

# B. C. Butler's Developing Understanding of Church: An Intellectual Biography

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## A DISSERTATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>B.C. BUTLER’S DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF CHURCH: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY ...</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Bishop Butler: A Biographical Overview .....	8
Butler and Newman .....	14
Butler and von Hügel .....	16
Butler and Lonergan .....	18
Statement of Thesis .....	21
The Context.....	22
Methodology.....	25
The Design.....	28
Organization.....	29
Bibliography .....	29
<b>PART I CONVERSION: BASIL BUTLER’S SUBJECTIVE STORY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: THE SEARCH FOR THE ONE THING NECESSARY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
A Reason to Believe .....	31
The role of the apologist.....	31
Bishop Butler: An ecumenical apologist .....	32
Conversion: A specific task of the apologist .....	33
Butler and the universal question: What is the meaning of life? .....	34
Unification: Seeking the One Thing Necessary .....	36
The Church: The Fulfillment of the One Thing Necessary .....	40
Unification: The contemporary context .....	40
Unification and the future .....	41
Selfishness: The real obstacle to world unity .....	41
Unification: A moral concern .....	42
Unification and ecumenism .....	43
Summary .....	44
<b>CHAPTER TWO: CONSCIENCE—THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEART .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Introduction: Conscience and the Love of God .....	45
Conscience, Fundamental Option, and the Spiritual Life .....	47
Conscience, Authority, and Responsible Freedom .....	50
Conscience, the Ethical Imperative, and Conversion.....	54

Summary .....	58
<b>CHAPTER THREE: BUTLER’S DIALOGUE WITH BERNARD LONERGAN.....</b>	<b>60</b>
Introduction .....	60
Butler, the Early Lonergan, and the Second Vatican Council .....	61
Butler, the Later Lonergan, and the Turn to the Subject.....	65
A new synthesis .....	67
A silent dialogue.....	68
The link.....	72
Conversion .....	74
The question .....	74
Interpretive remarks.....	76
Newman on apprehension and assent. ....	76
Lonergan and Butler on conversion and the basic option. ....	77
Second conversion.....	80
Data of theology .....	81
Summary .....	82
<b>PART II FROM THE GREAT CHURCH OF THE PAST TO THE GREAT CHURCH OF THE FUTURE: BASIL BUTLER’S ECCLESIAL STORY .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: KOINONIA AND INDIVISIBLE VISIBLE UNITY .....</b>	<b>83</b>
Introduction .....	83
Crisis of Meaning in Christianity .....	84
The Emergence of the Question of Visible Unity.....	90
Visible Unity: The question for the ecumenical movement .....	91
The witness of the Great Church of the past.....	94
Reformation views of the Church .....	100
Toward the Great Church of the Future .....	102
Koinonia and communion in general.....	102
Ecumenism and koinonia.....	105
Butler’s metachronics and koinonia .....	107
Summary .....	109
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: NEW ORIENTATIONS IN ECCLESIOLOGY: BUTLER ON THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH.....</b>	<b>111</b>
Introduction .....	111
The Sacramentality of Church Governance: Butler on the Limits of Authority .....	115

The ordinary magisterium: A question of concordia-communion .....	116
Episcopate and papacy: Sacramental realities .....	118
The Unitive Role of Church Governance: Butler on Authority and Freedom .....	122
Authority and constraint.....	122
Conscience and dissent.....	123
True authority: Of God, in Christ .....	126
Dimensions of Conversion .....	127
Overcoming the sin of schism: An ecumenical concern .....	127
Consensus in ecumenical theology.....	129
Who is to say? Koinonia and authority.....	131
The Universal Call to Salvation: The Missionary Dilemma.....	133
The nature of the dilemma .....	133
Salvation outside the Church: The wider ecumenism .....	133
Butler’s christology of mission.....	135
Who belongs to the Church? Where is the Church? .....	135
Summary .....	138
<b>IN CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE RT. REVEREND BISHOP B. C. BUTLER .....</b>	<b>146</b>

## B.C. Butler's Developing Understanding of Church: An Intellectual Biography

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The question of the relevance of the Church in a time of cultural crisis calls for both a reinterpretation of the Church's basic meaning and for competent interpreters. In this regard, the name of Basil Christopher Butler, a monk of the English Benedictine Congregation and a bishop, emerges not only as a noted apologist and ecumenist but also as a Council Father dedicated to *aggiornamento*. The purpose of this dissertation is twofold. First, it provides in Part I an interpretation of Bishop Butler's basic horizon from within which the Church emerges as the single most unifying force in the fragmented human condition and conscience emerges as the single most significant aspect of Butler's subjective principle—conscience mediating the search for the one thing necessary, which search arises from the principle of free responsibility to which the grace of conversion is offered and by it received. Second, in Part II, attention is directed to the ecclesial emphases that derive when such a basic horizon is operative, uniquely in Butler's attention to the issues of unity and authority. Bishop Butler's story evidences conversion and Church as data for theology as theology carries out its task of mediating religion in a culture.

Research indicates that Bishop Butler's ecumenical and apologetic effectiveness reaches maturity in his interpretation of *aggiornamento* in the light of Lonergan's theory of emergent probability. The evolutionary novelty of the Second Vatican Council, faithful to the past yet capable of audacious change, is a tentative, provisional, and imperfect situation. Yet in this context Butler directs attention and gives direction to areas of special ecclesial interest: Vatican II's shift from the objective to the subjective aspects of human and Christian experience with a new vision of the institutional Church. Butler directs his attention to the unfinished business of the Council, i.e., the relation of a universal episcopate to the papacy. The present task of the Church is to embody the spirit of the Council within the structure and life of the *koinonia*. Such an embodiment will lend a flexibility in interpreting hierarchical authority and thus facilitate the ecumenical task. The Great Church of the future, expressed in *koinonia*, will then carry out its universal mission to humanity. Butler calls all Christian churches to rededicate themselves to the restoration of indivisible visible unity constitutive of *koinonia*. Such a rededication requires mutual ecclesial and personal conversion from the sin of schism to the establishment of perfect communion.

The dissertation concludes that although Bishop Butler's vision lacks the further and necessary reflection on the liturgical aspects constitutive of *koinonia*, he has drawn attention to the key cognitive components of the unity that must prevail. Conversion, as articulated by Bishop Butler, verifies the thesis that a renewed ecclesiology must be grounded by a subjective religious principle. The Church must ever a medium through which all of humanity can receive the deepest satisfaction of its radical yearning for unification, the self-communication of God revealed as Jesus in and through the Church.

## INTRODUCTION

It is time for those who lived the Council passionately, and who believe that it offers us the key to the Christian and human future, to make their voices heard. (B. C. Butler)<sup>1</sup>

The above text aptly introduces Bishop Basil Christopher Butler, not only as the subject of this dissertation, but as a spokesman for the Church in our time.<sup>2</sup> As an influential Council Father, Butler has dedicated himself to the aggiornamento initiated by Vatican II and supports that dedication by an understanding of the Church that is ecumenical, intellectually cogent, morally effective, and religiously compelling.<sup>3</sup>

With this dissertation I hope to accomplish two tasks, both of which are reflected in the title: B. C. Butler's Developing Understanding of Church: An Intellectual Biography. First, I will describe the development of Butler's thought with respect to his idea of church. Besides being an exposition of certain ecclesiological concepts, this dissertation also serves as an intellectual biography introducing Butler's life and thought to an American audience.<sup>4</sup> Second, and more technically, I will defend the thesis that Butler's life and thought, with some modification, are paradigmatic of Bernard Lonergan's notion of conversion, which notion is of considerable interest to contemporary theology.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Christians in a New Era* (New York: Maryknoll Publications, 1969), p. 13 (hereafter cited as *CNE*). This series of essays appeared first as "The Meaning of Renewal" in *The Tablet* (London), then as a book entitled *In the Light of the Council* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1968). A Maryknoll jacket blurb comments that "of all Englishmen [Butler is] the best qualified to write on the subject."

<sup>2</sup> Professor Valentine Rice, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, provides two sources of biographical data. The first, *Dom Christopher Butler: The Abbot of Downside* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), was written in preparation for University of Notre Dame honorary degrees conferred on Council Fathers who were making contemporary Church history. The second source is Rice's *Introduction to Searchings: Essays and Studies by B. C. Butler* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1974), pp. 9-27. Biographical data of another sort is provided by Butler himself in his intellectual autobiography, *A Time to Speak* (Southend-on-Sea, England: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1972). Personal data and events pertaining to Butler that are significant for this dissertation will be supplied in an Appendix. The above-mentioned works will be cited hereafter as *DCS*, *Searchings*, and *ATTS*, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> *The New York Times*, December 2, 1966, noted that Abbot Butler's appointment as bishop would especially be hailed by the intelligentsia of England. An impressive tribute is Henri de Lubac's comment that Butler is "one of the most noble and learned men of our generation." See "The Church in Crisis," *Theology Digest* 17 (Winter 1969): 312-25. More recently, Butler's brilliance is acknowledged by Richard A. McCormick in his essay, "Authority and Morality," *America* 142 (March 1, 1980): 170.

<sup>4</sup> In his Introduction to *Searchings*, Rice points out that

"beneath the surface diversity of these studies there is . . . an underlying unity of concern. There are two unifying principles—the particular biographical experiences of the author and his emphasis on the necessity for a theological return to the Bible. The second is, of course, a product of the first. And very often both are operating together" (p. 25).

A similar principle is at work in the title of this dissertation, a title which indicates that a subjective principle grounds Butler's ecclesiology. In no way can this dissertation do adequate service to the quality of Butler's intellect, but it will afford an introduction to Butler's thought which might be called "The Mind and Heart of Butler." Nicholas Lash, a longtime friend of Butler, in reviewing *Searchings*, states that this collection "needs complementing by another (which will surely one day be published) showing how . . . years of austere 'watching' bore fruit in the statesmanship and breadth of vision of recent years." See *The Tablet* 229 (July 12, 1975): 649-50.

<sup>5</sup> Butler acknowledges his dependence on Lonergan. See *CNE*, p. 10, and "Back to Philosophy," *ATTS*, pp. 115-37. It must be said from the outset that Butler, in trying to show his admiration for Lonergan, is telling his own story, not Lonergan's. This study works from the same perspective. It is inevitable that

Butler's determination to speak on behalf of the Church reflects an imperative that is compelling. This dissertation seeks to reveal the compelling nature of that imperative and the role it plays in the formation of Butler's ecclesiology. Moreover, Butler wants to be heard.<sup>6</sup> The title of Butler's autobiography, *A Time to Speak*, is significant here, for this dissertation is an effort to let Bishop Butler speak—specifically to let him speak in the context of Church and conversion. Butler maintains that both are primary data for theology, and this can be demonstrated in his own life and thought.<sup>7</sup>

Part I of the dissertation will reflect the subjective dimension that grounds Bishop Butler's life, and Part II will explicate the religious thought that objectifies that subjective element. This Introduction follows a similar plan. First, the reader will become acquainted with Bishop Butler through a biographical overview and, in lieu of an intellectual pre-history, through some comments on the major figures with whom he has dialogued. Second, the reader will become acquainted with the thesis, context, and design of the dissertation through which Butler's ecclesiological contribution will be presented.

Although Butler is a scholar of some stature in the field of biblical studies, this dissertation does not deal with that side of his career. His most significant contribution to biblical scholarship lies in his study of the synoptic problem. The respect given this scholarship is evidenced by the fact that his essay on the subject holds an important place in *The New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*.<sup>8</sup>

Of recent years, Bishop Butler has been recognized as both an ecclesiologist intent on articulating the meaning of the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council, and as an ecumenist seeking Christian unification and calling for a turn toward the "Great Church of the future." Certain key ecclesial issues—the limits of papal infallibility, the question of the indivisible visible unity of the Church, the role of conscience, the nature of hierarchical authority, and the relationship between authority and freedom—have engaged Butler since he began his own anguished journey toward Roman Catholicism. He has given each issue careful study and argumentation. The subjective nature of Butler's arguments on these matters make his theological reflections truly autobiographical.

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Lonergan appear in this dissertation and that his language regarding conversion be used and understood, but it is used as a forum for what Butler has to say.

<sup>6</sup> Butler speaks movingly of this desire:

"When Augustine of Hippo lay dying, while the Vandals were besieging Hippo, he had the walls of his room adorned with the penitential psalms. Foreseeing the moment of truth, he found himself possessed by a conviction of the unworthiness of the life that lay behind him. Lesser men, awaiting, like him, the final summons, may well share that conviction about their own life. 'How enormously has my life fallen short of the witness it should have been to the truth as I have come to see it.' Is it permissible, then, before the curtain goes down, to make what could be a last endeavour to say, at least in words, what one has failed to express in behaviour? Will there be anyone to listen to the last words of one whose debts to his friends are beyond reckoning? Do not guide yourselves by what I have done, but rather believe this that I now say. It is time to speak" (Foreword, *ATTS*, p. 1).

<sup>7</sup> Butler asserts that the individual and the Church are not mutually exclusive realities. On the one hand, there is what Butler sees as the basic religious experience, "a radical actuation of the self at its deeper and therefore all-encompassing level," and on the other hand, the fact that religion is never a purely private thing: "The individual is rooted in history and society." See "The Data of Theology," *Clergy Review* 61 (May 1976): 177. This key article of Butler's will appear later in the dissertation but it used here to demonstrate the statement of thesis.

<sup>8</sup> See Butler's "The Synoptic Problem" in *The New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1975), pp. 815-21.

## Bishop Butler: A Biographical Overview

Basil Butler was born on May 7, 1902, in Reading, England, of Anglican parents, the third child in a family of six siblings.<sup>9</sup> At Oxford (1920-25) he distinguished himself with triple first-class honors, in classical Mods, classical Greats,<sup>10</sup> and then a two-year postgraduate course in theology, which he finished in nine months. At the invitation of B. J. Kidd, Butler accepted a theological tutorial at Oxford's Keble College (1925), meanwhile preparing for a career in the Anglican Church, to which he was ordained a deacon in 1926.

Prior to his ordination, however, a latent crisis of faith surfaced. In an effort to resolve it, Butler read Baron Friedrich von Hügel. At this trying period of Butler's life, von Hügel's arguments made it clear that historical Christianity is plausible.<sup>11</sup> Butler then began a systematic investigation into the claims of Rome, an investigation which became for him a spiritual journey involving much suffering and anguish.<sup>12</sup> In the summer of 1927 he left Keble College, informing his bishop that he could not accept ordination to the priesthood in the Church of England.<sup>13</sup> B. J. Kidd introduced Butler to Dom Leander Ramsey, Abbot of Downside.<sup>14</sup> In his letter of introduction Kidd wrote:

My colleague, Basil Butler, is wavering in his allegiance to the Church of England, and may ultimately wish to join the Church of Rome. I don't think he has got further yet, but I do think it is likely that he will in the end find his way there. . . . His withdrawal is a

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<sup>9</sup> Butler attended "public" grammar school in Reading, and although there are few records of its history, it is believed that the grammar school existed even before Henry I founded the Abbey in 1125. After that date, no one could keep school without consent of the Abbot. The scholarship that Butler later won to Oxford was established by Sir Thomas White, founder of St. John's College, Oxford, and "old boy" of Reading. Queen Elizabeth and Archbishop Laud, a native of Reading, both endowed the Reading School. See John Rogers, *The Old Public Schools of England* (New York: Morehouse, Barlow, Co., 1973), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Oxford's *Litterae Humaniores*, or "Greats" as it is called, had a lasting influence on his life and thinking. It confirmed his opposition to materialism. Tempting as it was to him, Butler found the tenets of materialism unsustainable:

"I could not see how man's conscious experience could be explained away on materialistic principles. Matter appears to be totally external and, in itself, totally lacking in awareness. Man was, equally obviously, aware, and possessed of an interior life. Moreover, deny the validity of man's intellectual process, and materialism, along with every other theory, was deprived of a foothold in reason" (*ATTS*, p. 16).

<sup>11</sup> Butler spoke to one of his theology tutors and was introduced to N. P. Williams, a fellow of Exeter and one of the intellectual leaders of Anglo-Catholicism. Williams, in turn, introduced Butler to the work of Baron Friedrich von Hügel, whose influence on Butler was enduring.

"I was enchanted and impressed. Here was a man of great erudition and of manifest integrity; and he had succeeded in being a convinced Christian, and of the stricter sort, a Roman Catholic. If he could effect a synthesis between his reason and the Christian faith, might not I?" (*ATTS*, p. 6)

<sup>12</sup> Butler began this investigation with Martin Hancock, a theology student. Hancock was a fellow Anglican and Butler's best friend. *A Time to Speak* is dedicated to him.

<sup>13</sup> During that same summer, Butler received a signal honor. It was rare for a twenty-five year old scholar to be asked to deliver a paper at the Anglo-Catholic Congress. This was the occasion of his first published work. See *Searchings*, pp. 28-37. "The Christian Eucharist and the Mystery Religions" was originally published as "Christianity and the Mystery Religions," *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress, 1927* (London: Society of SS. Peter and Paul, 1929). The honor, however, did nothing to relieve him of the intellectual and spiritual struggles which were plaguing him.

<sup>14</sup> Abbot Ramsay, a convert since 1895, was an Anglican priest who studied theology from Hort, Lightfoot and Wescott. He knew the pain of separation from old associates and was able to offer to Butler the same friendship that Downside had offered to him.



great personal grief to me, especially as in nine-tenths of Christian belief and practice we are wholly one.<sup>15</sup>

Butler's greatest obstacle in accepting Roman Catholicism was Rome's obscurantism regarding biblical scholarship. He knew that to acquiesce in such obscurantism was impossible for him, and yet the Church of Rome beckoned to him as the only form of Christianity that stood the test of his rigorous search into history. He wrestled with the question of intellectual dissent, with the question of freedom of conscience in areas of dogma not directly revealed, and with the question of what was absolutely necessary for submission to Rome. Butler notes that before Newman entered the Church of Rome, he wrote the main part of his essay on the development of doctrine "while yet his eyes were dim and his breast laden."<sup>16</sup> Like Newman, Butler had deep questions which clouded his eyes and burdened his heart. Yet he went ahead with his choice. So, too, without all the evidence he wanted, Butler made his decision.<sup>17</sup>

Admitting that in the end he probably rushed things a bit, Butler, on May 31, 1928, went into a church, said a *Credo* and a *Gloria*, and the with great mental suffering and spiritual anguish, made his way to Downside Abbey. The following month, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church there. Butler was relieved that the pain of long deliberation was over, but that was his only relief. It was a year before he experienced any joy over his decision.<sup>18</sup>

Butler taught as a layman at the Downside Abbey School and became a novice at the Abbey in September 1929. Although he had some personal disinclination for monasticism, he chose

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<sup>15</sup> *DCB*, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 22. Butler is referring here to that time when Newman's theory of the Church of England as the *Via Media* had crumbled. Newman's theory envisioned the Church of England as truly and purely catholic, based on the customs of the apostolic Church and the teachings of the Fathers, corrupted neither by Romanism nor Protestantism. Thus, Newman had to reconsider his position regarding the Church of England.

Dr. Wiseman, later Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, elucidating St. Augustine's criteria for true faith, had struck a powerful blow to Newman. Newman wrote: "The words of St. Augustine struck me with a power which I never felt from any words before. . . . The theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized." See Hilda Graef, *God and Myself* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1968), p. 19. At this time, as he began to sort out this trauma, Newman began to develop his notion of the development of doctrine. It became clear to him that he was wrong about Rome; the primitive Church could not know the whole truth, and only slowly could truth be revealed in the course of history. See John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1973), pp. 341-47. Following the uproar after Tract 90, Newman lost faith in the Church of England. On October 8, 1845, Newman wrote, "I am this day expecting Father Dominic, the Passionist. He does not know of my intention, but I mean to ask him admission into the fold of Christ" (*Apologia*, pp. 234-35). "So passed from her ranks one of the greatest minds which the Church of England has ever produced, and this departure marks the end of a chapter in the history of the Anglican revival" (Moorman, p. 347). The poignancy of the moment is relived by Butler in his own interior anguish.

<sup>17</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 133.

<sup>18</sup> At times, questioning his decision, Butler knew he would not have reached any other, even if he had to do it all over again. His tendency would have been to put it off: "In the banausic sense of the word, I should not have found it difficult to 'earn my living' without reaching a decision on my faith problem." In fact he was urged to accept a position as tutor in classical honors moderations at Oxford, but the indecision was becoming intolerable (*ATTS*, pp. 24-26). In 1928 Butler wrote to a friend:

" . . . I think the difficulties and doubts that surge up so strongly at times are partly due to moods, and partly to looking at one area of the problem in isolation from the others. Taken in its positive complexity, I think the RC position is probably convincing to an extent that would justify submission. But just at the moment, I am talking more or less 'in the dark'; I think if need were I would be prepared to act in the dark too; but I think a moment may come when the scene lights up: but it is good to be able to see the strength of the RC position, when feeling is under a cloud" (*ATTS*, p. 26).

the Benedictine life because it would leave him relatively free to pursue the intellectual bent of his mind, and, if he so chose to, he could live closer to the Gospel idea.

Since it was taken for granted at Downside in those days that, as a solemnly professed monk Butler would become a priest, Dom Christopher the novice began a shortened course of preparation for the priesthood. Except for ascetical and mystical theology, Butler generally found theology boring. To his mind, moral theology was an intellectually empty exercise and very upsetting to him, as the emphasis on law heightened the danger of morality becoming a matter of mere obedience. Thus, Butler's intellectual life remained with scripture, his penchant for biblical scholarship harmonizing well with the spiritual growth demanded of the Benedictine life.

Butler was ordained a priest (1933),<sup>19</sup> taught classical languages and Sacred Scripture to young monks (1933-39), and became headmaster of the Abbey School (1939-46). In 1946 he became Abbot of Downside and was twice reelected (1954 and 1962). In 1961 Butler was also elected Abbot President of the English Benedictine Congregation, and by virtue of that position he attended the Second Vatican Council as one of the Council Fathers.

Prior to the Council, Butler became apprehensive. He realized that his would be a minority position in Rome on several scores. Certainly he was a believing Catholic, but in the matter of biblical scholarship he felt estranged from Rome's point of view.

There are some converts who seem to be able to swallow the Catholic Church whole with no critical reservations even in regard to its most contingent and mutable contemporary aspects, and with a total alienation from their own past allegiances. My own case was different. [He notes the instance of biblical criticism and scholarship.] I had been initiated into New Testament criticism at Oxford and it was an advantage that, in reading for my degree in Classics, I had learnt something about the modern approach to ancient documents. One of the things that helped me become a Catholic was my fear that, without the counterpoise of an ecclesiastical authority which claimed and could rightly claim to speak for Christ and which was not afraid to be dogmatic, my critical leanings would take uncontrolled possession and I should end up with no firm articulable beliefs at all.<sup>20</sup>

So Butler remained torn between his allegiance to ecclesiastical authority and his adherence to sound biblical scholarship.

In still another matter, Butler was not very confident that the Council could reverse the trend toward centralization in the Church. The over-centralization of Rome was, Butler realized, a product of an age of mass-production and Rome's commanding position could only be reversed by a miracle. More personally, on the notion of autonomy, Butler states that Benedictinism appealed to him because within its own limits it "clung stubbornly to the principle of local autonomy." Nor was his monastic vocation without its liability. By reason of the early efforts toward liturgical reform by the Benedictines, Butler had come to accept the immense force of the arguments in favor of a vernacular liturgy, and he knew he would align himself with those who proposed it (a stance not popular among the authorities of a preconiliar

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<sup>19</sup> The years following ordination were dark ones and the chores of teaching were a relief to him. In 1937 his spirits lifted and he continued his studies with a lighter heart. In face of the European crisis, he became involved in Catholic Action. His writing career had begun in earnest. In "A Manual of Catholic Action," *Downside Review* 54 (April 1936): 204-11, and in "What Is to Be Done (About Catholics in England)?" *Downside Review* 54 (October 1936): 515-21, Butler called for an integration of life's energies. Since Christ's work in men is a total perfection, one needs both action and contemplation: ". . . the total life of man individually and for mankind altogether, rooted and grounded on the Faith and inspired, commanded by charity."

<sup>20</sup> Butler, ATTS, pp. 138-39.

Church).<sup>21</sup> On the matter of ecumenism, Butler was further estranged from the Catholic majority of his time, especially in England.

It was difficult for me to feel bitter about the Church of England, to which, under God, I owed the fact that I was a Christian, and of which the closest members of my family were all devoted adherents. Already by 1940 Father Henry St. John, O.P. was engaged with a few others in theological discussions with a similar group of Anglicans, and on one occasion I had the privilege of attending one of their meetings. After the war, invitations began to arrive, usually from Protestant or Anglican organisers, to speak on a common platform at meetings during the annual week of prayer for Christian unity. I fear I abused these invitations by taking occasion of them to explain the Catholic Church's claim to uniqueness and the arguments in its favour. Looking back, I admire the forbearance of the non-Catholics in face of such behaviour. The truth no doubt is that the Anglican ecumenists, or some of them, were afraid of an excessive Protestant bias in the ecumenical movement as a whole and were glad of the cooperation of any Catholic who, without being absolutely insulting or sheerly incompetent, would take his stand with them. But all this was viewed with a good deal of disfavor by the Catholic authorities in England, and indeed in Rome, so far as Rome knew about it.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Butler found himself uncomfortable in the face of Vatican II because the world beyond the English Channel (especially in the aftermath of the Nazi horror and its effect on Western European Catholicism) was little known to Butler. Africa and the emerging nations were for him primarily mission territories. In short, his practical links with the world outside England came through international meetings of Benedictines held in Rome. Unfortunately, Butler did not like Rome, nor did he enjoy his visits there.

After all, the Vatican bestrode the narrow Catholic world like a colossus, and I could see little for us to do but walk under its huge legs and hope for a not too dishonourable grave. While men like de Lubac and Congar in France and Rahner in Germany were coming under ecclesiastical censure or being reduced to silence, anyone who, while not a professional theologian, had an interest in the intellectual element of religion, had strong arguments for keeping quiet.<sup>23</sup>

Butler is quick to add, however, that neither his discomfort nor his "deviationist thinking" diminished his loyalty to the Catholic faith and Church. Shortly before the Council, Butler had written a book entitled *The Idea of the Church* to show that the only intellectual position for a Christian was to be a Catholic.<sup>24</sup> Yet despite that fact, and in the face of the Council, he writes:

I feared another dose of authoritarian obscurantism. And I was not happy at the thought that I, an amateur in theology, might find myself conscientiously bound to stand out against an overwhelming majority.<sup>25</sup>

The Council opened on October 11, 1962. By October 24, Butler could write that his feelings were relieved and that he had a very clear sense of direction about the Council.<sup>26</sup> When Butler

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Letters from Abbot Butler in Rome to the Prior of Downside during the Second Vatican Council are variously dated from October 1962 to November 1965. These are unpublished letters, typewritten and mimeographed. On November 15, 1962, Butler wrote that one of the greatest experiences he ever had was to be present at the moment of the opening of an ecumenical council preparing to come to grips with questions of immutable truth. He noted that it was at such a point that the mystical and institutional

realized that the progressives could command a majority of the voting strength of the Council, he began to see that Pope John XXIII's hope might become a reality: a new Pentecost. His apprehension was dissipated by his contacts with those of sympathetic outlook and by the reception given his speeches.<sup>27</sup>

I rarely had serious doubt about the course I was to pursue, either in general or in detail, and—though I lay little stress on personal devotional feelings—I came to live with the sense that, above the conflicting opinions and interests and intrigues of the human participants in the Council drama, the Holy Spirit was overruling us to ends which transcended those of all or indeed any of us.<sup>28</sup>

For Butler, a conversion had begun in earnest. He notes especially the radical shift in his thinking about the modern world. His work with a small group on the issue of peace and war had involved him deeply in the moral issues connected with those subjects. His initial resentment turned to gratitude that he had been challenged by the attention that had to be paid to the moral problems of overpopulation, poverty in developing countries, and the call to the Church to be the Church of the poor.<sup>29</sup> By the close of the Council, Butler wrote to the monks at Downside expressing his opinion as to the importance of the Council acts and the change of heart needed to effect them within the Church.

I think it is going to be very important that we all know pretty thoroughly the real contents and implications of the sixteen Council acts. . . . The Pope seems determined to put the Council into effect when it is over. But what he can effect is somewhat limited by the extent to which the Church as a whole, from bishop to 'ordinary layman' takes the Council to its heart. I do hope that we are not all going to say, 'Well thank God *that's* over!' and try to revert to our former habits of thought and action.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Council, Butler has himself been ardently dedicated to *aggiornamento*.<sup>31</sup> He was one of the principles at the Notre Dame Conference on Vatican II held in March 1966. In December 1966 Pope Paul VI appointed him Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster. For ten years he acted as President of the diocesan seminary of St. Edmund's College at Ware and served as Episcopal Vicar of Hertfordshire. He has recently retired from those positions to devote more time to reading, writing, and lecturing.

In 1971 Butler published his intellectual autobiography, *A Time to Speak*, and in September 1974 he was invited to deliver the inaugural lecture of the annual Thomas Verner Moore Lecture Series established by St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C.<sup>32</sup> In a steady stream of journal articles, book reviews, and lectures, Butler testifies to his continuing conviction that the impetus

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showed themselves in coincidence: "There are the very actual reality of created agencies and imperfections, and the no less real action of God in these manifestations of human weakness."

<sup>27</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 144.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-47.

<sup>30</sup> Letters of Butler, November 28, 1965.

<sup>31</sup> Butler's dedication to *aggiornamento* is recognized by John O'Malley in "Reform, Historical Consciousness and Vatican II's *Aggiornamento*," *Theological Studies* 32 (December 1971): 573-601. Walter Burghardt, the editor, noted that it is one of the most significant articles of its time in ecclesiology ever published by *Theological Studies*. O'Malley lists the important work done in *aggiornamento* (see p. 573, n. 2), though he noted that at the time there was little serious literature. He notes especially Butler's "The *Aggiornamento* of Vatican II," in Vatican II; *An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John Miller (Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 3-13.

<sup>32</sup> As part of the fiftieth anniversary of the Abbey, and in co-operation with the School of Religious Studies and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of The Catholic University of America, September 28, 1974, Butler delivered a lecture, "Authority and the Christian Conscience," later published in *The American Benedictine Review* 25 (December 1974): 411-26. At this time, the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* was conferred on Butler.

of the Council must be maintained. He does not hesitate to remind both ordinary laymen and episcopal leadership that theirs is a mutual responsibility. But in confronting the crisis of the contemporary Church, Rice records Butler's fear that many good and progressive Church people may take up traditional and familiar attitudes and associations not in keeping with *aggiornamento*.

The Council gave voice to pressures and dissatisfactions within the Church and it achieved almost miraculous results . . . the work which it initiated must be brought to completion. And here he professes to be profoundly troubled. At the Council the progressives carried the centre with them by an exercise of holy rhetoric; when these same bishops of the centre are immersed again in the work of their dioceses there is a serious danger that they will succumb to the pressure of traditional associations.<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Butler, however, continues to address himself to this Church crisis and appeals to the documents of Vatican II.

. . . the documents of Vatican II are open to inspection by any interested Christian; and any discrepancy between the performance of officials and the spirit of these documents inevitably produces what today is recognized as a crisis of authority. . . . When authority speaks with one voice in the Council and with another voice in its day-to-day performance after the Council, the faithful find it difficult to determine where their duty of obedience lies.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to emphasize that Butler views the Church's contemporary malaise as a cultural shock. Although there is sufficient justification for the change, Butler considers it important to see it as it is—a cultural shock and not a crisis of faith.<sup>35</sup>

If the Church, faithful to its mission to all mankind, was to speak effectively to this changed and changing world, it had to admit change into itself, becoming different once again in order to remain the same.<sup>36</sup>

Having gone to the Council feeling very much in the minority, Butler recovered hope from the fact that the minority positions found their way into the Council documents. Now, he feels, the way is open for a powerful and confident entry of the Church into the missionary and pastoral realities of the twentieth century.

. . . I had lived for years with the uncomfortable sense that I was on the distant left fringe of Catholicism. As a result of the Council, I found myself in what Suenens . . . has described as the "extreme centre"; not a position of compromise, but one in which it is possible to work for a genuine theological synthesis and practical application of the gospel in the conviction that one is at the same time in harmony with the contemporary Church.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Butler, "Authority and the Christian Conscience," p. 421 (hereafter abbreviated as *ACC*).

<sup>35</sup> Butler has addressed himself to the crisis confronting those who are caught in the contemporary crisis and who are chagrined by the changes. In a two-part series in the form of letters, Butler discusses the changes, and especially the situation of the Ecône community of Archbishop Lefevre. See "Dear Thomas," *The Tablet* 230 (31 July 1976): 735-36, and (7 August 1976): 757-58. These letters occasioned a reply by Bede Griffiths who made this comment on Butler's suggestion that the crisis through which the Church is passing can be compared with that through which the apostolic Church passed in the first century, when it ceased to be the Church of the Jews and became the Church of the gentiles. Bede Griffiths believes that this is an extremely important suggestion and is a unique insight. Griffiths draws out some of the implications in the suggestion in "Dear Thomas Again," *The Tablet* 230 (11 September 1976): 879-80.

<sup>36</sup> Butler, "Dear Thomas," *The Tablet* 230 (31 July 1976): 736.

<sup>37</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 149.



Like Newman before him, Butler seeks to show that “the abiding identity of our religion is to be found not in static sameness but precisely in continuing change.”<sup>38</sup> The same Church is through it all. Vatican II is different because it is explicit in identifying continuity through change, after four hundred years of unnatural rigidity within a rapidly changing world. <sup>39</sup>

Butler continues in the spirit of the theological giants of the nineteenth and early twentieth century England who preceded him. In their own time they took up the challenge of the Church and its mission to the world. Thus, we conclude this biographical overview with a brief reflection on the influence that Newman, von Hügel, and, more recently, Lonergan have had on the development of Butler’s ecclesiology. Butler’s intellectual and spiritual development was in no small measure influenced by both Newman and von Hügel; and of Lonergan, Butler says that he articulates the philosophy by which he (Butler) lives. The purpose of this brief reflection is to show that Butler dialogues with theologians in such a way that the dialogues become part of his own story. Butler has said: “If a man is known by his friends, a theologian can often be known by the theologians he quotes in support of his theories or from whom he derives developments of them.”<sup>40</sup> Valentine Rice considers Butler to be the Newman of the twentieth century; and Nicholas Lash, who knows Butler well, cannot resist the comparison either. Lash characterizes Newman’s overall influence by applying these words of Butler to them both: “Our task is to preach hope in a time of public despair, and to emphasize the gospel warnings in times of complacency.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Butler and Newman**

Butler’s first book, *The Church and Infallibility: A Reply to the Abridged “Salmon”* (1954),<sup>42</sup> “contains a defense of John Henry Newman as he attempts to show Salmon’s misreading of Newman’s position. The book is valuable for Butler’s interpretation of Newman as the great modern champion of the idea of doctrinal development. The ideas which Butler explicates in *The Church and Infallibility* had been anticipated in his earlier essay “The Lost Leader” (1951) and was followed up in a later article entitled “Newman and Development” (1959).<sup>43</sup> In “Lost Leader” Butler tells Newman’s intellectual story. That story ultimately deals with the issue of conscience, which is a key aspect of Butler’s own cognitional development. “Lost Leader” also raises Butler’s pivotal question for his own ecclesiology—the question of the nature of the Church.

How much trouble would be saved in all our discussions with our non-Catholic friends if it were agreed that the basic question is: What is the Church? Although Newman’s submission was the result of his discovery of the true Church, I am not sure that even he saw quite clearly or ever expressed quite adequately that this was the vital question to ask and answer. . . . The problem of the Church’s nature is the same as that of her unity.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Butler, “Dear Thomas,” p. 736.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See Butler’s “Very Fiery Particle,” a review of E. L. Mascall’s *Whatever Happened to the Human Mind?* in *The Tablet* 234 (4 October 1980): 971.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Lash, “Finding Out,” a review of Butler’s *Searchings*, in *The Tablet* 229 (12 July 1975): 650.

<sup>42</sup> Butler, *The Church and Infallibility: A Reply to the Abridged “Salmon”* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954). This highly specialized treatment of the subject is often used as a textbook. Butler’s research, judging from the index, is impressive. He offers this work as an apologetic defense, but not the sort that Butler himself believes is required “for a comprehensive work on apologetics” (p. vi).

<sup>43</sup> See Butler, “The Lost Leader,” *Downside Review* 69 (January 1951): 62-73; and “The Significance of Newman Today,” *Dublin Review* 233 (Winter 1959): 337-46, reprinted in *Searchings*, pp. 133-42, under the title “Newman and Development.”

<sup>44</sup> Butler, “Lost Leader,” p. 72.

Although “Lost Leader” reflects an early ecumenical attitude that Butler now regrets (one that is gracious but uncompromising regarding the Catholic position), nonetheless one finds in that essay the emergence of Butler’s key ecumenical considerations: salvation outside the Church and the unity of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

In “Newman and Development” Butler emphasizes, in view of Butler’s concern with the attitude of the Church toward biblical studies, the “importance of Newman’s theory of development in the situation created by the rise of historical criticism.<sup>46</sup> A second book, *The Church and the Bible* (1960), had been preceded by an essay “The Catholic Faith and the Bible (1957),<sup>47</sup> both of which deal with (among other things) the relationship of biblical scholarship to official Church teaching and preaching—a relationship which, to Butler’s way of thinking, should be part of the process of doctrinal development described by Newman. Lash notes Butler’s use of Newman on the question of biblical studies.

. . . Butler, describing the shift in the Second Vatican Council’s treatment of revelation, from a neo-scholastic conception of Christian truths to one that, as more authentically biblical, includes a personalist dimension, invokes Newman’s motto: “Cor ad cor loquitur.”<sup>48</sup>

Lash further remarks on Butler’s observation that “the relevant sentence in Article 8 of *Dei Verbum* is described as practically a *précis* of Newman’s theory of development of doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> Lash quotes Butler to the effect that, while Newman’s theory of development allows Christians to withstand the attack of critical history, “it encourages them to embrace and apply the methods and aims of critical history.”<sup>50</sup> When many of the Council Fathers spoke of their fear that literary form criticism threatens the authority of the Gospels and endangers the faith of Catholics, Abbot Butler, schooled by long years of biblical scholarship, appealed to the Fathers not to be afraid of the search for truth.<sup>51</sup>

Let us not be afraid of scholarly and historical truth. . . . Let us not be afraid that our scholars may be lacking in loyalty to the Church and to traditional doctrine. . . . Doubtless some will turn liberty into license—but we must risk this for the sake of the greater good. Doubtless mistakes are made and will be made in this field—but it is one where trial and error are the road to the truth.<sup>52</sup>

In *The Theology of Vatican II* (1968) Butler notes that the Constitution on Divine Revelation evidences Newman’s influence: “Insight into the realities and words transmitted grows” by contemplation and by study— a study which makes room for theology, both professional and amateur.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>46</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 138.

<sup>47</sup> See Butler, “The Catholic Faith and the Bible,” *Downside Review* 75 (April 1957): 107-25, reprinted in *Searchings*, pp. 114-32; and *The Church and the Bible* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960).

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History* (Shepherdstown, West Virginia: Patmos Press, 1975), pp. 199-200. Lash, noting Butler’s use of Newman, refers to “The Significance of Newman Today” (cited above) and to Butler’s *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 30.

<sup>49</sup> Lash, *Newman on Development*, p. 204, refers once again to Butler’s *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 40.

<sup>50</sup> Butler, “Significance of Newman Today,” pp. 344-45.

<sup>51</sup> See James C. O’Neill’s report in *Council Daybook: Vatican II—Session 2*, ed. Floyd Anderson (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), pp. 104-5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 40.

## ***Butler and von Hügel***

In the midst of his dialogue with Newman and during his agony of decision about Rome, Butler encountered the writings of Baron Friedrich von Hügel. Butler asserts that von Hügel helped him to become a Catholic and Newman showed him how. Thus, indirectly, through von Hügel, Butler's dialogue with Newman continued, for von Hügel's first realization of the intellectual strength of the Catholic Church came through Newman. When he was seventeen, von Hügel read Newman's *Loss and Gain*, and although he would later come to criticize Newman's attitude toward intellectual dissent, von Hügel never failed to acknowledge Newman's influence on him.<sup>54</sup> In 1840 he wrote to Newman:

... how deeply, profoundly indebted I am to you, for all you have been to me by means of your books. The reading of 'Loss and Gain,' 'The Apologia,' 'Anglican Difficulties' and 'The Grammar of Assent' has, at different times, and in different ways, formed distinct epochs in my young intellectual and religious life.<sup>55</sup>

Historically, however, von Hügel's name is linked with the Modernist crisis at the turn of the century. While he himself escaped censure, he was an important catalyst in the movement.<sup>56</sup> Von Hügel lived at a time when the intellectual climate of Rome and the climate of ideas and attitudes which became his own consistent habit of mind were in conflict. Although he was born a Roman Catholic, many thought, because of his religious struggles, that he was a convert.<sup>57</sup>

I am a convert only in the sense of having, owing to a variety of circumstances, had to regain and to conquer for myself, morally, spiritually, and intellectually, a positive faith in the Catholic religion: from 13 to 18, I would have hesitated as to affirming a positive adherence to the Church; and I had considerable interior work to go through even after those early years.<sup>58</sup>

As a mediating figure, von Hügel tried to maintain a balance on an increasingly stormy sea between the hierarchy and the world of creative thought. Many who were influenced by him failed to achieve his balance. At the famous last meeting of the Modernists at Tyrol (immediately before the official publication of *Pascendi*), von Hügel defended responsible scholarship, while at the same time begging for the grace of suffering for himself and his friends within the movement.<sup>59</sup> At the time of the Modernist movement, von Hügel was deeply involved in writing his theological masterpiece, *The Mystical Element of Religion* (1898-1908).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Lawrence F. Barmann, *Baron Friedrich von Hügel and the Modernist Crisis in England* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph P. Whelan, *The Spirituality of Friedrich von Hügel* (New York: Newman Press, 1971), p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Barmann, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> For an account of the meeting and the reaction to the publication of *Pascendi dominici gregis*, see *Acta Sanctae Sedes*, Vol. XL (Rome: 1907). Cf. Barmann, pp. 198-209. Butler notes that there is a resemblance between the Christian experience at the present day and the Modernist movement, but that the Church today has officially initiated the work of theological and spiritual renewal. The tensions of our times could benefit from von Hügel's world of fresh air, limitless horizons, and wholeness of vision, and from his presentation of Christian spirituality in its total richness (Butler, in the Foreword to Whelan, p. 12).

Barmann makes special note of von Hügel's ability to adhere to institutional religion, despite his difficulties with it.

"The Baron was not a man to whom religion was merely one among many factors of personality and life. It became *the* integrating factor of his own personality, and was also the dimension in which his life was most deeply lived. On the other hand, he never confused nor identified religion itself with the structures with which it became institutionalized. To be true to the most important



Butler pays tribute to von Hügel as the most appreciated among religious thinkers, especially by those outside the communion of the Church who venerated von Hügel almost as a prophet.<sup>61</sup> Von Hügel's analysis of religion is, in Butler's opinion, the greatest contribution to the ecclesial thinking of his day.

Probably his greatest particular contributions were: his analysis of religion into three 'elements,' the mystical, the intellectual, and the institutional, with his resolute insistence that it is only in the interaction of these three that religion becomes fully itself; and his timely emphasis upon the fact that the Godhead transcends all suffering, is pure joy.<sup>62</sup>

Valentine Rice notes that at a time when Butler was plagued by religious doubts, von Hügel came to his rescue.

By the middle of his undergraduate years he [Butler] was no longer concerned with the rival claims of the several Christian denominations; instead it was Christianity itself that was at stake. He saw that the truth of Christianity is necessarily dependent on the existence of God. And he saw that, even if one granted both the existence of God and the divinity of Christ, it was still necessary to justify the historical and institutional Church. He found in the writings of Baron Friedrich von Hügel a satisfactory *apologia* for the institutional Church.<sup>63</sup>

Von Hügel's synthesis of religion puts the institutional aspect in proper perspective. The rites, rituals, and polity of the institution shape religious tradition. These, in turn, are balanced by the critical dimension which, von Hügel believes, lifts up the intellectual interpretation of creeds. Constructive theology and the mystical aspects point to the personal and interior experiences that express the unitive formation of a soul with God.<sup>64</sup>

Along with his remarkable gift of presenting the full picture of a religious issue, the baron's personal charm and holiness made him, in Butler's view, "an ambassador-at-large, and opposition whip in the Church of his day."<sup>65</sup> He had a profound influence on disturbed Catholic intellectuals and the serious non-Catholic reading public.

Nothing . . . can diminish the gratitude we, who worshipped at his shrine, while still outside the Church, must feel for the support, direction, and encouragement.<sup>66</sup>

That such a learned, earnest, and courageous layman found meaning and hope in institutional Christianity so impressed Butler that he himself came to see the truth of theism, Christianity,

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currents without repudiating the ecclesial structures within which he felt this life should be channeled, was the chief struggle of his adult years. As he matured, the struggle intensified until it became critical; eventually it was resolved, and without compromise of principle on the Baron's part" (Barmann, p. 2).

<sup>60</sup> Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, 2 vols. (London: James Clarke & Co., 1908). This non-Modernist work combines von Hügel's two main interests—biblical studies and the philosophy of religion—with psychology and textual criticism in literature (Whelan, p. 19).

<sup>61</sup> Butler, review of *A Critical Examination of von Hügel's Philosophy*, by Albert Cook, in *Downside Review* 71 (April 1953): 204.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Rice, Introduction to *Searchings*, p. 10. See also Patrick Granfield's interview with Butler in *Theologians at Work* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 224.

<sup>64</sup> Butler, *Idea of the Church*, p. 84.

<sup>65</sup> Butler, review of *Baron Friedrich von Hügel; A Study of His Life and Thought*, by Maurice Nédoncelle, in *Downside Review* 55 (April 1937): 260,

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

and Catholicism.<sup>67</sup> Butler discovered that it was possible to be intellectually at home within the Church.

Men remain unconvinced, however, because the grounds of credibility either lie below their mental horizon or are only seen by them through a haze of prejudice, with a faculty of vision distorted by pathological emotional disturbance. While these things remain—and they are the permanent condition in which Christianity has to operate—there will still be room . . . for men such as von Hügel.<sup>68</sup>

### **Butler and Lonergan**

With the publication of *Insight* and Butler's reading of it (1958), Butler began a dialogue with Bernard Lonergan of which he tells us: "I have never escaped from the sway that Lonergan thus came to exercise over me."<sup>69</sup> The third chapter of this dissertation will reconstruct the history of that dialogue as it has developed in Butler's ecclesiology. What follows here is the beginning of the story and the initial implications for ecclesiology that Butler has deduced from Lonergan's *Insight*. The importance of this moment in Butler's history is recorded in *A Time to Speak*.<sup>70</sup> Butler says that Lonergan has provided him with the philosophy by which he lives.

. . . and to the extent that a philosophy which touches at all points on human life can be tested by its apprehended adequacy in dealing with those points, my experience since reading this book has been a kind of verification of its positions.<sup>71</sup>

Except for the Epilogue, *Insight*. Butler declares, approaches man philosophically, i.e., "above all, and always to some extent actually intelligent."<sup>72</sup> Man the knower functions not simply according to the "pure laws of the unrestricted desire to know."<sup>73</sup> His intelligent activity "takes shape as continuing development, so development is the law of his life as a whole."<sup>74</sup> But Lonergan, Butler declares, is interested in an Eros "that has a wider scope and involves a higher dimension of being than the intellectual."<sup>75</sup>

I have been contending . . . that the intellectual, the moral, and the religious are quite distinct but not at all disparate. They are three distinct phases in the unfolding of the human spirit, of that eros for self-transcendence that goes beyond itself intentionally in knowledge, effectively in morality, totally in religion.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Granfield, *Theologians at Work*, p. 225.

<sup>68</sup> Butler, Foreword to Whelan's *Spirituality of von Hügel*, p. 10. Von Hügel's erudition and his utter honesty helped Butler to remain a convinced and open-minded Christian. "Von Hügel restored my faith in the possibility that Christianity might, after all, have the answer," and that he could consider the truth of Christianity free from "warped mental geography." See also Butler's review of *Baron Friedrich von Hügel*, p. 261.

<sup>69</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 116.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-37. Nicholas Lash, in his review of *ATTS* in the *Irish Theological Quarterly* 40 (April 1973): 189-90, recalls the excitement when he, Abbot Butler, and Sebastian Moore discovered *Insight* in 1958.

<sup>71</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>72</sup> Butler, "God, Anticipation and Affirmation," *Heythrop Journal* 20 (October 1979): 374.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Lonergan makes it very clear that those who endeavor to separate and compartmentalize the intellectual, the moral, and the religious, do not understand "the unity of the human spirit, this continuity in its operations, this cumulative character in their results." See Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 128.

<sup>76</sup> Butler quotes Lonergan's "The Natural Knowledge of God," found in *Second Collection*, p. 130.

This threefold distinction (intellectual, moral, religious) is linked, Butler points out, with Lonergan's theory of the four levels of human consciousness.

There is the level of conscious experiencing; there is a higher level, based upon the first, a level of inquiring and understanding; there is a third level of reflecting and judging (the level to which particular attention is devoted in *Insight*, since it is at this level, incorporating the results of the first two, that experience and understanding come to fruition in actual knowledge). But beyond this third level there is also the fourth level, 'the existential level, the level of evaluation and love' (Ryan and Tyrrell's very helpful Introduction to *A Second Collection*. . .). At this level the controlling transcendental notion is no longer the notion of being, but that of value: 'Lonergan was asked whether, just as he had spoken of a pure detached desire to know in *Insight*, he would now be willing to identify it with a pure detached desire for value. He answered Yes' (ibid.). This was an oral answer to a question, and I imagine that Lonergan would, on reflection, say not that these two desires are identical, but that the desire to know is subsumed in the desire for value.<sup>77</sup>

"Oughtness" and conscience played a crucial role in the development of Butler's own intellectual, moral, and religious life, and so Lonergan's acknowledgement of a developmental shift from the desire to know to the desire for value is an intellectual relief to Butler. The reality of man, Butler asserts, is fully realized in human behavior, where conscience is seen as "the topmost level of human consciousness."<sup>78</sup>

*Insight*, Butler declares, illuminates and ratifies his own desire for knowledge and understanding in a way that no other work does, although he characteristically qualifies this statement in regard to himself.

It is a desire which in principle respects no boundaries and is one in all its manifestations. Inevitably, it leads one on to seek a truth, or a set of systems of truths, which will underpin, organise and justify every subordinate item of knowledge and understanding. This "detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire" worked in me in my intellectual pilgrimage to the Catholic faith, though it was combined with a moral concern which seems to me to be itself parallel with or even prior to the intellectual Eros, and which has a practical urgency about it which counteracts curiosity's tendency to put off decision till more is known.<sup>79</sup>

This detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know, Butler tells us, is the keystone of Lonergan's theory of cognition.<sup>80</sup> It is an "aspiration towards clear and distinct ideas" and ultimately towards the idea of Being in which alone the desire would find final and complete satisfaction.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Butler, "God, Anticipation and Affirmation," p. 374.

<sup>78</sup> Butler, CNE, pp. 10-11. Butler directs us to *Second Collection* where Lonergan says that in addition to this kind of deliberate choice, "if one deliberates and chooses, one has moved to the level of the rationally conscious, free, responsible subject. That by his choice he makes himself what he is to be and what his world is called to be" (p. 227). See also Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder, 1972), p. 268, and Walter Conn, *Conscience and Self-Transcendence* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975), p. 396. Conn notes that this heightening of the conscious subject is a prerequisite for the fruitful exercise of transcendental method. In *ATTS* Butler states that:

" . . . the Eros of the intellect is not, indeed, corrupted, but is harnessed to the chariot wheels of our responsible freedom, and we criticise the 'larger world' because we are aware that our behaviour ought to be given its bearings by truth, . . . We know that it is immoral to hug a myth for the comfort it may give us" (p. 181).

<sup>79</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 133.

<sup>80</sup> Butler, "God, Anticipation and Affirmation," p. 366.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

The desire to know is thus a dynamic tendency. It is a conscious tendency, and it is intrinsically intelligent and reasonable. As already stated, it is unrestricted. It attains, and for a moment will acquiesce in, limited items and areas of knowledge. But it could only be fully satisfied with total knowledge of total reality. In Lonergan's occasional poetic moods it appears to resemble the semi-divine Eros of the Platonic myth in the *Symposium*. More often it is the Thomist spirit of man, potentially everything but actually a humble attendant on immediate experience.<sup>82</sup>

Speaking of the intellectual Eros, Butler argues that we have to affirm the reality of a total explanation of everything "while at the same time admitting that we do not ourselves possess the total explanation as such."<sup>83</sup>

The objective of the "unrestricted desire" to know is thus total factual truth, fully explained, and with the explanation ratified by an act of total affirmation. And it is through the mind's orientation to this goal that it is enabled to achieve its partial and limited successes within the field of such facts as are within its present compass. Just as absolute Beauty is the intention of our love of beautiful things and persons, and absolute Value the lodestar of our quest of what is good, so omniscience, self-explained and eternally affirmed is the operative intention (what, in its full metaphysical meaning, is covered by the term "final cause") of all our curiosity.<sup>84</sup>

Butler's indebtedness to Bernard Lonergan reaches beyond *Insight*, which he read shortly before the Second Vatican Council, to Lonergan's later works that have helped Butler grapple with the problems of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>85</sup> Butler was impressed by the aptness of Lonergan's theory of emergent probability<sup>86</sup> and the effectiveness of the heuristic structure<sup>87</sup> outlined in

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. By his reference to the *Symposium*, Butler links his own love of Plato with Lonergan's understanding of intellectual eros.

"I referred . . . to the Dialectic of Love in Plato's *Symposium*. I pointed out that, according to 'Diotima' in that dialogue, Love (Eros) is not precisely the good itself, but is a hunger and a quest for the (not yet attained) good. In Diotima's dialectic the good takes on the aspect of beauty, and the term of Eros' quest is absolute, eternal and changeless, perfect Beauty, of which all beautiful things and persons express only a likeness or participation" (p. 123).

<sup>83</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 125.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Butler considers Lonergan's "picture of a world in evolution the most impressive intellectually I have ever seen" (*ATTS*, p. 120). For Lonergan's development of the inner design of world process exhibited as an emergent probability, i.e., a view of world order within the limits of empirical method, see *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), pp. 115-28. David Tracy, in *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder, 1970), p. 123, directs us to pp. 259-62 of *Insight* where Lonergan joined "the notion of the reality and underlying continuity of the phenomenon of change, to the world view of emergent probability articulated in the early chapters in order to argue for the probability of the eventual emergence of intelligent consciousness." See also Butler's "The Openness of Theology," *The Month* 1 (January 1970): 21-25, as an application of Lonergan's emergent probability to an open process to which the Church is invited (p. 21). Butler's book *Church and Unity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979) presents a more recent understanding of the term.

<sup>87</sup> A heuristic structure is an anticipatory structure of ways by which world order can be known completely and concretely, but which order is, as of now, not known. See Joseph Flanagan, "Insight into *Insight*," preliminary draft paper submitted to the 1979 Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, p. 27. Lonergan, in chapter 20 of *Insight* ("Special Transcendent Knowledge"), affirms the existence both of the problem of evil and of its solution

". . . within the intelligible unity of the actual order of the universe. But this implies the existence of a heuristic structure whenever the object of an inquiry admits antecedent determinations; and the solution that we are seeking is an object of inquiry that satisfies the intelligible world order and that solves the problem defined above" (p. 696).

chapter 20 of *Insight* (“Special Transcendent Knowledge”), and by the implications of *Insight* for ecclesiology. Especially is Butler absorbed with the implications of Lonergan’s thought for *aggiornamento* understood as conversion.

As one who knows from personal experience just what intellectual, moral, and religious conversion is, Butler fits well Lonergan’s description of an investigator who engages in dialectic. “He will have no great difficulty in distinguishing positions from counter-positions.”<sup>88</sup>

Inasmuch as . . . investigators assemble, complete, compare, reduce, classify, select, they bring to light the dialectical oppositions that existed in the past. Inasmuch as they pronounce one view a position and its opposite a counter-position and then go on to develop the positions and reverse the counter-positions, they are providing one another with the evidence for a judgment on their personal achievement of self-transcendence. They reveal the selves that did the research, offered the interpretations, studied the history, passed the judgments of value.

Such an objectification of subjectivity is in the style of the crucial experiment. While it will not be automatically efficacious, it will provide the open-minded, the serious, the sincere with the occasion to ask themselves some basic questions, first about others but eventually even about themselves. It will make conversion a topic and thereby promote it. . . . It is finding out for oneself and in oneself what it is to be intelligent, to be reasonable, to be responsible, to love. Dialectic contributes to that end by pointing out ultimate differences, by offering the example of others that differ radically from oneself, by providing the occasion for a reflection, a self-scrutiny, that can lead to a new understanding of oneself and one’s destiny.<sup>89</sup>

In a word, Butler’s contemporary ecclesial story is an aspect of his own self-appropriation<sup>90</sup> of Lonergan’s transcendental method, and consequently the reaffirmation of Butler’s own basic horizon. *Aggiornamento*, as an ever-widening ecclesial horizon, constitutes Butler’s vision of a Church that can face the future with an openness characteristic of emergent probability. It is the unfolding of such a relationship (i.e., the radical relationship of ecclesiology and conversion in Butler’s religious thought) that is directed by the statement of thesis which follows and which introduces the second and more technical aspect of this Introduction.

### Statement of Thesis

The statement of thesis that grounds this dissertation is brief. *Conversion, the bedrock of individual subjective religious experience, is contemporaneously understood as the foundation of a renewed theology and, for the purposes of this dissertation, a renewed ecclesiology.* As a theological topic, conversion has little data to back it up.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, two questions arise at the

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<sup>88</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 251.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>90</sup> The use of the term “self-appropriation” is meant specifically in Lonergan’s sense, i.e., it is the heightening and intensifying of an awareness that is already given. Self-appropriation is not becoming aware of knowing, but becoming aware of it in new ways. See also Flanagan, “Insight into *Insight*,” p. 43.

<sup>91</sup> Butler makes note of this in “Bernard Lonergan and Conversion,” *Worship* 49 (June-July 1975): 329-36. “Conversion is a good Christian word, though it is not listed in the analytic index to my old theological standby, Tanquary’s *Brevior synopsis theologia dogmatica*.” Nor, he notes, is it listed in the index of significant topics in Lonergan’s *Insight*—a landmark work of influence in Butler’s intellectual development. Conversion is a major theme, Butler notes, in Lonergan’s “Theology in Its New Context,” *Second Collection*, pp. 55-67. The theological implications of conversion are considered in Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*. See Butler’s review of *Method* in *Clergy Review* 57 (August 1973): 579-94.



outset: How did conversion come to occupy center stage as a theological issue? And correlatively, in what way can it be said that conversion is also the foundation of a renewed ecclesiology? In other words, what data ground this thesis? I propose that *aggiornamento*, correctly interpreted, issues a clear call to conversion, both for the Church corporately and for the individual who wishes to conform to the challenge of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>92</sup> In short, *aggiornamento*, understood as conversion, grounds this thesis.

## The Context

Contemporary questions in Catholic ecclesiology have a specific context, namely, the Second Vatican Council. Avery Dulles points this out in *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and the Limits of Adaptation*.

There are some events in Church history so decisive that they set the agenda for an entire historical era. For Catholic ecclesiology the Second Vatican Council seems to have been such an event. More than a decade after the Council the Catholic ecclesiologist has no choice except to frame his questions in the light of what the Council initiated.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, the context for this dissertation is the Second Vatican Council and its theology which mediates a renewed ecclesiology, understood as *aggiornamento*.

Emergence of *aggiornamento* began as a moral incentive from Pope John XXIII. When Vatican II opened, there was no schema to define it. Pope John's appeal "to read the signs of the times" caught on, however, and from within the Council chambers the Catholic Church set out on a new course, facing up to the "joy and hope, the grief and anguish . . . of our time."<sup>94</sup> The exigencies of contemporary culture, demanding a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the nature and mission of the Church in the light of Pope John's *aggiornamento*, awakened in the Church a new historical consciousness.

Today the Church is witnessing a crisis under way within society. While humanity is on the edge of a new era, tasks of immense gravity and amplitude await the Church, as in

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Butler claims that he goes beyond Lonergan in stating not only that conversion supplies theology with its data, but without conversion there can be no theology. See Butler's "Theology and Conversion," *The Tablet* 224 (May 2, 1970): 424. Walter Conn uses Lonergan's categories as a framework for organizing and systematically questioning the other essays in his book, *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation* (New York: Alba House, 1978). "Lonergan," Conn claims, "clarifies the present theological context by locating it in terms of the classicist past and specifying the shift in theological method demanded by contemporary culture" (p. xi). Conn's work is important to this study because conscience is the source of the subjective principle in Butler's religious thinking.

<sup>92</sup> In "Theology in Its New Context," *Second Collection*, pp. 55-67, Bernard Lonergan refers to this as a "theology of renewal":

"Any theology of renewal goes hand in hand with a renewal of theology. For 'renewal' is being used in a novel sense. Usually in Catholic circles 'renewal' has meant a return to the olden times of pristine virtue and deep wisdom. But good Pope John has made 'renewal' mean 'aggiornamento,' 'bringing things up-to-date.'"

<sup>93</sup> Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> See Pope John XXIII's Apostolic Constitution, "Humanae Salutis," convoking the Council. Walter M. Abbot, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, American Press and Association Press, 1966), pp. 703-9 (hereafter cited as Abbot, *Documents*). A more recent edition of conciliar and postconciliar documents is *Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975) (hereafter cited as Flannery, *Vatican II*). In the convocation cited above, Pope John looked to the renewal of Christian life as "an anticipated token of the decisions taken by each of the individual faithful to apply the teachings and the practical directives that will emerge from the Council itself" (Abbot, *Documents*, p. 709).

the most tragic periods of its history. It is a question in fact of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the Gospel. . . .

Indeed, we make ours the recommendation of Jesus that one should know how to distinguish the ‘signs of the times’ (Mt. 16:4), and we seem to see now, in the midst of so much darkness, a few indications which auger well for the fate of the Church and of humanity.<sup>95</sup>

It was not until the Council was well underway that the full implications of *aggiornamento* began to be understood. Butler remarks this at the start of the fourth session.

At the beginning of the Council, no one knew which way the Church would renew herself. But by the end of the third session . . . we realized that it was not going to be a superficial adjustment but a radical one. It meant a fundamental reappraisal of Catholicism. By then this was not only the view of a progressive minority, but it had captured the center of the Council.<sup>96</sup>

Butler christened this radical adjustment “*aggiornamento-in-depth*.”<sup>97</sup>

A momentous shift came as the Council Fathers, pushed beyond the moral force of *aggiornamento*, began to act upon it. Responding to a proposal initiated by Pope John XXIII (but put forth by Cardinal Suenens), the Council was obliged to come to grips with the Church’s relationship to the modern world. The result was *Gaudium et Spes*, the longest document produced by the Council, a document which reflects the very heart of Vatican II.<sup>98</sup> Being the only schema formally willed by Pope John XXIII, *Gaudium et Spes* is unique in three ways: (1) it was written first in French; (2) it laid the foundation for a Christian anthropology; and (3) most importantly, it formally marked a profound shift in the historical consciousness of the Church, a shift which has had immense and far-reaching consequences.<sup>99</sup> Bishop Butler, as part of a group responsible for the preparation of a chapter of *Gaudium et Spes*, took note of the conflicts that arose as a result of the discussions on culture. The subject was thorny. Definitions of culture were either nonexistent or contradictory.<sup>100</sup> In point of fact, the Council itself was coming to grips with the death of classicism.<sup>101</sup> In *Gaudium et Spes* the demise of classicism is described in Section 3, entitled “Some Especially Urgent Duties of Christians with Regard to Culture.”

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 703 and 704.

<sup>96</sup> Xavier Rynne, *The Fourth Session: Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II: September 14-December 8, 1965* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 1, quoting Butler.

<sup>97</sup> Butler, “The *Aggiornamento* of Vatican II,” in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1966), pp. 1-13 (hereafter cited as Miller, *Vatican II*). Butler applies an analogy from biology in regard to “*aggiornamento-in-depth*.” Basic biological structures are modified to meet slightly different concrete situations, but a time may come when survival requires radical change. Butler insists that, with grace aiding, the Church as a communion of human beings can achieve radical new solutions, while preserving what is immutable (p. 12).

<sup>98</sup> It was at the end of the first session (December 1963) that the proposal was first put forward that the Council should sanction a document on the Church in the modern world. There was, it appeared, no such document among the sixty-eight draft documents prepared beforehand, and when this proposal was accepted, the desired statement had to be composed *ab initio*. For a history of the drama involved in the construction of this document, see Mark McGrath, C.S.C., “The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” in Miller, *Vatican II*, pp. 397-412.

<sup>99</sup> See *ATTS*, pp. 146-47, for Butler’s reflection on this document. For all its defects, Butler notes, it is a “great document.” It registers the Church’s commitment to serve the good of humanity in every sphere and the Church’s determination not to confine itself to matters merely of the sacristy or the soul.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Lonergan discusses the breakdown of classical meaning in an address delivered at Marquette University, May 12, 1965. See “Dimensions of Meaning,” *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 252-67. Butler notes that this

Today it is more difficult than ever for a synthesis to be formed of the various branches of knowledge, and the arts. For while the mass and diversity of cultural factors are increasing, there is a decline in the individual man's ability to grasp and unify these elements. Thus the ideal of "the universal man" is disappearing more and more.<sup>102</sup>

This concern with the breakdown of classical modes of meaning has important implications for ecclesiology. To remain credible, the Church must grasp this opportunity to speak to distinctly new cultural milieux in modes of meaning intelligible to them.

Besides the Council Fathers, Bernard Lonergan also addresses this new cultural situation. Although Lonergan does not do ecclesiology *per se*, he does offer ecclesio-cultural analyses of service to this dissertation.<sup>103</sup> The Lonergan who enters this discussion is not the Lonergan of *Insight*. It is the "later" Lonergan who addresses himself to *aggiornamento*.<sup>104</sup> Lonergan describes Pope John's call to read the signs of the times as a call to the awareness that "men are individually responsible for their lives and collectively responsible for the world in which they live them."<sup>105</sup> *Aggiornamento*, Lonergan notes, "marks a disengagement from a culture that no longer exists and an involvement in a distinct culture that has replaced it."<sup>106</sup> The crisis thus created is one of meaning, not of faith. In the transformation of man into an authentic subject, the role of meaning is not merely directive, it is also constitutive.

For it is in the field where meaning is constitutive that man's freedom reaches its high point. There, too, his responsibility is greatest. There occurs the emergence of the existential subject, finding out for himself that he is to decide for himself what he is to make of himself. It is there that individuals become alienated from community, that communities split into factions, that cultures flower or decline, that historical causality exerts its sway.<sup>107</sup>

Meaning, therefore, is an important part of living, and, Lonergan adds, "reflection on meaning and the consequent control of meaning are still more important."<sup>108</sup> Classical control of meaning has passed, and the Church is now embroiled in a modern struggle for the control of meaning. Again, the crisis is essentially one of culture and not one of faith.

There has been no new revelation on high to replace the revelation given through Christ Jesus. There has been written no new Bible and there has been founded no new church

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address was given before *Gaudium et Spes* was promulgated. See "Conversion and Theology," *The Tablet* 224 (2 May 1970): 424.

<sup>102</sup> Abbot, *Documents*, p. 267.

<sup>103</sup> See Butler, "Lonergan and Ecclesiology," ed. Philip McShane, *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress, 1970* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), pp. 1-21. Of this contribution, Lonergan expressed gratitude for the way Butler took his (Lonergan's) heuristic structure as outlined in *Insight* and filled it in with his firsthand knowledge of Vatican II.

<sup>104</sup> William F. J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard Tyrrell, S.J., identify a "watershed" in Lonergan's thought, which they say is a crucial shift. They date it between the years 1964-65, and identify it with the last two essays in Collection—"Existenz and *Aggiornamento*" and "Dimensions of Meaning," pp. 230-51 and 252-67, respectively. Butler locates this shift in Lonergan's essay, *The Subject*, where conversion is used of a "personal, philosophical experience." Frederick Crowe, in *Collection*, says that the change is development in Lonergan, not revolution. Orientation toward the subject turns our attention to personal responsibility and eventually towards conversion. *The Subject*, Marquette University Aquinas Lectures (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968) is reprinted in *Second Collection*, pp. 69-86.

<sup>105</sup> Lonergan, "Existenz and *Aggiornamento*," *Collection*, p. 248.

<sup>106</sup> Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," *Second Collection*, p. 113.

<sup>107</sup> Lonergan, "Dimensions of Meaning," *Collection*, p. 255.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*



to link us with him. But Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology are matters, not merely of revelation and faith, but also of culture. Both have been fully and deeply involved in classical culture. The breakdown of classical culture and, at least in our own day, the manifest comprehensiveness and exclusiveness of modern culture confront Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology with the gravest problems, impose upon them mountainous tasks, invite them to Herculean labors.<sup>109</sup>

For Lonergan, theology is the mediating factor in the Church whereby culture and God's meaning can be moulded and transformed: "Theology mediates religion in a culture." Hence, when Lonergan writes about *aggiornamento*, he does not view it as "some simple-minded rejection of the old and a breezy acceptance of everything new."<sup>110</sup>

. . . it is acknowledgement of its evils as well as of its good; and, as acknowledgement alone is not enough, it also is, by the power of the cross, that meeting of evil with good which transforms evil into good.<sup>111</sup>

In "*Existenz and Aggiornamento*," Lonergan concentrates not on how much or how little *aggiornamento* is required. He concentrates rather on the subject who must implement it.

The present question . . . is what kind of men we have to be if we are to implement the *aggiornamento* that the Council decrees, if we are to discuss what future decrees are to be desired, if we are to do so without doing more harm than good, without projecting into the Catholic community and the world any unauthenticity we have imbibed from others or created on our own.<sup>112</sup>

In Lonergan's opinion, the authentic man is the converted man who discovers the future and who has the determination to bring about the transformation of culture. He insists that "our creativity has to discover the future and our determination has to realize it. . . . Pope John spoke to the whole world. Vatican II stirred it profoundly.. For the Spirit of God is moving the hearts of many and in Paul Tillich's phrase, ultimate concern has grasped them."<sup>113</sup> Transformation, understood as conversion, is the bedrock of *aggiornamento*, and that transformation can only come about by reflection on the meaning of the Church in our own culture.

## Methodology

The methodology evidences selective application of Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology* as well as the direction given the procedure by Butler himself. The general approach is subjective and takes its direction from Bishop Butler's two poles of thought in religious matters: (1) conscience (the judgment of a person's free and responsible reflection on his experience and predicament), and (2) the complex notion of God-Christ-Church. Thus, the starting point for this dissertation is an analysis of the fundamental human issue as Butler understands it. I do not begin objectively by describing a model that fits Butler's ecclesiology. Rather, I let Butler speak for himself, and in so doing I demonstrate that an ecclesiological model does indeed apply. It emerges as a fulfillment model, one that is essentially sacramental (i.e., the Church as symbol of its essential nature and as a solution to the human predicament, fulfilling a basic human religious need).

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>110</sup> Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," *Second Collection*, p. 113.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Lonergan, "*Existenz and Aggiornamento*," *Collection*, p. 248.

<sup>113</sup> Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," *Second Collection*, p. 116.

The influence on this dissertation of Lonergan's *Method in Theology* is twofold. First, I have used the eight functional specialties as the tool for organizing Butler's writings.<sup>114</sup> Second, I have used Butler's review of *Method* as a verification of my choice of dialectic, foundations, and communications to describe Butler as an apologist and ecumenist. Part of the method, therefore, is completed in this Introduction, i.e., a description of the organization involved in this dissertation.

In regard to the application of the functional specialties, especially those that seem to apply in Butler's case, an explanation is in order. The explanation might be helped by an analogy. When a critic uses a tool or a strategy to interpret a writer, initial interest focuses on the tool itself. For example, a literary critic uses Aristotle's *Poetics* as a tool of analysis, let us say, of Shakespeare. The initial moment might focus on Aristotle's work. Once set in focus, attention turns back to the subject, in this case Shakespeare. Aristotle's *Poetics* then recedes into the background. I envision the use of the functional specialties of Lonergan's *Method*, and the principles he uses to ground these specialties, in much the same way. Lonergan's presence in this dissertation is important to the extent that he provides a way into an analysis of Butler's ecclesiology.

Organizing the corpus of Butler material was a formidable task. Research turned up a vast quantity of writings, and Butler turned out to be an elusive quarry. Aside from a basic core of longer works, the bulk of his writings appear in periodicals in the form of articles, book reviews, and extended commentaries. These span a fifty-year period during which his output was prodigious. Considerable interpretation would be required in order to do justice to the scope and variety of Butler's interests. Therefore, the problem became one of limiting and selecting from Butler's works those which would best serve to introduce the man and his message. Bernard Lonergan gave direction to this task by delineating the roles of apologist and ecumenist from within the eight functional specialties, specifically dialectic, foundations, and communications.

As regards the use of dialectic, Lonergan notes that the sense in which he intends dialectic is simple enough.

Dialectic has to do with the concrete, the dynamic, and the contradictory, and so it finds abundant materials in the history of Christian movements. For all movements are at once concrete and dynamic, while Christian movements have been marked with external

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<sup>114</sup> Lonergan states that *Method* outlines the clusters of operations performed by theologians and is a framework for collaborative creativity, but that it should not be slavishly imitated. With this in mind, the functional specialties described in *Method*, pp. 125-44, have provided a way to distinguish among Butler's theological contributions and to select those that best serve this dissertation. I have divided Butler's works into research (scripture), dialectic (apologetics), communications (ecumenism), foundations (conversion made thematic). The bibliographical material will reflect this division and the selection is determined by those works which are used in this study. Butler's work as a scripture scholar and most of his involvement in the ecumenical movement will be reflected in the bibliography, but will not be discussed in the text.

Lonergan differentiates between the role of the methodologist and the role of the theologian.

“. . . I must at once recall the distinction between the methodologist and the theologian. . . . The methodologist has the far lighter task of indicating what the “various tasks of theologians are and how each presupposes or complements the others” (*Method*, p. 355).

The task of the dissertation is clarified via Lonergan's account of the underlying ideas and directives of his eighth functional specialty—communications—which pertains to Butler's effort to communicate the Christian message. (We ought to be about the task of converting institutions, among them the Church. See *Method*, p. 361.)

and internal conflict, whether one considers Christianity as a whole or even this or that larger church or communion.<sup>115</sup>

As regards foundations, it is basically conversion made thematic and explicitly objectified. In his review of *Method in Theology*, Butler, by his selection of texts and the emphasis he gives to them, seems to identify with Lonergan's schema, as evidenced in the following excerpt.

Functional specialization . . . distinguishes stages in the process from data to the rounded fruit of theology. Hence, the first functional specialty will be research, and the second the interpretation of the data thus accumulated. Interpretation paves the way for history which reconstructs the course of events out of which the accumulated and interpreted data take their rise. And this leads on to "dialectic," sorting out and applying a criterion to the conflicting movements of religious history and the conflicting understanding of these movements and conflicts given by historians: the criterion will be transcendental method. Lonergan sums up dialectic thus: "By dialectic . . . is understood a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive viewpoint, and proceeding toward that goal by acknowledging differences, seeking their grounds, real and apparent, and eliminating superfluous oppositions" (p. 130).<sup>116</sup>

The reference to "an apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit" seems biographical of Butler, as does the reference to conversion below.

These first four specialties relate to the assimilation of the tradition. They leave a long road still to travel. For the purpose of the tradition is to enable the theologian, enlightened by the past, to "confront the problems of his own day" (p. 133). The first stage in this second half of theology is therefore foundations, and foundations is "conversion made thematic and explicitly objectified". . . . The scheme may be better grasped by a further quotation: "Research, interpretation, history, and dialectic reveal the religious situation . . . they challenge to a decision . . . that 'decision . . . is primarily not a theological but a religious event. . . . It enters into theology only as reflected on and objectified in the fifth specialty, foundations" (p. 135).<sup>117</sup>

As an ecumenist, Butler contends that Christian unity must be basically a unity of doctrine.<sup>118</sup> This contention of Butler's has a corresponding echo in Lonergan's schema. In the eighth functional specialty—communications—Lonergan assigns three meanings to the Christian message.

The message announces what Christians are to believe, what they are to become, what they are to do. Its meaning, then, is at once cognitive, constitutive, effective. It is cognitive inasmuch as the message tells what is to be believed. It is constitutive inasmuch as it crystallizes the hidden inner gift of love into overt Christian fellowship. It is effective inasmuch as it directs Christian service to human society to bring about the Kingdom of God.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 129.

<sup>116</sup> Butler, review of *Method*, *Clergy Review* 57 (August 1972): 587-88.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 588-89.

<sup>118</sup> Butler, "The Unity of the Church," *Searchings*, p. 99. In a prefatory note Butler states that he would write in a different style today, but he still endorses the main thrust of the article. The principle of unity of doctrine is the context of his ecumenism. The foundation, he claims, is visible unity. Cf. Rahner on the "visible communion of those who genuinely believe, hope, and love." "On the Structure of the People of the Church Today," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 12 (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 220.

<sup>119</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 362.

Lonergan holds that Christians largely agree on the constitutive and effective meanings of the Christian message. Division among them lies, he believes, in the cognitive meaning.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Lonergan identifies ecumenical issue which Butler has long struggled to make clear.<sup>121</sup>

There is a unique element in Butler's position vis-à-vis the cognitive meaning of the Christian message. It concerns the Church and its role as unifier, not only of Christian churches but also of humanity. Butler has lived the Church passionately. He believes that the Church offers the key to the Christian and human future. The unique cognitive meaning of the Christian message in regard to the Church is its position as unifier. In one of his earliest essays, "Unification" (1937), Butler has this to say:<sup>122</sup>

The "Church" however is not precisely the ultimate object, but rather at once the medium through which the individual is unified with his fellowmen in God (the ultimate unity), and also the preliminary actualisation of the potential unity of all humanity.<sup>123</sup>

This claim Butler spends his life defending and elucidating; it is the *raison d'être* of his ecclesiology.

The reality is, however, all too clear: Christian unity on the cognitive level does not exist. "The question 'What is the Church?' is not the same question as 'Which is the Church?'"<sup>124</sup> To ask the latter is to imply, Butler insists, that we already know what we mean by the term "Church."<sup>125</sup> This inability of Christians to agree on a cognitive understanding of the Christian message is, in Butler's opinion, an intellectual scandal. Our "actual divisions, over against the admitted oneness of the Mystical Body of Christ . . . like any intellectual problem . . . persistently evaded, despite the fact that it lies at the heart of a great human endeavor, is a dangerous and potentially explosive thing."<sup>126</sup>

## The Design

I return to the primary objective of this introductory work on Bishop Butler: the disclosure of the relationship of Church and conversion in his religious thought as a way to introduce the man and his message. The function of the design is to facilitate that disclosure. Conversion is the first topic. In this case, it is the story of conversion in the life and thought of Bishop Butler. It is treated separately, much as Lonergan places conversion outside the functional specialties, because it is a personal event.<sup>127</sup>

The second topic is the idea of the Church as it develops in Butler's religious thought. The ecclesiology considered is a limited ecclesiology, though the contribution it makes is evident in the clarification it offers to an understanding of the cognitive meaning of the Christian message. Development is the organizing principle of the chapters concerning a specifically Catholic ecclesiology with ecumenical implications.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>121</sup> Butler, *The Idea of the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962), pp. xiii-xvi (hereafter cited as *IOC*).

<sup>122</sup> Butler, "Unification," *Searchings*, pp. 49-60. The theme of unification is the subject of Chapter One of this dissertation.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>124</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 10.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>127</sup> See Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 355-68. In this chapter Lonergan explains in detail his notion of communications as one of the functional specialties.

Butler moves through the first part of this dissertation essentially as “communicator,” for his reflections are the culmination of a life’s effort to give a reason to believe and to convince others that there is a solution to the problem of Christian and human disunity. It is in this final stage that Butler’s “theological reflection bears fruit.”

## **Organization**

The organization of Part I of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter 1 begins with a presentation of Bishop Butler as an apologist whose search for the meaning of life has universal (ecumenical) application. This presentation is followed by a subjective interpretation of the question of human unification out of which emerges the idea of a church as a possible solution to the human predicament. The development in Butler’s thought on the ecclesial aspect of human unification is obvious in the description of the contemporary Church as a world Church with grave responsibilities. Through the entire chapter, a vision of reality emerges, a single unitary vision, that grounds all Butler’s religious experiences. The chapter closes with the emergence of the ethical imperative, or the “authority of the heart.”

Chapter 2 continues without break with a discussion of Butler’s choice of the ethical imperative as his fundamental option—a choice which he designates as the radical conversion in life. His choice of the ethical imperative is objectified throughout his life in different contexts. The final part of this chapter will link Butler and Lonergan on the subject of conversion.

Chapter 3 has for its purpose a chronological development of Butler’s continuing dialogue with Bernard Lonergan as that dialogue relates to the emergence of conversion as a key ecclesial question.

Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters comprising Part II of the dissertation. This second half of the study presents the issues of unity and authority from an ecclesial point of view. Chapter 4 shows Butler as a theologian representing the Roman Catholic position while simultaneously challenging all Christians to come together in dialogue. He calls for the Roman Catholic Church specifically to live the reality of *koinonia*, to move toward the Great Church of the future by bearing witness to the true nature of the Church as one.

Chapter 5 has a double focus—the limits of authority within the Church, and the question of the mission of the Church—key issues which have emerged from the Second Vatican Council. Butler shows authority (in the service of Christian unity) to be rooted in its sacramental nature, while mission is rooted in a wider ecumenism that goes beyond Christian unity to the question of salvation outside the Church. The notions of unity and authority, as constitutive of the Church, are shown to be dialectical—unity reflecting the responsible freedom of those who work for human unification, and authority reflecting the Church’s respect for the freedom of conscience of those to whom she presents the revelation of God in Christ (whether or not that revelation is recognized or accepted). Butler concludes that if conversion is desired of those seeking Truth, then there must also be conversion on the part of “those who already know” (i.e., Christians), and their conversion is evidenced by their true witness to the Truth which they already know. Hence, the certainty of the believer can become the anchor of the agnostic.

Since Bishop Butler continues to study and write, no word about him can be conclusive. Therefore, the final brief “In Conclusion” section will constitute something of a critique and something of a bridge, inviting further study of the man and his message.

## **Bibliography**

The bibliography for this dissertation contains as definitive a collection of Bishop Butler’s writings as can be compiled at this time. Butler’s scholarly output is voluminous and has been

so since the early 1930s, his preferred form of communication being that of reviews and journal articles. Hence, this bibliography has a didactic purpose: to demonstrate the development of Butler's thought and interests through time. To accomplish this, the primary sources (Butler's own works) are arranged chronologically and grouped according to the particular topics of interest to this dissertation and the forms in which Butler wrote. Butler's books are few and so are listed together alphabetically at the beginning of the bibliography. After the list of books come Butler's essays and reviews, listed chronologically according to the following subjects: (1) Vatican II and post-Vatican II theology; (2) Butler's dialogue with Bernard Lonergan; (3) unity and authority; (4) essays and reviews by Butler on a variety of topics; and (5) essays and reviews by Butler on scriptural matters. These last are outside the scope of this dissertation, but are included in the bibliography so as to present as full a picture of Butler's scholarly genius as possible. Some selected reviews of Butler's works (listed alphabetically) round out the picture of the man by presenting him to the reader as his theological peers see him. Finally, the bibliography contains a listing of relevant secondary sources as well as a list of broadcasts which Bishop Butler made over the BBC.

# PART I

## CONVERSION: BASIL BUTLER'S SUBJECTIVE STORY

### CHAPTER ONE: THE SEARCH FOR THE ONE THING NECESSARY

#### A Reason to Believe

##### *The role of the apologist*

We have introduced Bishop Butler in this dissertation as an ecumenical apologist.<sup>1</sup> In his Foreword to *Why Christ* (1960) Butler is specific about his desire to make a convincing demonstration concerning Christianity. It

. . . meets man at the point of his deepest need, and . . . its message takes account of perhaps the gravest difficulty that our reason has to face in seeking a criterion for living: the difficulty that reasonable men, seeking such a criterion by the unaided light of their own reason, have reached such diverse and contradictory conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

Butler wants to present an adequate account of the criterion that has become his own, the faith of the Christian Church. Butler applies, in this same Foreword, the words of one of the characters in Plato's *Dialogues*. These words have, Butler believes, general and inescapable application.

“What the truth is about these things we must either learn from others or discover for ourselves; or at least, if neither of these is possible, we must accept the best and least refutable of human answers to our questioning, and make this our raft for the perilous journey across life's waters—unless one found it possible to travel more surely and less dangerously by the more trusty transport of some answer that was divine.” (*Phaedo*, 85 c, d)<sup>3</sup>

To answer for the faith has always been characteristic of religious belief.<sup>4</sup> It corresponds to the responsibility one has for the gift given. It is the bearing fruit or what is called the second

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<sup>1</sup> Butler's ecclesiology of communion, which he describes as valuable for ecumenical dialogue, will emerge from this dissertation. Butler's ecumenical concerns go far beyond the ecumenical movement and, indeed, he claims that to propose “a view of the Church whose sole recommendation was that it would help the Ecumenical-Movement” might be suspect. See his *The Theology of Vatican II* (London: Barton, Longman and Todd, 1967), p. 135. This work, originally delivered as the Sarum Lectures, is Butler's interpretation of several conciliar documents. Cf. also Butler's most recent discussion on the Church as communion in *The Church and Unity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), pp. 32-52. Butler states that this new attempt to view the Church within a theology of communion complements his *The Idea of the Church* which, Butler tells us, was criticized for undue emphasis on the institutional ecclesial model.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, *Why Christ* (London: Barton, Longman and Todd, 1960), p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See Karl Rahner, et al., gen. eds., *Sacramentum Mundi*, 6 vols., s.v. “Apologetics,” by Johannes-Baptist Metz (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1:66-70. Metz discusses the changing methods of apologetics, claiming that the self-understanding of faith embraces more and more its own history. The hermeneutical question concerning understanding in general has modified the notion of historical science. Metz cautions the historical apologist to be more subtle and critical in his approach. To avoid hermeneutical pitfalls, he directs attention to the future and to a critical appraisal of the hermeneutical reflection on



phase of mediated theology. Having harkened to the Word, one seeks to give witness.<sup>5</sup> Jacques Maritain, in *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, discusses the role of the apologist.

The apologist, for a fact, did not make his way to the faith simply as an apologist, but indeed as a hearer of the evangelical preaching and the teaching of the Church. Only after having been firmly grounded himself in the things from above does he then, under the guidance of faith, teach the way that leads to faith and proceed to defend it. After all, one can defend only what one already has. A man enters life, for instance, inasmuch as he was engendered by his father; yet when he himself engenders in his turn, it is not inasmuch as engendered by his father that he does so, but as having now become a man. By the same token, it is not the apprentice who tutors, but the well informed. When the apostles converted the world they were not searching for the truth of faith, they had found it.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Bishop Butler: An ecumenical apologist***

Bishop Butler is far removed from the distasteful aspects of religious polemics. He never coerces, but seeks to persuade. His roots in the Anglo-Catholic Church have kept the interest of that Church dear to his own. In addition, Butler has long been associated with the humanists. His ecclesiology is flavored by his concern for a true Catholicism, without being anything less than a Roman Catholic Christian.<sup>7</sup> Butler appeals to the ideal of a world-wide unity and union, a common inspiration and a common hope based on genuine values of culture, but still more on a common transcendent faith. Butler's arguments are refreshing and convincing because they rest on what he has to say about fundamental human issues. It is as an apologist that he is known and respected in England. Nicholas Lash, a long-time friend of Bishop Butler, compares him to Newman. Lash sees them both as apologists of the most urbane and sophisticated kind, both of them expressing their apologetic in personal rather than in institutional terms.<sup>8</sup> Butler's book, *A Time to Speak*, has as its argument that the Christian Catholic teaching has been understood as a possible answer to man's ultimate question as to the meaning of life.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Corbishley, in

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time, thus offering a new form of relationship between theological reflection and religious institution. See also Edward Schillebeeckx, "Toward a Catholic Use of Hermeneutics," in *God the Future of Man*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), pp. 3-49.

<sup>5</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Essay on Christian Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Gustave Weigel distinguishes the two tasks of theology and ecumenism. In describing the ecumenist-theologian in *A Catholic Primer on the Ecumenical Movement*, Woodstock Papers, no. 1 (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1963), pp. 71-72, he writes:

"The ecumenist apostolate is not the formal task of theology. It is a by-product. The theologian by definition does theology, and in so doing it performs his proper function in the Church. He is a contemplative primarily though from the overflow of his contemplations the neighbor's thirst for light and knowledge can be slaked or sated. The non-contemplative apostolate, striving for the unity of all Christians, is a specifically different activity of the Church." (Cf. Lonergan's phases of mediated theology, *Method*, pp. 144-45.)

Weigel further emphasizes the fact that because theologians must work within the Church, the ecumenical theologian is radically committed to the guidance of episcopal regimen, even with its human deficiencies: "Under God's guidance the regimen works, and even its human deficiencies help to bring about the divine good for us all." These words written in 1963 are no less true today; but in the wake of Vatican II, the theologian in the service of the Church has come in for severe scrutiny. Richard McCormick's article, "Authority and Morality," p. 170, points to Butler for clarification on this topic. A unique contribution of this dissertation will be the explication of Butler's views on authority and freedom, and these from one who is bishop, ecumenist, and apologist.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Lash, review of *A Time to Speak*, in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 40 (April 1973): 189-91.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 197.



his review of the book, says that Butler's honesty, humanity, and erudition, coupled with humility, spirituality, and Catholic loyalty, combine to make this work a convincing apologetic and personal revelation.<sup>10</sup> E. L. Mascall pays tribute to Bishop Butler as "beyond doubt the most impressive intellectual figure in Roman Catholicism today."<sup>11</sup>

### ***Conversion: A specific task of the apologist***

Bernard Lonergan makes note of the task of the apologist.

The apologist's task is neither to produce in others nor to justify for them God's gift of his love. Only God can give that gift, and the gift itself is self-justifying. People in love have not reasoned themselves into being in love. The apologist's task is to aid others in integrating God's gift with the rest of their living.<sup>12</sup>

Lonergan further notes that, in regard to conversion, the apologist has a specific task.

Religious conversion is an extremely significant event and the adjustments it calls for may be both large and numerous. For some, one consults friends. For others, one seeks a spiritual director. For commonly needed information, interpretation, the formulation of new and the dropping of mistaken judgments of fact and of value, one reads the apologists. They cannot be efficacious, for they do not bestow God's grace. They must be accurate, illuminating, cogent. Otherwise they offer a stone to one asking for bread, and a serpent to one asking for fish.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Butler's arguments in this respect are certainly accurate, illuminating, and cogent.

Bishop Butler describes conversion as "the experience in which all religion is recapitulated, integrated, established."<sup>14</sup> He views conversion from a double perspective: first, as "a radical actuation of the self at its deeper and therefore all-encompassing level"; and second, as belonging to the Church, a subject of experience "inasmuch as it is made up of individuals who are, in a proper sense, subjects of experience."<sup>15</sup> The following text puts these two perspectives clearly in focus:

Christianity has a long pedigree. Like biological life, it discloses to the subject its profound debts to, its original insertion into, a long prehistory of man's religious quest, that quest that is the other face of the divine quest of man. . . . Too often we have seen this relation to Jesus as established merely by an external tradition of communicated words and institutions. The reality of it is the succession of interior religious conversions a series of occurrences, with developments from them, that is not just a number of unrelated events but the actualisation of a continuing stream of derivation, met by particular interventions of God that Christianity attributes to the Holy Spirit. . . .

External religion and the external tradition of religion are plainly meaningless apart from the inner life which should inform them and which they are intended to subserve.<sup>16</sup>

As a point of departure, the above text, which reflects the thesis—*Conversion, the bedrock of individual, subjective, religious experience, is contemporaneously understood as the foundation of a renewed theology, and for the purposes of this dissertation, for a renewed*

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Corbishley, "Resolute Hope," a review of *A Time to Speak*, in *The Tablet* 226 (December 2, 1972): 1149-50.

<sup>11</sup> E. L. Mascall, "Religio Monachi," a review of *A Time to Speak*, in *The Month* 6 (February 1973): 59-60.

<sup>12</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Butler, "Data of Theology," *Clergy Review* 61 (May 1976): 173.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

*ecclesiology*—opens the discussion of Butler’s basic horizon. This interpretation of key aspects of Bishop Butler’s subjective religious experience serves as something of a prolegomenon for the rest of the dissertation; that is, it is absolutely necessary for an accurate understanding of the meaning Butler ascribes to the Church, keeping in mind that he approaches the subject of conversion as one who has undergone it and who seeks to make this experience credible to others. The title of this dissertation indicates that Bishop Butler’s theology cannot be separated from the intellectual and religious experiences of the Bishop as theologian.

Butler’s “basic horizon” (a term borrowed from Lonergan) will emerge in Part I, and his life and thought will, with some modification, be seen to exemplify conversion as articulated by Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan uses the term “basic horizon” in reference to all theologians in whom the four transcendental conversions (intellectual, moral, religious, Christian) must be operative. The recent dependence of Butler on Lonergan for the articulation of his own reflections makes the presence of Lonergan’s language inevitable. A more detailed account of this dependence will be discussed in the third chapter.

### ***Butler and the universal question: What is the meaning of life?***

There is an overarching vision of life which grounds all of Butler’s religious experiences and which emerges as Butler gives us his response to the universal question: What is the meaning of life? That overarching vision is Butler’s understanding of the one thing necessary. The search for meaning, for the one thing necessary, is the achieving of that single unitary vision which not only makes sense of the whole project, but makes sense equally of each newcomer on the horizon of one’s mental stage.<sup>17</sup>

Butler asserts that there is a fundamental condition of the human being, a question at the heart of humanity, that one’s fundamental option answers. The universal question—What is the meaning of life?—the question that must be solved if one is to exist self-intelligibly in this world, arises from some principle of the practical order completely basic to human living in this world. It is to a principle of free responsibility that the grace of conversion is offered, and by it received.<sup>18</sup>

Can there be any question for a thinking man of his own need, whatever the defects of the society in which he lives, for a faith or vision, a controlling total view, which will give meaning to his life and a possible direction to his energies?<sup>19</sup>

Butler’s world, his maximum field of vision, is the human which presents itself to anyone who embarks on a journey of personal meaning. The meaning Butler ascribes to this life lies in what transcends its limits. In an early essay, “The Duality of History” (1950), Butler seems to describe this as mankind coming “into the right cognitive and affective relation with *Ens a Se*, and therefore with all that, in any sense, is.”<sup>20</sup> The divine act which terminates our mundane history is one thing necessary, “the ‘kingdom of heaven’ (that is the Reign of God).”<sup>21</sup> Butler’s

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<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner’s “searching Christology” is relevant in this respect.

“In freedom and orientated toward definitiveness, man is concerned with himself as a single whole. It is true that he can let himself be driven along through the multiplicity of experience in his life and be preoccupied first with one and then with another detail of his life and his various possibilities. He should, however, allow the whole and the singleness of his existence to appear before him and be answerable for this in freedom.”

Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thusing, *A New Christology*, trans. David Smith and Verdant Green (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, “Conversion and Theology,” p. 425.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Butler, “The Duality of History,” *Searchings*, p. 97,

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

world is the totality of all good things mediated in the present moment. The present moment offers through our conscience invitation to respond to the human predicament appropriately, i.e., by making judgments and coming to decisions.<sup>22</sup> Butler's world is total and basic. It culminates in the complex idea of God-Christ-Church as the total purpose of God in Christ, a purpose mediated to us by the Church. As he states,

... the witness of the past ages of the Church and of our contemporary age is that, to the extent that Christianity is genuinely believed and fully responded to, it becomes the very salt that gives savour to existence, the guide to life and the source of a deep inward serenity which can flare up into joy and ecstasy.<sup>23</sup>

Butler's essential metaphor of a journey reflects a dynamism that moves us toward a future in the direction of which we are absolutely oriented, toward the *eschaton* of the world and of all history.

Time and place and circumstances of the last encounter are hid from our eyes. But we know that in it we shall come face to face not with nothingness but with that full Reality which is also the more-than-satisfaction of the whole "desire" which has been the dynamism of our pilgrimage.<sup>24</sup>

There is a spiritual hunger for the metaphysically absolute that underpins all our reasonable behavior, a hunger that seems always to have been recognized by Butler, although he had to struggle to locate it for himself. He writes:

I do not think that I have ever seriously doubted that, unless a single explanation of everything exists, man's life is rudderless and absurd; though there have been times when I have wondered whether I could ever locate that explanation and find in it the meaning of my life.<sup>25</sup>

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to prove whether such an orientation exists, nor will it seek to prove the truth of that ultimate reality. These are questions about which the affirmative is presupposed. Rather, Butler emphasizes the reasonable behavior that is demanded by the existence of such a reality and by the religious implications of the search for the one thing necessary that guides us toward the future.

Man is naturally ordered towards the future. But the future is, in itself, the unknown and the inarticulable. To guide his footsteps, man has to look back and to trace out, beneath the contingent pattern of existence, the dynamic form which gives unity to the movement of life and which thus becomes a sign, not to say a sacrament, of the future.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Butler views religion from two perspectives: it is an interior experience; it is never purely private.

The basic religious experience occurs at the most basic or interior (or as some would say highest) level of the human spirit, the 'apex' of the soul or the 'synderesis', at which distinctions between knowing and willing, though already no doubt implicit, are not yet actually relevant. Religion, in its basic act, is a radical actuation of the self at its deeper and therefore all-encompassing level.<sup>27</sup>

It is in probing "to the deep heart of reality" that one finds "the desideratum of the depths of his own heart—the *unum necessarium* which alone can give sense and significance to the changing

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<sup>22</sup> Butler, ATTS, pp. 65-66.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Butler, ATTS, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>27</sup> Butler, "Data of Theology," p. 174.

features of human experience,”<sup>28</sup> and which Butler emphasizes as a deep level of attention corresponding to an intention: “the central core of our spiritual being from which flows the basic intention of our whole life.”<sup>29</sup>

In his essay “Unification” (1937), Butler describes at some length the process of unification as a process of self-actualization.<sup>30</sup> The essay is an important enough landmark to spend some time with, because from it has emerged an overarching vision which continues to ground Butler’s religious thought.

### **Unification: Seeking the One Thing Necessary**

The search for the one thing necessary has a history and development in Butler’s writings. The earliest and most significant moment in that development is his essay, “Unification.” By way of background, recall that in 1930 Butler became a monk at Downside Abbey, a monastery of the English Congregation of Benedictines. He had entered the Abbey after an intense period of intellectual and spiritual anguish concerning his religious convictions, which anguish he resolved without joy but with a determination that it was right. More than a year passed before a resurgent desire for holiness made him write that holiness is the only thing in life of which the value is certain. After this brief respite, a period of great darkness followed. In December of 1936 Butler wrote:

“I am in such ‘darkness’ as never was—though darkness is not quite the word, for it is rather as though the whole spiritual universe has dissolved into thin air and left one with the daily paper and one’s sausage and mash. The angels must think us very weird, mustn’t they?”

Again, on January 26, 1937:

“School started the week before last, and as ‘dope,’ it is working. . . . I pass my time between the sane paganism of my school life and the mad misery of the holidays.”

The year ended and the cloud had not been lifted. He felt that his days had declined and that his bones had “grown dry like fuel for the fire.”<sup>31</sup>

It seems correct to surmise that some deep spiritual experience or inner conviction took place during that period of darkness, because in April of 1937 Butler mentions a renewed buoyancy as he plunged with enthusiasm into his biblical studies. “Unification” and “One Aspect of the Christian Fact” are two essays published at the end of that period of turmoil.<sup>32</sup> In “Unification” Butler attempts to resolve the question of unity. Succeeding years seem to verify the surety of his inner conviction, of which he can say only that he is internally certain. Considering its biographical character, it is not surprising that the point of departure for the essay, “Unification,” constitutes a discussion of the “lacuna” in human experience (perhaps his own).

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<sup>28</sup> Butler, “Unification,” *Searchings*, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> For another aspect of Butler on self-actualization see “Self and Not-Self,” in *Why Christ*, pp. 30-52. This book, by Butler’s own admission, is an apologetic. The first three chapters (“The Modern Situation,” “Self and Not-Self,” and “Religion in History”) complement Chapters One and Two of this study.

<sup>31</sup> Rice, “Introduction” to *Searchings*, p. 20. The biographical introduction by Valentine Rice is a compilation of taped reflections of Rice with Butler and are, therefore, firsthand reflections. The experience here referred to in the text is not discussed by Butler; he merely notes it.

<sup>32</sup> Butler, “Unification,” and “One Aspect of the Christian Fact,” *Searchings*, pp. 38-60, both written in 1937. The importance of these early articles lies in the fact that, although he writes differently, Butler’s core vision of reality remains consistent through the years.

From Thales and the Hylozoists of the sixth century down to the Flight of the alone to the alone of Plotinus, the problem of unity, coupled as it was from the time of Socrates onwards with that of the unification of human life, may be said to have been basic to Greek philosophy. The observation is not without interest since the Greek tradition was essentially uninfluenced by Christianity and may therefore serve as independent confirmation of the thesis that the Catholic religion, in its claim to present men with a means of unification resting on a revelation of ultimate unity, does in fact offer to fill a lacuna, and to answer a vital need which man can discover but cannot by himself supply. If this thesis can be maintained, it would then be desirable to turn back to the origins of the Catholic religion, to seek an answer to the question whether or not this far-reaching claim, as it presents itself today, is in essence one with the claim involved in that “auctoritas” in which the original Gospel was invested.<sup>33</sup>

Butler probes the meaning of unity and human unification by describing the process of self-actualization. “Unification” is a penetrating look at the human predicament at a radical level of meaning. It raises the question of whether the Church provides meaning for one who seeks to satisfy an intellectual and religious drive. Butler argues affirmatively concerning the claim of the Church

. . . to unify men in a brotherhood transcending all contingent barriers, a brotherhood whose own unifying principle is God in Christ; a claim finally to be the introduction into human affairs of a new principle, a new creation, a life which is identically live, personal, active, concrete, unifying, a love that unifies even the two great commandments, because it is itself at once human and divine.<sup>34</sup>

The essential need of human nature, the desire for a unification, will never be completely achieved in our ordinary lives. It is possible, however, to achieve a unitary and unifying habit underlying all habits and acts of an individual’s life. But in order for act to become habit, there must be contact with

... an object transcending the values and exceeding the reality of every particular object; an object capable of penetrating and satisfying the depths of personality; that is to say a Lover and a Beloved, unchanging, absolute, divine—not a mere vague universal, but the possible object of particular acts and the abiding sustenance of a personal habit; a Reality, then, never absent from the profundities of the self, and moreover presenting itself, at least from time to time, within the borders of the self’s experience, in a concrete embodiment capable of serving as a focus for the discharge of act.<sup>35</sup>

Butler further argues that this principle of unity is operative from the beginnings of conscious life. Human experience and activity are controlled and inspired in all phases and at every stage by this principle of unity. He describes the process whereby the individual, by unification of his experiences, achieves articulate selfhood. It is the act of attention that translates the latent unity of the individual into the articulate unity of personality and therefore into achieving articulate selfhood. The act of attention selects and contrasts experiences and controls them by a principle of unity which involves a deep appeal to our needs and interests that make attention possible. It appeals to the needs and interests of the hidden author of the act of attention, the conscious “I.” This, however, does not involve a static act, but a process.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-55.

To speak of an act of attention is, however, to remind ourselves that conscious life, among men, is not a state but a process; it thus becomes important to consider its direction, the law of its development and the end towards which it moves.<sup>36</sup>

The origin of these needs and interests, presupposed by any act of attention, is deeper than the fully conscious experience and is found in the very nature of the subject himself.<sup>37</sup>

The particular act will be the subject's endeavour to express in conscious life the potentialities with which he finds himself naturally endowed; to express, in fact, himself; to transmute the latent unity of individuality into the articulate unity of personality—all this by means of, in union with, and yet over against, the world revealed in conscious experience.

Again, the achievement of articulate selfhood is correlative to the organisation of the vague totality of experience into an ordered world where part answers to part and each element gives and receives significance and enrichment by virtue of its inherence with the others in the whole.

For the principle of unity, whose ubiquity and importance we have been considering, is not the bare unity of arithmetic; it is not a "one" whose simplicity has been reached by subtraction. It is, more or less in all its manifestations, a "one" that dominates, organises, and makes possible a multiplicity; a "unity" achieved by inclusion and order; an ordered richness. The act of attention itself is a unity of volitional and cognitive elements with at least an undercurrent of emotion. The "simplest" object of attention (I abstract for the moment from God) reveals on inspection a duality of the "what it is" and the "that it is." There is no need to waste many words in emphasising the multiplicity within the finite subject itself—a multiplicity already visible in the union of origin, process and term in every act.<sup>38</sup>

Man, however, finds himself one of a society; slowly and painfully he sorts out the self and the not-self.

We thus enter upon a whole world of fresh unities—the family and the nation, the municipality, the cultural epoch, each real and rich and important only insofar as it is one; one in nature to begin with, and one in aspiration and ideal. And out beyond and within them all is the unity of humanity.<sup>39</sup>

Butler argues that just as the individual is only a united personality in potency and that his unity has to be achieved by personal activity, so too the unity of humanity is a potential unity.

A unity of the future or the beyond, it may be said; but a unity so real that it needs must colour our local and individual feeling, thinking and willing. For wherever there is potentiality and desire, the law of present progress is derived from the nature of the future goal. In particular, no solution of the ultimate problems of any individual's experience can be valid "for him" unless it is valid "for all"; there is an undertone of absoluteness—of catholicism—in even our most whimsical personal affirmations. I cannot hold as true for me what I am not prepared to assert as true for all. There is a

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 50. Regarding the act of attention, Butler has returned to its importance in *The Church and Unity*, pp. 40-44. This time he shows the influence of Lonergan as he uses the terms "pure and corrupt attention" as a basis for a discussion on community, and as a moment of self-transcendence, if it is authentic. On this point see also *Method*, p. 20. "The ultimate basis of both transcendental and categorical precepts will be advertence to the difference between attention and inattention, intelligence and stupidity, reasonableness and unreasonableness, responsibility and irresponsibility."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 52



social responsibility involved in every thought and action, in every act of self-determination.<sup>40</sup>

There must be, Butler continues, some means of bridging the gulf between subject and subject, and our common home for doing this is the material world. The body is the vehicle of sense experience, the link between intellect and intellect, will and will.

It colours and conditions our experience through and through, making us “a little lower than the angels”; making us incapable from the start of natural solitariness.<sup>41</sup>

There is a need, therefore, for an ultimate unitary good. The subject of any act, who lives deeper than the particular need inspiring any particular act, is the deeper reason for his acts, and any particular act is one stage in the continuous process by which the subject moves in quest of a good in which he will find his own unity.

A natural dialectic carries us up and out from the narrow confines of a comparatively insignificant single act into a world of organised and enriching experience, shot through and through with gleams of some ultimate unity where the real and the good, in all their fullness are identified each with each.<sup>42</sup>

To the degree, however, and in proportion to the completeness of this development from individuality to personality, the necessity increases of regarding life as one act.

He is no longer distracted between conflicting or unrelated claims; no longer does he live on the surface of himself and his world, as a *eutrapelos* or even almost a “dissociated personality”; he has probed to the deep heart of reality and has found there the desideratum of the depths of his own heart—the *unum necessarium* which alone can give sense and significance to the changing features of human experience; the *summum bonum* which, itself not comparable with the lesser ends of life, is yet the only reason why they can serve as ends for human effort.<sup>43</sup>

At this point, the idea of a church emerges in the essay, “Unification.” The Church is a society, and a person achieves social membership before he attains individual self-possession. It is by his membership in any society that he reaches himself. In return, the person gives his best to that society in and through his personality. Butler insists that society can heighten individual experiences in precisely the same way that an organic whole life enriches a single act. Society, then, constitutes a great reservoir of real riches on which man’s spirit must feed.

Butler’s ideal society, however, is a unified incorporation of humanity, and anything short of this is an impoverishing provincialism. The idea of a church, as identified in Butler’s essay, is constitutive of a person’s radical religious orientation—“his natural tendency to God.”

The idea of a church suggests at once a visible institution, and does so rightly; but the visible institution has got to be seen as the material and (at present) anticipatory embodiment of a great spiritual reality—of the spiritual unity of humanity, a unity found precisely at the deepest levels of human experience. As such, the church becomes an imperative necessity for the well-being of the individual life.<sup>44</sup>

Butler further emphasizes the fact that we cannot bear a solitariness of unaided decision on fundamental issues, because truth, humanity and reality have incalculable repercussions; they are too heavy a burden to bear alone. We are not endowed with intuitive certainty with regard to ultimate metaphysical and religious truth.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, life is controlled by unities which

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 54,

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

impose themselves upon one's attention and which appeal to the need for unification. When one reacts with attention, these unities do in fact progressively actualize the potential unity of the undeveloped personality. Without the Church, there is the danger of subjectivism, where man becomes the measure of all things.

The whole of our analysis of human experience and activity shows that the need for an object attained in consciousness as the specifying, unifying correlative of our potencies, already operative in the most superficial of our still scarcely human acts, only becomes more urgent at the deeper levels. It attains its maximum when we envisage human life at its deepest spiritual level and in its potential corporate unity of all individuals through all history. The spiritual capacities and history of mankind are an impossible futility, its spiritual life an incredible illusion, unless the "Church" of which we have spoken is a real possibility.<sup>46</sup>

It is most important to realize that while Butler argues that the Church must be a real possibility, it is *not* an ultimate object.

The "Church" however is not precisely the ultimate object, but rather at once the medium through which the individual is unified with his fellowmen in God (the ultimate unity), and also the preliminary actualisation of the potential unity of all humanity.<sup>47</sup>

The Church is the unified communion of the human religious quest, for by it man is in one way incorporated with God, and God is in some way "oned" with man, with humanity as a whole.

## **The Church: The Fulfillment of the One Thing Necessary**

### ***Unification: The contemporary context***

There is a remarkable consistency in Butler's interpretation of and insistence on unification as a real possibility in the human experience. His more contemporary views on the subject do not alter the fact that unification (the achievement of the one thing necessary) consistently grounds his ecclesiology. The context for his contemporary articulation is that of Vatican II—the context within which Avery Dulles insists all questions of ecclesiology since Vatican II must be considered

*Christians in a New Era* and "The Future (a chapter from *A Time to Speak*)<sup>48</sup> exemplify the consistency, the newness, and the relevance of the idea of a church as it emerges in Butler's theological reflections. Furthermore, the relationship of the individual to the Church and the Church to the world expresses the self-actualization of the individual (conversion) regarding both Church and world. Butler's recent articulation of his vision of the Church evidences his own conversion to the world through "the miracle of Vatican II." The meaning remains the same, but his tone reflects Pope John XXIII's *aggiornamento*. It is Butler's response to the signs of the times.

In *Christians in a New Era*, Butler insists that unification is becoming a real possibility, and that there is universal evidence of its absolute necessity if we are to avoid appalling disasters. This unification cannot be based on mere economic factors, on political foundations, or on the unity of secular culture. "Our unity, it would seem, if it is to be worthy of our personal dignity and hopes, must be a moral unity based on religion."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, "The Future," *ATTS*, pp. 151-76.

<sup>49</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 9.



## ***Unification and the future***

Butler develops his original insights concerning the needs of humanity and the Church by pointing to the future as a mighty challenge to unification. That challenge is characterized by the modern fascination with time—past, present, and future. Butler views the present moment as the only contact with reality, but at the same time there is a definite elusiveness in the present. As regards the past, we can capture it in imagination and evaluate it, but we cannot undo it. We move inexorably into the fixity of an ever growing past. This new element in Butler's reflections on existence, the notion of the importance of time and our responsibility for that which time creates, gives history an added importance. Butler notes, however, that we cannot look to the past to discover the fullness of life. The future, though it threatens as much as it invites, lies more within the limits of our will than does the present or past.

We can be, we are destined to be, in part creators of our own future.... And we are very conscious today that we can not only construct our own role for the future, but can in large measure construct the stage on which that role shall be played out.<sup>50</sup>

## ***Selfishness: The real obstacle to world unity***

Butler discusses the future 'in terms of the moral damage done by international policies which depend upon mutual threats and upon chemical! and biological warfare. Urgent are the huge and uncomfortable solutions required of us all with respect to the emergence of the Third World, economic insecurity, and materialism.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly, while the "third world" includes many millions of people living so close to the hunger line that a high percentage of the children die before school age, while the growth of the population in many regions there is outstripping the speed with which progressive schooling policies are trying to keep up with it, and while the gap between the affluence of the north and west of the world and the poverty of the third world is ever increasing, the "rich world" is consuming the world's raw materials at a speed which cannot be continued for very long without disaster. There is therefore both a world political threat from the imbalance between the poor countries and the rich, and a world economic threat from the growing exhaustion of resources. Meanwhile, the obsession of the rich countries with increasing productivity is a dynamic reinforcement to both these, easily combined, dangers.<sup>52</sup>

In such a way Butler describes our fragmented world—a world so much in need of unification. The disasters that threaten humanity are subjects of universal concern and few face the problems they raise. Should someone come up with the right solution, even if it is a feasible one, Butler wonders whether what can be done is likely to *be* done.<sup>53</sup> Selfishness is the real problem. Humanity can only be saved from disaster if nations and individuals refuse to distort priority, if they refuse to let selfishness win the day: ". . . when selfishness has made men stupid, they will not see where their genuine interest lies—or they say: *Après moi, le déluge.*"<sup>54</sup> Only a universal

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<sup>50</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 152.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. Cf. "The World Food Crisis" in *Time Magazine*, November 11, 1974, pp. 66-83. The report warned that unparalleled acts of international cooperation are needed to prevent the Malthusian nightmare from becoming a reality—nature's way of redressing the balance when population exceeds food supply—if man does not first redress it voluntarily. The World Food Conference made a grim prognosis and gave apocalyptic warnings. The determining situation poses a dilemma for the wealthy food-surfeited citizens of the developed world who must decide from a moral sense, or from sheer self-interest, or from their own sense of human dignity to feed the starving (p. 76).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

solution involving unification of the world will save men from the disaster of global selfishness. Butler makes an analogy to the efforts at work in Christian ecumenism—the allowance of great diversity within a worldwide unity and union. To effect worldwide unification, nations must see beyond their national horizons to a world horizon, to a unification based on “a common inspiration, a common hope . . . but still more deeply . . . a common transcendent faith.”<sup>55</sup>

Butler recognizes that there is a form of agnosticism which would reject his position. Religious truths, it would claim, are not so tangible nor so urgent as the more obvious problems that threaten humanity: the development of the Third World nations, the advance of education, or the overthrow of technological capitalism. Butler’s response is that of Christ to the tempter: Man shall not live by bread alone. To give meaning to life is no small matter.<sup>56</sup>

If our aim is to do good to our fellow men, then what greater good can we do than to help them to understand and accept the fundamental meaning of life, that meaning in the light of which it will be possible to establish a scale of priorities in services to be mutually rendered? Mankind has suffered too long from the stupidity of “do-gooders” and the enthusiasts of the latest intellectual fad or the latest political or economic slogan . . . concern for ultimate truth is not a matter of idle curiosity alone, but of the deepest moral concern.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Unification: A moral concern***

It is Butler’s conviction that Christians who are aware of their missionary-evangelistic role are inspired by a deep moral concern for humanity. This mission must be undertaken for the good of mankind. Today’s precarious world situation makes the realization of the Church’s mission more acute; but just recognizing these dangers is not enough.

Such dangers can be foreseen and understood, but it does not in the least follow that they will be prevented by suitable action on the part of men. And the reason why they may fail to be prevented is not simply human ignorance or stupidity, but even more basically, human selfishness, individual and collective. . . . Faced with these facts and these dangers, humanism alone is not enough. It can publicise the dangers and elaborate the remedial or preventive measures. And it can use human persuasion to recommend their adoption. Further than that it cannot go. It springs out of the human situation which it would wish to remedy, and like water, in the long run it cannot rise higher than its source.<sup>58</sup>

Humanism may warn, prescribe, persuade, and educate, but it is precluded by its own agnosticism from offering a convincing understanding of existence, a meaning for human life, a hope to inspire effort. Butler, on the other hand, emphasizes the radical difference the Church is meant to make.

The Church . . . offers not just an ethic, even the ethic of universal charity, but an interpretation of life. This is something which man, being rational, needs if he is to make sense of his situation and the efforts which it entails. It also offers a hope, based not on human calculations but on a divine promise of which the first fruits have already been given in the redemptive life of Jesus Christ. The hope is that, in the end, and with guaranteed divine assistance, the good will not be finally submerged by the forces of evil or the processes of dissolution. Without hope, man’s moral activity is hamstrung. And the Church also offers a supernatural reinforcement, recognisable, it is true, only by the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 154-55.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 194-95.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 167-68.

eyes of faith. The divine victory over evil and death, manifested and illustrated by the resurrection of Christ, is being carried out into the whole of history through the action of the Spirit of God, promised and given to the Church and her members, and will be finally actualised in the Eschaton of which, as we have seen, the redemptive incarnation is a real though mysterious anticipation.<sup>59</sup>

Butler has argued that a unified world will need a unifying spiritual inspiration, in fact, a common faith or religion that Christianity alone can supply.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Unification and ecumenism***

In the essay, “Unification,” Butler raised the ecumenical question: Can this one society be envisaged as capable of persisting in a state of disunity and in faith? Although this is a question for a later chapter, the general application is important here. In essence, this one society (i.e., the Church) can actually be one only “in a visible unity that essentially belongs to the fellowship of spirits whose intercourse is by means of the material world.” If this does not happen, if it is not evident, then each individual is left to find for himself the ratio of the unity of the separate members. But then it is no longer the one society which unifies humanity one and all. Individuals will create, each one for himself, an ideal human and religious unity. Thus, we back in subjectivism and on the road to agnosticism.<sup>61</sup>

It will be difficult to persuade mankind that the Christian faith is the one supreme unifying factor in human experience if division within Christianity persists. Can the visible society of the Church long withstand it? Butler believes that a divided Christianity will grow increasingly hard to maintain. He also realizes that ecumenism is still new and that ecumenical education will take time. Butler sees ecumenism as a hopeful sign, but a situation that requires sensitivity. The principle for ecumenical dialogue is “to understand and appreciate all that is of value in positions other than one’s own, while trying to explain and make palatable whatever is essential in one’s own position.”<sup>62</sup> For this reason Butler advocates, in the search for reunion, the quest “nor of the highest common factor, but of a lowest common multiple.”<sup>63</sup>

Ecumenical dialogue beyond the inter-Christian communions receives direction from the documents of Vatican II. Butler notes that they allow for the extension of the principle stated above. In this way there can be at least a common world view of the three faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Together they stand virtually alone in history as bearing common testimony in a world where racial and cultural differences are no longer going to count as fundamental *Weltanschauung*.<sup>64</sup>

Butler’s rationale for the Church consists in the fact that it is a medium and articulation of human unification. He places the Church in position of recognizing its mission to the world in the face of the ultimate threats that surround it. Butler’s image is one of service. The whole Church must serve the whole of mankind. This is the primary reason for its existence, and it is the one supreme unifying factor in human experience.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 157. Emmanuel Suhard in *The Church Today: Growth or Decline?* (Paris: Arch, 1947) notes that the world crisis of unification, and the growth or decline of the Church, depends on how the Church reacts to this crisis. The Church must lead in the unification and enter into the economic, the political, artistic and cultural factors of life, or it will decline (p. 122).

<sup>61</sup> Butler, “Unification,” *Searchings*, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 157. Cf. William F. Ryan, S.J., and Peter J. Henriot, S.J., “Message from Bucharest for Washington and Rome,” *America*, November 2, 1974, pp. 248-53. At the writing of this article, Ryan and

## Summary

As an ecumenical apologist, Butler seeks to present a convincing account of the Catholic Church. Butler's arguments reflect those qualities described in *Method in Theology*: the apologist's endeavors ought to be conducted in an ecumenical spirit. Since Lonergan designated the task of the apologist to be a conversion, the dissertation set about uncovering the relationship of Church and conversion in Butler's religious thought.

The point of departure for this chapter was the question of the meaning of life. In pursuit of an answer, we followed Butler's search for the one thing necessary. That search in turn arises from a first principle of the practical order, the principle of free responsibility. While this is a first principle in the practical order, the logically prior question, we have seen, is that of the meaning of life—in Butler's terms, the quest for human unification. The obstacles to unification are of moral concern to the Christian churches, who must begin by overcoming their own disunity. The meaning of the Church as the one supreme unifying force in human experience loses its persuasiveness, says Butler, if division among Christian churches continues.

The following chapter will present Butler's argument concerning the principle of free responsibility to which the grace of conversion is offered and by it received. Butler's cosmological argument thus coincides, in his judgment, with an argument from *moral* obligation, i.e., that the absolute reality exists.<sup>66</sup> This absolute reality, in Butler's scheme of things, actualizes, in a supereminent mode, the spiritual reality of moral obligation. Conscience, as the judgment on this two-fold experience, is the key to the next chapter.<sup>67</sup>

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Henriot, representatives of the Center for Concern, Washington, D.C., had official non-governmental organizational status with the United Nations. In evaluating Church policy, they called for a change in the Vatican's status in UN meetings to that of a very welcome and influential non-governmental organization, thus allowing the Church to take a more radical and unambiguous stance on behalf of the poor and powerless. In some ways this effort would make the Church the medium and articulation of human unification.

<sup>66</sup> Butler, "Self and Not-Self," *Why Christ*, p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 16-17.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONSCIENCE—THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEART

### Introduction: Conscience and the Love of God

The preceding chapter described Butler's overarching vision of reality in terms of the search for the one thing necessary, which is the context for understanding his religious thought. One aspect of that search, as we have seen, is the theme of human unification, beginning with the recognition of humanity's radical fragmentation and terminating in a divine act of ultimate unification in God. In between are questions for resolution: What is humanity's responsibility toward that final fulfillment? What ought to be one's response to the human predicament? These questions bring us to another aspect of the search for the one thing necessary: the theme of conscience,<sup>1</sup> understood as the authority of the heart.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter continues to discuss the subjective principle in Butler's religious thought, but evidences a more personal approach. The phrase, "authority of the heart," indicates that Butler's search for the one thing necessary was more than cold reasoning. The God we call the *Summum Bonum* is a God of love who resides in the deepest recesses of our conscience.

The reasons of the intellect deserve respect; but so also do the reasons of the heart. Greek philosophy has shown us the way, to the notion of God as the answer to the ultimate questionings of our intellect. Christianity has accepted that way and the compelling nature of its goal. But man is more than a computer. He has a heart. He has a fundamental hunger for what is good and holy. The Christian gospel adds to what philosophy has told us. Briefly, it has revealed to us that God is love, and that God, being love, loves us tiny and imperfect creatures; loves us in our individuality and loves us collectively, loves man the person and man the collective on pilgrimage through the epochs of temporal history.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See William C. Bier, ed., *Conscience: Its Freedom and Limitations*, The Pastoral Psychology Series, no. 6 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971) on conscience as a central issue both in Church and world from an interdisciplinary approach (p. x). Bier gives three reasons for this prominence: (1) the declaration on religious freedom of the Second Vatican Council; (2) the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*; and (3) the question of the exercise of authority in the Church. This work will be of significance in Part II of this dissertation.

See also John Donnelly and Leonard Lyons, eds., *Conscience* (New York: Alba House, 1973). This volume of philosophical discussions raises questions about conscience: "When does man's conscience come into play? Should a man always do as his conscience directs or is it possible for a man to follow his conscience and yet do evil? Finally, is there a faculty of conscience or is conscience no more than conditioned fears of retribution?" (Preface) The essays in this volume are intended to inspire further work in the area of moral concern.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R., speaks of "The Conversion of the Heart in Christian Renewal in a Changing World" (New York: Desclée Company, 1964), p. 157, and entitles Section 3 on conscience "God and the Heart of Man" (pp. 91-172). "The sublime goal of education," Haring states, "is the proper formation of conscience" (p. 172).

<sup>3</sup> B. C. Butler, Stephen Neill, Brian Hebblethwaite, and John Macquarrie, *The Truth of God Incarnate*, ed. Michael Green (London: Rodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 100. This citation is Butler's.

It is Bishop Butler's purpose to show that the acceptance of the moral precept at the heart of Christianity is identical with the love of God, that we are invited through our conscience to respond interiorly to the human situation responsibly and freely.<sup>4</sup> Although such an emphasis has long been dominant in Butler's religious thought, post-Vatican II theology has become a forum for his more contemporary reflections.

. . . the new emphasis on the subjective aspect of human life, on responsible freedom and creative spontaneity, is an emphasis which seems appropriate to an age in which we may hope to attain, at least here and there, to a collective adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

Collective adulthood, it would seem, overcomes by anticipation the dichotomy conjured up by the distinction between Church and world. Thus, any conscientious concern on behalf of humanity may be viewed by believers as "a kind of implicit virtual tendency towards the fullness of Christian truth and towards complete Christian communion."<sup>6</sup>

The concluding section of the preceding chapter noted that the obvious imperative in Butler's search for the one thing necessary is the inescapable fact of conscience. It is now time to address the issue specifically. In a post-Vatican II essay in *Christians in a New Era*, Bishop Butler writes on responsible freedom and speaks of conscience in a section entitled "The Heart of Christian Living."<sup>7</sup> Butler identifies conscience as one of two poles between which his mind moves in the field of religion (God-Church-Christ being the other pole), and that he defines conscience as a "judgment of man's free, responsible reflection on his experience and his predicament."<sup>8</sup>

"What is conscience?" Butler asks; and his answer includes Socrates' "familiar spirit issuing interior prohibitions"; Augustine Baker's "inspiration of the Holy Spirit"; and the Second Vatican Council's "divine utterance in the conscience."<sup>9</sup> The last two relate closely, Butler thinks, to the teaching of the French Jesuit, Jean Pierre de Caussade, on conscience.

. . . the heart of Christian behavior, as of the highest spirituality, is the (grace-governed) obedience to conscience. "God only asks for your heart" (i.e., for your interior surrender to conscience); "if you are seeking for the treasure of that kingdom where God reigns alone, you will find it. Your heart, if totally surrendered to God, is that treasure, that kingdom which you yearn for and seek. From the moment that one wills God and His will, one is in possession (fruition) of God and His will, and this possession is in proportion to our desire for it. To love God is: genuinely to want to love Him." De Caussade holds that each moment presents the human individual with a duty to fulfill, and that this duty is identical with the will of God, and he tells us: "The presence of God which sanctifies our souls is that indwelling of the Holy Trinity which establishes itself in the bottom of our hearts, when they submit themselves to the divine will."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Butler, *Why Christ*, pp. 51-52, and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 19ff.

<sup>5</sup> Butler, *Theology Vatican II*, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, "Responsible Freedom," *CNE*, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, "Responsible Freedom," *CNE*, p. 79. Cf. Bier, *Conscience*, Section VIII, "The Mature Conscience in Multidisciplinary Perspective." Maturity of conscience is described from a philosophical perspective (W. Norris Clarke, pp. 357-68); from a theological perspective (Ewert Cousins, pp. 369-78); from a psychological perspective (John R. Cavanagh, pp. 379-87); and from a political science perspective (John A. Rohr, pp. 388-97).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



Butler identifies the will of God with obedience to conscience. And conscience, as a free responsible judgment on man's experience and predicament, judges that experience and predicament uniquely in the passing moment. It is conscience that registers the message or the demand of the moment, the moment which both conceals and reveals the power and presence of God. The passing moment is all we actually possess. Our sole hold on reality, Butler insists, is the fleeting moment which alone divides us from absolute nothingness. Moreover, since God and his will are one, this same act of obedience to conscience in every passing moment constitutes a communion with God; it constitutes our fundamental option. More will be said of this below.<sup>11</sup> For now it is enough to say that this identification of the authority of the heart with obedience to God through obedience to conscience, is the source both of our communion with God and of the fundamental option.

Conscience brings us face to face with an absolute requirement, which, in order to be absolute, must be one with the source of finite reality, *quod omnes vocant Deum*.<sup>12</sup>

The believer may never in this life transcend the horizons of faith. He believes in God and he also believes in God's self-revelation in mankind's historical experience. But it is only a starting point for a believer when he can affirm that God has spoken to mankind in Christ and as Christ.<sup>13</sup> It begins an unending process of growth in understanding the revelation. One such understanding is Butler's application to the spiritual life of the idea of the fundamental option. The importance of such an application in Butler's religious thinking is evidenced by the fact that he devotes four chapters in *A Time to Speak* ("Prayer," "The Love of God," "Spiritual Reading," and "Mystics and the Present Moment") to the spiritual life.<sup>14</sup>

### **Conscience, Fundamental Option, and the Spiritual Life**

Bishop Butler is convinced that, for the morally adult person, everything depends on his fundamental option, an option which cannot be good without the grace flowing from Christ's redemption and which, unless one deliberately neglects it, is always available. "No doctrine or sacrament can take the place of this basic option."<sup>15</sup> The concern of the spiritual person, Butler insists, is not to understand the implication of God's will, but to read the message conveyed through his conscience and to respond to the "duty" embodied in the divine utterance.<sup>16</sup> The decision to determine one's inmost being by the light of the gospel is itself the fruit of religious conversion. It begins not from a human quest, but from divine initiative.

. . . the life of a religious man is a "converted" life, a life of which the fundamental intention, however inarticulate and indeed ineffable, is an orientation towards God as revealed in the revelation which God has made of himself. . . .<sup>17</sup>

When Butler speaks specifically of religion, he moves out of the theological/philosophical realm where our questions emerge from the desire to "know

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> "Butler, "Joy in Believing," *Searchings*, p. 267.

<sup>13</sup> Butler, "Belief and Reason in Science and Religion," *Searchings*, p. 235.

<sup>14</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 38-69.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, "Grace Abounding," *CNE*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

and understand,” to another realm where the desire to know and understand becomes the desire to respond. This is, in Butler’s opinion, the realm of religion.

But religion is a sphere in which not the desire to know is predominant but the desire to respond appropriately, in the total self-affirmation of our value-seeking being, to the situation in which we exist. There is a world of difference between the concern of an Aristotle to define man accurately (“rational animal”) and the concern of the Psalmist to understand his status in the universe and the practical consequences thereof: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?”<sup>18</sup>

The resolute and continuing attempt to respond appropriately constitutes, in Butler’s opinion, the spiritual life. Butler applies the fundamental option spiritually through the doctrine of divine providence.<sup>19</sup>

The Christian doctrine of providence implies that every situation in which we find ourselves is a focusing, at our own space-time point of experience, of the total purpose of God in Christ, and when we make the called-for response to the given situation we are in fact (with the help of divine grace) bringing our will into harmony with God’s will, finding therefore a union of our self and God (who is identical with the divine will).<sup>20</sup>

In his own spiritual development, Butler was greatly influenced by the exposition of the doctrine of providence in the writings of de Caussade. Butler found in his teaching a unity and universality that has gained de Caussade preeminence among those “who have tried to articulate the very essence of Christianity in words that, besides enlightening the intellect, attract the heart.”<sup>21</sup> The whole meaning of creation and history, the whole meaning of any passing moment, is Christ. De Caussade has “uncovered a doctrine that is fundamental, and universal because fundamental.” The practice of the doctrine of divine providence is for everybody and is of absolutely universal application. The core and center of de Caussade’s teaching is the simple fact of conscience.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Butler refers to de Caussade’s doctrine in the review of *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, ed. Marcel Viller, S.J., Fasc. VIII: Cassien-Chappuis (Paris: Beauchesne), in the *Downside Review* 57 (April 1939): 251-53. Jean Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751) is an outstanding representative of the spirituality of abandonment or surrender of oneself to God. *Spiritual Instructions in Dialogue on the Different States of Prayer*, ed. Gabriel Antoine, came out anonymously in 1741. It was published as a defense of the mystical life against the false mysticism of Quietism. De Caussade became more widely known by Ramiere’s edition of his *Abandonment to Divine Providence Envisaged as the Easiest Means of Sanctification*, in 1861, almost one hundred years after his death. The critical edition of the original text of *L’Abandon* was published by Father M. Olphe-Galliard, *Lettres spirituelles I: Texte établi et présenté*, trans. William J. Young, “Collection Christus,” no. 8 (Paris, 1962). See also *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, a posthumous work by Joseph de Guibert, S.J., trans. William J. Young, ed. George E. Ganns, S.J. (The Institute of Jesuit Sources/Loyola University Press, 1964), pp. 431-35. Butler regrets that Olphe-Galliard makes no mention of the influence of de Caussade in England (von Hügel was reading de Caussade in the late nineteenth century; Abbot Chapman in the 1920s). In 1925, at Downside, Butler, reading de Caussade, said, “It was like the joy of meeting an old friend.” See “The Absurd and John Chapman,” *Searchings*, p. 159, n. 9. That article was written in 1950. This was an important year because in 1950 Butler wrote an article, “A Master of the Spiritual Life: J. P. de Caussade, S.J., 1675-1751,” *The Tablet* 196 (December 23, 1950): 548-49; (December 30, 1950): 569-70. See also *ATTS*, pp. 63-69.

<sup>22</sup> Butler, “A Master of the Spiritual Life,” p. 548.

What God asks of you, he says, in effect, all he asks of you, all he asks of everyone, at every moment and in every situation, is to obey your conscience, which is the faithful echo of his voice, speaking directly and without interpreter to the soul.<sup>23</sup>

The imperative within the call of conscience—the expression of the will of God—is at the same time a judgment upon the situation as it exists in every passing moment. Conscience registers the message or demand of the moment which both conceals and reveals the power and presence of God. Butler makes a distinction between understanding (philosophy/ theology) and response (spiritual life). From this distinction there emerges this central religious truth: the awareness of God’s presence in our lives. Butler, we see, identifies this core religious experience, from a Christian perspective, as the doctrine of divine providence. This core religious experience organizes and integrates our practical daily living because it makes the divine will concrete by reason of our habitual attitude to the duty of the present moment which, Butler insists, is correlative to the divine will.<sup>24</sup>

Each of us becomes aware from time to time of a claim being made upon us through our conscience. Religion, taking up from there, teaches and believes that the claim thus made, identical with God’s self-utterance, is not just a matter of sporadic breakings of the silence, but is a dimension in the total human situation.

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. . . we can have a habitual attitude to existence which is correlative to the fact that all reality and all history, including our own personal history, is totally impregnated with the will of God—an attitude of total surrender . . . an acknowledgment which takes shape as a habitual “humility.”<sup>25</sup>

Butler notes, however, that existence in duration and in act is by momentary self-determination. For that reason, the response to our situation can only be moment to moment.

It is quite true that the passing moment is enriched with all the past, and pregnant with an unknown future. But neither the past or the future reaches us except through the mediation of the present moment. If God is to speak to us at all, it can only be in this moment in which alone we can respond to his utterance; and we may observe that God’s speaking is completed in and by our response to it.<sup>26</sup>

The basic intention of our whole life flows from the fine point or apex of the soul, the central core of our being. As the seat of the fundamental option, it keeps us going from moment to moment. Our transient *ad hoc* decisions and all our external behavior are only diminished expressions of that light which alone gives meaning to life. Butler points out that the seat and medium of influence is our innermost selfhood, almost always escaping our introspection. It persists within us, however, drawing us along by subterranean attraction in routine moments, and flaming up into inspiration at moments of supreme self-disclosure.<sup>27</sup>

The spiritual journey, as we have seen, begins with the first grace-enabled conversion at the beginning of our adult pilgrimage, a conversion which ought to lead to a transformation and conformation of our will with the will of God, a transformation to which we are all called.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

The orientation of the religious person constitutes a “serious call to a devout and holy life.” Although the response is characterized by various degrees of wholeheartedness, and given the authenticity of the conversion, there results a basic orientation towards God. This orientation survives, “unless the subject surrenders to some incompatible attraction of such power and scope as to divert the soul at its very roots, in its ‘apex,’ away from God.”<sup>28</sup> Butler notes that, in addition to the persistence of this fundamental orientation toward God, there is also an acceleration (unless the soul is hindered or diverted).<sup>29</sup>

The converted man, to the extent that he is living the implications of his conversion, is growing in the love of his “last end”—the end of the journey—namely God himself.

. . . human life only makes sense when it is viewed in the light of its ultimate end, the end compared with which everything else, however noble and important or even only necessary (like food and drink), is but “means,” and therefore subordinate. And the truth would seem to be that the ultimate end of life is not action in itself, but contemplation. Aristotle described the “activity” of the First Cause as *noesis noeseos*, the understanding of understanding—a cognitive activity. And he subscribed to the wise dictum that it is good for man to imitate God so far as he may. Aquinas, after an acute review of all other claimants, finds man’s last end in the beatific contemplation of the Supreme Reality who is also the Supreme Good.<sup>30</sup>

The quest for holiness is not separate from the ordinary conditions of life. On the contrary, by faith in God’s providence in the ordinary situations and by cooperation with his will, we both practice and bear witness to it. At the Second Vatican Council, Butler was determined to make this clear by strengthening the position of grace in the Council’s documents. He remarks that any misconception of holiness as the exclusive property of particular aspects of the Church’s life is swept away by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

While there is no suggestion that holiness admits of no gradations or that a general call to holiness may not become the basis of a more specific and even more urgent divine invitation, it is clearly laid down that a horizon of infinite holiness is opened up for everyone by his incorporation through baptism in the body of Christ, who is the archetype of all creaturely holiness.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conscience, Authority, and Responsible Freedom**

Butler contends that the authority which conscience exercises does not destroy freedom, it presupposes it. Conscience, however, does impose an absolute obligation: “. . . having determined as best one may . . . what one’s duty is, one is faced with an inescapable obligation to do that duty.”<sup>32</sup>

In Butler’s intellectual and religious development, John Henry Newman figures significantly on the subject of conscience. Butler considers Newman’s *Open Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, dealing with the double issue of authority and dissent, to be the most

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<sup>28</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 55-59.

<sup>29</sup> The preceding paragraph summarizes Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 55-59,

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 58-59.

<sup>31</sup> Butler, Letters from Abbot Butler in Rome to the Prior of Downside during the Second Vatican Council, unpublished.

<sup>32</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 16.

celebrated English Catholic defense of conscience since the Reformation.<sup>33</sup> Although the letter is one of Newman's later works, Butler notes that the idea of conscience was basic to all of Newman's adult thinking. Butler quotes this section from *University Sermons*.

It is obvious that Conscience is the essential principle and sanction of Religion in the mind. Conscience implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior, to itself; a relation to an excellence which it does not possess, and to a tribunal over which it has no power. And since the more closely this inward monitor is respected and followed, the clearer, the more exalted, and the more varied its dictates become, and the standard of excellence is ever outstripping, while it guides, our obedience, a moral conviction is thus at length obtained of the unapproachable nature as well as the supreme authority of That, whatever it is, which is the object of the mind's contemplation.<sup>34</sup>

Butler himself, in describing conscience, dismisses any identification of it with "a funny feeling inside us, or with some instinct or capacity like musical appreciation, which some may possess and others not; something which has nothing to do with our rational judgment."<sup>35</sup> He identifies conscience as a rational judgment on a situation requiring our response. Conscience not only takes into account the total material constituents of that situation, it sees them in the perspective of the relevant moral norms.

The mode of response thereupon dictated by our conscience is something to which, by the very fact of our constitution as responsible free persons, we know ourselves to be absolutely obliged.

. . . Our conscience may be mistaken if by that we mean that someone with ideal intelligence and complete moral maturity would have judged the situation differently. But we are never mistaken in obeying our conscience. God wills us so to do, and by so doing we conform to his actual will for us, and are in actual communion with him.<sup>36</sup>

Butler's defense of the primacy of conscience in the moral, intellectual, and religious spheres is rooted in personal experience. It is not surprising, then, that it should become the authority in the heart. And since the Second Vatican Council, Butler has become more articulate in defense of conscience. In *Gaudium et Spes*, Butler tells us, the Second Vatican Council recognizes the fact that "man detects, in the depths of his conscience, a law which he does not impose on himself, but which he ought to obey." This universal law is not the law of the Church, Butler observes, but the law of "the love of God and one's neighbour."<sup>37</sup> Bishop Butler insists that this affirmation of the Second Vatican Council regarding conscience is a powerful reaffirmation of what has always been Catholic teaching, i.e., the absolute primacy of conscience.

It means that the one, only and sufficient condition—for a morally adult human being—of communion with God in Christ is obedience to conscience. . . .

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79,

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The Council's teaching on conscience has to be seen against the background of the certainty that, for the morally adult human being, there is no ultimate third road between salvation and damnation, and that all salvation is in Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Butler is very clear about the fact that a person may be actually obeying the voice of God in his conscience and loving both God and neighbor, and yet be unaware that the voice is God's and that it is God he is loving.<sup>39</sup> In another essay written at the end of the Second Vatican Council, Butler quotes the document on religious freedom and notes its insistence that in the sphere of religion ". . .no one is compelled to act against his conscience and no one is prevented from acting according to his conscience in private or public, alone or with others, within due limits."<sup>40</sup>The mention of "due limits" takes one into the realm of responsible freedom.

. . . granted a real sense of responsibility, the free person will not only seek to determine the moral indications inherent in his actual situation; he will be ready to look for and comply with the guidance that the common moral sense of mankind can supply, and—if he is a Christian—with the guidance of the Church.<sup>41</sup>

In general, regarding individual conscience and authority, Butler claims that there is no unnecessary conflict between them, and only abuse on either side will produce clashes.

. . . abuse of authority or of freedom will produce clashes, which form an element in the drama of a Church endowed with the means to holiness and called to holiness as a body and in its members, yet composed of members who, whether prelates or simply laymen, are all morally fallible and prone to intellectual error.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the seemingly inevitable abuse of authority or of freedom will produce clashes, but not, Butler insists, an *a priori* state of opposition.<sup>43</sup>

Although Butler makes reference to the Church when he seeks to clarify the issues of authority and conscience, he notes that the issues spoken of are not specifically Christian perfections. When conscience is spoken of, it is universal in its application. It links Christians to the rest of humanity.<sup>44</sup>

It is . . . something by which Christians are linked to the rest of humanity. In particular, the Christian who obeys his conscience, the "conscientious" believer, is linked to every man "who fears God and does what is right." It is on this ground of conscience, above all, that John XXIII . . . sought to build a cooperation between Christians and "all me of good will," and that the constitution [on the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 78. Cf. Karl Rahner, S.J., "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian.'" *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 280-94. "The only necessary condition [for salvation] which is recognized here [in Vatican II] is the necessity of faithfulness to and obedience to the individual's own personal conscience." Rahner makes a distinction between two functions of conscience: "The one which tells a man's subjective self the universal norms of ethics and moral theology and applies them to his 'case,'" and the one by which the individual hears God's call to him alone, and which can never be fully deduced from universal norms." See also Rahner's *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964). The latter function of conscience seems to be the one Butler also intends.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *Theology Vatican II*, p. 173.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 180-81.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 101.

<sup>44</sup> Butler, *Theology Vatican II*, p. 169.



Church] addresses itself to all men. . . . It is conscience that moves men, individually and co-operatively, to “search out the truth” and “in truth to solve the many moral problems that arise in the life of the individual and of society.”<sup>45</sup>

Where the individual is concerned, however, moral adulthood requires a choice between what his conscience condemns as wrong and what his conscience judges to be right. If the fundamental option for the right is apprehended as right, then one is opting for God, even if it might be denied. Grace, finding no obstacles, takes possession. One is “in Christ” (and Christ ‘in him’) even if his conscience has told him to reject Christian preaching.”<sup>46</sup>

Every man of good will is in grace, and is mystically united in Christ with all other men of good will. All together, they constitute the body of Christ in its mystical element, as distinct from its visible institutional aspect.<sup>47</sup>

Butler observes that the decision for the right, dictated by conscience, must be made by the morally adult person who reaches moral adulthood by making a fundamental option.

Thus, for the morally adult person, whether he has been brought up as a Catholic or not, everything depends on his basic option. And his basic option, while it cannot be good without the help of grace which flows from our redemption by Christ, can always have that help—and will have it unless the man has deliberately rejected this help. No doctrine or sacrament can take the place of this basic option.<sup>48</sup>

. . . . the immature human is living in a situation that constantly demands more from him than he is capable of supplying; demands an effective reasonableness and rationality that is not yet his.<sup>49</sup>

This situation raises the question of constraint, or the responsibility of authority to impose limitations on the immature “in order that he may reach the fullness of responsible freedom with a greater range of effective freedom at some later date or in some ‘absolute Future.’”<sup>50</sup> It is at this point that Butler would introduce the role of social structures as “the framework for shared living and mutual help” necessary to society. The question is one of education, of discipline, of cultivation. Butler speaks of the necessity of maintaining the safeguards against anarchy and corruption.<sup>51</sup> While these are certainly necessary, they are also significant issues in discussing the practical and pastoral implications in applying constraint to the morally immature, for Butler distinguishes authority from constraint.

Constraint . . . is an external limitation imposed upon the freedom of behavior of those upon whom constraint is exercised. . . . Constraint, then, operates by

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. 169-70.

<sup>46</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> Butler, “Authority and the Christian Conscience,” *The American Benedictine Review* 25 (December 1974): 417. This article was the inaugural lecture of the annual Thomas Verner Moore Memorial Lecture series, newly established by St. Anselm’s Abbey, Washington, D.C., as part of its fiftieth anniversary celebration and offered in cooperation with the School of Religious Studies and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of The Catholic University of America, 28 September 1974.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 418-19.

limiting human freedom. This is can do not only by the actual exercise of force but by the threat of force-sanctions as we call them today . . . we may say that as constraint increases in range and effectiveness, so freedom is diminished.<sup>52</sup>

The relationship of freedom and authority is an important issue in Butler's ecclesiology and will, as has already been indicated, be discussed in Part II of this dissertation. For the present discussion on conscience, the relationship of authority and freedom is a key issue and as regards the individual, is located, whether one is in authority or not, in the "intention inscribed within it."<sup>53</sup>

The life of Jesus, as we have seen, the same life as in the divine order, is concentrated and presented to each one of us in the sacrament of the passing moment. It is accepted and assimilated by the *fiat* of our free consent, and, so accepted, forms Jesus Christ in the depths of our hearts.<sup>54</sup>

The human conscience knows that the situation with which it is faced is, in its totality, the embodiment of God's word to that conscience, and that the morally right response to the situation is a positive response to God—indeed an identification of the human will with the divine will in virtue of an identity of object.<sup>55</sup>

### **Conscience, the Ethical Imperative, and Conversion**

As Butler argued to the truth of Christianity, he sought to resolve a single question: If we have reason to believe that a holy creator is the ultimate explanation of all things, is Christianity true? Part of the resolution of that question provides us with the story of what Butler calls "real conversion." Real conversion, Butler says, may precede or follow a church conversion, or it may be coincidental with it. In his own life he notes that "the nature of the intellectual processes which led to this ratification and modification [of Butler's early religious heritage] . . . presupposes what has been said earlier . . . about the fundamental option."<sup>56</sup> About this radical option Butler states that, depending on the individual choice, real conversion does or does not take place.

In the end, there are two attitudes to life, and a great "option" between them. Either you are and choose to remain an egoistic hedonist; or you choose unselfishness instead. The former has nothing to be said for it except that it claims to agree with self-interest. It has against it the moral experience and witness of mankind through all its history. Deny altruism and the reality and validity of the moral imperative, and you take the heart out of most of the greatest literature of the world and make nonsense of the lives of the greatest men. . . . And as soon as I admit "ought" into my vocabulary, my position as an egoist crumbles utterly. The real conversion, then, is either a conversion from egoism to altruism, or the decision by which one who has never yet thoroughly chosen either alternative decides to do so. Every such conversion, I shall wish to maintain, is fundamentally, even if unconsciously, a religious conversion; for it

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 411-12.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>54</sup> See "Mystics and the Present Moment," *ATTS*, pp. 60-69.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

does honour to the absoluteness of moral value, and absolute moral value is God.<sup>57</sup>

The principle of “oughtness,” Butler insists, is as “ultimate irreducible as the notion of intelligibility itself.”<sup>58</sup> Butler observes that there is no divorce between intellectual and moral consciousness. “We are each one person, and we both ‘know that we ought’ and ‘ought to be reasonable.’”<sup>59</sup>

The dilemma of the moral imperative is aptly described by Butler as a question of whether “the man who gives a cup of cold water to a thirsty child is actuated by unselfish love or by a desire to play a role which flatters his self-conceit. To scrutinize the heart is the prerogative of God. To understand myself is something I can only do very indirectly.”<sup>60</sup> Butler, therefore, presupposes the truth of the notion of fundamental option. He has to assume that he has himself made the fundamental option and made it correctly. “. . . I have chosen not selfishness but the moral precept as the practical determinant of my life and thinking.” Butler hopes that his acceptance of the ethical precept (his love of God) is sincere; and he longs for the humility that goes with hope.<sup>61</sup>

Although Butler considers his contemporary reflections on the argument from moral obligation more articulate than his earlier attempts, he nonetheless appends to Chapter Two of *A Time to Speak* a significant letter of his written in 1928.<sup>62</sup> In the letter “he states that he dislikes moralism, but only in this one specific sense:

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 30. This conviction of Butler’s is a key factor in his dialogue with Lonergan, the focus of the next chapter,

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 185-86.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 185. Jacques Leclercq, in *Christ and the Modern Conscience*, trans. Ronald Matthews (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), makes note of the fact that from the nineteenth century on, “it has become impossible to discuss the moral problem without mentioning Kant, and that although Kant thought of himself as a metaphysician, he is,” Leclercq states, “incomprehensible apart from his Christian background” (pp. 83-84). Cf. Butler, “One Aspect of the Christian Fact,” *Searchings*, p. 44. Butler refers to C. C. Webb’s *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: University Press, 1926), pp. 117ff., and puts the Christian position at the opposite pole from the Kantian emphasis. Butler makes no judgment on the rightness or wrongness of Kant’s attitude. He is more concerned with contrasting the primacy of the Kantian ethical “Ought” with the primacy for Christianity of the factual “Is,” and also by the fact that the historical order is invaded by a real yet ambiguous transcendent order.

Cf. also *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Categorical Imperative,” 3:240-41. For Kant, the categorical imperative considers neither divine command nor conformity with nature nor consensus. It has “the category of *a priori*. For a philosopher with theistic presuppositions, the autonomous nature of Kantian morality has few adherents, for the obligation is imposed through the mediation of the law in the individual conscience. Such a critique of Kant’s philosophical position is based on the possibility of man’s specific knowledge of God and of the nature of the moral “Ought.”

For a modern commentary on Kant’s *Grundlegung*, see *Kant on the Foundation of Morality*, trans. with commentary by Brendan E. A. Liddell (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1970). See also Louis Dupre’s *Introduction to a Dubious Heritage; Studies in the Philosophy of Religion after Kant* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 1-5, for a summary of Dupre’s evaluation of Kant’s challenge to the study of religion.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-28.

That the best life and activity are those in which questions of duty no longer arises, because what is good is also accepted with full voluntariness and joy as the very goal of life and love.<sup>63</sup>

Most of us, Butler asserts, live much of our lives on a level where the “good still involves self-conquest felt as painful.” This call upon our will takes us into the only sphere where words like “duty,” “ought,” “guilt,” “sin,” “penitence,” “forgiveness,” have any meaning. This call summons us from “what is not our self and yet is ‘very good’: call it duty, or the catetgoric imperative or whatever you like.”<sup>64</sup>

More than fifty years after Butler wrote the letter, he reflects in *A Time to Speak* on what had probably preceded his personal decision regarding the force and importance of the ethical imperative within the question of ethical monotheism. Religious truth, Butler notes, is closely identified with the sense of obligation in one’s response to a personal source of goodness. Shortly before his decision to become a Roman Catholic, Butler described this sense of obligation as one which “drives you to postulate an Infinite and not less than personal source of the moral law . . . identical with underivative goodness . . . identical with the rational explanation of all that is.”<sup>65</sup>

But, whether or not it was conceivable that a purely material world could have got along without an explanation, I found it extremely difficult to accept the realm of conscious, intelligent life and at the same time not ask for an explanation of it. I felt at home in the long philosophic tradition that sought or supposed a single explanation of everything; and indeed that tradition is paralleled by the supposition in every great religion that the single universe has a single explanation—even though the explanation offered was often mythical rather than philosophical or genuinely critical. And it appeared to me that the One Explanation, if it were really to explain, must possess, though no doubt in a “supereminent” way, the “spiritual” (i.e. immaterial) qualities which were a significant element in the universe to be explained. I found it very difficult indeed to reject the hypothesis of a personal God.<sup>66</sup>

Butler’s choice of the ethical imperative marks a deliberate undertaking of an attitude of “conscientious seriousness” toward himself, toward humanity, and toward an end transcending his comprehension and innate powers.<sup>67</sup>

The love of neighbor only takes on its full depth said significance in its conjunction with the ‘love of God above all things,’ And, on the other hand, man was made for no other end than this end. ‘Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is without rest till it comes to rest in thee.’ Unable to discover or attain that end by his own unaided efforts, man becomes frustrated and his own moral endeavor falters. . . . And still his conscience, when he listens to it, orientates him toward the undescried goal. The gospel is not simply a noble humanism, it is also a message of divine redemption. And the Church, in bringing that message, is found to be entrusted also with the means of grace which man needs but could never have procured for himself. Man finds himself, finds his peace, and finds his joy, only in being brought by the love of God, the love which is God, to transcend himself in Christ, and thus in God.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Butler, *Theology Vatican II*, p.. 188.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-89.

That our human lives are capable of such spiritual heights goes far beyond a Christianity presented as a higher economic or cultural humanitarianism. Not to go beyond humanitarianism, Butler declares, is to surrender Christianity's claim to offer an interpretation of life.<sup>69</sup>

Butler attempts to correct the old bias which, he claims, tends to emphasize love of God to the neglect of neighbor. Butler states that true love of neighbor presupposes love for God and communion with him. Love of neighbor involves more than good will; it means practical efforts to promote the welfare of others, their cultural, material, and physical well-being.

When we have provided our fellow men with all that they can enjoy in the way of physical sustenance and cultural goods, they will say "thank you for nothing" unless we have helped them to glimpse beforehand, nay to taste beforehand, that ultimate experience which will be the concurrent fruit of their attainment of their last end.<sup>70</sup>

True neighbor love is all of this and even more, for the ultimate welfare of humanity is the vision of God.

The decision to opt for "real" (or radical) conversion, i.e., a conversion to full adult moral consciousness, involves a process of discovering the truth which is relevant to our behavior.<sup>71</sup>

The Christian conscience is the conscience of a man who has accepted as true, and who wishes to follow as a guide for behavior, the self-disclosure of God in and as Christ. I hasten to add that, in my view, this acceptance and the resultant resolution for behavior, are themselves, in one aspect, the fruit of responsible freedom. A Christian who has not yet reached years, as we used to say, of discretion, one who is not yet able to exercise responsible freedom because of his immaturity, is not capable of Christian responsibility in the full sense; has no developed Christian conscience. A full Christian is one who has discovered that he will be what he has made himself, and that he has freedom and therefore an obligation to make himself such as he ought to be.<sup>72</sup>

Essentially, this chapter has been concerned with an inward gaze, attempting to describe the fundamental human religious experience as one that takes place at the most basic, interior, or highest level of the human spirit. "Religion, in its basic act, is a radical actuation of the self at its deeper and therefore all-encompassing level."<sup>73</sup> But at the same time, Butler reminds us that

Important as it is to locate religion at the roots of the personality of the individual religious person, religion is never a purely private thing. The religious believer is a man before he is a believer. As a man he is rooted in history and in society and there is a measure of truth in the somewhat exaggerated modern slogan that

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<sup>69</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 168.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-86. On these pages Butler discusses such a process in terms of the basic option, of which the fully adult moral conscience is a key factor. Walter Eugene Conn, *Conscience and Self-Transcendence*, unpublished dissertation (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1973), presents Lonergan's transcendental analysis as "a normative understanding of conscience as the critically appropriated drive of the self-transcending personal subject for the authentic realization of value" (p. 4). This work is supportive of Butler's subjective principle, but we reserve comment on this for the next chapter.

<sup>72</sup> Butler, "Authority and the Christian Conscience," pp. 411-12.

<sup>73</sup> Butler, "Data of Theology," p. 174.

inter-personal relations are the very substance of personality, which is thus not a static but a dynamic thing. It is as already a social being, a member of the actual historical communion of the human race, that a man 'goes into his private chamber, shuts the door' and prays to his heavenly Father. True, the advent of conversion means the abolition of former horizons; but it does not and cannot mean the abolition of the person constituted by his social relations.<sup>74</sup>

At this point we are back to our thesis, which states that conversion and Church are radically related in Bishop Butler's religious thought. The mystical and institutional elements of religion, Butler declares, are wedded and inextricably bound, and together with the intellectual element of religion constitute data of theology. Butler's essay, "Data of Theology," is written from a Catholic-Christian viewpoint, but he believes that his analysis, with modifications, is valid for other world religions.

Everywhere, the heart of religion tends to become more and more an interior experience open to external influences. Everywhere, on the other hand, religion tends to create and to live in corporate religious bodies and traditions. Everywhere, the pure spirit of religion tends to be wedded to what I have called institution. . . . If I am correct, or more or less correct, in my analysis, the data of theology are the inner history of believing humanity. . . and simultaneously the external phenomena of religion in which that inner experience clothes itself and from which it seeks sustenance. . . . God's initiative and presence are the other side of the basic experience of the individual believer, and Jesus Christ, the fountainhead of the public tradition of religion. . . .<sup>75</sup>

Butler's mention of God's initiative closes this chapter with the awareness that conversion does not occur in human life as something that an individual generates for himself. It is a human experience only if accepted as a gift of unrestricted love of an unrestricted object.

It [conversion] is, so long as we confine our attention to the individual perspective, the basic, fundamental religious experience; the experience in which all religion is recapitulated, integrated, established. It is the key factor in religion.<sup>76</sup>

Conversion (intellectual, moral, religious) is the key factor in religion. What Butler has to say about conversion is important.

## Summary

The term "authority of the heart" describes the imperative which has been at work in this chapter—the moral imperative at the heart of Christianity which is identical with the love of God. Through our conscience we are invited to judge our experiences and to respond to them responsibly and freely.

In a unitary vision, Butler has related conscience, the fundamental option, and a spiritual life. Our moment-by-moment existence is illumined by an imperative variously objectified as conscience, the fundamental option, the expression of the will of God, the sacrament of the present moment, the serious call to a devout and holy life, and so on. None of these, Butler contends, is divorced from ordinary day-by-day existence. A further development of conscience, objectified in the tension between authority and freedom, is the interior expression of the morally free adult who makes a decision in view

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 173.



of his fundamental option. The distinction made in this chapter between authority, constraint, and responsible freedom will have ecclesial implications in the fifth chapter below.

Conversion results when the ethical imperative is objectified in one's fundamental option. Butler describes the force and importance of one's choice of the fundamental option which, to him, is "real" or "radical" conversion. The object of one's choice, Butler argues, is the one holy God, even though one may not know it. This choice is radically personal, radically social, but not radically self-generated. Butler's position with respect to moral/religious conversion is contemporaneously articulated as a consequence of his dialogue with Lonergan. This dialogue is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: BUTLER'S DIALOGUE WITH BERNARD LONERGAN

### Introduction

In this chapter, Butler's dialogue with Lonergan centers around two questions: first, how did Lonergan influence Butler's understanding of the Church; and second, in what way does the emergence of conversion as a contemporary topic relate to that development? It is important to repeat here what was stated in the Introduction: Butler was struck by the aptness of Lonergan's theory of emergent probability<sup>1</sup> and the effectiveness of the heuristic structure<sup>2</sup> outlined in Chapter 20 of *Insight*. Lonergan's cognitional theory then begins to influence Butler's ecclesiology, and the topic of conversion emerges as Butler follows closely Lonergan's interest in it.

The story begins with Butler's first reading of Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*. Butler tells us that he has read *Insight* many times, that he understands the main lines of Lonergan's argument, and "can recognize gross deformations of his thought when they are propounded by others."<sup>3</sup> But he also states that he is not so sure of the correctness of his own interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Butler explains his diffidence about attempting to interpret *Insight* and gives some advice about any undertaking of Lonergan's thought.

Lonergan . . . gives you his philosophy in a single book of nearly eight hundred closely-printed pages. And it is no use dipping about in him. . . . I can only report that the book will stand reading and re-reading and reading again. . . . But he must be read in his own words and at his own length; no one else can do justice to his thought at shorter length than he himself has found necessary.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter will chronicle Butler's absorption with certain of Bernard Lonergan's writings, namely, those dealing with the implications of Lonergan's thought for *aggiornamento* (the "early" Lonergan), and the consequent need for the theologian involved in ecclesiology to understand theology's need for a subjective religious principle (the "later" Lonergan). Conversion will emerge as that subjective religious principle. It is important to note, however, that in this dialogue Butler is telling his own story, not Lonergan's.<sup>6</sup> In doing so he offers not a factual, biographical sketch, but part of the story

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction of this dissertation, note 86.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction, note 87.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, "Lonergan and Ecclesiology," p. 2. Despite his diffidence, Butler's critiques are welcome guides to Lonergan's thought.

<sup>4</sup> Of this dialogue, Butler is careful to disqualify himself as a Lonergan expert. In describing some of Lonergan's influence, Butler hopes "that it will not be supposed that I am giving an adequate and balanced account of his thinking. His books are there to be read, and on the whole I think he would say that if he could have expressed his meaning more lucidly and more shortly than he has done, he would have, in fact, been briefer" (*ATTS*, p. 116).

<sup>5</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

of his self-appropriation<sup>7</sup> of Lonergan's transcendental method, and consequently the reaffirmation of his own basic horizon.

*Aggiornamento*, as it is understood in this chapter, emerges as the widening horizon of the Second Vatican Council. Lonergan's theory of emergent probability and Butler's grasp of its implications ground Butler's designation of it as "*aggiornamento-in-depth*." *Aggiornamento*, therefore, since it grounds both conversion and ecclesiology, challenges us to face the future of the Church with an openness characteristic of emergent probability.

In this chapter we take a second look at conversion, this time as it emerges center stage from within the dialogue between Butler and Lonergan. One may quite confidently expect that Butler's basic horizon (i.e., his search for the one thing necessary and the choice of the ethical imperative as his fundamental option) will not only influence his reading of Lonergan but will find a wider horizon and a higher synthesis in his self-appropriation of Lonergan's transcendental method. We may also expect to find that, with some modification, Butler's basic horizon is an exemplification of conversion as described by Lonergan.

Butler locates the link between the early and later Lonergan in Chapter 18 of *Insight* ("The Possibility of Ethics"). This becomes the catalyst for Butler's thought on the subject of conversion. We make an attempt here to form a chronology of ideas gleaned from Butler's writings between 1961 and 1979. The procedure has been something of a detective hunt; Butler continues to be an elusive quarry. The amount of research continues to grow due to Lonergan's continuing challenge and Butler's steady output. This chapter can do no more than give some clear indications of how Lonergan has influenced Butler and suggest the possibility of more extensive studies of the influence of Bernard Lonergan on the "later" Butler.

### **Butler, the Early Lonergan, and the Second Vatican Council**

Prior to the Council, Butler had published *The Idea of the Church* (1961) as a contribution to ecumenical dialogue. In that book Butler made a teasing remark that provides a clue to the influence of the early Lonergan on his ecclesiology.

This essay is conceived as a contribution to a dialogue between Christian believers. Should it fall into the hands of an unbeliever, he may wonder what all the fuss is about. May I suggest to such perplexed persons that the answer to their question may be found in the twentieth chapter (*Special Transcendent Knowledge*) of Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*?<sup>8</sup>

In Chapter 20 of *Insight*, Lonergan tells us that progress in culture is matched by decline and that all of us are victims of a general bias against truth and reality. Because of the social "surd" and the fact that man will not redeem himself, God in his goodness provides the redemption which we must be able to identify as the solution to the human predicament of evil. Lonergan sets up a heuristic structure for doing so and points us toward what we are looking for.<sup>9</sup> History, Butler observes, shows us the historical reality

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<sup>7</sup> The use of the term "self-appropriation" is meant specifically in Lonergan's sense, i.e., it is the heightening and intensifying of an awareness that is already given. Self-appropriation is not becoming aware of knowing, but becoming aware of it in new ways. See also Flanagan, "Insight into *Insight*," p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. xvi.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 131.

that meets the demands of Lonergan's heuristic structure. The historical reality, not named but implied by Lonergan, is the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> With this clue in mind it is not surprising that in *The Idea of the Church* Butler is not so much concerned with identifying the Church as he is with showing what sort of thing the Church is in its historical reality.

The purpose of this book is a narrowly restricted one. It is to pose clearly, and to suggest an answer to, a particular question about the Church: What sort of a real thing is the Church in its historical existence in this world?<sup>11</sup>

A second reference to *Insight* is Butler's use of Lonergan's idea of emergent probability and the evolution of a new species. (Here he is speaking of New Testament Christianity.)

A new species, then, is like a new insight, a new theorem, a new *logos* or *ratio*. Life manifests itself in adaptation to environment. As environment changes, so life must change its adaptations or perish. A new species is an adaptation to a new, often a wider, sometimes a higher, environment; or a more successful adaptation . . . to an environment that remains the same.

Christianity, however, was characterised by no alteration in man considered as a biological species. Yet it was emphatically a new adaptation to environment.<sup>12</sup>

Butler's use of evolutionary language shows the double influence of Bernard Lonergan and of Teilhard de Chardin.

Writing of the emergence of the living cell from the situation provided by 'mega-molecules,' Teilhard de Chardin says: "This discovery was doubtless prepared over a long period . . . ; but for all that it was sufficiently sudden and revolutionary to have immediately enjoyed prodigious success in the natural world.' [*The Phenomenon of Man*, English translation, p. 86.] Lonergan, who compares a new species to a new 'insight,' draws attention to the thrill that accompanies a new insight: 'this feature is dramatized . . . by Archimedes' peculiarly uninhibited exultation' when he rushed from the baths crying . . . Eureka. [*Insight*, p. 4.]<sup>13</sup>

With this in mind, Butler calls for a fresh effort of "critical and synthetic thinking beyond any that went into the composition of the New Testament books themselves" to determine, from the New Testament itself, the "idea and the ideas" that were latent in primitive Christianity.<sup>14</sup> In his last speech at the first session of the Council, Butler drew attention to a similar new understanding of culture demanded of contemporary ecclesiologists.

In my speech I made two observations. First, in a religion which had the incarnation of the Word in history as its central tenet, the historical approach could scarcely be considered inappropriate, indeed it must be the most appropriate of all approaches. But secondly, the "new theology" did not wish to jettison anything that is good in the older approach. It was a question of a higher viewpoint, and in that higher viewpoint the contributions of essentialism could

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<sup>10</sup> Butler, "God, Anticipation and Affirmation," p. 373.

<sup>11</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Butler, *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

find their honoured place. The ultimate aim was not an exclusive choice of historicism, but a new synthesis on a new foundation.<sup>15</sup>

In 1962 Butler reviewed a book that analyzed the situation of theology after the first session of Vatican II. The real question, said Butler, is not whether traditional theology is about to be ousted by modern thinking (as the press reported), but “whether the time is not at hand for taking traditional theology into a higher and wider synthesis?”<sup>16</sup>

. . . if theology is the expression of the developing mind of the Church, working indeed upon the data of the deposit of faith, but not by a purely abstract process of deduction in the study but contemplatively or intuitively in her never-ending labour of adaptation to the world which is the arena of her mission, then the witness of St. Thomas, for instance, will not lose its authority, but it will need to be seen in its historical context— among other things, in the context of his own intellectual development.<sup>17</sup>

In his address at Notre Dame University (1966) after the close of the Council, Butler returned to Lonergan’s emergent probability, but this time in the context of *aggiornamento* in depth.

Plant and animal species are found to include a number of varieties within themselves; they have modified a basic structure, common to all the varieties of a single species, to meet slightly differing concrete situations. But a time may come when the survival and welfare of the species’ biological inheritance requires some more radical change. A species is conceived by Bernard Lonergan as “an intelligible solution to a problem of living in a given environment.” When the environment change is beyond a certain limit, the species ceases to be a solution to it, and the alternatives now are extinction or evolution. If evolution occurs, the resultant species is a new solution to the new problem of living. It “rises upon and takes into account, as it were,” the earlier solution, and is “the sort of thing that insight hits upon and not the sort that results from accumulated, observable differences.” [*Insight*, p. 265].<sup>18</sup>

Communities, says Lonergan, which exist in “troubled times of crisis demand the discovery and communication of new insights and a consequent adaptation of spontaneous attitudes.<sup>19</sup> With such a goal in mind, Butler, following the Council, dedicates himself to the communication of “new insights” and to the challenges that the “consequent adaptation of spontaneous attitudes” demands. While the call to conversion does not explicitly appear in Butler’s Notre Dame address, his call for adaptation and transformation describes the experience without using the word.

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<sup>15</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> Butler, review of *The Study of Theology*, by Charles Davis, in *The Downside Review* 81 (April 1963): 165-67.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, “The *Aggiornamento* of Vatican II,” *Searchings*, p. 257.

<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 216. On the crisis of development (*Searchings*, p. 259) Butler quotes Canon Houtart’s *L’Eglise et le monde*, p. 18.

“Never has there been a more powerful consciousness of humanity’s engagement in a common adventure, driving it as with irresistible force to the achieving of a goal which will mean, perhaps, man’s willingness to transcend himself.”

Cf. Lonergan’s prophetic words on tension in community in *Insight*, p. 592.

“The tension between meaning and expression will be at its maximum at the beginning . . . : images and words that previously bore an established significance appear in strange collocations; they struggle under a burden of meaning that they do not succeed in conveying; quite suddenly they pass out of currency to be replaced by fresh efforts. . . .”

The spirit of Jesus was not the spirit of unqualified conservatism. . . . he subordinated law to charity and gave the impulse that was to change a predominantly national religion into one that was universal and catholic. It is that spirit which provokes audacious change in order to preserve, at a higher level and from a superior viewpoint, inherited values, which is the Spirit that animates the mystical body of Christ. In “the name of” that Spirit, Vatican II was called together and congregated. I am less doubtful than I once was that it was gathered for a second Pentecost.<sup>20</sup>

The following selection from Butler’s talk at Notre Dame brilliantly and lucidly describes the darkness of the pre-Vatican II Church and identifies the adaptations demanded by Lonergan’s evolutionary theory of emergent probability.<sup>21</sup>

What, now, of the pre-Conciliar Church? Like a stratified rock to the geologist, she was a fascinating object for the historian, not to say the antiquarian. She trailed strange clouds of glory from a past growing ever more remote and irrelevant—like the three crowns of the papal tiara. Her law was articulated on principles, not to say in a spirit, which were ultimately those of the Roman civil law. Her central administration was redolent of the familiar of the Roman Emperors, as her ceremonial reflected that of a Byzantine court. It needed a critical eye to discern, in the action and theory of the papal primacy, what came from the gospel and what from Caesar. She had never recovered from the estrangement between Eastern and Western Catholicism, which was symbolised in the mutual excommunications of Rome and Constantinople. Lacking the counterpoise of the Eastern churches, the West had come practically to identify its local tradition with the universal tradition, so much so that the miniature Eastern churches actually in communion with the Holy See were treated as quaint appendages and exceptions to a general rule. The *koinonia* of ante-Nicene times had become the Latin *societas*, and that society, having been first imperialised, had been feudalised in the Middle Ages. Still, in the middle of the twentieth century, she seemed to be trembling from the shock of the Protestant Reformation, and following her reaction against the new theology of the sixteenth century she had reacted also against the whole general stream of progress in that area of the world’s surface where she was geographically, but no longer spiritually at home. The tremendous dynamic movement that had flung her upon the Graeco-Roman world of the early Christian centuries seemed to have taken shape in a parabolic curve, carrying her now even further from the living, moving centre of human affairs. A species, when no longer adapted to its actual environment, can evolve, or it can perish. The Church cannot perish. But there is a third possibility. Sometimes a species succeeds in taking refuge in a backwater of existence, where—in diminished numbers and with no further relevance except to historians of past evolution—it prolongs an insignificant story. As we look back on the Church before 1962, do we not sometimes seem to be catching a glimpse of what might have become a monumental irrelevance?<sup>22</sup>

In describing what he calls the backwater of the preconciliar Church, Butler does not intend to disregard either the hopeful signs of renewal already at work in those years before the Council, or the fact that the Church, in a very real sense, will never fail. His caricature of the preconciliar Church is an effort to emphasize the need for a response to Pope John XXIII’s call to update the Church. That we have a divine guarantee regarding the imperishability of the Church provides no correlative divine guarantee that her

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<sup>20</sup> Butler, “*Aggiornamento* of Vatican II,” *Searchings*, pp. 264-65.

<sup>21</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 138-50. These are Butler’s reflections on the Second Vatican Council.

<sup>22</sup> Butler, “*Aggiornamento* of Vatican II,” *Searchings*, pp. 258-60,



destiny “will not be that of the coelocanthus, surviving with diminished numbers through having taken refuge from the main current of onward-moving life.”<sup>23</sup>

The tremendous change for the better brought about by the Council adds up, Butler cautions us, “to no more than a first step,” just as “conversion, for the individual, is a first step.” And he points out that the Church, the People of God, have been asked to make that first step, “to move forward into a great Christian Renaissance.”<sup>24</sup> As regards leadership in the effort, Butler (in 1966) wrote those determined words that introduce this dissertation.

It is time for those who lived the Council passionately, and who believe that it offers us the key to the Christian and human future, to make their voices heard.<sup>25</sup>

In pursuit of this goal, Butler draws attention to the necessity of individual action in the task of *aggiornamento*. The Council, as a new Pentecost, substituting the dynamic for the static as the appropriate category for Christian thinking and acting, recognized the charismatic force in the Church. These special graces make the “faithful of every rank fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church” (Constitution on the Church, n. 12).<sup>26</sup>

It is in this context of the life of the Spirit, indwelling and welling up from the depths of baptised humanity—which exists only in individual, personal subjects—that the sacraments attain their full meaning. . . .

We look to the saints who have gone before us into glory as to exemplars of that transformation into the likeness of Christ which is our common vocation.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, true *aggiornamento*, Butler holds, is not revolutionary but profoundly traditional. It is carried out today from within the context of the challenge to which Pope John XXIII initiated a response.<sup>28</sup>

### **Butler, the Later Lonergan, and the Turn to the Subject**

In an address delivered at the Lonergan Congress (Florida) in 1970, Bishop Butler made further application of the theory of emergent probability by identifying its implications for ecclesiology, filling in Lonergan’s heuristic structure outlined in Chapter 20 of *Insight*.<sup>29</sup> In that same address Butler goes beyond *Insight* and begins to deal with the “later” Lonergan, thus marking a transition in his thought.<sup>30</sup> Reflecting that the

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<sup>23</sup> Butler, “Joy in Believing,” *Searchings*, p. 271.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>25</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Butler, “The Constitution on the Church and Christian Reunion,” *Searchings*, p. 250.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250-51.

<sup>28</sup> Lonergan, “*Existenz and Aggiornamento*,” *Collection*, p. 251.

<sup>29</sup> At this Congress Butler does not give a detailed account of why Lonergan holds that the solution for the problem of evil can be found. He underlines some of the elements of that heuristic structure relevant to an ecclesiology. See Butler, “Lonergan and Ecclesiology,” in McShane’s *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>30</sup> Of this transition Butler notes that

“In some more recent work Lonergan has taken his stand with us at the particular stage of human historical development in which we are all involved, and he has moved more explicitly from the notion of man as substance to that of man as a subject, man as he makes his own environment and as he makes himself. This distinction, between man and man and man the subject, is worked out in ‘*Existenz and Aggiornamento*’ and in *The Subject* (1968).”

“collaboration”<sup>31</sup> called for by Lonergan is by implication identified as the Church, Butler makes very clear, as does Lonergan, that there can be unauthentic members within the Church’s communion. *Aggiornamento*, calling for authenticity, will need a firm base and a critical stance to challenge that unauthenticity.

The new foundation will have to be ‘the subject,’ not indeed ‘as scientist’ but as theologian. And one becomes a subject . . . by a ‘conversion,’ which is in principle radical: ‘The convert apprehends differently, values differently, relates differently because he has become different. The new apprehension is . . . not new values so much as transvaluation of values.’ Conversion is personal, but ‘it can happen to many and they can form a community to sustain one another in self-transformation, and to help one another in working out the implications, and in fulfilling the promise of their new life.’<sup>32</sup>

Butler’s evaluation of the importance of Bernard Lonergan’s turn to the subject had its early clear expression at this 1970 Lonergan Congress. In Butler’s thought, however, the recognition of the individual as subject has had a considerable history predating 1970. One wonders whether Butler’s “conscious ‘I’” of “Unification” (1937)<sup>33</sup> did not find immediate recognition in Lonergan’s *The Subject* (1968). It is of value here to compare excerpts from the two works, beginning with “Unification.”

. . . the totality of a consciousness is one . . . because it is the correlative of one conscious subject, the conscious “I,” the hidden author of the act of attention.<sup>34</sup>

We mentioned . . . the needs and interest of the subject which alone make possible its stimulation by particular features in the field of consciousness. These needs and interests are presupposed by any particular act of attention, and their origin must therefore be sought, deeper than fully conscious experience, in the very nature of the subject himself. The particular act will be the subject’s endeavour to express in conscious life the potentialities with which he finds himself naturally endowed; to express, in fact, himself; . . .<sup>35</sup>

This subject lies deeper than the particular need inspiring any particular act; to him the needs go back, and he is thus the deeper reason for his acts. But this means that any particular act is one stage in the continuous process by which the subject moves in quest of a good in which he will find his own unity, the supply of the deep need which is in some sense identical in scope with his self; while any particular object will be sought as an element in our means to this ultimate unitary good.<sup>36</sup>

In proportion to the completeness of the individual’s actuation, and to the extent to which he had developed from individuality to personality; in proportion to his “mastery” over self and situation, and to the real humanisation of his activity in all its fibres, such that each element of it is unmistakably impressed with his

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He goes on to indicate in what way Lonergan’s thought from this new perspective may benefit ecclesiology. Again see Butler, “Lonergan and Ecclesiology,” pp. 4-7.

<sup>31</sup> “Collaboration,” in Lonergan’s scheme, provides the “antidote to the errors to which man is inclined.” He says that “the solution in its cognitional aspect will consist in a new and higher collaboration of men in pursuit of truth” (*Insight*, p. 719). See also Butler, “Lonergan and Ecclesiology,” p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Butler, “Lonergan and Ecclesiology,” pp. 16-17. A discussion of conversion is reserved for below.

<sup>33</sup> Butler, “Unification,” *Searchings*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

personal “style” and fulfils his real intentions: in that proportion, the necessity increases of regarding his whole life as one act.<sup>37</sup>

Now compare Butler’s 1937 reflections with excerpts from Lonergan’s 1968 essay, *The Subject*.

The study of the subject . . . is the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious. It prescind from the soul, its essences, its potencies, its habits, for none of these are given in consciousness. It attends to operations and to their center and source which is the self. It discerns the different levels of consciousness, the consciousness of the dream, of the waking subject, of the intelligently inquiring subject, of the rationally reflecting subject, of the responsibly deliberating subject.<sup>38</sup>

Just as the existential subject freely and responsibly makes himself what he is, so too he makes himself good or evil and his actions right or wrong. The good subject, the good choice, the good action are not found in isolation. For the subject is good by his good choices and good actions. Universally prior to any choice or action there is just the transcendental principle of all appraisal and criticism, the intention of the good. That principle gives rise to instances of the good, but those instances are good choices and actions. However, do not ask me to determine them, for their determination in each case is the work of the free and responsible subject producing the first, and only edition of himself.

It is because the determination of the good is the work of freedom that ethical systems can catalogue sins in almost endless genera and species yet always remain rather vague about the good. . . . We come to know the good from the example of those about us, from the stories people tell of the good and evil men and women of old, from the incessant flow of praise and blame that makes up the great part of human conversation, from the elation and from the shame that fill us when our own choices and deeds are our own determination of ourselves as good or evil, praiseworthy or blameworthy.<sup>39</sup>

In order to trace Butler’s transition from the language of “emergent probability” and an “open” theology to the language of “the subject” and conversion, we must revisit those early days of Butler’s fascination with Lonergan’s *Insight*. Our revisiting consists of three parts: first, the transition from Teilhard to Lonergan and a new “synthesis”; second, the implications of Butler’s interpretive article “Belief and Reason in Science and Religion,” which article represents both Butler’s efforts at self-appropriation of *Insight*, and his view of the scientist as subject and for that reason open to conversion; and third, Butler’s response to some of Lonergan’s thoughts on conversion.

### ***A new synthesis***

In *A Time to Speak* Butler notes his appreciation of Teilhard’s approach to science from the standpoint of faith, his synthesis of the two, his strong poetic quality, and his prophetic vision.<sup>40</sup> There is evidence of Teilhard’s influence in *Why Christ*.<sup>41</sup> In *Christians in a New Era*, Butler specifically mentions his dependence on Teilhard, but

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Lonergan, *The Subject*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, *Why Christ*, p. 55. Note the Teilhardian Christology: “Christ, the apex and climax of the whole of creation and of history.”

also suggests that something is missing in the Teilhardian synthesis of faith and science.<sup>42</sup> What is missing is the mediation of philosophy. Butler finds in Lonergan's "hard-currency" philosophy the marriage of faith and science. Teilhard, says Butler, is a manageable thinker whom you can take in small doses, while Lonergan demands the "hard labour of philosophic thinking" and "there is no use dipping about in him."<sup>43</sup>

With Lonergan as guide, Butler set out on a new synthesis, making his journey "Back to Philosophy" (in *A Time to Speak*) via *Insight*.<sup>44</sup> The following short piece from a 1958 book review is indicative of Butler's new synthesis.

When, conscious of the danger, one has prayed earnestly for light, and still feels the whole set of converging probabilities gravitating towards an alleged revelation which cannot be accepted without implicitly acknowledging its claim to uniqueness, one finds oneself engaged in a dialectical process which will carry one out into a faith which transcends the limits of subjectivity, and precisely by transcending it satisfies that metaphysical thirst for objective and eternal truth which lies at the heart of human selfhood.<sup>45</sup>

### ***A silent dialogue***

In his essay, "Belief and Reason in Science and Religion" (1966), Butler makes no direct reference to Bernard Lonergan; yet the language is unmistakably his.<sup>46</sup> Nor is there mention of *aggiornamento*; yet a review of the bibliography reveals that, at the time this essay was written, Bishop Butler was deeply involved in the Second Vatican Council's theology of renewal and its need for "a new synthesis on anew foundation."<sup>47</sup>

In "Belief and Reason" Butler asks whether science excludes every element of belief and whether religion excludes operations of the critical intellect. These questions reflect Butler's personal awareness of the importance of the world shift to more empirical modes of knowledge.

By religion here I do not mean an alleged pure essence of religion, never perhaps found in human history; and by science I do not mean a Platonic idea of science. I am referring to science as a historical phenomenon in the contemporary world, one of the most powerful factors in the environment which we men have actually created for ourselves. And by religion I shall also be referring to actually existing religion. Indeed, since there are many religions on the contemporary stage, it may be convenient to aim at full concreteness by confining our attention primarily to the religion with which I am best acquainted, and in which in fact I happen to believe: the Roman Catholic religion—though much of what I shall say

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<sup>42</sup> In *CNE*, pp. 10-11, Butler quotes Shock's *Theology of Renewal* where direct reference be made to Teilhard's synthesis: "The religious history of man has to evolve around one privileged axis. . . . This axis is the Church which Christ founded and in which he continues to live. As the Incarnation is unique, so is the Church unique."

<sup>43</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 136.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Butler, review of *Adventure in Search of a Creed*, by C. F. Happold, in *Downside Review* 76 (Summer 1958): 188.

<sup>46</sup> Valentine Rice, "Introduction," *Searchings*, p. 27. This observation is Rice's, whose information is from recorded interviews with Butler.

<sup>47</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 150.

about religion would, I hope, be acceptable to many Christians who are not Catholics.<sup>48</sup>

In this essay Butler acknowledges theology's distinction between natural faith and supernatural faith, but he tells us that the distinction will not affect his argument. He demonstrates the distinguishing characteristics of science and of religion and goes on to show how philosophy mediates the two.

What is characteristic of science is its intrinsic rationality<sup>49</sup> and its reliance on the validity of the human cognitive processes.<sup>50</sup> It is also characteristic of science that it necessarily leaves some questions unanswered.

One such question arises if we hold that biology is really a science, distinct from physics and chemistry. Living things, it may be held, while they do not contravene the laws of physics and chemistry, yet manifest and express a further set of laws which are not deducible from physical and chemical laws, though they may be conditioned by them. If this is so, then the question arises of the unification of these various scientific viewpoints in a higher synthesis; and this question is one which science itself cannot answer but which the scientist, being an intelligent man, can recognize.<sup>51</sup>

Because science necessarily starts with *what* exists, it cannot of itself face the further question of *why* anything exists.

We can now raise another question, still more far-reaching, of which the answer, whether affirmative or negative, would take us right outside the realm of science. What we can and must ask is the explanation of the existence of the entities which science experiences, understands, and judges; or, if objection is raised to the stating of the question in that way, what is the explanation of the fact that sensible data occur? And what, again, is the explanation of the existence of intelligences which experience, understand, and judge? Why are there sense data? Why do they give rise to hypotheses and laws of lesser or greater probability? And why is there anyone to have sense experience, to enquire, to understand, to formulate laws, and to verify them? Why is there anything at all?<sup>52</sup>

The scientific process is bathed in mystery; not only the mystery of scientific questions left unanswered, but also the mysterious sphere which is for science one of unanswerable questioning.<sup>53</sup>

Mystery is what we know to be unknown; and the scientist knows that he leaves unanswered the question whether there is a reason for existence, and, if there is, the further question what that reason is.

Science, then, is an intellectual activity which involves presuppositions and leaves unanswered further questions. To speak thus is not, it may be objected, to show that science depends on belief or faith, since the scientist's acceptance of sense data and of the principles of reason is not so much an act of faith as an ineluctable necessity; while his inability to answer the further question about the reason of existence involves him, precisely as a scientist, in a necessary

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<sup>48</sup> Butler, "Belief and Reason in Science and Religion," *Searchings*, p. 227.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 230-31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

suspension between belief and disbelief. But further, we have now to show that science as a historical phenomenon and a characteristic of our age is intrinsically conditioned by belief.<sup>54</sup>

In contrast to science's intrinsic rationality (leaving room for its unanswerable questions) is religion's total dependence upon faith. There is no way, Butler asserts, that believers may transcend the horizons of faith.<sup>55</sup> The question is: Is there any room for processes of reason within the sphere of religion? To answer this, Butler turns to theology and to theologians. The contrast between faith and reason is based, Butler tells us, not on degrees of faith but on a faith which reasons upon what faith has accepted,<sup>56</sup> for

It is to be observed that a Christian believer does not merely believe in God; he believes in God's self-revelation in mankind's historical experience, and particularly in that strand of history and tradition which culminates in the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth and is then carried to mankind at large by the Church which he founded. It has been well said that the three great realities for a Christian as such are God, Christ, and the Church. What is the believer's relation to them? Basically and normally it is a relationship of complete personal commitment, and is thus something more than a pure intellectual assent to a set of propositions about them. It is a commitment which involves not only his intellect but his will; and the resultant relationship is in some ways analogous to the relationship of a lover to the person he loves rather than to that of the scientist to his hypotheses. But emphasis upon the will-and-feeling elements of faith must not blind us to its intellectual element. It is an axiom of philosophy that nothing can be willed unless it is also known. The believer does not adhere to God revealed in Christ except insofar as he really does believe that God has spoken to mankind in Christ and as Christ. And such a belief will normally become the starting-point of an unending intellectual process of growth in understanding of the revelation.<sup>57</sup>

Butler calls this process of intellectual growth "theology." The starting point of theology is the historical phenomena of the Christian revelation which opens theology to the scientific process, from elaboration of hypotheses to their verification.<sup>58</sup> And here lies the distinction between theology as science and theology as faith.<sup>59</sup> Theology depends

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 235-36.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>59</sup> In "The Role of Philosophy," *The Tablet* 222 (July 13, 1968): 692, Butler reflects on the current confusion in philosophy and points to Lonergan's *Insight* as the *philosophia perennis* in its modern rethinking. He urges that students of theology be exposed to it, but he cautions that philosophy and faith have very different motivations. Philosophy has the same motivation as pure science, i.e., the pure desire to know. The God that philosophy affirms is the satisfaction of the intellectual curiosity. The purpose of his article rests in the conclusion where he states:

"I conclude that, if theology is made to rest upon and derive from philosophy, it fails of its purpose and cannot hit its target. It will also appear that not only does theology have a different motive from that of philosophy, but that it depends upon something of which in its intrinsic essence philosophy takes no account: divine revelation, or—to put it in biblical terms—the given word of God."

In a later work, *Philosophy of God and Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), Lonergan argues that philosophy of God and theology are distinct, but that they should not be



on divine revelation, “the given word of God” and the faith that accepts it. “There is no question of verifying *faith*.”<sup>60</sup> But Butler believes that there is a correspondence in theology to the scientific process of verification.

. . . the believer . . . looks for verification not of his faith but of the theology which seeks to give rational articulation to his faith.<sup>61</sup>

At this point Butler invites the scientist to become subject, to take a first step towards transcendence.

. . . it is held that philosophy can bring a man to the point from which the only reasonable further step is an acknowledgement that the heart of that mystery is the Absolute Reality and *Summum Bonum* which believers call God. Then revelation enters upon the scene to give a self-disclosure of the supreme mystery beyond the reach of natural philosophy. If the revelation is seen to be duly accredited, and if a man, again following the dictates of reasonable responsibility, makes his act of faith, then there is a roundedness in his total apprehension and response to reality which neither science nor philosophy by itself is capable of giving. But within that totality of response, the autonomy of science remains intact. It is part of the faith of a believer that nothing that is true for science can be false for theology, nothing that is true in theology can be disproved by science.<sup>62</sup>

The scientist is involved in a necessary suspension between belief and disbelief<sup>63</sup> which presents the ordinary man with a field for the exercise of faith rather than of reason. Moreover, the scientist, as scientist, “pursues his operations in a circumambient area of mystery” where philosophy or metaphysics is required to articulate some of that mystery.<sup>64</sup>

The essay calls both the scientist and the believer to a mutual intellectual conversion. Is there perhaps a second conversion implied— a moral conversion demanded both of the scientist who discovers and explains and of the ordinary layman who puts his faith in the scientist?

To sum up, we may say that science is a rational process, depending on prescientific data, operating on rational principles which it cannot itself justify, and giving rise inevitably to questions which transcend its own competence; so

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separated because they have a common origin and a common goal. Both have their origin in religious experience and their goal is to promote into clear consciousness the major factor in the integration and development of the person (p. 59). The philosophy of God can only exist in the climate of religious experience, and “the philosophic inquiry needs the support of the properly religious context for the full and effective attainment of its goal” (p. 55). In reviewing this book, Butler says that Lonergan does not mention it, but he supposes that if this proposal (not to separate the philosophy of God and theology) is to be carried out successfully, philosophers will have to take to theology and theologians to philosophy (p. 21).

<sup>60</sup> Butler, “Belief and Reason in Science and Religion,” *Searchings*, p. 236.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239. The test of verification for theological theories will be an appeal to the religious experience of believers. “A man who has valid grounds for believing has his faith integrated into his total life of responsibility, and his religion can, in its turn, illuminate the rest of his human experience and guide his activity. Nevertheless, it is true that such a man, having recognised his duty to believe, accepts the content of his faith from the source of revelation and does not test it in detail by detailed verification” (p. 239).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

that all scientific knowledge is bounded by a sphere of mystery in which beauty and moral goodness have as much right to exist as science can claim for itself. And as an historical phenomenon, and a characteristic of our age, science is shot through with belief, and presents the ordinary man with a field for the exercise rather of faith than of reason. Moreover, its own progress and apparently inexhaustible fecundity depend upon a great moral fact: the intellectual integrity of its practitioners, and their mutual trust.<sup>65</sup>

### ***The link***

In “Conversion and Theology” (1970), Butler reported with enthusiasm that conversion was now a key notion in Lonergan’s thought, and he looked forward to its development in *Method in Theology* (which had not yet been published). Butler is careful to remark that “Lonergan’s new interests and affirmations do not mean that he has discarded his positions as stated in *Insight*.”<sup>66</sup> In “*Insight Revisited*” (1973), Lonergan himself declared that “development is a gradual accumulation of insights that complement, qualify and correct one another,”<sup>67</sup> and that “what is perhaps novel in *Insight*, is taken for granted in *Method*.”<sup>68</sup>

“Conversion and Theology” constitutes Butler’s effort to link the later with the earlier Lonergan and marks a critical point in his own development.

If I were asked for something in *Insight* which links the later with the earlier Lonergan, I should point, *inter alia*, to chapter 18, “The Possibility of Ethics.” And this chapter raises a question which I am not sure that by itself it solves. It could be taken as an attempt to “evolve” the moral “ought” from the pure desire to know, which is the dynamic principle of the thought of the book as a whole.<sup>69</sup>

Butler asked Lonergan about this at the Florida Congress, and Lonergan agreed that you cannot get out of your premises more than you put into them.<sup>70</sup> The question is not a peripheral one, because for Butler, to speak the word “ought” is to destroy one’s position as an egoist.<sup>71</sup> This, in turn, invites one to an altruism which, if accepted, is the first step to “radical” conversion (or “real” conversion, in Butler’s terminology).

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 234. In *Philosophy of God and Theology*, Lonergan refers to the modern conception of theology as not a set of propositions but a concrete religion, “as it has been lived, as it is being lived, and as it is to be lived” (p. 56). For that reason “theology has to draw on the resources not only of scientists and historians but also of philosophers” (pp. 56-57). Moreover, the empirical nature of its operations demands of theology that it acquire a method and insofar as it does so, theology “becomes a reflection on the significance and value of religion within a culture” (p. 56).

<sup>66</sup> Butler, “Conversion and Theology,” p. 425.

<sup>67</sup> Lonergan, *Second Collection*, p. 277.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Butler, “Conversion and Theology,” p. 425.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Alberic Stackpole’s account, “Bishop Butler on the State of the Church,” in *The Ampleforth Journal* 57 (Autumn 1972): 4-14, records the Bishop’s question as to whether the contemporary task “is not to foster and sensitise a more generic moral ‘oughtness’ which is a subjectively personal force. Moral action lies not in social habit, not in code, but in the private intentional area” (p. 5). Butler relies strongly here on Newman’s *Grammar of Assent* (London: Burns & Dates, 1881), p. 37, hereafter abbreviated Newman, *Grammar*.

In his review of *Method*, Butler declares himself satisfied with Lonergan's position, because in *Method* Lonergan does not seem to derive the moral "ought" from the desire to know.

It [*Method*] recognises that, just as understanding is an operation that represents a "higher viewpoint" than sensing and imagination, and just as judgement represents a higher viewpoint than the understanding which it nevertheless presupposes, so the quest and affirmation of value represents a higher viewpoint, supervening upon and 'sublating' that of judgement.<sup>72</sup>

Ryan and Tyrrell note that, in *Second Collection*, value is distinguished as a fourth level of consciousness, but in *Insight* the fourth level is discussed in terms of decision and ethics. They also note Lonergan's statement that the skimpy treatment accorded personal relations in *Insight* "is not to be taken as a denial of their singular importance in human living."<sup>73</sup> Therefore, while Ryan and Tyrrell agree that the existential level is not entirely missing from *Insight*, they remark that *Second Collection* and *Method* represent part of Lonergan's effort to undertake a special study of the fourth level.<sup>74</sup> Lonergan himself, in "Insight Revisited," makes note of this development.

In *Insight* the good was the intelligent and the reasonable. In *Method* the good is a distinct notion. It is intended in questions for deliberation: Is this worthwhile? Is it truly or only apparently good? It is aspired to in the intentional response of feeling to values. It is known in judgments, of value made by a virtuous or authentic person with a good conscience. It is brought about by deciding and living up to one's decisions. Just as intelligence sublates sensing, just as reasonableness sublates intelligence, so deliberation sublates and thereby unifies knowing and feeling.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, according to Ryan and Tyrrell, Lonergan's transcendental notion of value, which is the same as the transcendental notion of being, underpins all particular judgments of value or evaluation.

The transcendental notion of value is the single unfolding through four levels of the one intention of what is good, of what is worthwhile, that manifests itself in each individual evaluation. It is the universal principle of appraisal and criticism prior to any choosing. This single unfolding, in manifesting itself in different stages, determines the specific levels of human consciousness: experience, understanding, reflection, and evaluation. Evaluation is the keystone of the structure of intentionality. It constitutes the level of the existential subject who freely and responsibly makes himself what he is, whether good or evil.<sup>76</sup>

In *A Time to Speak* (1972), Butler notes that the Lonergan of *Method* now seems to agree with him in "not deriving moral obligation from speculative understanding."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Butler, review of *Method*, p. 595.

<sup>73</sup> Ryan and Tyrrell, "Introduction," *Second Collection*, p. ii; and *Insight*, p. 730.

<sup>74</sup> Lonergan's doctoral dissertation, *Grace and Freedom* (1941), concerned with the fourth level of evaluation and Christian love and indicates an even earlier concern with the existential level.

<sup>75</sup> Lonergan, *Second Collection*, p. 277.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

<sup>77</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 133n.

## Conversion

We are now at the point where conversion as a topic historically emerges in Butler's writings. In "Conversion and Theology," Butler states what has already been discussed above, that because you cannot evolve the moral "ought" from the pure desire to know,

It follows that there is some "first principle of the practical order" inherent in the subject when he comes to deliberate, evaluate, decide and act. And whatever may be the case in academic philosophy, it appears to me that this first principle, the *rectum est agendum*, is completely basic to our human living in this world. It is a principle of free responsibility, and it is to our free responsibility that the grace of conversion is offered, and by it received.<sup>78</sup>

Recall that at the time of his conversion to the Church of Rome (1928), Butler wrote that the sense of obligation drove him to postulate an Infinite and not less than personal source of the moral law identical with underivative Goodness, identical with the rational explanation of all that is.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, Butler takes as his fundamental option the rejection of selfishness and the acceptance of the moral precept as the practical determinant of his life and thinking. Butler is convinced that, for the morally adult person, everything depends on his fundamental option. The seat of the fundamental option is called by him variously as the apex of the soul, the central core of our being, and our innermost selfhood. Here is the context for what Butler calls "real" conversion. This fundamental option, the grace-enabled conversion of the morally adult person, is a first step toward the transformation and conformation of our will with the will of God.

As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, Butler described conversion as "the experience in which all religion is recapitulated, integrated, established," and viewed it from two perspectives: (1) as radical actuation of the self at its deepest and therefore all-encompassing level; and (2) as belonging to the Church. The first perspective has been our concern here, namely, Butler's basic horizon within which operate the four transcendental conversions (intellectual, moral, religious, Christian).

### ***The question***

In his review of *Method in Theology* and in *A Time to Speak*, Butler offers his first critique of Lonergan's distinction between moral and religious conversion. He first works it out in *A Time to Speak*, then puts the question directly in his review of *Method*. For the purpose of clarity, a lengthy excerpt from that review follows. The salient portions of Butler's argument are underscored.

There are in fact three species of conversion, according to Lonergan: intellectual, moral and religious. Intellectual conversion is from the false philosophies that corrupt our thinking. Moral conversion is from satisfaction to value: "We move to the existential moment when we discover for ourselves . . . that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself . . . moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict" (p. 240). It seems to me that, if the viewpoint of responsibility is the highest in the hierarchy of human meaning, then moral conversion, the substitution of the good of all for the satisfaction of self, is the crucial step. What, then, is religious conversion?

In his contribution to *Theology of Renewal*, Lonergan had committed himself to the statement: "Religion is conversion in its preparation, in its developments,

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<sup>78</sup> Butler, "Conversion and Theology," p. 425.

<sup>79</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 27-28.

in its consequents, and also alas in . . . its failures . . . its disintegration. . . . Conversion is fundamental to religion.” And now we are told that religious conversion is just one of three species of conversion. “It is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state. . . . For Christians it is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit . . . it is the gift of grace. . . . Operative grace is religious conversion. . . . As intellectual and moral conversion, so also religious conversion is a modality of self-transcendence. Moral conversion is to values apprehended, affirmed, and realized by a real self-transcendence. Religious transcendence is a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence” (p. 241).

*I find this distinction between moral and religious conversion difficult to accept on the terms in which Lonergan presents it. Is not moral concern itself, if authentic, “total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations”? I would think that, if there were any reservations, there would not be a real transcendence. And on the other hand, that to which we can rightly surrender in a real self-transcendence on the level of ultimate responsibility can surely only be the Reality which Lonergan describes as “ultimate concern,” the Reality with which the convert to religion “falls in love.” The ultimacy of this Reality that summons us to moral conversion is expressed in the absoluteness of the demand made upon us by the moral imperative. Nor will it do to say that the difference between moral and religious conversion is that, in the latter, God takes the initiative. For God very certainly takes the initiative in moral conversion, which is—if I understand Christianity aright—impossible without operative grace.*

I am inclined to think that, if we are to affirm a religious conversion distinct from moral conversion, we shall have to introduce some term like “God reflectively acknowledged as such” as the object of the conversion. This, however, would spoil Lonergan’s schema, in which each of the three conversions is envisaged, I think, as a self-transcendence higher than its predecessor; the difference is on the side of the transcendence and not just between objects within the same horizon. But God explicitly recognized as such does not seem to me to be a higher Reality than the object of absolute moral concern. I state these difficulties, admitting that I have probably shown myself to have failed to understand Lonergan’s thought at this point.<sup>80</sup>

This same argument was presented to Bernard Lonergan for comment at the Lonergan Workshop at Boston College in June 1979. Lonergan’s response is here given in its entirety. Interpretive comments follow which, while not resolving the issue, keep the dialogue open.

Butler’s objection is that if you really have a moral conversion, you will also have a religious conversion; and if you have a religious conversion, you will also have a moral conversion. The thing is that there are several stages of moral conversion and several stages of religious conversion. And to begin any stage is not to have reached the end of that stage. It is not to have reached the final perfection possible in that category, whether moral or religious, for conversion never means more than the beginning of any stage. The key step is to get out of the previous stages that are not yet moral or not yet religious. You have Kohlberg’s three stages—six, if you subdivide each of the stages into two stages. The first stage is: “What’s in it for me?” The second stage is: “What’s the law? And how is it

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<sup>80</sup> Butler, review of *Method*, pp. 586-87.



enforced?” The third stage is: “What’s right?” It’s only in this third stage that you begin to think about morality. Now to begin to think about morality (“Oh! That’s what morality means!”), well, that’s the first stage of conversion. It doesn’t mean that you’re morally perfect yet. It can be a long time before you can even begin to think of being morally perfect.

There is a mention of operative grace. Operative grace in St. Thomas occurs when you are willing to do the good that previously you were not willing to do. And there are all sorts of good things that you can become willing to do that previously you were not willing to do. I heard a professor of asceticism and mysticism explain that he’d been converted five times, and he said he’d made five steps forward. It doesn’t mean that he was five times more converted than other people.

Finally, there is Newman’s distinction between notional and real apprehension, notional and real assent. A real apprehension of moral and religious perfection and an attainment of it, a real assent to it, would make Bishop Butler’s argument valid. But you can have a conversion without having a *real* apprehension and a *real* assent to what moral perfection means and implies. You could spend your life finding that out. In one of Evelyn Waugh’s stories, “Brideshead Revisited,” a character in that story says, “O Lord, make me holy; but not yet.” That’s very good.<sup>81</sup>

### ***Interpretive remarks***

Interpretive comments on Lonergan’s reply to Butler will be limited to the implication of Newman’s distinction between notional and real assent. My comments, if I read Newman correctly, will link Lonergan and Butler on the subject of conversion through an understanding of Newman’s real assent, and differentiate them through an understanding of Newman’s “circumstances” of assent. Both Lonergan and Butler agree, it seems to me, that to be converted is to make a real assent to conversion.

We will proceed as follows. First, I will offer some texts dealing with assent and apprehension from Newman’s *Grammar of Assent*. Newman insists on the unconditional character of real assent. Second, I will indicate briefly how the circumstances of assent differentiate Lonergan and Butler in their approach to conversion and their apprehension of stages of conversion.

### **Newman on apprehension and assent.**

Newman, in his *Grammar of Assent*, tells us that real apprehension is stronger than notional apprehension,<sup>82</sup> although Lee H. Yearly points out Newman’s emphasis on the need for both the real and the notional.

Newman thought that religion begins with the real and finds real expression in action and community, but that it also needs for completion the notional, theoretical expression. Religion’s source must always remain the real. . . .<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This was an oral public response given by Lonergan to Butler’s argument which had been presented for comment at the Lonergan Dialogue, held during the annual Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, June 1979.

<sup>82</sup> Newman, *Grammar*, p. 37.

<sup>83</sup> Lee H. Yearly, *The Ideas of Newman: Christianity and Human Religiosity* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p. 49.



Newman describes real assents as personal in character, each individual having his own and being known by them.<sup>84</sup> Real assent cannot admit of degrees; its essential characteristic is unconditional.<sup>85</sup>

Real assents . . . are sometimes called beliefs, convictions, certitudes; and, as given to moral objects, they are as rare as they are powerful. Till we have them, in spite of full apprehension and assent in the field of notions, we have no intellectual moorings, and are at the mercy of impulses, fancies and wandering lights, whether as regards personal conduct, social and political action or religion . . . they create, as the case may be, heroes and saints, great leaders, statesmen, preachers, and reformers, the pioneers of discovery in science, visionaries, fanatics, knight errants, demagogues, and adventurers.<sup>86</sup>

Real assents (acts of belief) affect our conduct; notional assents do not.<sup>87</sup>

Belief, . . . being concerned with things concrete, not abstract, which variously excite the mind from their moral and imaginative properties, has for its objects, not only what is beautiful, useful, admirable, heroic; objects which kindle devotion, rouse the passions, and attach the affections; and thus it leads the way to actions of every kind, to the establishment of principles, and the formation of character, and is thus again intimately connected with what is individual and personal.<sup>88</sup>

Newman insists on the distinction between belief (real assent) and theology (notional assent) because, he tells us, it is one thing to know something and another to believe in it.<sup>89</sup> We need the intellectual moorings of real assent and the practical determinations it urges in our lives. We do not yet have the full force of the dynamic effects of real apprehension and real assent, otherwise we would be saints and heroes.

Real apprehension, then, may be pronounced stronger than notional, because things, which are its objects, are confessedly more impressive and affective than notions, which are the objects of the notional. Experiences and their images strike and occupy the mind, as abstractions and their combinations do not. Next, passing on to assent, I observe that it is this variation in the mind's apprehension of an object to which it assents, and not any incompleteness in the assent itself, that leads us to speak of strong and weak assents, as if assent itself admitted of degrees. In either mode of apprehension, be it real or be it notional, the assent preserves its essential characteristic of being unconditional.<sup>90</sup>

### **Lonergan and Butler on conversion and the basic option.**

Just as Newman characterizes real assent as personal in character, each individual having his own and being known by it, so too does Lonergan. Conversion, he states, is "existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate."<sup>91</sup> Can we join Newman and Lonergan and say that a real assent to conversion is an existential, intensely personal, utterly

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<sup>84</sup> Newman, *Grammar*, p. 83.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>91</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 130.

intimate assent to a transformation of one's self and one's world?<sup>92</sup> Can we say about assent, as about conversion, that it is not just a development or even a series of developments, but rather a resultant change of course and direction?<sup>93</sup>

It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in interlocking cumulative sequences of developments on all levels and in all departments of human living.<sup>94</sup>

In other words, the circumstances that precede or follow upon real assent do not change the nature of assent, but rather, like conversion, assent is a catalyst for change.

Conversion, as lived, affects all of a man's conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions.<sup>95</sup>

Newman states that assent does not admit of degrees of strength, but that such "degrees" lie in what he calls the "circumstances and concomitants" of the assent; for instance, in the emotions, in the ratiocinative (logical reasoning) faculty, or in the imagination.<sup>96</sup>

If we are to differentiate Butler and Lonergan on conversion, that differentiation has to be in the "circumstances and concomitants" of conversion. There is, for example, Lonergan's description of conversion in "Theology in Its New Context,"<sup>97</sup> followed immediately by his comment: "Not all conversion is as total as the one I have so summarily described. Conversion has many dimensions."<sup>98</sup> There is demanded, however, of every converted subject a basic horizon which includes the four transcendentals (Be attentive; Be intelligent; Be reasonable; Be responsible)—circumstances and concomitants of the "single achievement, the achievement of self-transcendence."<sup>99</sup>

For Butler, the one reality, a real assent to the ethical imperative, requires the same four transcendentals. If the key point is to get out of the situation that is not yet moral or not yet religious, then there is required some understanding of the circumstances that will help you to do so. *A Time to Speak* contains Butler's reflections on such understanding.

A large part of this book has been about the way in which I came to endorse the general vision offered to me by my upbringing, but qualified it by finding the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>96</sup> Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 185ff.

<sup>97</sup> Lonergan, *Second Collection*, pp. 65-66.

"Fundamental to religious living is conversion. It is a topic little studied in traditional theology since there remains very little of it when one reaches the universal, the abstract, the static. For conversion occurs in the lives of individuals. It is not merely a change or even a development; rather it is a radical transformation on which follows, on all levels of living, an interlocked series of changes and developments. What hitherto was unnoticed becomes vivid and present. What had been of no concern becomes a matter of high import. So great a change in one's apprehensions and one's values accompanies no less a change in oneself, in one's relations to other persons, and in one's relations to God."

<sup>98</sup> Lonergan, "Theology in a New Context," *Second Collection*, p. 66.

<sup>99</sup> Lonergan, "The Natural Knowledge of God," *Second Collection*, p. 128.

genuine version (and therefore the obligatory version) of Christianity in the Catholic faith and Church.<sup>100</sup>

It is, Butler says, a reflection “upon the nature of the intellectual processes which led to this ratification and modification.”<sup>101</sup>

Butler identifies the notion of real conversion as the basic option, “a conversion from egoism to altruism, or the decision by which one who has never yet thoroughly chosen either alternative decides to do so.”<sup>102</sup> Recall that this is precisely the point of Butler’s difficulty with Lonergan:

Every such conversion, I shall wish to maintain, is fundamentally, even if unconsciously, a religious conversion; for it does honour to the absoluteness of moral value, and absolute moral value is God.<sup>103</sup>

Butler designates as conversion the decision to obey the ethical precept. He calls it a “Copernican revolution for *l’homme moyen sensuel*.”<sup>104</sup>

Conversion is often supposed to be necessarily a sudden, datable, cataclysmic occurrence. It can be such in its beginnings, though even in such cases it is a decision for reorientation which then has to be applied gradually, and sometimes painfully, and continually re-confirmed in new situations and in face of fresh “temptations.”<sup>105</sup>

The fundamental option, Butler insists, cannot remain a mere “mental event [real assent, not notional] without consequences in external behaviour.”<sup>106</sup> Butler states that he has himself made an intellectual (notional) and practical (real) assent to the ethical

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<sup>100</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 185.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* It was stated in the last chapter that Conn would take a position supportive of Butler’s. Perhaps his position will add some clarification to the unresolved point at issue here. Unlike Butler, who emphasizes the moral/religious connection, Conn emphasizes the intellectual/moral. He says that this is because his is a philosophical work and his primary concern is the nature of moral conversion (p. 530). Butler does not avoid the intellectual/moral, as we have seen in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation: the search for the one thing necessary and the authority of the heart.

Both Conn and Butler agree on the moral conversion as the *beginning* of religious conversion (Conn) or *fundamentally if unconsciously* a religious conversion (Butler). Conn asks about a philosophical, humanist ethic that may not want to presuppose God and his love. Conn adds, however, that “to be authentically open it must be ready to recognize that the self-transcending love of man has no necessary limits” (p. 524). But since “a religious outlook may be specified by its recognition and acceptance of life as a gift, even the most circumscribed love of man, if it be genuine self-surrender, can be considered as the beginning of religious conversion” (p. 524).

Conn proposes the following distinctions: between a *critical* moral/religious conversion and an *uncritical* moral/religious conversion, on the one hand, and on the other, a distinction between a fully explicated philosophical intellectual conversion and a more implicit, but nonetheless real, intellectual conversion.

Such distinctions, it would seem, remain circumstances that differentiate but do not constitute the real assent to self-transcendence. The point remains: is it possible to separate the reality of moral self-transcendence from the reality of religious self-transcendence? (See Conn, *Conscience and Transcendence*, pages cited.)

<sup>104</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 183.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

imperative.<sup>107</sup> On circumstances that can affect one's fundamental option, i.e., one's assent, Butler states that

. . . while during our day to day life we have the basic ability to change our fundamental option, we know full well that the previously determined and long built-up orientation from which we approach the present moment [circumstances of assent] affects enormously the probability that we shall here and now choose good or evil. Total conversions though possible are rare. [As Lonergan says, "You can have a conversion without having a real apprehension and a real assent to what moral perfection means and what religious perfection means and implies.] *Nemo repente fit malus*, says the proverb; and we can add, with as much proverbial (but not absolute) truth, No one suddenly becomes good.<sup>108</sup>

To be converted, therefore, does not mean to be perfect; it means to make a real assent to conversion. Total conversion would seem to mean "a real apprehension of moral and religious perfection and an attainment of it, a real assent to it," this being the condition that Lonergan said would be necessary in order to make Butler's argument valid.

### **Second conversion.**<sup>109</sup>

As Lonergan says above, Kohlberg's third stage—"What's right?"—is only the first stage of conversion. With conversion something new begins to operate, affecting "all of man's conscious and intentional operations." Butler designates this same third stage as the awakening to the basic option, which, he asserts, is identical to the attainment of moral adulthood.<sup>110</sup> Such a decision is logically preceded by a judgment of truth, as are all decisions on important issues.

And judgment is what Lonergan calls the final increment in the process of human knowledge. Beginning from sense data, we seek to understand the world about us, and our understanding, a tentative thing in itself, takes shape in concepts and hypotheses. But the process of knowledge is incomplete until we have reflected upon our hypotheses and come down firmly on one side or the other.<sup>111</sup>

An example of this in Butler's life was his refusal to delay any longer to look at evidence that might upset his cherished belief or disturb the even tenor of his life. Butler admits that it is probably common to refuse to take a look at such evidence,<sup>112</sup> yet he insists that

There comes a time, for most of those who survive the perils of the womb and of infancy, when a man can begin to "think for himself" and to "decide for himself." This time has been anticipated of course by spontaneities which prefigure his later autonomy. Quite a small child can begin to strike out his own line in thinking, and to shape his future personality by whims and choices. But a certain maturity is needed if a man is to sit back, survey the total horizon of his

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>109</sup> The term is borrowed from Roger Balducelli's "A Phenomenology of Conversion," in *The Living Light* 10 (Winter 1973): 545-57. This idea will be considered later in the dissertation. (See pp. 215ff.)

<sup>110</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 184.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

experience, and embark on a life-journey for which he can and will be held responsible.<sup>113</sup>

The embarkation on such a journey is evident in Butler's firm decision to live existentially on the fourth level of consciousness. Of this kind of deliberate decision Lonergan says:

Decision is responsible and it is free, but it is the work not of a metaphysical will but of conscience and, indeed, when a conversion, the work of a good conscience.

Further, deliberate decision about one's horizon is high achievement. For the most part people merely drift into some contemporary horizon. They do not advert to the multiplicity of horizons. They do not exercise their vertical liberty by migrating from the one they have inherited to another they have discovered to be better.<sup>114</sup>

At its real root, then, foundations occurs on the fourth level of human consciousness, on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision. It is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against. It is a decision illuminated by the manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic. It is a fully conscious decision about one's horizon, one's outlook, one's worldview. It deliberately sets the frame-work, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective.

Such a deliberate decision is anything but arbitrary. Arbitrariness is just unauthenticity, while conversion is from unauthenticity to authenticity. It is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love.<sup>115</sup>

### ***Data of theology***<sup>116</sup>

It is time now to leave the discussion of Butler's basic horizon with a glance both backward and toward the future. We look down the distance so far traveled with Butler's own question: "Can we isolate and describe a religious experience that we can take as basic?" The question is important. Lonergan thinks we can.<sup>117</sup> There seems to be no question that Butler's religious experience supplies the data for at least one such basic experience. We have taken a look at conversion from within the context of Butler's self-appropriation of *Insight*. Such self-appropriation is guided by the surety of his own search for the one thing necessary, in the urgency of the ethical imperative, and in the decision that objectified both—his acceptance of the Catholic Church.

The look to the future is again directed by Butler. Recall once more the following:

It is time to remember that, important as it is to locate religion at the roots of the personality of the individual religious person, religion is never a purely private thing. The religious believer is a man before he is a believer. As a man he is rooted in history and in society and there is a measure of truth in the somewhat exaggerated modern slogan that inter-personal relations are the very substance of personality, which is thus not a static but a dynamic thing. It is as already a

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>114</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 268-69.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>116</sup> Recall that Butler, in the matter of conversion, stipulates that the individual and the Church mutually provide the data of theology. See Butler, "Data of Theology," p. 177.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

social being, a member of the actual historical communion of the human race, that a man 'goes into his private chamber, shuts the door' and prays to his heavenly Father. True, the advent of conversion means the abolition of former horizons; but it does not and cannot mean the abolition of the person constituted by his social relations.<sup>118</sup>

The identification of the social aspect of religious experience in history is for Butler the Roman Catholic Church. Butler's understanding of the nature and mission of the Church, guided by his "unrestricted horizon," will, in turn, be wise guidance for his interpreters, for Lonergan claims that an "unrestricted horizon is ultimate and basic; it is wisdom and its domain is being."<sup>119</sup>

## Summary

This chapter is pivotal to the dissertation, for in it we have seen that conversion is both the key theme of Butler's ecclesiology and the vital grounding of his lived experience. In the chapter's generous attention to the influence that Lonergan has had on Butler, Lonergan's philosophy emerged as a verification of Butler's own. Butler's application of Lonergan's theory of emergent probability in his own ecclesial development offered ever new syntheses on new foundations. Aggiornamento, says Butler, is one such new synthesis and its foundation is conversion. New horizons for the Church must be met with a spirit that provokes audacious change in order to preserve, at a higher level and from a superior view point, inherited values. This is the same Spirit that animates the body of Christ.

The chapter has developed the notion of conversion from three perspectives: (1) Butler's difficulty with Lonergan's distinction between moral and religious conversion; (2) Butler's own experience of a second conversion; and (3) Butler's basic horizon, incorporating both Church and conversion as data of theology. Lonergan's turn to the subject emphasized the fact that there are unauthentic members in the Church. Is Butler's own description of the conscious "I" and his need for transcendence a foreshadowing of this important shift to the subjective? The fact that the Church is made up of individuals in varying stages of unauthenticity demonstrates the need for conversion.

The next chapter has as its focus the emergence of the Church as a fellowship of the converted. While Butler consistently and authentically identifies with the social religious experience of the Roman Catholic Church, he challenges all Christian churches (his own included) to eradicate the actual source of division among them by a rededication to the restoration of visible unity.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>119</sup> Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon," *Collection*, p. 213.



**PART II**  
**FROM THE GREAT CHURCH OF THE PAST**  
**TO THE GREAT CHURCH OF THE FUTURE:**  
**BASIL BUTLER'S ECCLESIAL STORY**

**CHAPTER FOUR:**  
**KOINONIA AND INDIVISIBLE VISIBLE UNITY**

**Introduction**

The introductory chapter of this dissertation indicated that (1) the development in the meaning that Bishop Butler ascribes to the Church is part and parcel of his personal story, and (2) that Butler's story unveils the radical relationship of conversion and Church as data for theology. Such is the thesis that has given direction to Part I of this dissertation. Part II presents, within the context of *koinonia*,<sup>1</sup> a model of communion that embraces, from an ecclesial perspective, the notions of unity and authority as objectifications of the subjective principle outlined in Part I. The model of communion for which Butler contemporaneously argues sublates<sup>2</sup> from a wider perspective and a higher synthesis his earlier view of the Church as institution. Ecumenism and the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church will now be understood from within this model of communion.

Part II of this dissertation also demonstrates Butler's concern to communicate both the truth of the idea of a Church<sup>3</sup> as well as the truth of the Roman Catholic Church in particular. Butler's earliest (1937) reflections on the Church as constitutive of an individual's radical religious orientation—his “natural tendency to God”<sup>4</sup>—have been refined by events that have occasioned significant development in his life and thought, namely, his involvement with the writings of Bernard Lonergan and with the Second Vatican Council's implications for a changing Church in a changing world. Hence, in Part II we continue the use of Lonergan's categories for interpreting Butler's thought and the use of the Second Vatican Council as context for Butler's more considered view of the Church as *koinonia*.

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<sup>1</sup> In *koinonia*, or sharing grace gifts in common, Butler sees a mutual enrichment instead of mutual concession. He suggests the principle of the “lowest common multiple” and argues to the fact that the potentiality within Christianity will unfold itself in a majestic and continuing development, referring his readers to Newman in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and in “The Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine” (an earlier sermon). It is Butler's conviction that, as Newman points out, the unending process of interpreting the faith leads to the accumulation of a tradition to which tradition we contribute our own small share (*Church and Unity*, pp. 157-58).

<sup>2</sup> Lonergan uses the notion of sublation to mean “that what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context” (*Method*, p. 241)

<sup>3</sup> An application of *koinonia* in an extended sense is his argument for the Church as the “anticipatory embodiment . . . of the spiritual unity of humanity . . . at the deepest levels of human experience” (*Searchings*, p. 56). This notion will be developed as a wider ecumenism.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Butler holds tenaciously to the principle of the indivisible visible unity of the Church and maintains that the work of the Second Vatican Council will not be accomplished until visible unity is restored. In his 1979 study, *The Church and Unity*, Butler uses the term *koinonia* to designate both the Great Church of the past<sup>5</sup> (in which all the major Christian churches have their roots) and the Great Church of the future (in which all Christian churches will one day be united). He offers a model of communion—certain aspects of which will be considered below—as a first step toward that future Church. Such fulfillment requires, however, mutual conversion on the part of all Christians in order to understand what it means to be “united but not absorbed.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the thesis of this dissertation continues to relate Church and conversion in Butler’s religious thought, a relationship applicable both to the ecumenical movement and to Roman Catholic theology.

Ecumenism and *aggiornamento*, which mutually call to conversion, are hallmarks of Butler’s more recent thought. They ground his essential understanding of the Church, an understanding which he constantly and consistently seeks to communicate. In *A Time to Speak*, Butler describes the nature of such communication, demonstrating the intimate connection between the truth to be communicated and the life experience of those who communicate.

If truth can in any degree be communicated from one man to another, it must first pass through the medium of the communicator’s own experience, mind and judgment. Doubtless, its boundlessness will be to some extent diminished in this process; and it is only too probable that some admixture of untruth and some distortion of balance will affect the truth as communicated. All one can hope is that truth itself being so much greater than our deficiencies, something of the intended message will be apprehended by the recipient. In any case, the mediating function of the communicator cannot be eliminated. This must be an apology for an element of egotism in what follows.

But just as a communication is made by an actual flesh-and-blood communicator, so also it can only, in the end, be received by the hearer in the full actuality of his subjectiveness. Assimilation and appropriation of the truth is a highly personal exercise. In form, therefore, these pages address themselves as to an individual reader. The actual reader cannot be compelled to read, nor to read on, nor to respond with the same genuineness that the writer has sought to exercise. It may be, however, that one or two into whose hands these pages will fall will feel drawn to such a response. I greet them as though from across the gulf that they too will, in their due time, be crossing.<sup>7</sup>

The meaning of the Christian message, properly shared, is the basis of communion and community. To communicate such is the fruit of theological reflection and the proper task of a converted theologian.<sup>8</sup> Such a one is Bishop Butler.

### **Crisis of Meaning in Christianity**

There are, Lonergan tells us, certain “ontological aspects pertaining to meaning no matter what its contents or its carrier.”<sup>9</sup> In the fourth chapter of *Method*, Lonergan

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<sup>5</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 115; and *IOC*, p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, “United Not Absorbed,” *The Tablet* 224 (7 March 1970): 220-21. See also Sonya Quitslund’s positive reaction to this article of Butler’s: “‘United Not Absorbed,’ Does It Still Make Sense,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 8 (Spring 1971): 255-85.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 355.

distinguishes the communicative, the effective, the constitutive, and the cognitive functions of meaning. Of the specifically Christian dimension of meaning, Lonergan states that the inner grace and the outer word that comes to us from Christ Jesus is the authoritative source of doctrine, and “because that source is one, the doctrine will be a common doctrine.”<sup>10</sup> The common doctrine, authoritative by reason of its origin in Jesus Christ, is, like common meaning, doubly constitutive.<sup>11</sup> It is constitutive of the individual as a member of a community; and with several individuals it is constitutive of community among them.<sup>12</sup> The genesis of common doctrine, like the genesis of common meaning, “is an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive, constitutive, and effective meanings.”<sup>13</sup>

It is effective inasmuch as it counsels and dissuades, commands and prohibits. It is cognitive inasmuch as it tells us whence we come, whither we go, how we get there. It is constitutive of the individual inasmuch as the doctrine is a set of meanings and values that inform his living, his knowing, his doing. It is constitutive of the community, for community exists inasmuch as there is a commonly accepted set of meanings and values shared by people in contact with one another. Finally, it is communicative for it has passed from Christ to the apostles and from the apostles to their successors and from these in each age to the flocks of which they were the pastors.<sup>14</sup>

Lonergan also reminds us that just as common meaning constitutes community, “so divergent meaning divides it.”<sup>15</sup> A serious division is one that arises from the “presence and absence of intellectual, moral, or religious conversion.”<sup>16</sup> Lonergan’s picture of a divided community is not very attractive.

. . . the divided community, their conflicting actions, and the messy situation are headed for disaster. For the messy situation is diagnosed differently by the divided community; action is ever more at cross-purposes; and the situation becomes still messier to provoke still sharper differences in diagnosis and policy, more radical criticism of one another’s actions, and an ever deeper crisis in the situation.<sup>17</sup>

Lonergan points out that unauthenticity in Christian traditions militates against shared, authentic Christian meaning. This unauthenticity can be purified only by purifying the traditions themselves, for authenticity and unauthenticity can both become traditions.<sup>18</sup>

The Christian Church is a community that results from the “outer communication of Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.”<sup>19</sup> God’s grace can be counted on. Therefore, it is with practical theology that the effective communication of the Christian message is concerned

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 298.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

To communicate the Christian message is to lead another to share in one's cognitive, constitutive, effective meaning. Those, then, that would communicate the cognitive meaning of the message, first of all, must know it. . . . Next, those that would communicate the constitutive meaning of the Christian message, first of all, must live it. For without living the Christian message one does not possess its constitutive meaning; and one cannot lead another to share what one oneself does not possess. Finally, those that communicate the effective meaning of the Christian message, must practise it. For actions speak louder than words, while preaching what one does not practise recalls sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.<sup>20</sup>

Since, as Lonergan points out, doctrines are constitutive both of the individual and of the Christian community, and since they can strengthen or burden, can unite or disrupt, can confer power and authority, they can, therefore, be associated with what is congenial or alien.<sup>21</sup>

Butler's efforts on behalf of the Church reflect his determination to work for those doctrines that are congenial to the task of communicating the Christian message. He is guided by the principle of the indivisible visible unity of the Christian Church and by the conviction that what the world needs the Church supplies. And this the Church supplies by its constitutive meaning, despite any unauthenticity on the part of her members.

For who, that has lived and laboured and loved in any of the Christian communions, but must acknowledge with humble gratitude that, whatever the "scandals" and "tares" which afford so easy an argument to those who object against the gospel its "martyrdom of man," there is wealth of human goodness and of holiness which the outsider may often fail to notice, but which is derived from, and dependent upon, God's gift of his Word to man and the "incarnation" of that Word in historical institutions?<sup>22</sup>

Butler's ecclesiology, then, can be described as an ecclesiology of communion, wherein the Church is constituted as a "fellowship [communion] of the converted."<sup>23</sup> In this ecclesiology of communion, Butler uses the word *koinonia* to identify that unique communion, that nexus of personal relationships built upon conversion which is at the heart of religion.<sup>24</sup> The Church emerges, in his view, as "a radical transvaluation of all value, a radical reconstruction of living," a Church that becomes what it is called to be: "the great force for creative change in the world,"<sup>25</sup> although imperfect, always in need of conversion, and limited with respect to the ideal which it incorporates.

In Butler's ecclesiology, however, conversion may never be dissociated from the social dimension of life.<sup>26</sup> The social aspect of the Church is its actuality as an "anticipatory embodiment of a great spiritual reality—of the spiritual unity of humanity, a unity found precisely at the deepest levels of human experience."<sup>27</sup> If, however, as Butler insists, *koinonia* is to be identified with what Christians call "the Church," then it must also have recognizable elements. A flexible ecclesiology is needed that will enable

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>22</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> Butler, "Lonergan and Conversion," p. 336.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Butler, "Data of Theology," p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 56.

all Christians—Catholics and non-Catholics—to recognize one another as genuine Christian communities linked by constitutive elements held in common.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear to me that the road to reunion must be the quest, not of a highest common factor but of a lowest common multiple; “My Church tradition has emphasised the following items as belonging to the deposit of faith; yours has emphasised certain other items. Let us see whether our two positions, taken in what they positively affirm rather than in what they neglect or deny, cannot be harmonised in a synthesis which will be not more jejune but actually richer than either tradition taken separately”. . . .

I would wish to add that, while it is essential that the Church should not compromise on the contents of the inherited faith, it is also of the highest importance that she should not insist, as a condition of reunion, upon the acceptance of anything that is *not* an integral part of the genuine “tradition”. . . .

The underlying principle of ecumenical dialogue is that one should try to understand and appreciate all that is of value in positions other than one’s own, while trying to explain and make palatable whatever is essential in one’s own position.<sup>29</sup>

The reality of the present situation is that Christians are all too easily recognized by their divisions. Schism has rendered the question of visible unity a major obstacle to reunion among Christian communions.<sup>30</sup> Butler, however, makes a distinction between objective and subjective aspects of schism, which he names respectively “sociological schism” and “the sin of schism.”<sup>31</sup> The sin of schism is overcome when Christian individuals and churches mutually strive to surmount the divisions among themselves.

When a Church has come to realize that division between Christians is an evil that needs to be overcome, and when in consequence it has deliberately committed itself to the ecumenical enterprise, then it has exorcized the “sin” of schism. When our hearts are all dedicated to Christian unity the real evil of schism has already been overcome. It may still remain to work out the consequences of such dedication.<sup>32</sup>

This distinction makes possible an ecclesiology of communion which Butler believes will effect the necessary mutual conversion from the sin of schism, regardless of what position is taken vis-à-vis the circumstances that created the division. Regarding the sin as the evil of such division, Butler writes:

In the eyes of God this is the heart of the matter. Cajetan argued that schism is a sin, not precisely against obedience but against charity. He sees the Church as an embodiment of the virtue of charity in a community of mutual forbearance and esteem. Schism is the ecclesial expression of egoism, whether individual or collective. As such—and I here speak, be it noted, not of schism as a sociologically

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<sup>28</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, pp. 158-59.

<sup>30</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 5

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

observable fact but of the sinfulness of an interior determination of the will—it is clean contrary to the gospel. But it is also, thank God, much rarer than sociological schism.<sup>33</sup>

The ultimate good faith that is required both of individuals and groups will alter the “intellectual scandal of our actual divisions, over against the admitted oneness of the mystical Body of Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Butler warns that any intellectual problem, persistently evaded, is “a dangerous and potentially explosive thing.”<sup>35</sup>

Here again we see Butler identifying a call to authenticity—a call to conversion for all Christian churches. He is convinced that there must be a flexibility in the Church. The flexibility was opened up by the Second Vatican Council, whose spirit has, Butler insists, by no means yet permeated the Roman Catholic communion.<sup>36</sup>

. . . Christians, both within and without the visible communion of the Catholic Church, must practice patience with regard to this slow but continuing influence of the Council on the Church as a whole.<sup>37</sup>

With this flexibility in mind, the search for what is common in our Christian heritage becomes the goal of the future. In other words, the Great Church of the past (the undivided Church of the first five centuries after Christ) directs us to a Great Church of the future. Perfect communion can exist, Butler insists, if we are moving toward the ideal order where there would be no separate bodies but only one visible universal Church.<sup>38</sup> P. de Letter writes of this desire for visible unity, and notes the importance of Bishop Butler in the undertaking.

Has the time come, when will the time come, for a realization of the visible unity of our churches, after the pattern suggested in the happy formula of Bishop Butler, taken up by Paul VI, “united not absorbed,” “unity without uniformity?” When will steps be taken for our reunion in the Church of Christ?<sup>39</sup>

In the final chapter of *The Church and Unity* Butler apologizes to his ecumenical friends, while he reminds his fellow Roman-Catholics

. . . that not everything in the contemporary stance and practice of their Church can claim the status of *articuli stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*. I have singled out the extreme centralisation which, in modern times, has been both a bulwark of the Church in a world of polemics, controversy and secularisation, and also a dead hand upon the spontaneity, and a grievous limitation of the legitimate autonomy, of the local dioceses and regions, not to speak of the due liberty of the individual Christian conscience, and which is still a serious obstacle to the union of Christians for which we all pray.<sup>40</sup>

The point here is Butler’s challenge to all Christians to dedicate themselves to the quest for perfect communion, and to offer to this quest an articulated ecclesiology of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5

<sup>34</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. xiv.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, pp. 233-34.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>38</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> P. De Letter, “Our Unity, in Faith,” *Theological Studies* 38 (September 1977): 536-37.

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 197.



communion in accord with the principles of ecumenism. As a Roman Catholic, Butler is committed to two things: (1) to the intellectual rightness of the Catholic position, and (2) to the Catholic Church's "existential actuality," imperfectly representative of what it is called to be.

This imperfection is chronic. It is not something that began to be only after some heroic age of a hardly discernable past. It is an ineluctable consequence of the fact that the Church is a communion of human beings in various stages of development from lesser to greater maturity, and of human beings who are fallible and, despite their baptism, liable to sin. The Church's imperfection may take different shapes at different epochs and in reaction to different circumstances. But we have not grounds for supposing that the Church on earth will ever be a perfect expression of its own ideal. The Second Vatican Council's words can be applied here:

While Christ, holy, innocent, undefiled (Febr. 7:26), knew nothing of sin (2 Cor. 5:21), but came to expiate only the sins of the people (Hebr. 2:17), the Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal.<sup>41</sup>

The question arises as to whether reconciliation among Christians should be postponed until the Catholic Church has put her house in order. Butler states emphatically that there should be no such delay.

Had we any hope that the Church might at length, or even quickly, so put her house in order that there would be nothing scandalous about her, then a case, insufficient but plausible, might be constructed for remaining outside until the interior reformation should be accomplished. But if the Church will never be what she ought to be, then an inescapable question arises: Is it not our duty to join her without more ado to lend our aid to her "continual purification" from within her ranks? For, imperfect though she is and will always be, she is divinely given and guaranteed, new and supernatural, historical reality within which and by means of which God's eternal purpose for the salvation of all men and the supernatural elevation of his creation is being accomplished.

The Church, in fact, is the "sacramental" re-presentation of the appeal of God in Christ, an appeal directed to every man everywhere and at all times. It is an appeal of love and calls for an answer to not theoretical but actual, existential, love which gives itself as fully and immediately as God has given himself in Christ. On the one hand, the appeal is: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . My yoke is easy and my burden light." On the other hand, it is inexorable with all the inexorability of perfect love. And because it is inexorable it is "judgemental." "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son. . . . He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." The message of Christian history is that the way to come to Christ is to belong to the *koinonia*, and that hearing Christ and believing him who sent him entails, not as a distant aspiration but as a here and now urgency, seeking membership of that *koinonia*.<sup>42</sup>

The fundamental truth of the Church to which Butler argues is, as E. L. Mascall points out, the Church as *koinonia*, a fellowship, a communion, "a fact reflected in

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 234. Quoting from the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, paragraph 24, note 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

Scripture, the Fathers, and, not least importantly, in Vatican II.”<sup>43</sup> Mascall quotes Butler regarding the Church as the united and unifying presence of Jesus.

“The Church is not an extraneous appendage to the redemptive incarnation. Rather, we can say, since the Church itself is commissioned to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, it is, with the incarnate Word, the anticipatory summing-up of the whole of creation, the preliminary actualisation of God’s purpose in creating the world and man.”<sup>44</sup>

Mascall goes on to point out the value of Butler’s clear-sighted ecumenical thought with respect to visible unity.

. . . all must be grateful for his determination to avoid the vagueness and sentimentality that persistently haunt the ecumenical movement and at the same time to disown any kind of legalism, authoritarianism or politicism in his exposition of the Church and its unity.<sup>45</sup>

Historically, the Christian churches come out of the Great Church of the past and are straining toward the Great Church of the future. An ecclesiology of communion will get us there, says Butler. An ecclesiology of communion involves common doctrine, a shared understanding of Christianity as an indivisible visible unity. Doctrinal agreement on the meaning of the Church will, however, demand conversion by reason of the unauthenticity that has crept into the Christian tradition regarding visible unity. “Persons brought up in an unauthentic tradition,” Lonergan tells us, “can become authentic human beings and authentic Christians only by purifying their traditions.”<sup>46</sup>

. . . while the unconverted may have no real apprehension of what it is to be converted, at least they have in doctrines the evidence both that there is something lacking in themselves and that they need to pray for illumination and to seek instruction.<sup>47</sup>

Butler’s ecclesiology of communion issues such a call to authenticity. The mutual purification of traditions in the light of common Christian meanings is what Bishop Butler hopes to effect by challenging the Christian churches to recommit themselves to the restoration of indivisible unity.

### **The Emergence of the Question of Visible Unity**

Butler’s *The Idea of the Church*, as well as many of his essays, reflect von Hügel’s influence and chronicle his (Butler’s) concern with the institutional element of religion. There must be, Butler argues, a firm conviction about the nature of the Church as a single historical society, but the preservation of the reality of the Church demands a perspective that does justice to its complex totality.

Christianity is a message and a gift to man from God who is truth and spirit, and who demands to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But, in the first place, there is no ground even in the most primitive records of Christianity for the supposition that the divine message can be summed up in a simply formulated

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<sup>43</sup> E. L. Mascall, “Koinonia,” review of *The Church and Unity*, by B. C. Butler, *The Tablet* 233 (3 November 1979): 1075.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Here Mascall quotes Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 299.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

idea. And on the other hand, man, the recipient of the message, is “a little lower than the angels.” He is bodily, as well as spiritual. And he is social as well as individual. There are, as von Hügel taught, an intellectual, a mystical, and an institutional element in Christianity, as in all human religions. Each element is potentially scandalizing; each needs checks and limits which it will respect. But without the synthesis of all three elements, human religion ultimately falters and fails.<sup>48</sup>

The question of visible unity continues to be a central issue in Butler’s ecclesiology. His interventions in the Second Vatican Council and his strongly ecumenical interpretation of post-Vatican II theology will be better understood if we see the reality of the visibly united Church as the goal of Christian ecumenism.

### ***Visible Unity: The question for the ecumenical movement***

Butler admits that although there is already a wide area of theological agreement among Christian communities, it is generally acknowledged that there is no clear and unanimous response on the part of Christian leaders and thinkers concerning visible unity.<sup>49</sup>

No-one can pretend that there is, at the present day, a clear and unanimous response, on the part of Christian thinkers or leaders, or in the minds of Christian people to this question.

The modern Western confusion of thought on this subject is in the main a product of the vast religious upheaval of the Christian West to which history has given the name of the Reformation. And indeed it is among the heirs of the Reformation, and between them and the Roman Catholic Church, that there is this divergence of opinion on the nature of the Church.<sup>50</sup>

In order to isolate and highlight the importance of the question of the nature of the Church in its historical existence, Butler, in *The Idea of the Church*, has concentrated attention on that article of the creed professing belief in the Church. Butler admits that this limits his theological scope, and explains why he chose to so limit it.

It can be misleading thus to isolate one article from the living whole of Christian thought. But we have not only concentrated our attention on the Church; we have deliberately neglected aspects of ecclesiology other than such as throw light upon the question: of what sort is the Church in her earthly pilgrimage; what kind of reality is she, and how can this kind of reality be described and distinguished from other kinds? Despite the disadvantages and even dangers of this twofold limitation, our procedure may be excused on two grounds. First, the question which we have been asking is one of fundamental relevance not only to the Ecumenical Movement but to the individual Christian who wishes to conform his living to the mind of Christ. And secondly, if an enquiry can be justified by the exhibition of some positive result, we seem to be able to plead such justification; we are in a position to give a definite answer to our question.<sup>51</sup>

Butler has no difficulty with the institutional aspect of the Church. Among other things, it is an organization that exists for the promotion of some public object, “the

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<sup>48</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 84

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

communication to mankind at large of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,”<sup>52</sup> but the very mystery of the Church precludes limiting the Church to its institutional aspect. Butler says that there

. . . is some danger that the Church may come to be regarded, in some quarters, as nothing but an institution; as though it were adequately and fully classified as one specimen of this species of fact.<sup>53</sup>

In the Second Vatican Council, this danger was avoided by a significant change made in its draft document, “The Nature of the Church,” and the more essential designation of the Church as mystery.

If the Church is a mystery we have to resign ourselves to the fact that we shall never grasp it in its fullness in a single definition. A mystery is indeed an object of intellectual curiosity; but it is one which we shall never fully encapsulate in human concepts and language.<sup>54</sup>

Ecclesiology is at the heart of the ecumenical movement, and it is Butler’s contention that sooner or later the deep divisions within Christianity will have to be resolved. He states that the divisions were not caused by a diversity of views concerning the nature of the Church. The disagreement is, rather, a product, of the Reformation.<sup>55</sup>

I am convinced that . . . the Ecumenical Movement will have to examine the question of the nature of the Church with full seriousness, at least if it takes the unity of all believers in a single communion as its ultimate goal.

There is, however, a great deal that can be said about the Church while this particular problem remains without an agreed solution; just as there was much that could be said about Christ before the full truth about his human nature was defined. There is a wide area of theological thinking about the Church where Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and many Protestants and Anglicans, can meet in common.<sup>56</sup>

As a permanent endowment of the Church, faith in visible unity, if discarded from Christian tradition, would, Butler says, be tantamount to an undogmatic liberalism pushed to ultimate consequences, a disintegration and eventual collapse of what God has given us in Christ and preserved for us by the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup> There would be little hope for a Christianity that deliberately surrendered the conviction of visible unity as the essence of Church.<sup>58</sup> Such a surrender is too high a price to pay, Butler argues, as an escape from our present difficulties.<sup>59</sup>

We have to ask ourselves whether the principle of indivisible visible unity of the Church is an “essay” which has failed and must in consequence be abandoned; or

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<sup>52</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 226.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

whether perhaps it is a principle which has not to die but to “reappear under new forms.”<sup>60</sup>

As we have noted, Butler selects the first five hundred years of Christian history (the time of the Great Church of the past) as the common point of origin for all extant forms of Christianity: “in those days all our forefathers were members of a single communion.”<sup>61</sup> That Great Church includes groups whose separate existence does not precede the Reformation. One of Butler’s purposes in *The Idea of the Church* is to show that the ideas held in common among the members of the Great Church of the closing years of the fourth century reveal issues which stand between us and the first origins of Christianity, and he asks: “Is the history of Christian antiquity ‘definite’ upon the broad issue whether the Church is a visible society?”<sup>62</sup> ‘ Applying the words of Newman regarding the appeal to history, Butler cautions that

. . . we may say that we are not to expect a clear, unanimous and explicit adherence of the whole of Christian antiquity to an accurate definition and elaboration of the idea of the Church. Our question is rather: In what direction does the mass of the evidence point? And here another quotation from Newman is relevant: . . .

History is not a creed or a catechism, it gives lessons rather than rules; still no one can mistake its general teaching on this matter, whether he accept it or stumble at it. Bold outlines and broad masses of colour rise out of the records of the past. They may be dim, they may be incomplete; but they are definite.<sup>63</sup>

Butler justifies the limitation he imposes on his ecclesiology by using the word *Church* in its meaning of *ecclesia*: the original, historical community of believers gathered before God and The Twelve and marked off from the uncommitted gentiles and from the Jews who had not accepted Christ.<sup>64</sup> Such an exclusive use of the word *Church* relates it to a single coherent idea.<sup>65</sup> This, he believes, will offer clarity and consistency to his investigation of the Church militant as a single society on earth. However, when Butler moves into subsequent Christian history and into present complexities, he avoids any identification of the Church (although he states that his intention in writing *The Idea of the Church* is to show that the only intellectual position for himself as a Christian is to be a Roman Catholic).<sup>66</sup> And when he presents the alternative ecclesial positions of Luther, Calvin, and the Anglo-Catholics, it is not for the purpose of refuting them.<sup>67</sup> Butler’s primary aim is to let the radical issue of Christian unity emerge with such clarity that it cannot be avoided. The question of whether visible unity remains the *sine qua non* of the contemporary Church is forcing a divided Christianity to examine its conscience concerning the formative and therefore unitive element of the Church.

Butler places the issue within the context of Christian history to show that, except for the abortive attempts of the First Vatican Council, there is no comprehensive ecclesiology

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>61</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>66</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 141.

<sup>67</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 86.

available for interpretation; and conciliar action of the first five hundred years does not give a simple definition of the Church. What it does provide is a picture of the Church “acting publicly upon the great stage of human history to give dogmatic formulation to what Christianity believes about God and Christ.”<sup>68</sup> Butler implies that the intense theological thinking and hard argument of the times reveals the Church as a unique, visible, historical community or communion. If you take away this conviction about the Church, then, Butler insists, “you have cut the nerve of conciliar action in the fields of doctrine and discipline alike.”<sup>69</sup> It is important, therefore, to come to grips with the development of Christian meanings within the scope of history. It is this task which, David Tracy declares, faces the historical theologian as a theologian: “to decipher how and why past Christian meanings were meaningful and true for a particular cultural situation, and how and why such past meanings either are or are not meaningful today.”<sup>70</sup> Tracy further notes that it is rare to find a contemporary constructive theologian who is at the same time “a historical hermeneutical master of primary Christian texts.”<sup>71</sup> While Butler’s personal diffidence might cause him to disclaim such a description, his acknowledged expertise as a biblical scholar, his long study of early Christian texts, and his astute theological interpretations, make for the rare combination described by Tracy.

### ***The witness of the Great Church of the past***

From the Great Church of the past Butler cites Cyprian, Augustine, and other great Christian thinkers in defense of the indivisible visible unity of the Church, which unity, he believes, cannot be discarded without doing violence to tradition.<sup>72</sup> He cites Cyprian on the doctrine of the unity of the Church, and Augustine for the strong support he gives to the Cyprianic principle of indivisible visible unity.<sup>73</sup> Although in many other matters Augustine disagrees with Cyprian, Butler does not try to reconcile these differences; his main interest is to indicate the strength of their agreement.

Cyprian, while not a great theologian, was a great statesman and an accomplished practitioner of rhetorical Latin. As such he is an important witness to those Western modes of thought about the Church which eventually predominated, even in the East.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: A Crossroad Book, Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 239-40.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>72</sup> Johannes Quasten encourages study of the early Fathers as an excellent source for the study of late antiquity and early Christianity. [Cf. *Concise Sacramentum Mundi: Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 181-85.] Patristic studies, Quasten notes, have influenced the Second Vatican Council, especially in ecclesiology. Patristics emphasizes the development of Christian dogma. “Of great importance now is the question of the development of doctrine—the gradual, organic process that has been made in Christian thought through the ages. To understand this development, one must know what the Christian writers of the early Church taught.” [From an interview by Patrick Granfield, *Theologians at Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 23.]

<sup>73</sup> “The axiom [outside the Church no salvation] is customarily tied to the name of Cyprian, but versions of it antedate his writings. St. Ignatius of Antioch (d.c. 110), for example, approximates the saying when he prescribes doctrinal unity and union with the Church and the bishop as the attachment to God and Jesus Christ.” [Jerome P. Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation* (Collegeville, Minn.: St. John’s University Press, 1976), p. 3.]



The Cyprianic principle regarding the unity of the Church was articulated in the context of what was the burning issue of his day: schism as contrasted with heresy, and the admission of schismatics into the Church.<sup>74</sup> The severity of his stand toward schismatics flows, as Martin Marty remarks, from his ardent zeal for the unity of the Church.<sup>75</sup>

The only time that Cyprian uses the word *Church* in the plural is when he refers to a local church (the bishop-clergy-people). The Church exists in the bishop; a bishop exists in his people. Therefore, the word *Church* is incapable of having a plural when it denotes the universal Church as a concrete historical entity.

For Cyprian, the Church is that world-wide association of baptised persons in which he himself is a bishop, though he can make a mental distinction between the Church as sanctifying and the People of God as being sanctified: 'One is the Church, which, having attained the grace of eternal life, both lives unto eternity and gives life to God's people.' (EP lxxxii, I)<sup>76</sup>

Butler knows of no passage in Cyprian's work where the word *Church* can be shown to refer to, or include within its meaning, the Church "expectant" (in the intermediate state), or the Church already triumphant in heaven. Nor does the word *Church* include anyone still alive who is outside the one communion of the universal Church. The universal Church is rooted in a unity prior to the multiplicity of the local Churches. It is not merely a federation of intercommunicating local churches held together by the unanimity of their bishops. This inherited tradition is so familiar that we scarcely think about it, but the issue ought not to be forgotten.

. . . it shows that the sacrament of Christian initiation implies the priority of the universal Church as compared with the local community. The "Church of my baptism" is the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church is not a resultant from relations set up between local communities. On the contrary, the local church derives its character of "church" from the fact that it is a local manifestation of the universal Church.<sup>77</sup>

For Cyprian, indivisible visible unity is primordial, essentially supernatural, and officially bestowed on the Church by Christ himself.<sup>78</sup> The property of unity, although subsequently shared by the apostles, is founded not on the multiplicity of The Twelve but on the singularity of their leader. Thus, unity is preserved in the source.

Established by God in the act by which Christ brought it into being, the Church is made one by Christ's act of foundation. Not only is the Church made one, its unity is unbreakable and visible by reason that Christ did not found a multiplicity of Churches: "God is one, and Christ is one, and His Church is one, one is the faith, and one the people cemented together by harmony, into the strong unity of a body."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Butler, *IOC*, pp. 87-104.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. See Martin Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Fontana Books, World Publishing Co., 1975), p. 77.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>78</sup> Butler, "Catholic and Roman: The Witness of St. Cyprian," *The Downside Review* 56 (April 1938): 127-44. See also Butler, "New Light on the *de Unitate* of St. Cyprian," *The Downside Review* 56 (October 1938): 452-67.

<sup>79</sup> Maurice Bevenot, *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, The Unity of the Catholic Church* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1957), p. 65. Jaroslav Pelikan in *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 159-60, notes:

"In making such an issue of the empirical unity of the Church, Cyprian was expressing the conviction of the Church Catholic from the beginning. Heresy and schism were closely

Schism tears schismatics away from the Church. It does not tear the Church into two parts so that each becomes a separate Church. The Church is one; therefore, only one can be the Church. To deal with the problem of schismatics and heretics, Cyprian espoused a single principle: the unity of the Church is God-given. Lapsed believers, regardless of their merits or demerits, are outside the Church and for that reason their claims are disproved. They have deserted the unity which is the property of the Church of Christ. Schismatics are bodies existing in visible separation from the indivisible, visible, universal Church, and Cyprian attempts to refute all schism on these grounds. Thus, Cyprian insists on a unity based on intercommunion, not a unity of common descent. Butler asserts that without this unity of indivisible communion, Cyprian's argument would be mere verbiage. Cyprian's argument is not one of support for the Roman See, but for a true understanding of the nature of the Church.<sup>80</sup>

Butler shows that open conflict between Cyprian and Bishop Stephen of Rome was not over rebaptism;<sup>81</sup> they both agreed that baptism of schismatics ought not to be repeated, but for different reasons. Stephen upheld the traditional practice by which the primacy of the official and sacramental element is independent of the personal holiness of the minister, even if he belongs to a body that is not a true Church.<sup>82</sup> Cyprian denied the validity of heretical baptism. He made no distinction between objective and

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related because both of them violated the unity of the Church. It is interesting that in all the seven epistles of Ignatius the Church was explicitly called 'holy' only once, while the unity of the Church in the bishop was one of the overriding preoccupations of all the epistles, so much so that it seems accurate to conclude that the most important aspect of the Church for the apostolic fathers is its unity. It has also been observed that the noun 'unity' occurred eleven times in Ignatius and the verb six times, but that neither was found anywhere else in the apostolic fathers.

For both Ignatius and Cyprian, moreover, the bishop was the key to authentic unity, and schism was identified as party spirit in opposition to him. Therefore the efforts to superimpose upon the second or third centuries the distinction made by Augustinianism and especially by the Reformation between the visible and invisible Churches have proved quite ineffectual, even in interpreting the thought of Origen, whose dichotomy between the heavenly and earthly Churches might seem to have tended in that direction; but on earth there was only one Church, and it was finally inseparable from the sacramental, hierarchical institution. Church was in the striking phrase of Origen, 'the cosmos of the cosmos, because Christ has become its cosmos, he who is the primal light of the cosmos.'"

<sup>80</sup> Butler, *IOC*, pp. 93-97.

<sup>81</sup> On the controversy between Stephen and Cyprian, see Henry Chadwick's *The Early Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 119-20. Controversy and fundamental divergence in sacramental theology was resolved by Stephen's death (256) and Cyprian's martyrdom (258) during the persecutions of Valerian. Stephen's attack on Cyprian is the first occasion where the bishop of Rome is known to have appealed to "infallibility," so to speak. Contrast this with Cyprian's claim that all bishops are in theory equal, like apostles, and answerable to God alone. Cyprian's sacramental theology was abandoned by the bishops of Carthage because of the Donatist crisis fifty-five years later.

<sup>82</sup> Butler, *IOC*, pp. 100-102. The term "intercommunion" means sharing sacraments in common in subordination to a super-local, universal episcopate; individual bishops are linked by mutual recognition and communion (*IOC*, p. 94). In 314 the issue of the rebaptism of heretics was settled by the Western Council of Aries. Rebaptizing was discontinued. Since 400 the principle was established that there was the possibility of baptism outside the Catholic communion. In regard to orders, the Council of Nicea decided to admit convert clergy from the Novationists to Catholic ministry, implying the validity of their baptism. The Council of Trent made this view official. In 1958 this was presupposed by the Lambeth Congress. The variety of practices in the Eastern Orthodox Church since 1054 is not discussed by Butler.

subjective light, and applied with strict logic and without qualification the dictum that “salvation outside the Church does not exist.”<sup>83</sup>

The Church, as Cyprian understood Church, is the exclusive sphere of saving grace, but at the same time Cyprian could not tolerate even a small threat to the concord of bishops, so great was his conviction of unity. Cyprian tried out a compromise idea to preserve episcopal unity, an idea which did not fit in with his own previous logic about Church unity. Cyprian suggested that if each bishop could follow his own practice, the bond of peace and concord could be preserved (an idea which Butler says speaks more for Cyprian’s heart than for his head).<sup>84</sup> According to this line of reasoning, if an ex-schismatic were reconciled at Rome without rebaptism, Cyprian, as bishop of Carthage, would not consider him to be either a baptized person or a member of the Church. Butler insists that this inconsistency cannot be supported because on catholic principles “you cannot be a member of the universal Church when you are in Rome and not a member when you find yourself in Carthage.”<sup>85</sup>

At issue here, Butler observes, is the importance of tradition. Stephen was upholding the tradition which read: “Let there be no innovation, but let the traditional practice be maintained.”<sup>86</sup> The controversy was never settled because both Stephen and Cyprian died before reaching any agreement, and Cyprian’s compromise notion was written to Rome before he realized that Rome was opposed to his policy of denying the validity of schismatic baptism.<sup>87</sup>

Butler concludes that Cyprian was not really interested in identifying the true Church; his interest was to preserve the unity of the Church. Butler looks at Cyprian’s sacramental principle (that sacraments administered outside the Church are invalid) in the light of Cyprian’s ecclesiology. This principle presupposes the Church’s “single initiation rite, its super-local government, and its unity of the Church. Butler looks at Cyprian’s sacramental principle (that sacraments administered outside the Church are invalid) in the light of Cyprian’s ecclesiology. This principle presupposes the Church’s “single initiation rite, its super-local government, and its unity of communion.”<sup>88</sup> These rites and limits constitute a sacramental reality. The Church itself is a sort of sacrament in its undivided unity. Thus, Cyprian speaks of the undivided sacrament of the Catholic Church. The Church is a historical society of baptized persons on earth. Local churches are incomplete societies; they merely represent the complete society, the universal Church. Intercommunion establishes the local churches as units of actual associations. Thus, it seems to Butler that the ultimately unresolved baptismal controversy involving the question of tradition centers on baptismal initiation into the unity of the “undivided ark.”

A thing of undivided unity, of which the members are human beings of flesh and blood in a state of probation on earth, initiated into it by a visible rite of baptism, and held together by a government consisting of human beings who are created bishops by public rite itself administered by bishops, can hardly be anything other than a visible human association.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 100. See also Butler, “Catholic and Roman: The Witness of St. Cyprian,” p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

The fact of universal, visible unity is an indisputable fact to which Cyprian appeals with confidence, as he does in referring to the bishops when he speaks of “all the churches of the world linked with us by the bond of unity’ and ‘communicating with us.”<sup>90</sup> The episcopacy does not spring up locally, nor is it bestowed from below. It is something that belongs essentially and primordially to the universal Church and is given from outside the local community. Butler infers that the bishop, although functioning with reference to his own local community, is essentially an officer of the universal Church. Just as the local churches are linked through their bishop with the rest of the Catholic Church, so the individual Christian is linked with the rest of the Catholic Church through baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>91</sup> Butler concludes that, although Cyprian’s view of heretical baptism is unacceptable in itself, and although it is inconclusive, Cyprian’s major premise cannot be called into question. He witnesses to the visible unity of the Church, which witness is important testimony to the reality that, as a visible unity, sacramentally bound, the Church is incapable of division.<sup>92</sup>

Augustine directly opposes Cyprian on the baptismal controversy, but agrees with his position in regard to schism.<sup>93</sup> Augustine’s theology is deeper than Cyprian’s, and he towers above the other Western Christian thinkers of the first millennium as the classic doctor of grace and outstanding witness to the authority of the Church.<sup>94</sup> Augustine refers to Cyprian as the great champion of Christian unity, and excoriates the Donatists for using Cyprian as an authority for their position, which held that all sacraments bestowed outside the one communion are null. “‘First be in the Church,’ declared Augustine to the Donatists, ‘. . . and then dare to name him as a supporter of your views.’”<sup>95</sup>

Augustine’s voluminous writings about Donatism arose from the effects of the Donatist schism. “Schism, he argues, deprives the reception of valid sacraments of any lifegiving virtue for the recipients.”<sup>96</sup> Augustine held that schismatics are actually and validly baptized and ordained and truly celebrate the Eucharist. But because they are separated from the communion of the Church, schismatics are involved in apostasy from the true Church, which means that those who administer or receive their sacraments are sacrilegious.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. This notion of the indivisible unity of the Church provides the stable or “static” element of the Church considered in its extensive dimension. The gift of God in Christ is that it will survive thus undivided.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 106. Augustine’s conversion from Manichean dualism through agnosticism to God, and from Platonism to Jesus Christ, resulted in his conversion to a particular institution. For Augustine, Christianity and Catholicism were one thing. Butler had come to the same conclusion, especially in regard to authority. “As regards authority, I held that Christianity was a dogmatic religion, and that there was indeed some living authority to determine its dogmatic content” (*ATTS*, p. 15). Augustine, too, had to accept the authority of the Church before the Gospel could have any claim over him. “I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved thereto by the authority of the Catholic Church” (*Lib. c. ep. Manich. V* [P.L. viii, 176]).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 112. Cf. St. Augustine, *C. Cres. II*, xxi, 39. Donatism was a powerful schism that held that all sacraments bestowed outside the one communion were null. They had appealed to the authority of Cyprian.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

Augustine's position reflects that of Optatus of Miletus who argued that God, not the minister, produces sacramental effects. The baptismal rite of a schismatic communion<sup>98</sup> is a Catholic rite used illegitimately. It is valid, but fruitless for personal sanctification. The character or seal of the baptism gives a permanent place in the Church. Therefore, says Augustine, a validly baptized person is permanently related to the Church, and for this reason he or she is always capable of receiving other sacraments. Liceity does not depend on the validity of a person's baptism or ordination, but on his or her state of friendship with Christ.<sup>99</sup> Butler notes that the validity of sacraments in schismatic communions has never been explicitly defined by the Roman Church, but is regarded as common and certain doctrine by all the Church's approved authors. While some would see Augustine's decision as merely expedient, Butler sees it as a concern for charity, just as Cyprian's is a concern for unity. Augustine characterizes the Church as charity incarnate. "Christian charity cannot be preserved except in the unity of the Church . . . without this charity you are nothing, even though you should have baptism and faith, and, by faith, be able even to move mountains."<sup>100</sup>

For Augustine, the *communio sacramentorum* (visible fellowship expressed and built up in the sharing of common sacraments), that visible single communion which is the Catholic Church, is charity incorporated, we might almost say charity incarnate; and it is the *only* incorporation of charity; outside it "charity cannot be preserved."<sup>101</sup>

Augustine's theory was not novel. It reflected the current ecclesiastical practice of his day. The Church was considered the minister rather than the agent of the sacraments. The sacraments were not the Church's creations, but Christ's.

[The ministers] are human instruments, but not precisely—as regards the proper effect of the sacraments in the supernatural order—human *agents*. The Church could not invent a sacrament. She can only administer those entrusted to her by Christ.<sup>102</sup>

In this regard, Butler draws a useful analogy between the role of the Church and the role of Sacred Scripture. Like Sacred Scripture, sacraments possess intrinsic supernatural qualities and properties immediately from God. The Church's task is to recognize the divine gift both in Sacred Scripture and in the sacraments. The Church does not mediate the intrinsic supernatural qualities but exercises the power to administer and to determine the external conditions.

Their grace-giving and character-imparting qualities are intrinsic to them and not dependent on the Church, whatever powers the Church may have to determine their external conditioning, and whatever rights she may possess in regard to their administration.<sup>103</sup>

Since the Bible can circulate outside the Church and still remain a collection of inspired scriptures, Butler concludes that it is not certain, *a priori*, that the sacraments cannot circulate outside the Church. Some theological qualifications must yet be made concerning the validity of sacraments *extra ecclesiam*, says Butler, but it is certain that sacraments are efficacious within the Church because they belong to God and to the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp. 106-7.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 113, citing *Contra litt. Pat.* II, 77.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



Church and must be performed as in the Church.<sup>104</sup> Rightness, says Augustine, is distinct from power. The Church can allow the right to administer the sacraments, but their efficacy, as distinct from their rightness, depends on one's friendship with God.<sup>105</sup> Cyprian had no problem deciding who was in the Church. Augustine's more subtle theory offers no such definite criterion. The criterion lies, says Butler, with the determining tradition of the Church, whatever meaning we may attach to that word, or however we may identify the reality of it.<sup>106</sup>

### ***Reformation views of the Church***

The Church rarely became an object of theological debate before the Reformation. The earliest full-length treatise on the Church comes only in the late Middle Ages. Butler states: "For fifteen hundred years there was hardly more doubt about the nature of the Church in her historical existence than there is today about the human nature of Christ."<sup>107</sup> Hence, alternative views on the nature of the Church did not cause the Reformation but resulted from it. In rationalizing their schismatic positions, the reformers did not realize the divisive effect that interpreting the Church from a personal perspective would have.

The greatest upheaval that Christianity has ever sustained from influences from within its own ranks, the sixteenth-century Reformation, was in large measure inspired by . . . a criticism of institutionalised Christianity. But the heirs of the Reformation did not escape from institutionalism; they only substituted one set of institutions for another. The Christian West used to know, and suffer under, one Church. The Reformation has left us with a number of Churches; institutionalism has not been transcended but propagated.<sup>108</sup>

Butler brings the Reformation ecclesiologies into focus not in order to refute them but to present a broad-brush picture of the present reality to be faced. Butler is convinced that any view that tears the Church away from its roots will destroy an essential property of Christianity.<sup>109</sup> What caused the divisions is no longer the issue, and polemics, Butler declares, will serve only to deepen the radical separation created by the Reformation. A brief look at how Butler views some alternative positions on the Church will further demonstrate his point. Butler has no intention of diminishing the contributions of the reformers. Rather, Butler examines the problems created by their ecclesiologies. And if their ecclesiologies can be recognized as lacking the essential element of visible unity, and if that element be further recognized as constitutive of Christianity, then perhaps the breach can begin to be healed in a more realistic way.<sup>110</sup> Until that is done, Butler believes that Christian unity lacks a realistic direction for its efforts.

Butler points out that while Luther was radical enough to reject the doctrines and tradition of the Mass, he could not discard the word *Church* altogether, because that would have been too definitive a break with a long and powerful tradition. Luther's

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 182.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-47.

<sup>110</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 12.



problem was grace, not the historical Church.<sup>111</sup> When Luther's connection with the Church came to an end, and he had no *locus standi* because he had cut ties with that single visible society in which he still believed, he was forced to rationalize his position. In a radical departure from tradition, Luther created a new model in his attempt to find a theological meaning for the Church from a sociological perspective.<sup>112</sup> This new situation constituted the shift in theology that, according to Butler, initiated the modern interest in ecclesiology.<sup>113</sup> He specifies three alternative ecclesiological views relevant in this regard: (1) Luther's; (2) Calvin's; and (3) Anglo-Catholicism's.

(1) Luther's radical alternative, which is the present position of extreme Protestantism, considers the Church as a society hidden from the eyes of men, a community of saints justified by a faith which is purely interior. The Church is no more visible than is the faith of her members. The real Church is not visible at all nor visible in any way that permits her to be identified as a distinct entity in the historical order. Luther's modified view states that the Church is essentially invisible, but since it is involved in history it has a contingent and variable visibility. At the deepest theological level the Church is the communion of saints, and it is present where the Word of God is preached. The Church's existence in history is for its function of teaching and preaching, and within that necessary organization visible unity is an ideal to be achieved but not an actual, primordial characteristic.<sup>114</sup>

(2) Calvin held to a strong belief in the visible Church as an article of faith. Contrary to Luther, Calvin insists that the features of the Church are visible in history. As a social fact, Calvin requires of the Church an organization of order, a *rectus ordo*. But, Butler cautions, although it may seem so, we are not back in Roman Catholicism here. Calvin's *rectus ordo* is deduced from Scripture by Calvin himself. His more mature position may come closer to the early tradition than Luther's, but the model Calvin deduced is a visible Church created by Calvin himself.<sup>115</sup>

(3) In delineating the position of the English Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Butler admits that there is no easy and clear answer to the English settlement from which present-day Anglicanism derives. The Elizabethan settlement was a practical compromise with no governing theological insights and no coherent set of defined doctrines. The ambiguity of the Thirty-Nine Articles gave Anglo-Catholics recourse to traditional Catholicism as legitimate and impartial judge when some authoritative interpretation was required. The Tractarians believed that the often violent opposition of the reformers made such recourse obligatory.<sup>116</sup>

Anglo-Catholic teaching states that the society of the Church exists today in three divided fragments: the Anglican Communion, the Eastern Orthodox Communion, and the Roman Catholic Communion.<sup>117</sup> It differs from other theories of a divided Church in its insistence on doctrinal orthodoxy and valid episcopal succession. But like so many theories that have originated since the Reformation, Anglo-Catholicism presupposes the possibility of a visible, historical society existing in separate parts. It is difficult, Butler notes, to find an official statement of the essential beliefs of the Anglican communion. The most representative view seems to be the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 60.

<sup>114</sup> Butler, *IOC*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-27.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

(1958). Butler believes that it contains the implication that the Church is by its nature visible, since it is entered into by the visible rite of baptism.

It is a visible entity capable of becoming a single visible society or communion; indeed, it once *was* such, if we may press the phrase about “recovering” unity. So long as the Church is not actually a single visible communion, she is failing to realise an ideal, not to say an obligation, laid upon her by Christ.<sup>118</sup>

Although the Roman Catholic Church as a single communion which *de facto* and by necessity was never shaken in its position, the attacks that followed the Reformation resulted in a polemical situation during which the Roman Church concentrated on its visible, authoritative, juridical, and legal aspects—those most criticized by the reformers. In its refutations, the Roman Catholic Church presented an imbalanced view of her convictions about the nature of the Church. Invisible and mystical aspects of the Church were relegated to a remote area of ascetico-mystical theology.<sup>119</sup> The temporal nature of the institutional Church was overemphasized, while the unpredictable working of the Spirit was obscured. The Church became too exclusively juridical and legalistic; its sacramental nature became subordinated to jurisdiction and administration.<sup>120</sup>

It is said that we have seen the question of the unity of the Church far too exclusively from the angle of the unity of a universal historical society with a single governmental centre, far too little from that of a mystery which is fully embodied in every local Church and is actualised in the Eucharistic celebration in which the bishop represents his people before God.<sup>121</sup>

The Second Vatican Council has begun to move the Roman Catholic Church in a new direction.

## **Toward the Great Church of the Future**

### ***Koinonia and communion in general***

Butler in his model of communion as the basis for contemporary ecclesiology makes a distinction between communion in general and Christian communion.<sup>122</sup> He uses the word *koinonia* to identify the Christian communion as that which is shared, i.e., “the Church as a particular, divinely established and guaranteed communion.”<sup>123</sup> Communion in general is more than just a notion or a concept, Butler says. Being deeply imbedded in our human condition, it is a prerequisite for the flowering of the human personality.

God’s entry into our lives is historical and incarnational, and so for God

. . . to become truly human means to become one for whom communion is of the essence of his condition. If he assumes human nature we can expect that he will consecrate human communion.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>119</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 60.

<sup>120</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 241.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>122</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

A community emerges from the established relations between persons who share possessions, experiences, goals, and hopes.<sup>125</sup> It is this notion of sharing the grace gift flowing from the act by which we were redeemed that establishes the *koinonia*. Contrary to *koinon* (something held in common), there is *idion* (something held in private), an idiosyncrasy that marks one off from the community.<sup>126</sup>

Butler gives two meanings to communion. The first is common ownership. The common field of a medieval village, for instance, did not belong to the squire, lord, or patron; it was the common property of the village. This common ownership grounds the relationship between the owners. That relationship, in turn, is the foundational factor in building up the sense of common purpose and recognition of a common identity, i.e., the village. This is community in the second sense.<sup>127</sup>

Communion is a system of personal relations built upon and flowing from common possession or common experience, and in potency to become interpersonal relationship.<sup>128</sup>

Communion in general, as Butler understands it, is a relatedness or a relationship that arises from common possessions, experiences, and aspirations, with the potentiality for development into personal relationships or into community. *Koinonia* is the sharing that is constitutive of the community which emerges from such relationships.<sup>129</sup> The mutual sharing of a common rational nature is the “dynamic factor for making a universal society . . .,” and as the theme of the first chapter indicated, this cannot be realized without the help of a universal supernatural society. Butler identifies this universal supernatural society as the Church.<sup>130</sup>

In discussing both aspects of communion, as Butler so interprets them and as they are seen in the light of this thesis, communion in general is another way of looking at the subjective religious experience of conversion, and *koinonia* is the sharing that objectifies that subjective religious experience in reference to the Church. In *The Church and Unity*, Butler defends his use of *koinonia* in reference to the Church, suggesting it to be a word applicable in ecclesiology but borrowed from 1 John 1:3. Butler makes special use of *koinonia* by offering communion as a model to understand (and possibly to identify) the Church. He suggests that the Church is itself a communion,<sup>131</sup> and the development of his ecclesiology of communion reflects the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>132</sup> Butler recalls that one purpose of the renovation and accommodation of *aggiornamento* is to facilitate Christian reunion.<sup>133</sup>

Those who best understand the problems of Ecumenism are aware that one of the greatest obstacles to Christian union is our failure to agree about the nature of the Church which Christ founded; and those who see *aggiornamento* as requiring no mere surface adjustment in the field of Canon Law and administration, but a radical reappraisal of the Christian Gospel and its implication, would be among the first to agree that this requirement cannot be

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-37.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>130</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 134n.

<sup>131</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 74.

<sup>132</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 35.

<sup>133</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 240.

met without a clear vision of the Church herself, in her nature, her functions, her God-given mission.<sup>134</sup>

The “union of all Christians in one visible fold,” and the “renovation of the Church and its accommodation to the contemporary world,” must therefore be grounded by “a truer reflective understanding of what the Church herself is.”<sup>135</sup>

An ecclesiology which is “ontologically ordered, by the elements which constitute it,”<sup>136</sup> will be richly nuanced, Butler insists. One such nuance involves the notion of communion as a sharing among Churches which is already real, which can increase, and which is ordered ontologically by constitutive elements.<sup>137</sup> Butler admits to the limitations of such an ecclesiology.

Our resulting ecclesiology may lack something of the clarity and definiteness of views associated with the name of Bellarmine; but it will have gained in richness and nuance, and in recognition of the mysteriousness of Christianity, not easily framed in precise human language. . . . “We know where the Church is; it is not for us to judge where the Church is not.”

. . . the notion of “communion,” while fully traditional, is yet flexible. In this respect it has a great advantage, for the ecumenical dialogue, over the description of the Church as “a society”. . . . Communion . . . exists wherever there is common possession, whether of material or spiritual riches. There is a primordial communion between all men through their possession of a common specific (and rational) nature. There is a closer communion between men of a single culture or single political system. There is a certain communion between all who recognize the existence of a holy creator God. But there is obviously a much greater “communion” between all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as the redeemer of mankind. And this is still more true of Christians who, having been truly baptised, are thereby marked with a common seal of incorporation into Christ. . .

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Butler’s ecclesiology of communion does not presuppose that the whole question of the Church and her visible nature is based on “an acceptance of the belief that the perfect communion exists on earth—or that it is identical with the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>139</sup> He does, however, point out that there is a marked difference “between forms of Christian communion based on the common sharing of only part of this totality and a ‘perfect communion’ in the totality of the Sacred Tradition.”<sup>140</sup>

In *The Theology of Vatican II*, Butler speaks of the Church as a “mystery of communion,”<sup>141</sup> and indicates that this notion bears further theological investigation.<sup>142</sup> The Church, he tells us, transcends itself. It exists “in its integral fullness in the Catholic Church,” and it exists “in bodies out of communion with the Catholic Church.”<sup>143</sup> By “out

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 133.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., pp. 133-34.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

of communion” Butler means that they do not enjoy perfect communion. An ecclesiology of communion approaches the whole question of the Church and her nature as visible on earth

. . . from a basis which does not presuppose, on the part of those taking part in the dialogue, an acceptance of the belief that the perfect communion exists on earth—or that it is identical with the Roman Catholic Church. Just as it enables Catholics to recognise other Christian bodies as genuinely Christian communions, linked with the Catholic Church by all that is held in common between them, so it enables non-Catholics to acknowledge the Catholic Church as a Christian communion, closely linked to them by the same constitutive elements. Behind this common agreement, or rather beyond it, there remains, of course, disagreement about the actual existence here and now or the identification, of the perfect communion. But if ecumenical dialogue is directed towards visible Christian unity it is implied that a perfect communion either *can* exist on earth, or at least is the ideal which must govern ecumenical endeavour.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Ecumenism and koinonia***

Butler’s model of communion reflects the goal of Pope John XXIII in convening the Second Vatican Council, that of Christian unity and the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church. His ecclesiology, therefore, is intimately related to the general view of the Church that inspired the documents of Vatican II, particularly *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>145</sup>

The focus for contemporary ecclesiological articulation is the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council and the notion of the imperfect yet genuine communion that exists among the various Christian bodies.<sup>146</sup> Butler believes that the language of the Decree on Ecumenism is a healthy reminder of the benefits of the notion of communion as “extremely rich and capable of many different kinds and dimensions of realization.”<sup>147</sup>

We have already seen that the Constitution on the Church represents a move away from a rather narrow juridical outlook whereby the nature of the Church is deduced from the nature of the papal primacy. This constitution offers an ecclesiology which seems to be basically sacramental . . . . And the centre and climax of this whole sacramental order is the Eucharist, . . . . Thus the climax of sacrament is also the focal point of communion. . . . “Church” and “communion” become one thing in the mystery of the Eucharist. . . . The Church is daily created or re-created in and by her sacramental life, and the juridical element in her government is there to prevent that sacramental life from anarchy and disintegration.<sup>148</sup>

The ecumenical dialogue that is to operate from “a basis of shared connections and to extend the area of such common convictions through a process of clearing up

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 135

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 135-36.

misunderstandings and communicating insights,”<sup>149</sup> ought to lead, Butler concludes, to “mutual enrichment in the apprehension of divine revelation and mutual purification of the articulated faith.”<sup>150</sup>

The development of *koinonia*, as Butler understands it, is essential to the process of healing the divisions in Christianity. “A divided Christianity,” Butler points out, “is very ill indeed.”<sup>151</sup>

It is necessary not to acknowledge the symptoms of the illness, but to diagnose it. There is little to be gained by pretending that the illness does not exist, or by inviting believers to act as though everything could be put right by a mindless coming together in an external unity that would have no theological rationale. If my diagnosis is correct, the key to our problem is found in a very simple fact; . . . there is no justifying reason for schism. If I am correct it is not the case that serious defects cannot show themselves in the one universal communion whose unity is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit himself; even if Christians were all sinless, the mere fact that we are human, and that human beings attain maturity only by a slow process, would mean that the Church militant can never live at the level of its calling. But the remedy for defects in the Church is not to separate oneself from the community [*idion*] whether by an individual secession or by a group movement into schism, but to stay within and pray and work for improvement here and there.<sup>152</sup>

If the ecumenical movement may be said to be moving toward *koinonia*, the ideal order where there would be not separate bodies but only one visible universal Church, then perfect communion can exist. If so, it ought to be, in Butler’s opinion, the goal of ecumenical endeavors.

Imperfect it undoubtedly is since it does not incorporate them into the full visible unity of the *koinonia*. But communion mediated through Christ and embracing all who genuinely try to serve him is not, for that reason, unimportant or insignificant.<sup>153</sup>

A visibly united Church in her earthly pilgrimage is fundamental not only to the various communions, but also for the individual who wishes to conform his mind to Christ. If the ecumenical movement is sincere in its conviction that the unity of all believers is its goal, then it is Butler’s conviction that there must be fundamental agreement on the issue of visible unity, so that the Church, though visible and presently divided, may be able “along with aspiration to achieve, by God’s grace, victory over these divisions by the establishment of a Great Church of the future.”<sup>154</sup> Churches can, Butler insists, begin to learn from each other in an atmosphere of mutual charity, esteem, and growing understanding.

Butler appeals to history as a primary category for testing the authenticity of *koinonia*, and he chooses historical categories because the issue of the visible unity of *koinonia* is not a speculative one to be left “for solution in the world to come.”<sup>155</sup> Butler holds that:

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>151</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 9.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>155</sup> Butler, *IOC*, p. 227.



If the *koinonia* is not historically visible, it cannot be presenting the divine challenge to humanity and it has no credibility; and credibility is of the essence of the Message and of the *koinonia* to which the Message is entrusted.<sup>156</sup>

The *koinonia* has traditionally been perceived as an indivisible visible fellowship.<sup>157</sup> But *koinonia* is at the same time, by reason of its eschatological dimension, in a created order of a higher level,<sup>158</sup> sustained by the Holy Spirit and preserved from the ultimate threats of temporality.<sup>159</sup> Butler's eschatology maintains a distinction between "history and the post-historic or metachronic" (metahistory).<sup>160</sup> Metachronics is Butler's analogy between

. . . Greek philosophic thinking and Israelite meditation on history; it is parallel to metaphysics . . . with its suggestion of a state of things "after" (*meta*) "time" (*chronos*) it emphasizes the paradox of eschatology.<sup>161</sup>

### ***Butler's metachronics and koinonia***

At the International Theological Congress at Notre Dame in 1966, following the close of the Second Vatican Council, Butler first used the term *metachronics*. It is of sufficient historic interest to reproduce his words here.

. . . in my opinion, the eschatological dimensions of the gospel take us to the very heart of the whole theological problem of our day. We have all learned that one must take, the Bible on its own terms, and in order to give an exegesis of it one has to understand the mentality that operates in the Bible. We have learned from great men like Oscar Cullman that the Hebrews thought in historical categories. Now it seems to me that as one contemplates the eschatological moment in the Jewish-Christian teaching, one appreciates that, if I may put it like this, eschatology stands to history as in the Greek systems of thought metaphysics stands to physics. On that analogy I rather like to talk, not about eschatology, but about "metachronics." "Metachronics" stands to history as metaphysics stands to physics. It is the ultimate dimension of thought, apprehension and understanding when you approach reality in historical categories. Now if there is any truth in what I am saying, one sees at once the extreme importance of the fact that we have in Christianity a realized eschatology. In other words, Christianity—the gospel—offers us, not history on one side and "metachronics" on the other as two unrelated, completely discontinuous phenomena, but history shot through with the richness, values, or "metachronics." And secondly, it occurs to me that, while the patristic and medieval effort to express Christianity in the thought-categories of Greek philosophy was entirely legitimate and immensely enriching for the Church, nevertheless in the end those categories are inadequate for the gospel; we must find our way back—and it is not very easy for us who are the heirs of Greece and Rome—to the primary historical categories.

Now what is exciting for the Church at the present moment is that we are living in an age of the human story in which the historical and durational categories of thought are regaining, even independently of our own efforts, a

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<sup>156</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 115.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>160</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 98.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

central place in human thinking. While the Council itself was concerned, not with baptizing a theology, but with presenting doctrine, nevertheless a large part of the drama of the actual Council was the clash between the Greco-Roman, ultimately philosophical, and the more biblical, historical and contemporary approach to the same set of data.

By way of conclusion, I would like to say that I do not conceive our being faced here with an ultimate either/or. If we wish to accept the historical approach, we need not, therefore, finally reject the philosophical approach. What I think we are aiming at, and what it may not achieve, is some kind of a higher synthesis in which both those elements are given their due place. But I feel perfectly certain that the historical categories have got to be given the prior.<sup>162</sup>

In another place, Butler compares Aristotle's metaphysics ("a product of the pure unrestricted desire to know and understand") with eschatology ("an existential concern which led the early Israelites to find a meaning for their own history in the purpose of God as manifested at the Exodus"). Butler concludes that although metaphysics was forced upon Aristotle by physics, it nevertheless "indicates a level of reality which the physical level presupposes. Being-as-being underpins being-in-motion."<sup>163</sup> In a similar fashion, Butler speaks about eschatology.

If eschatology is to be true to its own inner dynamism it must, in the end, and despite the enormous intellectual difficulties of the enterprise, make the eschaton, that which comes at the end of history, underpin and in a sense "come before" history.<sup>164</sup>

*Koinonia* is eschatological, therefore, in the sense that its "consummation and goal are in the post-historic dimension of that heavenly glory into which Christ by his ascension has already entered."<sup>165</sup> The whole of Christianity as it moves through time is marked "with the pledge, and actuated by the germ, of eternity."<sup>166</sup> One might say not only that "in its end is its beginning," but that its end permeates its history. Butler's metachronics, his eschatology, grounds and conditions the whole fact of history. Butler uses Ephesians 1:3-14 to describe the eternal purpose and causal action of God as the leitmotiv, "giving a kind of deductive colour to the whole exposition."<sup>167</sup> The new order of creation, the divine purpose fulfilled in the work of Christ, involves more than just believers.<sup>168</sup>

They have been caught up into a vast scheme; the final "uniting" (summing up) in Christ of the whole created universe. Into the sweep and dynamism of that

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<sup>162</sup> John H. Miller, ed., *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, International Theological Conference, University of Notre Dame, March 20-26, 1966 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 316-17.

<sup>163</sup> Butler, ATTS, p. 98.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 113.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

divine plan, already in process of accomplishment, the Christian believers have been really incorporated.<sup>169</sup>

Those who became caught up and transfigured by so great and novel a truth, became a real historical community—*koinonia*—the Church. This commonly-based revelation thus becomes, Butler points out, the basis of real historical *koinonia*. In *The Church and Unity* Butler hypothesizes that the *koinonia* is integral to the mystery of a new divine order, involving an “elevation” of the created order to a higher level. This new order was established in the resurrection of Christ and, being historical, is subject to the growth and development that characterizes every historical movement.<sup>170</sup>

In history it is imperfect, always falling short of the ideal which it incorporates. It is part of human history, and humanity, though redeemed, is on the whole not yet either inerrent or impeccable. Thus, from the first Easter onwards, there will always here on earth be something wanting to the credibility of the *koinonia*; and those who demand a Utopia or an earthly paradise will always be able to turn away from the *koinonia* as failing to measure up to the standards they have set it. It is in keeping with the mercy of God, however, that he does not abandon those he has redeemed because they fail to attain on earth a perfection which is promised to them in heaven.<sup>171</sup>

The problem of indivisible visible unity, then, does not lie in what we recognize as the source that unites or overcomes the sin of schism, but rather in that of which division actually consists. The constitutive elements that are held in common already bind Christians, but deep divisions relative to identifying the perfect communion remain.<sup>172</sup> These deep divisions within the Christian experience challenge the whole of Christianity to work toward the Great Church of the future. Butler calls not only on his ecumenical friends in the other churches but also on his fellow Catholics to commit themselves to this great task, realizing that it has already begun.<sup>173</sup>

Someone has said that the road to Christian unity, like the road to resurrection, is a way of the Cross; that unless a Church is prepared to die to itself it cannot hope to be raised again into the Great Church of the future. There is truth in this saying, a truth that has to be worked out in different ways in the different Christian bodies. Catholics so far have perhaps been slow to apply this truth to themselves. . . . I think that there is much room for movement, a movement that has begun already in our own generation.<sup>174</sup>

## Summary

This chapter developed Butler’s position on the restoration of indivisible visible unity. The term *koinonia* and the model of communion sublate Butler’s earlier model of the Church as society. This sublation marks a development in Butler’s ecclesiology and

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>172</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 135.

<sup>173</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 228.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

addresses the crisis of meaning in the Christian message which, according to Lonergan, lies in the cognitive meaning of the Christian message.

The question of visible unity, placed in the context of history, receives support from the witness of both Cyprian and Augustine. Disagreement concerning the nature of the Church did not cause the Reformation but resulted from it. Thus, there is an urgency that calls for the reversal from an ecclesiology of polemics to an ecclesiology of communion. While the Roman Church never moved from its position regarding visible unity, following the Reformation it emphasized the authoritative, the juridical, and the legal aspects of ecclesiology. The momentum to correct this imbalance was initiated by the Second Vatican Council.

*Koinonia* is in a created order of a higher level by reason of its eschatological dimension, sustained by the Holy Spirit and preserved from ultimate threats of disunity. It has traditionally been perceived as an indivisible visible fellowship. Metachronics is the word coined by Butler to emphasize the paradox of eschatology. *Koinonia* is eschatological in the sense that its consummation and goal are in the post-historic dimension. The whole of Christianity moves through time marked with the pledge and actuated by the germ of eternity. Its goal must permeate its history, and so, indeed, there must be real historical *koinonia*—the Great Church of the future. Since in history *koinonia* is always imperfect, so all Christians must apply themselves to the task of first recognizing and then overcoming the actual source of division.

**CHAPTER FIVE:**  
**NEW ORIENTATIONS IN ECCLESIOLOGY:**  
**BUTLER ON THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

**Introduction**

Butler's conviction that the Second Vatican Council is epoch-making in the history of Christianity is evident not only in his first enthusiastic response to the Council (chronicled in a vast outpouring of interpretative essays, books, and talks on the theology of Vatican II) but also in his recently published book, *The Church and Unity* (1979).

. . . the Council was epochmaking. . . . I would only repeat, what I have said elsewhere, that its spirit is more important than its letter, together with my conviction that this spirit has by no means permeated the Roman Catholic body. . . . It has been pointed out very truly that individuals and collectivities alike can suffer cultural shock, and particularly the shock of rapid change within their own cultural environment. Catholics have had to put up with a lot of changes since the Second Vatican Council began its discussions in 1962. But the direction of change remains important, whatever its speed or gradualness. The Council was a solemn act of the Catholic Church and it stands as a norm, in the letter but above all in the spirit of its Acts, for future progress.<sup>1</sup>

This observation parallels Butler's earlier statement made to the International Theological Conference at Notre Dame, Indiana, in the spring following the close of the Council (March 1966).<sup>2</sup>

We, then, who believe these things, must study the Council's acts. But we must do more; we must catch and embody the Council's spirit. We must be members and representations of Christ in and to the world. And we have to show that we remember that the heart of Christ and the heart of his gospel were directed ultimately beyond humanity to God.<sup>3</sup>

*Lumen Gentium* (which reaffirmed the genuine sacramental nature of episcopal collegiality) and the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (which looks toward human good will as the liaison between the total human family and the visible Church) are, in Butler's opinion, two moments of the Council that set the Catholic Church in a new direction.<sup>4</sup> Butler describes these two moments, which have so significantly influenced his contemporary religious thought.

The first is the reaffirmation, in *Lumen Gentium*, of a genuine sacramental episcopal collegiality, which had been thrown somewhat into the background by the work of the prematurely ended Vatican I. This seems to afford the basis for a recovery of the principle that the papacy—and now we must add the episcopate—is not the source of the actual life of the Church, but the coordinator of that life's various and peripheral spontaneities. This principle of subsidiarity is carried through to the point at which the lay Catholic is seen as a genuine creative force in the life of the People of God; and to the further point where it is realized that

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, ed., *Vatican II*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

the whole human family, so far as good will prevails, is a theater of the operations of the grace-gifts of the Holy Spirit, is cooperating, if often incognito, in the building up of Christ's kingdom.

The second suggestive moment is the direction of the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* not only to Catholics, or only to Christians, but to all men of good will. Human good will is the liaison between the total human family and the visible Church. . . . Mankind ought to be morally united, to form a single spiritual communion. The signs of our aspiration to such unity are plain to see in past and present history. That the obligation and the aspiration are real, gives meaning to the Council's address to all men of good will. But past and present history show us how halting and imperfect are the steps that man can take in his own strength to achieve that unity without which his own future is now more than ever clouded over with menace. . . . The Church . . . is the sign and the instrument of the unity of the whole human race.<sup>5</sup>

These two moments captured the two closely woven themes of Christian unity (the remote aim of the Council) and of Church renovation and accommodation to the modern world, i.e., *aggiornamento* (the more immediate aim of the Council).<sup>6</sup>

The preceding chapter presented an image of the Great Church of the future as a possible fulfillment of the remote aims of the Council. This chapter will focus on possible ways to begin the journey toward that Great Church. Once again, assuming the role of apologist and ecumenist, Butler sets himself the task of clarifying the issues that could hinder both reunion and renewal. One such obstacle involves the misunderstandings that arise with respect to the use and misuse of power in the Roman Catholic Church. Such misunderstandings about the truth of the Roman Catholic Church cannot be rectified unless and until the Church itself begins the process of internal renewal.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Butler notes that a volume could be written on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which paved the way to a change of theology in the field of the subjective and the objective (*Theology of Vatican II*, p. 163ff.). This shift is the starting point in dialogue with Christianity and the world.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> The following citations present Butler's concentrated attention on two key ecclesial issues following Vatican II: (1) the limits of infallibility and (2) the relationship of authority and freedom from an ecclesial perspective: "Authority and the Christian Conscience," *American Benedictine Review* 25 (December 1974): 411-26; "Authority in the Church," *The Tablet* 231 (May 21, 1977): 477-80; "Authority in the Church, 2," *The Tablet* 231 (July 2, 1977): 631-32; *The Church and Infallibility* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954); "Church and Primacy," *The Tablet* 227 (September 29, 1973): 916-19; "The Church's One Foundation," *The Tablet* 222 (December 14, 1968): 1243-44; "Conscience and Authority," *The Tablet* 222 (September 21, 1968): 934-35; "A Grave Issue in the Church," *The Tablet* 223 (March 29, 1969): 311-12; "If We Could Only Be Sure," review of *A Pope for All Christians*, by Peter J. McCord, *The Tablet* 231 (September 17, 1977): 889-90; "Individual Commitment and the Church," *The Month* 238 (January 1977): 4-5; "Infallibility: Further Considerations," *The Tablet* 225 (September 25, 1971): 924-26; "The Infallibility of the Church," *The Tablet* 225 (April 3, 1971): 328-30; "Institution versus Charismata," in *Theology of Renewal*, vol. 2, ed. L. K. Shook (Toronto: Palm Publishers Press, 1968), pp. 42-54; "Judgment and Formula," review of *Infallibility: The Crossroads of Doctrine*, by Peter Chirico, in *The Tablet* 232 (January 7, 1978): 10-11; "The Limits of Infallibility, I," *The Tablet* 225 (April 17, 1971): 372-75; "The Limits of Infallibility, II," *The Tablet* 225 (April 24, 1971): 398-400; "The Limits of Infallibility," in *Christians in a New Era*, pp. 53-62; "Obedience and the Moral Law," *The Tablet* 223 (August 30, 1969) 854-55; "Permissiveness—Pros and Cons," *The Tablet* 225 (March 20, 1971): 278-80; "Responsible Freedom," *The Tablet* 222 (March 2, 1968): 199-200; "The Roman Primacy," *The Tablet* 223 (January 6, 1979): 15; "The Significance of the Synod," *The Tablet* 223 (September 20, 1969): 919-20; "Teaching Without Authority," *The Tablet* 199 (May 10, 1952): 376-77; "A Witness to Papal Authority," *The Tablet* 229 (November 8,



The ultimate remedy for what we must consider a misunderstanding of true Catholicism will not be attained till the practice of the Church has been renewed. But both Vatican Councils have shown us the practical influence of theology and doctrine. It was after the conclusion of the First Vatican Council that Roman thinkers began to develop a unilateral theory of power in the Church. . . . Vatican I proclaimed a doctrine about the Pope which was not complemented by a similarly elaborated doctrine about the episcopate.

On the other hand, the renewal of theology and biblical studies of the last fifty years has been in large measure behind the practical successes of the so-called “progressive” champions in Vatican Council II. We may therefore hope that what the Council has enacted, especially in the *Constitution on the Church*, will in time produce practical results which will help to discredit the caricature of Catholicism which has made our dialogue with the separated brethren and their churches so difficult.<sup>8</sup>

Exposition of Catholicism’s magisterial doctrine of the episcopate has helped to remove some misunderstandings about the nature of authority within the Church. Just as the Council envisioned the actual life of the Church to be found in the grace-gifts of the Holy Spirit operative in the whole human family,<sup>9</sup> so Butler locates within the sacramental nature of the Church the limits of papal infallibility and the function of authority.<sup>10</sup>

A second obstacle to reunion and renewal is the conflict involved in reinterpreting the mission of the Church. The Council bound the Church irrevocably to the world, and from within its deliberations emerged the question of the subjective element of salvation

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1975): 1076-78; “Vatican I, A Hundred Years Later,” *The Tablet* 224 (January 3, 1970): 3; Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council I, 1869-1870; Based on Bishop Ullathorne’s Letters*, ed. Christopher Butler (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1963).

<sup>8</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, pp. 242-43.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, “Institution versus Charismata,” in *Theology of Renewal*, vol. 2, ed. L. K. Shook (Toronto: Palm Publishers Press, 1968), p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> Butler’s lengthy footnote in *ATTS*, p. 159, represents his own summation of his position on infallibility, the context within which his discussion on the limits of infallibility can be better understood, i.e., “the quest for genuine and practical ‘collegiality,’ for true Christian freedom, and for real diversity . . . within ultimate unity.”

“As regards infallibility, I would put my own position succinctly as follows. Unless the Church is able and willing to commit herself without reservations to *some* doctrines (e.g., the true godhead of God the Son, the perfect reality of both the godhead and the manhood of the one person Jesus Christ, the real eucharistic presence, our transcendent human destiny in the ‘vision of God’) then she has no categoric message to offer to men, but only a vague ‘uplift’—or an attractive ‘myth.’ The purpose of such categoric teaching will be that it should be accepted by the individual believer as giving a body to his own faith and a meaning to his own life. However, unless the Church has a divine guarantee that she will not be allowed by God so to commit herself except to doctrines that are true, and unless the individual believer can believe that this is so, the categoric truth of the doctrines will not in fact become accepted as categorically true by the individual. Or, if he does so accept them, he accepts them not *qua* taught by the Church but *qua* conclusions of his own judgment. And in that case, the unity of the faith will be not, as historically it has been, a given unity in which individuals participate; it will be, on the contrary, a resultant unity, or rather a confluence of innumerable individual faiths. This is neither Catholicism, nor is it a ‘message’ which can convert and help the world. I am quite prepared to consider the possibility that ‘infallibility’ is an unfortunate word to have chosen to express the Catholic position. What matters is the truth which God, through the collective mind of the Church’s teaching authority, was expressing in the ‘infallibility’ definition of 1870, the truth which the faithful have now accepted under the integument of that word for over a century.”

which, according to Butler, requires of all adult human beings that they fear God and do what is right<sup>11</sup> : “They must be men who rule their lives by their conscience.”

The Constitution on the Church . . . in its chapter on the People of God, opens its discussion of salvation by a primary affirmation that “whoever fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God” (n. 9). Only after laying down this principle does it proceed to teach that the objective means of salvation are given by God in the People of God, this is, the Church. . . . Salvation is, for the individual, radically dependent rather on subjective good intention than on external ecclesiastical allegiance. Important as adherence to objective truth and its sacramental and institutional embodiment is, it is less important than a good will to adhere to truth and to seek ever fuller truth. In the end, subjective conscientiousness is of greater value than objective correctness.<sup>12</sup>

Butler claims that this shift from an objective to a subjective view of salvation, accompanied by a shift from a juridical to a sacramental view of the Church, is exemplary of the Church as “a fountain-head of unpredictable freedom.” For the Church has set out on a different course, “without rejecting or denying her past, without any surrender of her patrimony.”<sup>13</sup> The question of *aggiornamento* thus takes on universal proportions.

This chapter will address four key ecclesial questions: (1) the role of the magisterium, (2) authority and freedom,<sup>14</sup> (3) ecumenism, and (4) salvation outside the Church. These questions are controversial both theologically and pastorally.<sup>15</sup> From Butler’s perspective they are key questions in the cause of Christian reunion and renewal.

The first two sections of this chapter—“The Sacramentality of Church Governance: Butler on the Limits of Authority” and “The Unitive Role of Church Governance: Butler on Authority and Freedom”—are inextricably bound together, rooted as they are in Butler’s own personal history. They are his interpretations of what is expressed or implied in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Since Butler is both a bishop

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, “Institution versus Charismata,” p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 167.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, ed., *Vatican II*. p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> A selected bibliography on recent literature dealing with these first two questions follows. It provides a wider context for Butler’s positions on these same issues (see footnote 7, above): Peter Chirico, *Infallibility: The Crossroads of Doctrine* (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews and McNeel, 1977); Nicholas Grotty, “Conscience and Conflict,” *Theological Studies* 32 (June -1971): 208-32; Paul C. Empie and Austin T. Murphy, eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974); John C. Ford and Germain Grisez, “Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium,” *Theological Studies* 39 (June 1978): 258-312; John T. Ford, “Infallibility: A Review of Recent Studies,” *Theological Studies* 40 (June 1979): 273-305; Patrick Granfield, *The Papacy in Transition* (New York: Doubleday, 1980); John Jay Hughes, “Infallible?: An Inquiry Considered,” *Theological Studies* 32 (June 1971): 183-207; John J. Kirvan, ed., *The Infallibility Debate* (New York: Paulist Press, 1971); Joseph A. Komonchak, “*Humanae Vitae* and Its Reception: Ecclesiological Reflections,” *Theological Studies* 39 (June 1978): 221-57; Peter J. McCord, ed., *A Pope for All Christians?: An Inquiry into the Role of Peter in the Modern Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976); Richard A. McCormick, “Authority and Morality,” *America* 142 (1 March 1980): 169-71; Richard A. McCormick, “Notes on Moral Theology: 1978,” *Theological Studies* 40 (March 1979): 59-112; Karl-Heinz Ohlig, *Why We Need the Pope: The Necessity and Limits of Papal Primacy* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Abbey Press, 1975); J. M. R. Tillard, “The Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” *Theological Studies* 40 (March 1979): 3-22; George B. Wilson, “The Gift of Infallibility: Reflections Toward a Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 31 (December 1970): 625-43.

<sup>15</sup> See McBrien, “Special Questions in Ecclesiology,” *Catholicism* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), p~ 817-63.

and a theologian, it seems appropriate to let him state his own position as it appears in the Foreword of *The Theology of Vatican II*.

It is to be observed that an ecumenical council does not purport to teach systematic theology. In its teaching role, it rather aims to proclaim doctrinal truths which are the data on which theology works. It follows that the theology contained in these chapters is to be taken as rather a personal interpretation than a historical record.

When a bishop writes on theology, he does so not in his official but in a private capacity.<sup>16</sup>

From within the third section of this chapter—"The Ecclesial and Ecumenical Dimensions of Conversion"—the notion of a converted consciousness emerges. It is viewed as the proper attitude of the Church in the face of the pluralism that the varying ecclesiologies of our time have produced. The unity of faith is not threatened by the inescapable fact of pluralism. Unity can only be preserved by conversion. Characteristically, Butler invites individuals and churches to move toward one another in an atmosphere of perfect attention/love, and away from the corrupt attention of polemical theology. He calls for a conversion uniquely ecclesial and ecumenical.

The fourth section of this chapter, "The Universal Call to Salvation: The Missionary Dilemma," reflects the ecumenical theology of Vatican II.

### **The Sacramentality of Church Governance: Butler on the Limits of Authority**

One of the problems left over from Vatican II is, in Butler's opinion, the need for a more accurate definition of the relationship between the juridical and the sacramental aspects of the Church, in particular between the papacy and the sacramental nature of the Church.<sup>17</sup> In the Council the sacramental nature of the Church "won out" over the juridical, but not, Butler notes, without difficulty.

All those who shared in it will remember the passionate conflict of Vatican II between the neo-Ultramontanes, led by some eminent curial figures, and those who were bent on restoring the traditional doctrine of collegiality. The Acts of the Council are there to show that the neo-Ultramontanes were defeated.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, Foreword.

<sup>17</sup> Philip McShane, ed., *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 12. See also Avery Dulles, "Papal Authority in Roman Catholicism," in *A Pope for All Christians*, pp. 48-70. That the papacy is the greatest ecumenical problem between Protestants and Roman Catholics is generally agreed, but Dulles notes as well the fact that the papacy is a problem for Roman Catholics, not the idea of a papacy but "the present mode of operation and the possible future shape of the papacy" (p. 48). Dulles discusses the papacy as an inner-Catholic problem from three perspectives—the divine institution of the papal office; the Pope's primacy of jurisdiction; and his infallibility—with the suggestion that these key tenets may need reinterpretation (p. 51). The essay contrasts the attitudes of Vatican I and Vatican II and offers a splendid historical background against which to measure Butler's own position on these same issues. This dissertation has selected Butler's interpretation of what he calls "the limits of infallibility." Dulles' notes on pages 68-70 are an enriching complement to Butler's published interpretations listed above (see footnote 7, above).

Cf. Granfield on "The Pope as Ecumenical Pastor," and his discussion of these same tenets—divine institution, primacy of jurisdiction, and infallibility—in *The Papacy in Transition*, pp. 96-123.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, "A Grave Issue in the Church," *The Tablet* 223 (March 29, 1969): 311.

Butler raises what he considers to be a crucial question regarding the particular powers of the Pope as successor to St. Peter. He asks whether the Pope's powers are "wholly included within the total powers of the Church as a whole and especially of the college of which he is the head."<sup>19</sup> On the surface, there is no explicit answer. The implicit answer to the question is to be found, Butler believes, in the necessity to subsume the papacy under that broader notion whereby the sacramental and juridical elements of the Church are balanced in the perfection of communion.<sup>20</sup>

Butler reflects on the nature and exercise of authority in the Church from the perspective of episcopal leadership, and within that discussion he locates two aspects of the institutional Church: (1) its sacramental nature and (2) the limits of papal infallibility.

### ***The ordinary magisterium: A question of concordia-communion***

The question of the relation of the authority of the Pope to that of the other bishops brings up the question of what Vatican I called the universal, immediate, ordinary jurisdiction of the Pope. That the Pope's authority is universal is clear from the fact that, by withholding the right of communion, he can ultimately bend all who remain within the *koinonia* to his will: if they rebel, he can exclude them. That this authority is "ordinary" means, in the language of the Council, that it is not derived from some other human source.<sup>21</sup>

The First Vatican Council,<sup>22</sup> which first formulated the notion of the Pope's universal ordinary jurisdiction, was well aware that there were some limitations on this primacy.<sup>23</sup> It was, however, unable to specify what those limitations were, as the Council was cut short by war.<sup>24</sup> Butler notes that Vatican I defined only the Pope's extraordinary magisterium. It is at present doubtful "that the Pope has an infallible ordinary magisterium."<sup>25</sup>

Butler maintains that there is a danger in the word *ordinary*. It is equivocal in the sense that

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<sup>19</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>21</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 231. By the "ordinary magisterium" Butler means the moral unanimity of the worldwide episcopate. On the doctrinal and theological reflections of the Church, Butler describes them as conducted with a "collective or collaborative climate of opinion controlled by the pervading presence of a total truth revealed by God" (*Theology of Vatican II*, p. 25). The moral unanimity of the episcopate consists in "a truth which is always carried and in some measure expressed in the "mind of the Church" and in the teaching of her magisterium, and which is capable, when circumstances require it, of partial formulation in definitions of faith" (*ibid.*).

<sup>22</sup> Butler, "Institution versus Charismata," p. 45. See also *CNE*, pp. 53-62; and *ATTS*, pp. 145-48. Butler suggests Garrett Sweeney's "The Primacy: The Small Print of Vatican I," *Clergy Review* 59 (February 1974): 96-121.

<sup>23</sup> See Abbot, *Documents*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Butler, "Vatican I, A Hundred Years Later," *The Tablet* 224 (January 3, 1970): 3. On the ending of Vatican I, see John T. Ford, "Infallibility: A Review of Recent Studies," *Theological Studies* 40 (June 1979): 291, n. 71. Ford says that "the termination of the Council left in abeyance the plan to promulgate a constitution on the Church as the context for the constitution on papal primacy . . . , the absence of an ecclesiology gave ample opportunity for what B. C. Butler has described as 'creeping infallibility.'" Ford is here quoting "The Limits of Infallibility," by Butler in *The Tablet* 225 (April 17, 1971): 291.

It can be taken to mean (and has often, even recently, been so taken) that the Pope's universal jurisdiction is something of daily and normal exercise; that, day by day, the Pope rules the Church in somewhat the same way that the Roman Emperor's rule was both coextensive with the Empire and in continuous exercise.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, the Church, including the bishops other than the Pope, not only lived under but also encouraged "a monopoly of power in the Church, which Popes have claimed."<sup>27</sup> Even more disastrous is Rome's over-calling of her hand in this regard which, Butler says, resulted in an estrangement of East and West regarding papal primacy.<sup>28</sup> Butler sees an opportunity for ecumenical dialogue in Vatican I's awareness that there were *some* limitations on the primacy in its formulation regarding the universal ordinary jurisdiction of the Pope. It is one instance of a flexibility in the interest of reunion that Butler sees as inherent in the Church.

The special position of the local church of Rome can be described, Butler observes, as either a primacy or as a center of communion.

There is truth in both descriptions; indeed either can be derived from the other: if the Pope has a primacy of teaching and discipline, he can exclude from communion; and if he is the centre of communion, he can require compliance with his leadership as the price of communion. Both descriptions can appeal to one or other of the so-called Petrine texts of the New Testament. The shepherd of the flock could be its primate. The rock on which the Church is built so as to be superior to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune would be the God-given centre of the Church's communion.<sup>29</sup>

Butler thinks, however, that we have lived too long with a notion of primacy which has been pushed to lengths that "it can be argued, have provoked schism and hindered reunion."<sup>30</sup>

Should we not change our emphasis now, and propose the papacy as the centre of a reunited Christianity? Should we not admit that Peter too needed "conversion," so that he might fulfill his task of—not reducing to uniformity, but—strengthening the brethren.<sup>31</sup>

The Second Vatican Council opened up such opportunities, and it is Butler's conviction that the Church, the *koinonia* conscious of its need for purification, must yet be attentive to the spirit as well as to the letter of the acts of the Council.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 232.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Mascall, review of *Church and Unity*, p. 1075.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 233.

<sup>30</sup> While the papacy remains a stumbling block, there is at least discussion on the matter among the leading Christian denominations, a sign of hope in itself. In the Introduction to *A Pope for All Christians*, Robert McAfee Brown states that there are "no fetters on the Holy Spirit."

"The reunion of a tragically divided Church will not come without some breakthrough on the understanding of the papacy. We must not presume at this point to know how a breakthrough would come. But we must also not presume at this point to deny that could come" (p. 12).

<sup>31</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 233.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



## ***Episcopate and papacy: Sacramental realities***

The leadership implied in the episcopal function of “ruling the Church,” is received in the fullness of the sacrament of orders. It is a divine gift and is delegated neither by the Pope nor the episcopal college. As such, a bishop is not the *source* of authority but is a ministerial *instrument* of authority given by Christ. Thus, the function of authority is prior to its exercise. It is pastoral and oriented toward the spiritual development of the Church. It is the exercise or “province” of a bishop’s authority that is assigned to him canonically.<sup>33</sup> Leadership, therefore, is not extraneous to the sacrament of orders; it is contained within it. Episcopal consecration confers the teaching, sanctifying, and ruling offices in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the episcopal college.<sup>34</sup>

The bishops, in view of their sacramental status, have authority which receives partial expression in juridical terms, for the juridical element is present to prevent the sacramental life from anarchy and disintegration. Hence, the juridical element is not creative of the Church. Rather, it is the sacramental life which daily re-creates the Church in eucharistic fellowship and makes Christ present through the People of God.<sup>35</sup> The local Church transcends itself as an expression of the universal Church, and local bishops are linked together in universal communion as are the local churches.<sup>36</sup> This notion of sacramentality, emphasized by the Second Vatican Council, integrally relates Christ and the Church: God as absolute meaning expresses his meaning in and as the man Jesus, and as such, Jesus is the sign and sacrament of God as the Church is the sacrament of Christ.<sup>37</sup> Butler states that, if he is right, all Church authority, including that of the papacy, arises from within the sacramental order, “just as the whole Church is sacramental in her nature.”<sup>38</sup>

. . . there is no special sacrament for making a man Pope; he becomes Pope by election and, if not already a bishop when elected, he has to accept Ordination as a bishop.<sup>39</sup>

Butler asks, therefore: Does the papacy fall wholly within the sacramental order? If that could be shown to be true, then a very great difficulty would be overcome, he says.

The Council’s explicit teaching that episcopal consecration is a sacrament (the fullness of the sacrament of order), that it confers, along with the office of sanctifying the People of God, the offices (*munera*) of teaching and *ruling*, and that these offices can of their nature only be exercised in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the (episcopal) college, suggests to me that all power of “ruling” in the Church is to be seen not as something extraneous to the sacrament of order but as contained within it. Obviously election to the papacy is not a sacramental rite. If, then, such election confers on the Pope powers which are not intrinsic within the episcopate as embodied in the episcopal college, these powers are nonsacramental in their origin and seem to contradict the general picture of the Church presented by Vatican II.<sup>40</sup>

The issue raised, Butler tells us, is a grave one not because the vague issue of collegiality is central to it, but because the important questions it raises concern the

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>37</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 50.



authority of the college. Does it derive its authority immediately from the Pope? Or directly from some divine institution? Butler takes the position that the Pope's authority is grounded by the notion of the Church as a sacramental reality. It is as head of the whole Church that the Pope has universal authority, and that by reason of the fact that he is head of the college of bishops. The authority of the Pope and bishops, as reflected in the Vatican II documents, is exercised in a collegial mode.

Butler asks whether there is an aspect in which the Pope is over, but not in, the Church.<sup>41</sup> In other words, could it be that the whole Church, including the episcopal college, would stand on one side with the Pope on the other? (Butler points out that some preconiliar canonists would assert that the authority of an ecumenical council derives from the Pope who convenes it, and that the Pope is the font of all ecclesiastical law.<sup>42</sup>) The episcopal college acts in a strictly collegial way with the consent of its head and implies a *communio with* the head rather than a *dependence on* the head. If it were a matter of dependence on the head, there would be the implication that the Pope was somehow extraneous to the college. Consent of the head, in Butler's opinion, implies both communion of the head with the members as well as an act which is the proper competence of the head.<sup>43</sup> There is no aspect of the papacy which falls outside the collegial structure if one considers the Church a mystery of communion. *Seorsum*<sup>44</sup>, to Butler, means that while there is communion between the head and members, there is that act which is proper to the head. In that sense the Pope is *seorsum* (by himself) but acting as head and mouthpiece of that communion of the episcopal-apostolic college. He is not, Butler concludes, the Pope in a lonely eminence (being not *in* the Church, but only *over* it), with the whole Church, including the episcopal college, on the other side.<sup>45</sup>

The Pope, Butler claims, shares this function in hierarchical communion with the episcopal college. His province of leadership is, however, unique. It is an authority of government, not of teaching, and is directed not to the intellect of the governed but to the will, and it is not a question of infallibility.<sup>46</sup> In the role of teacher, the appeal is to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 49. Patrick Granfield, *The Papacy in Transition*, (New York: Doubleday, 1977). Granfield uses Butler's translation of *in (universam) ecclesiam*, i.e., "in relation to the (universal) Church." He prefers it over the more usual "over the (universal) Church," in order to avoid the idea that the Pope is "above and outside the Church" (p. 68, n. 17). Granfield refers to Butler's *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 101-2, n. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Butler, "Institution versus Charismata," p. 45.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 46. See also Butler, "A Grave Issue in the Church," p. 311.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. See also Butler, "A Grave Issue in the Church," p. 312, n. 1. The role of the Pope in the college is unique, but the college and its authority survives the demise of the Pope, though in an abnormal form. It calls urgently for normalization by the lawful election of a new Pope of Rome (*Theology of Vatican II*, p. 102). The college of cardinals is a human, not a divine foundation, with no intrinsic authority per se. Its authority derives from the implicit assent and indeed the delegation of the episcopal college.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46; and *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 91-92, on the relationship between the Pope and bishops in council. Butler realizes that his petition is in verbal contradiction with a statement in *Lumen Gentium* which states that the college of bishops cannot be conceived apart from its head, but he explains that the situation he refers to is the normal one where there is a head of the college. In an interregnum, Butler insists that when there is no head, authority must reside somewhere, perhaps in the world-wide episcopate ("Grave Issue in the Church," p. 312, n. 1). Moreover, Butler suggests that when a non-bishop is elected Pope, his immediate possession of full jurisdiction must be seen as resulting from a concession of the college, whose authority derives from the implicit assent and delegation of the episcopal college. If this were not the case, papal supremacy would fall right outside the sacramental structure of the Church. A coherent ecclesiology would be rendered impossible ("Grave Issue," p. 312).

<sup>46</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 54. Ibid., p. 55.

the intellect and not to the will, and it is here, Butler asserts, that the question of infallibility can properly arise.<sup>47</sup>

When not infallible, the Pope's office of teaching is not destitute of magisterial authority. Both governing (which appeals to the will and calls for the virtue of obedience) and teaching (which appeals to the intellect and calls for docility) highlight both the nature and the limits of papal authority. Butler notes that conscience can oblige disobedience in governance, as it can also be a duty to dissent from teachings.<sup>48</sup>

The faith which makes a believer is essentially a free and responsible act and habit, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals, and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him. If freedom is constitutive of human nature, it is not less true that responsible freedom in its members is of the essence of the Church.<sup>49</sup> Because the basic structure of the Church has a divinely guaranteed origin (ordinary magisterium), the "life-blood of the Church" lies not in its legal structure but in the *concordia*, the grace-inspired will of its members to sustain the worldwide communion of charity.<sup>50</sup>

But precisely because "the love of the brotherhood," concord, or Christian charity is not derived from, but rather gives rise to, law, there can be no precise legal safeguard against legalism.<sup>51</sup>

And because there is no safeguard against legalism, the Pope must keep himself informed as to the content of the tradition; and, Butler says, this could very well entail his having to consult the faithful.<sup>52</sup>

It will certainly entail the use of such methods of investigation as prudence may dictate. Hence there can be no doubt that a pope who attempted to define an article of faith without making use of such means would commit a grievous sin. But there is no "legal" sanction by which he can be prevented from committing such a sin—any more than law can compel the British sovereign to sign a parliamentary bill. In the end, the Church lives by conscientious charity rather than by law.<sup>53</sup>

Vatican II does not seem, on the surface, to provide an explicit answer to the further question of whether the last word remains with the Pope. The last word remains with the Pope in the *legal* order, where he can freely exercise his own authority in a way that the college can never exercise its collegial powers without his free concurrence. A visible society, says Butler, cannot do away with law, nor "*sub specie legis*, can it dispense with an ultimate court of appeal." But below the legal level, systems not sustained by the good

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 55.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 97-102.

<sup>50</sup> Butler, "Lonergan and Ecclesiology," pp. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 105.

<sup>52</sup> Butler says that the whole body of the faithful have an unction from the Holy One (cf. 1 John 2:20-27) and cannot be deceived in belief (*Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 12). Thus, the whole body of the faithful has its own infallibility. It cannot be deceived, and—if it has any way of giving unanimous utterance to its unanimous faith—it consequently cannot deceive (*CNE*, p. 56). This is a most important point. Vatican II appears to teach that the sacred tradition, or deposit of faith, is something committed to, held by, and transmitted by the Church as a whole, not something entrusted privately to the magisterium and to be received passively from their pastors. When the bishops or the Pope teach, they do so as expressing the mind of the Church as a whole (*CNE*, pp. 56-57).

<sup>53</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 105.

will and consent of their membership, can “lose their moral claim to the obedience and co-operation of the citizens.”<sup>54</sup>

In interpreting the meaning of the *sensus fidelium*, Butler remarks that the Church’s true mind cannot be equated with the sum total of the opinions held by the faithful. He agrees that while

... it is true that there is an infallibility *in credendo* that takes shape in the *sensus fidelium*, it is manifest that there is no straightforward way to determine what the real *sensus fidelium* is. All we can say is that the mind of the Church will usually disclose itself only very slowly; and of course its ultimate articulation will remain the task of the episcopal college.<sup>55</sup>

Butler, however, is insistent that the Church is not just a visible society ruled by an empire, by absolute power from the center. The Church is the mysterious reality of grace presented to us.<sup>56</sup> In “Ten Years After—Vatican II and the Future,” Butler states that it would be a grave mistake to suppose that the needs of the Church today can be met either by theology or by authority or by either of them in combination without anything further. “The Christian religion is something much more than an intellectual “view” or construction. It is faith, and it impinges on the whole of our humanness, sensible, emotional, and interpersonal. . . . It [the renewal] will come from within believing Christians.”<sup>57</sup> Faith is a commitment, a self-engagement of the person in a profoundly personal act. Butler notes the divisiveness and factionalism in the years since Vatican II, and he hopes that realization of the gravity of the church’s predicament will, with the help of grace, lead many to actuate or strengthen their self-commitment.<sup>58</sup>

It would seem to follow that all of us, including ecclesiastical authority, should for the present, be more concerned with quality than quantity. Deprived of the sociological advantages of “Christendom” the Church’s influence will have to be more “spiritual” in the sense in which the influence of Jesus Christ himself was not so much institutional or sociological as spiritual. And authority will have to model itself upon the “unspeaking” authority of Calvary. . . . The “image” of the Church will need to be less an image of structure, dogma and law than an image of “discipleship” (and fraternal communion). This is not to say that we can jettison structure, dogma, and law, but that the determining “form” of the Church will be something transcending though including these.<sup>59</sup>

An act of communion, Butler notes, is an act of love—an act, therefore, of knowledge, since knowledge and will are both involved in acts of love. Our knowledge of God is indeed at the core of Christianity, that knowledge that we can only have if he discloses himself to us in revelation.<sup>60</sup> The Christian word for the nexus of personal relationships

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-5.

<sup>55</sup> Butler, “Lonergan and Ecclesiology,” p. 15.

“From the point of view of evidential value there must be a vast difference between the passively received opinions of the immature, together with the irresponsible fancies of drifters, and the tenets of those who have faced and responded positively to the challenge of the critical point ‘when the subject finds out for himself that it is up to himself to decide what he is to make of himself.’” (p. 14)

As Butler understands Lonergan, the critical point is never transcended; as each challenge is met, the development reveals a further and graver challenge (p. 15).

<sup>56</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>57</sup> Butler, “Ten Years After—Vatican II and the Future,” *The Tablet* 226 (September 30, 1972): 24.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 925.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 30-31.

built upon the conversion which is at the heart of religion is *koinonia, communio, communion*.<sup>61</sup>

The Church is, at its most genuine, a fellowship of the converted and of God in his Son, Jesus Christ. It is at the same time the spearhead of the whole process of emergent probability and therefore is humanity coming into its own, living at the height of the “fourth level” of consciousness. And since conversion involves a transvaluation of all values, a radical reconstruction of living, the Church is the great force for creative change in the world. It is in fact the channel and instrument of that “solution of the problem of evil” that must exist, since evil, and more precisely sin, exists. It hardly needs to be added that since we are dealing with a real world and not with ethereal hypotheses, this solution is a concrete fact, as concrete as the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, as concrete as the episcopal college and its head.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Unitive Role of Church Governance: Butler on Authority and Freedom**

#### ***Authority and constraint***

Consequent on his discussion of the magisterium in the light of Vatican II is Butler’s interpretation of the relationship between authority and freedom. The first distinction Butler makes is between authority and constraint. He distinguishes authority from constraint and puts the two in proper relationship. Constraint operates by limiting human freedom not only by the exercise of force, but also by the threat of force—”sanctions” as we call them today.<sup>63</sup> True authority makes no attempt to diminish freedom. It does not dictate, nor does it threaten to impose sanctions. “It appeals to freedom and invites freedom to come into act. . . . The freedom it appeals to is responsible freedom.”<sup>64</sup>

The language of authority is one of duty, not of necessity. There are certain things we *ought* to do (duty) and not certain things we *must* do (necessity).<sup>65</sup> True authority, he insists, looks beyond itself to a norm of action that is conformed to reality.

Responsible freedom looks beyond itself to a norm of action that is conformed to reality. And it is to responsible freedom that authority addresses itself, not to constrain or to command but to illuminate and enable. At the moment when authority takes on the aspect of command and menace, it allows itself to be corrupted by constraint.<sup>66</sup>

Butler believes that the individual Christian who exercises responsible freedom accepts as true, and wishes to obey, the self-disclosure of God in and as Christ—but conscience is the key. Where there is an undeveloped Christian conscience, there is no Christianity in the full sense.<sup>67</sup> In the case of an unformed conscience, the disciplinary function of

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<sup>61</sup> Butler, “Lonergan and Conversion,” *Worship* 49 (June/July 1975): 336.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Butler, “Authority and the Christian Conscience,” *American Benedictine Review* 25 (December 1974): 411-12.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 413.

Church authority exercises constraint, but the disciplinary action of bishops and Popes must be rooted in the values of communion.

. . . because the People of God is made up of individuals who are in various stages of development towards maturity, official Church authority can rightly ally itself with constraint, denying—for example—the full rights of communion to those who pertinaciously behave in ways contrary to the values of communion.<sup>68</sup>

Regarding the authority of dogma, if one concedes that the Church as a communion of believers could not survive without it, then, but only derivatively can one likewise concede that doctrines receive authority from God self-revealed in the Christian mystery. When we require that people adhere to doctrines to which the Church has not irrevocably committed herself, then the role of assent is confused, for

. . . the divine guarantee of doctrine appertains, in its fullest sense, only to those doctrines and dogmas to which the Church has fully committed herself, whether by the common consent of her believers (the *sensus fidelium*) or by the decisions of official authority.<sup>69</sup>

The word assent should be reserved for adhesion properly required for irrevocable decisions.<sup>70</sup> There is no question, in Butler's opinion, of constraint upon the freedom of thought. Assent in this regard is an expression of freedom and a way into the enriching values of revealed truths.<sup>71</sup> "It is not the end of all enquiry, but the beginning of a new phase of enquiry."<sup>72</sup>

### ***Conscience and dissent***

Official authority ought to discipline only in the name of communion, and the Christian conscience that acknowledges this authority ought to conform in the same spirit of promoting communion.

At the present time, the rights of conscience on the one hand, and the claims of authority on the other, are being canvassed with unparalleled vehemence amongst us. What I find unfortunate is the exaggerations which emanate from both sides of the debate, and the assumption, so dangerously gaining ground, that conscience and authority are conflicting notions, so that one can only flourish at the expense of the other. The reason for this may be that the location, the limits, and the conditions of the two notions are not stated with sufficient precision.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 422-23.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 424. See Butler in this work for observations concerning doctrinal and linguistic problems in official statements. He calls both exegesis and hermeneutics to aid in clarifying the truth intended by the official statements. In "Renewal and Adaptation," *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 23, Butler makes observations concerning the linguistic problems in the statement of dogmas. A dogma is the statement of a proposition, in human language, and like all statements, it is subject to interpretation, and interpretation has to take account of the historical and especially linguistic context in which the statements were made. He further emphasizes the fact that definitions of faith are the outcome of the contingent circumstances, needs, and interests. Merely listing the dogmas does not insure a complete and balanced picture of the Christian faith. "All dogmas are true, but not equally important and in fact some can be less important than truths of faith which, have never been defined."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 424-25.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>72</sup> Butler, "The Limits of Infallibility, II," *The Tablet* 225. (April 24, 1971): 399.



Newman rightly observes that ‘did the Pope speak against conscience in the true sense of that word, he would be cutting the ground from under his feet.’ And this for one simple reason, among others. The typical Catholic is not the one who has simply drifted on in the Church to which his parents belonged, but the man or woman who, whether born into a Catholic family or not, has given his adhesion to the Church by a free and responsible act of faith. The Church herself cannot compel such adhesion. It springs from a basic conscientious decision of the individual, and the Church’s authority only begins to operate when the free adhesion has occurred and within the bounds of conscience; it is essentially an authority which appeals to conscience and to nothing else. If I acknowledge the authority of the Church, I do so by a free conscientious decision of my own and it is implied that the Church can never rightly order me to act against my conscience. It is assumed, throughout, that conscience itself has led one to seek the proper information about one’s situation and the relevant moral norms.<sup>73</sup>

The problem lies, Butler observes, in the fact that there is no good theology today concerning the nondefinitive teaching of the ordinary magisterium.<sup>74</sup> Butler realizes that although a discussion of the theologian’s attitude in the face of noninfallible teaching and the practical directives of ecclesiastical authority may seem to be “lacking in that warmth and *abandon* of unquestioning submission which is commonly associated with Christian obedience,”<sup>75</sup> he defends the position of the theologian who cannot overlook the truth and the practical consequences that result from pointing out the distinction between infallible and non-infallible teaching. The theologian, Butler states, prefers to speak about “clear-eyed obedience.”<sup>76</sup> He is aware, moreover, that authority in the Church has no meaning except in the context of respect for conscience.<sup>77</sup> Butler concludes that

Inevitably, then, there must be not a conflict between authority and freedom, in which one can only win its point at the expense of the other, but rather a dialogue—of which the ultimate resolution is always to be left to conscience. Human responsible freedom, to which the faith itself makes its appeal, is the supreme value which the Church subserves. Once again, I would emphasize that

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<sup>73</sup> Butler, *CNE*, pp. 100-101. See Richard McCormick, “Authority and Morality,” *America* 142 (March 1, 1980): 170, on the proper response to authentic, but noninfallible teaching. He refers to Bishop Butler who, he says, brilliantly states the crux of the matter. He appreciates Butler’s realism. Assent without critical analytical thought “is to reject . . . responsibility and to be disloyal to the truth— and to the Church.”

<sup>74</sup> Butler, “Ordinary Teaching,” *Clergy Review* 66 (January 1981): 3-8. Joseph A. Komonchak, in “Theological Reflections on Teaching Authority in the Church” (a paper delivered at Boston College, Lonergan Workshop, June 1979), notes similarly that “a critical history of the “teaching office in the Church, which itself would have theological implication, remains to be written” (p. 2). Komonchak refers to some initial work: by Cougar and Dulles.

“Yves Congar has recently published some initial investigations, “Pour une histoire sémantique’ du terme ‘magisterium,’” *Revue de Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 60 (1976): 85-98; “Bref historique des formes du ‘magistère’ et de ses relations avec les docteurs,” *Ibid*, pp. 99-112. Avery Dulles has a few brief observations in “What is Magisterium?” *Origins* 6 (1 July 1976): 81-88.” (p. 2)

<sup>75</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 102.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*. See also McCormick, “Authority and Morality,” p. 171.



one is speaking of responsible freedom, that is of freedom which acknowledges and respects the legitimate requirements of authority.<sup>78</sup>

Butler identifies such acceptance with his very acceptance of the Church. “My free adhesion,” Butler states, “precisely implies the rights of the Church as my teacher and guide.” But Butler acknowledges a problem in those areas where the Church’s infallibility is not in operation, “in the sphere, for instance, of what is called the authentic but not infallible teaching of the Church.”<sup>79</sup> Encroachment of an authoritarianism may, Butler warns, be operative when the rights and duties of conscience prevail.

If the Church has not committed her infallibility on a point of teaching, then she cannot require an unconditional assent to that teaching. This means that I may have serious and valid reason for leaving the question at issue open in my mind. And where the Church’s moral guidance does not come as an inevitable inference from the Church’s infallible teaching, there is similarly a possibility of legitimate disagreement. In both cases, since the Church is our God-given guide on the path of salvation, the *onus probandi*, as Newman puts it, is on the man who withholds assent to a doctrine or obedience to a command. Because of this, the Catholic is not, in such cases, in precisely the same situation as a man who acknowledges no authority in the Church at all. A Catholic cannot dismiss the non-infallible teaching of the bishops or the Pope as of no more significance than the opinion of private theologians; I mean, he cannot do this *a priori*. He needs to establish the fact that he is presented, in a given case, with the right or duty of dissent. And he must be prepared to pay the cost of dissent.<sup>80</sup>

Butler brings the issue down to that of the role of the theologian regarding dissent. He seems not to limit his remarks to professional theologians, for Butler is insistent that all of us are theologians. But a certain autonomy is required for professional theologians in order that their contributions may be those proper to the theological enterprise and to the whole Church. Butler refers to Lonergan’s *Method in Theology* regarding the autonomy of theologians, the necessity of a criterion, and the responsibility that the criterion places on the theologian which, if accepted will result in an atmosphere of trust.<sup>81</sup>

Theologians are to be responsible for keeping their own house in order, for the influence they may exert on the faithful, and for the influence theological doctrine may have on Church doctrine. . . . Now it may be thought that one endangers the authority of Church officials if one acknowledges that theologians have a contribution of their own to make, that they possess a certain autonomy, that they have at their disposal a strictly theological criterion, and that they have grave responsibilities that will all the more effectively be fulfilled by adopting some method and working gradually towards improving it.

But I think the authority of Church officials has nothing to lose and much to gain from the proposal. There is no loss in acknowledging the plain historical fact that theology has a contribution to make. There is much to be gained by recognizing autonomy and pointing out that it implies responsibility. For responsibility leads to method, and method if effective makes police work superfluous. Church officials have the duty to protect the religion on which theologians reflect, but it is up to the theologians themselves to carry the burden

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Butler, review of *Method in Theology*, by Bernard Lonergan, in *Clergy Review* 57 (August 1972): 579-96.

of making theological doctrine as much a matter of consensus as any other long standing academic discipline.<sup>82</sup>

### ***True authority: Of God, in Christ***

Butler exhorts official authority not to center its attention primarily on respect and consent. He challenges authority to be rooted in the authority of God in Christ, for this is what grounds both the limit and the style of authority.

The divine love that is the very heart of reality is a love that, in its own pure self-expression, “throws away the rod” of constraint and entreats where it might command. And because it thus renounces constraint and trusts to its own appeal and attractiveness, it exercises over the Christian conscience a power that, by a shift of meaning of the word, the New Testament even calls constraint: “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and raised” (2 Cor v. 14f.).<sup>83</sup>

According to Butler, if the style of authority in the Church does not suggest the humble appeal of him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, then those in authority must always be ill at ease.<sup>84</sup>

In his essay, “Authority in the New Testament,” Butler claims that the authority of accredited teachers is derived from the universal authority of Christ, and the apostolic commission carries with it a divine guarantee of the apostolic message.<sup>85</sup> Like the leaven and the mustard seed, it has become a dynamic, active, vital, and self-developing force. In each age Christianity must be a contemporary Christianity, and its authority must also be a contemporary authority, an authority apostolically derived from Christ. Doctrine is the constitutive principle of the social character of the Church. Contemporary doctrinal authority will be found where the general authority of the Church is found. The Church, therefore, will, as an institution, embody that authoritative doctrine.<sup>86</sup> The Church in its official teaching is true in its formulations—past, present, and to come.<sup>87</sup>

As a communion, faith grounds the union of the People of God in two ways: first, in the primordial sense of openness and surrender to the basic invitation of God’s self-revelation; and second, in the assent to those beliefs articulated in the content of faith. Beliefs are doctrines both in the subjective order and in the objective order, and the doctrinal aspect of Church authority (objective order) in its unitive role must guard against heterodoxy which is fatal to communion.<sup>88</sup> Butler suggests that the mood of the believer can balance what appears to be constraint upon his thinking.

. . . the mood of the devout believer will be . . . a welcoming gratitude that goes along with the keen alertness of a critical mind and of a good will concerned to

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<sup>82</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 332.

<sup>83</sup> Butler, “Authority and the Christian Conscience,” p. 426.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, pp. 61-75, *passim*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>88</sup> Butler, “Authority and the Christian Conscience,” p. 423.

play its part both in the purification and development of the Church's understanding of her inheritance.<sup>89</sup>

Butler, however, does not mean that by accepting authority one rejects criticism. As an institution the Church must live its life in this world and be governed as a society ought to be governed, but with one difference: the Church is always the mysterious anticipation of the age to come. "As Christ was a first embodiment of all that Augustine meant by the City of God, so the Church may be described as a second embodiment of it."<sup>90</sup> The life-principle of that city is, Butler firmly believes, an overmastering love for God so overpowering that it destroys the deepest roots of selfishness, and Christians are "those in whom the love of God revealed in Christ has most fully won this all-controlling sway."<sup>91</sup> Such an embodiment requires conversion.

## Dimensions of Conversion

### *Overcoming the sin of schism: An ecumenical concern*

In *A Time to Speak* Butler writes of the dialectic of love<sup>92</sup> and the fact that human love has to confess an abiding gap between what it would be and what, in this life, it never can be. He describes the dialectic of love as the entry into a new world of joy, as a moment of the intermingling of two centers, a blurred, distant, created analogy of the *donum amoris* from within the Trinity. The dialectic of love is a communion of persons, each remaining intact but together bringing to birth, at least in intention, a new, shared existence. Without this human experience of love, the shared experience of *koinonia* is not possible. The following discussion is an objectification of Butler's theory of conversion (already presented in Chapter Two of this dissertation) as the process of self-actualization in the movement from immature to pure attention—to the birth of love.

At the core of interpersonal relations is the recognition of the selfhood of the other.<sup>93</sup> This recognition is the fruit of genuine attention to the other *as other*.<sup>94</sup> The act of attention itself is constituted by the principle of unity which, Butler has pointed out, controls and inspires "human experience and activity in all its phases and at every stage."<sup>95</sup> As constitutive of the act of attention, the principle of unity is operative from the beginning of conscious life.

. . . human attention from the first hours of babyhood is turned outwards, away out towards the mother's breast and the bed's warmth, the mother's smile and the mother's voice; only secondarily, by a reflex act of attending to his acts does the child by slow and painful degrees learn of himself as contrasted with the non-self. He may be said to be his parent's child, his brother's baby brother, before he is to himself, himself. He is a member in act while still only potentially a person.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Butler, "Authority and the Christian Conscience," pp. 425-26.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, *The Church and Infallibility* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), p. 220.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 46.

<sup>93</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 49.

<sup>94</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 40.

<sup>95</sup> Butler, *Searchings*, p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Thus, in the quest for personal unity, as we discover ourselves as persons and assimilate what is other than ourselves,<sup>97</sup> we are confronted with the paradox that exists in the act of conversion: while moving from immature attention (that cannot recognize the otherness of the other) one is concomitantly required to make “oneself one’s own.”<sup>98</sup>

When immature love/attention evolves into pure love/attention, we have a moment of radical conversion. If this conversion does not take place, attention becomes corrupt and only a conversion to pure attention/love will reverse the situation that selfishness has created. This critical moment of life, when “self-awareness and self-knowledge are produced by the shock of the contrasting Other,” this moment is so important that without it true interpersonal relations would be impossible—the “thou” could not give birth to the “I” in the lover’s consciousness.<sup>99</sup>

Now, too, for the first time, real selfishness, selfishness as a moral, not merely a natural, fact, is possible; for selfishness is the great refusal to accept love’s challenge and to move up and out from the egocentrism of the past to a new objectification of interests which will find its ultimate term, perhaps, at a point far beyond the immediate expectations of this new-born consciousness.<sup>100</sup>

Butler describes the birth of love as the “death-knell of psychological solipsism or pure subjectivity,” and notes the demands that such a realization makes on our human development when we presume both the “true otherness of the beloved” and the objective reality of the worth of the beloved.<sup>101</sup> Love, as Butler sees it, is the fulfillment of the desire to sacrifice for the object of our love—a love which covers the whole of human experience, including religion.

In religion, considered as the love of God, . . . human love becomes most fully itself, since here first, and here only, can love reasonably be unconditional and absolute, self-sacrifice total and without reserve.<sup>102</sup>

The ecclesial application is not difficult to make. Conversion begins from the first grace-enabled moment at the beginning of our adult life, and is a process of self-actualization developed in the search for the one thing necessary, the *summum bonum* of life, symbolized for Butler in the Church. He believes that the Church, made up as it is of experiencing individuals, is itself an experiencing subject.<sup>103</sup> And although it is true that the individual’s faith is in some sense the Church’s faith before it is one’s own (with the apparent difficulty in resolving the two modes of experiencing), it can be agreed that the Church is “epitomised in Jesus Christ its head. In him Church and individual are identical.”<sup>104</sup> A disaffiliated Christian is, in Butler’s opinion, a contradiction in terms, because it seems that by reason of the Christian’s identification with Christ, identification with the Church follows.<sup>105</sup> In a similar manner, just as the unity of the Church is the inspiring principle of the human experience of Christians, it constitutes a mutual necessity to reach perfect attention/love as the essence of a mature Christianity,

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<sup>97</sup> Butler, *Why Christ*, p. 30.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>103</sup> Butler, *Data of Theology*, p. 172.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

individually and collectively. As the basic human experience of *koinonia*, a genuine attention will provide the interpersonal dimension of Christian communion.

Butler observes that ecumenical dialogue, whether “inter-faith or faith-and-world convergence,” involves a process of mutual attention.<sup>106</sup> Ecumenical dialogue will be authentic if love/attention is pure.

The purer that attention, the greater the possibility that the dialogue will change both partners in the dialogue, enrich both their traditions by mutual information and ultimately, it may be hoped, allow both traditions to flow into a common synthesis richer than either by itself.<sup>107</sup>

If, however, we see the other as conforming to or possibly subserving our own requirements, then corrupt attention/love permeates” our efforts at dialogue and can only result in inauthenticity.

Such “corrupt attention” is very frequent in polemical theology: we require that the Other should see things from our point of view, in our perspective. Since he plainly does not so see them, we are angered and tempted to doubt his good faith, or at least his intelligence. He becomes an obstacle to us, something to be circumvented, if not destroyed. So far as we are concerned, he is not, or ceases to be, himself. And as there is corrupt attention so also, and in consequence, there is corrupt love. . . . Love flows from attention; and on the other hand, attention presupposes love. As is the one, so is the other.<sup>108</sup>

The lesson we must learn from the Second Vatican Council is that “Christian unity is a matter of restoration [of pure attention; of mutual dialogue; of enrichment of traditions; of the flowing together of traditions into a common synthesis of doctrinal unity; of the Great Church of the future], but *not* of return to Rome.”<sup>109</sup>

### ***Consensus in ecumenical theology***

Dialogue, we have seen, is the way to approach the whole question of Christian unity, and the first principle of dialogue, Butler tells us, is to establish communion and some common ground from which discussion may take its start.<sup>110</sup> In 1975 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches issued a paper entitled *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*. This paper was the work of theologians from almost all the confessions represented on the World Council. Their findings were unanimous. The following quotation from Butler’s book, *Church and Unity*, is an extract from the Faith and Order Commission’s paper regarding the uniqueness of baptism.

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<sup>106</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 43. Lambert Beaudin, a Belgian Benedictine monk (1873-1960), worked for ecumenism along similar lines. He uses the term “psychological rapprochement”: “The method of psychological rapprochement emphasized the necessity of getting to know the other person, especially within the totality of his or her spiritual tradition, with all its richness. It required an openness to learn, indeed, an eagerness to reach out and meet the other person in a veritable ‘I-thou’ encounter.” Sonya Quitslund, in “It Takes Courage to Be a Prophet,” describes Beaudin as one who, remaining unknown to Christians in North America, helps shape modern Roman Catholicism. *Ecumenical Trends* 8 (December 1979): 43.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-41.

<sup>109</sup> McBrien, *Catholicism*, p. 687.

<sup>110</sup> Butler, *Church and Unity*, p. 225.

“The sacraments . . . are Christ’s gift to his Church. . . . Our baptism unites us with Christ who took upon himself our sins and those of the whole world that they might be forgiven and blotted out, and opens to us newness of life. . . . In baptism . . . we are baptized by one Spirit into one body . . . which is the Church. . . . By the necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in one baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ and with each other and into the life of the Church Universal as well as the community of the local church. . . . The churches are in agreement that the usual minister of baptism is an ordained minister, though there are cases where baptized believers may baptize. . . . All churches are convinced that in the life of any one individual baptism is a unique and unrepeatable act.”<sup>111</sup>

The consensus expressed in the Faith and Order Commission’s paper is, in Butler’s opinion, impressive, yet it raises questions for him in two directions: first, regarding the sacrament of baptism, and second, regarding the implications of consensus. In other words, what is baptism, and who baptizes validly?<sup>112</sup>

Considerable theological acumen has had to be expended on such questions; and the decision upon them has had to come from ecclesiastical authority, not merely from the opinions of a majority of theologians.<sup>113</sup>

Regarding the validity of baptism, there is profound theological disagreement between those who hold to the validity of infant baptism and those who hold that baptism is not valid if the recipient is incapable at the time of making an act of personal faith.<sup>114</sup> This divergence, Butler points out, involves theological issues of great moment in light of the paper’s declaration that “All Churches are convinced that in the life of any one individual baptism is a unique and unrepeatable act.”<sup>115</sup>

Butler asks whether, in view of the fact that disagreement regarding infant baptism does not destroy the consensus of “great traditional Churches where baptism is administered to babies,”<sup>116</sup> the intervention of an authority is necessary to resolve the difficulty. He asks further whether this same situation might not also provide a further argument regarding visible unity, especially in view of the goal of the present-day ecumenical movement. “By what right,” Butler asks, “do we accept a consensus on baptism while rejecting—if we propose to reject the consensus on the indivisible visible unity of the Church”<sup>117</sup>—a consensus unchallenged for fifteen hundred years by the Christian churches!

In particular, if we are prepared to say that the disagreement of the churches that reject infant baptism does not destroy the consensus on the subject of infant baptism, by what right can it be said that the rejection of the principle of indivisible visible unity by the churches of the Reformation damages the consensus that otherwise obtains.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 182. Butler cites *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*, Faith and Order Paper No. 73 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



## ***Who is to say? Koinonia and authority***

While Butler sees the value of consensus, he admits to the difficulty inherent in its appeal: “consensus is never literal unanimity; so that someone has to decide what, for practical purposes, shall be deemed a consensus.”<sup>119</sup> The authority, Butler insists, that would derive from a consensus by which the Church of the future would abide, will be determined only if “its interior principle of cohesion” (communion, and “its message to the world”) would take its stand on “agreed interpretations of the faith.”<sup>120</sup>

The Church of the future would find itself bound to accept one out of a diversity of interpretations; so again, the question arises: what would be the authority for such a choice? It is hard to conceive of any other authority except that which would derive from a consensus. And everything suggests that that consensus would be not more than a moral unanimity, or the agreement of a majority against a minority of continuing dissidents. Neither experience nor faith encourages us to think that literal unanimity will ever be attained in this life. Yet if in the end we shall be constrained to accept a majority view, how can we escape the conclusion that, already today before the goal of the ecumenical movement has been attained, the criterion is the agreement of the majority?<sup>121</sup>

Whatever each individual Christian has to say about how such agreement comes about, it seems to Butler that “the *koinonia* is forever historically one human fellowship.”<sup>122</sup> It is the *koinonia* that constitutes us as

Christians.

In order that the Word, entrusted to the *koinonia*, may be preserved in its integrity and universally proclaimed, the unity of the *koinonia* in history is necessary. Augustine once remarked that heresy is schism become inveterate. If the life-blood of the whole Church fails to circulate everywhere, the instruments of the Word which the new ‘churches\*’ purport to be will speak with inconsistent voices. It is then ‘anybody’s guess’ which is the right version of the gospel; and the probability must be reckoned with that none is correct—that in fact the Word is no longer being communicated. And this is an impossible conclusion because it would mean that the indefectible purposes of God in the incarnation and the constitution of the *koinonia* had been frustrated. The *koinonia* is therefore forever historically one human fellowship. This a Christian can know, even if he has not yet succeeded in identifying for himself which of the various claimants is that divinely guaranteed *koinonia*, that ‘one holy catholic and apostolic Church’ for which he is seeking. The Church—however it is to be identified—is, he will come to realize, the single visible divinely guaranteed exponent of the revelation, communicator of the message, of the Act of God.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Edward K. Braxton writes on conversion in *The Wisdom Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) and provides a model for what he calls “Conversion and Theological Activity” (p. 105, fig. 5). The model incorporates Lonergan’s eight functional specialties, and the chapter from within which the model emerges demonstrates Braxton’s interpretation of Lonergan’s definition of theology as the reflection on religion which mediates it within a culture. Braxton describes the “wisdom community” as the Christian churches. The wisdom community is a metaphor for a framework and a program for “renewing understanding and communication between parish, priests, theologians, bishops, and the people in the pews” (p. 1). Braxton’s wisdom community is an example of *koinonia*. A book such as Braxton’s, which is global in its design, provides the

It is from within this sacramental dimension that the Christian derives his vocation. As Christ is the sacrament of God and the Church the sacrament of Christ, so the Christian is the sacrament of the Church. Once duly constituted as a believing community, Christians will seek to be the *Lumen Gentium*. The Second Vatican Council directed that Christians collectively be engaged in a wider ecumenism. Bishop Butler's model of communion is a unique application of the goals of the wider ecumenism, a shift in ecclesial thought from a formerly more objective understanding of salvation. Constituted as *koinonia* by the inner grace and the outer word of Jesus Christ, the Christian churches live out their sacramental mission. Collectively they will turn their gaze outward in a new sense of mission.

In closing his review of Macquarrie's *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, Butler asks the following question: "How much diversity is compatible with the continuing historical identity of the *ecclesia catholica* that is the mother of us all?"<sup>124</sup> In other words, what is distinct about consensus in ecumenical theology? Dialogue is a step along the way to Christian unity, but it cannot take us all the way. Rather, visible unity makes possible doctrinal unity. In view of Lonergan's assertion that Christians are divided on what they are to believe, Butler is convinced that the key issue in ecumenical dialogue is the visible unity of the *koinonia*. From Butler's perspective, the proper direction for ecumenical theology is first to overcome the sin of schism by mutual conversion of the churches to a rededication of themselves to the restoration, of visible unity. Once communion is established, then efforts to identify doctrinal areas for theological and pastoral consensus can begin.

. . . doctrinal unity results from the unity of the Church herself as a real unique community, and not vice versa. This means that, useful though theological dialogue between the Christian bodies undoubtedly is, it cannot by itself take us all the way to unity. A consensus theology, if it is possible at all, will not precede but follow the unity of communion.<sup>125</sup>

Butler identifies the dialectic in *koinonia* (described above) as a "dialectic of unity in faith and plurality in usages," and quotes Pope Paul VI.

"To find ourselves one in diversity and faithfulness can only be the work of the spirit of love. Unity of faith is required for full communion; but diversity of usages, so far from being an obstacle to unity, is a strength. St. Irenaeus, so well named, for he was a peacemaker both in name and behaviour (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, V, 24, 18), said that difference of customs confirms the agreement in faith (Ibid. 13)."<sup>126</sup>

The implications of such an ecclesiology are yet to be drawn out in collaboration with "our separated brethren."<sup>127</sup>

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wider picture within which Butler's unique, highly specialized and self-limited ecclesial issues are highlighted. In some ways it also fills out in great detail the model of communion that Butler argues for. On the other hand, Butler's emphasis on ecumenical ecclesiology is a wider horizon for Braxton's emphasis on the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church. Braxton's wisdom community is an example of a community working toward common, meaning as constitutive of community within *koinonia*.

<sup>124</sup> Butler, "Roman Requirements," pp. 261-63.

<sup>125</sup> Butler, "The Church and Primacy," *The Tablet* 227 (September 29, 1973): 919.

<sup>126</sup> Butler and Jean Tillard, "The Pope with the Bishops," *The Tablet* 234 (October 11, 1980): 987-88. The editor of this article for *The Tablet* states that Butler claims merely to be summarizing the views of Tillard, but he is evidently in agreement with them.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 988.

## The Universal Call to Salvation: The Missionary Dilemma

### *The nature of the dilemma*

The shift from an objective to a subjective view of salvation, which is, as we have seen, representative of the theology of renewal, has affected the Church's rethinking of its mission. The missionary dilemma arises from the *particular* reality of the Church and its universal mission.<sup>128</sup> Prior to the Second Vatican Council, lay awareness of the Christian sense of mission was manifested in Catholic Action groups. The Council took advantage of the dynamism that this earlier sense of mission initiated,<sup>129</sup> namely, that the mission of the Church is to witness to its innermost reality: the Spirit of Christ. As a visible sign to the world, the Church is in the world but it points beyond it.<sup>130</sup> The *missio*, the sending, becomes the vocation of the Christian. Aware that the reality of God in Jesus, in and through his Church, is an experience to be lived and to be believed in with utmost seriousness, the Christian mission is at once a liberating and freeing experience which at the same time invites to a life of moral responsibility.

Mission is a charismatic fact in the Church, an event . . . described by John XXIII as an authentic Pentecost, which rediscovered the profound meaning of mission, of proclaiming the relationship of Catholics to "others" . . . by making the whole Church conscious of the enormous changes in the world.<sup>131</sup>

Butler refers to this particularity and universality of the Church when he agrees with the Council's affirmation that the Church "subsists" in the Roman Catholic communion, yet by the very mystery that it is, it also transcends itself and is present wherever men of good will reach out to the absolute.

Without any infidelity to our faith that the visible structural elements of the Church as founded by Christ survive as a coherent reality in the world today, the gospel warning that we should not judge one another is a warrant, confirmed by experience so far as it goes, that the Church exists also outside the limits of the "complete communion" made possible by this structure. We know where the Church is; we cannot determine so confidently where she is not; *ubi Spiritus, ibi ecclesia*.<sup>132</sup>

### *Salvation outside the Church: The wider ecumenism*

As we have seen, the question of how the Church can be a particular reality and a universal reality at the same time is central to any consideration of the Church's salvific activity. The question has a long and troubled history, especially within the Roman Catholic Church. Does the question itself intimate that perhaps there is no salvation

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<sup>128</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, *The Community Called Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), pp. 73-76.

<sup>129</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 10. Dulles refers the reader to Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, "On Evangelization in the Modern World," paragraph 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Clergy Conference, 1976), p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Marie-Joseph Le Guillon, "Mission as an Ecclesiological Theme," in *Concilium*, vol. 13, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), pp. 81-130.

<sup>131</sup> Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, p. 10.

<sup>132</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 186.

outside the Church? What, then, are we to do with the dictum: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*?<sup>133</sup> Butler addresses the question from within the framework of the Second Vatican Council's teaching on salvation, which he interprets in the following selection from *The Theology of Vatican II*.

The chapter on the People of God begins with a fundamental assertion: "At every time and in every nation, whoever fears God and works righteousness is acceptable to God"—a reference to St. Peter's observation in the house of the Gentile centurion at Caesarea. The council does not here explain what is meant by this "fear of God and working of righteousness." Later on, however (n. 16), it remarks that "divine providence does not deny help needful for salvation to those who, without their own fault, have not yet reached an express recognition of God and who strive to attain to a life of rectitude—in which striving they are (in fact) helped by God's grace." We shall hardly be going beyond the intention of the constitution if we identify the fear of God with a genuine docility towards the reality of "ultimate concern," and the working of righteousness with a basic obedience to conscience even though conscience is inculpably misinformed.

The breadth of view thus shown by the council might cause surprise to some who are aware of the Church's constant teaching, already referred to above, that "outside the Church there is no salvation." But the constitution at once goes on, after thus describing the subjective conditions of salvation, to affirm the opposite pole of our human paradox: "It was God's good pleasure to sanctify and save men, not individually and without any interrelationship among themselves, but to establish them as a people that should acknowledge him in truth and give him holy service" (n. 9). This states, in a preliminary broad generality, the objective aspect of man's salvation, which, on the Christian view, is something we cannot achieve for ourselves, but is a gift from God, with qualities therefore deriving not from our own nature or self-determination but from God's will. While every genuinely conscientious man will be saved, salvation itself is not a private possession but a participation in a common, communal, social salvation.<sup>134</sup>

In order to find theological room for this wider ecumenism, Butler holds that the truths to which those of world religions cling, and whereby they are helped along the road to salvation, are aspects of that truth which, in its fullness, is Christ. He argues that in virtue of their subjective good faith, non-Christians are guided by the Spirit of Christ and are indwelt by Christ himself.<sup>135</sup> In other words, a deeper understanding of the

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<sup>133</sup> The dictum "outside the Church, no salvation" has been variously interpreted. The historical controversies about salvation outside the Church are recognized by Karl Rahner as internal to Catholic theology and the whole issue occupies him extensively under the term "Anonymous Christian." [See Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian," *Theological Investigations* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 280-94.] John Macquarrie discusses the same issue under the image of "the wider ecumenism," and he does so in dialectical terms. He uses the Greek *tonos* (tension of the well-functioning bow) to describe the tension between the particular commitment of the Christian and his openness to people of other faiths or those of no faith (Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, pp. 102-9). On this score, Butler thinks that it might be insulting in some circumstances to tell a Buddhist or a Hindu that he is an "anonymous Christian, but it is not insulting if we give him this honourable title in our own thinking." If there is no reciprocal desire on the part of other religions to consider Christianity in the same light, the fact is, Butler affirms, they do not make the same claim to universality as does Christianity. In Butler's opinion, this claim, coupled with the doctrine of the incarnation, is at the core of Christianity, and any diminution of it would be surrendering the validity of Christianity (see Butler, "After Ten Years," p. 876 and 876n.).

<sup>134</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>135</sup> Butler, "After Ten Years," p. 876.

principle “outside the Church, no salvation” goes hand in hand with the renewed doctrine of the Church of Vatican II: “At all times and among every people, God has given welcome to whosoever fears him and does what is right.”<sup>136</sup>

### ***Butler’s christology of mission***

Butler offers some christological presuppositions, principles which ground his whole religious thinking, as a preface for any specifically Catholic theology. These principles ground Butler’s ecclesiology as well. “Christ,” says Butler, “is the centre-piece of the Christian gospel and therefore of Christian theology.”<sup>137</sup> Precisely as mediator, Christ is the fullness of divine self-discipline and divine self-giving by what he does and by what he is: the mediator and message of God whom he reveals as supremely generous.<sup>138</sup> Elsewhere, Butler affirms that this kind of knowledge of God and Christ, which is possible for us in this life, is a knowledge by faith: “the content of our faith is Christ himself, the living Word of God. And Christ is he who indwells the whole Church.”<sup>139</sup>

With respect to the wider ecumenism, Butler believes that the accommodating suggestions of some theologians seem to be incompatible with basic Christian positions.

We are ready nowadays to recognise that the great non-Christian religions may perform a very valuable service for their adherents, and that there is much that is spiritually true in their theory and practice. But some Christians have gone further and have either suggested that the range of God’s purpose in the incarnation does not extend to the adherents of these other religions, or that at least in practice we should give up any idea of evangelising these adherents.<sup>140</sup>

Butler believes that Christians are bound to hold that Christ is both the accredited divine mediator for the whole human race and the complete embodiment of all the truth which God has willed to reveal publicly to mankind in the historical order. Other than the name of Jesus, “there is no other name by which we may be saved.”<sup>141</sup>

### ***Who belongs to the Church? Where is the Church?***

The question that we are left with is: Who belongs to the Church? We can say where the Church is. Who is to say where it is not?<sup>142</sup> Perhaps Augustine’s truly fundamental

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Cf. Acts 10:35.

<sup>137</sup> Butler, “Authority and the Christian Conscience,” p. 415. See also Butler’s “The Church’s One Foundation,” *The Tablet* 222 (December 14, 1968): 1244; and “After Ten Years,” *The Tablet* 226 (September 16, 1972): 876. This latter is the first of three articles which were written to commemorate the ten years since Vatican II. The other two—“Ten Years After Vatican II,” *The Tablet* 226 (September 23, 1972): 901-2; and “Ten Years After—Vatican II and the Future,” *The Tablet* 226 (September 30, 1972): 924-25—discuss theological method and the interior renewal without which, Butler claims, no exterior changes can be of any permanent significance.

<sup>138</sup> Butler, “After Ten Years,” p. 876.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Cf. Acts 4:12.

<sup>142</sup> See Boniface Willems, “Who Belongs to the Church?,” trans. Theodore L. Westow, in *Concilium*, vol. 1 (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), pp. 131-51.



search for truth, his constant questioning, was stimulated by his original experience of the truth of God which remained the source of his life and thought. Augustine's insight—that truth is more interior to us than we are to ourselves—and his consciousness of this most ultimate relation of the understanding of the self and of truth, leads him to say (addressing God): “When I recognize myself, I recognize you!”<sup>143</sup> The Church, which he saw as the *one* human community formed by those who have received Christ's grace and redemption and which is to be recognized by unity, holiness, and apostolicity, is in its totality the body of Christ. In this sense, there is an invisible as well as a visible Church. Hence, one can say that outward membership is no guarantee of salvation, and that non-members of the visible Church, through no fault of their own, may be in fact among its invisible members.<sup>144</sup>

Butler reaffirms what is unique in the Catholic Church, while at the same time he extends the limits of communion to the ends of the earth. What is unique to the Church is its divine foundation and divine guarantee. Its members are in communion, bound together by the word of God incarnated in and as Jesus Christ; and they are bound to humanity by this same word of God.<sup>145</sup>

The Church as communion is most sharply brought to view in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the divinely given sacramental structure of the Church—including the apostolic episcopal college—survives intact and, by divine guarantee and assistance, will survive “till the end of the age.” But the communion exists also wherever the Christian gospel meets with a positive response; and, at least in a potential sense, wherever responsible freedom opens itself out to the more or less dimly realised invitations of Absolute Value. But wherever it is found, under whatever disguises, and at whatever level of intensity and perfection (or imperfection), this communion which is the Church finds its substantial existence in human persons; it exists by being subjectivised, and it operates through the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ, that Spirit “which blows where it lists.” To this subjectivised life of the gospel, interiorly moved by the Holy Spirit, everything else in the Church, Pope and bishops included, is subordinate—or rather Pope and bishops also are subjects of the gospel, fulfilling however in the Church an official role of service.<sup>146</sup>

The Second Vatican Council, recognizing that while the primary mission of the Church is still unaccomplished, it must go on living from day to day and from century to century, realizing that the work of God is being carried out by those outside complete communion as well as those within it.<sup>147</sup> The neat old dichotomy of good Church and evil work has broken down.<sup>148</sup> The Church, however, is

. . . something more than an international friendly society. And if she were not something more, it is doubtful whether she would have a valid message of hope

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<sup>143</sup> Eberhardt Sunons, “Augustinianism,” in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 56-57.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>145</sup> Butler, “The Encounter with Humanism,” *The Tablet* (July 12, 1959): 686-87. In this article, “the possibilities of dialogue between Catholics and humanists and the larger question of the place of religion in the secular city,” is considered.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 687.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



for man, who has never found in the wisdom of statesmen or of philosophers the means to achieve his recognised ends.

The Church's message is of a transcendent value and of the existence of means for its attainment; and as this value is inclusive of all values, it is implicit in her message that she has the clue also to man's attainment of the finite values of this life.<sup>149</sup>

Butler sees a continuing missionary effort as a duty of the Church, because God's providence must work through creatures. The world would be a worse place if the gospel had never been preached, and without Christianity the basic option for God and the full flowering of the life of grace would be more difficult.<sup>150</sup> There is a summons, to the Christian, calling for unplumbed resources and powers in order that the needs of the present world might be attended to.<sup>151</sup> The bond to this world is through our common humanity and through our duty to be morally united so as to form a single spiritual communion, obliging and inspiring the reconciliation of man to God and God to man, for mankind is God's. In this way the love of neighbor takes on full significance as it joins the love of God. The Church and world are on converging courses, and the point of convergence is dialogue.<sup>152</sup> In Butler's opinion, the highest form of dialogue is communion in love, and the Church as the body of Christ has nothing less to communicate than Christ who is the self-communication in love of God to mankind.<sup>153</sup>

Butler describes contemporary society as future-oriented. Yet the future makes no sense until the present moment begins to be responded to with the attention Butler insists it demands.

Our conscious experience is in the here and now. As an actual existing person, I am here, not there; now, not then. Tomorrow I shall again be saying "I am here," and it is possible that "here" today is the same place, relatively to a good many items of my environment, as tomorrow's "here". . . . As for my "now," it is always inexorably changing. Now passes into then before I have finished greeting it. I hang on to reality in and by a fluent moment; the film of my experience never pauses, but goes for ever forward and only in one direction. . . . This actual moment, together with my present localisation in this particular "here," is the focal point by which alone I have access to all reality, and by which alone all reality, God included, makes contact with me.<sup>154</sup>

To make this contact with reality, to discover the "full significance of life," we must look to both the past and to the future.<sup>155</sup> The future, however, unlike the past, is "plastic to our will—within limits."<sup>156</sup> The notion of time, and our responsibility to that which time creates—history—is, at least as regards the future, a beckoning.

The door has been closed on the past but, as Bergson remarked, *les portes de l'avenir sont toujours grand 'ouvertes* . The future lies before us like an

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<sup>149</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, p. 77.

<sup>150</sup> Butler, *CNE*, p. 24.

<sup>151</sup> Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>153</sup> Butler, *ATTS*, p. 165,

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

undiscovered country, beckoning to use with mysterious promises of unpredictable novelties, warning us of those great enemies, fate and change, ambushing our path.<sup>157</sup>

The human spirit inevitably reaches out to transcend materialism. Communion with God is supernatural in its essence and everlasting in its implications. “Unless there is some other good news of the possibility and fact of this communion than the Christian gospel,” Butler declares, “the future of the world will continue to be bound up with the future of the Church.”<sup>158</sup>

## Summary

This chapter has put, within the context of the Second Vatican Council, the complex issues with which Butler has wrestled in the light of the goal he set for all Christian Churches: the reestablishment of visible unity in the *koinonia*. The chapter has described Butler’s interpretation of the new directions set by the Roman Catholic Church in the light of the Second Vatican Council and developed the implications for ecclesiology of two key moments in the Council: (1) the reaffirmation, in *Lumen Gentium*, of the sacramental nature of episcopal collegiality, and (2) the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* which looks toward human good will as the liaison between the human family and the visible Church. This new direction is essential for the good of the whole world and within that world, for the good of the Christian churches working together for the establishment of the *koinonia*.

From within the notion of the sacramentality of Church governance, Butler discusses the limits of infallibility wherein true collegiality between Pope and bishops might be realized. He further discusses the notion of authority under the unitive role of Church governance, and describes the tension between magisterial authority and freedom of the believer, emphasizing the rights of conscience. The question of assent and dissent in theological matters is given the ecclesial dimension referred to in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Butler’s christological principle grounds his understanding of the wider ecumenism: Christ is the mediator of the whole human race. While he reaffirms what is unique in the Roman Catholic Church, he extends to the ends of the earth the limits of communion. The Church is bound to the world through its common humanity; morally bound to that world in order to form a single communion. The reconciliation of man to God and of God to man is thus effected, for mankind is God’s. The Church, the Great Church of the future, emerges as the fulfillment of the human quest.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-69.

## IN CONCLUSION<sup>1</sup>

During these postconciliar years, Basil Christopher Butler has consistently worked for renewal within Roman Catholic theology, specifically with regard to ecclesial issues. Bernard Lonergan's writings and the theology of *aggiornamento* have provided him with both the context and the forum for expressing his views on the future of the Church. Basically, Butler maintains that the documents of Vatican II represent a new direction not only for the Roman Catholic Church but for every Christian communion that takes ecumenism seriously.<sup>2</sup> He continues to speak as an apologist and an ecumenist, arguing for an ecclesiology of communion that calls Christian churches to a mutual personal and ecclesial conversion. Butler argues convincingly for the Church as a possible answer to humanity's ultimate questions of meaning. To make the Church believable, he calls on all Christian communions to journey together toward the restoration of visible unity,

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws on the following selection of reviews of Butler's books: Bede Bailey, review of *Searchings*, in *New Blackfriars* 57 (May 1976): 238; Maurice Bevenot, review of *Theology of Vatican II*, in *Heythrop Journal* 9 (July 1968): 326-28; Thomas Corbishley, "Resolute Hope," review of *A Time to Speak*, in *The Tablet* 226 (December 2, 1972): 1149-50; Charles Corcoran, review of *Idea of the Church*, in *Worship* 35 (November 1963): 674-75; Colin Garvey, review of *Theology of Vatican II*, in *Louvain Studies* 2 (Fall 1968): 182-84; Nicholas Lash, "Finding Out," review of *Searchings*, in *The Tablet* 229 (July 12, 1975): 649-50; Nicholas Lash, review of *A Time to Speak*, in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 40 (April 1973): 185-91; E. L. Mascall, "Koinonia," review of *Church and Unity*, in *The Tablet* 233 (November 3, 1979): 1075; Fergus Kerr, review of *Church and Unity*, in *New Blackfriars* 61 (April 1980): 201-2; James Quinn, "Vatican II," review of *Theology of Vatican II*, in *Clergy Review* 53 (April 1968): 323-25; Gerard S. Sloyan, "Dr. Salmon Redivivus," review of *Church and Infallibility*, in *America* 91 (July 17, 1954): 402; Alan Wilkinson, "Evolving Church," review of *Searchings*, in *Clergy Review* 61 (February 1976): 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> *The Theology of Vatican II* is the best of Butler's interpretations of the Council documents. Garvey, who attended Butler's Sarum Lectures at Oxford, wrote: .

"It would be difficult to find a better blend of wide and deep scholarship, thorough knowledge of what went on at the Council, penetrating analysis of texts, and it is important to note, a strong spirit of charity" (p. 184).

Quinn's review of the same book emphasizes not only Butler's interpretation of texts but also the fact that Butler realized the depth of change, the shift of concerns and perspectives, in *The Theology of Vatican II*. There are loose ends in the essays, but Quinn believes that these loose ends represent "signposts of the future shape of theology" (p. 323). The sacramental nature of the Church and its bearing on our understanding of the primacy is the most important topic of Butler's conciliar theology. Quinn imagines that it "is the topic nearest Bishop Butler's heart. Its ecumenical importance need hardly be stressed" (p. 323). Quinn is likewise impressed by Butler's unique understanding of eschatology and history (metachronics) and by Butler's account of the three contrasting emphases which the Council tried to hold in tension: "... tensions between the sacramental and the juridical, between the subjective and the objective, and between a closed and open view of the Church" (p. 324). Butler, Quinn concludes, evidences the saving grace of the contemporary theologian: a fine sense of proportion.

"Bishop Butler has a delicate feeling for history, combined with humble openness to new insights. Speaking, e.g., of the charismatic gifts of the Church as the 'perennial source of its unpredictable novelty,' he sees the role of the institutional Church as one of judgment and control, yet without stifling genuine inspiration" (p. 324). Butler is the kind of theologian needed for our day, Quinn concludes.

toward the Great Church of the future, toward the *koinonia*.<sup>3</sup> (See how these Christians love one another!)

Fulfilling the task of the in terms described by Lonergan, Butler helps others to integrate God's gift with the rest of human living, using arguments that are accurate, illuminating, and cogent. Compelled by his early investigation into the claims of religion as a possible answer to the human quest, Butler evolves and articulates his basic subjective religious principle objectified in a theory of conscience. The genesis of this subjective principle is the story of conversion which, Butler says, recapitulates, integrates, and establishes all religion. It is a radical actuation of the self, but the self as belonging to the Church. Because of his loyalty to his chosen religious affiliation, Butler is considered by some to be "not notably irenic," but his very honesty, erudition, and loyalty are admired by his peers.<sup>4</sup> Loyalty to his tradition demands of him that he work to expose what is unauthentic in that tradition and that he open up areas of flexibility and dialogue in pursuit of the restoration of Christian unity.

The dissertation's five chapters have provided a context for testing the thesis that conversion and Church are data for theology. Beginning with an investigation of the subjective element that grounds Butler's religious thought, and without which what he has to say about the Church cannot be adequately understood, the study next presented Butler in dialogue with Lonergan on the subject of conversion. Part I established conscience as a dynamic principle in Butler's own lived subjective experience by developing the themes of unity (Chapter One) and authority (Chapter Two). In Part II, these same themes were further developed from an ecclesial perspective within the context of the Second Vatican Council.

Butler makes a distinction between the presuppositions of Catholic theology and the way Catholic theology should be practiced today.<sup>5</sup> Butler argues (1) to a pluralism of

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<sup>3</sup> In his review of *Church and Unity*, Kerr writes that Butler starts alone among English Catholic theologians.

"No one else has been able to combine sound learning with a sense of theological adventure. . . . Ecclesiology is his predilection; and there is certainly no better account than this of the Catholic understanding of the indivisible, visible unity of the Church" (p. 201).

<sup>4</sup> On his ecumenical attitude at the time of Sloyan's review, Butler says that he would not write in the same style today. But as recently as 1979 Mascall, reviewing *Church and Unity*, expresses his disappointment at the firmness of Butler's conclusions, but at the same time he admires Butler's determination:

". . .to avoid the vagueness and sentimentality that persistently haunt the ecumenical movement and at the same time to disown any kind of legalism, authoritarianism, or politicism in his exposition of the Church and its unity" (p. 1075).

On his apologetic stand in *Why Christ*, the *London Times* recorded the following:

"Abbot Butler has provided a reasoned argument that is wholly free from the moralizing alibis that can so easily deflect the Christian apologist from his purpose. Written with precision and grace, his book is adult in purpose and achievement and must command respect for the intellectual integrity with which the Christian faith is commended" (*Times* [London] *Literary Supplement*, October 14, 1960, p. 665).

<sup>5</sup> See "Ten Years After Vatican II," *The Tablet* 226 (September 23, 1976): 901-2. Butler argues that within the framework of Lonergan's cognitional theory a broad distinction between theology as the work of understanding and the "magisterium" as the voice of judgment is made.

"As Lonergan insists, understanding is not the final stage in human cognition. The final stage, presupposing understanding, is the act of judgment. Understanding says: Perhaps things are capable of being interpreted in this or that way. Judgment says: Things are

theologies paralleling the plurality of culture,<sup>6</sup> (2) for a modification of the theory of the supreme juridical and doctrinal authority of the papacy by placing it within the sacramental nature of the episcopacy,<sup>7</sup> (3) for the primacy of conscience, and (4) for responsible freedom. The individual and the Church are partners in the task of human unification, willing to move together into the challenge of an unknown future. This reordering of priorities calls for self-transcendence, for conversion.

What has emerged, then, in this dissertation, aside from the ecclesial questions for which it is a foundation, is a description of conversion as articulated and lived by Bishop Butler. A glance backward indicates the genesis of, and therefore the verification of, the thesis that has directed this dissertation. The key concept under examination was the interrelationship between (1) conscience, understood as the judgment of a person's free and responsible reflection on his experience and predicament, and (2) the complex notion of God-Christ-Church. Uncovering the meaning of the synthesis of those two poles, it seemed to me, might prove that Butler's understanding of conscience is the key to his personal and ecclesial authenticity. The title of the dissertation attempts to reflect this relationship. The developing idea of Church as Butler understood it would be revealed as an intellectual and religious story.

On my first encounter with Butler's thought, a primary clue to the importance of conversion in his life story was seen in the relationship between the two poles of his

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this (or thus). . . . What Vatican II says . . . about scripture scholars should, in my view, be extended to theologians as a whole. Their function is a function of understanding, and their work is preliminary to the act of judgment in which the episcopal college not only surmises but teaches. Unless the bishops grant due freedom to the theologians, this necessary preparatory work will not be done" (p. 902).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. In his book *Doctrinal Pluralism*, Bernard Lonergan discusses from a broad perspective the issue of pluralism of doctrine. The fact of diversity and complexity relative to the contemporary task of preaching the gospel to the modern world entails a "pluralism not yet of doctrines, but at least of communications" (p. 2). He points to the challenge that pluralistic culture poses to contemporary Christian faith.

"Currently in the Church there is quietly disappearing the old classicist insistence on worldwide uniformity, and there is emerging a pluralism of the manners in which Christian meaning and Christian values are communicated. To preach the gospel to all nations is to preach it to every class in every culture in the manner that accords with the assimilative powers of that class and culture" (p. 6).

Lonergan insists that the crisis is one of culture, not of faith, indicates what the crisis of faith entails, making a distinction between the pluralism implicit in the transition from classicist to modern culture and the "more radical pluralism that arises when all are not authentically human and authentically Christian" (p. 6). Thus, Lonergan restates the role of theology as mediating religion in a culture, demanding of the mediator a converted consciousness (see *Method*, p. xi).

<sup>7</sup> Kerr's review of *Church and Unity* points out that although the book constitutes "an important statement of why the papacy is an essential element in the Church and why it matters so much that it should change," he adds the following qualification:

"The whole argument of the book would have gained a great deal if such discreet allusions to misguided papalism had been linked to a thorough-going examination of the way in which the explicitation of the papal office has so often been inseparable, from an erosion of both conciliar and episcopal authority" (p. 202).

Kerr also claims that the true understanding of conciliarity, of collegiality, and of Rome's credibility as the visible center of unity have been hampered by unjust defense of papal claims: "As Bishop Butler puts it (almost): the pope, in the 'great Church' of the future, must learn to be, not 'the dictator of a world-wide quasi-political organization,' but 'the centre of charity' (p. 216)" (p. 202).



thought (conscience versus God-Christ-Church) and in the influence of Lonergan on him from 1958 to the present. Current data reveal that Lonergan's influence is still growing in significance and that it calls for further investigation, and for another pen. Other clues in my search were Butler's conversion to Roman Catholicism, his choice of the Benedictine life, and his commitment to *aggiornamento*. The task then became a process of unveiling the relationship of the idea of conversion to Butler's ecclesial thought. The result was a description of a process which, because it emerged from a question of ultimate concern, could be offered as a criterion for responsible living in and through the Church. The subjective principle described, however, had an added complexity, i.e., the admission by Butler of his own conscious application of Lonergan's transcendental method. This topic, too, is open to further research and explication.

Is Butler's life and work paradigmatic of conversion as articulated by Lonergan? I would conclude *yes* on two counts. First, Lonergan asks if one could describe a conversion that is basic. I believe this dissertation demonstrates that Butler's real conversion resulted from asking basic questions about existence and that he set about answering those questions existentially.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, recall that conversions do not happen in chronological sequence. They overlap and compenentrate; one or the other may be absent; and they all interact in a mature Christian identity. The process of self-transcendence is reflected in Butler's experience. The question of God and ultimate meaning entered his life and his consciousness. He resolved the question, establishing a basic horizon which finds explicit expression in the Church.<sup>9</sup> There are several objectifications of this basic horizon: intellectual conversion—the one thing necessary; “real” (or “radical”) conversion—the acceptance of the ethical imperative; ecclesial conversion—the acceptance of the Church as the fulfillment of the search for the one thing necessary; ecumenical conversion—away from the sin of schism and toward the Great Church of the future—theological conversion—acceptance of *aggiornamento* and the shift from norms to method in theology.

At the conclusion of this personal critique are two important observations. One deals with the assembly of data, the other with the limitations of Butler's ecclesiology.<sup>10</sup> First, the data assembled from Butler's books needs to be interpreted in the light of the

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Corbishley seems to say that *A Time to Speak* is Butler's effort to do this.

“If there is an underlying theme of the book, it is not so much the author's own subjective reaction to certain events . . . but the insistence on the idea, the conviction, that there is one fundamental explanation of human experience, and of the cosmos, a belief that reconciles the claims of reason with the religious, mystical quest of the spirit (p. 1150).

<sup>9</sup> Wilkinson remarks the maturation and development in *Searchings* that has characterized the life and work of Bishop Butler. He notes the shifts of horizon in Butler's life: the move to Downside; the year of wrestling before he became a Catholic; the “long journey to the Vatican” Council which seems to have released in him questions that had long been buried”; the intellectual relief of the Council; the “new step” for the Church; and, above all, the bishop's celebration of the Vatican Council as “a powerful intervention of God's saving Spirit” (p. 75). About this change of horizon, Wilkinson comments:

“It sounds as if Bishop Butler has moved to a point where he is now ready to develop a theology in which full and grateful recognition is given to the fact that God speaks to the Church through the world as well as speaking to the world through the Church. For as he says in a pregnant phrase ‘our Lord Himself was the great Excommunicate’” (p. 75).

<sup>10</sup> In *The Idea of the Church* Butler attempts to determine by historical means the true nature of the Church, not its identification. This limited argument, Corcoran notes in his review, is brilliant and unique: Butler refutes the liberal Protestant thesis that the Church is a purely invisible entity. The work is incomplete, Corcoran ventures to suggest, in Butler's not identifying the Church (p. 675).



bibliography. Many of his essays contain insights that were later developed into longer works, and many essays represent subsequent developments on the books themselves. There is no one work of Butler's that reveals him fully.<sup>11</sup> The kind of research needed to draw a full portrait of the man follows Frederick Crowe's prescription of stodgy, nitty-gritty work of assembling and reassembling data until they yield their secret. An interpretation of Butler's ecclesiology demanded an investigation of the intellectual/spiritual processes that directed his words. Much of that process was not overtly described by Butler, but if, as he says, a theologian is known by whom he reads and quotes, then the bibliography for this study will provide essential direction.

There is, however, a wider ecclesial perspective that we must consider here, and in that wider perspective certain limitations of Butler's ecclesial thought become evident. I shall consider four. Two concern his writings in general; the third is in reference to the area of sacramental theology and liturgy; and the fourth limitation touches on the subject of conversion.

First, Butler seems to have done his reflection and his writing in isolation from centers of scholarly discussion. Indices of theological literature indicate that although his work is regularly noted, there are no reviews of Butler's early work in scripture by continental theologians, and only recently has his ecclesial work begun to be generally noticed. In contrast, Catholic and Anglican periodicals have regularly reviewed Butler's works, but have usually evidenced little inclination toward negative criticism. Butler's scholarly dialogue has, therefore, been limited to review material which, by its very nature, precludes the wider perspective.

This leads us to the second limitation: the fact of Butler's scholarship being primarily in the form of essays and reviews. Much of it is difficult of access to an interested reading public. Hence, his books are read in isolation from his essays, giving an incomplete picture of his thought.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [The superscripted numeral in the text has no corresponding text at the bottom of page 245 of the typewritten dissertation.—Anthony Flood.]

<sup>12</sup> In his review of *Searchings*, Lash says that the post-Lonergan and postconciliar Butler emerges only briefly in *Searchings*. Lash is convinced that another collection will appear to supplement Rice's selection.

"All his life, Bishop Butler has been a man of uncompromised integrity, penetrating intelligence and deep spirituality. And yet it is in the last decade or so, assisted by the combined experience of his 'conversion' to the thought of Bernard Lonergan, the experience of Vatican II, and of being a bishop with the responsibilities wider than those he enjoyed as Abbot of Downside, that he has transcended the somewhat restrictive framework within which, especially in matters of ecclesiology (and many of these essays are, fundamentally, exercises in ecclesial apologetics) he operated during most of the period covered by this collection" (p. 650).

A new collection of Butler's essays is necessary for many reasons, but chief among them seems to be the necessity to show

"... how these years of austere 'watching' bore fruit in the statesmanship and breadth of vision of recent years, a statesmanship which has enabled him to exercise an influence on twentieth-century English Catholicism the extent of which it would be premature to estimate" (p. 650).

If the Catholic Church in England survives the fate of the coleocanthus (a favorite word of Butler's), a not important part will have been played by Bishop Butler's insistence upon "... in season and out of season, that obedience to the highest standards of intellectual integrity as an indispensable feature of authentic Christian experience and of the form of the Church's mission" (p. 650).

Third, and much more serious in the light of the *aggiornamento* to which Bishop Butler is so ardently committed, is his failure to incorporate a developed sacramental theology in the model of communion he contemporaneously presents. The *Constitution on the Liturgy* (n. 10) describes the liturgy as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the fount from which all her power flows.” Liturgy is constitutive of community. The role of a bishop and his lived experience with his people must make the cognitive meaning of the Christian message (what is to be believed about the Church) meaningful to the community of believers. The constitutive meaning of the Christian message (what Christians must become) must crystallize the hidden, inner gift into overt Christian fellowship, e.g., the beloved community at worship.

Bishop Butler responsibly (but conservatively) describes certain aspects of the liturgy in *The Theology of Vatican II*.<sup>13</sup> He explains that the mystery of the Church is fully embodied in every local Church and actualized in the eucharistic celebration in which the bishop represents his people before God. The eucharistic celebration itself is the climax of the sacramental life of the Church and the focal point of community. The *Constitution on the Liturgy* deals with the very center of the Church’s corporate life and the transcendent object of her ultimate concern— Christ himself present to his Church. Bishop Butler, however, does not develop his liturgical expression of that ecclesial life, other than to describe it as a service done in common with concentration on the approach of the faithful with good intention, full knowledge, both active and participative. The bishop claims that he is not a liturgist, but how welcome would be an apologetic interpretation of the *Constitution on the Liturgy* (n. 10) arguing for a bishop’s responsibility to symbolize the fact that he is the one from whom Christ’s life is in some way derived and upon whom it in some way depends. But Bishop Butler has not yet finished speaking. Recently he has begun to reflect on the importance of the local Church and of small ecclesial communities of which the liturgy is the heart. And so one hopes that Bishop Butler may objectify that core and center of religious living in what we could call a liturgical conversion!

Fourth, on the subject of conversion, we must note that the research involved in this study revealed little influence of Butler’s monastic vocation on his subjective reflections. This lack is especially noteworthy in regard to the *conversio morum* of Benedictine life. This may be due to his personal diffidence or to his concern that there is no good theology of religious life, that the theological presuppositions of the religious life have not yet received adequate attention. Whatever the reason, reflection on his Benedictine/liturgical tradition does not head Butler’s list of priorities.

One must, however, allow a scholar his preference in intellectual endeavors and the qualifications we register in no way lessen the scholarly contributions that Butler has made and continues to make. Bishop Butler regards the work of the French Benedictine, Gueranger, as a foreshadowing of the Council’s draft on the liturgy, and he saw that the liturgical movement was a natural ally of the new biblical scholarship. But Butler’s first

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<sup>13</sup> In his review of *A Time to Speak*, Lash explains Butler’s theological conservatism as

“ . . . partly due to his personal temperament and philosophical temper, and partly due to the diffidence of the scholar who, always insisting that he is not a theologian, operates with donnish caution in areas that are not professionally his own. And, anyway, ‘conservatism’ is here, as always a misleadingly crude label. In matters of biblical exegesis, he is a ‘conservative’ in the sense that Dodd and Jeremias (both of whom he admires) are usually so described. The undoubted ‘conservatism’ of certain aspects of his ecclesiology and sacramental theology may possibly be due to the premature invocation of those metaphysical techniques amongst which he is so much at his ease. . . . in matters of Church policy he is manifestly more ‘progressive’ than the majority of bishops in the English-speaking world” (pp. 189-91).

love had always been scripture study, which kept his concentration until the radical shift in the Second Vatican Council.

The new direction of Butler's ecclesiology may yet incorporate a practical application of the model of communion for which he argues cognitively. From an ecumenical perspective one would hope that he will further address himself to the question of joint Eucharists which might very well be a most effective way of forwarding ecumenism, and that he would also be part of the "competent authority" to help develop guidelines for them. These hopes are not unreasonable expectations, since, for Bishop Butler, "the doors of the future are always open."

Butler experiences, understands, reflects critically, and acts responsibly, driven by a desire to know and comprehend. But more than that, he is driven to seek satisfaction in value, in what is worthwhile and of ultimate concern. The contribution of this dissertation resides first in its ability to bridge the man and his message. Second, in the process of revealing Butler the man, this work contributes to the ongoing discussion of conversion and demonstrates in Butler's life story how conversion becomes data for theology. Third, it sees in Butler an example of Lonergan's authentic man who lives on the fourth level of consciousness, the level where consciousness becomes conscience. Fourth, it contains many of Butler's important and characteristic interpretations of the issues of unity and authority as they are lived moment by moment in the Christian life. It is to be hoped that the development of Butler's ideas and ideals in this work will lead to and become a vital part of the history of the Church in our time.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE RT. REVEREND BISHOP B. C. BUTLER

BUTLER: Rt. Rev. (Basil) Christopher, O.S.B., M.A.

Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster.

Titular Bishop of Novabarbara.

President, St. Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, Ware, Herts.

Bishop with special responsibility for the county of Hertfordshire in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster.

Member of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith and Consultor of the Congregation of Christian Education.

Honorary Fellow, St. John's College.

Chairman, Editorial Board, *Clergy Review*.

Hon. LLD, Notre Dame University.

Cardinal Heenan's Representative, British Council of Churches.

Member, Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission for Church and State.

Member, Conference on Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament.

Member, London Society for Study of Religion.

Born, Reading, England, 7 May 1902.

Received into Roman Catholic Church, 1928.

Entered Novitiate at Downside Abbey, 1929.

Ordained Priest, 10 June 1933.

Elected Abbot of Downside, 1946. Reelected 1954 and 1962.

Elected Abbot-President, English Benedictine Congregation, 1961, under which title was called to the Second Vatican Council.

Educated, Reading School and St. John's College, Oxford (White Scholar) Craven Scholarship, 1st Class Classical Mods, Greats, and Theology. Gaisford Greek Prose Prize.

Prox: acc: Hertford Scholarship.

Tutor of Keble College.

Classics Master Brighton College, 1927.

Downside School, 1928; Headmaster, 1940-46.

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This information is supplied by Father Richard More Sutherland, Chaplain and Private Secretary to Bishop Butler, St. Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, Ware, Herts.