, there is no salvation.

- **Beneficiaries**

In this model of church, the beneficiaries are its own members. Dulles paints a fine word-picture to describe this:

The church is the school that instructs them regarding the truths they need to know for the sake of their eternal salvation. It is the refectory or inn where they are nourished from the life-giving streams of grace, which flows especially through the sacraments. It is the hospital where they are healed of their illnesses, the shelter where they are protected against the assaults of the enemy of their souls. Thanks to the governing authority of the shepherds, the faithful are kept from wandering into the desert and are

led to the green pastures.¹⁸

- **Strengths**

In the years and centuries during which this model was dominant, it served to give Catholics a strong sense of corporate identity¹⁹ and solidarity and a strong sense of institutional loyalty, a sense captured in the old hymn ‘We Stand for God’. They knew clearly who they were and what they stood for, when they were succeeding and when they were failing.²⁰ It did not lend itself to protest, questioning of authority, or to dissent. ‘Father knows best’ was its unexamined assumption. It also gave a strong push to missionary work, understood as seeking to save the souls of persons who were not members, by bringing them into the organisation.²¹ Success could be measured in numbers – how many converts, how many baptisms, how many confessions, how many communions, how many confirmations, how many Easter duties done, how many church marriages, how many Catholic funerals, etc. This model also had the benefit of being strongly endorsed in official church documents.²²

Some features of this model are still important in a Catholic understanding of the church, such as the bonds of shared faith and beliefs, of shared prayer and sacraments, and of church leadership and government.

- **Weaknesses**

The weaknesses of this model include the following: - It has little support in scripture and early church tradition, which suggest that the early church was anything but a single tightly-knit society and functioned in less authoritarian and more communitarian modes than this model suggests.²³ Three defects flowing from it were identified at the Second Vatican Council by Bishop Emile de Smedt of Bruges, Belgium. They are, first of all, clericalism, i.e. control, domination and even oppression by ordained persons, on the one hand, and passivity, blind obedience, and non-involvement of lay persons on the other. Another defect identified by de Smedt is juridicism, i.e. an emphasis on law and order which tends to turn the gospel into laws and obligations with a corresponding lack of attention to relationships

with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with fellow Christians and fellow human beings generally; and insufficient attention to the gospel imperative of pastoral charity, after the example of Jesus the Good Shepherd and ‘the friend of sinners’. (He is presented in the gospels as sometimes offering people friendship and communion with him even before they were converted).²⁴ A third defect identified by de Smedt is triumphalism, i.e. lording it over others, and putting others down. Triumphalism places more importance on the prerogatives of authority stemming from valid institutional appointment, than on prayerful discernment in the appointees of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for ministry.

An excessive emphasis on the hierarchy also tends to inhibit the role of theologians as the church’s think-tank by asking them to find clearly in scripture things that honest scholarship cannot locate, such as the modern dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁵ It also inhibits theologians by putting the brakes on the exploratory aspects of their role. It fails to account for the vitality of non-Roman Catholic churches, and finds it hard to affirm that non-Catholics can be saved.²⁶

As a closed society, it is out of touch with the demands of the times,²⁷ which include *aggiornamento* (bringing the church up-to-date) as well as dialogue with the modern world, with other Christians and their communities, and with non-Christian communities of faith. It tends to ignore or suppress the charisms (gifts for ministry) that the Holy Spirit has distributed among all members of the church, and through which ‘he makes them ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the church . . .’ (*Lumen gentium*, a.12).

- **Concluding comments on the institutional model**

It must be said in all fairness that while the institutional model dominated right up to our own times, it was never pushed in an absolutely pure form.²⁸ Other ways of imaging and understanding the church were present, at least to some degree. We begin to focus on those other ways, as we now turn to additional models.

B. THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNION²⁹

- **Meaning**

Underlying this model is the conviction that the church is a community of interconnected persons. It therefore emphasizes relationships. 'Love, acceptance, forgiveness, commitment, and intimacy constitute the church's very fabric.'³⁰ It is 'a community in which justice, peace and mutual love are realized and lived.'³¹

Yves Congar has put particular stress on the church as a community, communion and fellowship of human beings. He says that there are two aspects to this. On the one hand, it is a fellowship of men, women and children with God and with one another in Christ. On the other hand, it is also the totality of the means by which this fellowship occurs and continues.³²

Jerome Hamer, also a Dominican, agrees with Congar that the church is a communion.³³ He says that this flows from its being the body of Christ. There is an inward aspect to this communion, the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the church, the life of grace, and the virtues of faith, hope and love. There is also an outward or external aspect to this communion. It is seen in the profession of faith, in church discipline, and in participation in the sacraments. The communion given by the Holy Spirit is also expressed in a network of interpersonal relationships of mutual concern and assistance.³⁴

The image of the Body of Christ is a key to understanding the church as a communion. It is straight out of scripture, and is closely allied to two other biblical images of the church, that of the People of God and that of the Temple of the Holy Spirit. But as long as the arid model of church as a political society prevailed, those three biblical images were neglected until their revival in the 20th century.

The image of the church as the Body of Christ, as found in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12

of Paul, stresses the mutual union, mutual concern, and mutual dependence of the members of the local community on one another. In Colossians and Ephesians, on the other hand, the accent is on the headship of Christ and the dependence of the total body of believers on him.³⁵

Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have developed the image. Augustine understands the Holy Spirit as the soul of the body, and claims that the church is not essentially visible, since it includes angels and the souls of the faithful departed that have been saved. He spoke of the 'church since Abel'. For Aquinas, the church consists of all who are in union with God, either incompletely in this life, or completely in the life of glory. For him, the Holy Spirit is the source of the union. For him, therefore, the Body of Christ is not essentially visible or hierarchical.³⁶

Since Vatican II, which gave strong emphasis to the church as a communion, some Catholic writers have argued that this implies that through the unifying presence of the Holy Spirit, the church is one great community made up of many interlocking communities. So, for the renewal of the church, 'they would wish the church in our time to become a place in which one can establish rich and satisfying primary relationships – that is, person-to-person relationships founded on mutual understanding and love'.³⁷

- **Goal**

In the image of the church as a communion in the one body of Christ, its goal is a spiritual or supernatural one. It aims to lead human beings into communion with God.³⁸ That goal goes with its very nature as a communion with God, a communion 'in Christ', a communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Just by being in the church, then, one has at least begun to be in union with God. 'To live in Christian community,' says Fuellenbach, 'is to share in the life and love of the three Persons in one God.'³⁹

- **Bonds**

In the image of the church as communion with God, the bonds that unite the people of the church to God and to one another are the interior graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁰ and their outward behaviour as Christians resulting from their shared life of grace.

- **Beneficiaries**

In this model the beneficiaries are the members of the church themselves,⁴¹ those whose lives are touched by the Holy Spirit living in the church.

- **Strengths**

The strengths of this model include the following. It connects with the in-born need of every human being for sharing and intimacy. It is more democratic and less hierarchical than the previous one. It stresses the activity and gifts of the Spirit in all the members, and the dependence of all on the contributions of each. It is very ecumenical, since it accentuates the biblical images of the Body of Christ, the People of God, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, all of which are dear to the hearts of Orthodox and Protestant Christians. It harmonizes with the teachings of the great Doctors of the Church, Augustine and Aquinas, and of the Second Vatican Council, that the church is essentially a fellowship of the Holy Spirit, a shared communion (*koinonia*) of grace. It tends to revive Christian spirituality and the practice of prayer.⁴² It is a reminder that the Holy Spirit both speaks to and inspires all kinds of persons in the church and not merely those ordained. It can and should challenge office-holders to discover, utilize and coordinate the many charisms among their people for the well-being of the whole community. As St Paul wrote: ‘Do not quench the Spirit . . . but test everything and hold fast to what is good’ (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20). It is the ultimate basis of rich interpersonal relationships of love within warm, caring human communities. So much so that it represents ‘the fulfillment of the age-old dream of all humanity for union with God and fellow human beings in justice, peace, and joy’.⁴³

- **Weaknesses**

Weaknesses with this model of communion include the following: - There is some obscurity

about the relationship between the spiritual and the visible dimensions of the church. Too much stress on the spiritual runs the risk of making the organizational aspects of the church seem unimportant and superfluous.⁴⁴ Secondly, with its strong focus on the connection of the church with the divine, it may give the impression that the church itself is as fully divine as Jesus, and be blind to the fact that across the board, the church is made up of human beings, who for that very reason are more or less weak, ignorant, sinful, inconsistent, unfaithful and unreliable. So, it does not allow enough for both freedom and failure.⁴⁵ Thirdly, it does not provide any strong motivation for missionary work. Fourthly, there is some unresolved tension between the church as a network of friendly interpersonal relationships and the church as a communion of grace.⁴⁶ Any expectation of always finding in a church a community which satisfies all one's needs for belonging seems simply doomed to frustration. Fifthly, to be wrapped up in the joy and blessing of Christian fellowship may mean forgetting the church's mission as servant of the kingdom of God. Sixthly, members of close communities may feel at home only among themselves and regard others as outsiders and intruders.

- **Concluding comments on the model of communion**

Fuellenbach observes wisely:

In the church there are two structures: the hierarchical and the charismatic. Both belong together. Charism without an ordering function disintegrates easily into turmoil, chaos, and division; order without charism results in conformism, indifference, and lifelessness. Keeping this dialectic between order and the charismatic gifts in balance is not easy.⁴⁷

C. THE CHURCH AS SACRAMENT⁴⁸

- **Meaning**

A sacrament is a sign, a particular kind of sign. A simple sign is merely a pointer to or an indicator of something else, usually of something absent. But a sacrament is a full sign, a sign of something or someone that is really present. So, in the first place, a sacrament is a sign of

grace, i.e. a sign of the presence of Christ (acting in the Holy Spirit). But it is also a cause and an instrument of his presence. In the celebration of the sacraments of the church, Jesus Christ is present and active. So the Council of Trent rightly describes a sacrament as ‘the visible form of an invisible grace’, and one that is efficacious, i.e. one which produces what it is a sign of,⁴⁹ which is to say, the active presence of Christ.

In order to bring together the external and internal aspects of the church into a satisfactory synthesis, many Catholic theologians have viewed the church as a sacrament. They reason that if Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God, the church is the sacrament of Christ. She represents him, not just because she continues his work on earth, but also because she is the continuation of his person. This is to say that the members of the church continue to be for others his body, mouth, eyes, ears, heart, hands and feet. Their responsibility is to bring people into contact with Christ and his Spirit.

As a sacrament itself, the church has both an outward and an inner aspect. The outward or structural aspect of the church is its external organization. That is essential, for without it the church would not be visible.⁵⁰ Its inner aspect is the presence of Christ (acting in the Spirit) within the faith, hope and love of the members of his body.

In this understanding of the matter, the seven sacraments are in turn sacraments of the church. As actions of Christ in and through the church community, they are efficacious, i.e. they work, they get results. They work to build up the church, and make it the sign of Christ that it is meant to be. In the words of Vatican II, the church is in Christ a ‘sign and instrument’ of union with God and of the unity of all human beings.⁵¹ Vatican II also said that the church reveals itself most clearly in the celebration of the sacraments, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist.⁵²

- **Goal**

To appreciate how a sacrament works, one has to be aware that the human spirit functions

through the body. The body is the medium of the spirit. Through the body we make contact with the world around us. So too by being his body in the world, the church is a sign, instrument and event of the saving presence of Jesus Christ. The challenge to the church is to both incarnate itself in every nation and every culture and to be a convincing sign within them all of the redeeming grace of Christ. For the church to make an impact, it is essential that in its rituals and in all its other activities it show what it is meant to be, a united community, a community and communion of shared faith, hope and love. When its members fail to express who they are as Christians, they are actually a counter-sign, obscuring and covering up the face of Christ from others.

- **Bonds**

The bonds are all the social, visible signs of the redeeming grace of Christ in the lives and activities of believing Christians. When they manifest their faith, hope and love by their words, witness, example, prayer, worship, and service to others, they are expressing and embodying the redeeming grace of Christ who is present in them and among them through his Spirit.⁵³

- **Beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries of the church as sacrament are all those who come to faith, trust and love through their contact with Christian believers. When the members of the church actually express who they are as the Body of Christ, by prayer and praise, by joy and hope, by peace and patience, by self-forgetful love, and by the practice of all Christian virtues, they are a sign and source of the presence of Christ to one another and to people outside the church. They 'become living symbols of God's love and beacons of hope in the world'.⁵⁴

- **Strengths**

The strengths of this model include the following. It brings together the visible and the invisible dimensions of the church. It gives a boost to missionary work, by stressing that the community of the church is meant to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. It can

motivate its members to work together for God's kingdom of unity, truth, love, integrity, justice, reconciliation, peace and joy.

- **Weaknesses**

Weaknesses with this model include difficulties in communicating it, at least at the popular level, and the fact that it has not been taken up much in Protestant life and thought.⁵⁵ Another difficulty is that it does not offer concrete criteria for discerning, evaluating and judging the divine and the merely human features of the church.⁵⁶

D. THE CHURCH AS HERALD⁵⁷

- **Meaning**



Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

This model sees the church as gathered, formed and constituted by the proclamation of the word of God and its acceptance in faith. This model therefore sees the church as the herald of God's word. It views the church as having received an official message and the commission to pass it on. 'The basic image is that of the herald of a king who comes to proclaim a royal decree in a public square.'⁵⁸ In this model, everything else in the church, e.g. statements of belief, liturgies, and forms of church government, are secondary to the proclamation of the word of God and the faith-response of the hearers of that word.

- **Goal**

The goal of this model is for the church to proclaim what it has heard and believed. It takes seriously the command of the risen Lord in Mk 16:15-16 (cf. Mt 28:18-20): 'Go into all the

world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.’ It understands the task of the church primarily as missionary, proclaiming the powerful word of God to the whole world by telling everyone about God’s wonderful deeds in history, and especially all that he has done in the person of Jesus Christ. But it holds that it is not its responsibility to convert people, still less to build the Kingdom of God, since God alone can convert people⁵⁹ and make his kingdom come.

- **Bonds**

With this model, the number one bond among church members is faith,⁶⁰ seen as a response to the gospel, i.e. the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord of all and the proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God. The church is first of all a community of worship in which the word is proclaimed. With many Protestants of the Reformation tradition, sacraments are secondary to the proclamation of the word. What a sacrament means for them is a sign or dramatization of the faith of the community in the word proclaimed. With this model the unity of the church is everyone responding to one and the same gospel.⁶¹

- **Beneficiaries**

In this model the beneficiaries are those who hear the word of God and put their trust in Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour, as the source of their salvation.⁶²

- **Strengths**

Among the strengths of this model are the following: - It is biblically-based in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament⁶³ and in the preaching in the New Testament of Peter, Paul and others. Secondly, it gives a clear sense of identity and mission to the church, and especially to the local church as a congregation heralding the good news of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Thirdly, it fosters a spirituality that emphasizes the sovereignty of God, the distance between God and human beings,⁶⁵ and God’s call in his word for repentance and reform of life.

- **Weaknesses**

A major weakness of this model includes the fact that it can be too wordy, and overlook or downplay the truth emphasized by Catholic Christians that the Word of God became flesh in Jesus Christ,⁶⁶ and that he is still embodied in the church, his body on earth, and in its sacraments. Another Catholic critique is that it focuses too exclusively on witness to the neglect of action.⁶⁷ It is too pessimistic in regard to human effort to cooperate with grace to build a better human society (and even the kingdom of God on earth), and that it fails to recognise the duty of Christians to do so. Lastly, 'it easily gives rise to biblical fundamentalism, one of the greatest threats to the gospel message today'.⁶⁸

- **Utilizing the charism and ministry of prophecy**

Among the neglected or suppressed charisms and corresponding charismatic ministries in the church today, Fuellenbach has drawn attention especially to those of prophecy and teaching.⁶⁹ He gives rich descriptions of how the NT ministries of prophet and teacher are meant to continue today, without being domesticated or taken over by the hierarchy. He summarizes prophecy as 'disclosure of God's plans and purposes in history'.⁷⁰ He says that the prophet's task has always been 'to proclaim to the people of God the will of God for today'.⁷¹ He observes that the role of prophets in the Early Church was 'to encourage, edify, console, and call to repentance'.⁷² 'They express warnings, admonish, give occasional premonitions and insights into the future, and are the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit in giving guidance for the church's mission'.⁷³ He suggests that 'the prophet's task is to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on proposing alternative solutions and futures never thought of'.⁷⁴

He notes too the origin of religious life in prophetic protest: 'Religious life came into existence as a protest movement against a church that had conformed too much to society at large'.⁷⁵ He singles out the 'prophetic charism' of such founders of religious congregations as Francis, Dominic and Teresa of Avila as demonstrating the uncompromising nature of the

gospel and as moving the large-scale institution of the church into new situations and circumstances.⁷⁶ He endorses the proposition that the priority of religious life today is the witness to community life:

Religious life in community must be a clear sign that our Christian faith can create communities in which peace, justice, love, and true brotherhood and sisterhood are not just empty words but lived realities. As communities within the church, they serve as the visible and tangible anticipation of the final community that God intends for the whole of creation. The reconciling power of the Holy Spirit creates a community that, already here on earth, reveals among men and women the unity and harmony that are to find their fullness at the end of time. Because of all the brokenness of human life and the impossibility of ever creating a perfect community, the sign that God's kingdom has broken into the world has to be demonstrated in our time.⁷⁷

- **Utilizing the charism and ministry of teaching**

In the churches of the New Testament there was a recognized group of teachers. Their role was to not only pass on the tradition they received from the founding apostles but also to interpret it. New situations require fresh interpretations. In interpreting the tradition they therefore also developed it.⁷⁸ Their ministry tended to complement that of the prophets, and save the latter from fanatical excesses.⁷⁹ Their successors in the church are the theologians and exegetes.⁸⁰ Their task, in the words of Dulles, is 'to reflect synthetically and critically on the Christian message, bringing out its meaning and coherence.'⁸¹ It is a task that must be exercised in the community and is not just an optional choice by those who have the gift for it. It belongs to the essential structure of the church, contributes a distinct service to the church community, and contains a magisterium of its own, which at times may not be in total agreement with the official teaching.⁸²

E. THE CHURCH AS SERVANT⁸³

- **Meaning**



Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The basic attitude that goes with this model is that the church is in the world, not over against the world, and that as part of the human family, it shares the concerns of other human beings. As Vatican II has said: ‘The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.’⁸⁴

The image which best goes with this attitude is that of the church as servant. It could hardly be more beautifully expressed than by the late Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston:

Jesus came not only to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom, he came also to give himself for its realization. He came to serve, to heal, to reconcile, to bind up wounds, Jesus, we may say, is in an exceptional way the Good Samaritan. . . . So it is that the church announces the coming of the Kingdom not only in word, through preaching and proclamation, but more particularly in work, in her ministry of reconciliation, of binding up wounds, of suffering service, of healing. . . . [Just] as the Lord was the ‘man for others’, so must the church be ‘the community for others.’⁸⁵

- **Goal**

The goal of this model is not to recruit new members for the church but to be of help to all human beings, wherever they are, and to keep alive among them their hopes and aspirations for a better world founded on positive and healthy human values, such values as those also of the Kingdom of God,⁸⁶ e.g. truth, love, compassion, forgiveness, justice, reconciliation, peace and joy. A particular service of the church is to discern the signs of the times, and in defence

of kingdom values, to offer prophetic criticism of social systems, organizations, policies and behaviour.

- **Bonds**

The bonds of union, in this model, are most of all the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood that springs up among those Christians who join together to give Christian service to the world of humanity. Such bonds tend to cut through the traditional denominational divisions and forge a new communion among otherwise divided and estranged Christians.⁸⁷

- **Beneficiaries**

In this model the beneficiaries are primarily and principally those human beings all over the world who hear a word of comfort or encouragement from the church, who receive a concerned and respectful hearing from the church, or who receive some material or other forms of practical assistance from the church.⁸⁸

- **Strengths**

A particular strength of this model is that it saves the church from being turned in on itself, but rather turned out towards struggling and suffering human beings wherever they are. It sees the church as an agent of social change. It continues the activity of Jesus himself, whose heart was moved with compassion for all kinds of sick, broken and needy persons, and who frequently restored them to physical and mental health. It is backed by what Jesus says about works of mercy in his Parable of the Great Judgment (Mt 25: 31-46), '*I was hungry . . . etc.*' In this model - to echo the Prayer of Francis of Assisi - where there is hatred, the church brings love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. So it seeks to give the church a new relevance, especially to the poor and oppressed, a new modernity, and a new sense of mission.

- **Weaknesses**

One suggested weakness is the inadequacy or ambiguity of the image of ‘*servant*’. It suggests work done under orders and not freely, work done for the good of others but not for oneself, and work that is humble and degrading.⁸⁹ To serve God by serving others requires a free commitment. It also requires self-emptying, as in washing another’s feet. Self-emptying in serving another, however, can also bring feelings of self-worth, fulfilment and satisfaction to the one serving. As the Prayer of St Francis has it: ‘it is in giving that we receive . . .’

Another possible weakness is that in the NT the service (*diakonia*) mentioned is the service Christians give to one another. No NT writer seems to envisage any mission of the church to abolish such existing social institutions as slavery or Roman rule over Palestine. On the other hand, the Servant Songs of Isaiah which speak of restoring sight to the blind, setting prisoners free, and comforting the broken-hearted, may be as applicable to the church as to the Messiah (cf. Is: 61:1; Lk 4:16-19).⁹⁰ But even if it can be argued that the NT does not assert that the role of the church is to make the world a better place to live in, but rather sees salvation as happening in an afterlife, NT teachings are not necessarily the last word on the subject. They can develop, and, in fact, they have developed, but without fostering the illusion that any time soon we are destined for some kind of paradise on earth.

F. TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS: THE COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES MODEL

- **Meaning**

To his first edition of *Models of the Church* (1974), Dulles has added a chapter that he calls ‘The Church: Community of Disciples’.⁹¹ Implicitly, he appears to view this model as a kind of unifying thread running through the five previous models, and one that tends to bring them closer together. So I will conclude my presentation and development of Dulles’s special contribution to our study of images, understandings, and models of the church in history, by highlighting and reflecting on some features of his treatment of this sixth model. In treating it he makes his own the image that Pope John Paul II applied to the church in his first encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis* [The Redeemer of Humanity] in 1979,⁹² an image that

has been warmly received ever since.

This image and model is solidly grounded in scripture, in the action of Jesus in his public life of gathering around him a big group of followers, both men and women.⁹³ Among those who followed in his footsteps were his chosen inner circle of close companions and co-workers, known as 'the Twelve'. As risen Lord, Jesus brings them back together, after they have left him and fled. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost described in Acts Ch. 2, the number of those who believe in him expands rapidly. Luke calls those who believe, 'disciples', and in Acts 6:2 he refers to 'the whole community of the disciples'. A new image has been born, one that emphasizes personal experience of Jesus Christ alive!

Fuellenbach comments on the meaning and value of this sixth model:

The three basic elements of following the Lord in the New Testament are outlined best in Mark 3:3-15: called, to be with, and to be sent out. The stress in a vision of church as a community of disciples seems to be on the second aspect. To be a disciple means first and foremost to be with the Lord, to have been called by him into intimacy, to have firsthand knowledge of him. According to 1 John 1:1-4, to be a disciple means to have seen, touched, and lived with the Lord before one can be sent out. Mission means to witness to one's own experience of the Lord.⁹⁴

- **Strengths**

The discipleship model gives a real boost to evangelisation and service, the emphases of the fourth and fifth models. In the heyday of the institutional model, evangelisation was the prerogative of priests and religious. But Vatican II has insisted that 'the obligation of spreading the faith falls individually on every disciple of Christ'.⁹⁵ Besides proclaiming the good news (in the herald model) the community of the disciples of Jesus, both as individuals and together, must also reproduce the deeds of Jesus (in the servant model). It must fight poverty and disease, bring compassion and healing to the sick and the dying, and help others in need.

Nowadays the Catholic Church stresses a close link between evangelisation and action for justice, development, peace and liberation in the world.⁹⁶ ‘Our discipleship,’ writes Gustavo Gutierrez, the father of liberation theology, ‘is our appropriation of [Jesus’] message of life, his love of the poor, his denunciation of injustice, his sharing of bread, his hope of resurrection.’⁹⁷ Dulles stresses further that the discipleship model motivates the members of the church to imitate Jesus in their personal lives.⁹⁸

He also suggests that the same qualities which make the church the sacrament of Christ also make it the community of disciples. In both models, the church has its origins in Christ. In both too the church is the representative of Christ (cf. Lk 10:16; Mt 10:40-42). In the third place, Jesus Christ is really present in the community of disciples as in a sacrament. Indeed, to feed or clothe needy disciples is to feed or clothe Jesus himself in his members (Mt 25:35-40), and to persecute them is to persecute Jesus in his members (Acts 9:5).⁹⁹ But community of disciples is a somewhat better designation than sacrament, since the latter is somewhat impersonal and because it also suggests that the church is without defect. Moreover, the idea of community of disciples has more support in Scripture than the church as sacrament.¹⁰⁰

- **The question of weaknesses**

Like the other models, the community of disciples does have some weaknesses, ones which Dulles identifies, but at least partly refutes.¹⁰¹ But it also has this strength that it calls attention to the radical break with worldly values that is required for fidelity to Jesus, and it does not conceal or play down the cost of following him, and of giving him first place in one’s life - above family, friends, property and personal ambition.¹⁰² If this seems like ‘mission impossible’, the advice Dulles gives is particularly appropriate ‘Discipleship always depends upon a call or vocation from Christ, a demanding call that brings with it the grace needed for its own acceptance.’¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Dulles strikes a note of realism when he observes: ‘The disciple is by definition one who has not yet arrived, a learner . . . to be a disciple . . . is to be still on the way to full conversion and blessedness of life’.¹⁰⁴

Fuellenbach has emphasized the community dimension of this model when he writes that ‘. . . it is in the community that one finds support and discerns with others which way the Lord leads’,¹⁰⁵ and that ‘only the community can provide the atmosphere, the concern, the mutual love, and the experience of Christ risen and alive that will enable the disciple to live true discipleship’.¹⁰⁶

Dulles continues:

I repeat . . . that the community of disciples is only one perspective on the church. Other images and models, such as servant, sacrament, mystical body, and institution, are needed to remind us that the church is an organic and juridically organized community established by the Lord and animated by his Spirit. Through reflection on these models, we can continually enrich our understanding of discipleship itself.¹⁰⁷

Recently, Fuellenbach has advanced two additional images, understandings, and models of the church.¹⁰⁸ But they may both be regarded as variations of the model of the church as a community and communion. They are not proposed as substitutes for the church as institution but as a counterbalance.¹⁰⁹

G. BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

- **Meaning and activities**

These are found mostly in Latin America, Asia and Africa where 70% of the Catholics of the world live. They exist as small groups, and especially as neighbourhood groups. They are typically churches of the poor rather than churches for the poor. They continue as works in progress rather than as fully structured, self-reliant and self-contained communities. While they share some common features, there are individual cultural differences among them. A profoundly held shared conviction is that ‘the Christian faith can only be grasped, personally experienced, and joyfully embraced in a community of people who reinforce one another in

their commitment to the gospel'.¹¹⁰ They are quite similar to the house churches of the first Christians. They consciously seek to live out the qualities of the kingdom of God: - equality, participation, fellowship, and communion – or in the words of Romans 14:17, justice, peace and joy.¹¹¹ Their members seek to really know one another, meet with one another, care for one another and support one another within rich and deep interpersonal relationships. They meet often to reflect on the good news of the Word of God in the context of their life experiences and problems, to pray together and, as often as possible, to be nourished by the Eucharist. Their faith-sharing centres on the person of Christ. It leads them to work together for that better world he proclaimed in word and deed, God's kind of world (the kingdom), and especially in their own situations. They choose their own leaders. They also develop bonds with other Christian communities, through visits e.g., and with the church as a whole. They are linked with their local parish communities, and especially through celebrations of the Sunday Eucharist with the whole parish.

- **Animating theological principles**

They are animated by three theological principles which developed during Vatican II or shortly afterwards: - 1. The church must be understood in relation to the world. 2. God's will to save goes beyond the boundaries of the church. 3. The church has a concrete role to play in the sociopolitical liberation of human beings.¹¹² But they work within the framework of parishes and dioceses, so that if the bishop or parish priest does not want them, they can do nothing.¹¹³

They are based especially on the conviction that the church is a sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

So the idea of charism is basic to their workings. Fuellenbach remarks:

Charism is understood as the manifestation of the Spirit's presence in each member of the community and directing everything for the good of all. Each member of the community is charismatic, exercising a particular function in the community and enjoying a fundamental equality with other members. As the organizing principle, charism includes the hierarchy. The charism of office is that of exercising leadership within the community. The charism is of prime importance by virtue of the fact that it is responsible for harmony

among the many diverse charisms within the community. But, nevertheless, the hierarchy is to be seen as possessing one ministry among many other charisms that together build up the whole church.¹¹⁴

- **A model for the wider church?**

The small church communities just considered are a phenomenon especially of the so-called Third World. But they might well prove a model for the church of the so-called First World. This is a world in which there is more and more preoccupation with consumer goods and material things, a world too in which there is less and less consciousness of the presence, activity, and significance of God. It is a world too in which more and more persons are experiencing the inadequacy of the parish for their faith to both survive and thrive.¹¹⁵ They are feeling more and more the need to belong to real close communities of faith, hope and love, communities in which faith is expressed in a truly personal way, where all share their faith, where all feel equal and respected, communities in which they can develop significant interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging, and the opportunity to reach out to others in loving and humble service, justice and compassion.

H. THE CHURCH AS A CONTRAST SOCIETY¹¹⁶

This model has been proposed by the brothers Gerhard and Norbert Lohfink,¹¹⁷ but one that has been enthusiastically taken up and promoted by Fuellenbach. It is a model of how God imagines and wants human society to be. It is counter-cultural and even subversive of the status quo. It pictures the church as a community with different values from those of a globalized world, such as the pursuit of money, power, competition and success. These tend to divide the world into 'haves' and 'have nots', and to exclude and marginalize many persons. The values of the church as a contrast society are those of Jesus and the kingdom of God. The church 'is seen primarily as a community in which justice and compassion are the basic rules of conduct, which must be demanded from society at large as well if the church wants to fulfil its primary mission to lead all human societies into the kingdom of God now and to come'.¹¹⁸ It sees itself in solidarity with the poor. But while it has a particular concern

for the poor and oppressed, the victims of society, it is not a social action group as such, but a community that stands out for following the Lord and proclaiming his kingdom. It is in harmony with the self-understanding of the early churches, which saw their communities as present within and yet set apart from the surrounding society. Those first Christians stood out for their unity in Christ, their acceptance of one another as brothers and sisters, their readiness to share with one another, their sense of equality and their rejection of distinctions of class and race (cf. Gal 3:28; Acts 4:32; Rom 12:2). But once the church became the 'official society' under the Emperor Constantine, it became an agent of the state, and compromised such requirements of the gospel.

I. CONCLUSION: THE QUESTION OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE IMAGE OR IMAGES TODAY

Fuellenbach asks the questions of consequences, the '*so what*' ones. He asks:

What image do we have of the church as the true bearer and carrier of Jesus' own vision? Do we have an image of the church which can inspire people and provide them with an ideal with which they can identify and to which they can commit themselves with enthusiasm and lasting zeal?'¹¹⁹

To ask those questions is surely a particularly appropriate conclusion to the survey of images of the church that this presentation has offered. But no answers to those questions will be adequate if they fail to take into account the insistence of Dulles that no one model by itself is sufficient for an adequate understanding of the complex mystery of the church in all its dimensions. He has said: 'In order to do justice to the various aspects of the church, as a complex reality, we must work simultaneously with different models. By a kind of mental juggling act, we have to keep several models in the air at once.'¹²⁰ The different models must complement one another, and compensate for the deficiencies of each.¹²¹ He also says that by being '*catholic*', the Catholic Church must be open to all God's truth, no matter who speaks it.¹²² This is a truly ecumenical attitude, and one that fosters pluralism in theology,¹²³ including the theology of images, understanding, and models of the church in history.

¹ See my twin article, 'Images and Understandings of the Church in the New Testament', *Australian E-Journal of Theology*, Issue 8 (October 2006).

² See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (New York: Doubleday: Image Books, 2002), an expansion of the second edition of his work (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988). See too his 'Imaging the Church for the 1980s', *A Church to Believe in: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), Ch.1.

³ Citing Antonio Lambino, John Fuellenbach, *Church: Community for the Kingdom* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2002), says: 'A model is a conceptual and symbolic representation or system by which we try to grasp and express reality in whole or in part' (109). He borrows from Louis Luzbetak to assert: 'Good models will always be (1) useful, (2) open, (3) fitting, and (4) stimulating' (ibid., 110).

⁴ Robert Bellarmine, *De controversiis*, tom 2, lib 3, cap 2 (Naples: Giuliano, 1857), vol. 2, 75. Cited by Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 26.

⁵ Dulles, 'Imaging', 3.

⁶ Dulles, ibid., 4.

⁷ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 28.

⁸ Dulles, ibid., 27.

⁹ Cf. Dulles, ibid., 30.

¹⁰ The expression is attributed to the late Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani.

¹¹ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 31.

¹² Dulles, ibid., 32.

¹³ Cf. Dulles, ibid.

¹⁴ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 27.

¹⁵ In his *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1965), Congar speaks specifically of a tendency in history to regard the church 'as machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman see, in a word, 'hierarchology'. On the other hand, the two terms between which the mediation comes, the Holy Spirit on the one side, the faithful people or the religious subject on the other, were as it were kept out of ecclesiological consideration' (45).

¹⁶ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 33.

¹⁷ *The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ* (Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XII 'Mystici Corporis Christi' 1943), London: Catholic Truth Society, 1955), n.21.

-
- ¹⁸ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 33.
- ¹⁹ Dulles, *ibid.*, 35.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 34.
- ²² Dulles, *ibid.*
- ²³ Dulles, *ibid.*
- ²⁴ See commentaries on this, e.g. that of Francis Moloney, *A Body Broken for a Broken People: Eucharist in the New Testament* (Melbourne, Australia: Collins Dove, 1990).
- ²⁵ Cf. Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 36.
- ²⁶ Dulles, *ibid.*, 37.
- ²⁷ Dulles, *ibid.*
- ²⁸ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 38.
- ²⁹ Cf. Dulles, *Models*, Ch.III, 'The Church as Mystical Communion'; Fuellenbach, *Church*, 147-155.
- ³⁰ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 152.
- ³¹ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*
- ³² See Congar, *Lay People*, 28-58.
- ³³ See Jerome Hamer, *The Church Is a Communion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964).
- ³⁴ Hamer, *The Church*, 204.
- ³⁵ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 43.
- ³⁶ Dulles, *ibid.*
- ³⁷ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 49.
- ³⁸ Dulles, *ibid.*, 50.
- ³⁹ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 151.
- ⁴⁰ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 49.
- ⁴¹ Dulles, *ibid.*, 50.
- ⁴² Dulles, *ibid.*, 51.

-
- ⁴³ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 155.
- ⁴⁴ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 52.
- ⁴⁵ Dulles, 'Imaging', 15.
- ⁴⁶ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 53.
- ⁴⁷ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 143. He notes: 'At the present moment there is a tendency to reaffirm the role of the hierarchy. This is understandable in the wake of excessive criticism of all authority in the church' (144).
- ⁴⁸ Cf. Dulles, *Models* (Expanded ed.), 'The Church as Sacrament', Ch.1V; Yves Congar, 'The Church, Universal Sacrament of Salvation', *The Church That I Love* (Denville N.J.: Dimension Books, 1969), Ch.2; Fuellenbach, 'The Church as Sacrament', *Church*, 155-161.
- ⁴⁹ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 58-59.
- ⁵⁰ Dulles, *ibid.*, 61.
- ⁵¹ *Lumen gentium*, 'The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,' a.9, a.48.
- ⁵² *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 'The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,' a.10.
- ⁵³ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 64.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. Dulles, *ibid.*, 65.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. Dulles, *ibid.*, 67.
- ⁵⁶ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 160.
- ⁵⁷ Cf. Dulles, 'The Church as Herald', *Models*, Ch. V; Fuellenbach, 'The Church as Herald', *Church*, 161-163; William Henn, 'Believing God's Word', *Church: The People of God* (London & New York: Burns & Oates, 2004), Ch. 2.
- ⁵⁸ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 69.
- ⁵⁹ Dulles, *ibid.*, 76.
- ⁶⁰ Dulles, *ibid.*, 75.
- ⁶¹ Dulles, *ibid.*
- ⁶² Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 76.
- ⁶³ Dulles, *ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 76-77.

⁶⁵ Dulles, *ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁶ Cf. Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 77ff.

⁶⁷ Dulles, *ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁸ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 163.

⁶⁹ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 125ff.

⁷⁰ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 130.

⁷¹ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 136.

⁷² Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 129.

⁷³ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁵ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁶ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁷ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 137-138. The ideal leads him to ask: 'Are religious today really offering this prophetic critique to the church and to society as a whole? Have religious orders betrayed their calling so that God must devise other means to take up this task in the church? Is God's history of salvation moving in a different direction?' (138).

⁷⁸ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 139-140.

⁷⁹ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 140.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Cited in Fuellenbach, *ibid.* Dulles, *ibid.*, remarks: 'Yet the critical observations of theology are no more enthusiastically welcomed than the denunciation of the prophets. Theologians, too, are at times suspected of disloyalty to the institutions.'

⁸² Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 140-141.

⁸³ Cf. Dulles, 'The Church as Servant', *Models* (expanded ed.); Ch.VI; Fuellenbach, 'The Church as Servant', *Church*, 163-165.

⁸⁴ *Gaudium et spes*, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,' a.1.

⁸⁵ Richard Cardinal Cushing, *The Servant Church* [Pastoral Letter] (Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1966), 6-8 Cf. a statement of the great Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1967): 'The church is the church only when it exists for others. To make a start it should give away all its property to those in need. The clergy must live solely on the free-will offerings of their congregations, or possibly engage in some secular calling.'

The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving' (203-204). Cf. also, Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York; Macmillan, 1965: 'The church's task in the secular city is to be the *diakonos* of the city, the servant who bends himself to struggle for its wholeness and health' (134).

⁸⁶ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 89-90.

⁸⁷ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 89.

⁸⁸ Dulles, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 91.

⁹⁰ Dulles, *ibid.*, 92.

⁹¹ See Dulles, *Models* (expanded. ed.), Ch. XIII. Cf. his 'Imaging the Church for the 1980's,' New York: Crossroad, 1982, Ch.1.

⁹² Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 198.

⁹³ Cf. Dulles, *ibid.*, 199ff.

⁹⁴ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 114.

⁹⁵ *Ad gentes*, 'Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity', a.23; Cf. *Lumen gentium*, a.17.

⁹⁶ Cf, Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 212.

⁹⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 96. Cited by Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 213.

⁹⁸ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 214.

⁹⁹ Dulles, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Dulles, *Models* (expanded ed.), 215.

¹⁰¹ Dulles, *ibid.*, 215ff.

¹⁰² Dulles, *ibid.*, 215-216.

¹⁰³ Dulles, *ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁴ Dulles, 'Imaging', 10. Cf. Fuellenbach, *Church*: 'According to the New Testament one is never a disciple but is always on the road to becoming a disciple. Discipleship is a precarious thing, something any of us can easily betray or deny. To remain in the company of Jesus requires a fresh grace from the Lord every day. The emphasis here is that being a disciple means to be on a journey towards discipleship . . . It means "to go behind the Master" and to let him determine the way, to let oneself be corrected every day. It is here that the community becomes quite important, because it is in the community that one finds support and discerns with others which way the Lord leads' (116).

¹⁰⁵ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 117.

¹⁰⁷ Dulles, *ibid.*, 226.

¹⁰⁸ See Fuellenbach, 'Two Models for the Future Church: Basic Ecclesial Communities and a Contrast Society', *Church*, Ch. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 173.

¹¹⁰ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 171. He observes: 'As the saying goes, faith that is not shared dies. Individuals may not be able to maintain their enthusiasm for Christ and his message without the support of a community that shares with them that enthusiasm and joy which come with a true encounter with Christ and his Spirit' (194).

¹¹¹ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 175.

¹¹² Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 174.

¹¹³ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 193, citing Clodovis Boff.

¹¹⁴ Fuellenbach, *ibid.*, 175, citing Leonardo Boff.

¹¹⁵ Recent parish mergers have for some Catholics aggravated their sense of alienation from the parish.

¹¹⁶ See Fuellenbach, 'The Church as a Contrast Society', *Church*, 196-207.

¹¹⁷ Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church: Towards a Theology of the People of God* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 51-120; Norbert Lohfink, *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible* (Berkeley CA: Bibal Press, 1987), 48-52.

¹¹⁸ Fuellenbach, *Church*, 197.

¹¹⁹ Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus for Today* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 250. He suggests: 'The present prevailing image of the church in many parts of the world is that of organized religion with laws, rules, and structures. The church is seen as an institution in society which fulfils expected functions along with institutions like business, government, labour, and entertainment. Society has allotted a role to religion and expects it to fulfil it without interference in any other institutions and their respective functions. In allowing itself to be integrated into society, the church loses its world-transforming power' (250-251).

¹²⁰ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1987), 10.

¹²¹ Dulles, *ibid.*, 206.

¹²² Dulles, *Models* (Doubleday Image ed.), 10.

¹²³ Dulles, *ibid.*, 13.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Congar, Yves. 'The Church: The People of God.' *The Church and Mankind*. E. Schillebeeckx ed. Concilium 1, 1964, 7-19.

_____ 'The Historical Development of Authority in the Church.' *Problems of Authority*. Helicon & Dartman, Longman & Todd: Baltimore & London, 1962, 119-156.

_____ *Diversity and Communion*. London: SCM Press, 1982.

_____ *The Mystery of the Church*. London & Baltimore: Geoffrey Chapman & Helicon Press, 1960.

_____ 'The Role of the Church in the Modern World.' *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. H. Vorgrimler ed. London: Burns & Oates, 1969, 202-203.

_____ *This Church that I Love*. Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1969.

_____ *The Mystery of the Temple*. London: Burns & Oates, 1962.

Dulles, Avery. 'Imaging the Church for the 1980s.' *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom*. New York: Crossroad, 1982, Ch.1.

_____ *Models of the Church*. 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1987.

_____ *Models of the Church*. Expanded ed. New York: Doubleday Image, 2001.

Fuellenbach, John. 'The Meaning of "Church" in the Teaching of Vatican II.' 'The Use of Models in Ecclesiology.' 'Two Models for the Future Church.' *Church: Community for the Kingdom*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2002, Chs. 3, 6, & 7.

Haight, Roger. *Christian Community in History: Volume 1: Historical Ecclesiology*. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Hill, Edmund. 'Church.' *The New Dictionary of Theology*. J. Komonchak et al. eds. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987, 185-201.

Himes, Michael. 'The Development of Ecclesiology: Modernity to the Twentieth Century.' *The Gift of the Church*. P. Phan ed. Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 2000, Ch. 3.

Lennan, Richard. 'Communion Ecclesiology: Foundations, Critiques, and Affirmations.' *Pacifica* 20 (February 2007), 24-39.

McBrien, Richard. 'Church.' *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. R. McBrien et al. eds. New York: Harper Collins, 1995, 313-314.

* _____ 'The Church in History.' *Catholicism*. North Blackburn, Vic.: Collins Dove, 1994, Ch.XVII.

_____ 'III. The Church in History. Questions 23-37.' *Responses to 101 Questions on the Church*.' New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1996, 33-54.

Plumer, Eric. 'The Development of Ecclesiology: Early Church to the Reformation.' *The Gift of the Church*. P. Phan ed. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000, Ch. 2.

Author

Brian Gleeson CP is a doctor of theology and lectures on Church and Sacraments at the Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill, Victoria.

Email: Brian Gleeson [bgcp@pacific.net.au]