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0521450608 - Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought

- Daphne Hampson

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CHRISTIAN CONTRADICTIONS

THE STRUCTURES OF LUTHERAN AND CATHOLIC THOUGHT

Catholic thought and Lutheran thought are differently structured, embodying divergent conceptions of the self in relation to God. Failing to grasp the Lutheran paradigm, Catholics have wrenched Luther into an inappropriate framework. Roman/Lutheran ecumenism, culminating in the 'Joint declaration' of 1999, attempts to reconcile incompatible systems, based on different philosophical presuppositions. Drawing on a wealth of material, both Continental and Anglo-Saxon, the author thinks through these structural questions within a historical context. But how – within a religion of revelation – can God be conceptualised as both foundational to the self and yet also an 'other' with whom the self inter-relates? Kierkegaard is shown in a complex model to hold together strengths which historically have been exemplified by the two traditions.

This is an important work in systematic theology which considers questions quite fundamental to Western religion. It should be of interest to theologians of all backgrounds and also to church historians.

DAPHNE HAMPSON is Reader in Divinity at the University of St Andrews. She holds doctorates in Modern History (from Oxford), in Systematic Theology (from Harvard) and a master's degree in Continental Philosophy (from Warwick). She is the author of *Theology and Feminism* (1990), *After Christianity* (1996) and of numerous articles in the field of feminism and theology. She has lectured and broadcast widely in Britain, the USA, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands.

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Preface

Anyone who works on a subject over a period of more than twenty years owes many debts of gratitude. It was in 1971 in his 'Theological Controversies' course at Harvard Divinity School that Arthur McGill proposed that we should study the subject of justification on the one hand in Luther, on the other at Trent. I believe that I was immediately captivated. (The second-hand copy of John Dillenberger's *Selections* from Luther's writings – which I bought thinking I should only need it for a week – is still with me and in dilapidated condition.) When some years later I came to write a doctoral thesis I had no doubt as to what the topic should be (though I had some difficulty in convincing my teachers). Then there was a day when Arthur McGill asked how Kierkegaard related to all this. I replied, as though it was self-evident, that his was the best solution I had encountered in the history of Western thought to the split between Catholic and Lutheran. 'There', he said, 'is your thesis.'

In the years that I have thought about this topic, first writing a thesis and then more recently this book, many people have talked with me about my work. In 1976 I went to see Philip Watson, whose writing on Luther (at a time when few were interested) remains a landmark. Trained as he was in motif research, he profoundly influenced my own reading of Luther. I was also privileged to talk with Gordon Rupp, who kindly gave me books. Other Luther scholars with whom I have had useful conversations are Timothy Lull and Ian Siggins. More recently Carl Braaten, in correspondence, pointed me in the direction of Finnish Luther scholarship. At an early date James Luther Adams took a real interest in my work. And I had memorable conversations with Krister Stendahl who gave me insights into the Scandinavian Lutheran context.

On the Catholic side various people have been so kind as to read my work and to comment. Responding to an early draft, Herbert

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McCabe declared that Catholicism itself comprehended both of those things which I wished to say. Taking me aback, this remark enabled me the better to conceptualise why this was not the case! John Ashton made useful suggestions. I believe that John (Jack) Mahoney was slightly dumbfounded to find (at a Catholic conference which I had been invited to address on the subject of feminism) that I was familiar with the Tridentine documents and wished to discuss their Aristotelian context! Among Anglicans I must record my gratitude to Henry Chadwick who, having read the doctoral thesis, greatly encouraged me.

I am also grateful to some of those who have been involved in ecumenical conversations. Michael Root, formerly of the Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, enabled me to get onto the trail of documents from the international discussions between the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation. It was he who urged me to go to the Lutheran Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg. At Strasbourg the director of that institute, Theodor Dieter, devoted hours of his time to discussing with me (in the summer of 1999) the current state of play both within Germany and between the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican. He continues to send me material hot off the press.

In reciting debts of gratitude I have also to thank my students. During the years between writing the doctoral thesis and the book my interest in the subject was kept alive through teaching courses on the differing structures of Lutheran and Catholic thought and on Kierkegaard. The need to present this material carefully and to consider it from all angles was, I believe, a very helpful foundation for writing the book. I remember an honours seminar which met at the unfortunate hour of nine o'clock throughout a Scottish winter in an under-heated room. We had in that group two middle of the road 'public school' Anglicans, a moderate Catholic now a priest, a highly conservative Catholic (a convert from Evangelical Christianity) who subsequently went off to join Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and a radical American post-Christian feminist who was deeply informed about Bultmann. Interestingly it has been a number of this group of students with whom I have subsequently been in touch. It was a real intellectual experience for all of us and they and I remember it with glee. I must also thank my erstwhile colleague Ivor Davidson, who proved himself deeply informed about sixteenth-century Christianity and made detailed comments on my work.

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Naturally I am grateful to have been granted the use of libraries. Harvard Divinity School was initially indispensable and I have been back there since to find further American Lutheran material in particular. The librarians in St Andrews have always been most helpful and have procured obscure material through Inter Library Loan. I was particularly fortunate that 1983, just before I completed the thesis, was a Luther centennial year and, thanks to the Goethe Institute, a collection of the latest German Luther scholarship travelled around Britain, coming to St Mary's College, St Andrews. The hours spent poring over those books proved to be my introduction to modern German-language Luther scholarship. In 1984 I spent a week at the library of the Kirchliche Hochschule in Berlin-Zehlendorf, carrying away a suitcase full of photocopies. Likewise in 1996 I spent a week at the Kierkegaard archive and research centre in Copenhagen. On that occasion I was allowed my suitcase of photocopies free! In recent years I have made extensive use of Cambridge University Library. Finally, at just the right point in the research, I was able to spend the week I mention in Strasbourg. That allowed me access to all the ecumenical material relating to the international Roman/Lutheran discussions on justification and to a German-language library at the point that I needed to pursue references which had eluded me in Cambridge and Harvard.

Various institutions and funds have most kindly given me assistance. An invitation to lecture in the theology faculty of the Karl Marx University at Leipzig in the (then) German Democratic Republic allowed me to spend the week in West Berlin. (It was on this journey that I was also able to stay with friends at the Lutheran seminary which was once Luther's monastery in Wittenberg and to imagine him *in situ*.) An invitation to lecture to the Diocese of Newark, New Jersey, in the autumn of 1998, enabled the week back at Harvard. I spent the spring of 1997, when I was starting to write the book, as a member of High Table at King's College Cambridge on sabbatical from St Andrews, and I was extended this privilege again in the autumn of 1999 as I was completing it. I have to thank the Deas Fund (and the late Helena Deas who left her money to the members of staff of the School of Divinity at St Andrews) for enabling me to go to Copenhagen. Finally I am grateful to the Carnegie Institute for providing much of the money for me to visit the Strasbourg Ecumenical Institute.

A number of students have most kindly worked with me on the

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book and have been paid by the Deas Fund. Sarah Nicholson kindly put quotations from the thesis (written before the days of personal computers) on disk. Clare Jarvis, a research student in Latin, translated the Latin of the Regensburg joint statement on justification. Catherine Heatlie converted references to quotations culled from various sources to the standard Weimarer Ausgabe of Luther's writings. Elayne Deary put the bibliography on disk and Simon Podmore did much work checking references. Anja Klein and Patrick Schnabel made sure my German was correct. I am grateful to all of them.

My relationship with Cambridge University Press has been protracted. It was Alex Wright who first believed in the book. Ruth Parr, for the short while she was there, was equally supportive. But above all I have to thank Kevin Taylor, quite the finest editor with whom I have worked in my publishing career. He had the patience to wait for this book which he somehow knew would finally appear. I owe a very considerable debt of gratitude to the two readers employed by the press. Fergus Kerr, OP, has given me insights into Catholicism which I might have lacked. James Gustafson gave hours of his time during his retirement to a perusal of my manuscript, handing over to me pages of hand-written comments. His grappling with the thesis of the book provoked me into clarifying further what it is I am arguing. Jan Chapman has been a splendid copy-editor.

But finally at the end of this 'roll of honour' I return in my thoughts to Arthur McGill. He it was who inspired the work in the first place and it was his insights and reading of the sources which enabled me to grasp the importance of this topic. On the one hand a Canadian Presbyterian who had written his doctoral thesis on Barth, and on the other hand deeply informed about Catholic theology, Art McGill could (unusually) inhabit both Protestant and Catholic thought worlds. He had a marked ability to interpret existentially theological documents deriving from another age, making them come alive. How often while teaching have I heard his way of formulating issues ringing through my own articulations! He died young after severe illness and having published little – thus his legacy has in part to be his students' work. I can only be grateful to have had such an inspirational teacher at the early stages of my theological career. Thus it is to the memory of Arthur McGill that I dedicate this book.

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TRANSLATION

Having learnt my Luther from numerous secondary sources (which use different translations) as well as from reading Luther, I have standardised the situation by giving references to the standard German *Weimarer Ausgabe* (*WA*) of Luther's works. Translations from German secondary sources are my own unless I have specified otherwise. In the case of Danish (a language I do not know) I have been perplexed as to what to do. I am very clear that I prefer the earlier translations of Kierkegaard which seem to me more subtle. I have therefore for the most part used these translations, though I have given the reference to the more recent translations in a footnote. When I have been given help with a text, in one case Danish, in another Latin, I have acknowledged this with a footnote.

LANGUAGE

I am myself a feminist who feels strongly about inclusive language. What, however, I have done here is to retain the use of the word 'man', since that exactly suits the material about which I am writing. These authors did take the male as somehow the norm for humanity and were unclear as to whether or not woman was included. When I am considering the situation today or putting forward my own opinions then of course I use inclusive language.