

*Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark*

October 2003

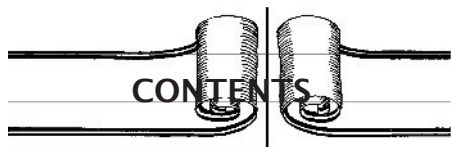
*Vol. 21 No. 67
80p*



TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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EDITORIAL

We bring you an interesting variety of ecumenical material with much gratitude to all contributors.

Barbara Wood gives us news of the visit by Commission members to St John's Seminary at Wonersh, which was greatly appreciated by all concerned.

Dare to Share, reported by Joy Peck, attracted a very large gathering of people who were very impressed by this event.

Visits to Walsingham are always very blessed occasions, and we are pleased to publish two vivid reports from Desmond Miller and Esther Godowski giving their impressions of a special ecumenical pilgrimage there.

Finally, Desmond Miller (who is currently engaged in Marian studies) gives us the first instalment of his presentation on Our Lady.

Please keep the material flowing in.

Although we have not yet attained the fulness of unity which we all desire, we can be encouraged by the progress which has been made, and continue to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our future work.

A Visit to St John's Seminary, Wonersh

9th April 2003.

The warmth of the welcome by the staff and students of St John's Seminary for our party was in marked contrast to the bitter cold of the day of our visit. We had come to follow-up the talk given by Fr Anthony Barratt, St John's Vice Rector, to the Archdiocese of Southwark Unity Commission AGM in Aylesford last September 2002, and our purpose was to find out more about the place of ecumenism in the life and teaching in the Seminary.

Our party, led by Bishop Charles Henderson, consisted of two representatives from each Area Commission. We wanted to exchange views and learn from the students about three particular aspects of their experience and training at the Seminary:

1. the effect of the seminary on attitudes towards ecumenism amongst the students
2. the ecumenical opportunities available to the students to enable them to feel comfortable when working and meeting with people from other denominations
3. the ways in which the difficulties encountered by parishioners working for unity (specifically Parish Unity Contacts), often unsupported by their parish priest or by other parishioners, could be overcome.

It was clear from our discussions that the students experienced the same tension in their thinking as those of us actively involved in ecumenical work. We all had the same challenge in holding together the ecumenical imperative of Christ's prayer that all should be one with our commitment as Catholics to uphold and protect Catholic doctrine from any watering down, fudging or compromise. The Seminary experience strengthened and confirmed the students in their appreciation of, and sense of, belonging to the Catholic tradition. It was from this perspective that they viewed their ecumenical encounters and experience.

Some of this experience came from the parishes from which the students had come. One student spoke of his many friends from different denominations. He said that too often people were apologetic about their tradition. In his experience an open and frank approach was far better and had enabled him and his friends to learn from each other. He had first discovered the importance of scripture in this way, something confirmed later at the Seminary.

Father Tony Milner explained that it was difficult for the Seminary to include ecumenical exchanges with other training colleges on a regular basis. The students' timetable was very full leaving little room for such activities. In addition, there were no partner colleges in the vicinity at present although he was hopeful of an Anglican initiative that might prove fruitful in this regard. However, many students went on ecumenical training courses for different ministries. The students differed in their reactions to these experiences. While most appreciated working together, some expressed difficulties and some frustration. One raised an interesting question. He had found dialogue difficult when people from the same denomination had widely differing views and could not agree amongst themselves. He wanted to know whether ecumenical dialogue was with an individual or with their church? Another said that real dialogue often took place in the bar rather than in a more formal setting. Several students had experience of working with people of other denominations in prison or hospital chaplaincy work. They found working together was a powerful form of sharing even if there was little or no discussion about their different traditions. Difficulties arose when services were held in which the Eucharist was celebrated. These highlighted differences and made people feel uneasy or uncomfortable and fearful of 'saying the wrong thing'. It was felt that it was much better to celebrate and share what we had in common in non-Eucharistic services. Such forms of worship could be a sign of the potential of doing things together.

It was apparent that the openness and welcome of the Seminary

to outsiders – ranging from users of the library and other facilities to incoming football teams – provided an important source of contact for the students. Through such contacts friendships were formed and differing religious affiliations often only became apparent later. It was generally agreed that forming friendship was the most important form of ecumenical activity.

Underlying the whole exchange was a fundamental question. What is our vision of the unity we seek? It seems that different answers to this question can lead to very different responses. A radical vision of what unity might mean could prevent people from engaging in ecumenical activities because they felt it was unrealistic or made them feel uneasy. This question was a challenge to us as representatives of the Unity Commission. Father Michael Lovell attempted an answer on our behalf. He said we already shared baptism and we all went to church and prayed. It was important always to convey the positive, to go back to Scripture, to acknowledge the faith of others and recognise the grace of the Holy Spirit in their lives. We had to enter into the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were visible in other denominations.

One student summed up the conclusions of the discussion for us. Forging links and making friends, working together, sharing a commitment to work for justice and peace, ‘doing things ecumenically rather than doing ecumenical things’ was the best way forward. Perhaps the answer to the question about our vision of unity lay here – a vision about a process that could reveal what unity amongst Christians could one day mean.

Barbara Wood

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A touching moment during the discussion at the great ecumenical conference, *May they all be one . . . But how?* In St Alban’s Cathedral on 17 March 2003, occurred when Cardinal Kasper remarked that the Pope had recognized the ministry of the new Archbishop of Canterbury by presenting him with a pectoral cross. With a smile Archbishop Rowan showed us the

cross and said how much it meant to him. John Woodhouse

Dare to Share

A meeting at the Institute of Education, London

10th May 2003

Dare to Share was a day spent in exploration of the gifts given to God's people, a way to Christian unity. Nearly three hundred people attended the event, which was organised by Churches Together in England and the Focolare Movement. The aim was to bring together those movements which are Bodies in Association with Churches Together in England. The event deepened knowledge and understanding of these movements resulting in a valuable growth of unity between them. It comprised a necklace of talk and mime threaded with outbursts of song from different traditions. Reducing four hours to a few lines is not an easy task. What follows is a thumbnail sketch of the day.

The Revd Bill Snelson opened with a warm welcome, pointing out that decorating was taking place in the hall so painters were to be ignored. At which point a little clown in a painter and decorator's outfit climbed a ladder on stage and sat watching and listening with great attention.

The first of four sections was devoted to ***Justice and Peace: The word builds a new world.***

The Retreat Association reminded us of the importance of retreat in enabling us to live more fully in the real world.

Christians Aware explained different aspects of the logo, like a little square corner to remind us that nothing is ever really perfect

The Council on Christian approaches to Defence & Disarmament gave a brief history of the work from the days of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to the landmine protests.

Action by Christians Against Torture reminded us that if torture is happening and we do nothing we are on the side of the torturer.

The clown stood at the side of the stage, face and body language

reaching out with an expression of infinite sadness.

The next section was about ***Young People:***

The word nourishes the life of young people.

The YMCA explained their inside out job as they re-examine themselves for the new millennium, making us think about how we define what we are now.

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) talked about asking questions and finding answers.

The YWCA demonstrated with slides the different ways in which the movement has endeavoured to empower women since its inception in 1894.

The Rt Revd Michael Doe, once he had been thoroughly dusted by the clown's feather duster, was able to sum up the morning. He did so by highlighting the importance of the Movements in working towards visible unity, in helping us to understand the new society and new culture and, lastly, in working with the young. He concluded with a list of verbs to summarise what we had heard:

Engaging: With the world through action on torture and defence.

Belonging: How we belong together.

Meeting: How we meet each other.

Encountering: Meeting with the marginalised.

Finding: God.

Questioning: SCM merging the theological and political.

Moving: in pilgrimage.

Lunchtime brought opportunities to renew old friendships and make new ones.

The graveyard slot was far from sleep inducing. This third section was called:

Building Community: The word generates a new community.

A speaker from *Church Action on Disability* explained that the organisation is a resource that should be used as they have the

insights and knowledge to enable accessibility for the disabled. *L'Arche* carers and residents presented 'Thank you for Loving Me' in words and mime, a very moving cameo. The *Interchurch Families* speakers quoted the pope in 1982 'You live in your marriages the road to unity'. This organisation joins three hundred families in mutual support and prayer where traditions are shared and problems are resolved. The pain of separation is very real in such relationships. *The Bible Society* offering began with a mime between the speaker and the clown, of lighting a candle – a light in the darkness. The Bible Society is not just a translation and distribution service it is also working to have the Bible seen by society as a relevant and credible document, to get the Bible story back into the arena, so that it is fashionable again.

The clown remembered to blow out the 'candle' she had been holding all through the talk.

The last unit was called ***Engaging the People outside Church Structures: The word goes beyond boundaries.***

The International Ecumenical Fellowship started with three people each holding a differently shaped parcel. The packages were opened to reveal three identical objects! Their aim is to share gifts, which even if they cannot be enjoyed, can be respected. They seek to live today the church of tomorrow with love.

A speaker from *The Christian Council on Ageing* was interviewed, providing yet again a different and interesting format. We were informed that the Council works to have older people seen as a resource but also aims to ensure improved care and spiritual input for the elderly. They have links with the Alzheimer's Society. The interviewer impishly added a few obviously unexpected questions like. 'How old do you have to be to join?' The reply was the younger the better!

Last, but not least, was the input from the *Focolare Movement*. The speaker explained the two aspects of the Movement. They are growth in Love and Unity, bringing people together in a

relationship of love. The Movement reaches out through dialogue to other Christians, those of other faiths and to those of no religious commitment. The Mariapolis, the annual week of holiday and spiritual sharing, and the permanent towns dotted around the world are living examples of what the world would be like if transformed by the gospel.

The diminutive clown, Dee Pizzo now had her slot: *A Visual Reflection*. She pulled six people out of the audience at random and persuaded them, all in mime, to love each other. Moving to centre stage she beckoned one by one to each of the six and gave each one the end of a piece of coloured fabric from a bucket. Each person backed away while yards and yards of fabric came out forming a lovely, multi coloured star with the shining clown in the centre, once more up her ladder. The star symbolised the meeting of all in God.

David Coffey had the task of summing up the day. He described the event as sprightly and informative with a scary clown! He described *Dare to Share* as being like the start of the story of the loaves and fishes, a small beginning with a big result to come. He concluded by explaining that living the word leads to freedom and a change in our lives and in the lives of those around us, which can transform the world at all levels. An event like *Dare to Share* results in a deep union with each other and with God. Where just one person lives the word even the desert will flower.

The occasion concluded with an act of worship. Prayer, meditation with slides, petition and song joyously filled our hearts to end the day.

Joy Peck.

This article is also published on the Churches Together in South London website: www.ctsl.btinternet.co.uk

An Ecumenical Pilgrimage to Walsingham

A new initiative took place in Walsingham between the first and fourth of April this year when the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius joined in an ecumenical pilgrimage to Walsingham.

On the first afternoon after being welcomed by Fr Philip North, the Administrator of the Shrine, Bishop Kallistos Ware of Oxford (Orthodox) gave the opening address: “Am I not free?” (1 Cor 8:1): *The Mother of God as an Icon of Human Freedom*. This was followed by Benediction in the Roman Catholic Parish Church. After supper a Liturgy of Reconciliation was held in the Anglican Shrine Church.

The daily programme began with the Roman Catholic Mass in the Parish Church celebrated by Dom Alberic Stacpoole, OSB and after breakfast a Morning Meditation by Fr Stephen Platt, General Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. On the first morning Stations of the Cross were led by Fr Peter Marr in the Anglican Shrine – the wind being too cold to pray out doors. This was followed by an Anglican Sung Eucharist at which Bishop Edwin Barnes preached. During the afternoon all were invited to a Sprinkling at the Holy Well followed by the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at the Orthodox Parish Church of the Transfiguration, Great Walsingham. The evening talk by Fr John Salter, “Our Lady of Soufanieh, a Melkite Shrine in Damascus” gave an account of the contemporary apparitions to Myrna, visionary and stigmatist, a Melkite Christian married to a Greek Orthodox living in Damascus.

During the morning of the third day Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Church based in Stevenage spoke on the Apparitions of Our Lady at Zeitoun, Cairo, where the Blessed Virgin is reported to have been seen by crowds of up to 250,000 people of all religious faiths between 1968 and 1971. After lunch Bishop Thomas

McMahon (Roman Catholic) gave an address and was followed at four o'clock by the Office of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Chapel of Reconciliation. Then came a talk by Dom Alberic Stacpoole on the apparitions of Our Lady at Lourdes and Medjugorje. Finally we visited the Slipper Chapel (the Roman Catholic Shrine) where prayers were said for Martin Gillett founder of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary – there is a memorial plaque on the west wall of the chapel. The evening was taken with the singing of the Akathist hymn to the Mother of God in the Orthodox Chapel in the Anglican Shrine followed by a panel discussion in the Norton Room.

The central event of the final morning was the service in the historic Methodist Chapel, led by the Revd Peter Collingwood and the sermon preached by the Revd Dr Leslie Griffiths. The pilgrimage ended after lunch with prayers in the Anglican Shrine Church.

This event was the inspiration of Mrs Natalya Pack who with Fr Peter Marr organized it all so very efficiently. They were pleasantly surprised at the response – seventy four people participated. To my knowledge there were representatives from the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches; Greek Orthodox, Coptic, Antiochene and Melkites. We were comfortably accommodated at the Anglican Shrine and very well fed. It was an opportunity to meet interesting people, to pray together and to be stimulated by some outstanding speakers – the quality of the talks was exceptional. It is proposed that perhaps we might repeat the exercise in two years time.

Desmond Miller

An Ecumenical Pilgrimage to Walsingham II

A personal account by Esther Godowski, Southeast Area –
Southwark Diocesan Unity Commission.

The first leg of my pilgrimage was the train journey from King's Cross to King's Lynn where outside the station a sleet-laden squall awaited me. I was directed to the bus stop for Fakenham by a man who called me 'my lovely'. Being addressed as 'my lovely' brought gladness to my windswept grey hairs, I can tell you. The Norfolk people were cheerful and helpful all through my time there. From Fakenham it was only 5 miles on yet another bus to Walsingham. Later at the introduction and welcome to the Anglican Shrine the Administrator, Revd Philip North, pointed out that the difficulties of the journey were an essential part of pilgrimage.

Father Philip conducted a visit to the shrine. The altar of the Annunciation and the Holy House, the holy well, the stations of the cross, statues and candles. He said the role of the Shrine in the 21st. century was: 1) to give a glimpse of heaven, 2) to evangelise, 3) to be a charitable centre, 4) to have an education department, 5) to be a centre for ecumenism, 6) to share Holy Ground.

Bishop Kallistos talked on the theme 'Am I not free?': *The Mother of God as an Icon of Human Freedom*. Mary cooperated with God who does not compel. She made an act of choice. Not passivity but engagement. Mary is taken into dialogue with God, and she made a courageous choice. She made the decision with her *Fiat*. We had Benediction at the Roman Catholic Parish Church before supper. Before bed there was a Liturgy of Reconciliation at the Anglican Shrine.

Daily at 7.30 a.m. Dom Alberic Stacpoole of Ampleforth Abbey celebrated Mass for us. He always preceded his comments by "I'll just say half a word". I liked his matter of fact approach. He was refreshingly forthright. After breakfast Fr Stephen Platt, General Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, led

a daily meditation. The first was on The Marriage Feast at Cana. Later in the week we were reciting the first Mystery of Light together in the Roman Catholic Shrine.

On day two Revd Peter Marr led Stations of the Cross in the Anglican Shrine. In the afternoon we had Sprinkling at the Holy Well in the shrine. It was a neat ceremony. The priest scooped a ladle of water from a container of water from the well. Each person drank some after which the remainder was poured through their cupped hands . . . purifying and healing.

I didn't feel I could attend everything that was on the program. I had been itching to go to the Slipper Chapel so I went there while most of the others were at the Orthodox Parish Church. In the early morning when on my way to Mass there would be a number of commuters in their fine cars beetling away to work, but now in the early afternoon the solitude, beauty and freshness of the Norfolk countryside was left to this fortunate pilgrim. I enjoyed that one mile walk and the time spent before Our Lady of Walsingham's statue.

On our final evening there was the Orthodox service called *Akathist* in the Orthodox chapel inside the Anglican Shrine. Bishop Kallistos chanted scriptural passages referring to Our Lady. A couple I had been chatting to over lunch harmonised the responses beautifully. It seemed like a great hymn of praise. Everyone was struck by the beauty of it.

The highlight of day four was the service of prayer and preaching at the Methodist Church built at the end of the eighteenth century. The service was led by the Revd Peter Collingwood. The preacher was Revd Dr. Leslie Griffiths, who complimented us on our singing of the Wesley hymns. He mentioned a time whilst travelling in southern France when he came across a crowd of Portuguese people who were there for the grape harvest. They had

organised a procession in honour of Our Lady of Fatima. They showed great interest in him and said they had never met a protestant pastor from Wales before. He said how happy their faces were, and how the love and respect for Mary, the miracle worker, made them radiant. He couldn't help but be moved by it. My time with fellow Christians in Walsingham was enriching and educative. It wasn't my first visit – I had been on my parish outings there in the past, but this pilgrimage was special largely due to sharing it with this extended family from other denominations.

Esther Godowski

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MARY, A SIGN OF HOPE or A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION ?

A paper presented to the Southwark Ecumenical Commission –

South East Area by Desmond Miller on 7th September 1982

She shines forth on earth, until the day of the lord shall come, a sign of hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God.

Thus say the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council speaking of Mary in *Lumen gentium*, Chapter VIII, n.68. But could it be that Mary is so identified with her son Jesus that the Prophecy of Simeon applies to her as well ?

He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against, and so reveal their secret thoughts.[1]

As Roman Catholics – especially those of us who are cradle Catholics – are saddened by the lack of devotion and even hostility to Mary, the Mother of the Lord, among Christians of the Reformed tradition. That the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on Mary is a difficulty in the Ecumenical dialogue is apparent from many sources. The recent document, the ARCIC 'Final Report', after stating what Anglicans and Roman Catholics hold in common about the Virgin Mary, says:

Nevertheless the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption raise a special problem for those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by these dogmas are sufficiently supported by scripture. For many Anglicans the teaching authority of the Bishop of Rome, independent of a council, is not recommended by the fact, that through it, these Marian doctrines were proclaimed as dogmas binding on all the faithful.[2]

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when considering a report from its Panel on Doctrine in May 1977 said:

There is no doubt that Mary holds a unique place as the Mother of Jesus but the Church of Scotland believes that the greater part of Roman Catholic teaching cannot be justified from the evidence of the New Testament, and that it tends to obscure the uniqueness of Christ himself – a tendency which seems very apparent in popular Roman Catholic devotion to Mary . . . Accepting the communion of saints in Christ, the Church of Scotland cannot go so far as the Catholic Church in allowing prayer to Mary and the saints.[3]

Robert McAfee Brown gives a Protestant view when he says,

Next to the papacy, Mariology is the area of greatest theological division between Catholics and Protestants. The problem centres on the most recent papal pronouncements, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, so that she is freed from the taint of original sin and the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin into Heaven immediately after her death.[4]

Underlying the Protestant concern with the apparent centrality of these truths in the faith and life of the Roman Church and their unchecked development, he continues,

the dogma of the Assumption represents simultaneously the one completely unambiguous exercise of the prerogative of papal infallibility and that portion of Catholic theology that

seems at the farthest remove from the New Testament.[5]

The basis of the Protestant objection to Catholic teaching on Mary is that they cannot be sustained by ‘scripture alone’ but rely on papal teaching.

Three ‘guiding rules’ have been suggested by René Laurentin for the conduct of a meaningful ecumenical dialogue by which we might come to an agreed understanding of the Marian problem. If we were to begin with an examination of our own conscience, we could approach the dialogue in humility and openness, ready to shed previously held opinions, concepts and preferences in order that we might see more clearly the ‘substance of the dogma’ beneath the ‘outer covering’.[6] Secondly, we should search for the ‘substance of the dogma’ by a return to the sources of faith. We need to turn again to Scripture, and study the Fathers for their interpretation and insights gained through prayer and meditation. The mind of the Church is to be sought in official documents and in its liturgical expression. Doctrinal formulations may need to be restated. This is not to compromise but to seek a ‘more complete concept of revealed truth’.[7] Finally we should endeavour to have a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the origins and theological principles of the other Christian Traditions in order to get to the root of our differences.[8]

Relations with Churches of the Reform Tradition

The Reformation sprang from a need to renew Christian life and restore certain fundamental values. The many abuses, superstitions, and poor state of theology was acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI in 1522 when he promised ‘we will apply ourselves whole-heartedly to the reform, first of all, of the Roman Curia, from which, perhaps, the evil has spread’.[9] Change was needed but the zeal of the reformers was such that they often threw out the underlying truth with the abuse. Extreme and exclusive opinions arose which the Catholic Church could not and can never accept as happened in Marian doctrine. Luther, who differed from Calvin,

professed a very positive devotion to Mary but in 1523 he wrote, ‘I desire the cult of Mary to be totally abandoned solely because of the abuses which arise from it’.[10]

The principles characterised by the word ‘alone’ arose from a desire to purify beliefs and return to the essential. This positive approach was good but there developed an exclusive emphasis.

Scriptura sola

A return to inspired scripture was a necessary reform but the exclusion of tradition was unfortunate. As Laurentin said, ‘Not only is scripture the object of Tradition, in the sense that the Canon of Scripture is transmitted to us by the Church, but also in the sense that Tradition passes on to us its meaning and interpretation’.[11] An exclusive recourse to scripture in the climate of the time led to the rejection of the notion of Mary’s original sanctity and her final assumption which were as yet undefined. Her continued virginity after childbirth, her sanctity and the expression, ‘Mother of God’ which is not in Scripture were called into question.

Gratia sola

God’s gift is of a wholly gratuitous nature. The beginning of salvation for each individual is a gratuitous grace without anterior merit. There is no supernatural work which is not entirely the work of grace. This is good in that it was a corrective of the Pelagianism of the day, but taken to an exclusive and excessive degree, it is a refusal to accept merit in man. Man cooperates with the grace which he welcomes and freely makes his own, so that salvation, which is entirely and without exception the work of grace, is also at the same time and in a subordinate fashion, entirely the work of human free will.

Secondly this flowering of grace in the life of the Christian produces merit. It is entirely the work of God and entirely the work of man, gratuitous under the first heading and worthy of new gifts under the second. The freedom of God’s grace gives us the power of meriting glory. Mary is ‘the most perfect realization achieved by the absolutely gratuitous favour of God’s loving kindness. . . He

gave it to her to reach the highest degree of co-operation, the highest merit which could be had in the Church of the Redeemed'. [12] As St Augustine puts it, 'In crowning merits, God is crowning His own gifts'. Laurentin stresses that 'it is important to restore the fundamental notion of uncreated grace, that occupation of our souls by God of which created grace is in some way a trace'.[13]

Fides sola

St Paul tells us that 'we are justified by faith'. (Rom. 5:1) The Reformers maintained that the Christian is justified by *faith alone*, good works being considered unnecessary. In effect this is a refusal to attach any worth to man's works and tends to reduce faith to an assurance of one's own personal salvation. Protestants readily admit to the spiritual gifts given to Mary and the Apostles, but see them as being given in the manner, and on the same level as to the saints of the Old Testament. Catholic doctrine 'holds that these gifts are durable, permanent, transmissible, and capable, of an effective radiation of their power in the economy of salvation'.[14]

Deus solus

The Reformers were right in their desire to emphasize the transcendence of God, but when taken to the extreme of *God alone*, it becomes a refusal to acknowledge the value which God gives to mankind. The fact that God loves us means that we are infinitely loveable. *Deus solus* leads to Nestorianism. It devalues, at one and the same time, the humanity of Christ and the divine motherhood of Mary, together with the grace and efficacy they convey. Thus Mary counts little among Protestants.[15]

Sola Christi – Christus solus

For contemporary reformed theology, as for its sixteenth century founders, nothing must compromise the sole sufficiency of Christ in salvation. All doctrine must be tested against 1 Tim 2:5, 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'. Any Marian definition that establishes her as a separate and additional source of grace from her son is to

be rejected. In *Lumen gentium*, article 60, the Catholic Church affirms that Christ is the one Mediator saying, ‘Mary’s function as mother of men, in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.

Objections to Roman Marian Dogmas

In a dialogue with Dr John McHugh, John de Satgé puts forward the standard Protestant objections to Roman Catholic Marian dogmas. The Protestants reject the teachings themselves and especially the cultus of Mary on the grounds that it is contrary to scripture, and distorts doctrine. Mary is seen to block the true way to God through Christ the one Mediator. The conflict arises from a different understanding of Grace and Justification rather than the consequences of the Incarnation. The Marian cultus would seem to be a non-Christian phenomenon best explained by comparative religion and (morbid) psychology. Mary has ceased to be the Mary of the Gospels and has become, as it were, a mother goddess as in ancient pagan religions. The objections are based on:

1. The late date of any Marian cultus; the Apostolic Church managed without it.
2. The dubious orthodoxy of those who first paid attention to Mary.
3. The cult took over shrines to ancient heathen divinities.
4. The link between the expanding cults of Mary in the Middle Ages and the growing emphasis on celibacy. Was it a psychological compensation?[16]

John McHugh replies: from a Protestant point of view, and assuming the Lutheran/Calvinist doctrine of ‘justification’ to be correct, the Marian doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a distortion, a heresy. If, however, one accepts the view of the Council of Trent (1545–63) expressed in its decree *de Justificatione* to be the correct, we have a different case. For the Protestant, ‘justification’ means that a veil is drawn over our sins. For the Catholic, ‘justification’ is Gods power to transform our nature in this life. This is expressed to its fullest extent in Mary by preserving

her from original sin in anticipation of the merits of her Son, and bestowing on her the fullness of heavenly glory. She is a creature in whom we see manifested the fullness of grace.

It is true that around the Mediterranean the earliest cult of Mary was closely connected with centres where a mother-goddess had been revered in pagan times e.g. Ephesus. The early Christian Church recognized this need in people but regarded it as a (divinely inspired) *praeparatio evangelica* and used the figure of Mary as ‘virgin’ and ‘mother’ in order to purge the old shrines of their more gross characteristics. The Church fought against the worship of Venus, the worship of sex, a problem not unknown today. Properly understood, the presentation of Mary as both virgin and mother strikes a psychological balance that is needed in every age. [17]

The Teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on Mary Today

The Marian dogmas may be stated briefly. Mary is the Mother of God (the *Theotokos*), she is all holy, she is the perfect virgin. In the first instant of her conception she was preserved from all stain of original sin in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour. When the course of her earthly life was run, she was assumed, body and soul, to heavenly glory. [18]

‘It is to be noted that all truths about Mary are expressions of aspects of the mystery of Christ and his Church, of the mystery of God’s saving presence in and with man and the form this takes’ . [19] It is the job of the theologians to draw out the fullness of the meaning of the dogmas in the light of these mysteries. The need to return to sources and restate its basic Marian position has been accomplished by the Roman Catholic Church in the eighth chapter of the Second Vatican Council Document *Lumen gentium* where one finds a statement of great ecumenical significance in which Mary is considered within the context of the Church. With constant reference to Scripture, it avoids extreme positions and phraseology. The ecumenically difficult title ‘mediatrix’ is placed with other historical Marian titles, showing it to be one among many, to be understood within this venerable tradition. The ecumenical concern

of the document can be seen most markedly in the great care it takes to emphasize the unique Mediator, Jesus Christ, and to say categorically that if the title ‘mediatrix’ is applied to Mary, it is to be understood in a way that neither takes away from nor adds to the dignity or the effectiveness of the one mediator, Christ.[20]

The Position of the Churches of the Reformed Tradition Today

This is less easy to define but we are aware that many Protestant theologians have returned to their ‘sources’, in study of the writings of the founders of the Reformation, and that their doctrine is undergoing development. They have gained new insights into scripture and the teachings of the early Fathers. We are aware also of a greater interest in devotion to Mary amongst many non Catholic Christians.

The Way Forward

(This article will be continued in the next Issue)

Endnotes *(See next issue.)*

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Treasure in Clay Jars

Some comments made at a meeting of Croydon Deanery Pastoral Council, reminded me of the service held by Churches Together in Addiscombe in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on the theme of “Treasure in clay jars”. Residents in Croydon are well used to the sight of long lines of would be immigrants queuing outside Luna House. Some of those at the Deanery Pastoral Council meeting expressed concern about the number of refugees in the Borough, while the majority wished to extend an open welcome and offer help.

In his address at the service in St Matthews in January, Father Gary Dyer, who has since become the chair of Churches Together in Addiscombe, had spoken of the way in which people ignore a simple request for directions made to them in the street. How easy it would be for us to smile and help someone rather than rush by and ignore them!

On 14 September we will be celebrating Racial Justice Sunday. This will again be an opportunity to reach out to our neighbours and those who need our help. At St Matthew’s the service had been enhanced by the singing and dancing of the members of the Church of God, who hold their services in the church. We had also heard from a Methodist who had to leave Antigua because of her political beliefs and of how she and her family had been welcomed in Addiscombe.

We do indeed hold a “treasure in clay jars” and the theme of the Week of Prayer could well be used throughout this year of troubled times. Now, more than ever, we need to get to know and understand each other's beliefs and customs.

John Woodhouse

