
This volume is the fourth to be published by Mannion and his collaborators in the developing Ecclesiological Investigations Network, which began with a series of conversations at Chichester University and has since grown quickly to include a number of international conferences and an ongoing program unit at the American Academy of Religion meetings. This journal has also been in close partnership with the Network, including a special issue (2008, vol. 4, no. 2) devoted to its first international conference.

If this volume is indicative of the quality to be expected of the series, then it raises high hopes for a worthy English-language, twenty-first century successor to Yves Congar’s *Unam Sanctam* series. Collecting essays by sixteen scholars on plurality, diversity, unity, and ‘otherness’ in ecclesiology, this work draws from a series of lectures on ‘Church in Our Times’ at Liverpool Hope University in early 2006 and from invited contributions from additional scholars. The ‘otherness’ of its title is evident in the breadth of its explorations: general studies of ecclesiological inclusivism, diversity, and dialogue; particular studies coming from Indian, feminist, and Pakistani contexts; reflections on unity and power in Roman Catholic and Anglican confessional contexts; and investigations of methodology in ecclesiology. Rather than attempting to repeat the editor’s success in summarizing each paper, I would like to outline the methodological strengths of this volume as the kind of systematic ecclesiology that a church aware of its internal ‘otherness’ requires.

*Church and Religious ‘Other’* succeeds as a single volume precisely because its composition reflects the insight of Mannion and his collaborators that ‘diversity and plurality are blessings for the church and the wider world alike and need not be feared or shunned’ (p. 8). Serious attention to the blessing of otherness, not only in ecclesial practice but in ecclesiological reflection upon that practice, entails a withdrawal from ecclesiological methods that continue to pursue the false dream of a single volume *De ecclesia*, constructed from a single perspective and overly certain, or even ignorant, of its presuppositions and assumptions. The collaborative ecclesiology of this book and of the Ecclesiological Investigations Network as a whole demonstrates the epistemic humility of a community of scholars aware of their rootedness in plurality. It should be noted that these authors’ humility differs from a lukewarm, and ultimately disingenuous, tolerance – these are theologians, historians, and social theorists asking serious questions and stating real positions, but they do...
so firmly yet softly, advancing the construction of an adequate ecclesiology with and not at each other.

The challenge, common to all collected volumes, of guiding the reader through a conversation rather than stacking disparate essays one upon another, is met through careful editing and through the grouping of essays into three major sections. The first, entitled ‘Ecumenical and Pluralist Contexts and Questions’, grounds the conversation in more detailed analysis of ecclesial existence in concrete situations where the Christian church meets, and is, ‘the other’ in a variety of circumstances. The second section, ‘Church, Inclusivity and Diversity’, broadens the conversation to ask some more theoretical ecclesiological questions about the strengths and limits of inclusivity in the Christian church. These articles remain rooted in concrete contemporary and historical situations, however – Mark Chapman’s essay on the Windsor Report in the light of Anglican history and Mary McClintock Fulkerson’s work on the embodiment of ecclesial propriety in relation to US racism are particularly striking examples of ecclesiological reflection on current issues rooted in a close reading of past practice. The third section, ‘Constructive Explorations for the Future’, is not only the most future-oriented but also the most ‘systematic’ in the sense of presenting constructive theological explorations of the church, the role of the theologian in the church, and the nature of the church as a community of dialogue and of learning.

Kenneth Wilson’s definition of the church as ‘a living conversation’ suggests understanding this volume as an ecclesial work, in a strong sense. It embodies what Steven Shakespeare identifies as ‘a discipline of hospitality’ in making room for the location, concerns, and gifts of the ‘other’ in the heart of one’s own Christian identity and, in this case, one’s theological and ecclesiological reflection upon that identity. There are two ways in which the work begun in this volume may have been enhanced, or may be further pursued in the future works of this series. First, as in any collected volume in which essays are prepared individually and then brought into conversation, the liveliness of the dialogue in which the ideas were first presented is sometimes faded. It would be a real benefit to develop some mechanism in which the dialogical nature of the chapters could be further manifested, either through additional short contributions or by reports of some of the responses from the forums in which the ideas were first presented. Second, this volume is somewhat misleadingly named, in that the relation of the ‘church and religious “other”’, in terms of dialogue between Christianity and other religious traditions, is a minor theme in the collection. The lack of easily accessible language to discuss inner-Christian or inner-denominational ‘otherness’, as distinct from interreligious