

## **Visible and Invisible: George Tyrrell and Christ's Bodies<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Starting with the laying to rest of George Tyrrell's body in an Anglican grave, outside the bounds of the Catholic Church, this article considers how Tyrrell could yet understand himself to be within the Church, within the body of Christ. Tyrrell developed a distinction between the visible and invisible Church in such a way that a person like himself could be included within the latter. In this, Tyrrell's theology anticipated later ideas of the anonymous Christian and the Church as sacrament, his thinking incorporated within the body of more orthodox, conciliar theology.

**Keywords:** George Tyrrell, invisible Church, anonymous Christian, Church as sacrament, Body of Christ

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Though George Tyrrell (1861-1909) was refused a Catholic burial, he nevertheless died within the Church, which he thought the "extension and body of Christ".<sup>2</sup> Tyrrell died on 15 July 1909, having made his confession and received the last rites of the Catholic Church. But his body was laid to rest in the Anglican graveyard at Storrington, in West Sussex. For Tyrrell had not recanted the views for which he had been excommunicated two years previously, when his public attacks on Pope Pius X's encyclical, *Pascendi*, had

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first given as a paper at a colloquium held to celebrate the life and work of Professor Nicholas Lash on the occasion of his receiving an honorary doctorate in divinity from Durham University in 2011.

<sup>2</sup> George Tyrrell, "The Mystical Church" in *Hard Sayings: A Selection of Meditations and Studies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910 [1898]), 397-448 (p. 433).

been deemed too scathing and too public.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, his body was not fit for Catholic ground.

Three years before his death, Tyrrell had been expelled from the Jesuits. He had penned though not exactly published a letter to a university professor, who had doubts about Catholicism. The appearance of this letter breached the effective embargo on Tyrrell's writing that his superiors had imposed in 1900 as punishment for having offered a trenchant critique of the doctrine of hell in the provocatively titled essay, "A Perverted Devotion" (1899).<sup>4</sup> The article had been approved by a Jesuit censor in England (Herbert Thurston), but the Jesuit authorities in Rome took a different view.<sup>5</sup> Forbidden to publish, except in *The Month*, Tyrrell retired to Richmond in Yorkshire, where he began to harbour a growing dissatisfaction with the Jesuits and with Rome, though not with the idea and devotions of the Church. He also began to publish anonymously and under pseudonyms, and it was the appearance of one of these pieces, in an unauthorised Italian translation, that led to his expulsion from the Society of Jesus. Tyrrell's departure, when the time came, was more than half-willed by himself, as had been the part-publication of the offending letter.<sup>6</sup>

The irony of Tyrrell's life, if not indeed its tragedy, is that while he was devoted to the idea and witness of the Church, and constantly strove to defend its credibility, he found himself increasingly frustrated by his ecclesiastical superiors, and in particular by the Roman authorities, and their refusal to engage with modernity as he wished they would. It was his loyalty to the Church that proved his undoing. Of course if he had been

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<sup>3</sup> Tyrrell's criticisms appeared in the *Giornale d'Italia* (25 September 1907) and in *The Times* of London (30 September and 1 October 1907). For a full account of the events leading to Tyrrell's "minor" excommunication (he could hear Mass but not receive the sacrament) see Nicholas Sagovsky, *"On God's Side": A Life of George Tyrrell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), ch. 14.

<sup>4</sup> George Tyrrell, "A Perverted Devotion", *Weekly Register* 100 (16 December 1899), 797-800; reprinted in George Tyrrell, *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, arranged by M.D. Petre (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), pp. 158-71.

<sup>5</sup> For a full account of this incident see Sagovsky, *"On God's Side"*, ch. 8.

<sup>6</sup> For the complexities of Tyrrell's leaving see Sagovsky, *"On God's Side"*, chs 12 and 13. For the full text of the letter see George Tyrrell, *A Much-Abused Letter* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1906). See Tyrrell's own account in his letter to Ward (21 March 1906) in *George Tyrrell's Letters*, edited by M.D. Petre (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920), pp. 103-4.

a more phlegmatic personality, more tentative in his judgements, careful in his expressions, and conciliatory in his responses, he might not have found himself retracing the path that had led him from Anglicanism to the Catholic Church in 1879, and then into the Jesuit novitiate in the following year.<sup>7</sup> But the undoing of Tyrrell's life was not exactly a retracing, since though he half-joked about returning to Anglicanism, and wondered about Methodism, his commitment to a Catholic vision of the Church was the very thing that impelled his dissent from what he saw as its desiccation and diminishment.

The Bishop of Southwark, Peter Amigo (1864-1949), insisted that Tyrrell's excommunication was of the minor kind.<sup>8</sup> He could hear mass but not receive the sacrament. Unlike his fellow Modernist and excommunicate, Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), he was not to be shunned. He was marginalised, but not ostracised. And so while he could not receive the eucharistic body of Christ he was still within Christ's body, the Church, even if not permitted to be buried with fellow members of that Body, to keep company with fellow Catholics while awaiting the resurrection. To be thus removed from the centre to the edge of the ecclesial body must have added to Tyrrell's pain, for the Church as the Body of Christ was at the centre of his theology. But it was also this theology of the Church that would have permitted him to think that he was still within the Body, though pushed to the edge by some of his fellow Catholics, and it was this theology that would articulate the distinction between the Church as the Body of Christ and the Church as a body of sinners; a body where Christ is both present and seemingly absent.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tyrrell was received into the Catholic Church on the 18 May 1879 at Farm Street, London.

<sup>8</sup> When this paper was presented at the colloquium in his honour, Nicholas Lash confided that he had been confirmed by Bishop Amigo.

<sup>9</sup> "Christ surely was explicit enough on this point, to take away all surprise at the weakness or wickedness of the members of the visible Church of whatever degree or dignity. He came as a friend of publicans and sinners, to call, not the just, but sinners to repentance. We are not shocked to find the inmates of a hospital ailing and weakly; and the Church is little better than a hospital for sick and wounded souls, in whose midst Christ sits down daily to meat." Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, pp. 444-45. See further Karl Rahner, "The Church of Sinners" (1947) in *Theological Investigations VI*, translated by Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (London:

## Visible and Invisible

For Tyrrell the Church was the body of Christ, so that to die outside the Church was to die outside Christ; and outside Christ-become-the-Church there is no salvation. In an essay on “The Mystical Body” (1898), Tyrrell insisted that salvation “not merely depends upon, but even consists formally in our incorporation into the Church”.<sup>10</sup> However, this corporate life of salvation is not that of the visible, but of the invisible Church; that Church of which the visible is “but the sacrament and outward instrument”.<sup>11</sup> The visible Church is the institutional Church, “notorious in the history of the world for the last two thousand years.”<sup>12</sup> It is composed of good and bad fish; saints and sinners.<sup>13</sup> We are incorporated into this visible Church through “profession of faith and obedience, although we be spiritually dead”. But it is only “by divine charity” that we are brought into the invisible Church.<sup>14</sup> We can bring ourselves into one, but we must be brought into the other.

“There are treasures of truth in the dust-heap of every tradition”, Tyrrell tells us, “and the Roman dust-heap is perhaps the biggest and richest of all.”<sup>15</sup> But this dust heap,

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Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), pp. 253-69. The second part of this essay may now seem shockingly complacent about the sins of the Church, and it should be read in conjunction with Rahner’s later essay, “The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II”, published in the same volume (pp. 270-94).

<sup>10</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 410.

<sup>11</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 410.

<sup>12</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 431.

<sup>13</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 432.

<sup>14</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 416.

<sup>15</sup> George Tyrrell to A.M.L.C (about 1908) in *George Tyrrell’s Letters*, p. 30. The dust-heap as source of wealth is of course the theme of Charles Dickens last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). The dust heap of the nineteenth century was comprised of “[c]oal-dust, vegetable-dust, bone-dust, crockery dust, rough dust and sifted dust, — all manner of Dust”, Mortimer Lightwood tells his fellow diners, and to his list we could also add human dust, both the night soil (excrement) collected by the nightmen and the dust to which we all return. See

the visible Church, is also the “mystical body of Christ”, as well as Christ’s spouse.<sup>16</sup> But so also is the invisible Church, body and spouse. Are we then dealing with a doubled Church? Indeed there might be more than two, for Tyrrell also refers to the Church militant and the Church triumphant. But the latter are but modes of the invisible Church: militant on earth and triumphant in heaven.<sup>17</sup> And the real difference is between the visible and invisible Church, and the real difficulty the seeing of one in the other; the heavenly in the dust heap. But the difference is not a division, or not yet a division, but a distinction. For the two Churches are one Church: “two parts of one nature”. Tyrrell tells us “that they are like the inner word of the mind and the outer word of the lips, distinct yet most intimately connected as symbol and reality, as sacrament and grace signified”.<sup>18</sup> They are also like the body and the soul, for the body is the “symbol and sacrament” of the soul.<sup>19</sup>

By thinking the Church a sacrament, Tyrrell not only presumed on the second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), he also made it possible to think a distinction within the Church that allowed it to be both a body of sinners and the body of Christ; a Church in which one might be excommunicate and still a member, and a member of a Church that was spiritually alive rather than dead. It is to think the Church after Augustine, and it is to think the Church as an ambiguity, since the distinction between the visible and invisible Church can never be definitively marked in the visible without denying the distinction itself. It is also to think of the Church as extending beyond the visible or institutional. For Tyrrell, this ecclesial excess became the Church of the just, which we might otherwise know as the anonymous Church of Karl Rahner’s inclusivism, or as those who “sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience”, as *Lumen Gentium* avers.<sup>20</sup>

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Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, edited by Adrian Poole (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 432.

<sup>17</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 418.

<sup>18</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, pp. 432-33.

<sup>19</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 416.

<sup>20</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, II.16.

## The Just

It is the visible, bodily Church that “retains corrupt members”; tares amid the wheat. They are not members of the invisible, soulful Church, which is the Church of the “just”.<sup>21</sup> This last designation opens the Church to include more than merely those who profess Christ.

The saints in Heaven and all the just on earth, Catholic or non-Catholic, Christian or non-Christian, are invisibly bound together by the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit of Charity “which is the bond of peace,” the cement which seals into one the stones of the Heavenly Salem—“one body and one spirit.” And on earth the members of the visible Church are visibly united by the bond of obedience to that same Spirit viewed as the source of ecclesiastical authority and sacramental grace—“one body and one spirit.”<sup>22</sup>

Yet at the same time, Tyrrell insists on the necessity of faith for salvation, for entry into Christ’s invisible Church. “We cannot therefore suppose that the invisible Church on earth extends beyond the limits of the visible except so far as faith so extends.”<sup>23</sup> But what is faith, and how far does it stretch? Tyrrell explains that “faith is essentially trust in another whose wisdom and knowledge supplements what is defective in our own.”<sup>24</sup> Faith is trust in the God who has spoken to us, who has addressed us, and whom we have heard. “[S]ome kind of divine speaking or revelation” is a condition for faith; “*Fides ex auditu*—‘Faith comes by hearing.’”<sup>25</sup> “There can be no

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<sup>21</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 417.

<sup>22</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 417.

<sup>23</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 423.

<sup>24</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 424.

<sup>25</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 424.

faith ... where God is not felt to have spoken and to have commanded our obedient assent to the things that belong to our peace”.<sup>26</sup>

“God utters His mind in creation and in our conscience, and designs these books for our instruction; but only so far as He also signifies that this message is expressly directed to us can He be said to speak to us; He rather soliloquizes in our presence; He speaks in us, or outside us, but not *to* us.”<sup>27</sup> And God’s address can be recognised as such, distinguished from our own fancies, when it speaks to our need.<sup>28</sup> One can be deluded, one can doubt, but there are also “instances where there is no room for prudent or justifiable doubt.”<sup>29</sup> “God speaks in divers manners; but to all who are to be judged as to faith, speak He must in some form or other.”<sup>30</sup>

In other words, where the fuller revelation is denied, where the light of the Gospel never penetrates, yet the internal revelation of the fundamental and germinal truths of all religion will surely never be wanting; one need not ascend into Heaven to bring it down, nor descend into Hell to bring it up, for the word is ever nigh to each human heart, ever whispering into the soul’s ear, ever knocking at the gate of its love.<sup>31</sup>

Tyrrell’s appeal to an “internal revelation”, a whispering in the soul, might remind us of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), whose work was an undoubted influence on Tyrrell’s thought, and whose conscience also heard “the whisper of the law of moral truth within”.<sup>32</sup> And we may also think of Karl Rahner and his pre-

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<sup>26</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 425.

<sup>27</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 426.

<sup>28</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 427.

<sup>29</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 428.

<sup>30</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, pp. 428-29.

<sup>31</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 429.

<sup>32</sup> John Henry Newman, “Christianity and Medical Science” (1858) in *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 366-87 (p. 381); and cited in Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, 2 volumes (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), vol. I, p.

apprehension of the infinite in the finite, of a transcendence that bespeaks our giftedness, the acceptance of which is the acceptance of God's proximity; an acceptance implicit in the way a person "lives the duty of each day in the quiet sincerity of patience in devotion to his material duties and the demands made upon him by the persons under his care."<sup>33</sup> But Tyrrell himself calls on Thomas Aquinas for defence of the view that God can address us inwardly, implicitly, as well as outwardly, through explicit testimony, and that even the latter must be received inwardly if God's charity is to transform our souls and lives.

No difficulty follows from the position that one brought up in the woods among the wild beasts should be bound to certain explicit beliefs; for it is incumbent on Divine Providence to provide each soul with all necessary conditions for salvation, unless some hindrance is offered on the soul's part. For were one so brought up, to follow the lead of natural reason in the pursuit of good and the avoidance of evil, it is to be held for a perfect certainty (*certissimum tenendum est*), that God would either reveal all necessary beliefs to him by an internal inspiration, or He would send some one to preach the faith to him, as He sent Peter to Cornelius.<sup>34</sup>

Tyrrell admits that his teaching about the visible and invisible Church, and the hearing of God's word in the call of conscience, is a "matter rather of opinion than of authoritative teaching".<sup>35</sup> He admits to the danger that such a view might lead to "moral and dogmatic indifferentism"; a criticism often brought against Rahner's later rendition

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415. For Newman's influence on Tyrrell see Andrew Pierce, "Crossbows, Bludgeons and Long-Range Rifles: Tyrrell and Newman and 'the Intimate Connection Between Methods and Their Results'" in *George Tyrrell and Catholic Modernism*, edited by Oliver P. Rafferty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 56-75.

<sup>33</sup> Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians" in *Theological Investigations VI*, 390-98 (p. 394).

<sup>34</sup> The text cited is Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 14, 11, *ad primum*, incorrectly given by Tyrrell as 14, 2, *ad primum*; see Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 429.

<sup>35</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 430.

of such teaching. And undoubtedly it makes the witness of the Church secondary to that of the Spirit, who might have more interest in “the pursuit of good and the avoidance of evil” than in correct form and due deference. “The instructed catechumen must seek water and a minister in order to be regenerated; whereas the pagan can be born again of the Holy Ghost in the fountain of his own tears.”<sup>36</sup> By way of recompense, Tyrrell notes that none “can be counted a member of the invisible Church who through any fault or negligence of his own remains outside the communion of the visible Church.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, belonging to the visible Church brings the benefit of a more intense realisation of God’s grace; the “broken lights” of other traditions being “gathered up and intensified into one steady ray of pure truth”. “To every soul God supplies the daily bread of good thoughts and good desires, but in the Eucharist he satiates the hungry with the Bread of Angels, and causes the chalice of the thirsty to overflow and inebriate.”<sup>38</sup> And “it is no small gain that instead of our waiting on God, as it were for the troubling of the waters, God should wait upon us, ready to serve us with His graces as often as we choose to approach the sacraments and dispose ourselves to receive them.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 435.

<sup>37</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 431.

<sup>38</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 436.

<sup>39</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 436.

## The Church to Come

One might think that Tyrrell's theology of the Church would have become less fulsome and more jaundiced the more the Church sought his silence and closed its doors upon him. But that was the visible Church, the Church of the flesh, and Tyrrell's theology of the invisible Church remained as confident as ever it had been. Writing in 1908 he could still describe the Church "as the glorified body of Christ".<sup>40</sup>

Having left the Jesuits, Tyrrell published in full the letter to a university professor that had precipitated his leaving. *A Much-Abused Letter* (1906) repeats the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, but now as a distinction between the Church's conscious and subconscious self, and, in a more political moment, as between the papacy and the "people of God".<sup>41</sup> Now there is a sense that the mystical body of Christ, which extends beyond the confines of the visible Church, is making itself manifest in everyone who yearns for an ideal social harmony, the yearning of a "mystical body and brotherhood", composed of "the just, the noble, the brave and the true".<sup>42</sup> We must surely think that Tyrrell had come to see himself as one of these.

Earlier, when writing on the mystical Church, Tyrrell had noted that "without faith it is impossible to please God, impossible to live that life of sacrifice and conflict which obedience to conscience entails."<sup>43</sup> But that was in 1898, when the "sacrifice and conflict" consequent on Tyrrell's own "obedience to conscience" lay in the future, and it is only with hindsight that we read these as prophetic words. Can we think that Tyrrell foresaw his own future when he wrote of those who come to the Church that "she will in no wise cast out; and if ever she excommunicates, it is only lest the disease spread from one to many, or else for the chastisement and ultimate healing of the sinner himself"?<sup>44</sup> But later, when publishing in 1906 what was written in 1905, it is hard not to think that Tyrrell was writing of himself when he declared his worship of that "Power" which "is

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<sup>40</sup> Tyrrell to W.R.H. (1908) in *George Tyrrell's Letters*, 35-37 (p. 37).

<sup>41</sup> Tyrrell, *A Much-Abused Letter*, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup> Tyrrell, *A Much-Abused Letter*, p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 430.

<sup>44</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 445.

revealed in human goodness of every sort.” For now the invisible Church is almost coincident with humanity, and every member of the mystical body is the sacrament, if not the incarnation, of the one whose body they member.

Humanity, so far as it stands for the just, the noble, the brave and the true, for those who in any way have crucified, sacrificed, limited themselves for the love of God and for the sake of His Kingdom and of their fellowmen, is a mystical Christ, a collective Logos, a Word or Manifestation of the Father; and every member of that society is in his measure a Christ or revealer in whom God is made flesh and dwells in our midst.<sup>45</sup>

Later still, in a private letter of 1908, Tyrrell would again distinguish between the visible and invisible Church, but now as between the actual and a future Church that is to come, and that is even now “struggling to realise itself”.<sup>46</sup> “It is by thus realising itself in individual souls, and becoming an object of prayer and aspiration, that the ideal at last takes flesh in the outer world.” “God will not ask us: What sort of a Church have you lived in? but What sort of a Church have you longed for?”<sup>47</sup>

## Revenant

Tyrrell may have viewed the Church as a sacrament and foreseen what would later be known as the anonymous Christian, but Gregory Baum, writing in 1982, argued that Tyrrell was but a remote precursor of Vatican II. Tyrrell’s “cultural Toryism” favoured hierarchy and would have disinclined him to the Council’s implicit

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<sup>45</sup> Tyrrell, *A Much-Abused Letter*, p. 72.

<sup>46</sup> George Tyrrell to A.M.L.C (about 1908) in *George Tyrrell's Letters*, p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> George Tyrrell to A.M.L.C., p. 31.

egalitarianism.<sup>48</sup> Baum may have overestimated the latter and too easily assumed the former, but picking up on this, Michael Kirwan has more recently noted that the “dogmatic constitution eschews both the institutional pyramid and the notion of the ‘mystical body’ as its primary image, opting instead for the understanding of the Church as mystery (Chapter 1), and as ‘people of God’ (Chapter 2).”<sup>49</sup> But not only is it contentious, as Kirwan notes, to suggest that hierarchy is incompatible with the people of God, or the people of God with the body of Christ, it is also the case that Tyrrell’s talk of Christ’s mystical body is quite close to the mystery evoked by *Lumen Gentium*, and that Tyrrell could also speak of the Church as mystery and as the people of God.

Indeed *Lumen Gentium* quite closely follows Tyrrell’s own musings on the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, insisting that the Church of “hierarchical agencies” is not separate from the mystical body of Christ, but that both are an “interlocked reality” of human and divine elements. It follows Tyrrell in likening the mystery of the Church to that of the incarnation. For Tyrrell the invisible Church is the extension of Christ’s divinity, “as the visible Church is of His sacred humanity, both being united in the personal unity of their head, and being related to one another as the two natures are in Him; the human being entirely organic and subordinate to the service and manifestation and communication of the divine.”<sup>50</sup> So similarly *Lumen Gentium*, in which the “the social structure of the Church serve[s] the Spirit of Christ” as the “assumed nature” serves the “divine Word”.<sup>51</sup>

Kirwan raises the question of Tyrrell’s relationship to the Second Vatican Council in the context of growing concern with the reception and interpretation of the Council

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<sup>48</sup> Gregory Baum, “Introduction” to Ellen Leonard, *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), xv-xviii (pp. xvii-xviii). Baum argued that “a hierarchical structure that excludes the vast number of the faithful from decision-making and excludes on principle all women from the ordained priesthood” is unjustifiable in a Church viewed as the “sign and sacrament of redeemed humanity” (pp. xvii-xviii). But thirty years on, it may be the claim that the Church is such a sign and sacrament that seems unjustifiable.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Kirwan, “George Tyrrell and the Theology of Vatican II” in *George Tyrrell and Catholic Modernism*, edited by Oliver P. Rafferty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 131-152 (p. 141).

<sup>50</sup> Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 433.

<sup>51</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, I.8.

in the twenty first century.<sup>52</sup> To what extent was the Council in continuity with the past; to what extent did it rupture a presumed continuity?<sup>53</sup> There is thus a certain piquancy to thinking of Tyrrell in this regard. For with reference to one very important teaching—the Church as the sacrament of a body both visible and invisible—the Council would seem to be in continuity with one whom some saw as rupturing the Church—to the extent that there were those at the Council who objected to the idea of the Church’s sacramentality, as being too Tyrrellian a thought.<sup>54</sup> But perhaps it is fitting that one whose life can be seen as a series of ruptures—between Ireland and England, Anglicanism and Catholicism, and between Catholicism and itself—should himself become part of a larger story where the taking up or return of his ideas can be seen by some as breaking with a past that had uncannily seen what was to come.<sup>55</sup> In such a context we might still ponder and profit from Tyrrell’s warning: “God will not ask us: What sort of a Church have you lived in? but What sort of a Church have you longed for?”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kirwan agrees with Michael Hurley and David Wells that with regard to his teaching on the Church, Tyrrell’s theology “now appears ‘prophetic’ and even seminal”. Kirwan, “George Tyrrell”, p. 141. See Michael Hurley, “George Tyrrell: Some Post-Vatican II Impressions”, *Heythrop Journal* 10 (1969), 243-55 (p. 246); Michael Hurley, “George Tyrrell: Some Post-ARCIC Impressions”, *One in Christ* 19 (1983), 250-54; David Wells, *The Prophetic Theology of George Tyrrell* (California: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 80-1.

<sup>53</sup> See Benedict XVI, “A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council” in *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*, edited by M. L. Lamb and M. Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. ix-xv.

<sup>54</sup> Ernesto Cardinal Ruffini (1888-1967) was one of these. See further John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 178.

<sup>55</sup> Tyrrell himself wondered if the “new Catholicism” could “without a complete rupture, enter into its heritage.” He thought that “Rome cares nothing for religion—only for power; and for religion as a source of power.” George Tyrrell to Emil Wolff (20 November 1907); cited in M.D. Petre, *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, 2 vols (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), vol. 2, p. 355.

<sup>56</sup> George Tyrrell to A.M.L.C., p. 31.