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# Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time, by Gerard Mannion

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## Peer Reviewed

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of widely differing social, political, and cultural contexts.

Having been engaged in intercultural mission in Asia for nearly four decades, I am genuinely sympathetic to H.'s agenda. Yet, some serious questions remain: How does the faith-discernment of the local Christian community (e.g., Japanese) enter the dynamic? When does the missionary leave behind Western models because they are simply not helpful? Can a more user-friendly, streamlined approach be proposed in simpler language?—H.'s model appears rather intricate and convoluted. Still, H. correctly understands that missionary dialogue remains an urgent imperative in the world church, the one body of Christ, and this new series promises to contribute to that dialogue.

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ECCLESIOLOGY AND POSTMODERNITY: QUESTIONS FOR THE CHURCH IN OUR TIME. By Gerard Mannion. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2007. Pp. xvii + 249. \$29.95.

Mannion searches for an ecclesiology adequate to the challenges of postmodernity. A deductive curially-defined ecclesiology, he insists, must give way to a more inductive ecclesiology drawn from the practice and experience of the community of faith, built on the premise of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. After introductory chapters respectively on postmodernity and ecclesiology, where he establishes the need for what he calls a more "communitarian" or "visionary" ecclesiology, M. examines by way of contrast the contemporary "official" *communio* ecclesiology as an example of the dangers posed by single-faceted or "blueprint" approaches to ecclesial understanding. The remaining five chapters fill out suggestions made in chapter 2 about the need for a different way of constructing ecclesiology.

As M. describes it, official theology far too often talks only to itself and thus is simply out of step with what is in fact the faithful sociality of ecclesial belonging. We must begin our theology in recognition that the need for dialogue is

nonnegotiable—a challenging insight of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*. Even more challenging, though, is the need to recognize that the community's many voices are together the ultimate site of ecclesial authority, that leadership is validated in its attention to the *sensus fidelium*. The end result, M. concludes, will be a "virtue ecclesiology" in which Christians jointly explore what their ecclesial living says about who they are as a community of faith. From practice, we derive ecclesiology, but it is an ecclesiology as an ongoing dialogue marked by respect and genuine love, precisely as we should expect from a community whose God is the loving dialogue of the Trinity itself.

M.'s proposals are sensible, well-reasoned, and respectfully offered. Although the notion that our collective living in faith ought to shape our ecclesiology, as well as the content of that shaping, is counterintuitive for and beyond the reach of today's restorationists, his proposals deserve careful attention.

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LESS THAN TWO DOLLARS A DAY: A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF WORLD POVERTY AND THE FREE MARKET. By Kent A. van Til. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007. Pp. xii + 180. \$16.

Van Til's timely book addresses the needs of the poor in a capitalist economy, explains how basic human needs will not necessarily be met through contemporary free-market systems, and asserts that the Christian tradition requires basic sustenance for all. VT. constructively engages the contributions of the theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, political theorist Michael Walzer, and philosopher David Miller, and proposes the following definition of distributive justice: "A state of just distribution occurs when all members of humanity receive their basic needs, when citizens receive equal treatment, and when producers receive proportional reward on the basis of their contribution" (143). To concretize his proposal, vT. suggests three current