

# the ecumenist

a journal of theology, culture, and society

Vol.51 No. 2 • Spring 2014

## Introducing Receptive Ecumenism

Paul D. Murray  
Durham University, UK

### 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 organiz-

ing 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

### Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introducing Receptive Ecumenism</b><br>By PAUL D. MURRAY .....   | 1  |
| <b>Catholic Interreligious Reading<br/>Since the Second Vatican Council</b><br>By JULIEN HAMMOND .....                        | 8  |
| <b>Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times:<br/>White Supremacy in the Light of the Gospel</b><br>By JEANNINE HILL FLETCHER ..... | 9  |
| <b>A Sacrificial Dynamic in the Work<br/>of the Holy Spirit</b><br>By DON SCHWEITZER .....                                    | 14 |
| <b>What Is at Stake in <i>The Church:<br/>Towards a Common Vision?</i></b><br>By DARREN E. DAHL .....                         | 22 |

The Ecumenist, Vol. 51, No. 2 Spring 2014 / 1

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.<sup>2</sup>

### **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 re woven 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## 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.

## Select Bibliography

- Paul D. Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda,” in Paul D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5–25.
- . “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs,” *Louvain Studies*, 33 (2008), 30–45.
- Paul D. Murray & Andrea L. Murray, “The Roots, Range, and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” in Clive Barrett, ed., *Unity in Process: Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2012), 79–94.
- Paul D. Murray, “Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity in the Work of Yves Congar: *Ressourcement*, Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Reform,” in Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 457–81.
- . “On Celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and Ecumenical,” in Gavin D’Costa and Emma Harris, eds., *The Second Vatican Council: Celebrating Its Achievements and the Future* (New York: T & T Clark Bloomsbury, 2013), 85–103.
- . “Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29/4 (2013), 500–16.
- . “Roman Catholicism and Ecumenism,” in Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Catholicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), forthcoming.
- . “Ecumenical Methodology,” in Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), forthcoming.

**Paul D. Murray** is Professor of Systematic Theology and Dean and Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies within the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, UK. He is a member of the third phase of work of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission.

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](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](http://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

By Julien Hammond

Ecumenical Officer, Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton

*Interreligious Reading After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism.*

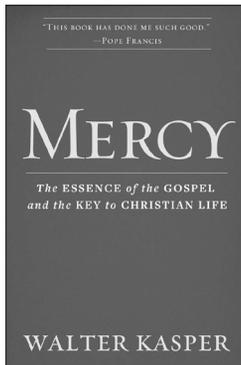
Edited by David F. Ford and Frances Clemson. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 236 pp.

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.



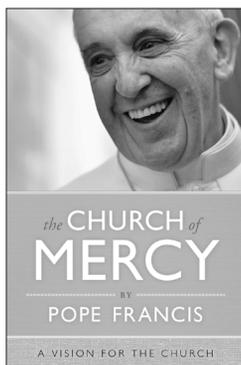
## **Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life**

CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

In *Mercy*, Cardinal Walter Kasper looks at empathy and compassion as a starting point for theological reflection on the topic. He continues by reflecting upon the following: What does it mean to believe in a merciful God? How are divine mercy and divine justice related? How can we speak of a sympathetic—that is, a compassionate—God? Can undeserved woe and divine mercy be brought into harmony with one another? He likewise seeks to address the ethical questions that similarly arise: How can we measure up to the standard of divine mercy in our own actions? What does the message of mercy mean for the practice of the church, and how can we cause the central message of God's mercy to shine in the life of Christians and the church?

**Walter Kasper** is a German cardinal and president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, having served as its president from 2001 to 2010.

272pp PB 978-0-80910-609-7 \$35.95



## **The Church of Mercy**

POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis has captured the world's attention with his seemingly counterintuitive approach to leadership. In *The Church of Mercy*, readers get a first-hand look at Pope Francis's vision of the good news of Christian hope and mercy.

Designed for a broad readership, *The Church of Mercy* collects for the first time the pope's views on being a church that exists among and for the people, solidarity for the poor, and the need to demolish the idols of power and money.

**Pope Francis** currently serves as the Bishop of Rome. Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, he joined the Jesuits and was ordained a priest in 1969. Prior to his election as Bishop of Rome, Francis served as a provincial superior of the Jesuits and Archbishop of Buenos Aires.

200pp PB 978-0-82944-168-0 \$26.95



Available at your local bookstore or call 1-800-387-7164 to order

*The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society* is published quarterly by Novalis © Novalis 2014.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without prior permission of and proper acknowledgment of *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society*.

**Guest editor:** Don Schweitzer – **Editor Emeritus:** Gregory Baum – **Contributing editors:** M. Shawn Copeland, Lee Cormie, Charles Curran, Virgilio Elizondo, Scott Kline, Marilyn Legge, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Harold Wells, Don Schweitzer – **Design:** Gilles Lépine – **Layout:** Audrey Wells

**Subscriptions:** Canada: \$16 • International: \$33 (postage and taxes included).

**To order:** Periodicals Dept., Novalis, 10 Lower Spadina Avenue, Suite 400, Toronto, ON M5V 2Z2

Tel: 1-800-387-7164 Fax: 1-800-204-4140 E-mail: [ecumenist@novalis.ca](mailto:ecumenist@novalis.ca)

ISSN: 0013-080X

Address editorial correspondence to: Novalis Publishing Inc., 10 Lower Spadina Avenue, Suite 400, Toronto, ON M5V 2Z2

Printed in Canada

