



The Interface of Authority and Charism in the Primitive Church: Lessons for the Church in Our Time

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Authority and charism are not mutually exclusive. Though for most of Catholic Church history, more of the hierarchic nature was center stage, while charisms thrived on the fringes—in religious houses and monastic movements. This came to a head at Vatican II when Cardinal Ruffini objected to a draft on the charism of the faithful, maintaining that such gifts are extremely rare and all together exceptional, and would have no part to play in the modern Church.¹ He would be eventually countered by Cardinal Suenens, whose ideas carried the day at the council. Suenens maintained that, “the Holy Spirit shows himself in the Church in the great number and richness of his spiritual gifts, gifts which Scripture calls *pneumatika* (1 Cor. 12:1; 14:1), or charisms (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12: 4, 9, 28, 30f; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pet. 4:10).”² He further added that, “to St. Paul the Church of the living Christ does not appear as some kind of administrative organization, but as a living web of gifts, of charisms, of ministries. The Spirit is given to every individual Christian, the Spirit who gives his gifts, his charisms to each and every one ‘different as they are allotted to us by God's grace’ (Rom. 12:6).”³

Primitive Church will be used in this work to refer to the Church of Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons and their respective visions for the Church. Both of them are apostolic fathers and both left teachings that are relevant today. “The early Christian Church institutionalized charismatic authority by assimilating the charism of prophecy

into the office of the bishop.”⁴ Gradually Church leadership and authority became centered around the bishop as the letters of Ignatius testify. This had the inevitable result of minimizing the import of charism outside established institutions of deacons, presbyters, or bishops.

Since Vatican II, the understanding of authority in the Church has undergone renewal. Vatican II nudged the Church away from a more autocratic, and Vatican controlled exercise of authority to a one that is more collegial and consultative in character. The direct result of this is the flourishing of lay ministries, a more active participation of all the baptized in the life of the Church, a greater appreciation of the bible among Catholics, a reinvigoration of the liturgical life, a profound sense of communion (no matter how imperfect) with non-Catholic Christian traditions, and a more positive engagement with the issues and the concerns of the world at large.⁵ And one can add, a greater reception and appreciation of charisms in the Catholic Church.

Situating the Problem

The world today is generally pluralistic and multicultural. There are different perspectives and competing views on almost every issue. The modern society is robust perhaps in every aspect. Where in a pluralistic society does one find direction in matters of ultimate concern? Making a case for Christianity in the public space for instance, Miraslof Volf maintains that “Since the world is God's creation and

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¹ Francis A. Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982), 10.

² Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, “The Charismatic Dimension of the Church,” in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. H. Kung, Y. Congar, D. O’Hanlon (Glen Rock: Paulist, 1964), 30.

³ Suenens, “The Charismatic Dimension of the Church,” 31.

⁴ David J. Hamstra, “Charismatic and Institutional Authority in Early Christianity and Sabbatarian Adventism,” May 2009, accessed 11/02/2022, https://www.academia.edu/37477991/Charismatic_and_Institutional_Authority_in_Early_Christianity_and_Sabbatarian_Adventism.

⁵ Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of The Magisterium in the Catholic Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1997), ix.

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since the Word came to his own even if his own did not accept him (John 1:11), the proper stance of Christians toward the larger culture cannot be that of unmitigated opposition or whole-scale transformation. A much more complex attitude is required—that of accepting, rejecting, learning from, transforming, and subverting or putting to better uses various elements of an internally differentiated and rapidly changing culture.”⁶ Volf offers an alternative to eliminating religion from the public space and especially Christianity, his solution is not attenuating Christian convictions but affirming them robustly and living them out joyously.⁷

Exercise of episcopal authority in the spirit of Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons can make compelling difference both in the lives of those who hold those offices and those who are their followers. Retrieving the role played by Church authority in the primitive Church of Ignatius and Irenaeus, will no doubt illumine the exercise of episcopal authority everywhere in the Church today because of their special accomplishments. Church leaders with their varying degrees of titles and claims to authority abound today. What is their overarching relevance in the public space. How much role is charism playing in the public space today. How can the Church today make episcopal authority more relevant and charismatic authority better appreciated?

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

This paper will primarily be a work in ressourcement theology—going back to the sources. Since method and system determine one another, no one method can be said to be sufficient for every subject. Paul Tillich’s method of correlation shall be used in this study.⁸ The fathers of the primitive Church showed how their theological endeavor correlated with stability, peace, and unity in the Church. This text shall try to show how their work can become lessons from which the Church of today can benefit.

Authority and Charism in the Primitive Church

The early Christian Churches began as the work of the Holy Spirit who appeared on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1–13). This event Peter read as a fulfilment of the Prophecy of Joel for the last days (Joel 2:28-30 = Acts 2:17-19). The experience of the gift of the spirit became closely related to the rite of entrance into the new eschatological community. Baptism conveyed the spirit to every new member. For by one

spirit, says the apostle Paul, we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and all were made to drink of one spirit (I Cor. 12:13).⁹ According to St. Paul all the activities of these new communities were done in power of the Spirit who distributes his gifts for the benefits of all (I Cor. 12:7–10).

The fast-paced transition of the Jesus movement to the Church was no doubt the work of the Holy Spirit. A charism of the Holy Spirit was at work completely changing the world for good. Thus, from a largely itinerant, rural, Jewish movement in Palestine, consisting of twelve chosen men and few others, who spoke mainly Hebrew or Aramaic and worshipped in the synagogues; by the time of Ignatius (100 years later), the Church has become mostly urban, exists in greater part outside of Palestine, in the Roman world, its life was centered in churches, its members predominantly gentile and its spoken language was Greek. Worship was no longer on Jewish Sabbath but on Sunday, its members were called Christians and their assemblies were superintended by bishops.¹⁰

Authority as Institution in St. Ignatius of Antioch

It has often been argued that the development of the ecclesiastical offices namely, those of bishops, presbyters, and deacons in the postapostolic period signified the end of the spirit-empowered democratic understanding of the Christian communities. Furthermore, this development initiated an age in which the authority of the institutional office holder took precedence over the inspired activities of members of the communities. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in the beginning of the second century, is the person who is primarily cited for having developed the concept of a hierarchy of ecclesiastical, opposed to the free activity of the divine spirit.¹¹ His letters were written within few weeks of each other, on his way to his martyrdom having been convicted and found guilty in his native Antioch of Syria. Although he did not state expressly the reason for his condemnation, Jerome (in 400 AD), will hang it on the persecution instigated by Trajan.¹²

By the time of his writing, the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons was taken for granted, and obedience to these offices was requested as indicative of unity

⁶ Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), xvi.

⁷ Volf, *A Public Faith*, xvii.

⁸ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 60.

⁹ Helmut Koester, “Writings and the Spirit: Authority and Politics in Ancient Christianity,” *The*

Harvard Theological Review 84, no. 4 (October 1991): 353–354, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1510180>.

¹⁰ James R. Edwards, *From Christ to Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became a Church in Less than a Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), xxi–xxii.

¹¹ Koester, “Writings and the Spirit,” 355.

¹² Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of the Episcopacy* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 20.

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in the face of false prophets.¹³ The Ephesians, he reminds that just as Christ manifested the will of the Father, so also the bishops bound everywhere to the ends of the earth manifest the will of Christ.¹⁴ He calls the Church to run together according to the will of the bishop, if a presbytery is to be worthy of God, it has to be fitted as exactly to the bishop as strings to a harp.¹⁵ Even the silent bishop, should be revered.¹⁶ To Magnesians he was insistent on respect for the bishop regardless of his youth, but that they should obey and submit to the bishop without hypocrisy.¹⁷ The Trallians, Ignatius asked to do nothing without the bishop, who together with the priests and deacons make up the Sanhedrin of God, aside these, there is no Church.¹⁸

Similarly, he tells the Smyrnaeans to follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as they would the apostles; and to reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is administered either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop is, let the people also be; just as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is unlawful to do anything in the Church without the bishop, for only what the bishop approves is pleasing to God. The approval of the bishop is necessary so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.¹⁹ This call is repeated to the Philadelphians with a loud voice.²⁰

Very revealing in reading Ignatius of Antioch is that the call to follow the bishop is put forward as an antithesis to heretics, Judaizers, and schismatics. Following the bishop and doing his bidding was seen as a safeguard against any danger, any threat to the good faith. Bishops also stand for the Church as symbols of unity. The bishop is thus put as the embodiment of truth, a beacon of light and a visible representative of the will of Christ. "Ignatius claims to speak

by the Spirit in urging submission to the threefold ministry, so that he unites in himself the charismatic and official ministries. The prophet's role is played by the bishop."²¹

Very supreme to Ignatius was the episcopal authority as a symbol of martyrdom. As a bishop he felt called to die for the faith and thus he could describe himself as the wheat of God which will become a fine flour in the mouths of the beasts. Consequently, he asked the Romans and all those who visited him in solidarity, not to stand on the way of his martyrdom, rather in the mouth of the beasts he hopes to become the pure bread of Christ.²²

The Exercise of Episcopal Authority in Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus was born in or around Smyrna about 120 AD. He was tutored in the faith by Polycarp of Smyrna, and from him, he learnt the traditions of John the beloved disciple. But midcentury he moved to Lyons on the Rhone River where he became bishop. He was dismayed to discover that Valentinus (a disciple of Polycarp), whom he has known so well, was in the forefront of spreading the gnostic heresy.²³ His work *Against Heresies*,²⁴ was influential in part because of his link through Polycarp back to John. The connection gave his work acceptance and authority and contributed significantly to the elimination of the heresy among Christians.²⁵ It made him the most important of the theologians of the second century and crowned him as the founder of Christian theology.²⁶ He spent months and years studying the tenets of the gnostic heresy, and through his knowledge, using other resources at his disposal, he was able to counter them.²⁷

The term *Gnosticism* is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "to know" or "knowledge." This knowledge is not intellectual but mythical and comes through a special revelation by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, or through his

¹³ Ferguson, *The Early Church and Today*, 94.

¹⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, chapter 3, trans., Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1., ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm>>.

¹⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, chapter 4.

¹⁶ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, chapter 6.

¹⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, chapter 7, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0105.htm>.

¹⁸ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Trallians*, chapter 3, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0106.htm>.

¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, chapter 8. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm>.

²⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, chapter 2 and 7, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0108.htm>.

²¹ Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church and Today, Volume One: Ministry, Initiation, and Worship* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 94.

²² Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, Chapter 4, Accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm>.

²³ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology, Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Oakville: Green, 1999), 68, 69.

²⁴ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Introduction. *Against the Heresies*, ed., Walter J. Burghardt et al. (New York: Newman, 1992), 1.

²⁵ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 69.

²⁶ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, 1.

²⁷ Olson, 71.

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apostles. The secret knowledge reveals the key to salvation.²⁸ The stress is on knowledge as a means for the attainment of salvation, or even as an aspect of salvation itself.²⁹ Gnosticism is chiefly dualist in outlook, characterized by a sharp distinction between matter and spirit. Matter is contrary to the spirit, and it is destructive.³⁰ This pervasive ontological dualism manifested itself in endless pairs of opposites: the temporal and the eternal, the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly, the here and the hereafter, the “flesh below” and the “spirit above,” etc. Salvation could only mean liberation from the bonds of this alien material world, and those thus saved could treat the material realities with indifference, if not disdain.³¹ Gnostics, because of their pessimistic view of matter, also rejected the resurrection of the body which they deem evil.

This form of anthropology was selling fast among Christians at the time of Irenaeus, and he proved equal to the task. Contrary to the gnostic claims to a secret knowledge, known only to the elite of their group, Irenaeus appealed to the tradition handed down by the apostles and transmitted in the Christian churches by the bishops who succeeded one another as teachers down to his own day.³² He employed three strategies to help him accomplish this task, the first included exposing the inner contradictions and fundamental incoherence. Its truth claims conflicted with one another. Secondly, he tried to show that Gnostic claims to some knowledge going back to the apostles is false, and finally he engaged Gnostic hermeneutics of scripture, and showed it to be unreasonable, and impossible. To the claim of a secret knowledge, Irenaeus assumed that if such teaching existed, Polycarp would have known of it, and pass it on to him. That this didn't happen, and none of the Christian bishops recognized it, or acknowledged it, seriously undermined the Gnostic claim.³³

While fighting Gnosticism on the one hand, he was also developing an alternative to Gnosticism on the other, this was a theory of redemption, his greatest contribution to theology—the theory of recapitulation (head). Christ's work of salvation provided a new head for humanity. Again, unlike the Gnostics who denied incarnation and replaced it with spiritual movements or emissions of the aeons, Irenaeus will

make incarnation central to salvation. Every point of Jesus' life was necessary for salvation, and the incarnation was itself redemptive not merely a step either towards Christ's teaching or to the cross. Irenaeus presents this teaching like a mini creed “...the creator of heaven and earth, and the seas and all things that are in them and in one Jesus Christ, the only son of God, who was enfleshed for our salvation...”³⁴ In a literal sense, for Irenaeus, the entire human race is born again in the incarnation and receives a new head in Christ. A source, origin, ground of being—that is unfallen, pure, and healthy, victorious, and immortal. It is fully alive both physically and spiritually.³⁵

The Charismatic Phenomenon of Montanus

As the bishops of the early Church were cementing Church authority around themselves, it is possible that prophets got on their way. Whereas the bishops may not have problem with prophecy as a gift of the Spirit, the ways of the prophets were incompatible with constructing a rational system of government that is ordered and hierarchical. Prophets and prophetic utterances could not be controlled. The risk of the prophetic ministry was deemed greater than the benefits. Improvised solution was that the bishops assimilated prophecy into their office. Thus, bishops were able to perpetuate a sense of the prophetic by excluding prophets and claiming the prophetic charism.³⁶

A look at Montanism can shade light on the tactical maneuvers of the primitive bishops. Montanus was a recent convert who prophesied in the village of Ardabau in Phrygia. Together with his two companions, prophetess Prisca and Maximilla, they prophesied in mood akin to uncontrollable madness. They did not speak as messengers of God but described themselves as possessed by God and spoke in his person. Montanus is credited with statements like “I am the Father, the Word and the Paraclete, I am the Lord God omnipotent who have descended into man, neither an angel, nor an ambassador, but I the Lord, the Father, am come.”³⁷ No doubt some thought Montanus was possessed by an evil

²⁸ Cf. Zavada, Jack. "Gnosticism: Definition and Beliefs" *Learn Religions* (September 2019), learnreligions.com/what-is-gnosticism-700683.

²⁹ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic religion, The Message of Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 3rd edition (Boston: Beacon, 2001), 32.

³⁰ Institute for Gnostic Studies (now defunct), *The Gnostic Handbook*, 57.

³¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Missiological Society series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 205.

³² Sullivan, 180.

³³ Olson, 71.

³⁴ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, 1, 10, 1.

³⁵ Olson, 73–75.

³⁶ Hamstra, “Charismatic and Institutional Authority,” 29–30.

³⁷ Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. “Montanists” by John Chapman, accessed November 10, 2022, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10521a.htm>.

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spirit and a troubler of the people, and they tried to stop his prophesying.³⁸

Montanists are alleged to have said that God, not being able to save the world by Moses and the Prophets, took flesh of the Virgin Mary, and in Christ, His Son, preached and died for the world. And because He could not accomplish the salvation of the world by this second method, the Holy Spirit descended upon Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, giving them the plenitude, which even St. Paul had not (I Cor. 13: 9).³⁹

Tertullian who was increasingly drawn to the Montanist sect, became their defender and most famous of the Montanists. This move made him bitter towards the Catholic Church from which he is allegedly said to have broken off. Tertullian holds as absolute law, the recommendations of Montanus to eschew second marriages, and flight from persecution. He denies the possibility of forgiveness of sins by the Church, insists upon extreme fasts and abstinences. He is said to have exaggerated those parts of the Montanist teaching which appealed to himself caring little for the rest.⁴⁰ Tertullian's love for the charismatic elements of Montanism led him to set up the distinction between the internal Church of the Spirit, and the external Church of the bishops.⁴¹

The condemnation of the heresy of Montanus seems to be the work of a regional council or synod in Asia minor. Apollinaris of Hierapolis maintained that the believers in Asia coming together many times and at many different places rejected the Montanist heresy, also called the Phrygian Heresy.⁴² The people having examined his prophecies declared them profane, condemned the heresy, and threw his followers out of communion. As the movement lost its formal identity, it is possible that either its members returned to the "Church of the bishops" or joined other Pneumocentric groups.⁴³

Lessons for the Church Today

The world today is an arena of intercultural and cross-cultural global interchange, a world more complex than that of the Fathers. Nevertheless, what these fathers did for the Church of their time falls to the Church to do same for this complex pluriverse. The past should be listened to, as it speaks to the present, to lay a vision for the future. The early Christians did not simply express in Greek thought what they

already knew, rather, they discovered, through Greek religious and philosophical insights, what had been revealed to them.⁴⁴ The Christian faith is intrinsically incarnational; therefore, unless the church chooses to remain a foreign entity, it will always have to enter into the context in which it happens to find itself. And the context of the second and subsequent centuries of the Christian era was almost in every respect different from that of the first. The shift from the Hebrew to the Greek world was only one (if extremely important) element of the new setting. It had other decisively different ingredients as well. For one thing, what began as a movement had, long before the end of the first century, irrevocably turned into an institution.⁴⁵

The Wisdom of Institutionalization

Can a movement survive as a movement? Sociology teaches that as a law, the movement will either institutionalize or phase out. Religious history has shown that every group that started as a movement and eventually survived did somewhat become institutionalized.⁴⁶ Pentecostalism is a modern example but there were Waldensians, Moravians, and the Quakers before them. It was a smart move for Ignatius to insist on the centrality and importance of the authority of the institution of bishop for the primitive church.

Although, the biblical warrants for the transition from apostles to bishops have been questioned, Sullivan submits that, history alone cannot give the answer to the question as to whether bishops are the successors of the apostles by divine institution. There are, however, good reasons in support of such belief. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the episcopate is an element of the divinely willed structure of the Church.⁴⁷

Episcopal Exercise of Power as a Symbol of Unity

The repeated call for submission to episcopal leadership was done against the background of divisive elements in the Church. Episcopal authority wasn't loved for the glamour of power, but so that the Christian community will be at peace, one flock under one shepherd. Ignatius sought through the use of episcopal authority to achieve a "pure" Christian community, devoid of heretics and schismatics and centered round the bishop.

³⁸ Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Montanists."

³⁹ Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Montanists."

⁴⁰ W. Le Saint, "Montanism," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 1079.

⁴¹ Le Saint, "Montanism," 1079.

⁴² Ferguson, 103.

⁴³ Le Saint, "Montanism," 1079.

⁴⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Missiological Society series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), xvii, 195.

⁴⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 195, 196.

⁴⁶ Bosch, 81.

⁴⁷ Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman, 2001), 28, 31, 32.

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Episcopal Authority as Martyrdom

Very important to Ignatius of Antioch is that martyrdom was a necessary accompaniment to his episcopal office. He strongly urged the Romans and indeed all those who came to meet him on the way to Rome, not to offer any help that could thwart his journey to martyrdom. He was simply more than ready to follow in the foot of the master, and he did pay the ultimate sacrifice for his faith. The world today, and the Catholic Church in particular, needs episcopacy that is not afraid of martyrdom whether from political authorities or from the powerful media organizations.

The Truth of the Church

The catalyst for the strong faith of the primitive church fathers like Ignatius and Irenaeus, their unwavering conviction even before fire and sword, was their belief in Christ and his Church. Their belief in the message of the salvation of the world which was to be proclaimed and accomplished through the Church. The Church for these fathers was the very continuity of the mission of Christ for the salvation of the world. Since the reformers demystified the Church during the reformation, the Church's credibility has been losing some ground.⁴⁸ From the period of the renaissance, through the enlightenment to modern development in science and technology, man is increasingly told that there is no God, or that he doesn't need God. In such a climate, it is difficult to take the Church seriously. The scandal of division in Christianity have not been very helpful to the gospel message either.⁴⁹ Vatican II defines the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 12–17). If the message of Christ for the salvation of the world is to be taken seriously, this age needs to discover the truth of the Church as the authentic witness of Christ and live it out fully as the primitive Church did.

The Goodness of Painstaking Scholarship

Irenaeus' definitive debunking of Gnosticism is a testament to true scholarship. Months and years were invested in serious studies just to understand the gnostic heresy and respond to it like an insider. When the Nag Hammadi scrolls were discovered, they did show that Irenaeus knew the Gnostics very well and he didn't misrepresent them. There are currents and ideologies in our time that need similar investment in study and learning rather than outright condemnation. The Church must not take leave of the rigors of this standard by Irenaeus.

⁴⁸ Bosch, 269.

⁴⁹ Bosch, 274.

⁵⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 363.

⁵¹ Volf, xv-xvi.

The Beauty of Pillars as Guides

Catholics generally hold their Church in high esteem, historical faults notwithstanding. The Catholic Church through her magisterium has provided guidance for the Catholic faithful down through the ages. In this era where people are free to use their power the way they wish without a referent outside of themselves, there is no longer massive affirmations for faith.⁵⁰ The Church is increasingly being ignored or not seriously factored in people's lives. This situation calls for some pillars of stability. Volf offers six ways in which the Christian faith relates to culture and remains relevant in society, among which are: Christian faith being prophetic by nature seeks to mend the world; to care for others; develop an attitude that is accepting, rejecting, learning, subverting, transforming etc.⁵¹ The Church must not be so accommodated to modern culture for apologetic purposes that it no longer brings its particular word to the world but simply reinforces secular culture by providing it with a balm of transcendent security.⁵²

CONCLUSION

In the primitive Church, the Church of today has a fountain of wisdom and inspiration from which she can continually draw. The primitive Church and sociology have shown that if the Church was to survive, institutionalization was necessary. It is with good reason therefore that the charismatic elements of the primitive Church were absorbed into the structures of the Church, and those that couldn't, like Montanism, despite a formidable advocate in Tertullian, were fizzled out. The interface of Authority and charism in the early Church then did result in either assimilation or elimination of charism, and it was a necessary move if the Church was to survive and thrive. It is therefore to the credit of the modern Church, that while the institutions persist, charisms indeed have a life of their own and are beneficial to the church and society.

Would it not just be as good if disparate elements in the human society, which are prone to being excluded find a true home in the Church of Christ?

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