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Introducing Receptive Ecumenism

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Introduction

In collaboration with ecclesiologists, ecumenists, senior ecclesiastics, social scientists, and local practitioners from across the Christian traditions and from academic and ecclesial contexts stretching, thus far, from Australia, North America, and Europe, the Centre for Catholic Studies within the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University has, for the past number of years, been hosting a series of research projects devoted to developing and modelling a fresh new strategy in Christian ecumenism, referred to as Receptive Ecumenism.[1]

The central aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to take seriously both the reality of the contemporary ecumenical moment—wherein the hope for structural unification in the short to medium term is, in general, now widely recognized as being unrealistic—and the abiding need for the Christian churches precisely in this situation to find an appropriate means of continuing to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity. The aim is to seek after an appropriate ecumenical ethic and strategy for living between the times; for living now orientated upon the promise of and calling to being made one in the Trinitarian life of God.

In service of this aim, Receptive Ecumenism represents a remarkably simple but far-reaching strategy that seeks to draw out a value that has been at work, to some degree at least, in all good ecumenical encounter and to place it centre-stage now as the appropriate organizing principle for contemporary ecumenism. This is the principle that considerable further progress is indeed possible, but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritizing the question "What do our various others first need to learn from us?" to asking instead, "What is that *we* need to learn and can learn, or receive, with integrity from our others?"

This short essay introducing Receptive Ecumenism moves through three key steps. The first section, "Three-phase Ecumenism," identifies Life and Works

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ecumenism and the traditional bilateral form of Faith and Order ecumenism as two complementary phases of the ecumenical journey that now need extending into a fresh third phase. The second section, "Receptive Ecumenism: Opening a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism," then offers Receptive Ecumenism as this significant next phase and outlines some of the key principles that are at work in it. In turn, the third section, "Case Studies in Receptive Ecumenical Engagement," turns to identify a number of examples of practical initiatives in receptive ecumenical learning and closes by highlighting the forthcoming Third International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism, which is to take place in June of this year in Fairfield, Connecticut. The conclusion reflects on the understanding of unity as the full flourishing of difference in communion that is at work in Receptive Ecumenism. A short bibliography of some relevant works is appended.

Three-phase Ecumenism

The modern ecumenical movement stemmed from the experience of the nineteenth-century Protestant missionary traditions, which became aware of a significant performative contradiction between the gospel of reconciliation they were each proclaiming and—acting as powerful counter-witness—the competition over the winning of souls and turf in which they were effectively engaged. As a consequence, from the outset, a fundamental ecumenical concern has been to seek for ways to move from mutual hostility and mistrust to recognition and effective collaboration in worship, work, and mission. Following the watershed 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, this concern issued in the Life and Works movement, which would later constitute one of the key streams flowing into the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

This was the crucial first phase of ecumenical engagement—first, not only chronologically but also in terms of abiding priority. This *ecumenism of life*, as it is sometimes called, is to ecumenical engagement as oxygen is to physical life: it is the *sine qua non* of all attempted ecumenical healing, without which nothing else is possible; and the churches always need more of it. Equally, no matter how much of it there might be, it alone is never going to be sufficient to solve the ecumenical problem. At its heart, the ecumenical problem consists not simply in breaches of affection, shared prayer, and witness—all of which occur within each of the Christian traditions and not simply between them—but in the institutional, ministerial, and sacramental divisions that, over centuries, have fomented and cemented such breakdowns.

At the heart, then, of the ecumenical problem is the broken witness the Christian churches give to the world by not being able to live consistently in full and visible structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion. Actions speak louder than words. St. Francis is recorded as telling his friars, "Preach always, and when necessary, use words." The first way in which the churches witness to the Gospel—even before they engage in social mission—is by their own lives, their own organizational realities. And here the unpalatable truth is that for as long as the Christian churches are prevented from living in full and visible structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion with each other, then they find themselves in a state of profound lived contradiction, rent by wounds and tears in the ecclesial body of Christ.

It is this realization that in turn drove one of the other key strands of the modern ecumenical movement, also emerging from Edinburgh 1910 and also subsequently feeding into the establishment of the World Council of Churches: the Faith and Order movement. The core concern of Life and Works ecumenism was—and remains—to build shared relationship and practice across formally divided traditions. In contrast, the *ecumenism of truth* or the *ecumenism of dialogue* focuses on formal doctrinal and ecclesiological causes of division, and asks how they might be healed and overcome, or how they might, at least, come to be understood as legitimate differences rather than as fundamental divisions. Here ecumenism takes a specifically and self-consciously ecclesiological form.

There have at times inevitably been tensions at various points between proponents of Life and Works ecumenism and of Faith and Order ecumenism, but there is no necessary opposition between them. Indeed, there is a sense in which Faith and Order ecumenism—the concern for the formal resolution of points of division in order to journey towards full structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion—both follows after and requires Life and Works ecumenism. On the one hand, the development of relationship with and direct personal experience of a separated tradition and its members can itself serve to promote an urgent desire for the overcoming of all that hinders full communion and so release significant energy for the self-consciously ecclesiological work of dialogue. On the other hand, as the many participants in the classical bilateral ecumenical dialogue processes from the late 1960s onwards attest,

the patient endeavours of the bilateral dialogues were sustained throughout and only able to make the progress they did on account of the quality of relationship that grew between the respective teams of participants.

Quite remarkable gains were indeed made by this second key phase of ecumenical endeavour, as exemplified by the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the most influential bilateral ecumenical dialogue in the English-speaking world since its inception in 1967 as an outflow from the Second Vatican Council. The methodology and strategies progressively developed by ARCIC in turn shaped the work of all the other bilateral dialogues. Three in particular were important: 1) demonstrating that some assumed divisions have been built upon misunderstandings and caricatures of one tradition by the other; 2) drawing upon new scholarship to show how the traditions could now more easily say jointly what they previously assumed could only be said in opposition; and 3) establishing that harmony between differing theological webs does not require uniformity of expression but, rather, ease of translation across what can legitimately remain differently articulated webs of practice and belief.

Throughout the first major phase of ARCIC's activity (ARCIC I, 1970–81) and continuing well into the second (ARCIC II, 1983–2005), the application of these and related strategies revealed that one key area of assumed historic division after another was not actually a point of real communion-dividing difference: whether teachings about the Eucharist, or about ordained priestly ministry, or about the relationship between justification and sanctification. Surfing the considerable energy released by Catholicism's formal entry into the ecumenical movement during Vatican II (1962–1965), the magnitude of achievement during the first phase of ARCIC's activity fed dizzy expectations about the possible realization of full structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion within a generation. The essential tasks of the dialogue partners were to come to the ecumenical table valuing the other tradition and prepared both to explain one's own tradition in relation to specifics with sufficient clarity and sophistication as to enable the members of the other tradition to understand it aright and affirm it, and to have their own appreciation of the other's tradition similarly refined, all with a view to coming to reconciled understanding.

In contrast, however, to those heady days, the contemporary ecumenical scene seems considerably more sober and constrained. Indeed, on many fronts and despite the undoubted historic achievements, the structural, sacramental, and ministerial reconciliation of the traditions now seems further away than ever, causing many to speak of an ecumenical winter or of an ecumenical cul-de-sac. The great wave of reconciliation through theological clarification appears to have crashed on the beach, dissipating its energy and leaving some of the great dialogue documents as the high-water mark of a tide now turned.

This is particularly evident in relation to some of the longer-running dialogue processes, where the 'softwood' of relatively easy early gains has now been exhausted, giving way to the 'hardwood' of lasting substantive differences: differences over the ways in which the local churches and the universal Church relate, over decision making at various levels of church life, and over the nature of eligibility for ordained ministry. There have also been significantly differing formal discernments between the traditions in relation to the pastoral care of gay and lesbian people and the legitimacy of admitting women into ordained ministry. Here and in related cases, we are not dealing with mere mutual misunderstandings and differences of articulation that can be clarified and relatively easily tidied up. Rather, we are dealing with substantive, long-term differences that, at the formal level, are not going to be resolved for the foreseeable future. It is important to recognize this while also recognizing that on the ground *within* the traditions there can be considerable diversity of opinion, with faithful members exploring what possibilities for eventual change might actually lie open.

On account, however, of the ecumenically game-changing nature of these 'hardwood' issues at the formal level, a different, third-phase strategy is required: one aimed less at short-term harmonization and reconciliation (cf. the second-phase dialogues) and aimed more at long-term mutual challenge, development, and growth by bringing the traditions into encounter with each other precisely in their difference. This third-phase strategy needs to be aimed less at asking what it is that another tradition needs to understand better about one's own tradition and to be aimed instead at asking what it is that one's own tradition has to learn and needs to learn from the other traditions. Just such a counter-intuitive third-phase ecumenical strategy has been developed in recent years under the title of Receptive Ecumenism, guided both by theological principle and by pragmatic insight.

Receptive Ecumenism: Opening a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism

The operative theological conviction is that if the call to full, visible communion is indeed a gospel imperative that shares in the reconciling work of the Triune God, then while the formal ecumenical journey might now be facing fresh challenges, this should not be mistaken either for arrival at the end of the road or for an insuperable roadblock. In Christian understanding, God does not manoeuvre us into corners and blind alleys in order to prod us with a stick for sport; rather, God can be trusted to be faithful to God's call and to provide the resources necessary to live that call fruitfully in any given context. Similarly, hope, unlike optimism, is not a form of reality denial that ignores the reality of apparent roadblocks in order to stay buoyant; on the contrary, hope takes reality seriously in all its problematic aspects and asks how the churches are resourced to live in the face of and through the roadblocks in question.

Receptive Ecumenism maintains that while the second-phase ecumenical concern to move as directly as possible to the harmonious reconciliation of apparently contradictory theological frameworks has, at least for the time being, now run as far as it can on many fronts—particularly so in the case of the more mature dialogues—this should not be taken as returning us to the first-phase ecumenism, where all that is possible is to attend to the quality of relationship, shared prayer, and witness between divided traditions. Abidingly important as such first-phase ecumenism undoubtedly remains, there must also be something more: there must be an appropriate means of continuing to walk towards and to live in anticipation of the reality of full communion.

For Receptive Ecumenism, this third way is to take seriously the gospel call to continual renewal and conversion at the heart of Christian life, and to view the churches collectively as each being on a long-term path to ecclesial renewal and growth in the face of the other: as being in a state, as Martin Luther would put it, of *semper reformandi* or, as Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, puts it, of *semper purificanda*. In this perspective, the longer-term ecumenical journey on which the Christian churches are embarked, and the recalibration of ecumenical expectation that this promotes, is not a matter of failure and judgment. It is a consequence of the softwood having been passed and the hardwood now being engaged. It is a time of grace for growth towards the goal by the only route possible: that of patient, grace-filled learning of how each is called to grow to a new place where new things become possible. The fig tree is being given the additional year it requires if it is to bear fruit.

Complementing and reinforcing these theological convictions at work in Receptive Ecumenism are some equally important pragmatic insights and principles. Key here is the recognition that during the same period that the churches have come to see the fulfilment of the ecumenical goal as being on a slower track than once envisaged, they have also come to—or have had forced upon them by external circumstances—more sober appraisals of their own respective wounds, difficulties, and needs. Each tradition has specific characteristic difficulties and limitations that are open to view and that can become impossible to ignore, but which the tradition in question can be incapable of resolving from its own existing resources. Think, for instance, of the widespread public recognition across the full range of Catholic opinion by the time of the election of Pope Francis that systemic pathologies around excessive centralism and a decadent bureaucracy needed to be addressed. Seeking to resolve such pathologies using existing internal resources is like a hamster running on a wheel: there might be a sense of movement, but no real progress is being made. On the contrary, the existing pathological logic is simply being reinforced. There is, consequently, a need for refreshment and renewal from without, from the alternative logics and ecclesial experiences of other traditions. This in turn is a dynamic process that will take each tradition to new places, in the first place for their own respective health and flourishing, but by so doing also opening up currently unforeseeable fresh possibilities for their own relating.

At the heart, then, of Receptive Ecumenism is the assumption that any further formal progress towards the abiding ecumenical goal of full structural and sacramental unity will only be possible if each tradition moves from asking how other traditions need to change and focuses instead on its own difficulties and tensions and consequent need to learn, or receive, from the best discernible practice and associated understanding in other traditions. This reflects a move *away* from ideal theorized, purely doctrinally driven ecclesiological constructs in ecumenical dialogue and a definite move *towards* taking the lived reality of traditions absolutely seriously, together with the difficulties and problems, tensions and contradictions to be found there.

The general tendency, of course, is to seek to hide such wounds, and most certainly to hide them from those outside the family circle. Consequently, too much ecumenical engagement is a matter of getting the best china tea service out: of showing ourselves somewhat formally in the best possible light to our distant relatives who are coming to visit rather than allowing the more warts-and-all self-understanding we keep locked behind the closed doors of the intimate family space to come into view. In contrast, rather than the ecumenism of the best china tea service, Receptive Ecumenism represents an ecumenism of the wounded hands: of being prepared to show our wounds to each other, knowing that we cannot heal or save ourselves; knowing that we need to be ministered to in our need from another's gift and grace; and trusting that as in the Risen Lord in whose ecclesial body these wounds exist, they can become sites of our redemption, jewels of transformed ecclesial existence.

This humble yet hopeful spirit of Receptive Ecumenism resonates strongly with Pope Francis's recent exhortation during this year's Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity:

> It is good to acknowledge the grace with which God blesses us and, even more so, to find in other Christians something of which we are in need, something that we can receive as a gift from our brothers and our sisters. The Canadian group that prepared the prayers for this Week of Prayer has not invited the communities to think about what they can give their Christian neighbours, but has exhorted them to meet to understand what all can receive from time to time from the others. This requires something more. It requires much prayer, humility, reflection and constant conversion. Let us go forward on this path, praying for the unity of Christians, so that this scandal may cease and be no longer with us.[2]

Case Studies in Receptive Ecumenical Engagement

High rhetoric indeed, but what might all this look like in practice? Various initiatives in Receptive Ecumenism have taken root and developed in different contexts around the world. The first Receptive Ecumenism project focused on an international research colloquium in January 2006 at Ushaw College, Durham, marking the conferral by the University of an honorary doctorate on Cardinal Walter Kasper. An international team was invited to explore, test, and develop the basic thinking at work in Receptive Ecumenism and, reflecting both the self-critical principle at the heart of the strategy and the specificity of the host tradition, to apply this thinking to exploring how Roman Catholicism might, with integrity, be fruitfully reimagined in the light of its ecumenical others. Further, reflecting the concern not just to theorize about the Church but to diagnose and address problems in its actual lived structures, systems, and practices, alongside the predictable mix of theologians, ecumenists, and ecclesiastics, the colloquium also drew together a critical complement of social scientists, organizational experts, and local church practitioners. The revised papers and additional commissioned essays were published in 2008 under the title *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism.*

In turn, extending the concern beyond Catholicism to explore what Receptive Ecumenism might look like in relation to specific traditions, the Second Receptive Ecumenism International Conference in January 2009 (again at Ushaw College, Durham) under the title "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to Be Church Together," invited as broad a range as possible of representatives of ecclesial traditions to engage in the exercise of self-critical receptive ecclesial learning from their "others." At time of writing, the mature results of this exercise, together with other commissioned pieces, are still in preparation for formal publication.

While these first two conference-based projects delivered the fundamental thinking and basic strategy of Receptive Ecumenism and tested it out in relation to specific ecclesial traditions—and sought, moreover, to do so in a way that took account of the socio-cultural and organizational realities of these traditions, rather than simply treating them as theorized doctrinal realities—the analyses they each pursued nevertheless tended to operate at somewhat refined levels. As such, they each highlighted the complementary need for a much more practically focused project that would examine the relevance, viability, and on-the-ground implications of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of local church life.

This recognition issued in a multi-year regional comparative research project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church, involving the nine major Christian denominational groupings to be found in the northeast of England, working with a multi-disciplinary team of ecclesiologists; practical theologians; sociologists

and anthropologists of religion; organizational, human resource, and financial experts (Durham University Business School); church educationalists; ecumenical officers; and other local church practitioners. The purpose was to examine how respective difficulties and sticking points in the organizational cultures, structures, and processes of each of the participant church traditions, from regional to congregational levels, might fruitfully be addressed by learning from, or receiving, examples of 'best practice' in the other traditions. The practical and the organizational act here as portals into the theological rather than the other way around: asking first how the specific difficulties and limitations of one tradition might be tended to by learning and receiving from what is strong in the others and then subjecting these possibilities to rigorous ecclesiological testing against the terms of the relevant host tradition.

To pursue this end, three research teams have focused respectively on Governance and Finance, Ministry and Leadership, and Learning and Formation. First, each team conducted a mapping of what is happening, in principle, within each denominational grouping, drawing upon extant documentation, formal ecclesiological self-understanding, and regulations, together with some initial interviews. Second, the teams conducted more detailed empirical testing, through structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and participant observation. Third, a series of congregational studies explored how these interrelated issues work in the round. Fourth, for each denominational grouping, all the findings deriving from earlier phases were then integrated into a report identifying strengths and difficulties—and areas of potential receptive learning from the gifts and strengths of one or more of the other groupings. Fifth, these constructive proposals in turn are being subjected to further rigorous testing at the three levels of *internal*, *extensive* and *pragmatic coherence*: examining whether a particular tradition's ecclesiological self-understanding can indeed be expanded and rewoven with integrity in order to accommodate the new insight and practice, while retaining all that is essential in the host tradition (albeit potentially transposed and reworked).

This formal study in the possibilities that are open at the level of the local church for receptive ecumenical learning is certainly yielding some significant findings and possibilities. That said, it needs be acknowledged that one of its limitations is the way in which its being led by a high-powered team of professional theologians and social scientists can appear to confine the process of receptive ecumenical learning to the level of the experts and to disenfranchise the "ordinary" churchgoer. With this, for all the active partnership that was cultivated with each of the participant traditions, the fact that the project has operated somewhat along the lines of an external consultancy model has militated to some degree against achieving strong ownership of the project's resulting findings by the respective traditions.

Consequently, what is really required in order to test the relevance of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of local church life is not a further series of such high-level, relatively externally conducted studies, but a series of self-initiated self-help projects wherein church members in a diverse range of contexts ask themselves where the specific difficulties in their own tradition lie and how they might fruitfully learn in these regards, with appropriate testing, from other traditions. It is pleasing to note that a considerable number of just such "bottom-up" local initiatives in Receptive Ecumenism have now arisen in a wide variety of contexts around the world, each of which would repay careful study.

Shifting attention, however, for now from such local initiatives in potential receptive ecumenical learning and onto the formal, international level of bilateral dialogue, it is significant that the third major phase of work of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III) committed at its first meeting to pursuing its mandated joint focus on the church local and universal and on ethical discernment in receptive ecumenical mode.[3] This is requiring a very challenging move *away* from the refined articulation of theorized, doctrinally driven accounts and *towards* also asking after the lived experience of decision making in each tradition and the real difficulties and tensions to be found there. In keeping also with the principle of pragmatic coherence briefly indicated earlier, these difficulties and tensions are being used as means of probing and testing the theorized accounts and identifying key areas for potentially fruitful receptive learning from the other. In proceeding in this way, ARCIC III is making no claim to being able to overcome at this point the very deep meta-differences in decision-making structures and processes that pertain *between* Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism. That would be utterly unrealistic. What it is seeking to do instead is to focus honestly on respective difficulties *within* the traditions as these arise in the experience of the concrete church and to make some kind of progress, albeit doubtless more modest than might once have been hoped for.

Finally, intentionally gathering all such practical initiatives thus far in Receptive Ecumenism at a variety of levels and from within a considerable range of contexts, the Third Receptive Ecumenism International Conference will take place at Fairfield University, Connecticut, from June 9 to 12, 2014, on the theme "Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective: Contextual Ecclesial Learning." The dual aim is: 1) to gather the total family of those who, in a wide variety of ways and contexts, have been putting Receptive Ecumenism to work in order that they might share on good practice and so contribute to the ongoing development of Receptive Ecumenism; and 2) to invite others into engaging this story and its potential in the hope that they might in turn be inspired to put it to work in their own contexts.[4]

Conclusion

The argument here, then, is that while second-phase ecumenism might still have important work to do in the context of relatively young ecumenical dialogue processes, where misunderstandings and prejudicial attitudes can still prevail, Receptive Ecumenism offers a constructive way ahead where such dialogues have run out of steam. Receptive Ecumenism starts with humble recognition of the wounds, tears, and difficulties in one's own tradition and asks how the particular and different gifts, experiences, and ways of proceeding in the other traditions can speak to and help to heal these wounds that elude the capacity of one's own tradition to heal itself.

I have argued that this way of reparative receptive ecumenical learning—this way of refreshment and *ressourcement* by and through the separated other—is the only way in which the currently divided traditions can walk towards full structural, ministerial, sacramental communion and their own healing together. As such, Receptive Ecumenism sets each tradition on an open-ended journey, both towards its own healing and greater flourishing and to coming to recognize itself in the other, the other in itself, and each as bound together in the fullness of Christ and the Spirit.

This is not a journey of return to any imagined uniformity. It is not a matter of the absorption of the many into a great undifferentiated unity. It is, rather, a journey towards the particularity of each coming to full flourishing and shining in all its particular glory. The wholeness, the full communion, of full catholicity thus understood is like the fully decked, fully illuminated Christmas tree—or like a polyphonous choir singing in harmony—in which each unique ornament, each distinct voice, is needed for the whole. It is in service of such greater ecclesial flourishing in communion and the resulting collective shining of the church in the world—called to be *Lumen gentium*, light to the nations—that the reparative, critical-constructive task of ecumenical ecclesiology is properly pursued.

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1 See Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), particularly Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda," 5–25; and Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs," *Louvain Studies*, 33 (2008), 30–45. Also see: https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/.

2 Pope Francis, "General Audience," 22 January 2014, available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140122_udienza-generale_en.html.

3 See the official communiqué released at the end of the inaugural May 2011 meeting: www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2011/5/27/ACNS4874.

4 For information on the conference, see: http://www.fairfield.edu/academics/schoolscollegescenters/academiccenters/centerforcatholicstudies//otherevents/conference/.

Catholic Interreligious Reading Since the Second Vatican Council

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Interreligious Reading After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism. Edited by David F. Ford and Frances Clemson. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 236 pp.

This book provides thirteen essays by pioneers and protagonists in the developing field of Catholic interreligious reading since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). It begins with David F. Ford's superb introduction to the writers and their themes that explains the substance and purpose of the book. Essays by Michael Barnes and Kevin J. Hughes offer insights into the complex historical and theological machinations that opened the Vatican II Catholic Church to modern biblical study, the exercise of religious freedom, and ecumenical and interreligious exploration.

Essays by Francis X. Clooney (Comparative Theology), David F. Ford (Scriptural Reasoning), and Paul D. Murray (Receptive Ecumenism) define the particular approach of each in their specific discipline of interreligious reading. Each essay explores the strengths and limitations of their practices and examines the potential of each for advancing the ecumenical and interreligious agenda of the Catholic Church into the future. This is particularly important in the wake of *Dominus Iesus*, the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, published in 2000, that expressly rejected extra-biblical scriptures as sources of divine inspiration (113).

The remaining essays offer critique and/or probing into Comparative Theology, Scriptural Reasoning, and Receptive Ecumenism by considering them within hermeneutical traditions within the Catholic Church (David Dault, Mike Higton), the philosophical underpinnings of Christian interreligious reading (Nicholas Adams), successes and limitations in the practice of interreligious reading (Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier), Islamic considerations (Anna Bonta Moreland, Maria Massi Dakake), and implications for theological formation in the Church (Peter Ochs).

Based in both theory and a wealth of practical experience, these essays will be valuable to scholars and veterans of interreligious reading, especially those looking to learn more about the specific disciplines of Comparative Theology, Scriptural Reasoning, and Receptive Ecumenism. Historians of Vatican II and specialists in literary studies will find much to value in this book. Reading this collection of essays feels a bit like attending a conference on the theme. Those who find themselves attracted to such a conference will enjoy the experience and be rewarded by it. However, the technical nature of the subject matter, the high level of the writing, and an assumed familiarity with Vatican II and post–Vatican II theological developments will render many of the essays inaccessible to the uninitiated.

Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times: White Supremacy in the Light of the Gospel

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At Vatican II, Catholics were reminded of the ongoing necessity of engaging the world as a faith practice: "the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel."[1] The two-fold task here is to see clearly what's going on in the world and to assess it through a distinctively scriptural lens. In its most concise form, this light of interpretation emanating from the Gospel might be conceived as a lens of saving love. When questioned about the path to eternal life, Luke's gospel remembers Jesus as approving the interrogating lawyer's answer, which comes from the heart of Torah: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." (Luke 10:26-27, NRSV) Here, a love that orbits toward God with heart, mind, soul, and strength is incomplete without love also to neighbour as oneself. This is the light of the Gospel as recalled to us by liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez: "If humanity, each person, is the living temple of God, we meet God in our encounter with others; we encounter God in the commitment to the historical process of humankind…. We love God by loving our neighbor."[2] The Christian is enjoined to love and to interpret the signs of our times through a lens that brings into focus our ability and our failures to love.

The active and pressing verb 'to scrutinize' insists that the contexts to which Christians bring the hermeneutic of love are not self-evident, but necessitate the removal of blinders and pressing beneath the surface to bring to view what is actually going on. Here, the best tools of social analysis must join with our theological concerns to successfully name present realities and scrutinize their constitutive elements. What we see with the help of critical theorists is an imbalance in the fabric of human sociality that runs contrary to our deep constitution as human beings. The signs of our times include the reality of white supremacy.

Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times: We Live in a Weighted World

We find a framework for such social analysis in the recent work of Mark Lewis Taylor. Employing the work of Theodore Schatzki, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jean-Luc Nancy, Taylor persuasively argues that the nature of our human condition is one that is fundamentally constituted by bodies in balance. We are ontologically, as human beings, thoroughly enmeshed in relations to others, where our bodies emerge in sociality and our material selves share space with others. This is the very basis of our being. Potentially in equilibrium, where the weight of human existence flows through networks in interpersonal, social, and global spheres, we *are* as human beings constantly in the flux of powers impinging upon us and being enacted by us. Love, here, might be envisioned as the power that constitutes us as interpersonal, social beings, and it is through this power that we come into being, in "a delicate spacing of bodies, involving both mutual intimacy and distancing of bodies."[3] When human beings are conceived as ontologically interrelated, the well-being of one is intertwined with the well-being of all. Thus, "delicate spacing" is Taylor's way of insisting that the individual *qua* individual is never alone, but that each of us exists in networks formed by both intimacy and distance. Love, for the Christian, could be the precarious relations of care that maintain both 'intimacy' and 'distance' (love of other and self) in a delicate balance.

And yet, while this potential power-equilibrium *should* ontologically and *could* theoretically frame our existence as human beings, our world is tragically characterized by our failures to love. Instead of delicate balance, the weight of the world is 'shifted' onto some and released from others. As Taylor explains:

> Shifting names what happens when the labile extension and delicate spacing of world bodies is disrupted. The results are not extension, relation and spacing in a singular plural world, but 'masses, gatherings, crowdings, crammings,

accumulations, demographic spurts, exterminations,' and so on.[4]

This disequilibrium is maintained by the constant exertion of power, which Taylor describes with the word 'agonistic' (meaning 'struggle'). His anthropology characterizes all human beings in the push and pull of a constant struggle: the privileged struggle to maintain their position and well-being, while the dispossessed struggle to achieve well-being. Taylor names the struggle 'political' as a way of indicating that politics is more than government laws enacted, but also includes everyday practices by which societies live within shared space and resources. The signs of our times indicate that we live within 'the agonistic political.'

The struggle Taylor names includes striving for bodily securities ('capital' in both economic and material senses), but it also includes the struggle for recognition, which he captures with the idea of 'symbolic capital': "There is … both an egoistic pursuit of self-love and a fascination with, and need to secure, approval of others. Glory, honor, credit, praise, fame – these make up the currency of symbolic capital."[5]

With the struggle for survival and the struggle to secure approval, Taylor provides a framework through which to scrutinize the signs of our times. Each one of us is necessarily interconnected through networks and relationships; enmeshed in those relationships, we seek material well-being and recognition. But the flow of well-being and recognition has shifted to the benefit of some at the dispossession of others; some persons are recognized, others eclipsed. This is where we find ourselves. Simply put, "Human being is steeped in this weighted world … bodies and their dispositions are shaped by a struggle for recognition and the accumulation of symbolic capital."[6] Disequilibrium, therefore, is the landscape in which Christians do their loving. We love in a "weighted world," where the dispossessed bear more while the privileged bear less, yet both struggle to achieve recognition through material and symbolic capital.

Scrutinizing the signs of the times in order to pursue the practices of love presses us to employ Taylor's framework to ask precisely who it is that benefits and who it is that is dispossessed in the shifting weight of our present world: Who among us struggles for quality education, homeownership, economic stability? Who among us benefits from the struggle to access physical well-being that is a universal human condition? Upon whom has the weight of *our* world been shifted? In terms of economic stability, the Pew Research Center starkly reports that in the United States, "The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households."[7] Wealth disparities along race lines indicate that poverty disproportionately weighs upon persons of colour, as demonstrated also by homeownership (where "an owned home is the most important asset in the portfolio of most households"[8]) and personal assets.[9] Access to education intertwines with this racialized financial disparity[10] when the Chronicle of Higher Education can report that 28% of Whites in the U.S. (25 years or older) hold a degree from a four-year college, while 17% of Blacks and 13% of Latinos do—this building on an 80% high school graduation rate for Whites, 62% for Blacks, 68% for Latinos and 51% for Native Americans. Health disparities as well illumine a disproportionate number of Black and Latino Americans uninsured, with health measures like diabetes and infant mortality favouring White Americans.[11] Incarceration rates for Black and Latino Americans further demonstrates that the weight of the world has been racialized.[12] On nearly every measure of our agonistic political landscape, the weight of *our* world falls disproportionately on men, women and children of colour.

If the agonistic political describes the struggle of the privileged to maintain their position of well-being, and the struggle of the dispossessed to find well-being, a crucial feature of our weighted world is the force of white supremacy. What was once an overt ideology has, over time, become transformed into a social position favouring Whites within the invisible networks of our society, as indicated by the various measures of human well-being (education, housing, employment, health) and its opposite (mortality rate, incarceration). The history of racist practices has created a weighted world where racism is institutionalized; the very fabric of our society crafted by white supremacy upholds white superiorities. What does the Gospel mandate to love look like in this weighted world?

Conscientization: Training Our Eyes to Read the Signs of the Times

Once again, the methodology of liberation theologians is informative here. Like the conscientization that was part of the movement in Latin America and developments in *mujerista* theology,[13] this same process of analyzing reality must be incorporated into the faith

practices of White North American Christians, because "when it comes to oppression – that is, to the sanctioning and nurturing of systems of inequality that are woven throughout social institutions and embedded within individual consciousness – most white, Anglo, affluent students have real difficulty getting the picture."[14] One reason why White Christians have a difficult time reading the signs of white supremacy is that our lenses have been trained to hone in on discrete acts of racism and our desires have been trained toward 'colour-blindness.' Indeed, many White Catholics hope in the fruitfulness of Catholic Social Teaching, which has insisted upon the full humanity of all persons, equal in their inherent dignity as created in the image of God. Thus, White Christians who are propelled by a theological anthropology of equality before God and Catholic Social Teaching that insists on the dignity of the individual may be diverted from seeing the real causes of white supremacy and non-white dispossession. As Payne Hiraldo suggests, "Colorblindness is a mechanism that allows people to ignore racist policies that perpetuate social inequity."[15]

To understand Hiraldo's concern with too quickly moving to the colour-blind treatment of all persons in their equality, we must distinguish between levels of racism. We've been trained to see and to reject the level most apparent in our history, that of "personally mediated racism,"[16] which manifests as direct discriminations on the basis of race. These are the past injustices we can see written into our histories, but we have yet to train our eyes to insist upon the institutionalized forms of racism that became the fabric of our society as a legacy of these past injustices. As Camara Phyllis Jones describes:

> Institutionalized racism manifests itself both in material conditions and in access to power. With regard to material conditions, examples include differential access to quality education, sound housing, gainful employment, appropriate medical facilities, and a clean environment. With regard to access to power, examples include differential access to information (including one's own history), resources (including wealth and organizational infrastructure), and voice (including voting rights, representation in government, and control of the media). It is important to note that the association between socioeconomic status and race in the United States has its origins in discrete historical events, but persists because of contemporary structural factors that perpetuate those historical injustices. In other words, it is because of institutionalized racism that there is an association between socioeconomic status and race in this country.[17]

While White Christians may pin their hopes on the possibility that personally mediated racism is more part of our past history than our present reality (although racial profiling and overt acts of white supremacy continue to challenge this hope), Christians may also feel as though they can wash their hands of responsibility for racism if they themselves have adopted colour-blind practices. And yet, it is because of the way that history informs our present that White Christians must take responsibility. For the history of choices that legalized dispossession remain effective in structuring our society as a weighted world where persons of colour disproportionately bear the weight. Legalized decisions were made to extract land from native peoples whose skin marked them as different (through Supreme Court decisions [Johnson v. M'Intosh, 1823] and Indian Relocation Acts). These historic choices were propelled by European colonialism, but they were sustained also by Christian exceptionalism. It was the intersection of 'racial' difference *and* religious difference that laid the groundwork for white supremacy as a founding ideology in the so-called New World. As indigenous advocates demonstrate to us today, the Catholic ideology of superiority and the theology of 'no salvation outside the Church' propelled the practice of 'Christianization' and provided the legal framework that assigned rights to Christians who came to inhabit the land and determined that native peoples held no such rights. As George Tinker describes, "The laws invented in European and English legal discourse to permit the invasion and occupation of indigenous lands were deeply rooted in the canon law of the medieval church and in their ongoing manipulation of Christian theology."[18]

Historic choices were enacted to enslave Africans whose skin marked them racially and theologically as 'other'. It was Christian supremacy intersecting with white supremacy that sustained the divisions under which the enslavement of Africans was conceptualized. As Cyprian Davis describes, the project of White Christian domination and the enslavement of Africans was itself at the intersection of religion and race:

> … the Africans south of the Sahara were considered as being Moslems – erroneously in fact,

since at that time little Moslem influence was found in the general population outside of North Africa. In the Middle Ages, Christians were considered to have a legitimate right to enslave the Moslems of North Africa who waged war on them. Moslems made Christians slaves, and Christians, in turn enslaved their Moslem prisoners …. Black Africans were seen as inhabitants of Moslem territory. Hence, they could be enslaved like the North African Moslems.[19]

It was the *theological* idea of *Christian* supremacy that formed the foundation for what will become *white* supremacy[20] as Christian supremacy grew into *white* Christian supremacy, which saw Black Christianities as derivative and therefore 'less than' their White counterparts.[21] Deep theological foundations supported choices to keep black and brown bodies from white places (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896), white schools (2nd Morill Land Grant Act, 1890), white neighbourhoods (Federal Housing Administration [FHA] Mortgage Underwriting Manual 1934–1968), and white churches.[22] Simultaneously, choices enacted through government programs supported the well-being of Whites through public higher education (Morill Land Grant Act, 1862), the establishment of federal housing assistance and mortgages (FHA, established in 1934), social security (established in 1935, but excluding farm workers and domestic workers—professions inhabited by many African Americans), and other racially infused legislation. These racialized historic choices form the generational legacy of dispossession that forms the fabric of our society even today.

In a Christian-dominated nation, the responsibility for these past prejudices and contemporary inequalities falls upon Christians willing to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel. But, even more pointedly, as James Cone has expressed, White theologians bear a particular responsibility in shifting the weight of the world, insisting that "No group has done more in defining the public meaning of the gospel than White scholars. And no group has done more to corrupt its meaning, making Christianity seem compatible with White supremacy."[23] Cone names white supremacy as "a moral evil and as a radical contradiction of our humanity and religious identities,"[24] indicting White theologians for continuing to ignore its powerful reality.

How Are We to Love in a Weighted World?

In the words of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, Catholic Christians are tasked with "the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." Our duty, then, is to see clearly our weighted world and to interpret our failings through the Gospel light of love. What does love look like in a weighted world? If it means re-establishing the mutual bonds of intimacy and distance in our networks of relationships, then it also means shifting the weight such that it is shared among humanity equally, in the delicate balance of self-love and love of neighbour that can be the witness of love for God. Those with privileges must be willing to undertake the kenosis of emptying, relinquishing symbolic capital by fundamentally resisting the desire for glory, honour, credit, praise, and fame, as well as resisting the never-ending desire for material and economic capital that comes at the cost of others' well-being. While necessary, it is insufficient for White theologians and White Christians to simply recognize white privilege (although that is an important first step in reading the signs of the times). Too often, the approach of white privilege focuses "on the individual [and] stalls racial analyses at personal levels without moving them toward structural or institutional understandings."[25] White Christians must be willing to recognize white supremacy institutionalized in the fabric of our weighted world. Yet, if "Whites know that they have reaped the material harvest of White domination in the modern world,"[26] then perhaps Whites are resistant to facing squarely this weighted world because they fear losing the well-being and recognition that they've put in so much effort to maintain. Here, returning to Taylor's proposal is imperative, as the point is not simply to recognize our human condition as 'the agonistic political,' but to actively redistribute the weight of the world through practices that are theological, embedded in the weighted world but holding within them transformative possibilities. Here, returning to the Gospel witness also is imperative, as Luke's Gospel has the story continue with a teaching moment for those inhabiting spaces of prestige and privilege. In the story that has come to be known as the 'Good Samaritan,' those who passed by were unwilling to forgo their symbolic capital, tethered as it was to maintaining distance from the defiled. They walked past the dying man, careful to avoid taking on the weight of his defilement, which could compromise the fragile status they struggled to maintain. When I place myself as a White Christian theologian in the position of those careful to secure their status, Jesus' call instead is a radical love of neighbour in a terribly weighted world: to follow instead the path of the Samaritan, who may

have held no symbolic capital, but was willing to forgo other forms of capital for the well-being of the one on whom the weight of the world had fallen. The disruption of the precarious, ontological balance of intimacy and distance that is recognizable as we scrutinize the signs of our times and interpret them through the Gospel lens of love means to follow this practice of care for self and other. For in holding up the story of the stranger on the road and the example he affords, the inquisitive lawyer sees clearly the message of eternal life promised as the result of love of God and neighbour, as Jesus lifts up the model of the Samaritan willing to relinquish his own well-being and enjoins, "do this and you will live."[27] (Luke 10:28)

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1 *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965 (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), Section 4.

2 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 110–11.

3 Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 41.

4 Taylor, *The Theological and the Political*, 41. Taylor is quoting Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 79.

5 Ibid., 88.

6 Ibid., 223–24.

7 Paul Taylor, Rakesh Kochhar, Richard Fry, Gabriel Velasco, and Seth Motel, "Twenty-to-One: Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics," Pew Research Center (www.pewsocialtrends.org). Accessed March 1, 2013. In 2009, the median net worth of households aligned significantly with race differences, with white households at $113,149, Asian households $78,066, Hispanic households at $6,325 and black households at $5,677.

8 Ibid., 15. Homeownership: 74% of Whites; 46% of Blacks; 47% of Hispanics.

9 Ibid., 23: "A sizable minority of U.S. households own no assets other than a motor vehicle. In 2009, that was true for 24% of black and Hispanic households, 8% of Asian households and 6% of white households."

10 Anthony Carneval and Jeff Strohl, "Separate and Unequal" (cew.georgetown.edu/separateandunequal). Accessed December 19, 2013.

11 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports the following diabetes rates: 6.2% Whites; 10.8% Blacks; 10.6% Latino; 9.0% Native American. The Center for Disease Control reports the infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births: 6/1,000 Whites; 12/1,000 Blacks; 6/1,000 Latino; 8/1,000 Native American (www.cdc.gov). A study using similar measures in Canada found that the health disparities of White and Black Canadians did not always favour Whites, attributing health outcomes to the more recent immigration of Black Canadians to North America and the long-term negative status of Black Americans and the legacy of slavery and the structural dispossessions after slavery ended. See Lydia Lebrun and Thomas A. LaVeist, "Black/White Racial Disparities in Health: A Cross-Country Comparison of Canada and the United States; Research Letter," *Journal of Internal Medicine,* Vol. 171, no. 17 (Sept. 26, 2011) (http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1105929).

12 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, rev. ed. (New York: The New Press, 2012). Alexander charts the way that racialized application of drug laws in the United States has led to the policing of non-white communities and the incarceration of non-white persons being radically different from the policing and incarceration of white communities and persons. Centring in on drug laws that have disproportionately jailed Black and Latino men, Alexander writes, "the war on drugs could have been waged primarily in overwhelmingly white suburbs or on college campuses" (124). But it was not.

13 The process of conscientization in the work of Ada María Isasi-Díaz, for example, includes "the phases of (1) telling stories/personal testimony, (2) reflective analysis, (3) liturgy and celebration and (4) political strategizing." See Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, *Racism and God-Talk: A Latino/a Perspective* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 98.

14 Jack Hill, "Fighting the Elephant in the Room: Ethical Reflections on White Privilege and Other Systems of Advantage in the Teaching of Religion," *Teaching Theology and Religion* Vol 12.1 (January 2009), 3–23 at 8.

15 Payne Hiraldo, "The Role of Critical Race Theory in Higher Education," *The Vermont Connection* 53 (2010): 51–59 at 56. See also Mark Hearn, "Colorblind Racism, Colorblind Theology and Church Practices," *Religious Education*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (2004), 272–88.

16 Camara Phyllis Jones, "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale," *American Journal of Public Health* (August 2000), 1212–15 at 1212.

17 Ibid.

18 George E. "Tink" Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 2008), 5. See also Stephen Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Discovery* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2008).

19 Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 21–22. See also Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

20 James Perkinson, "Reversing the Gaze: Constructing European Race Discourse as Modern Witchcraft Practice," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72.3 (2004): 603–29 at 619.

21 Stephen Ray, "Contending for the Cross: Black Theology and the Ghosts of Modernity," *Black Theology*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (April 2010): 53–68.

22 See Cecilia A. Moore, "Dealing with Desegregation: Black and White Responses to the Desegregation of the Dioceses of Raleigh, North Carolina, 1953," in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*, M. Shawn Copeland, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 63–77.

23 James Cone, "Black Liberation Theology and Black Catholics: A Critical Conversation," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 731–47 at 745.

24 James Cone, "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy," *Black Theology: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2004), 139–52 at 142.

25 Timothy Lensmire et al., "McIntosh as Synecdoche: How Teacher Education's Focus on White Privilege Undermines Antiracism," *Harvard Educational Review* Vol. 83, No. 3 (Fall 2013), 410–31 at 421.

26 Cone, "Theology's Great Sin," 145.

27 For white Catholic parishes, the model of black Catholic parishes engaged in social programs is instructive. As James Cavendish's study has demonstrated, black Catholic parishes are more likely to engage in social service and social activism than white Catholic parishes. Cavendish, "Church-based Community Activism: A Comparison of Black and White Catholic Congregations," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2000): 64–77.

A Sacrificial Dynamic in the Work of the Holy Spirit

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The environmental crisis has provoked an ecological turn in pneumatology. Modern technology has produced a view of nature as "standing-reserve,"[1] raw material waiting to be used by humanity for production, recreation, or consumption. Many argue that sustainable human communities require a moral sensibility in which nature has a higher moral value than this.[2] Theologians have responded to this by emphasizing the Holy Spirit's presence in all of nature. For example, Elizabeth Johnson describes the Holy Spirit as the "creative origin of all life," present "in all things."[3] This emphasis challenges Christians to recognize themselves as living in a Spirit-filled communion with nature and to acknowledge that the Spirit suffers when nature is destroyed.[4] At the same time, the Holy Spirit is understood to be eschatologically oriented, working in and through natural processes and historical events to move creation closer to the coming reign of God.[5]

This salutary emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the creator of all life and present in all of nature has a solid basis in the biblical witness.[6] Yet it raises a troubling question. As Jay McDaniel asked Johnson, if the Spirit is present in all forms of life, how is it present in predatory violence in nature, when one life form preys upon another? How is the Holy Spirit present in both the grey whale and the orca that preys upon it?[7]

Johnson responded that Christians may have difficulty seeing the Holy Spirit as present in predatory violence in nature which "does not cohere with a view of God that is Christ-like, exercising power in a non-violent way."[8] However, on the principle that "God's presence and action among human beings are consistent with God's presence and action in the natural world," she argued that "the Creator Spirit dwells within the world as source of existence, indwelling guide, empathetic companion who shares in creatures' ongoing joys and sufferings, and ultimate redeemer."[9] God is the source of life for both the grey whale and the orca. The Holy Spirit suffers with the grey whale when the orca preys on it. There is no final justification for such violence and suffering in nature. It remains a mystery.[10] The Holy Spirit brings the promise of a different future,[11] articulated in biblical passages like Isaiah 65:17-25 that speak of a qualitatively new time when such suffering and violence between species will be no more.

Johnson also noted that a higher purpose can be at work in such predatory violence. The predatory behaviour of orcas helps shape an ecosystem in which grey whales and other species thrive.[12] The predatory behaviour that destroys some members of a species can help keep the species as a whole vigorous, help sustain a vast ecosystem, and be part of an evolutionary dynamic leading to a diversity of life forms.[13] Here a sacrificial dynamic appears in the work of the Holy Spirit that can also be traced in other dimensions of life. We can describe this dynamic as the Holy Spirit sacrificing something it has created; a creature, a relationship, an institution, along with something of itself, in order to sustain a diversity of life, move creatures towards fulfillment, and move creation closer to its eschatological destiny. What follows will discuss this dynamic further and then trace its presence in peoples' lives, in the lives of institutions, and in struggles for social justice.

Three Dynamics of the Holy Spirit

When a wolf kills a caribou calf for food, three contrasting dynamics of the Holy Spirit are present. First, a Spirit-created form of life, the wolf, actualizes its potential to acquire sustenance. The Holy Spirit inspires and empowers this. Second, another Spirit-created life, the caribou calf, suffers and dies. The Holy Spirit shares its suffering. Third, the wolf's predatory behaviour works long-term to help sustain the vitality of the caribou herd, preserve the diversity of the ecosystem they share, and provide impetus towards its further evolution. In this third dynamic, the good of the caribou calf is sacrificed for the greater good of the ecosystem as a whole. In such moments, the Holy Spirit works towards the actualization of a greater good by sacrificing a form of life it has created and, in the process, something of itself.

Life can be defined as "the actualization of potential being."[14] Actualizing any possibility within history involves sacrificing other possibilities and actualities. As life often "lives on life,"[15] one Spirit-created being almost always lives partly by the suffering and/or sacrifice of others. Such suffering and/or sacrifice involve the

destruction of one good for the sake of another and are always ambiguous. The gain and loss are both real, and it is often debatable whether the good gained justifies the cost. Healthy predator-prey relationships that maintain the vitality of the food web in an ecosystem[16] exemplify this sacrificial dynamic in the work of the Holy Spirit. But change in an ecosystem can alter the effects of predatory behaviour so that it damages or destroys a food web and so works against the Spirit. Even in a healthy ecosystem, not every predatory act exemplifies this dynamic. The freedom to follow the Spirit is also freedom to act against it. There is wanton violence in nature as well as in history.

The Holy Spirit can be quenched, grieved, and sinned against.[17] It suffers loss and fragmentation through environmental depredation.[18] In history, Spirit-filled communities and relationships are frequently assailed by demonic movements and sinful actions. The violence unleashed by the Nazis in the Second World War was not an instance of this sacrificial dynamic of Holy Spirit. It is an example of how history can be a place of danger and failure for the Spirit, of how a culture can become sick and commit violence against the Spirit.[19] The environmental crisis is a symptom of a sickness in many contemporary cultures. As the Holy Spirit is the source and sanctifier of life, there is always opposition and tension between it and violence and suffering. Yet under the conditions of the fall, the Spirit may work towards actualizing a greater good by sacrificing something it has created and something of itself.

This is a dangerous idea. It could be used to bless violence or the destruction of Spirit-created relationships and communities that should be preserved and protected. To prevent this, criteria must be developed from Christology and the symbol of the reign of God to aid in discerning the presence of this dynamic of the Spirit. Despite this danger, an understanding of this dynamic is necessary for recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in all of nature: in the wolf and in the caribou calf. Understanding this dynamic can also enable one to recognize the Holy Spirit at work in emotionally painful and even physically violent events.

How This Dynamic Applies to a Person's Life Cycle or Journey

This sacrificial dynamic in the work of the Holy Spirit can also occur in the course of a person's life journey. A person (hopefully) becomes part of Spirit-created relationships with others that enable them to give and receive love, to develop as a person, and to experience moments of fulfillment. On the principle that "wherever there is love, there is God,"[20] we can identify relationships of parents and others to children, of friends or life partners to one another, etc., that are healthy, life-giving, and characterized by love as Spirit-created. Yet such relationships have a finite dimension. No matter how loving and beautiful the relationship of parent and child may be, there comes a time when that relationship must change if the child is to enter adulthood. The child must become independent and the parent must let them go. Similarly, no matter how Spirit-filled a relationship between friends or the relationships in a community may be, the Spirit may move a person to leave these for a different station in life, for the sake of their own greater good or the greater good of the new community they are called join. At such moments, there is both the joy of journeying to the new and the pain of Spirit-created relationships being disrupted that, in their finitude, must give way for the sake of something greater.

At my cousin's wedding, the father of the bride spoke movingly of how he and his daughter had worked together on their family farm. His words and demeanor portrayed a Spirit-created relationship between them of respect, shared labour, love, and joy in each other. Then, happy though he was at his daughter's marriage, he began to weep as he spoke of how their time of working together was now over. She was entering into a new relationship. They would still be father and daughter, but their relationship was changing. Amidst the joy of this wedding there was also emotional pain over what was ending. For the father, at least, there was a sense of loss as well as joy. In such life-cycle transitions, the good of a Spirit-created relationship between parents and children or between friends must frequently give way for the sake of what is, it is hoped, the greater good of the new relationship or station in life that one of them is entering into. In such transitions, the Holy Spirit may sacrifice a Spirit-created relationship, between parent and child or between friends or colleagues, through the call to enter into another such relationship for the sake of a greater good.

This dynamic of the Spirit disrupting a Spirit-created relationship happens also as a result of the Spirit's eschatological orientation. A person may be happy, productive, and fulfilled in their calling and station in life. Yet the Spirit may disrupt such relationships by calling the person to something new, for the sake of moving history closer to the coming reign of God. In extreme

instances, the call of the Spirit may lead a person to martyrdom.

While the martyr is a victim, they are more than that, for "the death of the martyr in the usual sense includes an active element"[21] on their part. The martyr steps forward as a witness to the truth, freely accepting death if it is the price of doing so. This imparts an element of sacrifice to their death. It remains an evil, a wrong done to them. Yet through their stepping forward, it also becomes their act of costly witness to a good greater than their own life. As the Spirit inspires such witness, it sacrifices a created good for the sake of something greater. When one risks one's life out of love for the poor, as did Ita Ford and three other religious,[22] or for the cause of racial justice, as did Martin Luther King, Jr., one responds to the movement of the Holy Spirit in a radical way: giving one's self totally for the sake of others.[23]

The radical nature of the self-giving in martyrdom makes it a distinct form of witness. Yet though radical, it is a form of a response to the Spirit that pervades all humane spirituality.[24] Every positive response to the Holy Spirit involves sacrifice of some kind. As an authentic response to the Holy Spirit is a moral act, the self may find fulfillment in the sacrifice made, for the moral act is always essentially self-integrative,[25] even when requiring great sacrifice. The martyr may experience their witness as benefiting themselves as well as others, through its participation in God's salvific work. According to the Psalms, it is intrinsic to human nature to elevate some values as holy,[26] to orient one's life to a vision of transcendence, and to sacrifice for it. In martyrdom, this basic human tendency finds radical expression and, possibly, a kind of fulfillment.

Martyrdom can have a creative, ecstatic dimension. In a sermon entitled "Holy Waste," Paul Tillich described human history as "the history of men and women who wasted themselves and were not afraid to do so … in the service of a new creation."[27] There is a tragic element of destructive waste in the sacrifice of martyrdom that makes it ambiguous. The tangible good of a person's life and the good they could do is sacrificed for the intangible good of their witness through dying to the surpassing worth of the reign of God. Martyrdom is a radical example of the Holy Spirit reaching beyond the forms of love, justice, and community possible in a society, to bring into being something new, to move history closer to the reign of God, through sacrificing a created good and something of itself. Before he became a prophetic figure, Archbishop Romero was a socially conservative priest and bishop who did much for the poor of El Salvador through acts of charity, by working within the confines of what his society permitted.[28] As archbishop he could have continued aiding the poor in this way. He was moved instead to speak out against the injustice the poor suffered. He called for a new social order at the cost of his life. With his death, the poor of El Salvador lost a great friend. Yet it was as their friend that Romero chose to speak out for social justice and suffer the consequences. He wasted his potential to do the calculable good possible within the confines of his society in order to shine some light on a transcendent good: the humanity and dignity of the poor that his society refused to recognize. His costly witness had an ecstatic and creative quality. It pointed beyond the limits of his social order, demanding the actualization of a greater justice.[29] The waste of his potential to do a calculable good was sanctified by his creative and effective witness to the reign of God.[30] The same dynamic was exemplified in Jesus' death, which Tillich described as "the most complete and the most holy waste."[31] In terms of the calculable good Jesus could have done, his death was a waste. But this waste was made holy by his death leading to the fulfillment of his destiny as the Christ.

As martyrdom involves the death of a righteous person, there is always a tragic element and ambiguity to it. This tragedy and ambiguity deepens in acts of self-immolation, a form of protest more radical even than martyrdom, because here the violence is self-inflicted. A recent example of this was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in December 2010. His action expressed the agony of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, whose struggle to live with dignity was made impossible by structural injustices. Through such actions, the poor "weigh-in"[32] against the oppressions bearing down upon them—in Bouazizi's case, expressing a dramatic cry of protest through his self-destruction. Bouazizi's death had a catalytic effect, helping to trigger the Arab Spring. On a pragmatic level, this tragic sacrifice had significant results. However, in India, some farmers protesting against financial difficulties facing them as a result of the "the WTO's free trade policies"[33] have committed suicide in a similar manner without effecting noticeable social change. When people follow the call of the Holy Spirit to action that disrupts Spirit-created relationships or that destroys Spirit-created goods, there is always an ambiguity and element of risk to their action. Even when martyrdom or a protest suicide has a galvanizing effect on society, it remains

deeply tragic. Still, for all its ambiguity, a protest suicide like that of Mohamed Bouazizi or Jeon Taeil[34] can be judged a self-transcending communicative action. Inasmuch as these were such, one can say that here the Holy Spirit sacrificed a life and something of itself to express a protest against social injustice. Churches and societies sin against the Holy Spirit when they fail to adequately attend to what such desperate actions express.

This Sacrificial Dynamic in the Lives of Spiritual Communities

The same dynamic of a Spirit-created good being sacrificed by the Spirit in order to achieve a greater good can be traced in the lives of spiritual communities. The Holy Spirit builds up congregations, denominations, spiritual movements, and communities. Then, at times, the Spirit may sacrifice these for the sake of a greater good. This was exemplified in several ways in the formation of The United Church of Canada. A first instance of this can be found in a report on the last annual assembly of the Congregational Union of Canada, held on June 8 and 9, 1925, on the eve of its entry with three other denominations into The United Church of Canada.[35]

The Congregational Union was substantially smaller than the Methodist Church of Canada and the number of Presbyterians who entered union. Congregationalists knew that union meant their cherished denomination would be absorbed and disappear in the United Church they were helping create. Yet "all but 8 of the 174 Congregational churches"[36] voted to enter. The majority of Congregationalists believed that by ending their own denomination to help form the United Church, they and other uniting denominations were becoming "one body in Christ, and a fitter vehicle for the manifestation of the Spirit."[37] Though they entered willing and joyfully, the published account of their last Annual Assembly also evidences sorrow over the ending of their denomination.[38] Here one can see the dynamic of the Holy Spirit sacrificing something it has created, now on an organizational level. This was a form of self-sacrifice, of creative self-withdrawal for the sake of something new.

The Holy Spirit sacrificed something it had created in a second way in the formation of the United Church, in the struggle over union that occurred within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Its General Assembly approved the proposal for organic union in 1916. But a significant minority of Presbyterians could not accept that Canadian Presbyterianism would be absorbed into the United Church.[39] They formed the Presbyterian Church Association "to prevent what they saw as the annihilation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada."[40] A bitter struggle within the Presbyterian Church ensued that eventually tore it in two. The union that formed the United Church happened at the cost of schism in the Presbyterian Church.[41]

Approximately 83 percent of the Presbyterian Church in Canada entered union.[42] The rest continued as the Presbyterian Church, remaining "clinched in legal and moral combat"[43] with the newly formed United Church until 1937. An exchange of fraternal greetings between the two denominations occurred for the first time in 1938, when the United Church's General Council passed a proposal that the United Church of Canada Act be amended to acknowledge the continuity of the remaining Presbyterian Church in Canada with that which existed before union.[44] If one accepts that the movement to form the United Church was inspired by the Holy Spirit, as most entering it at its formation did, one must recognize that in this process, the Spirit sacrificed organizations it had created in these two ways, through creative self-withdrawal and through struggle, for the sake of creating something new.

As new movements of the Holy Spirit take shape in history, they are "'sculpted' out of available resources by human thought and action."[45] As this happens, they may displace, disrupt, or compete with pre-existing Spirit-created organizations, movements, and communities, sacrificing all or part of them in some way. In particular, movements of the Holy Spirit like trans-confessional church unions seem to require that participating denominations be "willing to die"[46] to their former identities for the sake of creating a new one. The formation of the United Church bears this out. Here, the Holy Spirit sacrificed Spirit-created organizations in these two different ways. One, involving the Congregational Union of Canada, was largely a voluntary dying to the old to become part of something new. The other, the split in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, occurred through procedural and legal struggle.

The first case shows that new movements of the Spirit do not necessarily emerge through struggle with the old. A new movement may emerge through the voluntary self-withdrawal of the old for the sake of the new. Such free self-withdrawal for the sake of the other has been characterized as the fruit of the Holy Spirit.[47] The formation of the United Church also involved an instance of this on an individual level. When the time came to elect the United Church's first Moderator, Samuel

Dwight Chown, long-serving President of the Methodist General Conference and well positioned to be the United Church's first Moderator, stepped forward and, in a surprise move, read a prepared statement asking that no ballots be cast for him. He suggested that it would be better to select a Presbyterian as Moderator and moved that George Pidgeon, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, be elected.[48] His motion passed by standing vote. His action was described as the finest act of self-renunciation "in the history of Canadian Christianity."[49]

When emerging new movements of the Spirit require the sacrifice of the old, this can happen through the willing consent of those who say yes to the new even as they grieve the passing of the old. The Holy Spirit enables this by creating individuals and communities "who can accept their own finitude and perishability, who can live with the clear consciousness of the perishability of their relative world and reality because they know that in and beyond this perishability, they are ordained to participate in the divine glory and in its extension."[50] There is loss in acts of creative self-withdrawal, but also great beauty in the witness of those who make way for the new in this fashion.

A Sacrificial Dynamic of the Holy Spirit in Struggles for Social Justice

This dynamic of the Holy Spirit sacrificing something it has created and something of itself for the sake of a greater good can also be discerned in struggles for social justice. The Holy Spirit as the source and sanctifier of life is opposed to all that negates life.[51] When political regimes violently defend murderously oppressive social structures, as happened in some Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s, then the opposition of the Holy Spirit to all that negates life must assume a political form. In such situations, "the gospel cannot but be adversarial in respect of existing power,"[52] and the Holy Spirit becomes the source of radical social conflict.[53] Latin American liberation theologians rightly describe social and political movements in this context that "shared the characteristic of being a protest against the ruling order and a demand for a new world of justice and equity"[54] as generated by the Spirit. The Spirit's inspiration here was "mixed in with human limitations, errors, and sins."[55] Yet the aims of these movements were congruent with the reign of God. Many were led by Christians. The conflictual relationship in this context between the Holy Spirit and the ruling powers resulted in bishops, priests, religious, and lay people being martyred. Other people engaged in armed struggle against the ruling powers.

At certain times and places, social transformation leading to a more just society is possible through revolutionary movements, even though this transformation "will never be definitively achieved or perfectly realized."[56] As José Comblin noted:

> liberation theology now holds that modern revolutions have not been useless or devoid of human and spiritual content. It recognizes signs of the Spirit in them, in spite of all the suffering and all the violence they have occasioned. The anti-colonial revolutions, with the American Revolution of 1776 in the forefront, have not been in vain. The French Revolution of 1789, and all its offspring of the nineteenth century, have not been in vain. The socialist revolutions of the twentieth century have not been in vain or without content. None of these revolutions has been totally ineffective for the creation of a better world.[57]

To this we could add the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Neither has ushered in a perfect society, but each resulted from a movement of the Holy Spirit.

In situations of revolutionary struggle, there is a temptation to demonize members of the opposite side. Yet though people may be involved in demonic movements and do demonic things, they remain, as people, children of God and bearers of human rights. Though they oppose the Holy Spirit, it remains present within them. A rabbinic saying relates that during the Exodus, when the Egyptians who pursued the fleeing Israelites were drowning (Exodus 14:28-30), angels wanted to celebrate in song, but God rebuked them, saying, "The work of my hands is being drowned in the sea, and you want to sing songs?"[58] In such moments, the Holy Spirit sacrifices something it has created for the sake of a greater good, but in a tragic and costly way. There is the danger that recognizing this dynamic of the Holy Spirit at work in social struggles can be used to legitimate violence as willed by God. But this recognition can also work the other way. As the rabbinic saying quoted above suggests, recognizing that those on both sides of the struggle are the work of God's hands can prevent one from demonizing one's opponents and so hopefully work to temper violence.

Every society, no matter how just, has some contradictions and injustices. These are often difficult for

members of its dominant culture to see and appreciate. The Holy Spirit works to build up just social orders. However, as these inevitably harbour some injustices, the Spirit also generates countervailing movements seeking social change within them.[59] In light of the gospel, even "the most well-intentioned, and apparently most verified, well-structured, and recognized forms and practices of righteousness,"[60] in the most just societies, will at times need to be "called into question in favor of a richer experience of righteousness, of clearer experiences of justice, mercy and a clearer knowledge of God."[61] For those at home in such societies, who believe in their virtues and labour to uphold them, such calling into question can be difficult to tolerate. It is easy for privileged North Atlantic Christians to look back on Latin American countries in the 1970s and 80s and see there the need for radical social change. It is not so easy for many of these same Christians to recognize the global injustices of the present and to hear the criticisms of North Atlantic societies that these engender. At present, most privileged people in North Atlantic countries largely ignore the poor within their own borders and around the globe, despite the flow of information publicizing the needs of the poor and the injustices they suffer.[62] Justice for the poor often requires repentance on the part of the virtuous who are privileged members of affluent societies, who care deeply for their society, who work for its betterment, who identify with it and benefit from it. When justice requires that their social order be radically restructured, the "coming of justice can be a painful experience"[63] for them. Yet as the Holy Spirit has built up their society, so at times it must restructure society to achieve a greater and more extensive justice.

Distinguishing This Dynamic of the Holy Spirit from the Thought of Hegel

The sacrificial dynamic traced out here has similarities to the way the great philosopher G.W.F. Hegel understood God to be at work in history. For Hegel, the spirit also sacrifices what it creates, for the sake of producing something new and greater.[64] Christian pneumatologies can learn from Hegel how the Holy Spirit can work in nature and history in this way[65] without accepting all of his premises and conclusions. Like Hegel's, the position outlined here tries to understand how the Holy Spirit can be at work in situations of loss and pain. It differs from Hegel in recognizing history's openness to the future,[66] which makes it impossible to explain history according to a comprehensive, unified pattern, as Hegel attempted to do. It does not present history as always advancing to ever-greater realizations of reason and freedom. Instead, it acknowledges irredeemable losses in history, in which the Spirit suffers and is stifled. After the Holocaust, even those recommending Hegel as a resource for contemporary theology are post-Hegelian in this respect.[67] While the Holy Spirit can work through a sacrificial dynamic, it may also work through symbiotic relationships, in which the new comes into being through cooperation rather than struggle. Though one can recognize the Holy Spirit at work in this kind of sacrificial dynamic, this never justifies suffering and violence as Hegel did by arguing that what is, is rational.[68] Evil, suffering, and sin remain terminal mysteries for Christian thought, for which no rationalization can be given.[69] A pneumatology oriented on the crucified and risen Christ should take the preferential option for the poor and the symbol of the reign of God as criteria for discerning the Spirit's presence. Such a pneumatology can recognize the Spirit working through a sacrificial dynamic under the conditions of the fall without declaring that evil is ultimately justified and necessary for the good. As the Spirit works in this way, it takes the suffering involved upon itself and mediates the hope exemplified in Christ's resurrection of a final overcoming of suffering and evil.

Conclusion

The prophet known as Deutero-Isaiah saw the Spirit to be at work in both the building up of nations and their destruction (Isaiah 40:24). For this prophet, the breath or Spirit of God stands "for creation as a continuous process."[70] The dynamic of the Spirit examined here is one way in which this continuous process takes place in history under the tragic conditions of the fall. Here, almost all created beings live to some extent "at the expense of each other."[71] At times, the Holy Spirit calls people to make difficult moral choices that "entail the loss of certain specific goods for certain specific persons."[72] In such circumstances, the Holy Spirit sometimes sacrifices a portion of itself and what it has created to attain a greater good. The way this happens varies from one sphere of life to another and even within spheres of life. It is sometimes with the consent of those whose life-goods are being sacrificed and sometimes without. There is always the risk that what is destroyed may be of greater value than what is realized through its sacrifice.

The Holy Spirit does not elevate a person above this ambiguity, but it also stands for peace and a sense of ultimate meaning in the midst of it. The theology of

Paul continues the idea that God's Spirit continually acts to move creation to its eschatological goal, but also understands the Holy Spirit as the gift of peace and the assurance of salvation in the midst of history's ambiguity (Romans 8:15-17). As one faces moral decisions that will involve the loss of goods for others, or experiences the passing nature of one's own life-world, or suffers loss as a result of a movement of the Holy Spirit, it can enable one to accept this in "the acknowledgement of one's finitude,"[73] and to recognize in faith that one's finitude is accepted by the divine and participates, often in ways beyond one's knowing, in the coming of the reign of God. "The experience of the Spirit is never without the remembrance of Christ, and never without the expectation of his future."[74] In the Eucharist, this remembrance and expectation is mediated through sacrificing the potential of bread and wine to satisfy physical needs for the sake of their symbolic power. Here and elsewhere, the Holy Spirit is present as passion and energy for the coming of God's reign, but also as the fragmentary presence of that reign within history. As the Holy Spirit moves people to seek God's reign, sometimes through great sacrifice, it also mediates the assurance of its coming and one's participation in it, thus giving meaning to life in the midst of history's tragedy and ambiguity.[75]

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75 I thank Mark Wallace and David Seljak for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

What Is at Stake in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*?

Darren E. Dahl

World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,
Faith and Order Paper No. 214, WCC Publications, 2013. 46 pp.

There is much at stake in the World Council of Churches' (WCC) document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and, as a result, it demands a thorough and thoughtful response from all who are invested in ecumenism. This text, which builds on *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1982) and the many study documents that followed it over the next 30 years, represents an important step forward for the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. As Olav Fyske Tveit, the General Secretary, indicates in his foreword, the current ecumenical situation is defined as much by new opportunities as by new challenges. While God's gifts of unity are being ever more deeply and widely known, there is a "certain and reasonable impatience among many to see more movement in the reception of ecumenical dialogue." Likewise, he suggests that there are new questions that must be addressed, as well as a need to see "more dimensions of the call to unity."

In the midst of this, however, one discovers growing "tendencies toward fragmentation" and a focus upon "what is uniting the few rather than the many" (v). Moreover, the document is itself challenging. This is so not only because it "relates to everything the church is and what its mission implies in and for the world" (vi), but also because it explicitly takes up "what many consider to be the most difficult issues" for overcoming obstacles to Christian unity, including "our understanding of the nature of the Church itself" (1). This is a challenging document for challenging times.

The document begins with a foreword and preface, in which methodological matters are discussed. Chapter 1 discusses the origins of Christian unity in the great mission of God for the saving of the world. Chapter 2 develops an understanding of the Church as "communion," while Chapter 3 discusses the Church as a "pilgrim people." Finally, Chapter 4 addresses the relation of the Church to the world, drawing attention to interreligious challenges, the "moral values of the Gospel," and the need to respond to global suffering. Of these four chapters, the last is the weakest. I return to this concern at the end of the review.

This document is a convergence text. It is, therefore, "much more than simply an instrument to stimulate further study" (1), because it expresses a common understanding already reached, even while it points toward work that remains to be done. Therefore, the goal of the process initiated by this text—in which ecclesial bodies and councils of churches will respond officially to the text—is twofold: renewal of the various churches through exposure to ecclesial practices and concepts that have been synthesized from various traditions and, more importantly, theological agreement that will result in the "mutual recognition of each other as churches, as true expressions of what the Creed calls the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (vii). This appeal for mutual recognition, however, is not an appeal to a 'lowest common denominator' form of ecumenism. Recognition is not to be reduced to a minimal process, but "may in some instances depend upon changes in doctrine, practice and ministry within any given community" (8). In this process of convergence there is implicit a call to the transformation of identities within a common journey toward unity in Christ.

Given the formal logic of convergence and the subsequent goal of mutual recognition, it is not surprising that the issue of authority is central in the document. Indeed, as the document surveys the current state of mutual recognition as it is practised in the churches, it asks the question "How can we identify the Church which the creed calls one, holy, catholic, and apostolic?" (8). At the heart of this question is the 'we.' For in matters of recognition, it is not only a matter of 'how' but of 'who.' Who will recognize whom and by what measure? Who has the authority to recognize? Who has the authority to establish the terms for the process of recognition? This question of authority subsequently pervades the document: what is the authority of Scripture in relation to Tradition? (9); how are we to adjudicate authority between ordained ministers and the laity in ministry? (12); what authorizes change and continuity within the Church? (14); who decides what is "legitimate diversity" and what is not? (17); what is the difference between authority and power? (28); what is the authority of the

ecumenical councils? (30); and how are we to understand Petrine primacy? (31).

These questions of authority do not reflect negatively on the ecclesiology presented here. In any community, the question of authority in the widest and most particular senses is at play. It is a strength of the document that it handles them in a sensitive, open, and probing manner. However, one could equally ask whether there is something implicit in convergence ecumenism that unnecessarily foregrounds questions of authority at the expense of other questions. Is there a place for genuine alterity here, one not marked in advance by questions of legitimacy and not determined by the incentive of recognition? Might this be the place where the 'convergence' focus of the World Council of Churches could learn from the 'conversion' focus of Receptive Ecumenism and the work of Paul Murray? For example, in Murray's work we see the intention of one tradition to learn from another tradition without any previously established request for or bestowal of recognition. In fact, for Receptive Ecumenism, what is key is the self-recognition of vulnerability and need that leads one community to seek the gifts of an entirely other tradition. In this reception of gifts—and, to the extent that it is mutual, this exchange of gifts—the result is not convergence around a common statement but, rather, a mutual conversion across shared difference.

I mentioned earlier the weakness of the final chapter of the document. I would like to show, however, that the underdeveloped treatment of the relation of the Church to the world represents a pulling back from the document's own logic and not a privatistic or other-worldly understanding of the Church itself. In fact, in its treatment of the Church as "communion," the document provides a strong theological account of the integral relationship of the Church to the world. On the one hand, we learn that it is the gift of communion that establishes the internal life and identity of the Church in its relation to God and, on the other hand, this gift of communion establishes the relation of the Church to the world. Thus, the gift that, in being received, makes the Church to be Church is the very same gift that gives it to overflow into the world as a source of reconciliation and healing. According to this simultaneous reception of the gift of communion, the Church is constituted as Church precisely as it lives outside of itself in the world. Or, to look at it the other way, insofar as the Church lives outside of itself as Church in and for the world, it discovers its own internal life with God. The Church's 'worship' and its 'politics' are to be two expressions of the same vitality that constitutes it.

Such an understanding of the Church is grounded in God's trinitarian life. As the perfect communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the identity of God is to be articulated with metaphors befitting an infinitely gratuitous gift exchange. At the heart of God's creative self is not power but the life-giving creativity of one whose love continually calls life into being. In this view, the Church is the concrete place in which that generous, creative love is made manifest in the world. Such an understanding is not, however, purely speculative. The creative relationship with the world that is rooted in God's own identity as Trinity is given witness in the history of salvation. As the Scriptures attest, this is worked out concretely in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit and, thus, the constitution of the Church. It is the generous work of God in the world—the *missio Dei* or 'mission of God'—that constitutes the reality of the Church. The Church *is* the concrete expression of God's trinitarian love. As a result, "The origin of the Church is rooted in the plan of the Triune God for humankind's salvation" (6). There is no Church that is not in and for the world. As a result of this strong theological claim, the failure of the document's concrete treatment of the relationship of the Church and the world is a failure to develop its own ecclesiology. I say 'develop' here and not 'apply,' because it is precisely not a matter of formulating an understanding of the Church and then applying it to a 'secondary' Church–world relationship. The document is aware of this, but does not follow through on it.

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