

## Freedom in the Church

Isaac Padinjarekuttu

Dept. Historical Theology, JDV, Pune

But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us (The Grand Inquisitor<sup>1</sup>).

It is an unpleasant task to write about freedom in the Church, particularly from the point of view of Church History. The chilling words of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, remind us of the Church's complicity with the forces of unfreedom. Much has been written about it, and it is not my intention to produce another criminal history of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> But at the same time, it is good to be reminded of it time and again because history is a good teacher. In the process, we will, perhaps, find the same forces at work in some way in the Church of today as well. Therefore, this article is a short reflection on freedom in the Church from the perspective of Church History.

What is freedom? Aristotle defined freedom as a human being's autonomous self-determination to do good or evil. According to Augustine, the word could only be used in the sense of freedom to do good, since freedom to act in an evil way is not freedom. Thomas Aquinas tried to synthesize both these views. These classical definitions are no longer adequate to explain the dynamics of freedom in contemporary society. Today freedom is understood

primarily as a dialectical relationship between inner liberation (conversion) and outer liberation (liberation from structures of enslavement). In other words, social processes of liberation and personal emancipation are intimately connected. No one understands freedom today as the complete annulment of norms and the constant extension of individual liberties to the point of complete emancipation from all order. Kant's call, *sapere aude*, and the grand promises of the Enlightenment with its radicalization of individualistic tendencies have not led to true freedom. "Freedom, if it is not to lead to deceit and self-destruction, must orient itself by the truth, that is, by what we really are, and must correspond to our being. Since man's essence consists in being-from, being-with and being-for, human freedom can exist only in the ordered communion of freedoms."<sup>3</sup> In other words, freedom realizes itself in a network of relationships. This is the essence of Christian freedom, too. The sources of Christian freedom are Jesus Christ and his Gospel "which is a message of freedom and a force for liberation."<sup>4</sup> Let us first of all see what these sources tell us about freedom.

## The Roots of Christian Freedom

Although the words 'free' and 'freedom' do not occur frequently in his preaching, freedom and liberation are fundamental dimensions of the message of Jesus. The Kingdom of God offers to those who accept God as ruler liberation and freedom; freedom from enslavement to the rule of Satan, sin and death; freedom from social and religious pressures, and the enslaving needs of an imprisoned self; freedom from worry and fear; freedom to love God and one's neighbour.<sup>5</sup> Jesus attacked the vicious circle of unfreedom and put forward discipleship as the way to authentic freedom. Jesus' message gave his listeners the courage to be free. His liberating activities like healings, exorcisms, association with sinners, freeing people from the pressures of rituals etc. were the accompanying signs of his message. He did all these because he himself was free and his freedom was founded on his faith in God and his openness to the needs of others. Because of this, he was free from many conventional restraints and from doubts about his fundamental mission.

The community engendered by Jesus should mediate the freedom brought forth by him. It should witness to the liberation and freedom which he proclaimed through word and deed and subject itself to his judgment so that he continues to liberate it from all unfreedoms. The freedom which Jesus brought forth must be realized in his community.<sup>6</sup> Jesus said: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Truth is discovered by hearing the word of

God. The Church is the community of those who hear the word of God and do it (Lk 8:21). Therefore, the Church is the community where truth is realized and freedom proclaimed. The Church *has* to be a community of freedom. This is fundamental to its nature. Has the Church always been a community of freedom? I will answer this question by studying three problematic areas in the Church: power in the Church, the right to dissent in the Church, and the Church as the custodian of truth and orthodoxy.

### 1. Power in the Church

The Church like any social system possesses a lot of power. But power in the Church is vicarious power, conferred by the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20). The confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and his sovereignty are, according to Paul, the fundamental features of Christianity. The failure to realize this has created many problems in the Church. The decisive factor in the New Testament understanding of the concepts of power, sovereignty etc. is that all exercise of power in Christ's Church is understood as *diakonia* (service) and not as *arche* (power). This is too well known to be elaborated here.<sup>7</sup> This has also been the norm in the early Church. Although power and authority in the Church became institutionalized very early (monepiscopacy is attested to as early as AD 110), the Church was still a communion of the people of Christ, and power and authority were exercised for and with them. With Constantine, the structures of Roman administration were carried over into the Church. The Church also had to develop organizational structures beyond the local level,

like the Ecumenical Councils, which represented the 'universal Church'; thus the concept of universal ecclesiastical power began to develop. Gradually, the papacy became its sole custodian and accumulated a lot of power in its hands. The Gregorian Reforms of Gregory VII (pope from 1073) considerably strengthened the policy of Roman centralization which continues without much change till the present day. The pope became an absolute monarch in the Western Church, and the bishop something like an autocrat in his diocese. The emerging canon law supported this absolutism, making the pope and the bishops 'governors' and 'judges' of people, rather than pastors and servants.

The Reformation challenged some of these authoritarian structures and broke away from the Church in the name of the freedom of the Christian. Whether the quest for freedom was realized in the Reformation tradition is another question altogether. In the Catholic tradition, the Council of Trent enhanced papal and episcopal power further. The centralization and bureaucratization of the Church reached new heights with the Roman curia now taking up the governance of the Church in its hands. The dogmas of papal infallibility and primacy proclaimed by Vatican Council I in 1870 sealed the monarchical structure of the Church once and for all. Episcopal authority was effectively sidelined. Fortunately, the Second Vatican Council effected some changes in this regard. Although it emphasized the importance of hierarchical communion with the pope, it also spoke of episcopal collegiality.

History shows that the use of power in the Church has taken different historical forms, and, therefore, it is contingent. Ecclesiastical power is vicarious and every form it takes is not the ultimate will of God. If the exercise of power has assumed so many different forms in history and was influenced by diverse historical necessities, it must now respect contemporary needs, values and norms, like justice, equality, and the growing democratic ethos throughout the world. It is difficult to understand what role a hierarchical power structure as it exists in the Church today can play in the world of today.

The use or misuse of power in the Church today is the subject of heated discussion. Power in the Church can be justified only on two grounds: 1) the conservation and transmission of the deposit of faith and 2) the preservation of unity in the Church. When judged from these perspectives, we find that the exercise of power in the Church today has often nothing to do either with the conservation of the deposit of faith or the preservation of unity. Often other considerations are at play in the Church when it exercises its power. Besides the loss of individual freedom, reputation of persons, and the credibility of the Church, what is at stake in the wilful exercise of power in the Church is the cause of theological and liturgical pluralism which affects the very survival of the Church in the modern world. Even at the close of the twentieth century the Church has used its 'power' to excommunicate people in the name of doctrinal purity! Authority in the Church has often been a monolithic exercise of power, bypassing the

rights and responsibilities of the local Churches and of individual Christians.

## 2. The Right to Dissent

The Church would be happy to advocate for its members the kind of obedience and submissiveness which Ignatius of Loyola advocated for his followers. He compared his sons to 'the dead body which can be carried anywhere and treated in any fashion' or 'the stick in the hand of an old man which allows itself to be used wherever and for whatever purpose he wishes'. But even he set a limit to obedience and the rights of authority: '... at least where it is clear ... that no sin is involved.'<sup>8</sup> It is very important to notice that the ultimate authority here is the one who is to obey. He decides whether there is sin. His conscience has the final say. This is true of submission to the Church as well. Vatican II clearly shows us the importance of conscience when it says:

It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow his conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God who is the last end. Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience" (*Dignitatis Humanae* 3).<sup>9</sup>

From this freedom follows the right and duty of the members of the Church to protest against, and where necessary, oppose the misuse of power and the continuation of undesirable structures and norms in the Church. This has always been regarded as possible by the Church's tradition,<sup>10</sup> although with certain limitations. But the Church has sup-

pressed this right in various ways, even in the name of being faithful to its mission. The concern and solicitude of the Church for its mission has become so institutionalized and bureaucratized, that the procedures adopted by the Church often lacks many safeguards which are granted normally in any legal procedure. If one believes in the presence and activity of the Spirit in the Church and the diversity of charisms in the community, one will surely encounter dissent; suppressing this dissent is tantamount to extinguishing the Spirit. Dissent in the present day Church is often not the result of a crisis in faith or discipline, but of imposing a Eurocentric Christianity on non-Europeans. It is the result of not reading the 'signs of the times'.

There is, without doubt, plenty of dissent in today's Church, often destructive dissent, and the time has come for a consensus regarding ways to deal with it in the correct way. Some examples of dissent from the history of the Church may be helpful in this regard. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), a famous bishop of North Africa in the third century, was a man committed to the absolute unity of the Church which he portrayed in many vivid imageries; he nevertheless dissented with Stephen (d. 257), bishop of Rome, on the issue of heretical baptism<sup>11</sup> and was quite ready to defend his decision to dissent. The basis for unity in the Church, according to him, was the Spirit and not the bishop of Rome; he believed that the episcopal authority was supreme and that the bishop of Rome had no jurisdictional primacy over him. Diversity in practices was allowed but not schism. Both Cyprian and Stephen held on to their views, and, unfortunately,

we do not have any final ruling on this controversy.

In the Middle Ages, there arose many heresies in the Church, like the dissent of the Waldensians who began their activity between 1173 and 1175. It was a protest movement by a group of laity, both men and women, whose main objective was to obtain the freedom to preach. They did not want to be incorporated into the clerical and monastic structure of the Church, but at the same time, wanted to exercise their fundamental Christian right of proclamation of the good news. The movement was a Christocentric lay brotherhood with evangelical poverty and a missionary thrust centred on the Bible. They wanted to follow Christ in this way, but this frightened the hierarchy of the Church because it was feared that they would snatch power and authority from the hierarchy. The movement was suppressed and condemned as heresy, although there was nothing unorthodox in their teachings. Their fault seemed to be that they claimed a certain autonomy of vocation.

Martin Luther rebelled against the medieval Church because he felt in his conscience that many of the things that were happening in the Church of his time were theologically, pastorally and spiritually damaging. The preaching of indulgences made people flee the penalty of sin and not sin itself, he said. It gave them a false sense of security with regard to their salvation. He wrote these things to his bishop as a member of the Church and he detailed this with his 95 theses on indulgence and penance. In his exposure of the theological weak-

nesses of the theory of indulgence, Luther offered a sensitive criticism of a Church practice which was not entirely undisputed at that time. The Church saw it as an attack on the power of the Church. This was in fact not the case. It was a far more important theological question, namely, justification, but it was pictured as challenge to the authority of the Church by the curia. Here was dissent based on faith, theology and pastoral spirituality. The whole debate, unfortunately, took a different turn. Even a rather conservative Church historian like Hubert Jedin calls the attitude of Rome in this case as complete neglect of pastoral and apostolic responsibility. The whole question is whether the Church took Luther's right to dissent seriously, a dissent which was based on sound theological reasoning. Luther was a critic but did the Church deal with him suitably? Was there real dialogue about what he really wanted to say?

Coming to the modern period, we have the suppression of the right to dissent theologically unleashed in the wake of the so-called Modernist Controversy. It was the suppression of all liberal, anti-Scholastic and historical-critical forms of thought in the Roman Catholic Church from 1890 to 1910. The leaders of this movement dissented from certain cultural features of the Catholic theology prevailing at that time such as: (1) mandatory neo-Thomism imposed on the Church (*Aeterni patris*), very well articulated by Pius X's *Pascendi*, that Catholic orthodoxy is inseparable from its scholastic expression;<sup>12</sup> (2) Integralism, a view prevailed in the Church at that time which said that the Catholic doctrinal system was a system

of doctrines so rigorously connected and linked with each other (as is the system of Aristotle and St. Thomas) that no single point could be detached from the others, since the light of truth that illumined each individual part was the same that illumined the whole.<sup>13</sup> This sort of deductive method was being challenged by history, experience and human dynamics, and the Modernists were asking questions from this perspective; (3) fundamentalism, both biblical and dogmatic, and the rejection of human experience which was condemned by the Church as subjectivism. This was challenged by the Modernists as unhistorical; (4) Ultramontanism, which extended absolute support to papal centralism, now armed with the dogmas of papal primacy and infallibility, to proceed decisively against any liberal thought. Today most of the teachings of the Modernists are accepted as part of Catholic theology, but their dissent at that time was efficiently and ruthlessly put down.<sup>14</sup> Throughout history the institutional Church has been distinguished by a large measure of authoritarianism, and it has been monolithic and intransigent in its internal relationships, in quelling dissent, and in suppressing legitimate criticism. It has also shown intolerance towards the outside, towards worldviews and ideologies different from its own; it has also legitimized its power structures by using religion in order to maintain its privileged position in society. Dissent in the Church is not merely voicing a different opinion, but has deeper implications. In the final analysis, it is the manifestation of the perpetual tension that exists between community and individualism, charism

and legalism, service and power, Utopia and system, horizontal communication and bureaucracy, participation and centralism, orthopraxis and orthodoxy, creativity and repetition, celebration and ritualism, poverty and ostentation.<sup>15</sup> This tension will always exist in the Church and therefore, there will be and should be dissent in the Church and this need not always be destructive. In order that it may not be destructive, dissent in the Church has to have a spirituality, a spirituality of following Jesus which will provide the right context for legitimate dissent.<sup>16</sup>

### **3. The Quest for Truth in the Church**

Although the Gospel says that the 'truth will make you free' (Jn 7:32), there have been many victims of truth in the history of the Church. The truth that makes us free is the truth about God's universal love expressed in Jesus Christ. This truth is a liberative truth and not an ideology for domination. But in the history of the Church truth has often been used as an ideology for domination.

'Avoid heresy' (Tit 3:10), Paul admonishes Titus, and the Church has ever since tried to do this with whatever means it could. But the same Paul had also said: 'There must be factions among you' (1 Cor 11:19), for the purpose of discernment. Truth and heresy are not new concepts in the Church. The fundamental dogmas of Christianity emerged from a heap of heresies and even today no one can claim to have presented an adequate account of the heresies and schisms in the early

Church. Nor have early Fathers and Councils ever claimed to have exhaustively presented the truth about Jesus Christ. What they did was to present the truth about Jesus Christ in Hellenistic categories. Surely there were many other philosophies existing in the world at that time which could also have offered adequate categories for the expression of the Christian faith. That the early Church found its way to the Greco-Roman world and made itself at home in its philosophy is no reason to say that the final word about Christian doctrines has been spoken. The expressions of the truth about Jesus Christ as formulated by the early Fathers and Councils were not final. But they could prevent the destruction of the faith by heresies for a period.

In the Middle Ages there arose again 'popular' heresies which though not strictly theological, like the ones in the early Church, nevertheless had something to do with the nature of the Church and its mission. They wanted to go back to the Scriptures which seemed to be sidelined by the Church's 'traditions'; they demanded less ritualism; they preached and practised evangelical poverty and itinerant preaching; they emphasized equality in the Church. There surely were aberrations and elements contrary to the Gospel in the teachings of some of these heretics. But all of them called for a return of the Church to the truth of the Gospel. However, the Church, with the help of the secular arm, took up the task of suppressing these heresies. But they did not die down. When the Catharists and the Waldensians were suppressed there emerged the Spiritual Franciscans,

Béghards and Béguines, Fraticelli, Wycliff, Huss, Savonarola, and many others; and the Church reacted with more repression. Was this enterprise of suppression of heresies with torture and burning alive a Christian enterprise? Even today's moderate historical judgment would say that it represents a very disturbing episode in the history of the Church and that it was totally unworthy of the Gospel.

The Protestants who affirmed the 'freedom of the Christian' were not far behind in this. We have for example the brutal persecution of the Anabaptists and other dissenters which arose alongside the Churches of the Reformation. The Anabaptists with their humanist, biblicist and mystical streams of doctrines challenged many ideas of the Reformers themselves, thus being called the Radical Reformers, the Left Wing of the Reformation, Non-Conformists etc. They challenged the key concept of the Reformers, justification, the doctrine of baptism, their social morality etc. Their introduction of rebaptism was condemned particularly severely and they were persecuted and executed *en masse*. The mainline Protestant Churches, too, like their Catholic counterparts, believed that their own doctrinal position are true and any deviation is always a falsehood.

The concept of holy war or just war was yet another repressive measure advocated by Christianity in defence of the truth. Augustine had claimed that the maintenance of the moral order and the punishment of evildoers comprise an acceptable war aim, that it was morally justifiable to put down heretics and over-

come pagan peoples by means of force provided that the intention was pure. In the Christendom of the medieval times, the enemies of God were the enemies of the empire. Christians had the duty to defend God's Kingdom and of enabling it to prevail. Thus, the identification of the state with the moral good and the marking of outsiders as enemies of God produced the moral justification for war. One of the results of this pernicious doctrine were the Crusades. Christendom ruled by the pope and the emperor identified itself with the Kingdom of God and defended its rights with the sword, in the name of God, and extirpated unbelievers. Only the one truth of Christendom had a right. Deviant individuals were not tolerated within it, and the government wielded the sword within and without with the Church's approval. In the name of the one truth, there was little or no respect for the just concern of an opponent to defend his individual belief, conviction, culture, and territory. It took centuries for the second Vatican Council to rectify this and say: "This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power" (*Dignitatis Humanae* 2). The Council reversed the accepted Catholic teaching which gave freedom only to the truth and not to persons, claiming that error had no rights. The conquest of Saxony by Charlemagne, the 'discovery' and invasion of Latin America, and even the colonization and Christianization of Africa are at times justified by taking recourse to the theory of just war.

That this concern for truth has not only theological but also political causes gives it a dubious credibility. The birth of formal orthodoxy in the early Church was simultaneous with the formation of the Christian empire which needed political and religious unity. The quest for unity of faith and of the Church was often prompted by other considerations. Peace within the Church was decisive for the maintenance of good order within the empire; so it became a matter for the emperor and the empire to maintain peace in the Church. The Ecumenical Council became a judicial functionary of the emperor instead of the expression of collegiality in the Church, the emperor himself convoking it throughout the first millennium. Emperors would also, without much difficulty, switch between 'true' faiths. This same attitude was now carried over into the second millennium with the formation of Christendom. Church and state constituted one unity. Heresy threatened both the Church and the state, and hence a common crusade against it was justified. The science of theology flourishing in the universities tried to develop an organic, uniform formulation of the faith and it gave rise to dissent; and the Church, its juridicism and its institutions supported by the emerging science of canon law, dealt with doctrinal conflicts decisively. But the multiplication of conflicts made the safeguarding of the truth by the pope and the bishops alone increasingly difficult.<sup>17</sup> Thus the setting up of institutions with juridical powers independent of the pastoral responsibility of the bishops began, with damaging consequences for the Church.



The institution of the Inquisition, with its sorry reputation for violence and its arrogant display of ecclesiastical power, amply recorded in Church history, deserves special mention. It has compromised the credibility of the Church considerably. The Inquisition properly so called came into being when in 1232 the emperor Frederick II issued an edict for the whole empire entrusting the hunting-out of heretics to state officials. Thereupon Gregory IX (pope from 1227), fearing Frederick's political ambitions, claimed this office for the Church and appointed papal inquisitors. In 1252 Innocent IV allowed the use of torture by his bull *Ad extirpanda*, to break the resistance of the accused. In 1542 Paul III established the Congregation of the Inquisition as the final court of appeal in trials for heresy, giving it enormous powers; it was reorganized by Sixtus V in 1588. Once the Protestant challenge ceased, the Inquisition concentrated on social anomalies like witchcraft, or on internal enemies like dissenting movements such as Jansenism. The French Revolution and the accompanying turmoil violently shook European society as a whole, and the papacy in particular. It resulted in the 'Restoration' whose dominant value was submission to authority without question. Pope Gregory XVI's programmatic encyclical *Mirari vos* of 1832 said that the Church must set aside the *indulgentiam benignitatis* and by virtue of its divine authority *virga compescere*. Increasing attention to the doctrinal dimension of the life of the Church, attention to the details in which the faith was formulated and an extension of the scope of doctrinal decisions

binding in faith etc., made the Inquisition and the papacy move from the role of guardians of the deposit of faith and orthodoxy to that of definers of faith and doctrine; from the sphere of discipline to the sphere of doctrine. The First Vatican Council cemented this with its theology of revelation and the dogmas of papal primacy and infallibility. It presented revelation as a body of truth abstracted from the historical process. A ready-made truth; Catholics had the option either of accepting this position or of falling into error. The reaction to Modernism and other liberal movements in the first half of the twentieth century, the rabid fervour with which error and those in error were persecuted with secret and arbitrary trials, denunciations, ruining of individuals and their reputation, suppression of academic freedom etc. proved that the Church was ready to safeguard the truth of its doctrines at any cost. It was Pope Pius X, well known for his anti-Modernism purge, who in 1908, changed the title of the Congregation of the Inquisition into the Holy Office, and Paul VI in 1965 gave it the title Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The recent actions of this important organ of the Roman Curia, which has changed its name several times, but not its basic nature, have shown that the "reforms" it has undergone have not been adequate. Giuseppe Alberigo has pointed out the following inadequacies in the functioning of this doctrinal watchdog of the Catholic Church: "*Ecclesiologically inadequate*, in that it deposes questions of safeguarding orthodoxy to a body distinct from and isolated from the people of God and from

those responsible for pastoral care; *theologically inadequate*, in that it makes reference to an abstract and ideologized acceptance of the deposit of faith to the detriment of its pastoral nature and multiform riches; *historically inadequate*, because it is still strictly bound to models of ideological conformism which the modern world has superseded.”<sup>18</sup> Its present head, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, seems to confirm this assessment in his famous interview with Vittorio Messori which later on appeared in book form under the title *Conversation on the Faith*. In it he gives clear expression to *his* understanding of orthodoxy and truth in the Catholic Church which he seems to identify with authentic Catholic teaching, and which he is called upon to defend.

Many other examples can be pointed out to show that freedom has been and is still being suppressed in the Church in many ways, through its violation of fundamental human rights, silencing of persons, excommunications, legal rigorism, denial of the right to academic freedom etc.; there is a wide gap between liberative theory and repressive practice in the Church.<sup>19</sup> Before I conclude this article, I would like to briefly point to the philosophical basis of this repressive practice in the Church, namely, its epistemology, and add a theological corrective to it. The Church's epistemology claims a crude realism with regard to knowledge about the world and God; it also creates a dualism between reason and experience. This leads to an unhistorical concept of truth and revelation. What must be done, believed and hoped for are objectively given, to be taught to the people by the

hierarchy. This objective data of revelation allows no place for the subjective ways of the believer in making the faith his/her own. All subjective conditions for knowing and arriving at the truth are completely rejected. Therefore, there is the constant temptation to formulate an absolutist language and a uniform interpretation of texts. When reason is divorced from its anchor in experience, right doctrine becomes an absolute, other-worldly reality. The danger here is arbitrary reason with that of arbitrary power to decide truth and reality; power to stipulate the correct reading and interpretation of texts and to silence dissidents. A detached and abstract concept of reason is considered as the vehicle of eternal truth. Correctness of doctrine is all that is important, for, the ultimate question concerns the nature of reality whose interpretation is entrusted to ecclesiastical guardians. This gives the Church a source of power to control and demand obedience with repressive effects.

Against this we say that revelation and truth must be understood from a more modern perspective. Revelation makes no sense without the human being's answer in faith. This response, that takes place in history as a definite experience, in a concrete language, also belongs to the content of revelation. We are not adding anything to revelation here but are interpreting revelation. Neither part is independently the whole of revelation. So a completely objective content of revelation outside of history is a questionable concept. The whole of revelation and faith exist in history. There is no zone that is immune from the storms of man's history, no zone of pure

theology.<sup>20</sup> But the Spirit, who is constantly active in the Church and whose 'strength is revealed in weakness', preserves the identity of the Christian faith intact, and helps it to 'remain in the truth' through the vicissitudes of history.

But truth can be attained only from an historically situated perspective, that is, there is a perspectivism in every assertion of truth. We can possess it only in a historical, perspectivistic or relative way. Coming to the truth is a continual historical process. Truth is oriented towards universal consensus but is always sought within a constantly changing situation of question and answer. It is never found fully in my interpretation of reality but in going beyond my historical answer. I need also the other person's truth (perspective) in order to come to the fullness of truth. The articulations of faith also have this perspectivism because they are also made in a historical situation of question and answer. Creative faithfulness to the Gospel is possible only in a changing and developing history. Therefore to suppress the freedom of the Christian in the name of truth is no service to the truth.

Yves Congar, while speaking about the identity of the Church says that the identity of or the truth about the Church consists in the fact that it is an organic whole, constituted by a network of relationships and interactions. "It is impossible to restrict oneself to *a single criterion*," he says, "to ancient texts without the living magisterium, or to the living magisterium without the ancient texts, or to authority without the community or to the latter without the former, or to the apostolicity of the ministry without apostolicity of doctrine, or *vice versa*, or to the Roman Church separated from catholicity, or to the latter detached from the former . . . all these criteria together should ensure a living faithfulness and identity in the full historicity of our lives and our knowledge."<sup>21</sup> There is no other way in which legitimate freedom can be maintained in the Church. When one organ of the Church claims for itself all the 'freedoms' and all the other constituencies of the Church are mere beneficiaries of this freedom, there is no chance for the 'message of freedom and liberation' to be actualized in the Church and in the world.

## Notes

1. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, New York: The Modern Library, no year, 268.
2. Indeed there has been an attempt to write such a history. The multivolume enterprise of Karlheinz Deschner, *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowolt, begun in 1986 is the best example.
3. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," *Communio*, 23 (Spring, 1996), 34.
4. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'", Vatican city, August 6, 1984. The text is taken from *Origins*, 14 (September 13, 1984), 194-204.
5. Rudolf Pesch, "Jesus a Free Man," *Concilium*, (March, 1974), 58.
6. Leander Keck, "The Son Who Creates freedom," *Concilium*, (March, 1974), 71-82.

7. For a concise but good presentation see Josef Blank, "The Concept of Power in the Church: New Testament Perspectives," *Concilium*, 197 (3/1988), 3-12.
8. As quoted by Peter Huizing and Knut Walf, "What does the 'Right to Dissent' Mean in the Church?," *Concilium*, 158 (8/1982), 6.
9. Incidentally, Pope Gregory XVI, a reactionary pope from the first half of the nineteenth century, in his encyclical letter *Mirari vos* (1832) condemned the freedom of conscience as a 'false and absurd maxim' and as 'madness'.
10. *Ibid.*, 3-12. Also see in the same volume, James Provost, "The Catholic Church and Dissent," pp. 13-18 for a definition of the term dissent and other related issues.
11. A controversy in the early Church regarding the validity of baptism given by heretics.
12. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 40 (1907), 636-637.
13. Gabriel Daly, "The Dissent of Theology: The Modernist Crisis," *Concilium*, 158 (8/1982), 55.
14. These ideas are taken from the above article, pp. 53-57.
15. Juan José Tamayo-Acosta, "The Importance of Organized Opposition Groups and their Rights in the Church," *Concilium*, 158 (8/1982), 89.
16. Herman Häring, "The Rights and Limits of Dissent," *Concilium*, 158 (8/1982), 95-107, here 105.
17. Giuseppe Alberigo, "Institutional Defence of Orthodoxy," *Concilium*, 192 (4/1987), 85-86.
18. *Ibid.*, 92-93.
19. Cf. the article by F.J. Laishley in three parts: "Repression and Liberation in the Church: I. An Anatomy of Repression;" "Repression and Liberation in the Church: II. An Anatomy of Liberation;" "Repression and Liberation in the Church: III. Theological Reflection," *Heythrop Journal*, XXIX (1988), 157-174; 329-342; 450-460.
20. Edward Schillebeeckx, "Infallibility of the Church's Office," *Concilium*, (March, 1973), 78.
21. Yves Congar, "Norms of Christian Allegiance and Identity," *Concilium*, (March 1973), 25.