

# MANIFESTING PERSONS: A CHURCH IN TENSION

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In the *Republic* Plato views the city as the human soul writ large, and by exploring the visible nature of the city he seeks to unravel the invisible mystery of the soul. Likewise, but in the inverse, this paper begins from a theological notion of personhood in order to provide a broad framework or an imaginative construct to conceive of Church unity. This framework will be formed in light of a relational notion of personhood inspired by Joseph Ratzinger. It will be argued that an ecclesial dimension is necessary for the fulfilment of what it means to be a human person, a being in relation; the Church manifests persons. As human persons exist in the midst of history it means that an important aspect of personhood also concerns how one interacts within the present. To interact, to participate, rightly requires right perception. Following Romano Guardini's conception of personhood formed in tension, it will be contended that right perception, a proper harmony in this life, requires tension, a tension that only the Church can provide. Analogously, this paper suggests that the Church, East and West, will most flourish in a united tension, a coming together of difference rather than a complete dissolving of our respective distinctions.

## *I. The Church is a house of living stones*

*'I am their great union, I am their eternal oneness.  
I am the way of all their ways, on me the millennia are  
drawn to God'.<sup>1</sup>*

Relational ontology is arguably a trinitarian truth that resides at the heart of all Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger writes, 'the idea of the Catholic, the all-embracing, the inner unity of I and Thou and We does not constitute one chapter of theology among others. It is the key that opens the door to the proper understanding of the whole'.<sup>3</sup> In this trinitarian mystery we are given a glimpse of personhood in its perfection.<sup>4</sup> The Father is person, the Son is person, the Holy Spirit is person. And

<sup>1</sup> Gertrude von Le Fort, *Hymns to the Church*, trans. Margaret Chanler (London: Sheed & Ward, 1937), 21.

<sup>2</sup> The title for this section is from Origen found in Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 91.

<sup>3</sup> Ratzinger, 'Foreword' to Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 11–12; at 11.

<sup>4</sup> 'I believe a profound illumination of God as well as man occurs here, the decisive illumination of

yet, each person is fully God, and each person is fully united, so that we cannot say that there was a time when there was the Father but not the Son, or there was the Son but not the Holy Spirit. This unity is not contrary to personhood. There are three sides to this. First, a unity is the coming together of difference.<sup>5</sup> Thus, to speak of the unity of the Trinity necessitates three persons. Second, it is in relational unity that distinctions can be made. That is, for example, we know the Son because he is not the Father.<sup>6</sup> Third, unity of persons, which never dissolves the person but elevates the person, also forms a unity so closely related that it is inseparable; it is one being.<sup>7</sup> Briefly then, trinitarian theology reveals to us that personhood is found in relation; the unified whole and unique person are not opposites.

There is a clear distinction between individuals and persons. The fierce individualism present in Western culture is contrary to Christian anthropology. Ratzinger points out that modern man seeks to be God, so far so good—in theological parlance we call this deification. However, the problem is that for modern secular man the image of God ‘is of a “divinity that is conceived as purely egotistical”. With this purely monotheistic-egoistic divinity, there is no bi-directional “relationality”. Whereas, the true God, the Christian God is “of his own nature, being-for (Father), being from (Son), and being-with (Holy Spirit)”’.<sup>8</sup> To put it differently, the modern desire is not deification but ‘demonification’.<sup>9</sup>

The fall of man, mirroring the fall of angels, is the breakdown of relationship and the attempt to build a fortress of autonomy. This individualistic self-imprisonment rips and tears at the image of God imprinted on man’s very being. Christ came to pour the oil, the salve of his life on this wound of existence to restore the relational *imago Dei*. Henri de Lubac writes, ‘That image of God, the image of the Word, which the incarnate Word restores and gives back to its glory, is “I myself”; it is also the other, every other. It is that aspect of *me* in which I coincide with every other man,

what person must mean in terms of Scripture: *not* a substance that closes itself in itself, but the phenomenon of complete relativity, which is, of course, realized in its entirety only in the one who is God, but which indicates the direction of all personal being’. Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology’, in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 2 *Anthropology and Culture*, eds David L. Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy, trans. W. J. O’Hara (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 103–118; at 109.

<sup>5</sup> Without difference there is no unity but rather sameness. Hence, for example, marriage between a man and a woman is a proper unity, two become one flesh. John Paul II writes, ‘Together they thus become one single subject, as it were, of that act and that experience, although they remain two really distinct subjects in this unity’. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Ratzinger describes the trinitarian unity as ‘a unity that takes its being from the dialogue of love’. Joseph Ratzinger and Peter Seewald, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 267.

<sup>7</sup> ‘It is the nature of the trinitarian personality to be pure relation and so the most absolute unity’. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 187.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew T.J. Kaethler, ‘Freedom in Relation: Joseph Ratzinger and Alexander Schmemmann in Dialogue’, *New Blackfriars* 95.1058 (July 2014): 397–411; at 404.

<sup>9</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 245–249.

it is the hallmark of our common origin and the summons to our common destiny. It is our very unity in God.<sup>10</sup> The living reality through which Christ unites us is the Church.<sup>11</sup> The role of the Church, as Alexander Schmemmann posited, is to transform individuals into persons.<sup>12</sup> But, we must ask, 'Are there no other forms of community that crack open the shell of the autonomous individual? And why choose the Church as the social program for this end?'

The Church is *sui generis*; she is not a social program, one option among many, and because, as de Lubac argues, 'the idea of unity is not unity itself.'<sup>13</sup> That is, the Church is not a community akin to a local club or society. In clubs and societies we have the idea of unity but not unity itself.<sup>14</sup> But is there that much of a distinction between the Church and other communities? Guardini makes an interesting claim in this regard. He argues that true community fosters unique personality without sliding into individualism, a collected aggregate, or a monolithic oneness that destroys the person (e.g., communism). Such true community, what I refer to as unity, Guardini claims is beyond the scope of man's natural powers: One of two things must happen. Either the power of the community will burst all bounds, swamp the free personality of the individual, and strip him of spiritual dignity, or else the individual personality will assert itself victoriously, and in the process sever its organic bonds with the community. So deeply has original sin shattered the fundamental structure of human life.<sup>15</sup> To add to this, William Cavanaugh astutely points out that,

The state *mythos* is based on a 'theological' anthropology that precludes any truly social process. The recognition of our participation in one another through our creation in the image of God is replaced by the recognition of the other as the bearer of individual rights, which may or may not be given by God, by which serve only to separate what is mine from what is thine. Participation in God and in one another is a threat to the formal mechanism of contract, which assumes that we are *essentially* individuals who enter into

<sup>10</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 340.

<sup>11</sup> 'Today's widespread tendency to relegate faith to the private sphere thus, contradicts its very nature. We need the Church in order to confirm our faith and in order to experience the gifts of God: his Word, the Sacraments, the support of grace and the witness of love. Like this, our "I" can be perceived in the "we" of the Church and, at the same time, be the recipient and the protagonist of an overwhelming event: experiencing communion with God, that is the foundation of communion among men. In a world in which individualism seems to rule personal relationships, making them ever more fragile, the faith calls us to be the People of God, to be Church, bearers of the love and communion of God for all mankind.' Pope Benedict XVI, *General Audience Sainte Peter's Square Wednesday, 31 October 2012*, found September 19, 2019 at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121031.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121031.html)

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 143.

<sup>13</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 342.

<sup>14</sup> Although there may be a pale reflection.

<sup>15</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Meaning of the Church* (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2018), 106.

relationship with one another only when it is to one's individual advantage to do so.<sup>16</sup>

The same logic of the state *mythos* set out by Cavanaugh applies to communities. Guardini suggests that there are commonalities between natural communities and the Church, even similar means; however, fundamentally they are different because natural communities do not have the sacrament of community, the Eucharist. This brings us to the need for there to be unity *itself* and not just the *idea* of unity, but before dealing with this directly one more point needs to be highlighted. In natural relations there is a collision of rights. Therefore, a community can only come together if people are willing to give up a certain amount of individuality in order for there to be some semblance of unity.<sup>17</sup> To put it differently, naturally speaking, individuality is in opposition to community. Hence, any community thus formed is somewhat artificial. In contrast, the community of the Church is not comprised of the bumping and jostling of individual rights with the whole, but is rather one aspect of the whole meeting with another aspect of the whole. That is, the Church is the Kingdom of God on earth, and so is each human person. Where Christ is there is the Kingdom (Luke 17:21).<sup>18</sup> Quoting Origen, Ratzinger asserts that Christ 'is *hē autobasileia*, "the Kingdom in person" [das Reich in Person]'. Therefore, if the Christ life is within you, then the kingdom is present in you. Thus, the community of the Church is the gathering of the Kingdom, the unique aspects of the Kingdom—you and I—coming together with the Kingdom whole.<sup>19</sup>

Returning to unity, where is unity itself? Properly speaking, it is only fully manifest in the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the Love between the Father and the Son, and thus 'his particular quality is to be unity'.<sup>20</sup> Where the Spirit is, there is unity. The Spirit unites, the devil divides. Where is the Spirit? One place for sure: the Church.

<sup>16</sup> William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002), 44.

<sup>17</sup> See Guardini, *Meaning of the Church*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Guardian, writing about St Francis and God's command to him to repair his house, posits, 'This is not a question of the Church as a merely juridical institution enforcing its laws with regard to the individual who could and might live by his own inner freedom and fullness. Here stands the Church, objectively, expressing the universality of everything Christian, independent of the individual. Not only does it stand before the individual; it exists in him'. Romano Guardian, 'St. Francis and Divine Providence', in *The Human Experience: Essays on Providence, Melancholy, Community, and Freedom*, trans. Gregory Roettger O.S.B. (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2018), 1–30; at 24.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 41. Here Ratzinger is unpacking St Augustine's work on the Holy Trinity. The full citation is worth noting: 'If he [the Holy Spirit] is called by what is divine about God, what is shared by Father and Son, then his nature is in fact this, being the communion of the Father and the Son. The particular characteristic of the Holy Spirit is obviously being what is shared by the Father and the Son. His particular quality is to be unity'. Emphasis is in the original text.

It is the work of the Spirit that takes individuals and forms them into the body of Christ. It is the Spirit that takes individuals and forms them into the bride of Christ. The nuptial imagery is apt: like marriage, in the Church persons are formed. By being united to the Father in the Son and through the Spirit we are not only united to the Holy Trinity but to all in all. In baptism we die to the self and are cracked open to the divine through the work of the Spirit in the Church. This divine opening of the self puts us in relation with all things. And as I set out earlier, a person, as revealed in the Trinity, is one in relation. Thus, the Church, so to speak, births persons. Personhood is a type of ecclesial becoming. The Church is not simply the means but, in a sense, is also the end. The Church is the manifestation of Christianity. It is the manifestation of redemption, for it is in her that Christ pours his salvific ointment into the fracturing festering wounds of sin, reforming individuals into persons. She is the reality of redemption that we can touch and see.<sup>21</sup>

## *II. Objectivity: Participating in Reality*

*'I carry in my womb the secrets of the desert, on my head  
the noble web of ancient thought'.<sup>22</sup>*

The Church is the reality of redemption. Being united with the Holy Trinity and thereby with all things one is being transformed from an individual to a person. One aspect of personhood concerns the way in which we participate in reality. Stated differently, relating involves perceiving. To relate rightly we must perceive rightly. There are three key areas of perception: (1) intellectual perception concerning knowledge, (2) moral and social perception, and (3) religious perception. In what follows I will unpack Guardini's thoughts on this matter, his claim that the Church is necessary for perception and is the way to personality.

To understand the import of the Church and personality from Guardini's perspective one must grasp his basic anthropological approach. Guardini maintains that human personality only flourishes, perhaps only exists, in tension.<sup>23</sup> Broadly conceived, the tension exists between what *is* and temporality.

Guardini argues that the human creature is deeply sunk in relativism. We have watched nations rise and fall, political and economic structures collapse, and traditional conceptions of morality disappear in the face of ideologies. All of these

<sup>21</sup> This raises an interesting question: if the Church is both the manifestation of personhood and its means does it follow that a split Church (East-West) affects our personhood?

<sup>22</sup> Le Fort, *Hymns to the Church*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> 'Life has numerous levels in its constructions and progress. It cannot be known by a single, uniform act of judgement, but only through several contrary ones, that is, in terms of tension. Life simply cannot be lived as movement in one direction. Hence the apparent contradictions in the life of a genuinely vital person.' Romano Guardini, 'The Meaning of Community' in *The Human Experience: Essays on Providence, Melancholy, Community, and Freedom*, trans. Gregory Roettger O.S.B. (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2018), 83–107; at 84.



observations highlight the flux and instability that is part of human existence. As long as this experience of constant change is balanced (held in tension) by naive conviction or deeply rooted religious traditions, life can endure. However, in periods of transition in which fixed beliefs have been worn away stability is eviscerated from the human mind:

a sense of transience and limitation takes possession of the soul. It realizes with horror how all things are in flux, are passing away. Nothing any longer stands firm... Every valuation is only provisional. Man thus becomes uncertain and vacillating... He is at the mercy of the fashions prevalent in his surroundings, the fluctuations of public opinion, and his own moods. He no longer possesses any dignity. His life drifts. He lacks everything which we mean by character... he cannot overcome error by truth, evil and weakness by moral strength, the stupidity and inconstancy of the masses by great ideas and responsible leadership, or the flux of time by works born of the determination to embody the eternal values.<sup>24</sup>

Guardini's diagnosis of the human condition continues. He posits that along with the debilitating spiritual and intellectual poverty of relativism comes pride: 'Every social class deifies itself. Art, science, technology—every separate department of life considered itself the sum and substance of reality. There is despairing weakness, hopeless instability, a melancholy consciousness of being at the mercy of a blind irrational force—and side by side with these a pride, as horrible as it is absurd, of money, knowledge, power, and ability'.<sup>25</sup> Following close behind pride is violence.

As a Catholic, shored up by the hope of the Gospel, Guardini does not fall into existential despair. Rather, Guardini acknowledges man's weakness, transience, and power. To be human is to recognise these weaknesses, but *also* we are to recognise the other side, the other pole that provides tension. Man is weak, yet this can be overcome. Man is transient, yet he can aspire for the eternal. Man 'is to be aware of one's powers, of one's limitations, but to be resolved to accomplish deeds of everlasting worth'.<sup>26</sup> The complete human is he who lives in these tensions, when, as Guardini writes, 'they neither destroy each other nor drive each other to extremes, but blend in an evident unity replete with inner tension yet firm, imperilled, yet assured, limited, yet bound on an infinite voyage, this is a complete humanity... A man is human insofar as he truly and humbly combines these two aspects'.<sup>27</sup>

This equilibrium can only fully occur within the Church. It is she who presents us with both the historical and the unconditional. She arouses in us these tensions.

<sup>24</sup> Guardini, *Meaning of the Church*, 61–62

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 63.

In her we meet the absolute and our creatureliness is transformed; in this encounter, we become persons. By providing us with this tension the Church teaches us to see, giving us the lens to intellectually, morally, and religiously see. How tension provides these modes of seeing needs to be enucleated.

Modern man is a relativist. He recognises that all historical facts must be interpreted. Furthermore, the success of the scientific method has flooded into all areas of inquiry and with it the assumption that only the repeatable is truly knowable. Outside the realm of mere facts, the realm of things, man has become hesitant about truth. The Church counters this uncertainty with dogma. Truth is divinely guaranteed and unconditional. There is truth; man does not need to endlessly tread water in the horizonless sea of relativity; he can gain traction; there is a horizon. And with this knowledge man's valuation of himself is corrected. Guardini writes, 'his [man's] judgments are clear, free, and humble. But at the same time, he is aware that there is an Absolute, and that it confronts him here and now in its plenitude. By his faith he receives the Absolute into his soul. Humility and confidence, sincerity and trust unite to constitute the fundamental disposition of a thought adequate with the nature of things.'<sup>28</sup>

Following from intellectual relativism is moral relativism. Moral relativism creates a despot of man's arbitrary impulses by giving them free reign. Moral relativism unleashes the irrational and reduces man to a beast. The Church confronts man on this moral level with absolute values, a pattern, a person of perfection (i.e., Jesus Christ). Likewise, this applies to the life of practice and production, the social teachings of the Church. Through this pattern man is at peace, at rest. 'He rejoices in the fact that he is a creature, and still more that he is called to be a "partaker of the divine nature". His inner life becomes real, concentrated around a fixed centre, supported by eternal laws. His goal becomes clear, his action resolute, his whole life ordered and coherent—he becomes human.'<sup>29</sup>

Lastly, the Church confronts man's ever shifting vision of God. Left to his own devices, each man conceives of God in a different way: God is in nature, God is the strict lawgiver and judge, God is the distant architect, God is found in community and relationships, God is encountered in the vagaries of human emotion, God is a pure and clean abstraction. While some persons retain one such dominating description others move from image to image. By picking and choosing these descriptions man makes God in his own image. Prayer becomes a conversation *with* and justification *of* the self. Reflection and meditation become navel gazing. God is a self-portrait. The Church corrects this with her liturgy, and I would add, her teachings, her catholicity, and her vision of the whole. Guardini beautifully describes the liturgical import:

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 68.

In the liturgy the Church displays God as He really is, clearly and unmistakably, in all His greatness, and sets us in His presence as His creatures. She teaches us those aboriginal methods of communion with God which are adapted to His nature and ours—prayer, sacrifice, sacraments. Through sacred actions and readings she awakes in us those great fundamental emotions of adoration, gratitude, penitence and petition. In the liturgy man stands before God as He really is, in an attitude of prayer which acknowledges that man is a creature and gives honour to God. This brings the entire spiritual world into the right perspective. Everything is called by the right name and assumes its real form—face to face with the true God, man becomes truly man.<sup>30</sup>

In summary, the Church provides the necessary tension that reverberates into the hollows of man filling him with the unconditional in the midst of temporality and thereby making him what he is meant to be, a son of God.

### *III. The Truth Will Set You Free*

*'I was the desire of all times, I was the light of all times, I am  
the fullness of all times'.<sup>31</sup>*

Ratzinger writes, 'If there is no truth about man, then he has no freedom. Only the truth makes us free'.<sup>32</sup> What is this truth? Man is created in the image of God, and 'can only rightly be understood from the viewpoint of God'.<sup>33</sup> In a similar vein, Guardini claims that each of us possesses a pattern of God's divine idea. This is comprised of the universal—we are each human—and the particular—what is absolutely uniquely me. Freedom is when one's total existence is determined by both the universal and the particular, when one lives from the centre of his being. To put it differently, freedom is when man lives in harmony with the divine idea of his personality. Additionally, not only must man live in harmony with his unique divine personality he must also be in harmony with the whole of existence. The unique divine personality must encounter the divine idea that is external to him. He must see things as they are which includes recognising a hierarchy of worth, recognising the great as great, the small as small, the valuable as valuable. This recognition must arise out of the centre of his uniqueness and not out of compulsion. In short, the free man recognises otherness. Thus, Guardini claims, 'it is that the man who is truly free

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 68–69.

<sup>31</sup> Le Fort, *Hymns to the Church*, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 258.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 254.



is open to God and plunged in Him. This is freedom for God and in God'.<sup>34</sup> God is the ultimate other that man must recognise and enter into.

Yet, our predicament is that we are not free. We are impeded and our perception is clouded by the *Zeitgeist*. We do not recognise things as they are because we are blinded by cynicism and the current fashions. The antidote, argues Guardini, is the Church. In the Church eternity enters into time. In her time is balanced but not destroyed. She too is part of time, but because of her eternality she is not imprisoned by it. She is Catholic; she transcends race, politics, and temporal limitation. Guardini writes, 'The Church of her nature is rooted, not in particular local conditions or particular historical periods, but in the sphere above space and time, in the eternally abiding. She enters, of course, into relation with every age. But she also opposes each. The Church is never modern... The present always reproaches the Church with belonging to the past. But this is a misconception; the truth is that the Church does not belong to time'.<sup>35</sup> Thus, whenever political slogans, moral ideologies, gender theories, and psychological fashions claim absolute validity she opposes them. The Church breaks the fetters of the present. Guardini poetically quips, 'In every age the Church opposes what is *here* and *now* for the sake of *forever*'.<sup>36</sup>

It is not just the *Zeitgeist* that imprisons us. Our own character, our own unique divine pattern, imprison us as well. Perception is both enhanced and enclosed by our unique God-given character. For example, some persons are naturally prone to abstraction (an element of our uniqueness). Such a person atomizes, formulates, and rationalizes well. However, such a person tends to be impersonal, lacks empathy, and struggles to relate to those who are not like him. These interrelation aspects may be present but to a lesser degree, and left to himself the more dominant abstract way of perceiving will take over. Hence, he becomes fragmented. This one-sidedness is corrected by being fit into the whole, by being brought into relation with others who complete his own insights. Guardini writes,

His distinctive character must always remain the foundation. But character must become vocation, a mission to accomplish a particular work, but within an organic whole and in vital relation to it. Then one-sidedness will become fruitful distinction, bondage be replaced by a free and conscious mission, obstinate self-assertion by a steadfastness in that position within the whole which a man recognises to be his appointed place.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Guardini, *Meaning of the Church*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

The corrective is found in the Church. In her catholicity she opens man beyond himself and thereby he finds himself.<sup>38</sup>

Before concluding this section, one final point of Guardini's should be made. The answer to the narrowness of each individual is the experience of the whole, but this whole cannot simply be an idea. Rather, it involves a personal experience of the whole, and for this, argues Guardini, 'a subject is required which itself is a whole, and this is the Church. She is the one living organism which is not one-sided in its essential nature'.<sup>39</sup> In other words, it cannot be an invisible Church, nor a national Church, nor a community Church, but it must be a living universal Church.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV. *Tension Writ Large: The Two Lungs of the Church*

*'For I am mother to all Earth's children: why do you scorn  
me, world, when my Heavenly Father makes me so  
great?'<sup>41</sup>*

In what follows I will *broadly hint* at how this understanding of unity in tension can move beyond personhood to Church unity by providing four general examples. The emphasis is on 'broad', applying this framework to the specific complexities and nuances at hand is not the intent of this paper; I leave this for the scholars who are more deeply immersed than I am in ecclesiological history and theology. First, the relational notion of persons set out in Ratzinger's notion of the I-Thou-We combined with Guardini's language of tension naturally lends itself to a way of conceiving of primacy *and* collegiality. Personhood and community are not mutually exclusive. Ratzinger makes clear that the Church in its universality must be embodied by a person. Likewise, John Manoussakis claims that 'in Christian theology *the principle of unity is always a person*'.<sup>42</sup> Applying Ratzinger's I-Thou-We construct, we could say that there is no St Peter without the twelve, and there are no twelve without St Peter. Collegiality keeps in check the personal failures of the *Primus*, exposing, as Ratzinger writes, 'whatever in him is not a *vicarious* power but rather his own power'.<sup>43</sup> While, as Ratzinger continues, 'there is even in division itself a unifying function of the papacy... criticism of the papacy by non-Catholic Christians remains

<sup>38</sup> The Church is 'co-extensive with being as a whole'. Guardini, *Meaning of the Church*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> Guardini, *Meaning of the Church*, 94.

<sup>40</sup> There is no such thing as a universal subject in the abstract. I cannot personally relate to the state of Washington, or even to this vast geographical political thing one calls Canada. Neither Washington nor Canada are a subject in this sense.

<sup>41</sup> Le Fort, *Hymns to the Church*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 32.

<sup>43</sup> Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavours in Ecclesiology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 50. Bear in mind the vicarious power Ratzinger refers to is the power of obedience, of martyrdom.

an incentive to seek an ever more Christlike actualization of the Petrine ministry; for non-Catholic Christians, in turn the pope is the abiding, visible challenge to achieve the concreted unity to which the Church is called which ought to be her identifying feature in the world's eyes'.<sup>44</sup> Is this not a tension that can be healthily maintained between East and West?

Second, the objectivity of the Church put forth by Guardini immediately brings to my mind the relationship between the apophatic and the cataphatic. The rampant relativism of the modern world and its concomitant plague of uncertainty are serious problems that both East and West must face without denying the flux of temporality. To generalize, in this situation the West seeks clarity and often, although not necessarily, with this comes rigidity (e.g., neo-scholasticism) and moralism. In contrast, the East prefers to remain in the undefined apophatic cloud of mystery. The danger of this latter position, what Schmemmann sought to address in *For the Life of the World*,<sup>45</sup> is secularism (i.e., the separation of the sacred and the secular). That is, the Church is reduced to the mere spiritual (the mysterious known-unknown), and is to remain in the cloud of incense locked within the walls of the Church building. Following this logic, it is conceived that the Church should stay out of the rest of life, out of the realm of morality, politics, relationships, the marriage bed, intellectual activity, et cetera. Viewing this in terms of tension, it is conceivable that the East could constantly push the West reminding it that 'now we see through a glass, darkly' (1 Cor. 13:12). The ontological must be kept in relation with the eschatological. In the inverse, the West could remind the East that the Kingdom is present in Christ and thus in the Church, the faithful, and wherever truth, goodness, and beauty manifest. The eschatological must not be disconnected from the ontological, from the doctrine of Creation. Such a tension would realize the 'now but not yet'.

In terms of our vision of God, the tension between East and West could provide a bulwark against conceiving of God as a self-portrait. In contemporary Western Catholicism there is a renewed interest in the liturgy and in liturgical formation. Guardini, Ratzinger, and for that matter, the *ressourcement* school of thought at large, have sparked a renewed desire for a full and robust liturgy. There is the recognition that Mass is not about me but about encountering the wholly Divine Other. The East, with its profound sense of the liturgical could bolster this renewal and keep the West from sliding into Protestant forms of 'pro-me' worship. Catholicism, with her social teachings, extends this liturgical reality into all life.

Third, Guardini's argument that the Church sets one free from the spirit of the age points to another healthy tension. Orthodoxy, at its best, is historically rich (i.e., patristics). Yet, for various reasons, it appears that Orthodoxy has not, until the latter part of the twentieth century, deeply faced Enlightenment thought, Modernity,

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973).

and Postmodernity (Western thought). To paint with broad strokes, it appears to me that the result is often twofold: (1) Orthodox thinkers adamantly reject all things Western—Babylonian captivity—or (2) because it does not have a long relationship with Western thought and its history of development, Orthodox thinkers often capitulate and wholeheartedly accept contemporary philosophical constructs (e.g., reject metaphysics). Catholicism, on the other hand, at its best, has been in constant dialogue with her surrounding milieu evidenced by, and I know this is contentious for Orthodoxy, Newman's development of doctrine, and historically in her councils, not to mention the shift in thought brought about by Vatican II. In this sense, Catholicism provides a continuous living voice. Yet, of course, there is also the obvious danger of peering in too closely that she too falls into modernity. Perhaps what Orthodoxy offers in this regard to Catholicism is a constant reminder of what/whom she is anchored to (i.e., the councils, the liturgy and the Fathers), and thus to slow down. On the other hand, Catholicism, with its united voice—united both in history and space—and her development of doctrine, enables her members to engage with contemporary thought through a long unbroken, albeit somewhat tangled, chain of thinking.

Finally, with the current tragic sexual abuse crisis in the Church, and there will always be tragedy and brokenness in the Church, it is important to add one more thing. Guardini profoundly quips, 'Christ lives on in the Church, but Christ crucified. One might almost venture to suggest that the defects of the Church are His cross. The entire Being of the mystical Christ—His truth, His holiness, His grace, and His adorable person—are nailed to them, as once His physical body to the wood of the Cross. And he who will have Christ must take His cross as well. We cannot separate Him from it'.<sup>46</sup> Guardini argues that this crucified Church is the reality of the Incarnation. The Son did not remain distant but entered into the fray of history. This means that we are not to flee from the cruciform Church but to humbly live, love, and worship within her—there is no other option. Of course, this does not exclude reform and the call to holiness. With this in mind, there is one last tension, a tension we touched on with a slightly different emphasis concerning the objectivity of the Church: the tension between the typically Catholic incarnational emphasis and the typically eschatological emphasis of Orthodoxy. The brokenness of the Church reiterates that these must be held in tension. If we are too eschatological we succumb to a type of escapism and the Church remains an empty shell; if we are too incarnational we overlook that the Church is a pilgrim Church, 'Thy Kingdom come'. What *is* and what *will be* must remain in tension.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 56.

### Conclusion

Painting with broad brushstrokes, this article has utilized elements of Ratzinger's and, to a greater extent, Guardini's theological anthropology to provide a framework for conceiving of Church unity in terms of tension.<sup>47</sup> Appropriately, Guardian writes that life 'cannot be known by a single, uniform act of judgement, but only through several contrary ones, that is, in terms of tension... The same holds true of the experience of community when we consider it as a history'.<sup>48</sup> East and West each have unique strengths and weaknesses. By existing in a type of fruitful tension it is arguable that their respective strengths and weaknesses will be offset, and in addition even their respective strengths will increase.

In 'The Meaning of Community' Guardini explores the differences between the individual person and the community and the difficulties that beset any attempt to form healthy communities. One important means of overcoming these difficulties is understanding. By knowing and understanding the other a shared sense of responsibility as well as confidence is developed. In line with this, arguably, any rapprochement between East and West will involve a thorough attempt to understand the other.<sup>49</sup> Guardini writes, 'all true relationship to another proclaims, "Be what you are; continue to grow, so that you may become what you ought to be"—but only because personalized understanding is essentially possible only through the movement of approach and sight'.<sup>50</sup> Translated into the arena of East and West ecclesiological rapprochement, we could restate it in the following way: by approaching each other in full recognition of the respective unique strengths and weaknesses a unity of tension could be formed in which the Church becomes what it is meant to be, two lunges functioning together. To be clear, existing in a healthy tension does not mean that we ignore differences, nor that we remain exactly the same. Rather, it would require change, perhaps difficult change. Nevertheless, it would be change that would increase the respective unique strengths while bolstering the other's weaknesses.

While this article began by explicating the concept of personhood as relations in tension and then turned this notion in the direction of Church unity, it is fitting to conclude by resetting, so to speak, the dial. That is, if the Church is necessary for the development of persons, to transform individuals into persons (I-Thou-We), then it seems all the more important that the Church be united, an image of unity writ large. How can the Church manifest and form persons when she herself remains

<sup>47</sup> Theological anthropology is arguably an appropriate place to begin ecumenical dialogue. John Zizioulas notes in *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* that theological anthropology 'provokes and invites contemporary theology to work with a view to a synthesis between the two theologies, Eastern and Western'. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: The Cromwell Press, 1985), 26.

<sup>48</sup> Guardini, 'The Meaning of Community', 84.

<sup>49</sup> as is A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

divided? How can she fulfill the poetic voice of the Church given to us by Gertrude von Le Fort?

*I am their great union, I am their eternal oneness.  
I am the way of all their ways, on me the millennia are  
drawn to God.<sup>51</sup>*

<sup>51</sup> Le Fort, *Hymns to the Church*, 21.