

## ***The Catholicity of the Church. Avery Dulles. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.***

### **Introduction: The Catholic Principle**

Refers to McBrien and Imbelli. [3-5]

Tillich on 'Catholic substance' and 'Protestant principle'. [6]

Carl Peter's expression of Catholic principle: "Be not so prone to expect abuse that you fail to recognize God's grace as working, of having worked, and as hopefully going to work again through the means that have been given." [6]

Dulles asserts need to a 'Catholic principle' (refers to Mohler)..... notes that Tillich had difficulty accepting the Incarnation. [7]

Guittou: "The essence of Protestantism, he suggested, lies in its quest for purity. As the religion of separation and transcendence, it is no guard against alloys and compromises. Catholicism, while striving for purity, accepts the provisional combination of the pure and the impure." [8]

### **Chapter 1 – The Concept of Catholicity: Yesterday and Today**

Ancient usage focused on catholicity as referring to universality of place. [13-15]

Especially Augustine: wider geographic extension (*contra* Donatists). [13-15]

Four meanings of catholicity between Reformation and World War II: (1) orthodox – adherence to full apostolic heritage; (2) Counter-Reformation and neoscholasticism – "wide geographic extension combined with manifest unity"; (3) Tübingen and the Oxford Movement – incarnational and sacramental religion; (4) liberal Protestantism – divine authority falsely claimed for human regulations. [17-18]

Today there are many universalist movements and institutions. [18-21]

Vatican II on catholicity as "reconciled diversity." [24]

### **Chapter 2 –Catholicity from Above: The Fullness of God in Christ**

Ephesians 3.18-19 – "...height, length, height and depth " of God's love..... referred to the Church. [30]

Interconnected elements; "ontological richness." [30]

"...good biblical foundation for the doctrine of the analogous knowledge of God." [31]

Pleroma ... catholicity... fullness. [31]

Differentiated unity..... *conscientia oppositorum* [31]

"divine catholicity" is communicated and shared. [32]

The "catholicity of Christ" [32]

Catholic theologies "take the words *et incarnatus est* in the creed with utmost realism." [32]

Catholic faith = "a submission to the real" [33]

Incarnation as "a mystery of reconciled opposites." [33]

Christ as head of creation (cosmic dimension of Christology was maintained in the East). [34]

"... the Incarnation of the Word must have a bearing not only on human destiny but on that of the larger universe of nature..... Blondel and Teilhard: "...the ancient Catholic heritage regarding the universal headship of Christ"..... Biblical texts..... [34-35]

Christ's existence and life "have constitutive and transformative importance for the entire universe"..... on recapitulation, cf. Ephesians 1.10. [36]

Rahner: "the evolution of the world as a gradual ascent that comes to its peak in Christ." [37]

"...cosmic redemption." [38]

*Gaudium et Spes* [38]

Christ's headship of the Church: head and body image.... Paul: "a real physical incorporation" [39]

Christ as the fullness of God, and Church as the fullness of Christ. [40]

Church as the completion of Christ..... "The Church... supplies a certain extension in catholicity to the sufferings of Christ." [42]

Mohler: "catholicity as a union of diverse parts in a community of mutual support." [43]

Heresy = "separation from the multitude for the sake of some particular insight" [43]

Each heretical community "fell into distortion because deprived of the full context of Catholic truth and life." [43]

"... the Church's catholicity is continually borrowed from her Lord." [44]

"It is the very nature of the Holy Spirit to be one person in many persons." [45]

"...principle of unity in diversity" – fosters communion without effacing differences" [46]

Catholicity: both Christ and the Holy Spirit. [47]

### **Chapter 3 – Catholicity from Below: The Aspirations of Nature**

"...differences in anthropology have an inevitable impact on ecclesiology" [48]

Situates Catholicity between Pelagianism and Lutheranism in evaluating the impact of Original Sin..... Catholicity stresses "continuity within discontinuity"..... Justification, faith, and conversion are human acts elicited by grace. [49-50]

Bonhoeffer pleaded "for recovery of the concept of the natural on the basis of the gospel." [51]

Bonhoeffer saw Lutheran rejection of the natural as "a disastrous mistake." [51]

Dulles: *continuity* of created nature within the *change* occasioned/caused by original Sin. [52]

Gilkey on "the drive toward rationality" as "one of the distinctive strengths of Catholic Christianity." [53]

Catholic reverence for human nature requires respect for (1) reason) and (2) human freedom. [53]

Vatican I: the act of faith is a free act..... Catholic respect of human nature extends to senses and body. [54]

Tyrrell: Catholicism as “a religion of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit.” [54]

Karl Adam: The Church loves man’s “bodily and sensitive structure” [54]

“Art is native to Catholicism, since reverence for the body and for nature is native to it.” [55]

Liturgy appeals to all the senses. [55]

“The new creation is far more than a cancelling out of human guilt.” [55]

Twentieth century Catholic theology “prefers the earlier idea that human nature is intrinsically ordered toward the goal of eternal blessedness.” [57]

‘Pure nature’ has never existed. [57]-

Human nature has an inherent tendency to be perfected in Christ. [57]

Catholic evaluation of non-Christian religions. [60-62]

Tyrrell: “Catholicism paganizes Christianity in order to Christianize paganism”..... a sense of solidarity with all the religions of the world. [61]

“Catholicity... requires one to rise above exclusiveness and sectarianism without in any way falling into indifferentism”..... To be Catholic is to be open to the truth, good, and holiness in all religions. [62]

“God’s saving grace is operative among all peoples”..... the religions are channels for the mediation of grace. [63]

“The Christian theologian cannot set a prior limits to the heights to which grace can raise persons and social groups that are inculpably ignorant of the gospel.” [64]

Catholic attitude toward nature relates to Catholic involvement in society and culture. [64-65]

“Social Catholicism, by seeking to achieve concrete solutions of a particular kind could come to appreciate the secret workings of grace in the hearts of men and women who, without formal adherence to Christianity, sought to promote truth and community.” [65]

Novak and Danielou on the need for Catholicism to avoid the temptation to sectarianism. [66]

“... the Catholic tendency is to accept provisionally the composition of the pure and the impure, the saintly and the sinful, not in order to rest in what is deficient but in order to pass by means of it into deeper communion with God.” [67]

#### **Chapter 4 – Catholicity in Breadth: Mission and Communion**

“... a community that is expansive and inclusive”..... the capacity of God’s gift in and through the Church “to communicate itself without limit to persons of every kind and condition.” [68]

Jesus's ministry anticipated the universalism of the Church..... "Jesus' prophetic challenge to define boundaries of membership in God's people" [69]

Paul and Acts: "...the vanquishing of natural social barriers"... Catholicity of the early church was both inclusive and expansive. [71]

"The main theme of Acts is the outward thrust of the Church's mission." [71-72]

The word "all" in the great commission (Mt. 28.18-19). [72]

"...global missionary obligation" [72]

"As the Church spreads her faith, she shows forth the transcendence of the gospel and the universal working of the grace of the Holy Spirit." [74]

"...the church is driven by an inner dynamism to represent the whole of humanity as the recipient of redemption." [74]

Vatican II's "consciousness of cultural pluralism"... "gave greater acknowledgment to legitimate differences within the universal Church than had ever been given before." [75]

Accommodation to the genius of each culture "so that, by a wonderful exchange, all the richness of the nations may be given to Christ as an inheritance." [75]

Paul VI: Church "is bound to make herself native to every clime, culture, and race." [76]

"...movement from monolithic to pluriform unity" – but there is the question of distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable diversity. [77]

Newman: "Catholicism... has the power of holding together in unity elements that in all other schools are incompatible." [78]

"The Counter-Reformation trend towards uniformity continued well into the twentieth century, but was checked by Vatican II, which aimed to restore the proper balance." [82]

"The Catholic esteems the saints as living embodiments of the gospel and archetypal instances of its transforming power." [85]

"The saints are those in whom Christ's totally selfless love is present and operative." [85]

"Only the fullness of God, communicated through Christ and the Holy Spirit, can give the Church the dynamism and inclusiveness implied in the concept of extensive Catholicity." [86]

## **Chapter 5 -- Catholicity in Length: Tradition and Development**

"The abiding identity of the Church as a whole through the centuries..." [87]

Thomas's threefold catholicity: (1) geographical extension (including heaven and purgatory); (2) open to all persons; (3) temporal – extends back to Abel and forward into eternity. [87]

"Continuity in the temporal dimension corresponds to communion in the spatial." [88]

In space and time, "the Church is a symbolic center *from* which the divine fullness of life, as given in Jesus Christ, radiates outwards to all creation, and *towards* which that life, diffused through all creation, gravitates for its conscious and socially palpable expression." [88]

Eschatological aspect of the Church. [90-91]

"...the Church of God, with all its essential attributes, does exist in the present age, but it remains to be perfected in the age to come." [91]

The Church is not perfectly one, holy, catholic now, but it also does not possess these qualities only in hope and promise. [91]

Dulles makes three points relative to a Catholic understanding of the pilgrim Church: (1) The pilgrim church participates really, though imperfectly, in the fullness of God's gift in Christ; (2) this participation brings about a real continuity between different generations of Christians; and (3) different periods have their own distinctive character; the latter is able to complement and complete what has been initiated by the earlier. [92]

The Church "cannot be content to point forward to something not yet given; it must guard and dispense what has been irrevocably given in the definitive sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit." [94]

Rahner: "The grace of God no longer comes (when it does come) steeply from on high, from a God absolutely transcending the world, in a movement that is without history, purely episodic; it is permanently in the world in tangible historical form, established in the flesh of Christ as part of the world, of humanity, and of its very history." [94]

Protestant "tendency to equate development with decline." [96]

"...the Bible cannot be the rule of faith except when conjoined with a continuous Church tradition." [97]

"...as Newman pointed out, events of great importance require a considerable span of time in order to be rightly comprehended." [97]

The New Testament "gives only the early stages of a continuing process whereby the revelation of God perpetuates itself in the Church." [97]

But Catholic Christianity is also committed to a fundamental continuity. "...it must be possible to trace a direct line from past to present" since the same Spirit inspires in every age. [98]

Catholicism opposes both archaism and modernism. [98]

"Just as in early modern times Catholics tended to confuse universality with uniformity, so they tended to equate continuity with immutability." [99]

This extreme conservatism is no longer tenable in light of historical consciousness. [100]

Vatican II: "...a dynamic, progressive theory of tradition." [100]

"Changes in the cultural climate thus introduce a certain discontinuity in the self-understanding and self-expression of the Church." [101]

"...temporal catholicity calls for responsiveness to the times and seasons." [102]

“...each major era of Church history has a special task or vocation.” [102]

“...the docility with which we should approach the past.” [103]

“...sifting out the truth of the Christian witness from the distortions of human blindness and ignorance.” [103-104]

“...a corrective as well as an interpretive function.” [104]

Congar’s four principles, so that reform does not do violence to the essential structures of the Church: (1) respect for the given reality of the Church; (2) concern for communion with the whole; (3) patience with delays; (4) authentic reform must be based on authentic principles given in the gospel and the tradition. [104]

### **Chapter 6 – The Structures of Catholicity: Sacramental and Hierarchical**

Catholicism relies on institutional/sacramental structures to mediate the truth and grace of Christ – these are necessary to sustain all four of the previously considered dimensions of catholicity. [106]

The institutional “is positively cultivated as having intrinsic religious value.” [106]

Schleiermacher: Protestantism – individual’s relationship to the Church depends on his relationship to Christ. In Catholicism, the reverse is true. [107]

Church as Mother. [110-111]

This analogy “implies that the Church is prior to her members and that they depend upon her for their origin and continuation of their new life in Christ.” [111]

Church as sacrament: “Grace itself has an incarnational structure, for it seeks to express itself in a palpable and social form, and does not fully achieve itself until it succeeds in doing so.” [111-112]

Sacraments “are not reducible to their intelligible import.” [112]

The work on the whole person, not simply the mind and will, and achieve a real transformation. [113]

The prescribed words become embodied in the elements, the gestures, the persons. The words are quasi-sacramental. [113]

De Lubac: sacraments are sources of grace because they draw recipients into a new or closer union with the Church. [113]

Eucharist as sacrament of unity. [115-116]

Three levels of the Eucharist as sacrament of unity: (1) it effects community within the Church; (2) establishes communion between humanity and God; (3) communication of life to the material world. [117-118]

Orders as sacrament, “since it is one of those crucial acts whereby the Church actualizes her own essence as an organically structured body.” [119]

Bishops are for preserving unity in both breadth and length. [119]

“...the apostolic succession is the institutional counterpart of the apostolic tradition.” [120]

Danger of “magisterial monism.” [121]

Interaction of saints, rulers and scholars (Newman). [121-122]

Von Hugel: mystical/rational/institutional. [122]

G.B. Shaw in his preface to *St. Joan*, had a subtitle, “Catholicism not Yet Catholic Enough” [122]

“The traditional virtues of obedience and docility, important though they be, are no substitute for personal integrity and open dialogue.” [123]

Dominant temptations of Catholicism are clericalism and anti-clericalism: both “derive from a failure to appreciate the mutual complementarity of the many states of life within the Church, which serve on occasion as checks and balances.” [124]

Monasticism as “a characteristically Catholic institution.” [124]

Harnack: “a leaven and counterpoise” to ritualism and traditionalism. [124]

“...polycentric community” [126]

### **Chapter 7 – The Centre of Catholicity: Roman Primacy**

Pre-Vatican II “monolithic ecclesiology did not do justice to the idea of catholicity and identity in diversity.” [133]

Vatican II predicates catholicity of the local churches, as well as of the universal church. [133]

*Lumen Gentium*: “The variety of local churches with one common aspiration is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the universal Church.” [133]

“...mutual indwelling... between the universal and the particular Church.” [134]

Patristic age: “The approved doctrine of the Roman Church was the most reliable witness to the faith of the apostles.” [135]

Late middle ages into early modern times essentially were influenced by political theory and understood the papacy in terms of power. [135]

“...supreme jurisdiction” [136]

Vatican II linked papacy to service: witness..... power..... service [136]

The Petrine See and the particular church each enjoy a certain primacy, each of which needs the other. [136]

“The communion of churches is maintained by the interrelation of bishops, who mutually question, criticize, advise, and support one another.” [137]

The pope gathers the bishops into a college of which he is the center of unity. [137]

The pope is responsible for the catholic unity of the whole church – by assuring this unity, he performs a service for all. [137]

Tillard saw subsidiarity as an important corrective to “excesses of centralization in the modern period.” [138]

Soloviev: “the perfect circle of the Universal church requires a unique center...” [140]

“... an authority essentially conservative but nevertheless active.” [140]

“...if the college of bishops succeeds to the college of the apostles there must be in the Episcopal college someone who succeeds to the headship of Peter.” [140]

“Never since the Reformation has there been such readiness on the part of Protestants, Anglicans, and Orthodox to acknowledge the value of the papacy as a bond of unity.” [142]

“Now that Christianity is becoming for the first time truly planetary and culturally pluralistic it is more important than ever to have a central authority that will keep the regional groupings in communion. The centrifugal forces of social and cultural diversity must be counterbalanced by the centripetal attraction of a symbolic focus of unity.” [142]

Recent popes “have surely given unprecedented prominence to the catholic dimensions of the papacy.” [143]

“infallible doctrine... must necessarily resonate with the faith of the whole people of God.” [144]

“...if exercised in a way that hampers the leadership of other bishops and pastoral authorities can stand in the way of true catholicity.” [145]

“Rome is the centre, the principle of unity; Catholic is the periphery, the principle of diversity. There can be no centre without a circumference, no circumference without a centre.” [146]

Roman primacy, Catholic communion... are dialectical opposites which exist and flourish in mutual relatedness.” [146]

### **Chapter 8 – Catholic and Protestant: Contrary or Complementary?**

Congar on five defects of Catholic-Protestant polarization in the sixteenth century, including (Dulles paraphrases): “no real effort was made to understand the mentality that made the positions of the other side seem coherent and even obvious to their adherents.” [148-149]

Drey (of Tübingen) argued that “a certain kind of Protestantism had existed since the beginnings, even within the Catholic Church.” [151]

Schaff identified three eras: (1) Petrine – authority and law; (2) Pauline – free and justifying faith; (3) Johannine – reconciliation. [150-151].

Mohler posited a dialectic within the Church, but also a dialectic between the Church and heretical sects; he argued to the impossibility of Catholic/Protestant reconciliation. [152]

Barth insisted that Protestantism must allow itself to be questioned by Catholicism. [154]

Tillich on Catholic substance and Protestant principle: “each needing the other as its own counterpart.” [155]



Bouyer held the principles of Protestantism to be essentially affirming (*sola: gratia, fide, scriptura, Christus, Deo Gloria*) and admitting of a Catholic interpretation. [157-158]

“...Catholic comprehensiveness is so great that it includes the necessary principles for the self-reformation of the church.” [158]

Vatican II as a council of reform: (1) imposition of uniformity; (2) neglect of the need for change; (3) church without need for reform; (4) restriction of grace to ecclesial structures; (5) sacramental emphasis obscuring centrality of the Word; (6) Tradition as parallel to the Word – two-source theory of Revelation; (7) worship as official ritual, minimizing the importance of personal participation; (8) clericalism – neglect of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ and the charisms of the laity; (9) emphasis on law and obedience, obscuring conscience and freedom; (10) Catholic emphasis on completeness can obscure what is central. [159-161]

In each case Vatican II reaffirmed the distinctive Catholic principle, but tempered it so as to recognize the legitimacy of the criticism that may be provoked by an excessive reliance on the Catholic principle.” [163]

“...the Catholic principle, calling for acceptance of the given, for mediation, and for conformity, must be balanced by some other principle that gives scope to criticism, immediacy, and spontaneity.” [163]

Heiler, the evangelical element; Weber, the charismatic factor; Tillich, the Protestant principle; Drey, Mysticism; Newman, the prophetic office; von Hugel, the mystical element; Haughton, Sophia. [163]

“...the two principles can be dialectically united in a single Church.” [164]

The Catholic Church “can call attention to the danger that, where the proper sacramental and ministerial structures are lacking, the Christian substance is likely to be dissolved or at least attenuated by subjectivism, relativism, individualism, and secularism.” [165]

### **Conclusion – Prospects for Catholicity**

“Catholicity... is both a gift and a task. It designates not only a present reality but also a programme for action.” [170]

American Episcopalian theologian John Knox held that the second century Catholic movement was the ecumenical movement of early Christianity. [172]

Vatican II insisted that ecumenism be pursued for the sake of catholicity. [172]

“Pentecost... is a catholic event; it represents Babel in reverse, the restoration of communication among the estranged peoples.” [173]

“Catholics have rarely felt the suspicion and antipathy toward culture characteristic of sectarian Protestantism.” [175]

But Catholicism must hear Protestant warnings against any identification of Christ and culture. [175]

Extreme cultural pluralism is as dangerous as cultural monism. [176]

“...unreconciled diversity would be detrimental to the catholicity of the Church.” [176]

“Catholic unity cannot be formed on a merely transcendental experience of grace. It must be verifiable on the level of utterance and deed, and must be embodied in symbols accessible to all.” [176]

“... inherited symbols must not be hastily abandoned.” [176]

“Relying on the powerful but limited symbols and expressions of the faith in its own heritage, the church of the future may be able to move gradually towards a greater cosmopolitanism in which different cultural expressions of the faith enrich and correct one another through reciprocal communication.” [176]

Some Catholic theologians regard other religious scriptures as ‘inspired,’ “at least in an analogous sense.” [177]

“...the Church would seek to integrate the partial catholicities of philosophy, science, politics, economics, art, and recreation in relation to the total destiny of the universe in Christ. Compared with all other catholicities, that of the Church is not exclusive of competitive but contributory and complementary.” [178]

“...open view of catholicity.” [178]

“...the believing Christian... assured by the promises of Christ, remains confident that the catholicity of the Church and all other catholicities are, in the long run, on a path of convergence.” [179]

“The increased mechanization of life threatens to substitute quantity for quality, industry for nature, and planning for providence, thereby undermining what we have called catholicity in height and in depth.” [180]

There are other challenges to length and breadth. [180]

“... it is not easy to cultivate the Catholic cast of mind” [180]

Concluding paragraph spells out what is needed to cultivate that cast of mind. [180]