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The Dialogue Continued: JAMES D. G. DUNN

I WELCOME the positive responses from JMT, GSW and SJW. They exemplify just the sort of discussion which I hoped my little, all too personal, *cri de coeur* would evoke. It is precisely by means of such dialogue that I see the body of Christ moving forward in its endless quest for more adequate or fuller expressions of our common faith and life.

On some points raised I hope that what I have already written is clear enough to indicate what my response would be. Here I can only offer some points of clarification.

1. Yes, of course, it was all more complex, JMT. But I do not in fact subscribe to the theory of a sub-apostolic fall from grace. My point was different. (a) We ought to take more seriously the canonical status of our scriptures. Within tradition as a whole (including scripture) the NT must therefore be allowed to function as a critical check, a norm within the norm. In his commentary on the documents of Vatican II, Cardinal Ratzinger acknowledged the force of Protestant criticism on this point. My question then was, and is: Are there principles and emphases in the NT teaching on the Lord's Supper which have become eroded or obscured in subsequent and current practice? When issues and practice become highly complex there is almost always a good case for consulting once again first principles.

(b) The emphases characteristic within the NT were in fact sustained well into the second and subsequent centuries, despite initial appearances, that is, despite the way later tradition read the early fathers in the light of their own developed ecclesiology. This is also Lightfoot's and Schillebeeckx's point.

2. Any ecclesiastical practice which effectively denies the dominical word, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt 18:20), is surely open to criticism. Of course we must try to maintain the tension between unity and diversity, between flexibility and structure. My question is simply whether in the changing circumstances of today (including not least 'the decline in vocations') the 'priesthood of the two or three' cannot be more fully expressed without endangering the unity of the whole. The history of Christianity has many reminders that in times of change conformity must be relaxed to give scope for vitality; the inflexible structure can absorb change only by breaking!

3. In particular, I fully understand the 'representation' principle and recognize its force, JMT. Though we should beware of a double-think here: for if the 'representativeness' of our Communion is dependent on the rest of the Church acknowledging that representativeness (i.e. 'recognizing our orders'), we are indeed in a sad plight. My point, however, is that the other, older side of the representation principle has been too much ignored — the 'president' as properly representative of the priestly people assembled as Christ's body. Does it need to be said again that the congregation is constituted Christ's body only by the presence of Christ? The question is: How is that presence most appropriately represented? Moreover, SJW, has the belated emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God not yet

taught us that the more functions and authority we entrust to any single member of the body of Christ, the more we incapacitate the rest of the body? The ordained ministry will be the most obvious representative and enabling focus in most congregations, but (in principle and in practice) not necessarily the only one and not necessarily in all congregations or in all circumstances.

4. A fuller treatment would have given more space to the actual words of institution (GSW); my point was that more attention needs to be paid to their context. And SJW, is it not the case that NT principle and practice incorporated but also moved *beyond* Jewish precedent, not least in consigning firmly to the past any distinction of priest from people?

5. 'Let everything be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. 14:40). But is the danger confronting the great majority of our societies that of enthusiastic disorderliness, GSW? Where there is lack of vitality an emphasis on good order may stifle rather than nourish the life of the Spirit. It is hard to beat the good order of a well maintained cemetery!

Most of the above disagreements of emphases should resolve into a 'both-and' rather than an 'either-or'. But how do we prevent the former polarizing into the latter? Let dialogue continue!

Cri de Coeur

WHAT sort of visual impact do our churches make on those who come in casually, and on those who sit in silent contemplation? I am not concerned with the new and modernised buildings which have responded to the liturgical movement and give equal stress to Word and Sacrament, invariably now with at least the symbol of the cross and often other symbols and images. It is often difficult to discern the denomination of a new building, and insofar as they serve a locality this is good. Methodism never needed to make rulings about pictures and symbols as it took the puritan position taken from Judaism and Islam for granted. Good windows, pictures and banners are now accepted without question in an age where the image is replacing the printed word as a vehicle of communication.

My concern is with the inheritance of the past. The Campden Society led to an explosion of church furnishing businesses, and dissent enshrined its heroes in stained glass. Sometimes they took what the Anglicans rejected and there is at least one Calvary in Methodism, flanked by Balaam. One Primitive Methodist Church had a window with the Virgin as part of a crucifixion, and other new churches are dominated by carefully preserved and lit Victorian-style windows. Another has a bas-relief of Leonardo's Last Supper behind what appears to be an altar. All these crept in presumably with the permission of the trustees and in the absence of