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Christian Community in History, Vol. 2: Comparative Ecclesiology

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Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2: *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York and London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 518. \$34.95.

Roger Haight's massive work, *Christian Community in History*, is a significant achievement. Its goal is to outline the multiple ecclesiologies or self-understandings of the church from a historical perspective. Volume 1, *Historical Ecclesiology*, traces the growth of the church from its origin in the religious movement begun by Jesus to the late Middle Ages. Volume 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology*, continues his survey from the Reformation to a very brief outline of issues facing ecclesiology in the twenty-first century. The second volume is much more properly a history of ecclesiology. Unlike ecclesiology 'from above', which Haight rejects as abstract, idealist and ahistorical, he seeks methodologically to do ecclesiology 'from below'. It will remain a basic source for studies in ecclesiology, especially useful for graduate students.

The great merit of volume 2 is to include so many diverse ecclesiologies in a single work, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Free Church. A chapter on the sixteenth century outlines the ecclesiologies of Luther, Calvin and the Church of England, seeing its ecclesiology as most clearly reflected in the writings of Richard Hooker, as well as Anabaptist, Baptist and Tridentine ecclesiologies. He sees in the Anabaptist movement a struggle not just over baptism but between two mutually exclusive concepts of the church. Another chapter on modern ecclesiology reviews nineteenth-century developments, influenced by the missionary movement, the rise of fundamentalism, Roman centralism and the Enlightenment, with particular attention to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Johann Adam Möhler. Two chapters on twentieth-century ecclesiology turn to the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, Vatican II and its aftermath, liberation theology, basic ecclesial communities, Orthodox Christianity, with a focus on John Zizioulas, Pentecostal ecclesiology and the WCC Lima text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Missing from his survey are John Knox and John Wesley.

Haight writes clearly, with a deep historical sense and a good understanding of theological issues. Thus, in sketching Luther's ecclesiology, he distinguishes between developments from 1520 to 1530 and later ones up to his death in 1546. A nuanced discussion of Luther's theology of ministry notes that it is functional, but not 'merely' functional, as the ministerial office was historically instituted by Christ and transcends each congregation. Similarly he notes Calvin's concern for the unity of the church, even granting a possible role for councils. While he saw the Lord's Supper as a bond of unity and preferred its weekly celebration, the magistrates of Geneva, following the example of Zurich and Berne, approved only a quarterly celebration.

Concluding each chapter with a summary section drawing together ‘principles for a historical ecclesiology’ is particularly helpful. For example, he notes that while Calvin recognised that the monarchical episcopacy developed early in the church and saw his own distinctive polity as a close appropriation of New Testament or early church structures, his ecclesiology made room for a pluralism of polities. Thus he could respect both the New Testament witness and a historically conscious recognition of adaptation to issues of culture and historical context. Organisational differences should not stand in the way of unity, except in essential matters. Haight sees the failure of Queen Mary’s attempted restoration of the Catholic Church in England as teaching that church development cannot go backwards. A *ressourcement* that seeks to retrieve the treasures of the past is quite different from a restorationism that seeks simply to reinstate past forms, ignoring historical developments.

Haight’s distinction between an ecclesiology from above and one from below (which he finds also in Calvin) may be too finely drawn; it suggests that issues of dominical institution, succession, structure and sacramentality are merely theological or ideological. For example, he argues that the establishment of ministerial forms or institutional organs lies not above or outside the church, but within each church itself as a developing community. But this is to choose one explanation that may itself be more confessional than historical.

Haight sees Hooker’s ‘whole-part’ theory of the church, one church among many churches, as illustrating his own methodological principle that the proper subject for ecclesiology is the whole church, the whole Christian movement. This is important and his work addresses this admirably. But it also raises the question of the adequacy of a purely descriptive approach to ecclesiology. Is every church equally church, fully church, without raising the questions of christological foundation, pneumatological endowment, sacramentality and doctrine? Are differences merely historical? Without wishing to minimise the importance of doctrinal expression, he poses as a principle that existential community in Christ holds priority over doctrinal agreement. But how does ecclesiology maintain the balance between a sterile institutionalism on the one hand and a historicism that accommodates not just significant doctrinal difference but also enthusiasms and sectarianism on the other? At the end of the Introduction to volume 1 Haight promises to follow his two-part ecclesiology from below with ‘a more systematic and constructive essay’, presumably to address such issues. It will be eagerly awaited.

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