

**Heart and Soul:  
Receptive Ecumenism as a Dynamic Development  
of Spiritual Ecumenism**

**Submitted by**

**Antonia Pizzey BA., BTh. (Hons.) (ACU)**

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**School of Theology**

**Faculty of Theology and Philosophy**

**Australian Catholic University**

**Graduate Research**

**PO Box 968**

**North Sydney New South Wales 2059**

**Date of Submission**

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## **Statement of Authorship and Sources**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

Signed:

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## Abstract

Receptive Ecumenism is a fresh ecumenical approach that has immense potential. However, precisely *what* Receptive Ecumenism is, and *how* it is significant, remains unclear. This thesis argues that Receptive Ecumenism has the potential to reinvigorate ecumenism because it is a form of Spiritual Ecumenism. To date, no systematic investigation has been undertaken on explicating Receptive Ecumenism in relation to Spiritual Ecumenism. This study investigates Receptive Ecumenism's development from what we term the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. We focus on the key themes of interior conversion; ecclesial learning; pneumatology; the ecumenical gift exchange; the affective levels of ecumenical engagement; and the virtues of humility and hope. We draw on the work of key figures, including: Paul Couturier, Yves Congar, Vatican II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Walter Kasper, and Margaret O'Gara.

The introductory chapter addresses the research proposal, literature review, methodology, and the study's scope and limitations. The next chapter undertakes an in-depth examination of Receptive Ecumenism's primary source material. Chapter Three investigates the roots of Receptive Ecumenism within the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, and defines Spiritual Ecumenism's key features. Next, we give particular attention to the themes of humility and hope as constituting essential virtues within Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. The fifth chapter examines the connection between Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism as complementary. Chapter Six asserts Receptive Ecumenism's potential and effectiveness, as well as the challenges facing its successful implementation. The conclusion proposes seven critical reflections for Receptive Ecumenism, and areas for further research.

The research resulted in two key findings: 1) Receptive Ecumenism is an advanced form of ecumenical engagement, which has the potential to reinvigorate contemporary ecumenism because it is a form of Spiritual Ecumenism; and 2) Ecumenical renewal requires tapping into Spiritual Ecumenism, which is underdeveloped. Ecumenism is not just a theological endeavour, or a practical mission, but is also a spiritual and affective experience, of the heart and soul.

## Abbreviations

ARCIC: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

ARCIC I: 1970-1981

ARCIC II: 1983-2005

ARCIC III: 2011 ongoing

JDDJ: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

LG: *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

NSWEC: New South Wales Ecumenical Council

RE: Receptive Ecumenism

REI: The first Receptive Ecumenism Conference (2006)

REII: The second Receptive Ecumenism Conference (2009)

REIII: The third Receptive Ecumenism Conference (2014)

REIV: Proposed fourth Receptive Ecumenism Conference (2017)

RE&LC: *The Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism  
and the Local Church*, Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University

SACC: South Australian Council of Churches

SE: Spiritual Ecumenism

UR: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism

UUS: *Ut Unum Sint*, On Commitment to Ecumenism

“There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.” – Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*



## Chapter 1: The Ecumenical Path

### 1.1. The Past, the Present, and New Ways Forward

Since Vatican II, the Ecumenical Movement has endured periods of both optimism and disillusionment.<sup>1</sup> The current time is one of questioning and transition. The dual focus of many ecumenists today is on evaluating the last fifty years of ecumenical endeavour, and searching for new ways forward.<sup>2</sup> For some, the integrity of the entire Ecumenical Movement is in doubt. Others question or dismiss the goal of full visible unity. One of the key questions for our time is undoubtedly that of the future of the ecumenical endeavour: whether it has one, and what shape it will take.<sup>3</sup> It is to these questions that this study is addressed.

### 1.2. Evaluating the Contemporary Ecumenical Milieu

Any assessment of the last fifty years illustrates that ecumenism has achieved significant successes. Formal agreement has been reached on key, previously divisive, issues. One example is the theology of justification, in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ).<sup>4</sup> Other successful outcomes include *The Final Report on Eucharist, Ordained Ministry and Authority* (1982) between Catholics and Anglicans, and the Faith and Order

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis concentrates on ecumenical activity since Vatican II, as the Council marks the official start of Catholic engagement with ecumenism.

<sup>2</sup> For particularly notable examples, see Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2009). And Michael Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How it Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2003). And Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed? Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> A number of prominent authors have written on the future of the Ecumenical Movement. See Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* Margaret O'Gara, "Ecumenism's Future," *Commonweal* 132, no. 13 (2005). Walter Kasper, "Charting the Road of the Ecumenical Movement," *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, 2008 [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20080117\\_kasper-ecumenismo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20080117_kasper-ecumenismo_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was signed by the Catholic Church and the World Lutheran Federation in 1999, and countersigned by the World Methodist Council in 2006.

Commission of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982).

From a time when Catholics were officially dissuaded from engaging in ecumenical activity, the Catholic Church has recognised the inherent value of ecumenism in its community and mission. As the prominent Catholic ecumenist, Walter Kasper explains, “Separated Christians no longer regard one another as strangers, competitors or even enemies, but as brothers and sisters.”<sup>5</sup> Many misunderstandings and prejudices have been overcome, and Christians now “pray together, they give witness together to their common faith; in many fields they work trustingly together.”<sup>6</sup> The achievements of the Ecumenical Movement cannot be overemphasised, for, as Kasper makes clear, “Such a change was hardly conceivable only half a century ago.”<sup>7</sup> Ecumenism’s success is also emphasised by Anglican ecumenist Paul Avis, who writes that ecumenical work has “largely replaced suspicion, incomprehension and competition with understanding, trust and friendship.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, “in the form of theological dialogue, it has also significantly scaled down the extent of church-dividing issues between Christian traditions.”<sup>9</sup> However, ironically, ecumenism now appears to be something of a victim of its own success.

A new generation of Christians has grown up with the benefits of the Ecumenical Movement, and therefore, may take the fruits of ecumenism for granted. The urgency that fired previous ecumenical activity has faded, and ecumenism is at risk of complacency. Prominent ecumenist and Disciples of Christ minister, Michael Kinnamon, explains that the future of ecumenism in the

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today* (London: Burns & Oates, 2004), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Avis, “Unreal Worlds Meeting? Realism and Illusion in Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Theology* 115, no. 6 (2012): 420.

<sup>9</sup> Avis, “Unreal Worlds Meeting?” 420-421.



twenty-first century is far from assured.<sup>10</sup> Many visible hurdles to Christian unity have already been overcome, leaving the next generation of ecumenists to handle obstacles that are more elusive and subtle.<sup>11</sup> The ecumenical situation has changed over the last fifty years, and now the task of Christian unity is impeded by different challenges. Not least among these is reigniting the ecumenical spark in a new generation of ecumenists, and the difficulties posed by our pluralist, postmodern context.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the ecumenical milieu is shifting, with changes generated by forces such as secularisation, Christianity's move towards the Global South, and the increasing numbers of Pentecostal Christians who are opposed or apathetic in regard to ecumenism. In contrast to the earlier optimism of the Ecumenical Movement, ecumenism is now widely regarded as existing in a state of stagnancy, known as the "ecumenical winter."

While the aforementioned issues are of serious import for the future of ecumenism, our focus rests on another major factor contributing to ecumenical inertia. Our concern here is an apparent imbalance in the Ecumenical Movement, caused by a neglect of the central importance of Spiritual Ecumenism (SE). Contemporary ecumenism seems predominantly focused on theological ecumenism. For decades, the ecumenical endeavour concentrated almost exclusively on the working out of doctrinal agreement between one or more ecclesial communities. As such, ecumenical achievements have been reached

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<sup>10</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 2.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Murray talks about the "softwood" of "easy early gains" of ecumenism that have already been harvested, leaving our generation to work on the "hardwood" of the difficult "lasting substantive differences," such as church hierarchy. Paul D. Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society* 51, no. 2 (2014): 3.

<sup>12</sup> The WCC appears quite concerned with this issue. One recent attempt to educate and train a new generation of ecumenical leaders under the age of forty was established by the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), held alongside the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC in Busan. As part of the coursework, GETI produced a textbook focusing on ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner, eds., *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

largely on a doctrinal, or theological, level. The last fifty years of ecumenical endeavour could be described, therefore, as concentrating on doctrinal considerations, scriptural interpretations, doctrinal formulae, theological systems, and the like. The one-sidedness of this emphasis may have contributed to the slowing down of ecumenical enthusiasm. As its origins as a prayer movement indicate, ecumenism is more than just an academic exercise.<sup>13</sup>

This thesis is concerned with redressing perceived imbalances between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism. Theological ecumenism is understood here as ecumenical activities that primarily focus on doctrinal or theological concerns, on seeking to understand each other's beliefs and ecclesiology, in order to reach theological and doctrinal consensus. Its key activity is ecumenical dialogues, usually conducted by ecumenical professionals. While it has reaped great successes, such as JDDJ, there are signs that it may now be running out of steam.

Moreover, at one extreme, theological ecumenism can tend towards minimising the activity and centrality of the Holy Spirit, so that the spiritual dimension is neglected. If bereft of a focus on SE, Kasper explains,

Mere ecumenical activism becomes a soulless bureaucracy and is destined to exhaust itself; mere academic debate among experts, no matter how important it may be, escapes the 'normal' faithful and touches only the margin of their hearts and lives.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, SE emphasises openness to the Holy Spirit, in the humble recognition that, ultimately, Christian unity is brought about by God's will, not our own.

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<sup>13</sup> The link between Christian prayer for unity and the birth of the Ecumenical Movement is well-documented. The various prayer movements of the 18th and 19th centuries formed the basis for the later development of the ecumenical endeavour. Members of these prayer movements "discovered that there must be not only prayer for unity but prayer for unity by people of different traditions praying together," as explained by Gwen Cashmore and Joan Puls, "Spirituality in the Ecumenical Movement," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky, et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 1070.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century," (presentation, the 40th anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2005).

A predominant focus on practical ecumenism is likewise not without problems. Practical ecumenism is considered to be primarily directed towards mission, and churches working together. It is often carried out by laypeople, as well as professional ecumenists. While practical ecumenism is an essential aspect of ecumenism, and one with a rich harvest, there is a concern that a dominant focus on practical ecumenism could, at the extreme, contribute to a lessening of the ultimate ecumenical goal. Practical ecumenism focuses more on cooperation and joint mission, and may be satisfied with peaceful coexistence, rather than pushing for full visible unity. Nonetheless, both theological and practical ecumenism have been well-developed, established, and successful. In contrast, Spiritual Ecumenism remains underdeveloped, and its potential is still largely untapped.

The relative lack of emphasis on SE today is at odds with the intrinsic character of ecumenism. Kasper makes the point that while the modern Ecumenical Movement is usually dated from 1910, it could be considered as starting two years earlier, with Paul Wattson's introduction of "an Octave of prayer for the unity of Christians," celebrated from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1908.<sup>15</sup> Precedents can be seen even further back.<sup>16</sup> Historically, the Ecumenical Movement has its roots in prayer for unity, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not surprising, considering the driving impetus of ecumenism is Christ's prayer "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). Thus, ecumenism is more than just an intellectual endeavour. It also needs to be conducted on the affective level of the heart, and as a spirituality.

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Kasper, "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Origin and Continuing Inspiration of the Ecumenical Movement," in *A Century of Prayer for Christian Unity*, ed. Catherine E. Clifford (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Kasper, "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity," 27-28.

Spirituality speaks to the depths underlying ecumenical dialogue, the silences without words, and the mystery that concepts alone cannot convey; the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual Ecumenism is the impetus underlying ecumenism itself. As such, emphasising the spiritual within the ecumenical is vital to renewing the ecumenical endeavour as a whole. This sentiment is well expressed by Kasper:

We are only at the beginning of a new beginning. In order to start with renewed enthusiasm and energy in the new century we have to clarify the foundations, the vision, the ways and the practice of the ecumenical movement; above all, there is a need for spiritual ecumenism. The ecumenical movement from its very beginnings has been and will continue to be an impulse and a gift of the Holy Spirit. Ecumenical activities not grounded in spiritual ecumenism will very soon become a soulless routine, whereas spiritual ecumenism will lead us to the conviction that [He] who has initiated the whole ecumenical movement, is faithful and will bring it to its fulfilment.<sup>17</sup>

This is to say that the present time calls for a focus on the affective levels of shared faith and spirituality. Spiritual Ecumenism takes seriously Vatican II's point that "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart."<sup>18</sup> If ecumenism is a spiritual, affective, and virtuous activity, it must be carried out with humility and hope, not as a purely human task, but as a Christ-given, Spirit-led endeavour towards deepening conversion. Kasper explains that a renewed focus on SE is particularly suited to our contemporary context, which is characterised by "a distrust of any doctrinal position, yet at the same time a search for spiritual experience."<sup>19</sup> Reflection, therefore, on the spiritual dimensions of ecumenism appears timely.

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<sup>17</sup> Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century."

<sup>18</sup> Vatican II, "Unitatis Redintegratio: Decree on Ecumenism," in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), no. 7. Hereafter *UR*.

<sup>19</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

Ideally, these three streams of ecumenism should be held together in balance. However, theological and practical ecumenism have been areas of greater engagement compared to SE. An imbalance in the ecumenical equilibrium may, therefore, have resulted. If the balance is to be corrected, increased emphasis on Spiritual Ecumenism is required.<sup>20</sup> But how can this imbalance be rectified?

Recognition of the changing ecumenical climate leads to the second task, that of seeking fresh approaches, methodologies, and ways of doing ecumenism. One significant new methodology is that of Receptive Ecumenism (RE), which Kasper hails as having the potential to usher in a “new spring” in the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>21</sup> Does RE have the potential to respond to the imbalance between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism, and help the Ecumenical Movement move forward?

### **1.3. Thesis Proposal: Receptive Ecumenism as a Development of Spiritual Ecumenism**

This thesis investigates Receptive Ecumenism as a contemporary ecumenical approach that dynamically engages with Spiritual Ecumenism. The premise of this study is that, while RE has raw potential, some systematic conceptualising and foundational work needs to be undertaken. RE has been perceived as developing from a variety of different approaches: reception,<sup>22</sup> comparative ecclesiology,<sup>23</sup> elemental theology,<sup>24</sup> fundamental theology,<sup>25</sup> and

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<sup>20</sup> The focus of this thesis is on Spiritual Ecumenism, as it has often been downplayed against the importance of theological ecumenism. This is, of course, not to say that that theological ecumenism is unimportant, simply that healthy ecumenism requires a balance between the two.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Kasper, "Foreword," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), viii.

<sup>22</sup> Hervé Legrand, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Future of Ecumenical Dialogues - Privileging Differentiated Consensus and Drawing its Institutional Consequences," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Gerard Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning - The Promise of Comparative Ecclesiology," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic*

Rescher's pragmatic idealistic approach.<sup>26</sup> However, this thesis proposes that RE is best understood in dynamic relationship to SE, as a development within, and out of, SE.

We seek to discover how RE could be a valuable development and application of Spiritual Ecumenism. Does RE contribute to furthering Spiritual Ecumenism in the contemporary context? Can it help to redress the equilibrium between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism? Does Spiritual Ecumenism also serve to enrich and strengthen RE? Could it be, therefore, that RE is capable of reinvigorating ecumenism *because* it is based in Spiritual Ecumenism? As such, our investigation revolves around interpreting RE in light of SE. It is necessary, therefore, to define these two key terms.

### 1.3.1. Receptive Ecumenism

What is Receptive Ecumenism? RE is the proposal of Professor Paul Murray for "a fresh new strategy in Christian ecumenism."<sup>27</sup> Murray is a married Catholic theologian from the United Kingdom. He is Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology and the founding Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University. In 2011, he was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to the third phase of work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III), and in 2012 as a Consultor to the Pontifical Council for Justice and

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*Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Daniel W. Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism - Learning by Engagement," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Walter Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam! - The Relationship Between the Catholic and the Protestant Principles in Fundamental Ecclesiology," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 78.

<sup>26</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning - Establishing the Agenda," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7. It must be noted that this key chapter was first published as an article: Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7, no. 4 (2007). To avoid confusion, as the text is identical, all references used in this thesis are taken from the book chapter.

<sup>27</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

Peace. He launched the RE project in 2006, with the first of a series of international conferences held by Ushaw College at Durham University.

Murray describes himself as committed to a “postliberalism that distinguishes between being tradition-linked, even tradition-defined, from being tradition-confined.”<sup>28</sup> He also places a strong emphasis on the value of Nicholas Healy’s approach to ecclesiology which is both concrete and theological.<sup>29</sup> In line with this thinking, Murray asserts that the Church should not be considered as an ideal abstract, but as a “messy reality.”<sup>30</sup> His work is concerned to discuss “the living, breathing, empirical reality of the church as it actually is and not simply as we would have or imagine it to be.”<sup>31</sup> He therefore asserts the value of empirical methods and ethnography for ecclesiology.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, he claims that “the relationship between ecclesiology and ethnography is essential to any genuinely Catholic ecclesiology.”<sup>33</sup> Murray’s focus on empirical data, the lived reality of the church, as opposed to the doctrinal or theological reality of the church, and attitude of postliberalism, are all important factors in his establishment of RE.

Murray argues that RE is a realistic strategy in view of the “ecumenical winter.”<sup>34</sup> Ecumenical achievements have seemingly plateaued, and Murray argues that ecumenism is “frequently... written-off as futile, washed-up, log-jammed, “irrelevant,” and “belonging to a former age.”<sup>35</sup> Suffice to say, Murray supports a negative appraisal of the current ecumenical context. He believes that “we are at the point where the traditional formal strategies, for all their erstwhile success, have for the time being quite possibly gone as far as they can on most

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<sup>28</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice: On the Transformative Task of Systematic Ecclesiology," *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (2014): 254.

<sup>29</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 254.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 253.

<sup>31</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 256.

<sup>32</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 254.

<sup>33</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 255.

<sup>34</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs," *Louvain Studies* 33, no. 1-2 (2008): 30.

fronts.”<sup>36</sup> In his evaluation, despite prior achievements, “the structural, sacramental, and ministerial reconciliation of the traditions now seems further away than ever.”<sup>37</sup> In view of this, he proposes that the thrust of ecumenism should shift to finding a realistic approach for the current time.<sup>38</sup> He sees full visible unity as an unfeasible goal for contemporary ecumenism, and proposes doing what can be done, which is a process of deepening conversion.

However, this is not to say that he believes the goal of ecumenism to be anything less than full structural unity. In fact, Murray critiques ecumenical approaches that focus only on “prayer, good relations, and shared witness and mission.”<sup>39</sup> While these are important, he argues that they cannot on their own “solve the ecumenical problem,” which he sees as our inability to bear proper witness to the world.<sup>40</sup> To resolve this problem, he says “we need the achievement...of structural, institutional and sacramental communion.”<sup>41</sup> This is where he argues that RE takes seriously the reality that the achievement of full structural unity is not possible any time soon.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, he proposes RE as a realistic strategy for the “now,” designed with the realisation that full structural unity is not yet possible, but which still ultimately works towards the “not yet,” or the final goal of ecumenism.<sup>43</sup>

Murray describes RE as a new ecumenical “methodology” of “humble ecclesial learning.”<sup>44</sup> RE is based around a shift in thinking from asking: “What

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<sup>36</sup> Paul D. Murray, “ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for An Ecumenical Gear-Change,” *One in Christ* 45, no. 2 (2011): 207.

<sup>37</sup> Murray, “Introducing Receptive Ecumenism,” 3.

<sup>38</sup> Murray, “Introducing Receptive Ecumenism,” 1.

<sup>39</sup> Paul D. Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ: Receptive Ecumenism as an Instrument of Ecclesial Conversion” (presentation, The Catholic Theological Society of America: Sixty-Eighth Annual Convention: Conversion, Miami, Florida, June 6-9 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>41</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>42</sup> Murray, “Introducing Receptive Ecumenism,” 1.

<sup>43</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>44</sup> The phrase from the first Durham conference was “Catholic Learning.” The 2009 conference extended RE’s sphere outside of just Catholic learning to other Christians, shifting to “ecclesial



do our various others first need to learn from us?”<sup>45</sup> To asking instead, the self-critical question: “What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?”<sup>46</sup> His argument is that if each tradition takes up this question and applies it to their particular situation, then the Ecumenical Movement would regain some momentum.<sup>47</sup> He stresses the importance of each tradition doing this for the potential benefit to be gained, and not out of any insistence that others reciprocate.<sup>48</sup> This is a key point, as the focus here is on the Church *ad intra*, rather than *ad extra*; on interior conversion, rather than *quid pro quo* ecumenical engagement. RE’s inward focus on the church ties in with its key emphasis on conversion.

Murray calls RE “the way of hope-filled conversion.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, conversion can be considered the locus of RE. Its explicit aim is to inspire interior conversion, and the “structural, institutional, ecclesial and theological” ramifications this conversion may have.<sup>50</sup> RE focuses on enriching one’s own tradition, leading towards deeper conversion, by engaging in a process of hope-filled ecumenical learning. Hope has a particular role in RE, which will be explored in more detail later.<sup>51</sup> Suffice to say, RE entails a trusting hope in other Christians, as it is an ecumenism of “the wounded hands,” wherein a church openly displays its weaknesses to other Christians, rather than its strengths.<sup>52</sup> This is undertaken “knowing that we cannot save ourselves, asking our ecumenical

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learning.” This more encompassing phrase is used here. Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 16.

<sup>45</sup> Murray, “Introducing Receptive Ecumenism,” 1.

<sup>46</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 12.

<sup>47</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 12.

<sup>48</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 12.

<sup>49</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 12.

<sup>50</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>51</sup> The role of the virtue of humility in both Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism will be examined in Chapter Four.

<sup>52</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

others to minister to us in our need from their gifts.”<sup>53</sup> Undoubtedly, this implies a radical humility and hope in our Christian brothers and sisters. Whether it is simply naïve for a church to offer itself to other Christian churches on the assumption that they have the ability to heal us with their gifts (and what “wounds” and what “gifts” he means in particular), is one question that needs to be considered. Another concern raised here is in whether Murray means that RE should look to other Christians to “save” us, or whether he leaves enough room for the salvific activity of the Spirit. After all, hope is ultimately in God. A third possible issue is whether this approach appears disquieting towards more conservative elements within the Catholic Church.

Murray makes some bold claims for the value of RE. In light of the difficult situation ecumenical endeavours currently face, he attests that “considerable further progress is possible, but only if” churches follow the RE methodology.<sup>54</sup> To assert RE as the *only* way to ecumenical progress, and *the* manner in which to tackle pluralism certainly signifies confidence. Moreover, Murray writes that the “conviction behind” RE “is that, like the gospel, it holds the promise of life within it and is worth our making the greatest of efforts to walk in its way.”<sup>55</sup> Here he draws nothing less than a parallel between RE and the gospel itself. Further, Murray states that the purpose of RE is to highlight a “value” which he sees as underlying “all good ecumenical encounter,” namely, the self-critical question mentioned above.<sup>56</sup> He goes on to argue that this value is “*the* appropriate organizing principle for contemporary ecumenism.”<sup>57</sup> This is no small claim. RE is a strategy designed to highlight and bring to “centre-stage” the value of ecclesial learning, which he believes should become “the organizing

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<sup>53</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>54</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>55</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>56</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>57</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1. Italics added.

principle” of ecumenism itself. He argues that by using this approach, the Ecumenical Movement may move forward. It is important to note that Murray uses the terms “ethic” and “strategy,” along with “methodology,” “value,” and “way” to describe RE. These terms are somewhat vague, and require additional explanation. In view of the magnitude of these claims, RE is certainly worthy of serious consideration, especially in regards to the distinctiveness of its methodology.

One key question regarding RE is whether it actually constitutes a new approach. Murray himself states that it aims to highlight ideas that have always been part of the ecumenical endeavour.<sup>58</sup> Certainly, the concept of reception has long been an ecumenical keyword. He sees RE’s distinctiveness as being in “formally naming” it as such, and therefore releasing “its strategic potential.”<sup>59</sup> Rather than inventing something new, RE explicitly emphasises the receptive, ecclesial learning dimension involved in ecumenism.

However, he points out that RE is not designed to replace other ecumenical approaches, such as bilateral dialogues. Rather, it is meant to fit in with other approaches. RE’s uniqueness lies in its focus on learning rather than teaching, on the receiving of gifts rather than the giving of them. RE involves looking at other Christian churches in light of what they might be doing that is admirable, or what we can, potentially, learn from them, rather than focusing on what they need to learn or change.

Certainly, this Receptive Ecumenical attitude does not appear discordant with the pilgrim church of Vatican II. Although, presumably, an emphasis on receiving gifts would not disallow others taking gifts that they may find valuable

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<sup>58</sup> He makes this point a number of times. See: "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12. And "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>59</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

from our church. The difference is that the gift is not *thrust* upon another church.

As Murray puts it,

[E]ach tradition takes responsibility for its own potential learning from others and is, in turn, willing to facilitate the learning of others as requested but without either requiring how this should be done, or even making others' learning a precondition to attending to one's own.<sup>60</sup>

It is an ecumenism of receiving, rather than of giving; of taking responsibility for one's own journey of conversion, rather than controlling that of others. RE's unilateral focus distinguishes it from the model of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts.<sup>61</sup> However, there is a question of the validity of looking at only one half of the ecumenical exchange. After all, how can there be reception if there is not also giving, or learning without teaching?

Another distinctive facet of RE is its deliberate intent to engage with a broad array of people, both lay and professional. Murray highlights the diversity of those engaging with RE as including "ecclesiologists, ecumenists, senior ecclesiastics, social scientists, and local practitioners."<sup>62</sup> It is explicitly designed for use at the level of practical ecumenism. As Murray explains, RE is "quite clear that asking the basic receptive ecumenical question ... is not the exclusive preserve of an elite caste of theologians."<sup>63</sup> Rather, the premise is that everyone, at every level, should be involved in ecclesial learning.<sup>64</sup>

This democratised ecumenism is also not without problems, and is not as straightforward as it may seem, particularly in a hierarchal church such as the Catholic Church. There is the real risk of fragmentation, and a need for set criteria over what needs to change, what needs to be received, and what should remain the

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<sup>60</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>61</sup> The ecumenical gift exchange is a key concept within the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement that will be discussed in detail throughout the thesis. It is particularly important in the Vatican II documents, John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint*, and the work of Margaret O'Gara.

<sup>62</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>63</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism," *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 90.

<sup>64</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 90.

same. Then of course, there is the question of who sets the criteria. There is also the issue of how to deal with difference and disagreement. Further explanation is needed for how this “democratised” ecumenism would work in practice, and what it might mean for the church.

Nevertheless, RE appears highly successful at the level of practical ecumenism, and certainly has popular appeal. It is designed for use by laypeople as well as professional ecumenists, which accounts for some of the simplicity inherent in its methodology. Yet, it is also, at the same time, an academic discipline. Murray argues that RE “depends upon” the “need for rigorous and sophisticated theological scrutiny, testing and discernment, drawing upon all the traditional sub-disciplines of theology as appropriate.”<sup>65</sup> It is here that the same simplicity is more problematic. Whereas RE appears to have much energy and commitment at the practical level, there is somewhat less engagement academically. This may not be surprising, as Murray explains that “the point is that the basic process is one in which all can share and of which all can properly be initiators in relation to specific live issues.”<sup>66</sup> In this sense, RE emphasises that the academic must always be in service of practical, or real life, ecumenism. Consequently, RE would lose its integrity were it to become dominantly academic. Murray elucidates this point:

the core focus in Receptive Ecumenism is on the lived practice of traditions, their organisational, structural and procedural realities, and the wounds and tensions to be found there that call out for repair through potential receptive learning from another’s particular gifts.<sup>67</sup>

Rather than approaching ecumenism from an academic perspective, considering theological, Scriptural, or doctrinal texts and doctrines, RE focuses on lived traditions. Murray writes that its aim is to “not simply be a highly theorised

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<sup>65</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 90.

<sup>66</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 90.

<sup>67</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 91.

endeavour” or become “abstracted from the ordinary lived practice of the traditions concerned.”<sup>68</sup> He is concerned about the tendency of ecumenical approaches to become wholly theological affairs, with a dominant emphasis on theological ecumenism, which has been the traditional approach. RE, he says, “should arise out of the felt needs and experienced difficulties of the participant traditions” rather than from an academic examination of theological or doctrinal differences.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, the purpose of RE is not to try to remove, minimise, or seek agreement over doctrinal differences, but rather to focus inwardly on the tradition itself, and most especially, on its “wounds.” He writes that RE should “with all due expertise, rigor and sophistication... explicitly seek to perform a reparative ministry addressing these wounds.”<sup>70</sup> RE is therefore somewhat in tension with ecumenical methodologies based on theological ecumenism, with the aim to sort out differences between traditions. RE, in contrast, aims to sort out the tradition itself, based on lived experience of that tradition, rather than solely doctrinal concerns.

It is in this sense that Murray can argue that “all effective ecumenical learning,” while “always in need of being tested by the ‘head,’” nevertheless “consists most deeply in an affair of the ‘heart.’”<sup>71</sup> RE is an ecumenism of the heart before it is one of the head. It explicitly draws on the affective levels of ecumenical encounter. The shift required by RE, from the learning needs of others, to what we need to learn, is primarily one of attitude. A phenomenological analysis of RE may be useful here. Moreover, there is still more work needed in the analysis of RE on the academic level, and in the maintenance of a careful

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<sup>68</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>69</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>70</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 92.

<sup>71</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 86.

balance between head and heart. This brief outline of RE leads us now to define the second key term: Spiritual Ecumenism.

### 1.3.2. Spiritual Ecumenism

Along with a clarification of RE, this thesis offers a hermeneutical analysis of Spiritual Ecumenism. Part of the focus of this research is on defining and clarifying SE. SE, defined by Vatican II as the “soul” of the Ecumenical Movement, itself requires some rediscovery.<sup>72</sup> The term “spiritual ecumenism” can be used in different ways, especially from either a Catholic or Protestant perspective. Clearly, SE was an important thread in ecumenism prior to official Catholic involvement.

The first mention of Spiritual Ecumenism is recorded at the Edinburgh missionary conference in 1910.<sup>73</sup> SE was expressed as a “gospel requirement” which presupposes “practical and theological ecumenism” in the 1925 Life and Work conference, and in 1927 at the Faith and Order Conference.<sup>74</sup> SE is affirmed as the “foundation on which the WCC was built (1948).”<sup>75</sup> While it is necessary to be aware of the history of the term beyond Catholic usage, the current thesis uses SE in reference specifically to the Catholic tradition.

In Catholic thought, the term can be traced back at least to the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> In particular, SE is influenced by the work of Paul Couturier (1881-1953), who established the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. He also formed the *Groupe des Dombes* in 1937. Couturier is considered to be the “father” of Spiritual Ecumenism. Kasper calls him “the grand apostle and pioneer of spiritual

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<sup>72</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Régis Ladous, “Spiritual Ecumenism,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky, et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 1069.

<sup>74</sup> Ladous, “Spiritual Ecumenism,” 1069.

<sup>75</sup> Ladous, “Spiritual Ecumenism,” 1069.

<sup>76</sup> Ladous, “Spiritual Ecumenism,” 1069.

ecumenism.”<sup>77</sup> In line with Protestant usage, Kasper draws attention to the fact that the Catholic ecumenism can be considered as beginning with Spiritual Ecumenism, as “the very first impetus of the ecumenical movement.”<sup>78</sup> However, officially, it was the promulgation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the *Decree on Ecumenism* (hereafter referred to as *UR*) in 1964 which not only launched Catholic involvement in ecumenism in earnest, but fundamentally fashioned the framework for Catholic ecumenical dialogue over the decades since the Council. SE is the underlying thread of *UR*, and is acclaimed as “the soul of the whole ecumenical movement.”<sup>79</sup>

The term Spiritual Ecumenism, as used in this thesis, therefore, is not to be confused with the broader notion of ecumenical spirituality or spirituality in ecumenism. SE here refers specifically to the type of ecumenism advocated in *UR* as the “soul” of ecumenism, with a pre-eminently pneumatological focus. SE cannot be understood without reference to Couturier, and consideration of its expansion and development by post-Vatican II theologians, such as Kasper. Because of this, the term “Spiritual Ecumenical Movement” is proposed as useful because it categorises a broad ecumenical movement that emphasises openness to the Holy Spirit and the need for conversion.

The Spiritual Ecumenical Movement owes its original inspiration to Couturier, Yves Congar, Vatican II, and the work of John Paul II. It has been furthered more recently by Walter Kasper and Margaret O’Gara. In brief, SE is understood here as ecumenical activities intent on interior conversion. It emphasises ecumenism as a spiritual activity, seeking conversion to Christ through the Spirit. Because of this, the term Spiritual Ecumenical Movement is

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<sup>77</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 156.

<sup>78</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 156.

<sup>79</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.



used to encompass the threads of Spiritual Ecumenism in the Catholic tradition, from Couturier and the *Groupe des Dombes*, to Vatican II, and up to the present.

The very existence of a Spiritual Ecumenical Movement presumes that certain defining principles are common to a variety of groups and individuals. In this respect, SE has four key characteristics. Firstly, SE has a predominantly pneumatological focus, with an emphasis on openness to the Holy Spirit. As Kasper explains, the spirit behind SE is no less than the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup> Secondly, SE centres on interior conversion, to the extent that conversion is considered the aim of ecumenical endeavour. Vatican II writes that “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.”<sup>81</sup> Thirdly, there is an emphasis on ecumenism as an exchange of gifts. As John Paul II makes clear, “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an ‘exchange of gifts.’”<sup>82</sup> Fourthly, SE places priority on the affective levels of ecumenical encounter, such as emotions, attitudes, and virtues, especially hope for the future, and the humility that recognises sin and trusts in the Holy Spirit. Briefly outlining the four key characteristics of SE raises one of the key questions of this thesis: what is the relationship between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism?

Is RE, as described above, inspired and sustained by SE? RE advocates receptivity towards other traditions, but with the understanding that Christian unity is the work of the Spirit. The pneumatological basis of RE, therefore, requires deeper examination. The goal of RE is ecclesial conversion, focusing on the *ad intra* aspect of ecumenical dialogue, that is, interior conversion, the point at which Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism meet. Admittedly, the ecumenical gift-exchange is more problematic for RE, as Murray fears it could lead to arrogance. He advocates an exclusive focus on the reception of gifts, and in particular, on

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<sup>80</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 161.

<sup>81</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>82</sup> John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (1995), no. 28. Hereafter *UUS*.

learning from each other. Whether or not the ecumenical *exchange* (not just reception) of gifts is still implied in RE requires further examination.<sup>83</sup> A further area of connection is an emphasis on virtues, especially those of humility and hope.

These points of overlap beg the question, is RE a form of SE? Murray writes:

Receptive Ecumenism seeks to reclaim the full radical intent of Couturier's spiritual ecumenism by seeking to rescue it from the reduction to praying together and receiving of each other's spiritual and liturgical riches to which it can sometimes be reduced and to set its potential free for structural, institutional, ecclesial, and theological renewal.<sup>84</sup>

This statement is highly important for understanding RE. Murray is arguing that SE is in need of some recovery in order to regain its "full radical intent."<sup>85</sup> He sees its scope as properly extending to "structural, institutional, ecclesial and theological renewal," rather than just "prayer."<sup>86</sup> In this light, he regards RE as re-orientating SE back to the original thrust given it by Couturier. However, is this an appropriate interpretation? Could the relationship between the two be more dynamic than represented here – perhaps SE also "rescues" RE?

This brings us to another key question posed by this study: what significance does RE have for the future of the Ecumenical Movement? While RE's full potential is yet to be seen, it claims to offer the ecumenical endeavour a strategy that operates on the affective as well as theological levels of ecumenism. Could it also imply a rediscovery of Spiritual Ecumenism, and inspire its implementation in a new phase or stage? In this light, our hypothesis is that Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism dynamically enrich each other. However, this

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<sup>83</sup> On a number of occasions, Murray seems to dismiss or contradict the relationship between Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism. These issues will be raised and analysed in detail in the following chapter.

<sup>84</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>85</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>86</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

position is not without opposition. We must counter four main arguments, which need to be articulated at the outset.

The first argument is that RE does not make an original or new contribution to ecumenism. RE is essentially SE, rather than a further development of SE. As such, RE is redundant in the face of SE. Ecumenical efforts should therefore be directed towards emphasising the importance of Spiritual Ecumenism, which has over fifty years of solid theological grounding within the Second Vatican Council, rather than on RE, which is a shallow duplicate of SE.

A second perspective is that RE is not a development of SE, but a fundamentally new type of ecumenism. It is not advisable, therefore, to consider them together. RE developed in a specific context, namely, Murray's work as influenced by the American pragmatist-idealist tradition.<sup>87</sup> Vatican II texts serve only as supporting documents, rather than as fundamental texts. RE does not oppose SE, but the two approaches need to be carefully distinguished.

A third position refutes the claims of both Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. It argues that the spiritual and affective dimensions of ecumenism are not of key significance to the contemporary Ecumenical Movement. Spirituality is a slippery term, with negative connotations that distract from the solid theological and doctrinal work required in ecumenical dialogue. Spiritual and affective aspects are subjective, personal experiences. As such, the spiritual dimensions of ecumenism should be limited to prayer for unity, such as already exists. Any further development or extension of "spiritual" ecumenism is unnecessary.

Finally, a fourth argument contests RE's value as an ecumenical methodology. RE has only limited potential to offer. It is a negative approach that will not be welcomed because churches do not want to change themselves first.

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<sup>87</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 7-8.

There is a growing trend of defensiveness about one's own ecclesial identity, sometimes called "re-confessionalism." RE is too liberal an approach, thereby alienating the conservative elements of the Catholic Church. RE is therefore not feasible as a new ecumenical approach. At best, it may be helpful as supplementary to existing ecumenical methods. Our hypothesis must counter such objections. But now that we have outlined our proposal, we need to place it into context and consider a range of questions and viewpoints on the topic of Receptive Ecumenism.

#### **1.4. State of the Question: Opinions on Receptive Ecumenism**

Having outlined the proposal and the key questions posed by this thesis, a consideration of the breadth of the material available on RE must now be undertaken. As it is not feasible to review every word written on RE here, key ecumenists and theologians have been selected due to the importance of their discussions for RE. While referring to as wide a range of authors as possible is desirable, it must be recognised that the range of material available is quite homogenous. The majority of the authors reviewed are Catholic, with only one Anglican and one Eastern Orthodox voice. They are all male, and all but one of them is from an English-speaking Western country. Nevertheless, these authors and articles have been chosen because they present critical reflections on RE, both its potential and any possible challenges. Their contributions will be analysed in the following order: Walter Kasper; Paul Avis; Kallistos Ware; Gerard Kelly; Denis Edwards; Jeffrey Gros; Nigel Zimmermann; and David Ford. We will also look at three additional resources: ARCIC III; the booklet on RE produced by the South Australian Council of Churches (SACC); and finally, the workbook on RE written by the New South Wales Ecumenical Council (NSWEC).

Fittingly, the first word belongs to the eminent theologian and ecumenist, Cardinal Walter Kasper (1933 - ). Born in Germany, Kasper was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1957. In 2001, he was appointed as the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity by Pope John Paul II. In this role, he is also President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Kasper has published extensively. Of his many major contributions to ecumenical theology, two recent books stand out in particular: *That They May All Be One* and *Harvesting the Fruits*. Kasper also has strong ties to the beginning of RE.

The first RE conference was held in his honour, in conjunction with Durham University's conferral of an honorary doctorate upon him.<sup>88</sup> Kasper also contributed the foreword and a chapter to the RE volume.<sup>89</sup> It is dedicated to him "with gratitude."<sup>90</sup> He speaks highly of RE, praising it for being "more realistic" in contrast to the "utopian" tendencies of much ecumenism.<sup>91</sup> True to his own ecumenical work, Kasper firstly reaffirms the importance of Spiritual Ecumenism, and the understanding that Christian unity is ultimately God's work, which we must accept with patience and hope.<sup>92</sup> He goes on to explain that ecumenical work is not about becoming a "new" church but rather about becoming "a spiritually renewed" church.<sup>93</sup> Dialogue and learning from each other form key elements in this process of renewal, which is where an approach of ecclesial learning such as RE fits in.

He points out that the problem is not in a lack of texts which are of value to furthering ecumenical relations and Christian unity, but in the *reception* of

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<sup>88</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," vii.

<sup>89</sup> Kasper, "Foreword." And Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam."

<sup>90</sup> Paul D. Murray, ed. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>91</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," vii.

<sup>92</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

<sup>93</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

these texts.<sup>94</sup> This is where he sees RE as being helpful. He writes that RE “is conducive to a bridging of theological discussions and ecclesial practice.”<sup>95</sup> It not only asks a tradition to reflect on what it may learn from other Christian traditions, but it is “attentive to practical steps which could be taken as a result of that learning.”<sup>96</sup> It is in this sense that Kasper perceives RE as being realistic. Rather than a rarefied academic discipline, it acts on both sides of ecumenism: theology and practice. This is a pertinent insight, as RE appears particularly popular at a grassroots level, perhaps even more so than at a theological one.

While this assessment seems straightforward, it is also important to discuss his contribution to the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume. Though striking in many ways, Kasper’s essay does not engage deeply with RE. This may be because it is a re-publication of an earlier journal article.<sup>97</sup> Kasper begins with reference to the difficult “interim” period currently facing the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>98</sup> He highlights that part of the “premise” of RE is its “conviction” that ecumenical progress is still possible.<sup>99</sup> However, he goes on to explain that while his essay has “the notion of Receptive Ecumenism in mind,” it adopts “an approach more akin to fundamental theology.”<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately, Kasper does not proceed to elucidate the connection (if any) between RE and fundamental theology, nor how RE informs his argument. In fact, RE receives no further mention.

However, he does re-assert the importance of SE.<sup>101</sup> He insists that “it is not we, but the Spirit of God alone, who can create unity. Therefore, in the

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<sup>94</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

<sup>95</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

<sup>96</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam: The Relationship between the Catholic and the Protestant Principles in Fundamental Ecclesiology," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7, no. 4 (2007). To avoid confusion, all references in this thesis refer to the RE book chapter.

<sup>98</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>99</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>100</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>101</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

tradition of Paul Couturier, we can say that spiritual ecumenism is the soul of the ecumenical movement.”<sup>102</sup> Here he defines SE as encompassing “prayer, conversion, and self-sanctification.”<sup>103</sup> He stresses that “Spiritual Ecumenism also makes it clear that we should not be satisfied with such intermediate goals as better mutual awareness, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence.”<sup>104</sup> For Kasper, the goal of ecumenism is to partake of a shared Eucharist, and SE urges us towards this aim.<sup>105</sup>

Kasper’s perception of SE appears to confront Murray’s, as Kasper’s presentation of SE is not limited only to matters of prayer. Rather, for Kasper, SE is connected with the goal of full visible unity. There is a tension here, and it appears to be based in their different interpretations of SE. Both agree that the goal of ecumenism is more than just peaceful coexistence. However Murray argues that SE has become limited to just this, and therefore, RE is the necessary vehicle for ecumenical growth. In contrast, Kasper sees SE in a more well-rounded and vital manner.<sup>106</sup> While Kasper is certainly positive about RE, the thrust of his ecumenical work remains focused on SE, and its importance for the future of ecumenism. Reviewing Kasper’s comments on RE clearly reveals that the relationship between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism requires deeper investigation.

Another important commentator on Receptive Ecumenism is the Anglican ecumenist and ecclesialogist, Dr Paul Avis (1947 - ). Avis is an Anglican priest from the United Kingdom. He was the General Secretary of the Church of England’s Council for Christian Unity from 1998 until 2011. In 2009 he was appointed the Canon Theologian of Exeter Cathedral, and honorary professor of

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<sup>102</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>103</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>104</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>105</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>106</sup> Kasper’s work on Spiritual Ecumenism will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

theology at the University of Exeter. He was a theological consultant for the Anglican Communion Office from 2011 to 2012. He is the Editor in Chief of the international journal, *Ecclesiology*, published by Brill. He has published extensively.<sup>107</sup> Avis also attended the 2006 RE conference.

Avis published an article in 2012 which is valuable, not only because it addresses RE from an Anglican perspective, but because it raises some key questions surrounding RE.<sup>108</sup> He begins by stating that RE, although initially posed in a Catholic context, has “considerable potential” for all Christian churches involved in ecumenism.<sup>109</sup> He describes RE as “a project of great potential within the contemporary movement of ecclesiological renewal.”<sup>110</sup> However, he observes that RE stems from and is “addressed primarily” to the Catholic Church.<sup>111</sup> As such, it acts to “challenge” Catholic attitudes and “official stances” to ecumenism.<sup>112</sup> He attests that RE arises out of the context of the “ongoing struggle” within the Catholic Church over interpreting and applying Vatican II.<sup>113</sup> It therefore contains a “strong agenda for reform,” particularly in the areas of the laity and the “integrity of episcopal conferences.”<sup>114</sup> However, while acknowledging that “much” of the RE “conversation is an internal dialogue within” the Catholic Church, he argues that it challenges “all the major churches” to consider what perceptions and assumptions they place on other churches.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> One of his significant contributions to ecumenism is his book: Paul Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Paul Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" *Ecclesiology* 8, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>109</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 223.

<sup>110</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 223.

<sup>111</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>112</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>113</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>114</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>115</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.



In this sense, while he believes that RE “is first and foremost” a Catholic concern, it is also an “ecumenical matter.”<sup>116</sup> Avis makes a salient point in emphasising the Catholic character of Receptive Ecumenism. Murray has attempted, in the second and third RE conferences, to open RE as a fruitful ecumenical strategy for other Christian traditions. The success of this remains debatable, and there is no doubt that the majority of thinkers on RE are Catholic.

Having asserted RE’s potential, Avis continues his analysis, positing that RE could appear to be “stating the obvious.”<sup>117</sup> Reception and receptivity to other Christians has necessarily always been part of the Ecumenical Movement. After all, he says, “If ecumenism had not been essentially receptive, the ecumenical movement could not have achieved what it has achieved during the past century.”<sup>118</sup> Indisputably, ecumenism inherently involves reception.<sup>119</sup> Avis then asks, “So if reception or receptivity is already present, in effect making ecumenism what it is, why do we need an initiative called ‘receptive ecumenism’?”<sup>120</sup> This is a good question, and one that RE can be expected to answer, especially as Murray himself describes ecumenism as something of a “new name for an old way of thinking.”<sup>121</sup>

For Avis, the “answer is clear.”<sup>122</sup> He argues that RE is needed because while “the dynamic of reception” is “implied” in ecumenism, “it is not taken seriously enough.”<sup>123</sup> He attests that reception does not receive the attention it warrants, that it is not “taken to heart,” or given priority in ecumenical matters, that it is “not allowed enough sway” to inspire and direct ecumenical concerns.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>117</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>118</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 224.

<sup>119</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

<sup>120</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

<sup>121</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>122</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

<sup>123</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

<sup>124</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

In fact, Avis considers that “the disappointments and frustrations” of the contemporary Ecumenical Movement are caused by “lack of receptivity,” by “not allowing reception to have its full sway.”<sup>125</sup> He sees RE’s potential in the very fact that it is not new, but rather because it highlights the process of receptivity underlying ecumenical endeavours and draws it out for “our attention, reflection and action.”<sup>126</sup> If RE were entirely new, he believes it would “not get a hearing” by the Catholic Church or “its major ecumenical partners,” but would instead be considered a “threat.”<sup>127</sup> If this is so, then perhaps RE should strive to deepen and enrich its roots within previous ecumenical thought.

If RE is successful in bringing receptivity to the forefront, Avis believes that it “would do much to re-motivate, re-energise and redirect the ecumenical movement in our time.”<sup>128</sup> In fact, he goes so far as to state that RE has “revolutionary potential.”<sup>129</sup> He argues that it “strikes deep into ecumenical motivation and stands prevailing ecumenical attitudes on their head.”<sup>130</sup> Avis’s use of the words “motivation” and “attitudes” illustrate that RE acts on the affective levels behind ecumenical actions. RE challenges the predispositions and attitudes brought to ecumenical dialogue. It aims to transform these predispositions into being positive and receptive, rather than negative and defensive.

However, Avis calls this something of “a narrow tightrope.”<sup>131</sup> Without damaging the integrity of their own tradition, ecumenists are to seek what other traditions have to offer them, focusing on what they can receive, rather than

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<sup>125</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>126</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>127</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>128</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>129</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>130</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 225.

<sup>131</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 226.

give.<sup>132</sup> Avis puts it this way: “Can we be receptive to all that we can learn from the wider Church without false humility or breast-beating or pretending that we have nothing to offer in turn?”<sup>133</sup> Clearly, RE is not a quick fix solution, but rather one that expects a lot from a church. He writes that it “demands practical realism” about one’s own church and other churches.<sup>134</sup> Like Kasper, he is attracted to RE for its seemingly practical and realistic, rather than romantic or idealistic, vision.<sup>135</sup> Whether RE is overly idealistic in another way (in the sense that it looks too optimistically at other churches and too negatively at our own), is also a consideration.

Avis briefly raises the observation that RE may be intended to replace traditional bilateral dialogues.<sup>136</sup> He refutes this point by re-affirming the necessity of bilateral dialogues for receptivity, attesting that the “reception of one another” requires dialogue.<sup>137</sup> In this way, far from being replaced, dialogue underpins and furthers reception. He also notes that he believes RE needs to engage more profoundly with difference and otherness, as “fear of otherness” is behind much of the reticence against ecumenism.<sup>138</sup> Avis likewise raises other questions with which RE may be bombarded: Is it mainly a local and practical exercise, rather than one with wide-ranging and theological import?<sup>139</sup> He goes on: “Is ‘receptive ecumenism’ a new name for ‘spiritual ecumenism’?”<sup>140</sup> And again, asking: “Is [RE] purely a *pragmatics of ecumenism*? If it is, will the churches abandon the goal of full visible communion...?”<sup>141</sup> He expands on this last question, explaining that Murray himself sees the goal of ecumenism as

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<sup>132</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 226.

<sup>133</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 226.

<sup>134</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 229.

<sup>135</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 229.

<sup>136</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 230.

<sup>137</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 230.

<sup>138</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 231.

<sup>139</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 232.

<sup>140</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 232.

<sup>141</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 232.

nothing less than full visible unity.<sup>142</sup> Avis attests that RE “gives ample evidence” that it is not designed as “an alternative to theological dialogue.”<sup>143</sup> Rather he considers RE and theological dialogue to be in dynamic relationship, as “both presuppose and depend on each other.”<sup>144</sup>

He concludes by re-asserting the potential of RE, arguing that if its “ethos” were “taken to heart throughout the churches, ecumenism would recover its authentic character and become infused with fresh vitality.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, from an Anglican perspective, Avis offers a highly positive appraisal of RE. However, he also takes into account a number of areas where RE may be developed further, and raises a series of questions that need to be attended to in greater depth.

Having considered Avis’s Anglican outlook on RE, we now move into an Eastern Orthodox perspective. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (1934 - ) is a well-known English theologian of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He was born into the Anglican tradition and converted to Eastern Orthodoxy at the age of 24. In 1982, he became the Bishop of Diokleia. In 2007, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elevated the Diocese of Diokleia to Metropolis, making him Titular Metropolitan of Diokleia. He was also Spalding Lecturer of Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford University from 1966 to 2001. In a 2008 article, Ware offers a useful analysis of RE.<sup>146</sup>

While not explicitly stated as such, three key points of challenge to Murray’s understanding of RE emerge in his analysis. The first is that Ware concentrates on SE. RE is situated within the context of the spiritual dimensions of ecumenism, with Ware even quoting from Couturier. He stresses that Couturier

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<sup>142</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 233.

<sup>143</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 233.

<sup>144</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 234.

<sup>145</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism?'" 234.

<sup>146</sup> Kallistos Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective," *Louvain Studies* 33, no. 1-2 (2008).

“emphasized the right order of priorities when he advocated a week of prayer for Christian unity: not just a week of discussions, lectures and conferences, but a week of insistent prayer.”<sup>147</sup> For Ware, RE is inextricably bound up with the practice of prayer, as, indeed, are all forms of ecumenism. His emphasis on the spiritual aspects of RE is stronger than appears in Murray’s presentation of RE.

In emphasising RE’s spiritual dimensions, Ware argues that “three qualities above all are needed in receptive ecumenism: silence, a spirit of repentance and a Trinitarian mode of thinking and of living.”<sup>148</sup> Each one of these facets is highlighted in SE and in Christian spirituality more generally. Silence is important, as silence can engender receptivity, or as he puts it: “receptive ecumenism is to stop talking and to start listening – to start listening alike to God and to one another.”<sup>149</sup> He stresses the importance of repentance, stating that “receptive ecumenism...requires of us a spirit of repentance.”<sup>150</sup> Here he uses the Greek word *metanoia*, which is also the root meaning of the word for conversion. Conversion is crucial: “Unless we enter upon such work [for Christian unity] with a searching and inexorable desire to repent – to change our minds, to challenge our presuppositions, to be radically transformed – our ecumenical efforts will be trivial and superficial.”<sup>151</sup> He posits that the “spiritual attitude” inferred by RE is one of “prayerful watchfulness, of waiting on the Holy Spirit, of openness to the divine initiative.”<sup>152</sup> Therefore, RE is a spiritual practice that requires openness to the Holy Spirit.

Ware maintains that “If we interpret receptive ecumenism from such a perspective as this...it means that we view the attainment of Christian unity as

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<sup>147</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 47.

<sup>148</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

<sup>149</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 48.

<sup>150</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 48.

<sup>151</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 49.

<sup>152</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

pre-eminently the work of God, as a divine and supernatural action.”<sup>153</sup> Here he is emphasising one of the key points of SE, and one that calls for a high level of humility on behalf of ecumenists. The parallels between Ware’s perception of RE and SE are strikingly clear.

Ware also emphasises that RE must mean, first and above all, openness and receptivity to God.<sup>154</sup> He puts it this way: “Our horizontal receptiveness presupposes, as its source and inspiration, a vertical receptiveness.”<sup>155</sup> He proposes that RE’s success hinges on receptivity to God, stating that the “effectiveness” of “learning and receiving from one another...depends on both sides being prepared to learn and receive from God.”<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the Trinity forms the basis for ecumenism, as “the model and paradigm of all human relationship is nothing less than the Holy Trinity.”<sup>157</sup> He expands on this point:

In a Christian context there can be no genuine giving and receiving that is not Trinitarian. If, then, by receptive ecumenism we mean listening to one another in creative silence, and thereby giving and receiving from each other, it follows that receptive ecumenism needs to set, at the very centre of its agenda, a deepened awareness of the Trinitarian nature of God.<sup>158</sup>

His insistence on the centrality of the Trinity for RE reinforces his point that RE must mean *first* receptivity towards God, before it is openness to each other. It is this openness to God, and especially the Spirit, that allows for ecumenical relationships. Ware argues that RE involves calling upon the Holy Spirit, as he stresses: “Receptive ecumenism signifies a continual *epiclesis* of the Paraclete.”<sup>159</sup> Therefore, while RE is based in the Trinitarian context, it is focused specifically on the Spirit as the one who opens our hearts to God and each other. However,

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<sup>153</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

<sup>154</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

<sup>155</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

<sup>156</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 46.

<sup>157</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 49.

<sup>158</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 49.

<sup>159</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 47.

while Murray situates RE within a Trinitarian context, he does not centralise nor expand upon its ramifications to the extent that Ware is suggesting.<sup>160</sup>

The third challenging point Ware makes about RE is his understanding of the indivisibility of giving and receiving, teaching and learning. He insists that “giving and receiving, teaching and learning, are mutually interdependent.”<sup>161</sup> He illustrates this in his response to RE’s central question. Ware writes: “What can and does my Church learn and receive from other Christian traditions?” However, he then goes on: “And what do these other Christian traditions need to learn and receive from my own tradition?”<sup>162</sup> While the first question is recognisably the key methodology of RE, the second question is certainly not. In fact, Murray explicitly focuses on reception and learning only, and deliberately sets these aspects up as *oppositional* to giving and teaching. The point of RE, he stresses, is to focus on what we can learn, without consideration of what we may be able to teach.<sup>163</sup> In this way, as has already been noted, Murray concentrates on one side of the ecumenical gift exchange.

However, Ware considers the two questions together, as if one necessarily implies the other. In this regard, his presentation may appear closer to the ecumenical exchange of gifts (which is also part of SE) than RE. Ware writes that at first he set out to draw up “two lists,” one that sets out what the Orthodox Church can learn, and one which outlines what the Orthodox Church can teach.<sup>164</sup> “Very quickly, however,” he explains “I discover that this approach will not work.”<sup>165</sup> For, he realises, every point he believes the Orthodox Church could teach, they actually still need to “understand far better” themselves, and “other

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<sup>160</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.

<sup>161</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

<sup>162</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

<sup>163</sup> See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16-17 and Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

<sup>164</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

<sup>165</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

Christian communities can help us to do precisely this.”<sup>166</sup> Ware resolves this by coming up with just one list of “themes” that “all of us need to explore in common.”<sup>167</sup> So, with humility, Ware emphasises that everyone is learning, which correlates well with RE. However, learning and teaching, giving and receiving remain inseparable. He attests that by “learning from one another, and at the same time teaching one another,” we may “explore in common the urgent issues that at present we understand so imperfectly.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, Ware presents an account of RE that emphasises learning but which is not divorced from teaching. His article offers a nuanced critique of RE, which may allow it to develop more deeply on three key points: its link to Spiritual Ecumenism, its Trinitarian basis, and the indivisibility of teaching and learning.

We turn now to consider the analysis of Reverend Associate Professor Gerard Kelly. Kelly is a prominent Australian ecumenist, ecclesiologist, and Catholic priest. He was appointed President of the Catholic Institute of Sydney in 2004. He is also editor of the *Australasian Catholic Record*. Kelly is the Catholic co-chair of the Australian Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, and chair of the Faith and Unity Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

In a 2010 paper, Kelly describes RE as “a new wave in the ecumenical movement.”<sup>169</sup> It is a movement which may reinvigorate ecumenical energy and “help us concentrate on different areas.”<sup>170</sup> He writes that RE appears to have entered ecumenical affairs at the right time, and that one of Murray’s “coups” is in gaining the support of “church leadership at the highest level,” namely the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.<sup>171</sup> Kelly also stresses that

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<sup>166</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

<sup>167</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 50.

<sup>168</sup> Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism," 52.

<sup>169</sup> Gerard Kelly, "A New Ecumenical Wave" (presentation, National Council of Churches Forum, Canberra, 12 July 2010), 1.

<sup>170</sup> Kelly, "A New Ecumenical Wave," 2.

<sup>171</sup> Kelly, "A New Ecumenical Wave," 1.



working with RE means that “we are really dealing with something that is old, but also something that is new.”<sup>172</sup>

In a 2013 article, he makes a point to describe RE as an “ecumenical methodology.”<sup>173</sup> He explains that it is distinguished from other ecumenical methodologies, which he describes as the comparative methodology, the joint study of sources methodology, and the Lund Principle.<sup>174</sup> He argues that although RE has aspects in common with the other methodologies, it also differs from them.<sup>175</sup> He offers a useful comparison of RE and the three other methodologies, worth quoting at length:

The difference in relation to previous methodologies is that each church will primarily be learning about itself from the other. Earlier methodologies, on the other hand, were focused on learning about the other either directly (the comparative method) or indirectly (the joint study of the sources). Further, in comparison with the application of the Lund Principle, in receptive ecumenism there is less focus on churches acting together. This is not to say, however, that they are necessarily acting independently of each other.<sup>176</sup>

In other words, RE draws the focus of ecumenism towards inner conversion, to the church learning *from* others in order to enrich itself, rather than learning *about* others.

However, Kelly observes that this methodology may appear “counter-intuitive” to ecumenism itself.<sup>177</sup> This is a good point, as RE involves an inward orientation. In one sense, this can seem contrary to the ecumenical endeavour as a whole, as ecumenism usually focuses upon others first, rather than the self. This is, however, Murray’s aim, and parallels the key importance placed on “interior

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<sup>172</sup> Kelly, “A New Ecumenical Wave,” 1.

<sup>173</sup> Gerard Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” in *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians*, ed. Gideon Goosen (Sydney: The New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013), 5.

<sup>174</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 5.

<sup>175</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>176</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>177</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

conversion” by Vatican II. Raising this point, Kelly writes that RE’s interior emphasis is not meant to isolate a church from its ecumenical partners.<sup>178</sup> While RE does not intend to do so, however, this point must be reinforced with care, to avoid any risk of misinterpretation.

Kelly further explains that RE “asks each church to focus for a while on its own faith, life and witness,” which involves discerning areas of renewal and looking to other Christians for help.<sup>179</sup> For Kelly, RE’s distinctiveness is found in “learning from the other,” rather “than learning about the other.”<sup>180</sup> He explains that the goal of RE is to “offer a strategy that promotes in each church, change, growth and conversion to a deeper Christian life.”<sup>181</sup> However, he is not without reservations about the difficulties involved in the methodology.

He lists five challenges concerning RE, and offers some points towards overcoming them. The first is that it is counter-intuitive. He observes that those who are “ecumenically aware” may find it difficult and even “become distressed” about using a strategy that focuses on ourselves rather than on “building ecumenical relationships.”<sup>182</sup> However, he accepts Murray’s point that the present time appears to be one of stalled relationships, and consequently, “what some refer to as an ‘ecumenical winter’ can become an opportunity to do some work on our own house.”<sup>183</sup> Therefore, the counter-intuitiveness of RE is not an insurmountable obstacle. If the assessment of the ecumenical winter is a realistic one, then the time may not be right for the deepening of ecumenical relations. Overcoming reservations over RE’s counter-intuitiveness may, therefore, open new gains for ecumenism.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>179</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>180</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>181</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>182</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6.

<sup>183</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 6-7.

<sup>184</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

The second difficulty Kelly describes is the fact of ecclesial resistance to change. He states that resistance to change is often not due to “ill-will” but rather to “a lack of imagination” in discerning where change is required or desirable.<sup>185</sup> He makes the point that ecclesial change is often connected to church authority, and that reaching agreement on what areas or aspects need to change is not a simple or straightforward matter.<sup>186</sup> Thirdly, Kelly points to the difficulty of approaching “our ecumenical partners” for help.<sup>187</sup> Learning from other traditions may be complicated by fundamental differences, such as in ministry, or ecclesiology.<sup>188</sup> He attests that this problem may be overcome by understanding that “learning from the other” does not equate to adopting the same practices or concepts, or “even accepting their basic theological stance.”<sup>189</sup> “Rather,” he says, “another church can shine a light on our current practices and help us to see them with fresh eyes, and develop strategies for renewal.”<sup>190</sup> Fourthly, Kelly points out that the scope of RE “can be very broad.”<sup>191</sup> After all, where should ecclesial learning either begin or end? In theory, it can apply to everything. He suggests focusing RE on particular areas of practical concern.<sup>192</sup> On this point, he considers the willingness of the churches to “learn from each other” about responding to the recent sexual abuse scandal in Australia to be “an example of receptive ecumenism, even if it has not been named as such.”<sup>193</sup>

Finally, Kelly outlines that, if RE is to be most effective, then “local communities will need to reflect” on their own contexts.<sup>194</sup> The responsibility for ecclesial learning falls upon the church, as Murray also asserts. Each church will

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<sup>185</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>186</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>187</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>188</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>189</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>190</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>191</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>192</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>193</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>194</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

have to discern areas where it may benefit from ecclesial learning. Kelly makes the point here that in doing so, the emphasis is “not so much” on “how can the churches work together,” but rather, it is on how our church can receive “insights from others as we deal with these challenges.”<sup>195</sup> The question then becomes, “How will my church change? Is it ready to learn from others?”<sup>196</sup> Thus, Kelly offers an insightful analysis of RE, as well as opening up some challenging points for further consideration.

Considering Gerard Kelly’s work also leads us to discuss another well-known Australian theologian, Professor Denis Edwards. Edwards has published extensively, particularly in the fields of creation and ecology. He is also a Catholic diocesan priest. Since 2014, Edwards is a Professor in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. Previously, he taught theology at Flinders University, Adelaide. He has been highly involved in RE, most recently presenting at the third RE conference in 2014.

In a 2009 article, Edwards offers an account of RE that emphasises the importance of pneumatology. He writes that RE “is an invitation and a challenge to our churches.”<sup>197</sup> He proposes that RE implies that “the ecumenical encounter with another church tradition is an event of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>198</sup> This requires some unpacking. He explains that a fundamental disposition of ecumenism is receptivity to, and discernment of, the Holy Spirit.<sup>199</sup> In continuity with Spiritual Ecumenism, Edwards emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit as both the instigator and focus of the Ecumenical Movement. If the point of ecumenism is interior conversion, then that, indeed, falls under the purview of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>195</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>196</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>197</sup> Denis Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church: the Example of Justification,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 86, no. 4 (2009): 457.

<sup>198</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 457.

<sup>199</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 457.

Ecumenical activity involves discerning the movement of the Spirit, and acknowledging that unity is the result of the Spirit. He writes, "In the otherness of the other tradition, the Spirit of God offers us a gift."<sup>200</sup> This statement evokes Vatican II's SE, in recognising the truth and gifts that exist within other Christian traditions.

Edwards goes on to state that "Ecumenical receptivity" entails a positive attitude towards the other, an expectation of finding grace within that tradition.<sup>201</sup> He argues that the gifts to be found within other traditions are not limited to "the personal," but also extend to the structural and institutional aspects of the tradition.<sup>202</sup> Although he reiterates Murray's point on not limiting the scope simply to the personal, Edwards's presentation of RE appears to highly emphasise SE. Significantly, Edwards argues that "a theology of charisms can contribute to the development of receptive ecumenism."<sup>203</sup> He writes that a pneumatological focus on charisms was not "explicit" in the RE volume.<sup>204</sup> However, it is "implicit in much of the discussions."<sup>205</sup> It is quite telling that Edwards feels the need to clarify some aspects of RE, which, while implicit, have not been highlighted sufficiently. It is also significant that he considers RE to be in need of further development, and that the direction he pushes it towards is that of SE.

In undertaking his argument, Edwards seeks to investigate the "notion of institutional charisms," in the work of Congar.<sup>206</sup> He proposes that the Catholic Church "is called to receive into its own life and preaching" the "charism of a liberation theology of justification" from the Lutheran tradition.<sup>207</sup> In raising

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<sup>200</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457.

<sup>201</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457.

<sup>202</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457.

<sup>203</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457.

<sup>204</sup> With the exception, Edwards's points out, of the article by Ladislav Órsy.

<sup>205</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457-458.

<sup>206</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 458.

<sup>207</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 458.

Congar's question about what conditions could guide the application of a charism to a partner church, Edwards provides a helpful set of criteria.<sup>208</sup>

First, that the charism is recognised as "an authentic expression" of faith; that the charism leads to Christ; that it does not undermine the ecclesiology of the receiving church; that it can be considered an "organic development" of the receiving church's faith; that it brings the receiving church "renewed energy and life;" and finally, that it is "accompanied by the fruits of the Spirit."<sup>209</sup> Meeting these conditions, argues Edwards, means that the charism can be "celebrated as an institutional charism of the Spirit" and as a gift to the receiving church.<sup>210</sup>

Moreover, Edwards defines charisms as "gifts of nature and grace given for the fulfilment of the mission of the church."<sup>211</sup> He offers a list of charisms, including such things as "preaching and teaching," "music," "art," "peace-making," and "prophetic words and deeds on behalf of human liberation."<sup>212</sup> The difference between "charism" and "learning" within RE is an important point that requires further investigation. Edwards's focus on Congar is particularly interesting, as Murray states that Congar was one of the influences on his development of RE.<sup>213</sup>

However, Edwards's emphasis on receiving charisms, rather than learning from other churches, also highlights a tension between the ecumenical exchange of gifts and RE. While some authors appear to use the terms almost interchangeably, or at the least, do not perceive an opposition between the two, as has already been briefly mentioned, Murray himself draws away from the exchange of gifts. Edwards's argument that RE can be enriched by developing a

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<sup>208</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 462.

<sup>209</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 462.

<sup>210</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 462.

<sup>211</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 459.

<sup>212</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 459-460.

<sup>213</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

focus on the charisms therefore counteracts Murray's perceived opposition between the two. By focusing on charisms rather than "learning," Edwards imparts a particular emphasis on RE. In light of his article, it becomes clear that certain aspects of RE, perhaps obvious to Murray, require greater clarification if RE is to be received with integrity.

Reflection on this point leads us to discuss an article that, again, raises a need for greater clarification over the connection between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. Jeffrey Gros (1938-2013) was a renowned ecumenist and member of the De La Salle Christian Brothers. In his academic career, he published over 20 books and hundreds of articles.<sup>214</sup> He served as the Director of Faith and Order for the National Council of Churches, USA, for ten years, and the Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops for fourteen years. He also contributed a chapter to the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume.<sup>215</sup>

In 2009, he published an article which focused on "some elements of spiritual ecumenism, including the theme of receptive ecumenism."<sup>216</sup> He writes that this "seems to me a priority at this moment in the pilgrimage together to full visible unity."<sup>217</sup> This is a striking statement, as he infers that RE is properly a part of Spiritual Ecumenism, and that this SE is important for the future of the Ecumenical Movement. He outlines the aim of the article as "a treatment of spiritual ecumenism for academic theologians in service of the unity of the

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<sup>214</sup> One of his more notable books is Jeffrey Gros, Eamon McManus, and Ann Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998). Another two important contributions are: Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). And Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, eds., *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>215</sup> Jeffrey Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism - Formational and Catechetical Considerations," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>216</sup> Jeffrey Gros, "The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian to Spiritual Pilgrimage in Service of Gospel Unity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44, no. 3 (2009): 367.

<sup>217</sup> Gros, "The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian," 367.

church,” and raises five key points: “mentorship,” the “discipline of dialogue,” the “discipline of formation,” “receptive ecumenism,” and “prayer.”<sup>218</sup>

Gros’s placement of RE as one of five points pertinent to SE reinforces his understanding of RE as part of Spiritual Ecumenism. He describes RE “as a dimension of ecumenical spirituality,” and writes that “the ecumenical imagination is stimulated to discern the ecumenism of the possible.”<sup>219</sup> Here he also implies that the relationship between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism may be more dynamic than just one-way. Gros considers RE to be of key importance for an article on SE, and needs to be included on a list along with such central concerns as prayer.

Gros’s presentation also seems to situate RE largely for the purposes of practical ecumenism. He argues that the “pastoral purpose” of ecumenism means that teaching courses and materials need to be brought “into line with the ecumenical call of the gospel, the results of the dialogues to date, an adequate and irenic reading of our ecumenical partners, and a penitential and self-critical reading of our own church’s heritage.”<sup>220</sup> He sees the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume as useful for this task, and attests that it “should be a resource for all ecumenists in a variety of disciplines as a support and challenge to our work.”<sup>221</sup> Gros concludes by stating that “receptive ecumenism is as challenging a spiritual discipline for us [academic ecumenists] as are prayer, dialogue, mentorship, and the hard work of calling all Christians to the goal of full communion by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>222</sup>

It is interesting that Gros starts his article on SE by referring to RE as an aspect of SE, and finishes by arguing that RE is a “challenging spiritual

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<sup>218</sup> Gros, “The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian,” 367.

<sup>219</sup> Gros, “The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian,” 377.

<sup>220</sup> Gros, “The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian,” 379.

<sup>221</sup> Gros, “The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian,” 379.

<sup>222</sup> Gros, “The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian,” 382.



discipline.” Here, the relation between the two appears to be more dynamic than static, although it must also be acknowledged that Gros does not provide a detailed analysis of RE. He describes RE as focusing “on what a community... can learn and receive from other Christian communities as we move forward together in dialogue.”<sup>223</sup> While this definition strikes at the heart of Murray’s concept, it does not expand upon RE itself – rather, Gros deepens RE by adding it to the context of SE.

The connection between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism is also emphasised by Dr Nigel Zimmermann. Zimmermann is a lecturer in theology at the University of Notre Dame in Australia. In his 2014 review of the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume, he points to a basis for RE within Vatican II and the work of John Paul II.<sup>224</sup> He understands RE as a “self-critical” strategy, but one which does not damage Catholic “self-understanding of sacramental communion or apostolicity.”<sup>225</sup> Rather it is a “constructive dialogue” with other Christians, in which “ecclesiologists are called upon not as scientists but as healers.”<sup>226</sup> The emphasis in RE is on healing, rather than diagnosis.<sup>227</sup> However, Zimmermann also points out a “possible danger” of RE: that of a “too-optimistic naiveté” in always emphasising other churches in a positive manner, and our own church in a negative way.<sup>228</sup> He calls this “a kind of extreme, but ignorant humility.”<sup>229</sup> This kind of approach may lead to distortion, rather than healthy ecumenical relationships, as the problems of other churches may be overlooked or idealised, while the flaws of our own church are unduly magnified.<sup>230</sup> This is a pertinent

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<sup>223</sup> Gros, "The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian," 378.

<sup>224</sup> Nigel Zimmermann, "Book Review: Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism," *The Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 3 (2014): 526.

<sup>225</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

<sup>226</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

<sup>227</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

<sup>228</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

<sup>229</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

<sup>230</sup> Zimmermann, "Book Review," 526.

observation, especially as it may impact on the feasibility of actually applying RE. It also raises the question of criteria: what aspects of another tradition should we take into our own? What areas for “ecclesial learning” should our community be open to? RE must deal with questions such as these, or it may unintentionally lead a tradition towards a loss of identity and integrity.

RE is also being explored in relation to Comparative Theology and Scriptural Reasoning, with a special issue of *Modern Theology* devoted to the subject.<sup>231</sup> In his introduction, David Ford writes that “the most comprehensive theological framework is proposed by Murray.”<sup>232</sup> Ford describes RE as “a distilled wisdom in the spirit of Vatican II, uniting *ressourcement*, *aggiornamento* and *conversazione*.”<sup>233</sup> He regards it as exemplifying “the principle of multiple deepenings,” and sees it as being “a guide and inspiration” not just for Catholic ecumenism, but for ecumenism more broadly, as well as for inter-faith dialogue.<sup>234</sup> He justifies placing Comparative Theology, RE, and Scriptural Reasoning in conjunction by arguing that, in light of Vatican II opening up opportunities for engagement, each “can be seen as three answers to the question: How to engage wisely?”<sup>235</sup>

It is interesting how Ford places RE in context with other new methods of dealing with encounter and engagement, which ultimately stem from Vatican II. Murray himself talks of “family resemblances” between the three approaches.<sup>236</sup> Murray describes Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism as being “self-consciously postliberal strategies which eschew

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<sup>231</sup> See *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4. (2013): “Special Issue: Interreligious Reading After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism,” edited by David F. Ford and Frances Clemson. Contributors to the issue include Paul Murray, Francis Clooney, Nicholas Adams, and David Ford.

<sup>232</sup> David F. Ford, “Introduction - Interreligious Reading After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 3.

<sup>233</sup> Ford, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>234</sup> Ford, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>235</sup> Ford, “Introduction,” 8.

<sup>236</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

approaches premised on commonality and the priority of coming to agreement, in favour of taking seriously the particularity and plurality of traditioned commitment.<sup>237</sup> He stresses that each approach “seeks for learning across and from difference,” instead of seeking “underlying commonalities or reconciled agreement.”<sup>238</sup> In this sense, he sees a potential enrichment from considering all three approaches together.<sup>239</sup> However, Ford acknowledges that “each of these young practices has huge scope for development.”<sup>240</sup> He raises the factor of potential gains to be had by “combining two of them, or even all three,” and refers to Murray’s assertion of their “mutual compatibility and complementarity.”<sup>241</sup>

Yet, he goes on to add that he thinks “such combinations” are unlikely “to become common in practice,” because each one of them requires a great deal of investment and time.<sup>242</sup> However, he hopes that each approach will be able to share and learn from the others.<sup>243</sup> This initiative emphasises some of the possible applications of RE, and how it may extend beyond the ecumenical endeavour. Such a project also displays the interest in RE, placing it alongside two other new approaches.

RE projects also seem to be flourishing. One example is the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*, undertaken by the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University.<sup>244</sup> Another significant example is the fact that RE has been adopted as the methodology for ARCIC III, with the first meeting held in Bosé in May 2011.<sup>245</sup> The communiqué from the Bosé meeting reported that the method used by ARCIC III “was

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<sup>237</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 76.

<sup>238</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 77.

<sup>239</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 77.

<sup>240</sup> Ford, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>241</sup> Ford, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>242</sup> Ford, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>243</sup> Ford, "Introduction," 9.

<sup>244</sup> Please see their website for further information:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/projects/localchurch/>

<sup>245</sup> For more details, see Murray, "ARCIC III."

particularly helped by the approach of ‘receptive ecumenism.’<sup>246</sup> They understand RE as an approach “which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our partner, rather than simply asking our partner to learn from us.”<sup>247</sup> Moreover, “Receptive ecumenism is more about self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other.”<sup>248</sup> Note that the two keywords of RE, “learning” and “conversion” are both used, although they do not receive further elucidation. Not surprisingly, Murray is one of the Catholic members of ARCIC III, and has been present at all five meetings held to date.<sup>249</sup> ARCIC III’s adoption of Receptive Ecumenism is highly significant.<sup>250</sup> ARCIC III will surely provide valuable information on RE as an effective ecumenical strategy. It serves to highlight how RE has taken hold in parts of the ecumenical sphere, and the draw of its appeal. Although, it must be noted that this appears more to be an application of the fundamental principle of RE, used in conjunction with other ecumenical methodologies, than a systematic analysis of RE itself.

RE also exhibits a high level of appeal in Australia. Of particular note in regards to the practice of RE is the work of the SACC<sup>251</sup> and the NSWEC.<sup>252</sup> Both groups have produced practical booklets on applying RE to parish and small group contexts. While these booklets are practical rather than academic, they represent concrete examples of how RE is being translated and applied. Under the guidance of Geraldine Hawkes, the SACC was instrumental in fostering growth

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<sup>246</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III - First Meeting Communique," *ARCIC and IARCCUM* <http://anglicancentre.churchinsight.com/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=320801>

<sup>247</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>248</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>249</sup> The first meeting was held in Bosé in 2011, the second in Hong Kong in 2012, the third in Brazil in 2013, and the fourth was held Durban in 2014. The fifth meeting took place in April 2015.

<sup>250</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 210.

<sup>251</sup> Please see their website for a list of events and resources on Receptive Ecumenism: [http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en\\_receptive+ecumenism](http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_receptive+ecumenism)

<sup>252</sup> For further information, please see their website: <http://www.nswec.org.au/>

and interest in RE in Australia.<sup>253</sup> To date, the methodology has proven highly successful. The SACC was also recognised as a co-sponsor of the Third International Receptive Ecumenism Conference, in acknowledgement of their contributions towards RE. They have developed a booklet on Receptive Ecumenism: “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands: The Promise and Potential of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>254</sup> The booklet was written,

[in the] hope that people across the Church, in whatever land and at whatever stage or level of involvement, will feel inspired to a new disposition and spirit-filled action on unity in Christ through the way of Receptive Ecumenism.<sup>255</sup>

It is worth noting the language used here: “disposition,” “spirit-filled action,” and “way,” each inferring that RE acts at the affective levels of ecumenism as a process of conversion. The booklet tellingly describes RE as beginning “from a yearning, with the awareness or a frustration that some practice or structure or process within one’s own tradition may be inadequate.”<sup>256</sup> This explicitly situates RE within the affective levels of ecumenical engagement, as beginning from an emotional sense, rather than a purely rational one.

The booklet stresses this point further, insisting that “Receptive Ecumenism invites us, through a spirit of humility and a desire for healing, to share the pain, the woundedness, the felt-absence, with our ecumenical other.”<sup>257</sup> Each of these aspects can be seen as highly emotive, aiming to evoke the emotional experience behind ecumenical engagement. They could be described as arguments designed to convince based on the “reason of the heart,” to borrow

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<sup>253</sup> The SACC arranged for Murray to make a lecture tour around Australia in 2012, which inspired much interest in Receptive Ecumenism.

<sup>254</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands: The Promise and Potential of Receptive Ecumenism,” ed. South Australian Council of Churches (Adelaide: South Australian Council of Churches, 2014). This booklet was also part of the conference package given to each attendee at the third RE conference.

<sup>255</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 1.

<sup>256</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 1.

<sup>257</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 1.

Pascal's classic phrase.<sup>258</sup> The booklet goes on to explain what RE is *not* about: "Settling for less than the churches already are; diminishing the heritage of our particular churches; and, conducting a program: it's a movement of the Spirit."<sup>259</sup> The last point is particularly striking, and certainly implies that RE is a type of SE.

The parish workbook on RE published by the NSWEC was also written with the intention to be used in small parish groups.<sup>260</sup> In the booklet, Gideon Goosen writes that RE is "positive."<sup>261</sup> He explains that while there are different approaches to ecumenism, "Another approach is to think of what we can learn from Christian denominations other than our own. This is called receptive ecumenism."<sup>262</sup> While perhaps simplified, it highlights how RE can attract those without extensive professional experience in ecumenism, and be of great value in practical ecumenism. In fact, this simplicity is part of its appeal.

In sum, this consideration of the key literature available on RE reveals several pertinent points. RE is understood positively as appealing to both practical and theological ecumenism. There is much agreement and praise of RE as having the potential to reinvigorate the ecumenical scene. However, how to unlock and activate RE's potential is not explained in any systematic manner, nor is there an elucidation of the principles and criteria involved in ecclesial learning. Moreover, a number of important questions emerge, such as, what is the tension between the ecumenical exchange of gifts and RE? Can the terms "charism" and "learning" be used interchangeably? What is the pneumatology of RE? Furthermore, there is a strong undercurrent of SE running throughout many of the comments on RE,

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<sup>258</sup> The full quote from Blaise Pascal is "The heart has its reasons which reason knows not of." Blaise Pascal, *The Mind on Fire: Faith for the Skeptical and Indifferent* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2006), 221.

<sup>259</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 2.

<sup>260</sup> Gideon Goosen et al., eds., *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians* (Sydney: The New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013).

<sup>261</sup> Goosen et al., *The Gift of Each Other*, 4.

<sup>262</sup> Goosen et al., *The Gift of Each Other*, 4.

which has yet to be explored. In this regard, reviewing the literature highlights the need for RE's further elucidation.

### **1.5. Thesis Contribution**

RE has been hailed as the coming of a “new spring” for the Ecumenical Movement. But if RE is to bring about a newly fruitful season for Christian unity, the ground must be carefully prepared. A consideration of the key material raises questions about the approach. RE has yet to be set out and explained in a detailed, structured, methodological manner. Perhaps because of this lack of clarity, it has been applied and used in various ways. In particular, it seems often to be collapsed into the more traditional model of the ecumenical exchange of gifts.

RE cannot be considered an ecumenical model in the usual sense of the term. RE's strength (and weakness) resides in its simplicity. On the one hand, its simplicity enables a high level of popular appeal. It is not asking an ecumenically minded Christian to detail the differences between, say, the Catholic and Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of justification. Rather, it asks a more open question: what can Catholics learn from Lutherans? However, the simplicity of RE is also a weakness. Attempting to define what RE actually is can be somewhat frustrating. Murray declares ecclesial learning to be the key principle around which all ecumenical endeavours should be arranged, yet does not flesh out the ramifications of such. Murray describes it as an “ethic” that is “as simple yet all pervasive as the gospel it represents.”<sup>263</sup> While this certainly supports the importance of RE, it does little to actually illuminate what RE is about. After all, what aspects of the gospel, exactly, is he referring to? How should the strategy be enacted? He variously names it a strategy, ethic, value, and virtue, but does not elucidate on these terms.

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<sup>263</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

As such, there are points requiring greater clarification and questions which still need to be addressed. These questions are both methodological and evaluative. Methodological questions, such as: What are the theological underpinnings for this methodology? What is its basis in doctrine? What is the ecclesiology behind RE? What are its flaws or limitations? How does it fit within existing ecumenical methodologies and approaches? What is its role within the Catholic Church? How would it work within Orthodox, Protestant, or Pentecostal traditions? What set of criteria is there to guide churches in ecclesial learning? What means of discernment are drawn upon? There are also evaluative questions, for example: What is the original value of RE? What is its potential? If it becomes a widespread practice, what ramifications does it have for ecumenical theology? How well has RE been received?

Methodological work on understanding and defining RE is certainly hampered by the lack of published work on the subject. RE documents are exclusively limited to the form of journal articles and book chapters, mostly published from the three conferences. RE was officially launched with an international colloquium held at Ushaw College, Durham from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2006.<sup>264</sup> This first conference aimed to test RE within the context of the Catholic Church, hence the focus on RE and *Catholic Learning*. After the conference, Murray published a key article on RE in 2007, which was reprinted in 2008, alongside other articles originally presented at the first conference.<sup>265</sup>

Proceedings from a second conference, held in 2009 at Durham, are currently in the process of publication. The second conference expanded on the

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<sup>264</sup> The colloquium was held in honour of Durham University's bestowal of an Honorary Doctorate on Cardinal Kasper, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Catholic theology and ecumenism. It was comprised of some 150 attendees. For further information, please see: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/phaseone/>

<sup>265</sup> *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).



first by considering RE in a more broadly Christian, rather than Catholic, sense. It was attended by approximately 200 academics and ecumenists. A third, and perceived to be final conference, “Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective,” was held in June 2014, at Fairfield University, Connecticut. It aimed to build on the previous conferences by investigating RE in an international manner. A volume based on this conference is also awaiting publication.

Murray’s own published work on RE is limited to papers he has given at conferences, journal articles, and book chapters. The format of articles, in that they focus upon one or two dimensions or concepts, does not lend itself to a systematic analysis such as may be expected in a treatise or book. This may be one reason why RE has not yet been systematically outlined.

In fact, RE is almost always defined simply in terms of its key question, of asking what one’s own tradition can learn from another. Murray developed this question, and organised the three conferences mentioned above. At these conferences, the question was offered to different theologians and ecumenists, who each either addressed or applied it in some manner. Yet, definitively speaking, this simple question is almost all that there is. The brilliance of the simplicity here is in asking others to explore this question (which has been done academically at the conferences and more practically in ecumenical projects and groups). Simply asking this question has caused a re-invigoration of the ecumenical scene: it has led to the publication of dozens of articles, three major international conferences, and several smaller projects. Yet, systematic work on RE itself has been lacking. RE has spread wide, but perhaps, not deeply.

RE requires a sustained critical analysis, methodologically, structurally, and contextually, if it is to reach its potential. This is the task undertaken by this thesis. The aim is to fill in some of the gaps in the RE methodology by

interpreting RE within the broader Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. The intent is to clarify RE by considering how it can be understood within the framework of SE. The hope is to strengthen and deepen RE, and help it to reach its potential as an effective ecumenical strategy. Having described the contribution I hope to make, it is now time to address the underlying methodology.

### **1.6. Methodology**

This thesis offers a systematic examination of RE: what it is, where it originates, why it is significant, how it has been implemented, and what it requires to be successful. The intention is to investigate RE as a development of SE. However, as RE is relatively new, and SE requires rediscovery, the chosen texts require some justification.

The analysis of RE draws upon two key primary sources. Firstly, articles and chapters published by Murray. As the initiator of RE, his interpretation is taken as definitive. The second key primary source is the major published resource on RE: *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*.<sup>266</sup> The volume is considered constitutive of RE, and currently represents the major document available on the meaning of RE.<sup>267</sup> All other work on RE is categorised as secondary material, which is highly useful for analytical purposes, but is not taken to be definitive.

The sources used for the investigation of SE are more varied. There is something of a scarcity of recent scholarly documents on SE, although it is now receiving more attention, mainly due to the work of Walter Kasper. Spiritual Ecumenism is in need of rediscovery. As such, we propose that a Spiritual Ecumenical Movement can be traced within the modern Ecumenical Movement,

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<sup>266</sup> Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*.

<sup>267</sup> The volume is Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*. The proceedings of the second RE conference, held in 2009, is soon to be published.

stemming from the work of Paul Couturier, the *Groupe des Dombes*, Yves Congar, and into Vatican II. After Vatican II, the thread of Spiritual Ecumenism is taken up by John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint (UUS)*, and by the work of two theologians in particular: Walter Kasper and Margaret O’Gara. While there are undoubtedly other theologians and ecumenists of great import to SE, these thinkers have been selected because of their direct relevance to RE. Murray identifies Couturier, Congar, the Vatican II documents, *UUS*, and Kasper as being influential for RE’s development.<sup>268</sup> He asked O’Gara to co-facilitate the first RE conference and her contribution to the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume is directly after Murray’s own.<sup>269</sup> Thus, these sources have been selected because each is a proponent of SE who has impacted on RE in a significant manner.

This study undertakes a hermeneutical analysis of Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism texts, focusing on examining key concepts between them, such as: interior conversion; ecclesial learning; pneumatology; an emphasis on the affective levels of ecumenical engagement; and a renewed focus on virtues, particularly humility and hope. Our investigation of these sources will pay particular attention to the themes of humility and hope as constituting essential virtues within both Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. Having outlined the primary sources used in this thesis, and the justification for using them, we now turn to consider the scope and limitations of this study.

### 1.7. Scope and Limitations

The focus of this thesis is primarily theological, the better to inform ecumenical practice. The aim is to clarify the theological conceptualisation of RE, particularly in its relation to SE. Therefore, exploring RE in relation to other ecumenical methodologies (such as comparative ecumenism, or bilateral

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<sup>268</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>269</sup> Murray, "Acknowledgements."

dialogues), or to interreligious dialogue, is outside the limits of the current study. Applying RE to specific divisive doctrinal positions or particular ecumenical issues (such as baptism) is also beyond the scope of this thesis. Likewise, any specific assessment of RE in church communities, either in Australia or internationally, is not the focus of this work. Moreover, attempting to assess how well RE functions as a practical method of undertaking ecumenical dialogue in a concrete situation is also beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>270</sup> Additionally, investigating RE in relation to dialogue between the different rites within the Catholic Church, such as the Ukrainian, Maronite, or Chaldean rites, etc., is outside our focus.

Further, exploring the breadth of Spiritual Ecumenism, and how it applies to the Ecumenical Movement in general, rather than specifically for RE, is not feasible within the confines of this thesis. Similarly, analysing the depth of the work undertaken by Spiritual Ecumenists, such as Couturier or Walter Kasper, is not possible insofar as it is not directly relevant to RE.

This study draws on the most up to date scholarly research available on RE, with the awareness, however, that there are a number of major volumes on RE still forthcoming. RE is a developing methodology, and its long-term impact on the ecumenical scene is, of course, yet to be seen. It is expected that the eventual publication of these volumes will be of immense value to the continuing development of RE. As such, future research will need to be undertaken to analyse these texts. One key limitation of the current research, therefore, is that it can only draw on the material currently available. The present study focuses specifically on defining and grounding RE within the broader Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, and the value RE has for renewing the Ecumenical

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<sup>270</sup> The South Australian Council of Churches (SACC) is doing excellent work in this area, with very positive results. See the SACC website for a listing of their Receptive Ecumenism initiatives: [http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en\\_receptive+ecumenism](http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_receptive+ecumenism)

Movement. As such, any discussion of RE's presumed long-term contribution must be left for future study. Finally, this exploration is conducted from a specifically Catholic ecumenical standpoint which leaves to other explorations the developments that have occurred in other Christian churches in this regard.<sup>271</sup>

A note on the use of capitalisation of the word "church" is necessary. In the following work, references to the eschatological Church of Christ are capitalised. So any reference to Christ's Church, above and beyond denominational borders, receives a capital C. Church is also capitalised if the full name of the church in question is used, such as the Catholic Church, or the Uniting Church. However, reference to church in general does not receive capitalisation.

### **1.8. Outline of Chapters**

The argument of this thesis is that RE is best interpreted as part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. To undertake this proposal, each chapter takes up one of the following key questions: What is RE? How is it grounded in SE? What is the significance of the two approaches emphasising the spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions of ecumenical engagement? How are Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism complementary? And finally, what is RE's feasibility and significance for the future of ecumenism?

Seeking to define RE, Chapter Two examines the primary source material available on RE. Firstly, we discuss RE as a response to the call for ecumenical renewal. The second section considers Murray's presentation of RE, focusing on RE's characteristics, aims, and contribution to the field. After investigating his conception of Receptive Ecumenism, we move on to analyse how others conceptualise and understand RE. This is undertaken via a thematic analysis of

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<sup>271</sup> Throughout this thesis, the word "Catholic" is used specifically to refer to Catholic theology. It is not used in the broader sense of "catholic" as universal.

the articles in the major RE volume. The intention here is to highlight any cohesive threads within Receptive Ecumenism, and also, conversely, any areas of confusion or contradiction between how different contributors approach RE.

Finally, the chapter offers a critique of RE, analysing areas in which the Receptive Ecumenical project needs greater structure and criteria. One critique is the need to place RE in context.

This point leads into the third chapter, which focuses on the question: What is RE's theological grounding and context? This chapter aims to place RE in context with the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. As such, it offers a hermeneutics of SE. The key influences on RE are discussed in chronological order. We examine the roots of RE in Couturier; Congar as a forerunner to RE; the influence of Vatican II; how *Ut Unum Sint* lays the groundwork for RE; the significance of Kasper's SE; and finally, Margaret O'Gara's focus on the ecumenical exchange of gifts. A conjecture is made that Couturier, Congar, John Paul II, Kasper, and O'Gara can be grouped together and defined as Spiritual Ecumenists. From this theological background, we draw out four key characteristics of SE: its pneumatological basis; the intertwined notions of the Church as pilgrim and ecumenism as interior conversion; the concept of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts; and finally, its emphasis on the spiritual, affective, and virtuous aspects of ecumenism. We then grapple with the argument that, in light of these significant connections, RE is simply another name for SE. Against this assertion, it is proposed that RE is a dynamic development of SE, which develops SE in a distinctive manner. The last section of the chapter appraises the importance of SE for the modern Ecumenical Movement.

The importance of seeing ecumenism as a virtuous exercise leads into Chapter Four. This chapter centres on the significance of the spiritual, virtuous,

and affective elements of ecumenism. Consideration of these dimensions of ecumenism is essential in order to balance out the more traditional focus on the theological and practical levels of ecumenism. The chapter focuses on the virtues of humility and hope, and how they underpin Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. The first section outlines how humility forms the basis for other virtues, such as hope. Next, the way that hope is itself an act of humility is considered. Finally, a proposal for hopeful humility as a virtue for ecumenism is offered. This section addresses an understanding of conversion as intrinsically an act of humility and hope. It traces how these two virtues act to guide the Ecumenical Movement, and are given expression in Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. Finally, we discuss the significance of emphasising the spiritual and affective aspects of ecumenism within the Ecumenical Movement. Ecumenism is primarily a spiritual undertaking, and explicating these dimensions is vital for the future of ecumenism.

Drawing on the arguments outlined in the previous chapters, Chapter Five considers how the relationship between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism is dynamic; in other words, how they enrich each other. First, it is argued that not only is RE best understood within the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, but that it is a valuable development of SE. Here, a key assessment is given of how RE enriches Spiritual Ecumenism, reflecting on three key areas: RE's focus on institutional and structural conversion; its emphasis upon learning as deepening one facet of the ecumenical exchange of gifts; and RE's appeal and accessibility, which acts to push aspects of SE into the foreground. The question of whether these distinctions are significant enough to require considering RE as fundamentally separate from SE is raised, and refuted. The second part of the chapter focuses on three key areas where RE still requires further development

from SE: SE's Christological basis; its pneumatological foundation; and its concept of the ecumenical exchange of gifts. The final section proposes that RE is a reception of the key principles of SE. In this light, RE is a valuable development and application of Spiritual Ecumenism.

Maintaining the interpretation of RE as a type of SE, Chapter Six addresses RE's potential and effectiveness as an ecumenical strategy. Firstly, we examine how RE is capable of responding to some of the key challenges facing the Ecumenical Movement today: the "ecumenical winter," pluralism, the problem of identity, and the question of full visible unity. Having ascertained RE's ability to navigate these challenges, we turn to analyse the four major implementations of RE to date: the RE international conferences; the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*; ARCIC III; and Receptive Ecumenism in Australia. After evaluating the ways in which RE has been applied, and their relative successes and drawbacks, we address challenges that need to be overcome for RE to be successfully implemented. We then reflect on the import of RE for the future of the Ecumenical Movement.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the key points and results of our investigation into the relationship between Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism. Drawing together the arguments discussed throughout the thesis, we propose seven critical reflections on the significance of the dynamic between RE and SE. We conclude by looking to the future, and addressing the value of Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism for the Ecumenical Movement, especially in regards to the need to tap into the spiritual and affective levels of ecumenical engagement.



## **Chapter 2: Ecumenism of the Heart: Defining Receptive Ecumenism**

### **2.1. What is Receptive Ecumenism?**

The starting point for our investigation is to probe Receptive Ecumenism's primary source material.<sup>1</sup> First, we will consider the call for ecumenical renewal as RE's background context. We then turn to investigate Murray's conception of RE, its development, aims and distinctive features. Third, as RE is a collaborative endeavour, we offer a critical analysis of the RE volume. Finally, significant themes and tensions arising from this material will be examined. The intention is to highlight key themes within RE, and also, conversely, to uncover any areas of confusion or weakness.

### **2.2. Receptive Ecumenism and Calls for Ecumenical Renewal**

There is no shortage of evidence to support a negative appraisal of the current ecumenical situation. Over the last few decades, the Ecumenical Movement has been shrouded by a perception of stagnation. Alarm over the "ecumenical crisis" or the "ecumenical winter" can be traced at least as far back as the early 1990s. Jon Nilson paints a bleak picture of the ecumenical situation in 1995:

Our time has been called the 'ecumenical winter.' The hopes and enthusiasms that sprang up in the wake of Roman Catholicism's embrace of the ecumenical movement at Vatican II have faded. In some quarters, they have completely died out.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in Chapter One, material by Paul Murray (as the initiator of Receptive Ecumenism) and articles published in the RE volume (edited by Murray), are considered primary source material. All other resources are considered to be secondary material.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary: Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Future* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995), v.

Ecumenical decline is compounded by the retirement of “seasoned veterans of ecumenism,” and the lack of replacements “who are prepared and eager to carry on the work.”<sup>3</sup> The loss of ecumenical interest in younger generations is influenced by their view that “ecumenism is very old and unexciting news.”<sup>4</sup> The next generation appears more interested in non-Western theology, inter-faith dialogue, and working for justice.<sup>5</sup> This is problematic, because ecumenism is unlikely to have much of a future, unless it can capture the interest of the next generation.

Nilson is also critical of the Catholic tradition, arguing that although the Catholic Church continues to make “declarations of irrevocable commitment” to ecumenism, they “still do not do all that they can do and all that they must do to substantiate their words.”<sup>6</sup> He considers the decline of the Ecumenical Movement to be fuelled by a lack of interest and commitment, at both lay and official levels, and places a significant amount of blame on the Catholic Church. “If this is ecumenical winter,” he insists, “Roman Catholic creativity and courage have done little to hasten the coming of spring.”<sup>7</sup> From Nilson’s now twenty-year old perspective, the future of the Ecumenical Movement appears rather bleak.

Much the same sentiment is expressed by Harding Meyer in his important book of 1999. He points out that discussions over the ecumenical crisis have been going on for a long time.<sup>8</sup> He argues that this crisis should not be downplayed, and that “signs of a deterioration of the ecumenical urgency are immense.”<sup>9</sup> Meyer’s overview of the ecumenical milieu at the end of the 1990s is startlingly reminiscent of today’s situation. He points to declining interest in ecumenism,

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<sup>3</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, v.

<sup>4</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, v.

<sup>5</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, v.

<sup>6</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, vi.

<sup>7</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, vi.

<sup>8</sup> Harding Meyer, *That All May Be One: Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, trans. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 151.

<sup>9</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 151.

confusion or uncertainty over what direction ecumenism should take, loss of motivation, and lack of regard for the importance of ecumenical achievements.<sup>10</sup> He warns of an increase in “resistance” and “reservation” against ecumenism.<sup>11</sup>

Drawing on the 1994 Strasbourg paper, *Crisis and Challenge of the Ecumenical Movement*, Meyer describes a number of militating factors behind this negative situation.<sup>12</sup> One of the major causes of ecumenical decline, according to the Strasbourg report, is a general attitude of complacency and content over ecumenical achievements.<sup>13</sup> The fact that ecumenism has generally achieved “peaceful and cooperative coexistence” means that there is little driving urgency to push for more.<sup>14</sup> Of course, as Meyer says, stopping at the point of friendly cooperation devalues the ecumenical aim, which is no less than Christ’s vision of unity.<sup>15</sup> Meyer’s argument centres on the need to clearly define the aim of ecumenism. The goal of ecumenism is not simply the establishment of friendly relations. Rather, it is the Christological imperative that “they may all be one,” with all of its eschatological overtones. Thus, Meyer seeks to counter “present tendencies toward an erosion, disintegration, or reduction of the determination of the ecumenical aim,” by reasserting that “the aim of the ecumenical movement is the visible unity of the church.”<sup>16</sup>

However, the fact that the Ecumenical Movement is *still* in crisis is borne out by many ecumenists today. In a 2009 publication, Douglas Koskela states that: “In the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ecumenical movement finds itself at an impasse.”<sup>17</sup> He attests that it “appears to many to have lost momentum.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 151-152.

<sup>11</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 151-152.

<sup>12</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

<sup>13</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

<sup>14</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

<sup>15</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

<sup>16</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas M. Koskela, *Ecclesiality and Ecumenism: Yves Congar and the Road to Unity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), 9.

On a more positive note, one of the most important evaluations of the Ecumenical Movement to date is from Kasper, published in 2009.<sup>19</sup> In a counter to the prevailing trend towards negativity, Kasper offers an inspiring account of how much the Ecumenical Movement has already achieved.<sup>20</sup> He asserts, however, that ecumenical work is far from finished.

Kasper also acknowledges that the contemporary milieu is a challenging context for ecumenism. He explains that the “original enthusiasm has given way to new sobriety; questions about the ecumenical methods and the achievements of the past decades, and doubts about the future, are being expressed.”<sup>21</sup> As such, he urges the need “to undertake a fresh and unprecedented effort to harvest the rich results of some of the dialogues...and identify the remaining tasks.”<sup>22</sup> However, while acknowledging that the Ecumenical Movement faces challenges in the contemporary context, Kasper positively emphasises that “There is no reason to be discouraged or frustrated, or to speak of an ‘ecumenical winter.’”<sup>23</sup> He goes on, asserting that:

We have achieved more than we could have imagined or dreamed forty years ago. Yet we must also admit, realistically, that we have not yet reached the goal of our ecumenical pilgrimage, but are still at an intermediate stage.<sup>24</sup>

The present moment, Kasper believes, is the time to ask: “Where are we? What has been achieved? What has still to be done? Where *can* we, and where *should* we, move ahead?”<sup>25</sup>

Avis writes in a similar vein in his significant 2010 book. He explains that there is widespread recognition that “The ecumenical movement is ripe for reform

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<sup>18</sup> Koskela, *Ecclesiality and Ecumenism*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*.

<sup>20</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 3.

and renewal. Its theology needs to be reinvigorated and reshaped. Its bureaucracy deserves to be streamlined and refocused.”<sup>26</sup> He observes that the once exciting Ecumenical Movement now seems “rather humdrum” and “dreary.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, “there is at the present time much uncertainty, doubt and heart-searching about the future of ecumenism, the search for visible unity, coupled with real scepticism about the value of investing resources in ecumenical activity.”<sup>28</sup> Ecumenical reform is needed, “but what direction should this renewal and reform take?”<sup>29</sup> He argues that ecumenism needs to grapple with diversity and identity.<sup>30</sup> It must also integrate mission and unity, and display “greater realism” about unity, and how to achieve it.<sup>31</sup> He affirms that, above all, maintaining relations with each other should be undertaken out of love.<sup>32</sup> Avis also draws attention to a certain lack of spiritual depth within contemporary ecumenism, explaining that “Many church leaders and theologians saw the ecumenical movement as a new work of the Holy Spirit, but now it appears all too human.”<sup>33</sup>

Questions over the future of the Ecumenical Movement also form the focus of an important new work by Kinnamon, published in 2014.<sup>34</sup> Kinnamon directly addresses the question of whether or not ecumenism has a “future,” arguing that “it is not clear” that the “ecumenical impulse...will figure prominently in the church of the twenty-first century.”<sup>35</sup> In another article, Kinnamon states: “To put it bluntly, I believe that the ecumenical movement is in

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<sup>26</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, vii.

<sup>27</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, vii.

<sup>28</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, vii.

<sup>29</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, viii.

<sup>30</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, viii.

<sup>31</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, ix.

<sup>32</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, ix.

<sup>33</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, vii.

<sup>34</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?*

<sup>35</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 2.

danger of losing its way in the early years of the 21st century.”<sup>36</sup> As such, he argues that ecumenism requires renewal, if it is to survive.<sup>37</sup> In particular, he names “four manifestations of weakness in the movement.”<sup>38</sup> First, “Loss of commitment among church leaders to the goal of Christianity unity.” Second, “Divisions and other signs of weakness within the ecumenically supportive churches.” Third, “An increasing split between two sets of ecumenical priorities.” And fourth, “Diminishment of key instruments of the ecumenical movement, including councils of churches.”<sup>39</sup>

He then explains “two cardiac-type responses” to these problems.<sup>40</sup> The first is “Renewed emphasis on spiritual ecumenism.”<sup>41</sup> Kinnamon is critical of an over-emphasis on practical ecumenism, at the expense of SE:

The ecumenical movement, in my experience, has become so preoccupied with doing – conferences, committees, dialogues, reports – that it feels like business as usual rather than something Spirit-led... This emphasis on prayer has been articulated by many ecumenical leaders and gatherings.<sup>42</sup>

This sentiment evokes what Kasper has also been arguing, that ecumenism is fundamentally spiritual. The second remedy Kinnamon proposes is “Renewed interest and commitment among the laity.”<sup>43</sup> He insists that we must “remember that the ecumenical movement began as a lay enterprise.”<sup>44</sup> As such, “if ecumenism is to be revitalized, then it cannot be left for denominational specialists and theological experts to do on behalf of the church.”<sup>45</sup> In

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Kinnamon, “New Contours of Ecumenism,” *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 1 (2014): 18.

<sup>37</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 6.

<sup>38</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 147.

<sup>39</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 147-152.

<sup>40</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 152.

<sup>41</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 152.

<sup>42</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 153.

<sup>43</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 154.

<sup>44</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 154.

<sup>45</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 154.

Kinnamon's expert opinion, the future of the Ecumenical Movement depends on SE and lay participation.

This brief discussion of different assessments of the Ecumenical Movement, from the 1990s up until the present, highlights that claims about the "ecumenical crisis" or "winter" have characterised ecumenism for decades. Ecumenical enthusiasm and interest has generally declined since the high point of the 1960s and 1970s. However, there is certainly no call for the Ecumenical Movement to be abandoned. As John Paul II constantly reiterated, the Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism is irrevocable.<sup>46</sup> So much has already been achieved through the Ecumenical Movement. It is difficult, now, to point towards a concrete direction or goal for further development. Ecumenism has stalled, and lacks a clear direction in which to move forwards. The ultimate goal of full visible unity seems even further out of reach than it did in the 1960s. Kasper's question is particularly pertinent: "Where *can* we, and where *should* we, move ahead?"<sup>47</sup> While the Ecumenical Movement is certainly not without hope, it is floundering. The current time is therefore characterised by a cry for renewal and a search for new approaches to ecumenism.

Receptive Ecumenism has emerged out of this call for renewal, as an approach specifically tailored to the current ecumenical situation. As Murray explains, "Receptive Ecumenism is a strategy devised to respond to the contemporary ecumenical context."<sup>48</sup> In light of Kasper's evaluation of the current time as an "intermediate" period, Murray proposes RE as "not simply as a compensatory second-best suited to the present interim situation, but as the

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<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Paul D. Murray and Mathew Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church: Theological and Sociological Reflections on *Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*," in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian B. Scharen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 144.

essential way forwards towards the anticipated goal of organic structural unity.”<sup>49</sup>

Designed to reignite ecumenical momentum, it has the potential to provide the Ecumenical Movement with new direction and energy. Avis also attests to this:

I believe that it is not putting it too strongly to say that RE has revolutionary potential. As an idea and an agenda it strikes deep into ecumenical motivation and stands prevailing ecumenical attitudes on their head.<sup>50</sup>

This call for renewal, therefore, forms the background to RE’s development. We must turn now to investigate RE’s development and aims.

### **2.3. Paul Murray’s Vision of Receptive Ecumenism**

RE was launched in 2006 with the international colloquium “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism,” held at Durham University. It was the first of three international conferences, and received highly positive feedback.<sup>51</sup> Murray reports that the conference was variously described as “‘historic,’ ‘groundbreaking’” and “‘the most significant academic theological event in the UK in living memory.’”<sup>52</sup> The intent of all three RE conferences was to reignite the ecumenical scene by asking the question: what can we learn or receive from others, instead of what others must learn or take from us?<sup>53</sup> The first conference aimed “to articulate and scrutinize the basic idea and to test it out” in relation to Catholicism.<sup>54</sup> The second conference, “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to Be Church Together,” held at Durham University in 2009, addressed RE in relation to Christianity more broadly.<sup>55</sup> The third (and intended to be final) conference,

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<sup>49</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 15.

<sup>50</sup> Avis, “Are We Receiving ‘Receptive Ecumenism?’” 225.

<sup>51</sup> Murray, “Preface,” x.

<sup>52</sup> Murray, “Preface,” x.

<sup>53</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 12.

<sup>54</sup> Paul D. Murray and Andrea L. Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” in *Unity in Process: Reflections on Ecumenism*, ed. Clive Barrett (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2012), 80.

<sup>55</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 80.



“Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective: Ecclesial Learning in Context,” held at Fairfield University, Connecticut, in June 2014, aimed to consider RE in a global context.

Alongside the conferences, which have been primarily academic in orientation, there is also an ongoing research project on applying RE to a particular context, the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*, studying churches in the North East of England.<sup>56</sup> Thus, almost a decade since its inception, RE has encompassed three major international conferences, hundreds of participants from countries around the world, hundreds of papers, a major practical initiative, and one main volume, although in coming years, that number should increase to four major volumes.<sup>57</sup>

However, RE is still a developing process. RE has clearly impacted upon the contemporary ecumenical scene to some extent, although its place within ecumenism is, of course, still to be seen. But how was RE initially developed? What conception does RE’s main driver, Murray, have of this ecumenical approach? This section will analyse Murray’s development of RE, his conception of its aims and contributions to ecumenism, and his assessment of its distinctive features.

### **2.3.1. Development of Receptive Ecumenism**

In considering formative factors on RE’s development, six influences are of key relevance: (1) Murray’s awareness that the Ecumenical Movement requires a fresh ecumenical approach; (2) the American idealist-pragmatist tradition, especially the thought of Nicholas Rescher; (3) influences from Catholic ecumenical theology, particularly Congar, Vatican II, and John Paul II’s *Ut Unum*

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<sup>56</sup> This project is discussed in detail in Chapter Six, section 6.3.2.

<sup>57</sup> Murray intends to publish a volume of selected papers from each conference. The volumes will be published by Oxford UP. Work on the second conference volume is currently ongoing, while work on the third conference volume has just begun. The fourth RE volume will focus on the *RE&LC* project.

*Sint*; (4) Spiritual Ecumenism; (5) Scriptural Reasoning; and (6), Ignatian spirituality. Each of these influences will be analysed in turn.

First, Murray's proposal for a fresh ecumenical approach stems from his conviction that a new methodology is necessary, given the onset of a "long ecumenical winter."<sup>58</sup> The existence of ecumenical stagnation is frequently referred to in contemporary ecumenism, as already discussed. In comparison to the decades immediately following Vatican II, which witnessed "an enormous amount of ecumenical energy, goodwill, and optimism," ecumenical fervour has considerably lessened.<sup>59</sup> Murray is a proponent of the existence of an ecumenical crisis, as he reflects,

the urgent hope for foreseeable structural unity – the mainstay of so much committed ecumenical activity from the late 1960s, throughout the 1970s and even into the 1980s – appears to have run out of steam.<sup>60</sup>

He suggests a number of reasons for this, including "immense disappointment" caused by the "failure of high-profile initiatives," such as the 1969 and 1972 Church of England-Methodist unity schemes, and the negativity of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith during the first stage of ARCIC.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, he points to a divide between the commitment of grassroots ecumenists and the official levels of the Catholic Church. He believes that frustration with slow progress on doctrinal and structural unity has led to increased focus on more immediately practical topics, such as mission.<sup>62</sup> Murray also emphasises a trend toward increasingly insular ecclesiological communities, as the postmodern milieu causes some communities to adopt "a more inward-looking, preservationist mentality."<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, this attempt to strengthen

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<sup>58</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>59</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>60</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>61</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>62</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 10.

<sup>63</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 11.

their respective identities often comes at the expense of the ecumenical spirit.<sup>64</sup> However, Murray considers that, rather than giving up on the ecumenical initiative, ecumenism now has an opportunity to become more realistic. He argues that the early post-conciliar decades may have been “excessively and prematurely” optimistic.<sup>65</sup> As such, he stresses that “the aspiration for programmed structural unity in the short-medium term is simply unrealistic.”<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, Murray justifies the need for a fresh ecumenical methodology on the perception of the current context as one of stagnation, where ecumenical progress has plateaued. However, he considers that the contemporary milieu also represents an opportunity for achieving realistic ecumenical growth. Because full visible unity is not a workable immediate goal at this point in the Ecumenical Movement, it is time for an ecumenism “suited to the interim situation.”<sup>67</sup> He argues that the current context should be perceived not as a “problematic interim” but “more as a long-term learning opportunity” for “slow and difficult growth in maturity.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, one of the significant influences on Murray’s development of RE is his critical awareness of the current ecumenical milieu. RE is an attempt to respond to a largely negative situation in a positive, constructive way. However, what influences have impacted the shape of RE as a response to ecumenical stagnation?

A second formative factor on RE’s development is the American pragmatist tradition, especially as it has influenced Murray’s theological thinking. Murray’s first book, *Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective*

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<sup>64</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 11.

<sup>65</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>66</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>67</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>68</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

(2004) places a high value on Rescher's pragmatist-idealist method.<sup>69</sup> In relation to RE, he explains:

In this regard, it is notable that the key thinking at work in the Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning project has been shaped, in no small part, through just such close engagement with the broader, classical, pragmatist tradition; particularly so as this is mediated and creatively refashioned in the work of...Nicholas Rescher, and what he has come to refer to as his characteristic stance of pragmatic idealism.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, Rescher's "pragmatic idealism" was an important developmental influence on RE. In fact, Murray states that his book, *Reason, Truth and Theology* can be seen as outlining the methodological and epistemological principles for RE.<sup>71</sup> RE's pragmatist underpinning is illustrated in Murray's emphasis on the significance of context. Context is highly important, as he elucidates, "for Rescher the rational thing to do is to take one's situatedness seriously whilst continually opening it out to testing against what else there is and what else comes to light."<sup>72</sup> This is precisely what RE attempts to do. Murray attests that for Rescher, truth is something that we "can assume ourselves to be articulating in part but which inevitably eludes us in *toto*," which means that our attitude towards truth is one of "aspiration rather than possession."<sup>73</sup> Therefore, while recognising the pluralistic context of Christianity, and postmodern indeterminacy, Murray favours Rescher's pragmatist-idealist approach to truth.

Here, instead of looking at Truth from a modern perspective as one great, objective, static, transcendent, overarching entity, truth is instead found through a "recursive, expansive, self-critical" process.<sup>74</sup> What a community holds to be true

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<sup>69</sup> See Paul D. Murray, *Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004). The book is a reworking of his doctoral dissertation, and serves to outline some of the key influences on Murray's own approach.

<sup>70</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 7-8.

<sup>71</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 80.

<sup>72</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 8.

<sup>73</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 8.

<sup>74</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 8.

must constantly be challenged with “fresh understanding” from others, undertaken through a self-critical process to determine whether it is “still cogent” or whether the community requires “refreshment and renewal.”<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the transformative renewal is undertaken “in light of what can be appropriately received.”<sup>76</sup> This rather eschatological understanding of truth as developing, rather than fully achieved, and the need for self-critical engagement with others, can be considered the backbone of RE.

Furthermore, Murray finds that Rescher’s approach is “helpfully suggestive here of what might be referred to as a *committed pluralist* position.”<sup>77</sup> This position takes “the pluralist reality of the world” seriously as fact, and therefore requires “commitment” to “the need to negotiate this appropriately.”<sup>78</sup> The committed pluralist approach also “makes a claim precisely for the legitimacy and rationality of particular rooted commitment in this context,” and how this legitimate diversity may be “appropriately lived.”<sup>79</sup> Because of this attitude towards pluralism, Murray believes that Rescher’s “instincts” are “uniquely well-suited to the contemporary Christian ecumenical context and to indicating a constructive way forwards in a difficult phase of the ecumenical journey.”<sup>80</sup> For example, from Rescher’s approach to diversity, it follows that the legitimacy of one’s ecclesial identity is not compromised by recognising the validity of another’s ecclesial identity. In fact, if plurality is legitimate, and no one possesses the totality of truth, then ecumenism becomes a process of self-critical learning and renewal. In this light, Murray’s recognition of the relevance of applying this approach to the ecumenical sphere becomes clear.

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<sup>75</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

<sup>76</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

<sup>77</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

<sup>78</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

<sup>79</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

<sup>80</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 8.

Certainly, pluralism is one of the key challenges facing the Ecumenical Movement. By grounding RE within Rescher's pragmatist idealism, and advocating the committed pluralist approach, the hope is that RE may be able to navigate the pluralistic context facing ecumenism without succumbing to the pitfalls of postmodern relativism.<sup>81</sup> Rescher's approach to truth "as being about the integral refreshment and renewal of what one/one's community already has in the light of what can be appropriately received," is a highly significant influence on Murray's development of RE as an ecumenical approach.<sup>82</sup>

RE was also strongly influenced by the broader context of Catholic ecumenical theology. Of especial influence is the work of Yves Congar, Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism*, and John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint*. Murray refers to Congar's work "as representing a decisive forerunner of receptive ecumenism."<sup>83</sup> He explains that Congar "can be seen to have anticipated and, in many cases, to have significantly developed the key principles that come to articulation in Receptive Ecumenism."<sup>84</sup> Murray lists these as being an unremitting emphasis on full visible unity as the goal of ecumenism, combined with the recognition of the need to acknowledge the concrete realities and distinctiveness of churches.<sup>85</sup> This dual focus goes along with an awareness that it is the responsibility of each church to consider their need for reform and continuing conversion.<sup>86</sup>

He sees Congar as anticipating one of RE's key themes in what he considers his recognition that "critical and constructive modes of theological analysis," must be balanced with "pragmatic-organizational" and empirical

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<sup>81</sup> RE's effectiveness in engaging with the challenge of pluralism will be analysed in detail in Chapter Six, section 6.2.2.

<sup>82</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 8.

<sup>83</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity in the Work of Yves Congar: *Ressourcement*, Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Reform," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 3 (2011): 284.

<sup>84</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 301.

<sup>85</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 301.

<sup>86</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 301.

methods.<sup>87</sup> Murray asserts that Congar advocates a type of return ecumenism, but one where the Catholic Church itself learns and is changed by the process of ecumenical engagement.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, RE reiterates Congar's emphasis on reform and conversion, and what he calls his "plenitudinous" understanding of truth; that our articulation of truth will always be only in part.<sup>89</sup> The connection between Congar's ecumenical work and RE is clear.

Murray explains that the key ideas of RE were developed in nascent form in a module he taught at Durham University.<sup>90</sup> However, he elucidates that,

the continuing preparation for the module provided ample further opportunity to come to appreciate just how well this basic principle coheres both with the teaching of Vatican II on ecumenism...and with Pope John Paul II's remarkable encyclical...*Ut Unum Sint*.<sup>91</sup>

The links between RE and these two key texts can be seen as more than merely "cohering." In another article, Murray takes care to recognise RE's "lineage" from Vatican II, saying, "it is worth pausing to situate Receptive Ecumenism clearly in the stream of Vatican II teaching on ecumenism."<sup>92</sup> As specific examples, he refers to the vitally important statement in *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*) that the church of Christ subsists within the Catholic Church.<sup>93</sup> He presents a nuanced understanding of this key paragraph, reiterating that with this acknowledgement, the Church recognises that there are opportunities for learning from other Christian communities.<sup>94</sup> However, this is attested to without "a complete relinquishing of there being something distinctive about the Catholic Church."<sup>95</sup> He points out that both *LG* and *UR* are "clear that whilst there might be elements of the church in

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<sup>87</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 287-288.

<sup>88</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 291-292.

<sup>89</sup> Murray, "Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity," 297-298.

<sup>90</sup> For more details, see Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 84.

<sup>91</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 84-85.

<sup>92</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 82.

<sup>93</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 84-85.

<sup>94</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.

<sup>95</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.

other traditions,” it is the Catholic Church in which unity with Christ

“‘subsists...as something she can never lose’ (*UR*, 4).”<sup>96</sup> As such, Murray

explains that,

Here, then, Catholicism is refreshing its self-understanding in a way that both recognises the dignity of other traditions and the real potential for appropriate Catholic learning from them whilst also continuing to maintain— as do, analogously, many other traditions in their own regard and in their own way—what Catholicism understands to be its own distinctive gifts.<sup>97</sup>

With this statement, Murray aims to highlight the manner in which *UR* manages to gracefully navigate around tensions surrounding issues of ecclesial identity and ecumenism.

*UR* professes the church’s real need for renewal and conversion, but without compromising its integrity. For, as *UR* proclaims, “Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church.”<sup>98</sup> This understanding forms the essence of RE. RE does not seek the elimination of differences, but rather that, through learning from others, a tradition may become more deeply itself.<sup>99</sup> Or in other words, RE seeks interior conversion, which is central to *UR*.<sup>100</sup>

Murray firmly attests, therefore, that the principles of Receptive Ecumenical learning are supported by “even a relatively cautious reading” of Vatican II.<sup>101</sup> He insists that “Vatican II maintains an appropriate orientation to receptive ecumenical learning on Catholicism’s behalf” and that Vatican II unequivocally presents that the Catholic Church “is itself engaged on a continuing

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<sup>96</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.

<sup>97</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.

<sup>98</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15-16.

<sup>100</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 85.



story of reform, growth, and renewal.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, Murray grounds RE within Vatican II, particularly the ecumenical principles of *UR* and *LG*’s ecclesiological teachings about the church’s pilgrim nature.<sup>103</sup>

The second key Catholic ecumenical text influencing RE is John Paul II’s encyclical *UUS*. Murray describes John Paul II’s call for a reimagining of the Petrine ministry as “an invitation which itself exemplifies the strategy and virtues of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>104</sup> Another significant aspect of *UUS* that impacts on RE is John Paul II’s focus on ecumenism as more than just an intellectual endeavour, as “not simply an exchange of ideas,” but also “an exchange of gifts.”<sup>105</sup> This emphasis on a dialogue of love *and* truth is an affirmation of *UR*’s statement that: “In all things let charity prevail.”<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, John Paul II reaffirms *UR*’s emphasis on the existence of “elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian Communities,” a fact which allows for genuine ecumenical learning opportunities and engagement.<sup>107</sup> *UUS* even explains that “certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized” in other Christian communities.<sup>108</sup> This recognition forms the theological basis for RE’s notion of ecclesial learning.

John Paul II further stresses that, “To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them.”<sup>109</sup> However, in continuity with *UR*, *UUS* carefully demarcates that it is in the Catholic Church where “elements” of the Church of Christ “exist,

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<sup>102</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 85.

<sup>103</sup> Vatican II, “Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), no. 48. Hereafter *LG*.

<sup>104</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 13.

<sup>105</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 28.

<sup>106</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 11.

<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 14.

<sup>109</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 11.

found in their fullness, and without this fullness, in the other Communities.”<sup>110</sup>

This understanding reiterates *UR*'s careful explanation of how the Catholic Church can undertake ecumenism without conceding its ecclesial identity. *UR* and *UUS* advocate an ecumenism of conversion, not one of compromise. The same can be said of *RE*. Thus, Vatican II and *UUS* form the theological context out of which *RE* arises. As Murray explains, the principles of Vatican II “have been of fundamental importance in the shaping of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>111</sup> This fact is also acknowledged by Avis, as he remarks, “*RE* could not flourish except on the basis of all that Vatican II said about ecumenism and all that Pope John Paul II said in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).”<sup>112</sup>

The links between *RE*, *UR* and *UUS* are also of relevance in discerning the influence of Spiritual Ecumenism on *RE*. *UR* and *UUS* are key Spiritual Ecumenical texts.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, *UR* espouses Spiritual Ecumenism as its “soul.”<sup>114</sup> *UR* also focuses on the need for interior conversion, which is at the heart of *SE*. Moreover, many of the principles initiated in *UR* are further developed in *UUS*. Among many important points, *UUS* emphasises the concept of the ecumenical gift exchange, which is a core element of *SE*. However, the categorisation and characteristics of *SE* will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.<sup>115</sup> For now, the focus is on *SE* in relation to Murray's initial development of *RE*.

In his semi-autobiographical account of *RE*'s origins, co-authored with Andrea Murray, Murray relates a “final decisive event” in the development of *RE* when, during a day conference in 2003, Rowan Williams and Walter Kasper

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<sup>110</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 14.

<sup>111</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 85.

<sup>112</sup> Avis, “Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?” 234.

<sup>113</sup> *UR* and *UUS* will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4., respectively.

<sup>114</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>115</sup> The next chapter focuses on rediscovering Spiritual Ecumenism, discussing its definition, key proponents, and main characteristics.

discussed their “shared vision of Spiritual Ecumenism.”<sup>116</sup> His statement of the impact this conference had on RE’s development is vital to understanding RE, and thus worth quoting at length:

Spiritual Ecumenism articulated precisely the vision of receptive ecumenical hospitality and fruitfulness... The one caveat was that Spiritual Ecumenism could potentially be heard as speaking of the need for receptive learning purely at the level of one’s personal spirituality or, if extended to the collective level at all, to the need for such learning merely in relation to respective spiritual and liturgical traditions. If so, this would be to leave out of account the crucial need also for deep structural, institutional learning from each other in relation to such things as respective processes and structures of decision-making.<sup>117</sup>

Murray’s explanation pinpoints the difference between RE and SE as primarily one of scope. Murray advocates for a type of Spiritual Ecumenism with more than a “personal” emphasis; it must extend toward structural and ecclesial conversion.

Therefore, as he explains,

Spiritual Ecumenism, while absolutely right in its basic orientation, appeared to be in need of being taken forward in a more obviously institutional direction. In order to emphasize this, in the process of preparing for the first international research colloquium... that was to explore this strategy and concern, the decision was taken to refer to Receptive Ecumenism rather than to Spiritual Ecumenism.<sup>118</sup>

Here, again, the key point is that of scope. For Murray, a fresh ecumenical methodology must be able to address more than individual spirituality. The focus of his ecumenical approach is on institutional and structural transformation.

However, this is identified as the singular difference between Murray’s interpretation of Spiritual Ecumenism and RE. Indeed, it is implied that the RE conferences could, very nearly, have been “Spiritual Ecumenism” conferences. If nothing else, SE provided much of the inspiration and “basic orientation” for the

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<sup>116</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

<sup>117</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

<sup>118</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85-86.

development of RE. Moreover, the idea that RE seeks to expand on SE is referred to by Murray more than once. For instance, in the RE volume he writes, “Receptive Ecumenism both resonates with Cardinal Kasper’s and Archbishop Rowan Williams’s joint advocacy of the need for ‘spiritual ecumenism’ and expands upon this by explicitly drawing out the interpersonal and structural-institutional dimensions.”<sup>119</sup> In a paper given at the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2013, he states, “Receptive Ecumenism seeks to reclaim the full radical intent of Couturier’s spiritual ecumenism.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, SE is a highly significant factor in RE’s initial development, and arguably, is also important for its continuing development.

So far, we have discussed several major formative influences upon RE (ecumenical stagnation, Rescher’s pragmatist-idealism, *UR*, *UUS*, and Spiritual Ecumenism). Two other, perhaps less critical, factors also need to be noted: Scriptural Reasoning and Ignatian spirituality.

Murray undertook his doctoral studies at Cambridge University supervised by David Ford, and influenced by Daniel Hardy.<sup>121</sup> It was during this period that he encountered the developing project of Scriptural Reasoning, undertaken by Ford, Hardy, Peter Ochs and Aref Nayed.<sup>122</sup> He explains that although “Receptive Ecumenism came to articulation independently of Scriptural Reasoning” there “was doubtless collateral influence, especially around the handling of particularity and plurality.”<sup>123</sup> This influence comes from the fact that during the time Murray was developing RE’s “operative epistemological commitments and related

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<sup>119</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 15.

<sup>120</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>121</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

<sup>122</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

<sup>123</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

understanding of human rationality,” he was also exposed to the processes of Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>124</sup>

In Murray’s explanation, Scriptural Reasoning is a “version of ‘post-liberalism’” that incorporates the commitment to “take the particularity of Christian practice and understanding seriously” with the awareness of placing “such particularity” under “appropriate expansive scrutiny and potential revision.”<sup>125</sup> A similar emphasis can be seen in RE, in regards to its treatment of pluralism. Murray quotes Dan Hardy’s description of Scriptural Reasoning as “one way of going deeper simultaneously into one’s own faith and into the faith of others through study and mutual mentoring.”<sup>126</sup> With Hardy’s explanation in mind, Murray writes: “In many respects Receptive Ecumenism can be viewed as seeking to do something directly analogous in the intra-Christian context.”<sup>127</sup> This sparks an interesting connection between the two approaches.

The journal, *Modern Theology*, has devoted a special issue to drawing attention to parallels between Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and RE.<sup>128</sup> In relation to RE, Murray writes that:

Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism are all self-consciously postliberal strategies which eschew approaches premised on commonality and the priority of coming to agreement, in favour of taking seriously the particularity and plurality of traditioned commitment.<sup>129</sup>

In light of the connection between them, it is not surprising that Murray considers all three approaches to be “postliberal strategies of committed pluralism.”<sup>130</sup> In RE, this influence is expressed in its concern for an ecumenism that entails

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<sup>124</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

<sup>125</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 82.

<sup>126</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 82.

<sup>127</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 82.

<sup>128</sup> David F. Ford and Frances Clemson, eds., “Special Issue: Interreligious Reading After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>129</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 76.

<sup>130</sup> Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 79.

entering more deeply into one's ecclesial identity (conversion), rather than compromising it. As Murray expresses, the three approaches share "not only a concern to take differing traditioned identities seriously and to speak out of them, but to have them enriched through the very process of also taking another's tradition seriously."<sup>131</sup> The connection between RE and Scriptural Reasoning also affirms the influence of Rescher's pragmatist idealism and approach to pluralism, on both Murray's thought and RE's development.

Finally, Murray describes "another key influence" on RE's development, particularly at the "affective level," as the experience of a set of "Ignatian-inspired Lenten retreats."<sup>132</sup> He explains, "There is a direct link between the emphasis placed in Receptive Ecumenism on continuing conversion – both personal and institutional – as a principle of life rather than diminishment, and our involvement in these guided prayers."<sup>133</sup> It must be noted that Ignatian spirituality places a strong emphasis on humility, which is one of RE's key virtues. He elucidates that the influence of Ignatian prayer can also be seen in "the place accorded within Receptive Ecumenism to the imaginative, the creative, the 'dreaming of dreams' and their critical testing and scrutinizing."<sup>134</sup> The fact that RE operates on affective, as well as intellectual levels, is one of its distinguishing features, which will be discussed further below.

Therefore, to summarise, RE's development was influenced by six key factors. It developed out of awareness of ecumenical inertia, and in particular, the question of how to deal with the pluralistic context now facing ecumenism. Murray's response is to set in place a self-critical, yet simple, ecumenical methodology which allows the church to reflect on what can be learnt from other

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<sup>131</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 79.

<sup>132</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 83.

<sup>133</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 83.

<sup>134</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 83.

Christians. Such a procedure is based upon Rescher's pragmatist idealist sense of truth discoverable by means of a recursive, self-critical process undertaken by engaging with others. It is grounded within what he terms a committed pluralist approach, where difference is approached positively, rather than diluted to reach a type of lowest common denominator consensus. Moreover, RE's theological underpinning is formulated by key Catholic ecumenical sources, particularly *UR* and *UUS*. In conjunction with this, RE was also inspired by the vision of Spiritual Ecumenism, and seeks to expand SE's orientation to include institutional and structural transformation. During his formulation of RE, Murray was also influenced by Scriptural Reasoning, which adds depth to the way RE understands plurality. A final influence is found in Murray's experience of Ignatian spirituality, particularly its emphasis on humility and other affective dimensions. Having thus analysed key factors influencing the development of RE, we must now consider its aims.

### 2.3.2. Aims of Receptive Ecumenism

RE is intended as a realistic approach to ecumenism in light of the current ecumenical situation. Murray is conscious of the magnitude of the challenge posed by the achievement of full structural unity, but does not concede that this means it should be abandoned.<sup>135</sup> In his perspective, the ultimate goal of ecumenism is eschatological.<sup>136</sup> It is not human striving, but rather God's will that will bring about such unity. However, full structural unity must remain the aim of ecumenism.<sup>137</sup> With an acute awareness of our current context, he argues that "The point is to ask what it means to live *now* oriented upon such goals?"<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>136</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>137</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>138</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

Therefore, while RE is an interim measure (which does not itself aim to achieve full visible unity), RE does hold ultimately to the conviction that the goal of ecumenism is nothing less than full visible unity. As Murray stresses, “‘reconciled diversity without structural unity’ can simply never be a sufficient equivalent to the intended unity and catholicity of the church.”<sup>139</sup> As such, RE is a strategy which aims to push the Ecumenical Movement into regaining momentum, in ultimate service towards the final eschatological goal of full structural and institutional unity.

In this respect, he explains, “Receptive Ecumenism is concerned to place at the forefront of the Christian ecumenical agenda the self-critical question, ‘What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?’”<sup>140</sup> The point, he argues, is “that if all were asking and pursuing this question, then all would be moving, albeit somewhat unpredictably, but moving nevertheless, to places where more may, in turn, become possible than appears to be the case at present.”<sup>141</sup> He clarifies that this is “a somewhat ad hoc yet nevertheless systematically tested” process.<sup>142</sup>

Significantly, RE’s self-critical ecclesial learning is carried out “without insisting, although certainly hoping, that these other traditions are also asking themselves the same question.”<sup>143</sup> This is an important feature of RE, as it focuses on ecclesial transformation, rather than doctrinal agreement. Murray maintains that “the primary aim is not the promotion of increased mutual understanding and appreciation *between* traditions but of continuing ecclesial conversion, deepening and expansive growth *within* traditions.”<sup>144</sup> The focus is on interior conversion, in

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<sup>139</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>140</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>141</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>142</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 14.

<sup>143</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>144</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 88.



continuity with *UR*, which states that while Catholics must “be concerned for their separated brethren” however, “their primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself.”<sup>145</sup> RE is in service of this *ad intra*, rather than *ad extra* ecumenism. To put it simply, the aim of RE is transformative conversion, in all ecclesial areas:

Moreover, this required receptive ecclesial learning is envisaged as operating not only in relation to such things as hymnody, spirituality and devotional practices but as extending to doctrinal self-understanding and, even more so, respective structural and organizational-cultural realities.<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, RE’s scope properly extends to all aspects of the church. However, Murray insists that this process of conversion does not compromise ecclesial identities. He stresses that “this much-needed process of ecclesial growth, conversion and maturing through receptive ecumenical learning” is not “a matter of becoming less Catholic but of becoming more Catholic precisely by becoming more appropriately Anglican, more appropriately Lutheran, more appropriately Methodist, more appropriately Orthodox, etc.”<sup>147</sup> This concept of conversion strongly reflects *UR* and *UUS*’s emphases on the elements of the Church of Christ within other Christian traditions which exist for the enrichment of the whole body of Christ.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, while the RE “strategy” is “being modelled in specific relation to the Roman Catholicism,” Murray attests that it is also of “much wider and direct relevance” to Christianity.<sup>149</sup> This broader application was the focus of the second RE conference.

Therefore, the primary aim of RE is transformative conversion via a process of ecclesial learning. Lest this be seen as inferior to ecumenical

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<sup>145</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>146</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 80.

<sup>147</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>148</sup> See Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4. This concept is reiterated in John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 11.

<sup>149</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

approaches with the aim of full visible unity, Murray writes that while “the immediate aims of Receptive Ecumenism might appear relatively modest...it should not...simply be viewed as a lesser option.”<sup>150</sup> Instead, RE aims at the “very core of what is required for any real effective progress to occur.”<sup>151</sup>

Murray goes so far as to argue that: “Receptive Ecumenism is here being understood...as the essential way forwards towards the anticipated goal of organic structural unity.”<sup>152</sup> This is a re-expression of John Paul II’s insistence that, “The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptized.”<sup>153</sup> Therefore, it is Murray’s conviction that RE is not just a desirable new approach to ecumenism, but actually necessary for ecumenical progress.<sup>154</sup> Appraising the current ecumenical situation in a positive manner as being one of “a long-term learning opportunity,”<sup>155</sup> Murray argues that:

The dual conviction is that without this mode of self-critical learning no further substantive progress is possible, whereas with it all kinds of things are already possible which, if pursued, would take each of the traditions to new places wherein further things will become possible.<sup>156</sup>

This is no small aim, and certainly requires RE be given serious consideration.

### **2.3.3. Distinctive Features of Receptive Ecumenism**

After outlining RE’s development and aims, something must be said on its distinctiveness. Is this ecumenical methodology of transformative ecclesial learning actually something new? What sets it apart from other ecumenical approaches? A word, therefore, on some key distinguishing features of RE: (1) RE’s innovation and explication of implicit ecumenical processes; (2) RE’s focus on receiving rather than giving; (3) RE’s Catholic characteristics; (4) RE’s

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<sup>150</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 14.

<sup>151</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>152</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>153</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 77.

<sup>154</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>155</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>156</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 78.

operation on both the affective and intellectual levels of ecumenical activity; and (5), RE's collaborative nature.

Firstly, one of RE's distinctive characteristics is that it purports to highlight what have been largely implicit ecumenical processes. Referring to the title of William James's 1907 book, Murray relates that RE could be considered "A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking."<sup>157</sup> This is because it seeks "to articulate and promote [what] have been features of ecumenical thought and practice and of Catholicism throughout."<sup>158</sup> He clarifies, however, "But, of course, formally naming a way of thinking or proceeding and so drawing it to explicit attention can release its strategic potential and shaping influence in ways previously unforeseen."<sup>159</sup> The fact that RE highlights processes intrinsic to ecumenism can be seen in the approaches taken by some of the contributors to the RE volume, where receptive ecumenical learning is identified as occurring as far back as the 1980s.<sup>160</sup>

This facet of RE supports Murray's argument that Receptive Ecumenical learning is essential to ecumenism. If key elements of RE have already been part of the ecumenical process (albeit implicitly), then RE represents continuity with the Ecumenical Movement, rather than a radical departure from it. If RE is tapping into processes essential to ecumenism as a whole, then RE can be seen as an organic development of ecumenism. In other words, once pointed out, RE may seem immediately obvious; but before being highlighted, it may have been unconsciously assumed, rather than undertaken with critical awareness.

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<sup>157</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>158</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>159</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, Mary Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga - Lessons in Receptive Ecumenical Learning from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bilateral Dialogue Process," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). This point will be canvassed in the next part of this chapter, section 2.4.

Moreover, the fact that RE draws attention to indispensable aspects of the ecumenical endeavour, rather than proposing something entirely new, gives it a higher chance of being accepted and practiced. As Avis observes, if RE were proposing a radical break, rather than continuity, with previous approaches, it would be viewed as a threat.<sup>161</sup> Whilst this is all well and good, RE does need to claim a certain amount of originality, if it is to be considered a fresh ecumenical methodology. What, therefore, is distinctively original in RE?

Murray himself raises the “nagging” question as to whether there is anything “new” in RE.<sup>162</sup> He observes that there are “already shelves groaning under huge volumes of theological writings examining how particular traditions might understand each other better and even learn something from each other.”<sup>163</sup> Even in reference to RE’s specific focus on learning, he admits that RE does “not...claim any particular originality for according a strategic priority to Catholicism’s learning mode.”<sup>164</sup> As ecclesial learning is the key process underpinning RE, how then are we to understand RE’s own distinctive contribution?

Murray recognises that much has been written on ecumenism as a learning opportunity.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, he thinks the real question is why “has it generally led to such slight change in practice?”<sup>166</sup> In relation to the Catholic Church, “What is it that militates against Catholicism being a mature learning community?” And, “how might this situation best be tended to, or ministered to, therapeutically in such a fashion as might help free the ecclesial body of Catholicism for greater flourishing?”<sup>167</sup> Whilst there is, admittedly, an ambiguity here in that Murray

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<sup>161</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 225.

<sup>162</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

<sup>163</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

<sup>164</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 17.

<sup>165</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

<sup>166</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

<sup>167</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

answers the question of RE's originality with other questions, the questions are certainly pertinent. Moreover, RE is implicated as being able to either explore or resolve these quandaries.

Of course, the question of RE's uniqueness is something that can only, as of yet, be partially assessed. For now, fittingly, part of its distinctiveness comes from the fact that RE is essentially a question: What can we learn or receive from others for our own growth? While this question may implicitly underpin ecumenism as a whole, it is asked in a bold and challenging way by RE. Whether RE will ultimately be evaluated as innovative, rather than truly original, remains to be seen. Nevertheless, RE's creative explication of integral aspects of ecumenism is one of its distinctive features.

A second defining characteristic is its focus on receiving instead of giving, on learning rather than teaching. Murray explains, "Here we are dealing with Catholicism in explicitly receptive, learning mode rather than its, perhaps more familiar, teaching, repeating, judging, and defending modes."<sup>168</sup> Evoking *UR*'s emphasis on interior conversion, RE focuses on ecumenism as a transformative process within the church. This shift in attitude, from teaching to learning, is definitive for RE. Murray insists upon RE as a one-sided process, exclusively focused on what one may learn or receive.<sup>169</sup>

Therefore, asking what one's church has to teach or offer others is essentially opposed to RE. Murray explains that one should "take responsibility for their own learning," without "worrying" about the perceived learning requirements of others.<sup>170</sup> He illustrates this attitude with the adage that, "We

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<sup>168</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 17.

<sup>169</sup> As this is a key characteristic of Receptive Ecumenism, Murray reiterates this point more than once. See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12. Also Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 88. And Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

<sup>170</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 88.

cannot change others, we can only change ourselves but changing ourselves will enable change in others.”<sup>171</sup> This is a fundamental attitude shift, characterised by humility and a sense of maturity. He therefore suggests that,

receptive ecumenical learning requires a move away from the presupposition of mutuality – ‘we’ll move if you move’ – to the embrace of a certain unilateral willingness to walk the path of ecclesial conversion for the sake [of] the greater flourishing of one’s own tradition and regardless, to some extent, of whether others are also currently prepared so to do.<sup>172</sup>

RE’s emphasis on learning resonates with Murray’s argument that the current ecumenical milieu calls for a realistic approach, of doing what is possible. Simply put, taking responsibility for one’s own learning is possible, whereas placing requirements on, or guiding, the learning of others is not.

Moreover, it requires a conception of ecumenism as a process of necessary conversion; ecumenism is not undertaken for the benefit of other traditions, but for the enrichment of one’s own. One of RE’s aims is: “To embrace the unilateral willingness of ecclesial conversion for the sake of the ongoing flourishing of one’s own tradition in love.”<sup>173</sup> RE’s exclusive focus on receiving rather than giving creates a certain tension between it and the influential model of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts, which will be discussed in detail later. Undoubtedly, however, RE’s unilateral and interior orientation is a defining characteristic.

A third distinctive feature of RE is its specifically Catholic character. The first RE colloquium centred on Cardinal Kasper, with five other Roman Catholic bishops also in attendance.<sup>174</sup> As has already been discussed, the theological origins of RE lie in Catholic sources. Moreover, there are few non-Catholic

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<sup>171</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 88.

<sup>172</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 88.

<sup>173</sup> Durham University Centre for Catholic Studies, "About Receptive Ecumenism," <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology/religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/about/>

<sup>174</sup> Murray, "Preface," x.

sources or texts referred to in Murray's explication of RE.<sup>175</sup> RE's Catholic character has been explicitly acknowledged. One of the stated aims of the RE volume is to apply the methodology of RE "to Roman Catholicism's own specific need as the host tradition for receptive ecumenical learning from other Christian traditions."<sup>176</sup> RE is evidently a Catholic perspective on ecumenism, designed by, and for, Catholics.

As Murray elaborates, RE "is about the intensification, complexification, and further realization of Catholic identity, not its diminishment and loss."<sup>177</sup> In another article introducing RE, Murray writes that it is a "Catholic-inspired approach to intra-Christian, inter-denominational theological learning."<sup>178</sup> However, as mentioned previously, Murray also maintains that RE is of relevance to all Christian churches. It "is intended to be evocative of a universal call and identifying mark pertaining to the entire church of Christ Catholic and to every confessing Christian, and not simply to the Roman Catholic Church uniquely."<sup>179</sup> But certainly, RE has been centrally focused on the Catholic Church. The vast majority of participants at the international conferences, and contributors to the volume, are Catholic. While the second RE conference changed the focus from "Catholic Learning" to "Ecclesial Learning," it remains to be seen how deeply RE will become rooted within the Ecumenical Movement as a whole. Therefore, RE is grounded within Catholic theology, it initially focused on the Catholic Church, and a majority of those involved in RE remain Catholic. As such, its Catholic character is one of its distinctive aspects.

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<sup>175</sup> Murray mentions the significance of both Walter Kasper and Rowan Williams's understandings of Spiritual Ecumenism, which means that there is at least one reference to a Christian, rather than solely Catholic, viewpoint. See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>176</sup> Murray, "Preface," x.

<sup>177</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 17.

<sup>178</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 76.

<sup>179</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

A fourth characteristic of RE is its emphasis on the affective, imaginative, and spiritual dimensions of the ecumenical endeavour. RE aims to operate on both the affective and intellectual levels of ecumenical engagement. Murray observes that, “we are changed by love not by anger and if we are in turn to effect creative ecclesial change then it must be through the sustained passion of love rather than frustration.”<sup>180</sup> He insists that love is “the way of ecclesial transformation.”<sup>181</sup> This statement resonates with *UR*’s conviction that love must receive priority above all else.<sup>182</sup> As mentioned earlier, Murray explains that “Receptive Ecumenism is also an ecumenism of desire, even love.”<sup>183</sup> The affective dimension of RE is clearly illustrated in his following comments:

Aware of our needs and frustrations that we cannot alone resolve, we come to look with the eyes of desire on the particular gifts and strengths of our other; wanting to move towards them and to benefit for ourselves from the gifts and strengths we see there and which we know ourselves to need. It is a matter of falling in love; of putting the erotics back into ecumenism. If awareness of lack and need disposes us to be prepared to change, loving, even erotic, desire draws us on.<sup>184</sup>

This passionate argument indicates that the motivation behind RE is love. Such evocative phrases as “putting the erotics back into ecumenism,” steer away from theological ecumenism (which is primarily intellectual), into an ecumenism of the heart. Murray is attempting to highlight that ecumenism is not only engaged on the level of the head, but rather, perhaps even primarily, on the affective levels, of the *desire* for unity. Moreover, he explains that,

whilst always in need of being tested by the ‘head’—by critical theological scrutiny—all effective ecumenical learning consists most deeply in an affair of the ‘heart’, through being attracted by, desiring and falling in love with something of the grace-filled beauty of another

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<sup>180</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 89.

<sup>181</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 89.

<sup>182</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”

<sup>184</sup> Murray, “Growing into the Fullness of Christ.”



tradition and being impelled to move towards this focus of desire, even at cost.<sup>185</sup>

RE therefore prioritises the affective levels of ecumenism, which have not always been emphasised. Along with love, other virtues also play an important role in fostering a Receptive Ecumenical attitude.

For instance, Murray insists that we “must seek to live courageously and imaginatively in hope,” rather giving in to complacency or defeat.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, he maintains that RE “requires *both* active trust that we are being resourced for this and led into it in the ways we require *and* patient recognition that any real receptive learning necessarily takes time to be realised.”<sup>187</sup> RE therefore draws on an array of virtues, including love, hope, trust, patience, and of course, humility. It is no wonder, therefore, that Murray has also described RE as “a virtuous virus,” which he hopes will continue to grow and adapt “in diverse global contexts.”<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, RE’s emphasis upon the affective and spiritual levels of ecumenical engagement may potentially, and fruitfully, open up new vistas for ecumenism. The previous decades can be seen as primarily focusing on theological ecumenism. RE adds another layer of ecumenical involvement, emphasising the affective and spiritual aspects of ecumenism, as well as its intellectual levels. RE is an attempt at forming an ecumenism of the heart, designed to work in balance with theological ecumenism. Its emphasis on the affective dimensions of ecumenism is, therefore, one of its key defining features.

Finally, a fifth distinguishing facet of RE is its collaborative nature. RE has a distinctive format. Rather than Murray publishing a treatise on RE, where he systematically outlined RE’s theological grounding and context, methodology and aims, and developed a set of guiding criteria for its implementation, he

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<sup>185</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 86.

<sup>186</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

<sup>187</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

<sup>188</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

approached RE collaboratively. He organised a series of international conferences aimed to investigate the key question of RE. RE therefore, can perhaps most appropriately be explained as having multi-authorship.<sup>189</sup> Murray explains that RE has an “explicitly collaborative nature” and is concerned “to draw together a variety of ecclesial voices and responsibilities.”<sup>190</sup> This collaborative dimension is illustrated by the RE volume as a collection and expansion of papers originally presented at the first RE conference. Edited by Murray, this volume is of central significance for understanding RE, and constitutes the primary text available on RE. Murray writes that “the dual purpose of this volume” is:

(a) to propose and test a fresh approach to ecumenical theology and practice – Receptive Ecumenism – fit for the exigencies of the contemporary situation, and (b) to illustrate and apply this approach, as befits the basic vision and ethos behind the project, to Roman Catholicism’s own specific need as the host tradition for receptive ecumenical learning from other Christian traditions...<sup>191</sup>

Therefore, according to Murray, the purpose of the volume is to introduce and “test” RE, and to “illustrate and apply” RE to the Catholic Church. As such, the RE volume, a collection of thirty-two articles (one of which is written by Murray) can be considered as authoritative regarding RE.

Because of this status, the ways that contributors other than Murray conceive of RE is highly significant in understanding the approach. It is these different contributors, along with Murray, who have taken on the work of exploring the theological context and grounding for RE, as well as its potential contribution to the field, the questions it must take into account, and what set of criteria it can use.

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<sup>189</sup> The authorship of Receptive Ecumenism can best be recognised as Paul Murray’s articles, and the work that has developed out of the three international conferences.

<sup>190</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv.

<sup>191</sup> Murray, "Preface," x.

The advantages of this collaborative authorship lie in the richness and diversity this lends to RE as an ecumenical methodology. As O’Gara notes, ecumenism, at its best, is inherently collaborative.<sup>192</sup> However, this somewhat less than systematic approach may also have disadvantages. A major difficulty of RE’s format is the potential for fragmentation and lack of depth. The fact of RE’s multi-authorship causes RE to have some internal tensions and contradictions. It also means that some areas of its methodology lack clarification. Nonetheless, this collaborative format is a distinctive feature of RE.

Together, these five key characteristics present RE as an innovative Catholic ecumenical approach, collaborative in nature, which highlights important implicit features of ecumenism by focusing on learning and receiving, and the affective levels of ecumenical activity. Having probed Murray’s conception of RE, its development, aims, and distinctive features, it is important now to examine RE’s second primary source.

#### **2.4. Critical Analysis of the Receptive Ecumenism Volume**

Approaching an understanding of RE necessitates a critical analysis of the RE volume.<sup>193</sup> In light of the need to focus on points directly relevant to this discussion, only a selection of the most pertinent chapters will be analysed in detail. Other chapters, despite their own value, are unfortunately unable to be extensively reviewed here.

The RE volume is composed of a total of thirty-two chapters, and thematically divided into five parts. Selected chapters from each section of the volume will be analysed, with a particular focus on any points of agreement or discord between them and Murray’s vision of RE.

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<sup>192</sup> Margaret O’Gara, "Epilogue: The Study of Theology," in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 235.

<sup>193</sup> Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*.

### 2.4.1. Part I: “Visions and Principles”

Part I constitutes seven chapters, the intent of which is to elucidate “the pertinent theological, methodological, and hermeneutical principles” involved in RE.<sup>194</sup> The first chapter is Murray’s introduction of RE.<sup>195</sup> Much of this material has been canvassed in the first half of this chapter, and therefore does not require reiteration.

The next chapter, by Margaret O’Gara, focuses upon the process of “receiving gifts in ecumenical dialogue.”<sup>196</sup> Her argument is divided into four parts: “(1) ecumenical gift exchange as reception; (2) different ways of exchanging gifts; (3) gifts offered but not received; and (4) ecumenical partners and reception.”<sup>197</sup> Her points are firmly grounded within the idea of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts, as elucidated in the theology of Vatican II and *UUS*.<sup>198</sup> Throughout, O’Gara beautifully explicates the ecumenical exchange of gifts as an essential aspect of ecumenism.<sup>199</sup> Note, however, that her argument is not specific to RE, but pertains to ecumenical dialogue as a whole. Her consistent use of the language of “gift” differs from Murray’s more common usage of the term “learning,” and she does not use the term “Receptive Ecumenism” even once.

Of particular interest, O’Gara outlines different types of gift-giving, one of which closely resembles the process of RE: the “Mennonite-Roman Catholic movement called ‘Bridgefolk,’” where “each tradition wants to receive a different gift from the other.”<sup>200</sup> O’Gara also writes on the problem of “gifts offered but not

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<sup>194</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiii. Part I contains seven chapters in total, the first by Murray and the next six chapters are authored respectively by Margaret O’Gara, Ladislav Örsy, Philip Sheldrake, Nicholas Lash, Walter Kasper, and Riccardo Larini.

<sup>195</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning."

<sup>196</sup> Margaret O’Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>197</sup> O’Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue," 26.

<sup>198</sup> O’Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue," 27.

<sup>199</sup> O’Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue," 26.

<sup>200</sup> O’Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue," 29.

received.”<sup>201</sup> This is extremely valuable for understanding how to practice ecumenism as an exchange of gifts, but is perhaps not directly relevant to RE. After all, RE is concerned with receiving, rather than giving.

She then turns to consider challenges surrounding “ecumenical dialogue and reception.”<sup>202</sup> Reception is a key theme within the volume, which will be seen in further contributions. O’Gara concludes on a positive note, stressing the “experience” of ecumenism as the “desire for unity.”<sup>203</sup> Her emphasis on the affective dimensions of ecumenism recalls RE’s focus on the affective and spiritual levels of ecumenical engagement. Placed under critical scrutiny, O’Gara’s contribution is something of a quandary. On the one hand, it is one of the most important chapters in the entire volume. On the other hand, however, her focus is more on the ecumenical exchange of gifts than RE. Clearly, the relationship between RE and ecumenism as a gift exchange requires further consideration.

In Chapter Three, Ladislav Örsy addresses the need to develop criteria for receptive learning. He argues that first, a community must learn what “insights” exist within another church, before receiving these insights into its “existing tradition.”<sup>204</sup> Of course, this is not as simple as it sounds. Örsy explains the requirements for achieving authentic receptive learning: namely, the “persons learning and receiving must have the right dispositions, the doctrines received must be rooted in truth, and the practice accepted must be an expression of Christian love.”<sup>205</sup> It is interesting to note that two of these three requirements are affective in character.

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<sup>201</sup> O’Gara, “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue,” 30.

<sup>202</sup> O’Gara, “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue,” 33.

<sup>203</sup> O’Gara, “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue,” 36.

<sup>204</sup> Ladislav Örsy, “Authentic *Learning and Receiving* - A Search for Criteria,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

<sup>205</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 39.

In seeking a response to “identifying” the criteria for “such subtle requirements,” Örsy draws connections between receptive learning and the Second Vatican Council.<sup>206</sup> He offers “the wounded body in need of healing” as an analogy for understanding Christian unity.<sup>207</sup> He then outlines three “criteria of authenticity” for receptive learning: “preserving identity,” “true and false reception,” and “prudent and imprudent reception.”<sup>208</sup> After these points, he offers a reflection on how a church could become a “receiving community.”<sup>209</sup> Namely, it must “look inwards” and have humility and “a desire for enrichment.”<sup>210</sup> It must also “look outwards,” and believe that other communities contain gifts of the Spirit.<sup>211</sup> Moreover, the receiving community must “discover” something that would “enrich the receivers.”<sup>212</sup> Finally, the receiving community “must become a creative agent,” and use its “own resources” to “develop the inspiration it received.”<sup>213</sup> These points, especially the last one, are all important in understanding the process of reception. Like O’Gara, Örsy also proffers a definition of reception.<sup>214</sup>

Örsy’s emphasis upon the affective dimensions of ecumenism is clear. “Love and wisdom must go hand in hand,” he insists.<sup>215</sup> He concludes by pointing out the need for healing: “We need to heal ourselves, if we want to heal the world.”<sup>216</sup> He explains that learning and receiving are parts “of this healing process.”<sup>217</sup> Örsy’s chapter strongly resonates with Murray’s conception of RE, particularly RE as a healing process, and the focus on the affective and spiritual

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<sup>206</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 39-40.

<sup>207</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 41.

<sup>208</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 42-44.

<sup>209</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 44.

<sup>210</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 45.

<sup>211</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 45.

<sup>212</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 46.

<sup>213</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 46.

<sup>214</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 46.

<sup>215</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 45.

<sup>216</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 49.

<sup>217</sup> Örsy, “Authentic Learning and Receiving,” 49.

levels of ecumenical engagement. Örsy's chapter, therefore, is a valuable contribution towards the next stage in RE's development: that of establishing criteria. Almost a decade, and two international conferences later, the development of criteria for RE is still a highly important consideration.

In Chapter Four, Philip Sheldrake argues that "Catholic Learning and Receptive Ecumenism are more than purely ecclesiological concepts."<sup>218</sup> He undertakes this by discussing what it means to be Catholic.<sup>219</sup> He argues that "becoming Catholic people' is a process of hope."<sup>220</sup> As such, he insists that "Receptive Ecumenism is not simply a matter of structural adjustments or doctrinal refinement but is an encounter of people."<sup>221</sup> Therefore, he focuses on "the demands of hospitality."<sup>222</sup> This is significant because Murray also expresses the importance of hospitality in RE.<sup>223</sup> Sheldrake's emphasis on ecumenism as an encounter of people also evokes Murray's point that RE is concerned with lived traditions, rather than doctrines.<sup>224</sup> Sheldrake then provides a detailed explanation of the Christian notion of hospitality, drawing on the rule of St Benedict and Francis of Assisi's encounter with the leper.<sup>225</sup> From this reflection, he observes that "the process of becoming genuinely Catholic may be profoundly uncomfortable."<sup>226</sup> Sheldrake's emphasis on the importance of non-ecclesiological, or affective, elements in RE, especially hospitality, dovetails with and re-affirms points vital to Murray's vision of RE.

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<sup>218</sup> Philip Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52.

<sup>219</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 52-53.

<sup>220</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 54.

<sup>221</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 55.

<sup>222</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 55-58.

<sup>223</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>224</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>225</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 57-58.

<sup>226</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 59.

Chapter Six, by Walter Kasper, is a republication of a 2007 article. Due to this, Kasper explains, “this chapter reflects upon the relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism, understood as two principles, and offers a few reflections on Anglicanism within this context.”<sup>227</sup> However, this is undertaken with “the notion of Receptive Ecumenism in mind, but adopting an approach more akin to fundamental theology.”<sup>228</sup>

Kasper writes that the current time is “ecumenically in an interim period.”<sup>229</sup> He then explicates on the “current crisis of ecumenism.”<sup>230</sup> Kasper’s assertion of the existence of an ecumenical crisis, and current interim period, are key arguments for the basis of RE. Of especial import, however, is Kasper’s emphasis on the pneumatological and spiritual basis of ecumenism.<sup>231</sup> He writes: “Ultimately it is not we, but the Spirit of God alone, who can create unity.”<sup>232</sup> This sentiment is echoed in RE, as Murray attests that RE is “a Spirit-driven movement of the heart, mind, and will.”<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, Kasper’s reference to the pneumatological nature of ecumenism leads him to, “in the tradition of Paul Couturier... say that spiritual ecumenism is the soul of the ecumenical movement (*UR*, 8).”<sup>234</sup> Kasper explains that spiritual ecumenism “encompasses prayer, conversion, and self-sanctification.”<sup>235</sup> He attests, however, that:

Spiritual Ecumenism also makes it clear that we should not be satisfied with such intermediate goals as better mutual awareness, cooperation and peaceful coexistence. The goal of ecumenism is the shared celebration of the one Eucharist.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>228</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>229</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 78.

<sup>230</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 79.

<sup>231</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>232</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>233</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>234</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>235</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>236</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.



Kasper's assertion of SE as being concerned with the goal of full structural unity, rather than simply improved Christian relations, acts as something of a counter to Murray's conception of SE.<sup>237</sup>

However, Kasper's assertion that the purpose of ecumenical dialogue is not "a matter of finding the lowest common denominator but of reciprocal enrichment and growth" is one of the key points of RE.<sup>238</sup> It must be recognised that this chapter was neither originally written for the RE volume, nor does it explicate RE's methodology. However, as he is one of the major influences upon RE's development, and was central to the first RE conference, Kasper's chapter is important for understanding RE. Moreover, he offers points for consideration regarding the relationship between RE and SE.

Riccardo Larini's contribution concludes Part I. His chapter concerns the issue of reception. He begins by attesting that a "volume centred around the theme of Receptive Ecumenism undoubtedly represents a novelty in the world of ecumenical and, even more particularly, Roman Catholic theology."<sup>239</sup> It is unusual, he believes, because although "the theme of reception" has become prominent since "at least the early 1970s, its treatment in scholarly work is still uncommon."<sup>240</sup> It is significant that Larini places some of RE's novelty on being an academic discussion of the theme of reception. Whilst reception appears to be one of the key themes in the RE volume, what is meant by ecumenical reception is not necessarily what is meant by RE. Therefore, Larini's use of the two terms in an almost synonymous manner is noteworthy in understanding how other contributors may perceive RE. He concludes by arguing that "Receptive

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<sup>237</sup> See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>238</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 86.

<sup>239</sup> Riccardo Larini, "Texts and Contexts - Hermeneutical Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89.

<sup>240</sup> Larini, "Texts and Contexts," 89.

Ecumenism should not just be the limited passion of some people of good will... Rather, it constitutes a great chance for the future development of academic theology."<sup>241</sup> However, RE's "hermeneutical foundations" first need to be taken into account.<sup>242</sup> Larini's chapter points to the need for further consideration regarding the dynamic between reception and RE.

In sum, Part I reveals a number of key themes: the ecumenical exchange of gifts, reception, an emphasis upon affective, rather than theological factors, the need for criteria for receptive learning, and Spiritual Ecumenism.

#### **2.4.2. Part II: "Receptive Ecumenical Learning through Catholic Dialogue"**

This part of the volume aims to illustrate what ecumenical learning opportunities exist for the Catholic Church from the Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Orthodox traditions.<sup>243</sup> In Chapter Eight, Keith Pecklers addresses the "gifts that Roman Catholics have to receive from Anglicans" in the areas of "Church, Authority, Worship, and Spirituality."<sup>244</sup> He grounds his argument within the theology of Vatican II and *UUS*, and strongly emphasises the model of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts.<sup>245</sup> Pecklers argues for "the dual truth" that Anglicans and Catholics share much in common, and that there is "much we have to learn from one another."<sup>246</sup> While this assertion is compatible with the ecumenical gift exchange, it does not explicate the nuances of RE as a unilateral, rather than mutual, process.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Larini, "Texts and Contexts," 98.

<sup>242</sup> Larini, "Texts and Contexts," 98.

<sup>243</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiii. Part II comprises five chapters, written by Keith Pecklers, Michael Putney, David M. Chapman, William Rusch, and Paul McPartlan.

<sup>244</sup> Keith Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.

<sup>245</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 107-108.

<sup>246</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 108.

<sup>247</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

In his discussion of authority, Pecklers posits that “one of the specific gifts Anglicans can give Roman Catholics is...the gift of asking questions which need to be asked,” especially regarding controversial issues.<sup>248</sup> He goes on, however: “Of course, this is a reciprocal matter, and Roman Catholics also do well to ask Anglicans pointed questions.”<sup>249</sup> Regarding worship, he writes: “the subject of liturgy offers much fertile ground for mutual learning and ecumenical exchange.”<sup>250</sup> Again, the focus on mutuality is more appropriate to the ecumenical gift exchange than RE. However, Pecklers also points out that “Catholics have much to receive from Anglicans on the basis for pastoral practice.”<sup>251</sup> He concludes by stating that “the pilgrim path always begins in humility and trust,” and that “whatever we can accomplish together always begins in prayer.”<sup>252</sup> These statements emphasise the affective and spiritual aspects of RE. Therefore, Pecklers’s emphasis on mutuality contrasts with Murray’s conception of RE as an essentially unilateral process of interior conversion. As with O’Gara, Pecklers’s contribution raises the need for further clarification over the relationship between the ecumenical gift exchange and RE.

In Chapter Nine, Michael Putney also emphasises ecumenism as an exchange of gifts. He attests that the ecumenical exchange of gifts “describes a more profound exchange and deeper relationship than the practical alone” and it “is the nature of this more profound exchange that I would like to explore.”<sup>253</sup> It is striking that Putney grounds his argument within the ecumenical gift exchange, rather than RE. Considering O’Gara’s and Pecklers’s similar emphases, the ecumenical exchange of gifts appears increasingly significant to RE.

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<sup>248</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 112-113.

<sup>249</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 112.

<sup>250</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 114.

<sup>251</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 115.

<sup>252</sup> Pecklers, "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," 119.

<sup>253</sup> Michael Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123.

Regarding the gift exchange, Putney writes that ecumenism “involves a process of discovering in the other what the Holy Spirit has done to conform them to Christ and his wishes for the church.”<sup>254</sup> Therefore, the gift exchange is not just an exchange of “insights.”<sup>255</sup> Rather, it “can also involve an exchange of those gifts which are yet to develop as fully in one’s own communion...but yet belong to Christ’s vision for his church.”<sup>256</sup> He views the Ecumenical Movement as a process of Christians growing “towards each other as they grow closer to Christ.”<sup>257</sup> Moreover, he expresses that “the ecumenical movement...can itself be seen as a movement of conversion.”<sup>258</sup> Putney’s remarks are evocative of Couturier’s SE, illustrating Couturier’s influence on Putney’s work.<sup>259</sup>

Referring to a potential “clash of gifts” regarding ordained and lay roles in ministry, Putney explains that, at times, an exchanges of gifts “requires that one gift be adjusted in order to make room for the other to be received.”<sup>260</sup> This is reminiscent of O’Gara’s argument that certain gifts may need repair before being offered.<sup>261</sup> He concludes with the reminder that an exchange of gifts is not always easy, and while there should be no “delay” in carrying out this process, it also cannot be rushed.<sup>262</sup> He attests that it “cannot be carried out by theologians and church leaders alone but must draw upon the experience of ordinary men and women.”<sup>263</sup> This is a sentiment echoed in Murray’s emphasis on democratised ecumenism.<sup>264</sup> Thus, there is significant overlap between Murray’s conception of RE and Putney’s contribution: the emphasis on conversion, the spiritual and

<sup>254</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 124-125.

<sup>255</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 125.

<sup>256</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 125.

<sup>257</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 124.

<sup>258</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 124.

<sup>259</sup> Michael Putney, "One Man's Ecumenical Journey," in *My Ecumenical Journey*, ed. Elizabeth Delaney, Gerard Kelly, and Ormond Rush (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014), 1.

<sup>260</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 127.

<sup>261</sup> Margaret O'Gara, "Christ's Church Local and Global," in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 21.

<sup>262</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 132.

<sup>263</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 132.

<sup>264</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 90.

affective elements of ecumenism, and the participation of the whole church.

However, Putney's focus centres on the ecumenical gift exchange, rather than RE.

In the concluding chapter of Part II, William Rusch aims to demonstrate how Lutheran-Catholic dialogue "may be viewed as an example of ecclesial learning and ecumenical reception."<sup>265</sup> The focus of Rusch's study is clearly on ecumenical reception, which highlights a need to consider the nexus between ecumenical reception and RE. Thus, examining Part II reveals the key themes of the ecumenical gift exchange, Spiritual Ecumenism, and reception.

### **2.4.3. Part III: "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Church Order"**

The third part of the volume aims to investigate how specific issues of relevance to the Catholic Church, such as "apostolicity, primacy, collegiality, lay participation...and episcopacy," might be approached using RE.<sup>266</sup>

In Chapter 14, Denis Edwards explores two points of relevance to the issue of "Catholic ecumenical receptivity." Firstly, the "need for western receptivity" to Eastern understandings of "balance between pneumatology and Christology," and secondly, the Petrine ministry.<sup>267</sup> He argues for the value of Kasper's theology of pneumatology in regards to these two issues.<sup>268</sup> Whilst Edwards's chapter does not focus directly on RE, it is nonetheless valuable for critically reflecting on RE.

Edwards highlights broader ecumenical issues that impact on the function and achievement of RE; namely, the need for a renewed pneumatology and some

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<sup>265</sup> William G. Rusch, "The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue - An Example of Ecclesial Learning and Ecumenical Reception," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149.

<sup>266</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiii. Part III encompasses five chapters, written by James F. Puglisi, Denis Edwards, Joseph Famerée, Paul Lakeland, and Patrick Connolly.

<sup>267</sup> Denis Edwards, "The Holy Spirit as the Gift - Pneumatology and Catholic Re-reception of Petrine Ministry in the Theology of Walter Kasper," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 196.

<sup>268</sup> Edwards, "The Holy Spirit as the Gift," 196.

resolution over the issue of the Petrine ministry. Edwards's focus on a renewed pneumatology is of particular importance. RE has, at least implicitly, a pneumatological basis.<sup>269</sup> But RE's emphasis on the activity of the Spirit requires further development, which is where his work on pneumatology may prove especially valuable. Thus, Edwards provides a critical reflection of what is needed in order to achieve ecumenical receptivity, which is vital for RE to become a successful ecumenical methodology.

In the final chapter of Part III, Patrick Connolly examines how the 1983 Code of Canon Law of the Latin Catholic Church may be applied to the issue of episcopal accountability.<sup>270</sup> Connolly concludes by asserting that the Catholic Church "can learn much about oversight of leadership from other Christian traditions."<sup>271</sup> However, he recognises that "receiving gifts" in "an exchange of gifts' . . . is not a pain-free exercise," because it requires acknowledgement of "current Roman Catholic inadequacies, and of the consequent need for ecclesiastical adaptation."<sup>272</sup> Connolly also recognises that there "is also a sometimes unspoken Roman Catholic reluctance to learn from other Christian traditions," because of "awareness of difficulties in that other tradition's own structures."<sup>273</sup> He observes that much "discussion about renewing structures to ensure accountability" involve "learning from the secular world, rather than from other Christian denominations."<sup>274</sup> This raises further consideration on the perceived differences between learning from another Christian tradition as opposed to secular sources. His concluding remarks on some of the problems

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<sup>269</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>270</sup> Patrick Connolly, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning and Episcopal Accountability Within Contemporary Roman Catholicism - Canonical Considerations," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 241.

<sup>271</sup> Connolly, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning and Episcopal Accountability," 250.

<sup>272</sup> Connolly, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning and Episcopal Accountability," 250.

<sup>273</sup> Connolly, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning and Episcopal Accountability," 250.

<sup>274</sup> Connolly, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning and Episcopal Accountability," 250.

involved with receptive ecumenical learning are important factors for RE. Thus, Part III emphasises the need for a renewed pneumatology, and reflection on some of the factors that may impede Receptive Ecumenical learning, as well as the ecumenical gift exchange.

#### **2.4.4. Part IV: “The Pragmatics of Receptive Ecumenical Learning”**

In Part IV, the focus of the volume shifts “to seeking to diagnose the various non-explicitly theological factors that contribute, for good or ill...to the health of Catholicism.”<sup>275</sup> In Chapter 18, Mary Tanner emphasises that RE is “both realistic in the face of current difficulties and, at the same time, imaginative and bold.”<sup>276</sup> She argues that analysing Anglican-Roman Catholic relations since Vatican II is helpful for seeing “what has proved effective and what counterproductive in receptive ecumenical learning.”<sup>277</sup> Before moving on to this issue, however, Tanner asserts that it “is perhaps worth noting at the outset that what is here being referred to as Receptive Ecumenism is a new feature of the life of Christian churches that has emerged over these years.”<sup>278</sup> As such, she attests, “There are no generally accepted principles and no formulated rules.”<sup>279</sup> Rather, churches have been on “a voyage of discovery” since Vatican II, and the 2006 RE conference “provided a useful opportunity to reflect on what has happened and to envisage what might stimulate Receptive Ecumenism in the future.”<sup>280</sup> Here, Tanner makes a number of significant assertions about RE.

She identifies RE as emerging over time since Vatican II. She asserts the lack of widely held principles and rules on RE. And she defines the first RE

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<sup>275</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv. Part IV contains seven chapters, respectively authored by Mary Tanner, Donald Bolen, Geraldine Smyth, Brendan Tuohy and Eamonn Conway, Peter McGrail, James Sweeney, and Thomas J. Reese.

<sup>276</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 258.

<sup>277</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 258.

<sup>278</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 258.

<sup>279</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 258.

<sup>280</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 258.

conference as an “opportunity” to revitalise RE in the future, rather than as launching RE as a new ecumenical approach.

After making these assertions, Tanner turns to elucidate key developments in ecumenism since Vatican II.<sup>281</sup> She discusses ARCIC as “A Success in Ecumenical Dialogue, but a Failure in Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>282</sup> She describes the 1982 response process to ARCIC’s *Final Report* as “more an academic exercise than a move in Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>283</sup> Tanner’s insistence on naming RE at least as far back as the 1980s is quite striking. She explains that “another factor that militated against Receptive Ecumenism” at this time was the move to ordain women in the Anglican tradition.<sup>284</sup> As she explains, to the Catholic Church, the Anglican decision on ordination, of especial importance because it impacts on the unity of the church, “appeared to call into question the Anglican Communion’s ecumenical commitment to visible unity.”<sup>285</sup> Consequently, it “made any concrete step towards the recognition of ministries impossible.” Here, Tanner assesses that “what was most needed to encourage and support Receptive Ecumenism – a closer sharing of ministry and sacramental life – became even less likely to happen.”<sup>286</sup>

She also outlines the impact of ARCIC II.<sup>287</sup> Here, she argues that it “is surely time in two episcopally ordered churches for the bishops to take responsibility for pursuing the implications of the theological dialogue and for actively promoting Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>288</sup> She goes on to describe the meeting at Mississauga in 2000 as “a new initiative in Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 259.

<sup>282</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 262. This section encompasses pages 262 to 265.

<sup>283</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 263.

<sup>284</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 264.

<sup>285</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 264.

<sup>286</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 264.

<sup>287</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 265-266.

<sup>288</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 266.

<sup>289</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 266-267.



At this meeting, she attests, the bishops “emphasized the importance of episcopal sharing, shared collegiality, and the need for the bishops themselves to take responsibility for this new stage of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>290</sup> While Murray explains that elements of RE have always been implicit within ecumenism, the highlighting of these aspects within RE, and the use of the term Receptive Ecumenism, stem from Murray’s work and the 2006 conference.<sup>291</sup> Here, then, is a tension between Murray and Tanner over the conception of RE.

She concludes by offering eight points in response to “what can we learn from the story of the last forty-five years about Receptive Ecumenism?”<sup>292</sup> First that the “personal and relational” need to be prioritised.<sup>293</sup> Second, RE requires the engagement of the whole church, which must “desire” relationship, be open to learning, and “accept that renewal and change is required for the sake of fidelity to the Gospel.”<sup>294</sup> Third, RE “requires effective leadership.”<sup>295</sup> Fourth, RE “requires” a more developed understanding of “the structures and processes of reception.”<sup>296</sup> Fifth, RE “requires” the creation of “new” processes to aid implementation of “effective practices of reception.”<sup>297</sup> Sixth, RE “requires some rigorous consideration” when one church makes a decision that affects the “basic bonds of communion” with another church, such as women’s ordination.<sup>298</sup> Seventh, “theological dialogue needs to be complemented by a dialogue in the lives of the two communities.”<sup>299</sup> Finally, “there has to be a constant restatement of the goal of visible unity.”<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 267.

<sup>291</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>292</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>293</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>294</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>295</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>296</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>297</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>298</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>299</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

<sup>300</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga," 268.

Here Tanner provides a rich, critical reflection on RE. None of these points appear discordant with Murray's portrayal of RE, and several are essential to his vision. Her points may be useful in developing criteria for RE. However, Tanner's portrayal of RE as something that has emerged over the years since Vatican II, rather than as a new method launched in 2006, is problematic. While she provides a valuable discussion of the historical ecumenical background for RE, can the term Receptive Ecumenism authentically be applied to events prior to 2006? While these events may have many similarities to RE, and may have influenced RE's development, can they authentically be considered RE events? The difficulty over historically dating RE points to the need for greater clarity and definition over RE.

In Chapter 20, Geraldine Smyth sets out to "examine the relationship between the challenge of Receptive Ecumenism and psychoanalytic dynamics relating to the loss and reconfiguration of identity."<sup>301</sup> Rather than theological factors, Smyth considers the import of socio-psychological aspects that influence dialogue, such as the existence of "institutionalized prejudice" within churches, which causes an attitude of reluctance to learning from others.<sup>302</sup> One of her key themes is that of conversion, referring throughout to *UR*, *UUS*, and the *Groupe des Dombes*.<sup>303</sup> Smyth's use of sources key to Spiritual Ecumenism raises consideration of the link between RE and the broader Spiritual Ecumenical Movement.

She defines RE "as a journey of transformation," highlighting the centrality of conversion to RE.<sup>304</sup> Smyth makes the point that "divided churches"

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<sup>301</sup> Geraldine Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich - Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Factors Inhibiting Receptive Ecumenism," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 285.

<sup>302</sup> Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich," 286.

<sup>303</sup> See Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich," 289, 296.

<sup>304</sup> Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich," 289.

must “recognize that divided identities will not be healed without openness to conversion.”<sup>305</sup> Conversion is the path forward, which is the point also emphasised by Murray. Smyth’s focus on the social and psychological factors that influence ecumenical engagement is valuable to understanding the ecumenical milieu surrounding RE. Her emphasis on non-theological factors influencing ecumenism, such as fear and prejudice, reiterate RE’s key focus on the affective levels of ecumenical engagement. She concludes on a “spiritual note,” reasserting ecumenism as the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>306</sup>

Peter McGrail’s contribution in Chapter 22 explores “sociological factors” impeding “Catholic Learning” in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.<sup>307</sup> McGrail argues that RE entails “a profoundly social dimension.”<sup>308</sup> He asserts that “a genuinely transformative ecumenical learning is not simply agreement on matters of faith and morals, but a renewal of interpersonal engagement at a structural or institutional level, within denominations and across them.”<sup>309</sup> This focus on reform at a structural and institutional level is one of the key characteristics of RE as presented by Murray. However, McGrail makes the critical observation that despite forty years of ecumenical dialogue, the Catholic Church “remains largely untouched by the ecumenical experience” at the institutional level.<sup>310</sup> He expresses that there is reluctance to draw on anything other than traditional Catholic resources to tackle challenges facing the Church.<sup>311</sup> The key reason behind this insularity, he suggests, is “primarily sociological in

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<sup>305</sup> Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich," 294.

<sup>306</sup> Smyth, "Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich," 296.

<sup>307</sup> Peter McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction? Sociological Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning in the Church in England and Wales," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 319.

<sup>308</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 319.

<sup>309</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 319.

<sup>310</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 320.

<sup>311</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 320.

nature.”<sup>312</sup> McGrail explains that there is a defensive attitude which causes an “emotive pull” in the Catholic community towards relying on its own, rather than outside resources.<sup>313</sup> He insists that British Catholics “face a choice of either embracing ecumenical learning or of rebuilding the ‘fortress’ model of church that was its default position across the twentieth century.”<sup>314</sup> McGrail’s assertion that the primary impediment to ecclesial learning is sociological has ramifications not only for understanding RE, but for considering its feasibility as an ecumenical strategy.

In Chapter 23, James Sweeney investigates sociological and anthropological factors impacting on ecumenical engagement.<sup>315</sup> Sweeney also refers to the ecumenical gift exchange, however he asserts that it is “more challenging to receive the gift” than to offer it.<sup>316</sup> Like Smyth and McGrail, Sweeney highlights ecclesial identity as problematic for ecumenism, referring to a resurgence of defensiveness regarding ecclesial identity within the Catholic community as the “fortress church.”<sup>317</sup> Two themes emerge here that are important to RE: the challenge posed by fears over loss of identity, and the consideration of more than just theological factors that impede ecumenism, such as society and culture.

Sweeney argues that, if it is to be successful, RE must “reckon with the social psychology of identity formation.”<sup>318</sup> He also points to some potential “limits” to Receptive Ecumenical learning, especially over “irreducible”

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<sup>312</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 320.

<sup>313</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 321.

<sup>314</sup> McGrail, "The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?" 321.

<sup>315</sup> James Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 333.

<sup>316</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 333-334.

<sup>317</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 334.

<sup>318</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 335.

differences between traditions, such as those of sexual practices and ministry.<sup>319</sup> Sweeney concludes by stating that if Christianity is to “re-establish” its role in society it must foster “a reflexive and self-critical identity, humble enough and secure enough to engage in dialogue.”<sup>320</sup> Being self-critical, reflective, and humble are core to RE. Moreover, Sweeney believes that the “ecclesial virtues” of RE are “not simply of intra- and inter-ecclesial significance but of profound extra-ecclesial significance.”<sup>321</sup> The factors that inhibit RE, such as defensiveness over identity, or prejudice, actually impede all forms of ecumenical progress. Moreover, the attitudes required to advance ecumenism may also prove significant in strengthening the role of Christianity in society as a whole. As such, RE’s ecclesial virtues may be vitally important to Christianity in general.

Thomas Reese’s chapter on “organizational factors” impeding ecclesial learning within the Catholic Church highlights issues affecting both RE and ecumenism in general.<sup>322</sup> Reese’s concluding emphasis is that “ecumenism is an essential path to church reform,” an attitude central to RE.<sup>323</sup> He argues that both “the future of the church” and RE must be grounded within faith, hope, and love.<sup>324</sup> Reese asserts the significance of two of RE’s key characteristics: conversion and a central focus on ecclesial virtues. While these two emphases are important to all ecumenical activity, they receive particular emphasis within RE – and, of course, within Spiritual Ecumenism.

To summarise, investigating Part IV reveals the themes of reception; a focus on non-theological factors that inhibit ecumenism; challenges facing ecumenism, such as the problem of ecclesial identity and pluralism; and

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<sup>319</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 338-339.

<sup>320</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 343.

<sup>321</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 343.

<sup>322</sup> Thomas J. Reese, "Organizational Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 346.

<sup>323</sup> Reese, "Organizational Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning," 354.

<sup>324</sup> Reese, "Organizational Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning," 355.

pneumatology. It also uncovers a tension over whether or not RE can authentically be seen as existing prior to 2006.

#### **2.4.5. Part V: “Retrospect and Prospect”**

The fifth and final part of the volume is devoted to “reflecting back on aspects of earlier chapters and probing how the Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning agenda might be taken forwards in divers ways.”<sup>325</sup>

In Chapter 25, Orthodox theologian Andrew Louth investigates the potential learning Catholicism may be able to receive from the Orthodox tradition. However, he asserts that while the focus of the volume is on “what Roman Catholics can learn from other Christian confessions,” listening “must always be a two-way process.”<sup>326</sup> In a similar manner to the ecumenical exchange of gifts, he stresses that “it is not a matter of one group listening to another group...but rather mutual listening, and mutual reflection on a process of learning in which we all share.”<sup>327</sup> Therefore, Louth’s affirmation of ecclesial learning as a two-way endeavour somewhat contradicts Murray’s conception of RE as a unilateral process.

In Chapter 27, Hervé Legrand’s contribution is more concerned with the issue of ecumenical reception than with RE.<sup>328</sup> The prevalence of reception as a theme within the RE volume draws attention to the need to analyse the interrelation between reception, ecumenical reception, and RE.

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<sup>325</sup> Murray, “Preface,” xv. Part V constitutes eight chapters authored by Andrew Louth, Nicholas Sagovsky, Hervé Legrand, Gabriel Flynn, Gerard Mannion, Daniel W. Hardy, Jeffrey Gros, and Peter Phillips.

<sup>326</sup> Andrew Louth, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning - an Orthodox Perspective,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 361.

<sup>327</sup> Louth, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 361.

<sup>328</sup> Legrand, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Future of Ecumenical Dialogues,” 386.

In the next chapter, Gabriel Flynn seeks to address the theme of RE in relation to the thought of Yves Congar and Basil Butler.<sup>329</sup> Flynn's contribution is significant because it highlights the connection between RE and Spiritual Ecumenism. Drawing upon the work of Couturier and Congar, he insists that "over and above political, intellectual, and psychological factors" for ecumenism, "prayer is foremost."<sup>330</sup> Flynn describes Congar's life as "a veritable school of receptive learning" and refers to his primary emphasis on conversion.<sup>331</sup> Flynn concludes by stating that he "advocate[s] the approach of...Couturier whose eloquent prayer for unity resonates with unmistakable eschatological overtones: 'That the unity of all Christians may come, such as Christ wills, and by the means that He wills.'"<sup>332</sup> Where Legrand discusses reception more than RE, Flynn focuses more on Spiritual Ecumenism than RE. Again, this raises the need to discern the relationship between RE and SE.

In Chapter 29, Gerard Mannion frames his discussion of RE in terms of comparative ecclesiology.<sup>333</sup> He argues that "Receptive Ecumenism represents one notable and promising form of comparative ecclesiology."<sup>334</sup> Moreover, he proposes that comparative ecclesiology is "the best way for...Receptive Ecumenism to bear fruit."<sup>335</sup> Mannion also emphasises the integrity of learning and teaching as a two-way endeavour, and refers to the ecumenical exchange of gifts.<sup>336</sup> He advocates embracing pluralism, rather than perceiving it as a

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<sup>329</sup> Gabriel Flynn, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning - Reflections in Dialogue with Yves Congar and B. C. Butler," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 399.

<sup>330</sup> Flynn, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 400.

<sup>331</sup> Flynn, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 401.

<sup>332</sup> Flynn, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 409.

<sup>333</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 413.

<sup>334</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 413.

<sup>335</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 413.

<sup>336</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 414.

problem.<sup>337</sup> He stresses a “dynamic” manner of understanding tradition, with a strong focus on tradition as interpretation.<sup>338</sup> He concludes by suggesting that RE can be summed up by the concept of *perichoresis*.<sup>339</sup> Thus, where Legrand focuses on reception, and Flynn on SE, Mannion concentrates on comparative ecclesiology, rather than RE.

In his chapter, Daniel Hardy describes RE as “distinctive in two ways at least.”<sup>340</sup> First, because it “opens” the Catholic Church “to what may be learned through encounter with other Christian traditions.”<sup>341</sup> And second, because it “engages” with the challenges and queries posed by the contemporary context, as the church “confronts secular counterparts and postmodern critique.”<sup>342</sup> He proceeds to discuss “elemental theology” in relation to RE.<sup>343</sup> He presents the case for “ecclesial mapping” to work out where differences stem from, and what might be the way forward.<sup>344</sup> Hardy posits that “we need to learn not to speak for the traditions of others...but instead to speak with the others and to indwell their traditions.”<sup>345</sup> This statement has some similarity to Murray’s concept of studying living traditions. However, Hardy’s approach is perhaps more academic and abstract than Murray’s presentation of RE.

The fact that Legrand, Flynn, Mannion and Hardy each offer different methodological approaches for RE raises the question of RE’s methodology. Does RE have a unique methodology, or should it be seen as a development of either

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<sup>337</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 420.

<sup>338</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 424.

<sup>339</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning," 424.

Perichoresis, translated as “dancing together,” is an Eastern image referring to the relationships between the Godhead within the Trinity. Perichoresis is notable for portraying a non-hierarchical understanding of the Trinity.

<sup>340</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 429.

<sup>341</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 429.

<sup>342</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 429.

<sup>343</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 440.

<sup>344</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 438.

<sup>345</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism," 439.



reception, SE, comparative ecclesiology, elemental theology, or even another approach?

In Chapter 31, Jeffrey Gros investigates the “specifically pedagogical and formational dimension to receptive Catholic Learning.”<sup>346</sup> To do so, he looks at some key texts from the 1990s that “emphasize the educational component of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>347</sup> He considers that the challenge for Catholicism “is to develop among believers the receptive attitude that will draw them into ecumenical engagement.”<sup>348</sup> He goes on to list five key challenges in particular:

(1) preparing a corps of able dialoguers; (2) penetrating a more universal Catholic Community; (3) deepening the dialogue to deal with the more difficult issues; (4) rewriting our common history to reflect present ecumenical research and hopes; and (5) providing competent leadership as we move from dialogue to decision in receiving existing ecumenical results.<sup>349</sup>

While certainly vital points, however, these challenges are of concern for ecumenism as a whole, rather than specific to RE. He concludes by stressing that RE “is first of all a matter of spirituality, but that spirituality cannot be nurtured without careful attention to mind and heart, to prayer and study, to grace and the good works that flow from the Spirit’s gift.”<sup>350</sup> Here, again, one last reference to an implicit connection between RE and SE. Thus, the final part of the volume illustrates the themes of reception, Spiritual Ecumenism, the ecumenical exchange of gifts, and the indivisibility of teaching and learning, while exposing a tension over methodology.

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<sup>346</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 443.

<sup>347</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 442-443.

<sup>348</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 442.

<sup>349</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 449.

<sup>350</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 453.

## **2.5. Evaluation: Themes and Tensions within the Primary Source Material**

Having examined RE's primary source material, it is time now to make a critical evaluation. The volume undoubtedly offers a valuable contribution to contemporary ecumenism. However, analysis reveals that much of the volume is about either, the contemporary context and challenges facing the Ecumenical Movement, or Catholic ecumenism. There are relatively few chapters where the meaning of RE is probed as a distinctively new methodology, or which posit suggestions specifically honed to RE. Much of what is elucidated could be applied to ecumenism in general, rather than RE in particular.

For instance, out of thirty-two chapters, twelve of them do not refer to RE by name even once.<sup>351</sup> Seven chapters use the term Receptive Ecumenism only once or twice.<sup>352</sup> Only thirteen of the chapters refer to RE three or more times.<sup>353</sup> In other words, less than half of the chapters mention RE more than three times. At this level of analysis, it appears that the majority of chapters do not deeply engage with RE. Saying this, what constitutes RE as a specific type of ecumenism? What threads tie RE together? What gaps or confusions are there? Is RE a cohesive, unified methodology? An initial response to these questions requires examination of the main themes and tensions found within the volume, and how they relate to Murray's perspective.

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<sup>351</sup> The 12 chapters that do not refer to RE by name even once are: Margaret O'Gara, Chapter 2; Ladislav Orsy, Chapter 3; Nicholas Lash, Chapter 5; Keith Pecklers, Chapter 8; Michael Putney, Chapter 9; William Rusch, Chapter 11; Paul McPartlan, Chapter 12; James Puglisi, Chapter 13; Denis Edwards, Chapter 14; Joseph Famerée, Chapter 15; Paul Lakeland, Chapter 16; and, Peter Phillips, Chapter 32.

<sup>352</sup> The 7 chapters in which RE is named once or twice are: Philip Sheldrake, Chapter 4; Walter Kasper, Chapter 6 (although only in the introduction, the rest of the article is about fundamental theology); David Chapman, Chapter 10; Brendan Tuohy and Eamonn Conway, Chapter 21; Andrew Louth, Chapter 25; Nicholas Sagovsky, Chapter 26; and, Hervé Legrand, Chapter 27.

<sup>353</sup> RE is mentioned by name three or more times in the following chapters: Paul Murray, Chapter 1; Riccardo Larini, Chapter 7; Patrick Connolly, Chapter 17; Mary Tanner, Chapter 18; Donald Bolen, Chapter 19; Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20; Peter McGrail, Chapter 22; James Sweeney, Chapter 23; Thomas Reese, Chapter 24; Gabriel Flynn, Chapter 28; Gerard Mannion, Chapter 29; Daniel Hardy, Chapter 30; and, Jeffrey Gros, Chapter 31.

A critical reading of the RE volume reveals a number of recurring themes, here listed in descending order, from the highest number of references downward: awareness of the challenges facing ecumenism; the ecumenical exchange of gifts; mutuality, or the indivisibility of teaching and learning; reception; the importance of non-theological factors impacting upon ecumenism; Spiritual Ecumenism; and pneumatology. How do these themes relate to Murray's conception of RE?

One of the main themes within the volume is that of the challenges currently facing the ecumenical endeavour, with at least fourteen chapters (almost half of the volume), discussing this at some length.<sup>354</sup> There is a consensus among these theologians that the Ecumenical Movement is currently experiencing an "ecumenical winter." As Peter Phillips puts it, "Ecumenism is facing a critical moment."<sup>355</sup> The perceived crisis of ecumenism is a highly significant note within the volume, and one which acts as justification for the development of a new ecumenical approach. That ecumenism is currently in a state of crisis is also one of Murray's key points.<sup>356</sup> Indeed, this very fact is what gives impetus to his search for a new "way forwards," namely, RE.<sup>357</sup> Here, we can see a high level of accord within the primary source material of RE.

However, the next major theme is more problematic. The related themes of mutuality (of learning as a two-way process), and ecumenism as an exchange of gifts, are key themes within the RE volume.<sup>358</sup> Taken together, the perspective

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<sup>354</sup> This theme receives a significant amount of treatment in at least fourteen of the chapters: Walter Kasper, Chapter 6; Denis Edwards, Chapter 14; Paul Lakeland, Chapter 16; Mary Tanner, Chapter 18; Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20; Brendan Tuohy and Eamonn Conway, Chapter 21; Peter McGrail, Chapter 22; James Sweeney, Chapter 23; Thomas Reese, Chapter 24; Hervé Legrand, Chapter 27; Gerard Mannion, Chapter 29; Daniel Hardy, Chapter 30; Jeffrey Gros, Chapter 31; and Peter Phillips, Chapter 32.

<sup>355</sup> Peter Phillips, "Receiving the Experience of Eucharistic Celebration," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 457.

<sup>356</sup> See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 9.

<sup>357</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>358</sup> That RE is a two-way process is argued within at least three chapters: David Chapman, Chapter 10; Andrew Louth, Chapter 25; and Peter Phillips, Chapter 32. The ecumenical exchange of gifts is explicitly discussed in at least nine of the chapters: Margaret O'Gara, Chapter 2; Keith Pecklers,

that receiving and giving is a mutual process, rather than a unilateral one, is significant within at least twelve of the chapters, more than a third of the volume. For example, Peter Phillips stresses: "Learning from the other is a two-way process."<sup>359</sup> And David Chapman insists: "Receptive Ecumenism is never a one-way process."<sup>360</sup> There is, therefore, a strong emphasis on the indivisibility of teaching and learning.

The model of ecumenism as a gift exchange is one of the clearest threads throughout the volume, with, for example, both O'Gara's and Putney's chapters being almost exclusively devoted to the topic. The ecumenical gift exchange originates from *LG* and *UUS*, and has been expanded on by theologians such as Kasper, Putney and O'Gara. The concept asserts that different Christian churches have gifts to offer each other, but each gift ultimately comes from the Spirit for the enrichment of Christ's Church. Thus, an exchange of gifts leads churches deeper into conversion in Christ, made possible by the real but imperfect communion that exists within the Body of Christ. However, there is a tension between the model of the ecumenical exchange of gifts, the related notion of learning as a mutual process, and Murray's conception of RE.

RE is a unilateral process, focusing upon interior conversion. Murray stresses this one-sided concern as intending to inspire a sense of responsibility on behalf of the ecclesiological community for its own conversion. Murray explains, "the primary call is to take responsibility for one's own and one's own community's learning in the face of the other, without first demanding that the

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Chapter 8; Michael Putney, Chapter 9; David Chapman, Chapter 10; Patrick Connolly, Chapter 17; Donald Bolen, Chapter 19; Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20; James Sweeney, Chapter 23; and Gerard Mannion, Chapter 29.

<sup>359</sup> Phillips, "Receiving the Experience of Eucharistic Celebration," 463.

<sup>360</sup> David M. Chapman, "A Methodist Perspective on Catholic Learning," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 146.

other does likewise.”<sup>361</sup> The argument is that an emphasis on gift-giving or teaching may carry with it tones of superiority or arrogance. It places the teacher or gift-giver in a position of superiority or authority. It may reinforce boundaries between traditions, rather than fostering ecumenical engagement. It could lead the church to assert that other traditions *must* learn from it, or must accept the gift it is offering. The emphasis becomes *ad extra* rather than *ad intra*, on what *other* churches must do, instead of what *our* church needs to do. If the dimension of giving overrides that of receiving, the church risks becoming hypocritical, simply telling rather than doing. In an extreme form, it could support the return model of ecumenism supported by the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church.

In contrast, ecclesial learning fosters a sense of receptivity towards others. Instead of looking at other traditions in the negative fashion of what *they* need to learn, it engenders positive appraisal of other churches in the sense of what they have to give. The ramification of this approach is that it focuses on Catholicism in “explicitly receptive, learning mode rather than its, perhaps more familiar, teaching, repeating, judging, and defending modes.”<sup>362</sup> For Murray, RE is about interior conversion and transformative learning. It is about receiving instead of giving. This unilateral method contrasts sharply with the mutuality of learning and teaching, and the exchange of gifts presented within these chapters of the volume. The opposition between the volume and Murray’s conception of RE creates a significant divergence within RE’s primary source material. Clearly, the relationship between RE and the ecumenical exchange of gifts requires clarification.

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<sup>361</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 17.

<sup>362</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 17.

Reception is another major theme, receiving significant attention in at least ten chapters.<sup>363</sup> However, reception is something of an ambiguous theme, in part due to the lack of definition surrounding the term “reception.” Reception can be simply understood as the action of receiving something; or more technically, as the process of change which occurs within a tradition over time, through the inspiration of the Spirit. Or, more specifically, it may refer to ecumenical reception, which is concerned with the reception, or impact, of the results of bilateral dialogues upon a tradition. In other words, with whether the fruits of ecumenical labours actually leads to growth or enrichment within a tradition.

With these three potential definitions in mind, how does RE relate to reception? Certain chapters of the volume, for example Rusch’s contribution, appear to focus on reception rather than RE.<sup>364</sup> Rusch refers to two types of reception: “‘Reception’ has always been a feature of the life of the church. What is new about ‘ecumenical reception’ is that divided churches are challenged to receive a text which comes from outside them, from a bilateral or multilateral dialogue in which they have taken part.”<sup>365</sup> However, he does not address RE specifically, or nuance the connection between reception, ecumenical reception, and RE. Ecumenical reception in this sense, as relating to the fruits of bilateral dialogues, is not directly engaged within RE, as RE is a different, albeit complementary method to that of bilateral dialogues. Murray has this to say regarding the connection between RE and ecumenical reception:

Equally, nor does Receptive Ecumenism simply reduce to a concern to promote the approval, appropriation, and dissemination at the local level of the formulated results of higher-level bilateral processes, as – given the

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<sup>363</sup> At least ten of the chapters discuss the issue of reception at some length: Margaret O’Gara, Chapter 2; Ladislav Örsy, Chapter 3; Riccardo Larini, Chapter 7; William Rusch, Chapter 11; James Puglisi, Chapter 13; Denis Edwards, Chapter 14; Patrick Connolly, Chapter 17; Mary Tanner, Chapter 18; Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20; and Hervé Legrand, Chapter 27.

<sup>364</sup> Rusch, "The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue."

<sup>365</sup> Rusch, "The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue," 155.

connotations of unidirectional passivity frequently, if inappropriately, associated with the concept of reception – the better-known phrase ‘Ecumenical Reception’ can potentially suggest. Rather, Receptive Ecumenism represents the concern to bring to the fore the prior necessary disposition to receptive transformational learning that the bilateral processes presuppose.<sup>366</sup>

With this in mind, Murray understands RE as a necessary precursor in order to achieve reception. RE occurs prior to reception and ecumenical reception. As such, RE may better enable the process of reception, but it is also distinct from reception. However, delineating the contours of their relationship is difficult because of the lack of precise definition for either concept.

Nevertheless, certain preliminary assertions can be made: RE and reception overlap in the sense that both are concerned with transformative change. However, reception is a broader process than RE. RE aims to *cause* transformative renewal within a tradition. Reception is concerned more generally, with *assessing* how something has been received within a tradition, and therefore, has impacted or changed that tradition. For instance, the question of the reception of RE itself will be an ongoing issue, as time will show what effect RE may have on the ecumenical landscape in general, and specific churches in particular. However, the strength of the theme of reception within the RE volume illustrates the need for further elucidation over how reception, ecumenical reception, and RE relate.

The importance of considering how non-theological factors impact upon ecumenism is another significant theme within the volume, with at least six chapters placing significant focus on this topic.<sup>367</sup> A broad array of non-theological factors is outlined throughout the volume. These aspects include

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<sup>366</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 14.

<sup>367</sup> Non-theological factors are discussed within at least six chapters: Philip Sheldrake, Chapter 4; Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20; Brendan Tuohy and Eamonn Conway, Chapter 21; Peter McGrail, Chapter 22; James Sweeney, Chapter 23; and Thomas Reese, Chapter 24.

organisational, sociological, historical, psychological, educational, and spiritual factors, as well as affective aspects such as defensiveness over identity (the fortress church), prejudice or bias, emotional factors, friendship, and virtues such as hope, faith, and love. Considering affective, rather than theological factors, in relation to ecumenism leads to a focus on the *experience*, or phenomenology of ecumenism. Here ecumenism is more than purely an academic exercise, but a deeply meaningful, spiritual experience, linked to conversion. The volume's focus on non-theological ecumenical factors correlates strongly with Murray's conception of RE. Murray consistently uses affective language to describe RE, and affirms RE as a combined approach of being "imaginative," "analytic," and "practically focused."<sup>368</sup>

Spiritual Ecumenism is a further major theme within the volume, receiving significant emphasis in at least six chapters.<sup>369</sup> Although, at times, this theme is treated implicitly, via discussions on conversion, or the importance of prayer within ecumenism, rather than explicitly using the term SE. In his chapter, Kasper emphasises the importance of SE as the "soul" of the Ecumenical Movement, stressing that it "encompasses prayer, conversion, and self-sanctification."<sup>370</sup> Gros attests that "Receptive Ecumenism is first of all a matter of spirituality," which needs to be "nurtured" with "attention to mind and heart, to prayer and study, to grace and the good works that flow from the Spirit's gift."<sup>371</sup> The strong emphasis on SE found within the volume should not be surprising, as RE places a central emphasis on conversion. However, while Murray acknowledges the influence of SE on RE's development, he also argues that RE "expands" on SE's "more

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<sup>368</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 19.

<sup>369</sup> Spiritual Ecumenism is discussed within six chapters: Ladislav Örsy, Chapter 3; Walter Kasper, Chapter 6; Keith Pecklers, Chapter 8; Michael Putney, Chapter 9; Gabriel Flynn, Chapter 28; and Jeffrey Gros, Chapter 31.

<sup>370</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam," 85.

<sup>371</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 453.



obviously personal” focus.<sup>372</sup> Therefore, there is a tension between Murray’s conception of SE and the role it plays within RE, and the emphasis that SE is given within the RE volume.

Interrelated with Spiritual Ecumenism, pneumatology receives substantial focus, receiving detailed attention within at least three chapters, although it is implied throughout the volume.<sup>373</sup> Significantly, while pneumatology can be seen as an important theme in the volume, it is one that is perhaps underemphasised within Murray’s own presentation of RE. Murray attests that RE is “a Spirit-driven movement of the heart, mind, and will.”<sup>374</sup> However, he does not offer an explication for the presumed pneumatological basis of RE. As such, pneumatology is a gap where further development is needed.

There are also discordant notes between RE’s two primary sources. Two jarring notes in particular: confusion over dating RE; and diverging methodological groundings for RE. There is some confusion over whether RE is a recognisably new approach, or something that can be traced back decades. For instance, Tanner’s chapter analyses RE as being active in the 1980s.<sup>375</sup> In contrast, Gros’s contribution discusses RE almost in future terms, as something still developing.<sup>376</sup> The discordance between contributors over how to historically date or trace RE contrasts with Murray’s unequivocal presentation of RE as “a fresh approach to the contemporary ecumenical task.”<sup>377</sup> This, then, is a mismatch between Murray’s vision of RE and that of some of the contributors in the volume.

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<sup>372</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>373</sup> Pneumatology is a significant focus in three chapters: Walter Kasper, Chapter 6; Denis Edwards, Chapter 14; and Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20.

<sup>374</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>375</sup> Tanner, "From Vatican II to Mississauga."

<sup>376</sup> Gros, "Learning the Ways of Receptive Ecumenism," 442.

<sup>377</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 79.

Murray acknowledges that part of RE's value comes from its explicit intent to highlight features that have always underpinned ecumenism.<sup>378</sup> However, the naming and elucidation of such as "Receptive Ecumenism" stems from Durham University's initiatives, beginning with the 2006 Receptive Ecumenism conference.<sup>379</sup> In this sense, using RE as a specific term for anything prior to 2006 is essentially inaccurate. This kind of discontinuity suggests a lack of clarity over RE, and highlights a need for further explanation over the theological context surrounding RE, and in particular, RE's precursors.

There are also discrepancies over RE's methodological basis. For example, Legrand perceives RE within reception.<sup>380</sup> Mannion places RE in the framework of comparative ecclesiology.<sup>381</sup> Hardy considers it within the context of elemental theology.<sup>382</sup> Kasper refers to fundamental theology.<sup>383</sup> While Gros and Flynn place RE within Spiritual Ecumenism.<sup>384</sup> Murray himself situates RE partly within Rescher's pragmatist idealistic approach.<sup>385</sup> Clearly, there is room for greater clarification over RE's methodological underpinning, especially as explicating RE's methodological basis has long-reaching ramifications over how the approach is defined and used.

## 2.6. Conclusion

This chapter investigated RE's primary source material. We began by illustrating RE's development as a response to the call for ecumenical renewal. We then outlined Murray's conception of RE's development, aims, and distinctiveness. The third section offered a critical reading of the RE volume.

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<sup>378</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 79.

<sup>379</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 79.

<sup>380</sup> Legrand, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Future of Ecumenical Dialogues."

<sup>381</sup> Mannion, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Hermeneutics of Catholic Learning."

<sup>382</sup> Hardy, "Receptive Ecumenism."

<sup>383</sup> Kasper, "Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam."

<sup>384</sup> Flynn, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning."

<sup>385</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 7.

Finally, we undertook a critical evaluation of RE's primary source material, discussing both significant themes and tensions within the material. The aim was to highlight cohesive threads that give RE integrity and stability, and also points of confusion or contradiction that require further clarification. A significant number of the themes and tensions revealed in this analysis directly relate to Spiritual Ecumenism. As such, the connection between RE and the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement requires further examination – which is the aim of the following chapter.

## **Chapter 3: The Spiritual Roots of Receptive Ecumenism**

### **3.1. Receptive Ecumenism in Context**

In order to understand RE more fully, we must trace its roots in Spiritual Ecumenism. This chapter addresses the theological context and grounding of RE in, what is termed here, the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. Our investigation comprises three main sections. Firstly, a chronological examination of the influence of major figures and works from the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement on RE. Secondly, we clarify the key elements of SE in relation to RE. This background leaves us in a position to ponder whether RE is in fact a new kind of ecumenism, or simply another name for SE.

### **3.2. Receptive Ecumenism's Foundation in Spiritual Ecumenism**

There are clear lines of development between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism. Key figures in SE, such as Couturier and Congar, and important texts, such as *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Ut Unum Sint* play a vital role in RE's development. In order to discern the significance of SE on RE, we need to map out their influence. In chronological order, we will investigate the importance of Paul Couturier, Yves Congar, Vatican II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Walter Kasper, and Margaret O'Gara for Receptive Ecumenism.

#### **3.2.1. The Roots of Receptive Ecumenism in Couturier's Spiritual Ecumenism**

Abbé Paul Couturier of Lyons (1881-1953) is one of the most significant figures in early Catholic engagement with ecumenism. Indeed, it is not overstating matters to call him “a pioneer of modern Catholic ecumenism,” to use Catherine

Clifford's phrase.<sup>1</sup> Known as the father of Spiritual Ecumenism, he is widely recognised as the founder of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In light of the Ecumenical Movement's origins as a prayer movement, Kasper states that: "prayer for Christian unity and above all the Week of Prayer are the origin and constant impetus of the ecumenical movement."<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, Couturier's Spiritual Ecumenism has significantly impacted on Catholic approaches to ecumenism. Indeed, some three decades after he founded the Week of Prayer, Vatican II would assert Spiritual Ecumenism as the very "soul" of the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>3</sup> Couturier also established the *Groupe des Dombes* in 1936, which is remarkable for being "the longest standing forum for Protestant-Catholic ecumenical dialogue."<sup>4</sup> The *Groupe des Dombes*, as Clifford explains, plays a long and significant history in twentieth-century ecumenism.<sup>5</sup> An emphasis upon the need for conversion is one of its defining features.<sup>6</sup>

In his work to establish the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Couturier built on the Octave of Prayer established by Paul Wattson, which was first observed in January 1908. The Octave aimed at the unity of Christians through their return to the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> In 1933, Couturier initially accepted Wattson's Unity of Octave, but after two years of observance, he became convinced that the "triumphalist spirit" of the Octave required "radical revision."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in 1935, he published an apologetic for the Week of Prayer for

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine E. Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes: A Dialogue of Conversion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Kasper, "Charting the Road of the Ecumenical Movement."

<sup>3</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> One of the *Groupe Des Dombes's* key works is the document, *For the Conversion of the Churches*, trans. James Greig (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 15.

Christian Unity.<sup>9</sup> He asserted that a revised Octave for Christian Unity “must be founded on three pillars,” namely, humility and repentance; the ecumenicity of prayer for unity; and religious freedom.<sup>10</sup> As we will see, many of the core aspects of RE can be discerned in these three pillars.

Humility forms Couturier’s first pillar of prayer for unity. A truthful understanding of Christian division as sin is a necessary precondition for desire for unity.<sup>11</sup> Both confessing the sin of disunity and asking repentance inspire a humble attitude towards the Spirit. Such an attitude fosters the awareness of Christian unity as beyond the accomplishments of human ability.<sup>12</sup> Clifford points out that Couturier was living in a time when “many Catholics considered that those separated from Catholicism were solely responsible for the sin of division.”<sup>13</sup> This prevailing attitude supported the Catholic Church’s notion of return ecumenism. By placing sole responsibility for church divisions on other Christians, the Catholic Church was able to assert that unity could only be achieved through their repentance and return to the Catholic Church. Couturier’s emphasis that *all* Christians must take responsibility for Christian disunity is striking in contrast.

For Couturier, any true approach to Christian unity is grounded in humility, with recognition of the responsibility all must take for division. This humility extends to professing a truthful account of history, including uncomplimentary aspects of the Catholic Church, such as incidents of papal corruption, and violence towards other Christians.<sup>14</sup> This is why, for Couturier, humility is accompanied by repentance and prayer. In his revision of Wattson’s

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<sup>9</sup> The apologetic was entitled: “Psychologie de l’Octave de prières du 18 au 25 janvier,” and was first published in *Revue Apologétique*, December 1935.

<sup>10</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17-19.

<sup>11</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17.

Octave, Couturier included prayers for the sanctification of each Christian denomination, including the Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup> Decades before Vatican II's call for renewal, he highlighted the need to pray for the sanctification and conversion of the Catholic Church. Prayer is the cornerstone of Couturier's Spiritual Ecumenism, as he humbly asserts that unity cannot be achieved through human effort alone, but only through the work of the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

The second pillar, the ecumenicity of prayer for unity, refers to the necessary openness of ecumenical prayer. According to Clifford, Couturier regarded the Wattsonian Octave as having "prejudged the ecumenical goal and effectively imposed Catholic convictions on other Christians."<sup>17</sup> Prayer for Christian unity necessitates a scope applicable to all Christians, regardless of their denomination, but without affecting the integrity of each tradition.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, Couturier focuses prayer for unity on Christ, rather than the papacy or Rome.<sup>19</sup> He situates ecumenical prayer around Christ's prayer in John 17:21, attesting that this is a prayer that every Christian can unreservedly uphold, as it is nothing less than Christ's own desire for us.<sup>20</sup> By focusing on Christ's prayer for unity, Couturier intended to "universalize" ecumenical prayer into a truly ecumenical context, instead of emphasising return to the Catholic Church.<sup>21</sup>

Prayer must remain open to all Christians, and most of all, to the workings of the Spirit, rather than being restrained by the Catholic context. Couturier's shift from praying for other Christians to return to the Catholic Church, towards prayer for Christian unity, is reflected in his decision to change the name "Church Unity Octave," which has explicitly Catholic connotations, to "Universal Week of

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<sup>15</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 18.

Prayer for Christian Unity.”<sup>22</sup> Couturier’s conviction that ecumenical prayer must be truly ecumenical ties in with the third and final pillar: religious freedom.

Couturier’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is grounded in respect for religious freedom, another feature which was out of step with the prevalent Catholic attitudes of his time. Religious freedom would not be declared a basic human right by the Catholic Church until the Second Vatican Council’s *Dignitatis Humanae*, promulgated in 1965. Vatican II’s declaration on the right to religious freedom is intrinsic to the Council’s revolutionary Decree on Ecumenism, *UR*. As Clifford points out, the “document would be a key factor in bringing about confidence in new ecumenical relationships and prepared the way for official dialogue with other churches on equal footing.”<sup>23</sup> Couturier’s focus upon the right to religious freedom as a necessary component of ecumenism serves to emphasise how his SE was decades ahead of its time.

A respect for religious freedom entails that participating in the Week of Prayer would not compromise a person’s confessional identity in any manner.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Couturier showed respect for the integrity of other Christian traditions, and worked to establish a form of ecumenical activity that did not impose on other traditions while, at the same time, fostering repentance for Christian division and prayer for unity.<sup>25</sup> Couturier’s approach does not threaten ecclesial identity or loyalties, but acts as a process of deepening conversion into one’s own tradition, as participants open themselves to the will of Christ, and the activity of the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> As Clifford suggests, “The outcome is not uniformity, but a greater

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<sup>22</sup> Kasper, "Charting the Road of the Ecumenical Movement."

<sup>23</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 20.



conformity of each church to Christ.”<sup>27</sup> This conscious intent not to compromise ecclesial identities can also be found in Receptive Ecumenism.

The impetus behind Couturier’s Spiritual Ecumenism is recognition of Christ’s will for his church, grounded in shared repentance and humility. The Ecumenical Movement is a matter of Christians “being drawn in the same spiritual movement towards Christ,” as Clifford explains.<sup>28</sup> As such, it must be based in respect for religious freedom, as she expresses: “In this movement of prayer one remains entirely Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant and renounces nothing of one’s theology.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, SE does not damage ecclesial identities, but rather leads to deeper conversion. This idea is echoed in Murray’s assertion that RE is “not a matter of becoming *less* Catholic but of becoming *more* Catholic precisely by becoming more appropriately Anglican, more appropriately Lutheran,” etc.<sup>30</sup> Here, we found the same interconnection between ecumenism, ecclesial identity, and conversion, although Murray’s statement may draw the link more explicitly.

The theme of conversion is of key importance in Couturier’s work. Rather than the return model, where other Christians were expected to convert to Catholicism, Couturier is convinced that all are in need of conversion, including the Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup> SE is concerned with becoming more deeply converted to the will of Christ. The idea that ecumenism and conversion are inextricably linked is one which has resonated throughout the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, from Couturier’s work to RE, which Murray calls “the way of hope-filled conversion.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>31</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

Finally, we need to note Couturier's approach to Christian diversity and division. One of Couturier's key concepts is that of "spiritual emulation." By maintaining that Christian denominations could come together in a movement of Spiritual Ecumenism, Clifford explains that he conceived of a "convergent movement" of different Christian denominations.<sup>33</sup> In this view, diversity is not necessarily negative. While all Christians need to show repentance for division, and desire renewal, this does not mean the extinguishing of all difference.<sup>34</sup> Rather, as Clifford expresses, Couturier "saw the diversity of Christian confessions as a reflection of the diversity willed by God in the created order."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, diversity in theology, doctrine, or practice does not necessarily lead to division. Rather, Couturier's notion of spiritual emulation ties in with his belief that Christian traditions may prove to be complementary.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Couturier's positive appraisal of diversity and the conviction of the complementarity of Christian denominations can be seen as the nascent form of the concept of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts. The inherent riches that Christian traditions have to offer each other would later be stated in Vatican II, and developed by John Paul II. Along with conversion, it forms a keystone of Spiritual Ecumenism. Denominational complementarity is also intrinsic to RE, as it is founded on the concept that we need to learn from other Christians. Although Couturier phrases the complementarity of traditions in spiritual terms, other Spiritual Ecumenists express it in terms of "gifts," and RE prefers the term "learning," the core idea is the same.

Clifford makes the important point that while a cursory understanding of Couturier's Spiritual Ecumenism may give the impression that his focus is

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<sup>33</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 21.

primarily on the individual, and personal prayer, this is far from the case.<sup>37</sup> Couturier's SE is, as she explains, "aimed ultimately at a corporate and ecclesial renewal."<sup>38</sup> He considers that "personal sanctification" is inextricable from "the sanctification of each confessional body."<sup>39</sup> Couturier explicitly states that "Unity cannot be attained by a great number of individual conversions."<sup>40</sup> Rather, Christian unity will, some day, be achieved through the "corporate reunion" of all Christians.<sup>41</sup> And in this unity, he stresses, the "particular religious riches" of each Christian group "will be preserved."<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the individual and the community are indissolubly linked, such that communal renewal is intertwined with the personal conversion of each of its members.<sup>43</sup> The personal and communal do not suffer from a false dichotomy in Couturier's understanding. Spiritual Ecumenism, therefore, is intended to influence all aspects of the church, theologically, liturgically, doctrinally, and morally.<sup>44</sup> Couturier's goal is nothing less than the conversion of the whole church.

As such, Couturier's SE aims to inspire ecclesial renewal. This point is reinforced in his prayers for sanctification, where he contends that each tradition needs to pray and work for its own renewal first.<sup>45</sup> In fact, spiritual emulation involves attending *first* to any obstacles to unity that can be found inside one's own tradition.<sup>46</sup> Couturier's prioritisation on seeking internal renewal challenged

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<sup>37</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," in *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ*, ed. Geoffrey Curtis (London: SCM Press, 1964), 337.

<sup>41</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 338.

<sup>42</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 338.

<sup>43</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 23-24.

<sup>46</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 24.

the prevalent Counter-Reformation attitudes of his time, especially propensities towards criticism of others, rather than oneself.<sup>47</sup>

Couturier's notions of seeking internal renewal first, and being self-critical rather than critical of others, resonate strongly throughout RE. RE is *ad intra* ecumenism, concentrating on the renewal of the host tradition. Moreover, the assertion that we must change our thinking from asking what others need to learn from us, to instead self-critically asking what we may learn from others, is fundamental to RE's methodology.<sup>48</sup> While this is essentially the same attitude as that behind Couturier's SE, RE focuses the need to be self-critical in the specific sphere of learning, which adds a different dimension to Couturier's focus.

We can clearly see the legacy of Couturier's work in Receptive Ecumenism. RE claims that its practice will lead to one becoming more deeply converted into one's own tradition.<sup>49</sup> This echoes Couturier's concept of ecumenism as conversion. Moreover, Couturier's concept of spiritual emulation can be seen at the heart of RE's idea of ecclesial learning. Indeed, the fundamental conviction of RE can be seen as a rewording of Couturier's ground-breaking assertion of the difference between diversity and division, and subsequently, of the gifts traditions may have to offer each other. Moreover, we can certainly see Couturier's emphasis on self-renewal and being self-critical, instead of criticising other traditions, within RE.

However, Couturier emphasises prayer above all.<sup>50</sup> Couturier's SE is intrinsically a prayer movement, where prayer leads one more deeply into relationship with Christ. His ecumenism is spiritual in the deepest meaning of the

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<sup>47</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 24.

<sup>48</sup> As this assertion is key to the Receptive Ecumenical methodology, it is oft repeated throughout Paul Murray's work. For one example, please see: Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>49</sup> See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>50</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 343.

word. With humility, Couturier recognises that Christian unity is not possible for us to achieve on our own, but that it is in fact, the desire of Christ for his church. As such, the proper response is repentance and prayer, in particular, prayer which opens hearts and minds to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Grounded in Christ's prayer for unity (Jn 17:21), Couturier's prayer has an encompassing scope that goes beyond confessional borders to strike at the heart of Christian belief. Girded by respect for religious freedom, Couturier's SE does not challenge ecclesial identity, but rather inspires deepening conversion. The simplicity of his vision of SE is breathtaking. It is at once both reasonable and unobjectionable (because it does not compromise the integrity of a tradition) while being challenging, for both individual Christians and their traditions (because it is founded on repentance and humility, and the understanding that division is against God's desire for us).

In contrast, RE does not have this singular focus on prayer. In RE, the key emphasis is on *learning*. Prayer and learning have significantly different connotations. The distinction between the two in RE is one area which requires greater clarification. One point to consider here is whether RE places too little emphasis upon prayer, and how this should be addressed. RE has certainly inherited Couturier's focus on repentance and humility in that it advocates learning rather than teaching, receiving rather than giving. For Couturier, the way towards Christian unity is found in kenotic humility, in becoming open to the working of the Holy Spirit and the will of Christ.<sup>51</sup> Clifford explains that Couturier uncompromisingly held that, if "unity seems unattainable" this is because of "egoism and a lack of genuine humility and openness."<sup>52</sup> Ecumenism therefore requires an emphasis on the virtuous and affective levels of engagement. Thus, he perceived impediments to unity as existing largely on the affective level,

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<sup>51</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 22.

and the solution to be an increase in humility. Couturier writes in his *Ecumenical*

*Testament*:

If we were to examine every single difficulty which must be overcome so that progress towards Christian Unity may be made, we should always come to the same conclusion: the problem of Christian Unity is for everyone a problem of the orientation of the inner life, for unless it is orientated, even in secret, towards Christian Unity, how can Christians face this burning question? Unless it succeeds in gripping, even torturing the Christian conscience, what hope is there of its resolution?<sup>53</sup>

For Couturier, Christian unity is truly a matter of the heart. Unity is primarily a desire, and it is impeded by arrogance. In his words, it must “torture” one’s conscience, which situates ecumenism clearly at the affective levels of human experience. SE conceives of ecumenism as a virtuous activity, with humility as one of the key ecumenical virtues.

In line with Couturier, Murray emphasises humility and a renewed openness to the other. Murray considers that ecumenical progress is still possible, but only through the practice of RE, if each tradition approaches other denominations from the humble perspective of what they have to learn from others. However, whereas Couturier specifically advocates humility and openness to *Christ and the Spirit* as the way forward, Murray primarily emphasises humility and openness towards *other traditions* as the way forward. Whether RE leaves enough space for God, and places enough emphasis on the activity of the Spirit, is something that requires further reflection. This may be an area where RE could benefit from a deeper engagement with SE.

It should also be acknowledged, however, that Couturier places a high regard on the virtues of a monastic lifestyle. This focus on monasticism necessarily influences his work on ecumenism. Bearing this in mind, the primacy Couturier places on prayer, and the need for self-emptying humility, is certainly

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<sup>53</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 351.

not out of context. In contrast, Murray is a married layman, engaged in academic work. As such, Murray's emphasis upon learning, rather than prayer, may appeal to different contexts than Couturier's undoubtedly monastic approach. Whether or not it necessarily expands on Couturier's SE, RE certainly pushes SE in a different direction than Couturier. However, the legacy of Couturier's work in RE is one which needs to be explicitly recognised and clarified.

Another point of contrast between SE and RE is in terms of response from the Catholic Church. While Couturier is now lauded as a pioneer of Catholic ecumenism, in his own time his methods "were met with great suspicion," to use Clifford's phrase.<sup>54</sup> While he had the support of Cardinal Gerlier of Lyon, and while his Week of Prayer would become influential, his notions were not universally acclaimed by the wider Catholic Church.<sup>55</sup> Despite his efforts, Couturier's idea of SE "was not widely received."<sup>56</sup> Couturier was far ahead of his time.

Seven decades later, Murray's restatement of some of Couturier's key themes in RE has received a great deal of support and praise from the highest levels of the Catholic Church. RE is gaining attention, particularly in the UK and Australia, and has generally been received positively. Of course, it is not as if the intervening decades between Couturier and Murray are some kind of vacuum. Rather, the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement can be considered as having only just begun in the work of Couturier. Yves Congar marks the next important stage of development for Spiritual Ecumenism.

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<sup>54</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 24-25.

<sup>56</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 25.

### 3.2.2. Yves Congar as a Forerunner to Receptive Ecumenism

Yves Congar (1904-1995) was a French Dominican priest who is widely regarded as one of the twentieth century's most important Catholic theologians. He is well known for his work in ecclesiology, pneumatology, and ecumenism. He was a highly influential figure at the Second Vatican Council, and was key to the writing of *LG* and *UR*. His influence on Vatican II is such that Congar himself writes that, "If there is a theology of Congar, that is where it is to be found."<sup>57</sup>

Gabriel Flynn describes Congar "as a pioneer of Church unity and a champion of the laity."<sup>58</sup> Flynn sees Congar as a reformer, citing him as "an architect of the contemporary Church."<sup>59</sup> There is no doubt that Congar "holds an eminent place in the history of Church reform."<sup>60</sup> Paul Lakeland, also a contributor to RE, and the co-host of the third RE conference, writes of Congar: "No Catholic theologian...had a greater influence on the course of twentieth-century Catholic theology than" Congar.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, his legacy and influence is ongoing.

His value to the contemporary Ecumenical Movement has been recently highlighted in a new book focusing on Congar's work in the "hope of identifying resources that can revitalize the ecumenical movement."<sup>62</sup> However, like Couturier, Congar's ecumenical work did not always meet with approval from the Catholic Church. Prior to Vatican II, some of his work was banned, he was prevented from teaching, and everything he published had to be approved by the Vatican. In 1956, he wrote to his mother that he was silenced because, "What put

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Gabriel Flynn, "Yves Congar and Catholic Church Reform: A Renewal of the Spirit," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005), 101.

<sup>58</sup> Flynn, "Yves Congar and Catholic Church Reform," 99.

<sup>59</sup> Flynn, "Yves Congar and Catholic Church Reform," 99.

<sup>60</sup> Flynn, "Yves Congar and Catholic Church Reform," 99.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Lakeland, "Introduction," in *Yves Congar: Essential Writings*, ed. Paul Lakeland (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 15.

<sup>62</sup> Koskela, *Ecclesiality and Ecumenism*, 10.



me wrong (in their eyes) is not having said false things, but having said things they do not like to have said.”<sup>63</sup> For much of his career, he worked under intense scrutiny. Yet, before his death, he was made a cardinal.<sup>64</sup>

There is a deep connection between Congar and Couturier, especially around Spiritual Ecumenism. Congar writes that “for me ‘spiritual ecumenism’ was conjoined with an equally necessary theological ecumenism.”<sup>65</sup> He attests to a desirable connection between spiritual and theological ecumenism, a core theme in RE. However, Congar explains,

I did not give any priority or privilege to the spiritual aspect and its development. It was to Abbe Couturier that the grace and vocation were granted to open up the spiritual way for ecumenism and to give it its heart of love and prayer. He has been admirably faithful, even heroically faithful to that vocation.<sup>66</sup>

This is not to say that Congar does not value the spiritual aspect of ecumenism. Indeed, he writes, “This movement, which inspires men with the desire to serve the cause of Christian unity, is of a very pure and lofty spiritual nature.”<sup>67</sup> Congar has, therefore, a deep sense of ecumenism as a spiritual endeavour.

He is highly praiseworthy of Couturier’s work on Spiritual Ecumenism, including the need for interior reform and conversion.<sup>68</sup> On Couturier’s Prayer for Christian Unity, Congar attests that “all can come together in concord and unison, all the more so because fundamentally it consists in praying as Jesus prayed: ‘Father, that they may all be one, even as we are one’ (John 17:11), and thus in letting Jesus pray in us.”<sup>69</sup> In this way, Congar proclaims that Couturier has

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<sup>63</sup> Yves Congar, “Silenced for Saying Things Rome Didn’t Like to Have Said,” *National Catholic Reporter* (2000): 3.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Nugent, “Yves Congar: Apostle of Patience,” *Australian Ejournal of Theology* 4 (2005): 1.

<sup>65</sup> Yves Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism*, trans. Philip Loretz (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 20.

<sup>66</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 100.

<sup>68</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 21.

succeeded in creating a “truly universal, truly ecumenical” prayer.<sup>70</sup> Of Couturier, he writes, “To him we owe the spiritual foundation of the immense movement which today inspires the ecumenical hope of the whole world.”<sup>71</sup> But what of Congar’s own contribution to Spiritual Ecumenism, and later, to RE? Two key points can be discerned: Congar’s emphasis on interior conversion and reform; and pneumatology.

Congar conceives of ecumenism largely in the *ad intra* sense, of interior conversion and reform. He considers that our first task is to work on ourselves, in order to more closely aspire to the will of Christ. He explains,

Our business was to rotate the Catholic Church through a few degrees on its own axis in the direction of convergence towards others and a possible unanimity with them, in accordance with a deeper and closer fidelity to our unique source or our common sources.<sup>72</sup>

Here we can clearly recognise that ecumenism is not about lowest common denominator type consensus, but rather about deepening conversion. We can see, in nascent form, RE’s emphasis on learning from others in order to become more deeply what we already are.

Congar’s sense of the need for deepening ecumenical conversion is intertwined with his call for internal reform. He argues that ecumenism demands that we “broaden our minds,” and challenges us to develop “our loyalty and fidelity in depth.”<sup>73</sup> This deep process of critical self-reflection is needed to grapple with ideas which, although they may be commonly accepted as part of the Catholic tradition, actually “represent its stagnation and attenuation.”<sup>74</sup> He advocates the need for self-criticism and humility, and the willingness to listen to

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<sup>70</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

<sup>74</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

the Spirit in areas where we are not truly representing Christ. This is, of course, no easy task, as he explains,

Yet, painful as such an effort is, it soon reaps its reward in the expansion of our own catholicity and in countless discoveries and enrichments. Beyond the purely confessional and somewhat narrow meaning of that fine name 'catholic', we shall discover a truer sense of what we are and learn to become all that name implies, to make it a reality rather than a mere label and ourselves become more 'catholic', more 'universal.'<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, far from any risk of losing our ecclesial identities through undertaking ecumenism, Congar attests that ecumenical engagement and interior conversion lead us to a deepened and more truthful realisation of ourselves in Christ. He elucidates further that,

In doing this we shall rediscover parts of our heritage of which we never dreamed. We shall recover that part of our common heritage which our separated brethren retained in parting from us and which they have perceived, developed and lived with greater intensity than we have. We shall not add truths, peculiar to them and lacking to us, to our own. We all believe in truth and *we desire to be led 'into all truth'*. For our separated brethren, this means substantial rediscoveries and, for ourselves, rediscovery, in greater depth and breadth, of *our own* tradition.<sup>76</sup>

The seeds of Receptive Ecumenism can clearly be seen here. Congar focuses on interior conversion, on ecumenism as a rediscovery of our own tradition, not as in any way diminishing one's own ecclesial identity. Rather, ecumenism is a necessary process, in order to find the gifts of the Spirit within other traditions, which also properly belong to our own. Congar's sentiments are echoed in RE: that through ecumenism we will become more Catholic, rather than less Catholic; and that this process offers enrichment, rather than diminishment.

Alongside conversion and reform, he places a strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in ecumenism. For him, ecumenism is the activity of the Spirit.

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<sup>75</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

<sup>76</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

It is the Spirit who spreads the seeds of desire for Christian unity “where no human hand has planted,” and the Spirit who germinates and continually nourishes those seeds.<sup>77</sup> Christian unity is therefore not the work of human hands or minds, but rather the work of the Spirit according to God’s will. Congar explains that “God has called men to this task. . . . Yet, though we have worked with all our might, we must still recognize the fundamental insufficiency of all we try to do.”<sup>78</sup> Ultimately, the achievement of unity will come about according to God’s will, and is kindled within us by the Spirit. This pneumatological underpinning is central to SE. Congar’s emphasis on our inability to fully realise the truth is, as has been discussed by Murray, also vital to RE.<sup>79</sup>

There is a point of tension, however, between Congar’s ecumenical views and RE. Congar argues that “not every Christian is equally qualified to engage in ecumenical dialogue.”<sup>80</sup> He asserts that ecumenical activity must pass through rigorous internal testing, and “also conform to the external discipline of the Catholic community of which the hierarchy is the custodian.”<sup>81</sup> This is a decidedly different approach than that of RE, which is a democratised ecumenism designed to be undertaken by every member of the church. While RE upholds the need for expert academic work, it begins with the affective, rather than intellectual levels. It seeks to activate ecumenical work as the responsibility and duty of all, rather than as restricted to the academic sphere.

While RE’s concept of democratised ecumenism may not directly stem from Congar, there are clear lines of development between Congar’s ecumenical work and RE. In light of Congar’s influence, it is not surprising that Vatican II is the next significant influence on RE that must be investigated. It is, after all, the

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<sup>77</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 131.

<sup>79</sup> Murray, “Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity,” 297-298.

<sup>80</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

<sup>81</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 105.

Second Vatican Council which would lead to Spiritual Ecumenism's central position in Catholic ecumenical theology.

### 3.2.3. The Influence of Vatican II on Receptive Ecumenism

In the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the Second Vatican Council highlights Christian unity as one of its "principal concerns."<sup>82</sup> Far from the previous mentality against Catholic involvement in the Ecumenical Movement, *UR* explicates the importance of working towards Christian unity. Unity is the desire of the Catholic Church because "division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the sacred cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."<sup>83</sup> The ramifications of disunity appear to impede the Church in almost every way. By disobeying Christ, it cannot faithfully act as his Body. By scandalising the world, the Church actually misrepresents the salvific love of God revealed in Christ, causing (rather than removing) obstacles to the journey of conversion. By appearing hypocritical, the Church impairs the preaching of the Gospel, and fails in one of its primary missions, that of bringing the Good News to the whole world.

As if the above three reasons do not place enough importance on Christian unity, the Council emphasises that the Spirit behind ecumenism is indeed the Holy Spirit. "It is the holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire church," *UR* maintains, "who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the church's unity."<sup>84</sup> Ecumenism is therefore intrinsically part of the Catholic Church as a whole, rather than something extraneous. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is ecumenism's very principle. The same Spirit who brings about

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<sup>82</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2.

the unity of Catholics as one community, primarily through the seven sacraments, also inspires Christian unity. Thus, far from being a purely human mission, Christian unity ultimately stems from the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>85</sup>

As *UR* emphasises, “the unity of the church” is a “sacred mystery,” one “with the holy Spirit energizing its various functions.”<sup>86</sup> The Decree goes on to explain: “The highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the *unity*, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the holy Spirit.”<sup>87</sup> The Holy Spirit, who in some sense brings together the Three Persons of the Trinity, also works to unify the body of Christ on earth. Therefore, the ultimate source for Christian unity is nothing less than the unity of the Trinity. It is no wonder, therefore, that in recognising the magnitude of the consequences of division, the Council seeks “to set before all Catholic guidelines, helps and methods” to work towards the “divine call” of Christian unity.<sup>88</sup>

*UR* explains the Ecumenical Movement as being comprised of the “initiatives and activities planned and undertaken... to promote Christian unity.”<sup>89</sup> These initiatives are to make “every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions” misrepresenting other Christian traditions, and to engage in “‘dialogue’ between competent experts.”<sup>90</sup> Such measures are intended to lead to increased cooperation between Christians, and common prayer, “wherever this is allowed.”<sup>91</sup> Finally, *UR* outlines that “all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ’s will for the Church and, wherever necessary undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform.”<sup>92</sup> This last sentence is particularly important for

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<sup>85</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), 114.

<sup>86</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2. Italics added.

<sup>88</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>90</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>92</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

Spiritual Ecumenism, as will be seen. However, while the Council affirms that the Catholic Church must be genuinely engaged in the task of Christian unity, through the impetus of the Holy Spirit, *UR* also recognises that the ultimate goal of unity can only be fulfilled by God.

The *Decree on Ecumenism* concludes with the acknowledgment that “the unity of the one and only church of Christ transcends human powers and gifts.”<sup>93</sup> This realisation affirms the existence of the Catholic Church within the eschatological paradox of “now” but “not yet.” Unity is essential to the full realisation of what the Church is; yet, unity is impossible for us to achieve. Unity will only be brought to fruition by God, in God’s time. Therefore, with a strong sense of humility, *UR* states that the Council “places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the holy Spirit.”<sup>94</sup> While the consequences of division are great indeed, the foundation of Vatican II’s hope for Christian unity far surpasses them.

Hope for unity is grounded in Christ’s prayer “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). As we celebrate the Eucharist in his name, because he willed it of us, we should hope in the same way for Christian unity. The hope for unity is grounded in the Father’s love for us, which is the foundation of all creation’s existence. The hope for unity is rooted in the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who dwells within our hearts and, Jesus says, “will teach you everything” (Jn 14:26). It is in this way, the *Decree* attests, that the Church “makes its pilgrim way in hope.”<sup>95</sup> The words of the Council evoke a connection between the nature of the Church as pilgrim and the ecumenical endeavour, which is a key underpinning of SE.

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<sup>93</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2.

Moreover, the call to “interior conversion” which is at the heart of SE needs to be seen in the context of Vatican II’s ecclesiology.<sup>96</sup> In *Lumen Gentium*, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the Council asserts that the church “will receive its perfection only in” the *eschaton*.<sup>97</sup> Until then, the “pilgrim church... carries the mark of this world which will pass,” and must “groan and... suffer the pains of childbirth.”<sup>98</sup> The ecumenical significance of this ecclesiology cannot be overstated.

The image of the church as pilgrim counteracts the model of the church as the perfect society (*societas perfecta*) which influenced Catholic ecclesiology from the nineteenth century up until Vatican II.<sup>99</sup> In its original conception, the image of the church as the perfect society was understood in the sense that the Church was a *complete* society, possessing “all the means a society needed to pursue its own aims,” and therefore was independent of other societies.<sup>100</sup> It was conceived during the Middle Ages in a primarily defensive and juridical setting influenced by power-struggles between “popes and emperors.”<sup>101</sup> However, over time from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century there was a critical shift in thinking from asserting that the Church possesses “the necessary means of salvation” to “implying that it was” in *actuality*, the perfect society.<sup>102</sup>

Debate over this ecclesiological model can be seen behind the drafting of the *Constitution on the Church*. The first draft of *LG* states unequivocally that “only the Catholic Roman has a right to be called the church.”<sup>103</sup> The implication

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<sup>96</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>97</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 48.

<sup>98</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 48.

<sup>99</sup> Rembert Weakland, “Images of the Church: From ‘Perfect Society’ to ‘God’s People on Pilgrimage,’” in *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years After Vatican II*, ed. Austen Ivereigh (New York: Continuum, 2003), 79-83.

<sup>100</sup> Weakland, “Images of the Church,” 79.

<sup>101</sup> Weakland, “Images of the Church,” 79.

<sup>102</sup> Weakland, “Images of the Church,” 80-81.

<sup>103</sup> First draft of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, quoted in Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 41.



that, therefore, Protestant and Orthodox traditions are not churches was rejected by many bishops. Consequently, the second draft states that the church of Christ “is” the Catholic Church, echoing the image of the Church as the perfect society. However, the conception of the Church as perfect in reality was highly contested by many bishops during Vatican II. The final draft made the ground-breaking decision to change “is” to “subsists in.”<sup>104</sup> Hahnenberg calls this “what might be the single most important word change of the whole Council.”<sup>105</sup> By stating that the church of Christ “subsists in” the Catholic Church, the bishops maintained more of the original sense of the image of the *societas perfecta* (that the Church holds all the means of salvation), without the triumphalist overtones that the Church is actually perfect, here and now.

All this leads the Council to declare that the Church’s perfection will only be fully realised in the *eschaton*.<sup>106</sup> Because of this, Vatican II emphasises that the Church is *semper reformanda*, always in need of reform. It is this ecclesiological shift, from perfect society to pilgrim church that allows discussion of the sinfulness and imperfections of the current Church, and opens the door to Spiritual Ecumenism. Such critical evaluation of sinfulness and fault can be seen in the Decree’s acknowledgement that “both sides were to blame” for the breaking of the Church during the Reformation.<sup>107</sup> As *UR* attests, “Every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement toward unity.”<sup>108</sup> The *Decree on Ecumenism* states that Catholics should pray for other Christians, show them

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<sup>104</sup> Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 41.

<sup>105</sup> Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 41.

<sup>106</sup> Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 48.

<sup>107</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 114.

<sup>108</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 5.

concern, inform them about the Catholic Church, and make “the first approaches towards them.”<sup>109</sup> However, the “primary duty” of Catholics,

is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and more faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have been handed down from Christ through the apostles.<sup>110</sup>

This clearly posits ecumenism as a reform movement within the Church herself.

Ecumenism starts from the Church’s truthful and critical self-appraisal, in the spirit of continuing conversion to Christ. This conversion is necessary, *UR* explains, because “although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should.”<sup>111</sup> Far from being perfect here and now, the Council acknowledges the eschatological tension between “now” and “not yet” within the Church.

The Church does, indeed, have truth and grace, parts of the “now,” but it is still also inflicted with sin and human frailty. *UR* goes on to state that, “as a result,” the sinfulness of the Church is recognised outside the Church, both by other Christians and the world. Consequently, the Church’s very mission, “the growth of God’s kingdom is retarded.”<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the sinfulness of the Church must be recognised within, by its members. So, the Decree states:

All Catholics must therefore aim at Christian perfection and, according to their various stations, all play their part, that the church, which bears in her own body the humility and dying of Jesus, may daily be more purified and renewed, against the day when Christ will present her to himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>111</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>112</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

As a pilgrim church, rather than perfect society, all Catholics must strive towards deeper conversion, to more authentically represent a church that bears “the humility and dying” of Christ. As such, Vatican II calls the Church to a renewed sense of repentance and humility. The Decree goes on to explain: “Christ summons the church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution here on earth.”<sup>114</sup> Because of this, *UR* outlines, if “there have been deficiencies” such as in “moral conduct,” “church discipline,” or “even in the way that the church teaching has been formulated” then “these should be set right at the opportune moment and in the proper way.”<sup>115</sup> The Church’s renewed sense of humility, and awareness of sinfulness, leads it to seek conversion and reform. This humility also extends to the Catholic Church’s relations with other Christians.

The pilgrim nature of the Church links with the Council’s ground-breaking ecclesiological shift, from identifying the church of Christ *with* the Catholic Church, to the church of Christ existing fully, but not exclusively, within the Catholic Church.<sup>116</sup> This more humble declaration moves away from the return model which previously dominated Catholic attitudes towards ecumenism, and lays the foundations for genuine ecumenism. As *UR* states, “Church renewal therefore has notable ecumenical importance.”<sup>117</sup> As pilgrim, the Church has not yet received the totality of fullness or truth; it is eschatologically still “on the way.” As such, all theology remains provisional. Ecumenists cannot argue the absolute truth of any one doctrine or belief; we exist within the eschatological

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<sup>114</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 6.

<sup>116</sup> This can be seen throughout the drafting process of *Lumen Gentium*. The first draft of *LG* states unequivocally that “only the Catholic Roman has a right to be called the church.” The second draft asserts that the church of Christ “is” the Catholic Church. Between the second and final draft of *LG*, the Council made the radical decision to change the statement that the church of Christ “is” the Catholic Church, to the church of Christ “subsists in” the Catholic Church. For a brief outline of the process, see Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 41.

<sup>117</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 6.

tension of the “now” but “not yet.” Furthermore, from the beginning, Christian unity has been recognised not as a human task to create, but as a Christ-given, Spirit-led endeavour. The fullness of unity will only come through God’s will, and in God’s time. With its essence of hope, ecumenism must also accept, at times, working in the dark, for “hope that is seen is not hope” (Rom 8:24). In this light, ecumenism becomes a deeply humble exercise, appropriate for a pilgrim church. Here, we can see the ecclesiological underpinning for the concept of interior conversion.

Spiritual Ecumenism formulates ecumenism as a process of conversion, rather than a purely abstract, academic, or rational pursuit. The *Decree on Ecumenism* unequivocally attests, “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion.”<sup>118</sup> The use of the word “interior” is of key importance, as ecumenism is not something the Church undertakes for external reasons, but because it is necessary for the Catholic Church within itself. SE is intrinsically a reform movement within the Church, seeking its ever-deepening conversion in Christ. Therefore, as Cardinal Cassidy explains, ecumenism cannot be merely considered “a program of the Catholic Church; ecumenism is in the nature of being the Catholic Church. The Church cannot be true to itself unless it is ecumenical.”<sup>119</sup> This only makes sense in the context of ecumenism as interior conversion, with its basis in the self-understanding of the Church as a pilgrim.

After asserting the priority of interior conversion for ecumenism, the Decree goes on to explain: “For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a

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<sup>118</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7. Note: this, and all references used in the body of the thesis, is the Flannery translation; the quote used on page iii is a different translation, from the Vatican website.

<sup>119</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” in *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II’s Encyclical Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 12.

mature way.”<sup>120</sup> Here, the spiritual, virtuous, and emotional aspects of ecumenism are given precedence. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council illustrates that ecumenism is primarily a virtuous activity, rather than an intellectual one. Regarding diversity and difference in “spiritual life and discipline,” “liturgical rites,” and “even in the theological elaborating of revealed truth,” that is, theological interpretation, *UR* declares “In all things let charity prevail.”<sup>121</sup> Love is above all, the concern of Christians, for, after all, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Love has priority above all else, as St Paul teaches: “if I...understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith...but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:2). *UR* affirms that if love is given the highest priority in ecumenism, then “they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the church.”<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, *UR* exhorts Christians to “pray to the holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely *self-denying, humble, gentle* in the service of others and to have an *attitude of generosity* toward them.”<sup>123</sup> The Decree goes on to quote Ephesians 4:1-3, emphasising the Christian call to live with humility, meekness, patience, love, and unity in peace.<sup>124</sup> The ecumenical task must be carried out, therefore, with these virtues. Moreover, dialogue between Catholics and other Christians must be undertaken with “love for the truth, with charity, and with humility.”<sup>125</sup> Finally, *UR* points to the importance of the virtue of hope, as it is “our common hope which does not play us false.”<sup>126</sup>

After asserting that aspects of “truth” exist outside the Catholic Church, forming the basis for interior conversion, the Council goes on to affirm that “since

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<sup>120</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>121</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>122</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7. Italics added.

<sup>124</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 11.

<sup>126</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 12.

these are gifts belonging to the church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards catholic unity.”<sup>127</sup> The idea of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts is founded on Vatican II’s recognition of the existence of “some, though imperfect communion” between Catholics and other baptised Christians.<sup>128</sup>

Again, the Decree draws upon the ecclesiology outlined in *Lumen Gentium*. *LG* affirms that “the church has many reasons for knowing that it is joined to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity of communion under the successor of Peter.”<sup>129</sup> *LG* goes on, “For there are many” who share the same belief in the Trinity; the role of Scripture; Baptism, and other sacraments. Moreover, “many of them” have the episcopate; celebrate the Eucharist; and practice devotion to Mother Mary. Further, there is a “communion in prayer and other spiritual benefits.” Perhaps most importantly, “there is a true union in the Holy Spirit for, by his gifts and graces, his sanctifying power is active in them also and he has strengthened some of them even to the shedding of their blood.”<sup>130</sup> *LG* affirms that the impulse towards unity comes from the Spirit, who “stirs up desires and actions in all of Christ’s disciples in order that all may be peacefully united, as Christ ordained, in one flock under one shepherd.”<sup>131</sup>

In a similar manner, *UR* professes that “even in spite of” obstacles, “it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ,” and therefore deserve to be called Christians, and recognised as “sisters and brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 8.

<sup>128</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 15.

<sup>130</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 15.

<sup>131</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 15.

<sup>132</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

Therefore, a real, though incomplete, communion exists already between Catholics and other baptised Christians.

However, it is important to note that the Decree does not express complete equality between the Catholic Church and other Christian traditions. *UR* states that “nevertheless, our separated sisters and brothers” are “not blessed” with the “unity” Jesus Christ desired his Church to have, namely, “that unity which the holy scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the church proclaim.” The implication is that these are maintained only in the Catholic Church, which upholds both Scripture and Tradition. “For,” the Decree insists, “it is through Christ’s Catholic church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.”<sup>133</sup>

Vatican II goes so far as to emphasise the importance of the Ecumenical Movement as belonging to the nature of the Church itself, along with its pilgrim nature, including acknowledgement of the Church’s sinfulness. However, in regards to other Christians, the Catholic Church is still the only church to have “the fullness of the means of salvation,” something which evokes the notion of the church as the perfect society. We must remember, as Hahnenberg points out, to read the *Decree on Ecumenism* in context. He writes, that while from today’s perspective, such a claim might seem “arrogant and patronizing” it was in fact a “real breakthrough.”<sup>134</sup> Because, at the time, Catholic teaching questioned the “very possibility of salvation for Protestants.”<sup>135</sup> Moreover, while this sentence refers to an important theological point in the self-understanding of the Catholic Church, one which cannot be simply dismissed, it should also be interpreted within the context of the Decree as a whole.

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<sup>133</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>134</sup> Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 118.

<sup>135</sup> Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 118.

As a whole, *UR* represents an almost 360 degree turn around in the Catholic Church's approach and openness to other Christian Churches. Stephen Duffy points out that *UR* "was a quantum leap and light years ahead of any previous Roman Catholic pronouncement on ecumenism."<sup>136</sup> He makes the further assessment, written in 1984, that it "is also theologically more advanced than anything issued from Rome on ecumenism since the Council."<sup>137</sup>

Moreover, *UR* qualifies the possible exaggeration of such a statement by affirming that "some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church."<sup>138</sup> This fact forms the very basis for ecumenical dialogue. As the Decree explains, "It follows that the separated churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from the defects already mentioned, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation."<sup>139</sup> This is because of the Holy Spirit working within their churches, leading them to develop certain gifts "which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, [and] belong by right to the one Church of Christ."<sup>140</sup> Here, *UR* affirms that Catholics must "gladly" recognise the "truly Christian endowments from our common heritage" to be found amongst other Christian communities, for "God is always wonderful in his works and worthy of all praise."<sup>141</sup> The Decree takes this one step further, by attesting that:

anything wrought by the grace of the holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brothers and sisters can contribute to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it

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<sup>136</sup> Stephen Duffy, "Catholicism's Search for a New Self-Understanding," in *Vatican II: Open Questions and New Horizons*, ed. Gerald M. Fagin (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1984), 14.

<sup>137</sup> Duffy, "Catholicism's Search for a New Self-Understanding," 14.

<sup>138</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>140</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>141</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.



can always bring a more perfect realization of the very mystery of Christ and the church.<sup>142</sup>

Therefore, not only can the Catholic community accept the inspiration of the Spirit within other Christian communities, but the gifts given to them by the Spirit can enrich the Catholic Church. As pilgrim, the fullness of the Church has not been attained, and therefore the Church can always move closer to the mystery of the Church of Christ. It is here that we come to the theological underpinning for ecumenism as an exchange of gifts.

As the essence of Spiritual Ecumenism, interior conversion itself draws on the process of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts. The acknowledgement that Christian communities have gifts for sharing, giving, and receiving, recognises that no one ecclesial community has the *total* fullness of the body of Christ. Discussion of the ecumenical gift exchange brings us to the work of John Paul II, who, building on *UR*, focuses on the theme of the ecumenical gift exchange in *Ut Unum Sint*.

#### **3.2.4. The Groundwork for Receptive Ecumenism in *Ut Unum Sint***

John Paul II's 1995 encyclical "*Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism*," is a key influence on RE. Born Karol Józef Wojtyła (1920-2005), he served as Pope John Paul II from 1978 until his death. Before becoming Pope, he attended the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Throughout his pontificate, he strongly supported the reforms of Vatican II and the ecumenical endeavour. His emphasis on the importance of ecumenism is described as being an "unremitting commitment... that has characterized his papacy from the beginning."<sup>143</sup> He often repeated that the Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism is

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<sup>142</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, "Introduction," in *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 1.

“irrevocable.”<sup>144</sup> He worked to improve inter-faith relationships as well as relations with other Christians, particularly the Orthodox Church.

*UUS* is John Paul II’s twelfth encyclical, and is a landmark document for Catholic ecumenism. As Cardinal Edward Cassidy points out, it is “the first encyclical letter ever written on the subject of ecumenism,” and has “made a vital contribution to the ecumenical movement.”<sup>145</sup> Kasper describes *UUS* as “the great, important and even prophetic ecumenical encyclical of John Paul II.”<sup>146</sup> *UUS* was a major inspiration for such influential ecumenists as Kasper and O’Gara. Cardinal Cassidy considers that “certainly no other papal encyclical has been so widely distributed and studied outside the Catholic Church.”<sup>147</sup> Moreover, responses from other churches towards *UUS* have been generally positive.<sup>148</sup>

*UUS*, written thirty years after *UR*, builds upon the teachings of Vatican II. The Pope writes in *UUS* that it is our “duty” to “listen to and put into practice” the teachings of Vatican II.<sup>149</sup> In particular, he emphasises the Spiritual Ecumenism espoused in *UR* as the “soul” of the entire ecumenical endeavour.<sup>150</sup> There are three points of particular relevance to the later development of RE: i) *UUS*’s re-affirmation of the importance of ecumenism; ii) *UUS*’s tone of humility; and iii),

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<sup>144</sup> See *UUS*, no. 3 for one instance of John Paul II making this statement. For examples of scholars quoting his statement, see: O’Gara, “Ecumenism’s Future,” 11. Peter Cross, “John Paul II and Ecumenism,” in *John Paul II: Legacy and Witness*, ed. Robert Gascoigne (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2007), 121. Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” 11. Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.” The Catholic Church’s “irreversible” commitment to ecumenism was re-affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI after his election in 2005.

<sup>145</sup> Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” 10.

<sup>146</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 34.

<sup>147</sup> Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” 10.

<sup>148</sup> For an outline of different ecumenical bodies’ responses to the encyclical, ranging from the WCC, the Orthodox churches, the House of Bishops of the Church of England, and Reformed and Evangelical responses, please see Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” 16-24.

<sup>149</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 1.

<sup>150</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

John Paul II's re-emphasis on ecumenism as an "exchange of gifts."<sup>151</sup> These key aspects will be discussed in turn, highlighting their influence on RE.

The first chapter of *UUS* re-affirms the ecumenical teachings of the Second Vatican Council. In particular, John Paul II strongly emphasises that unity is God's will, and as such, it is intertwined with God's plan of salvation for humanity.<sup>152</sup> Because it is central to God's plan, as William Henn points out, disunity cannot be seen as a "minor flaw that can be tolerated," but is rather of paramount importance.<sup>153</sup> John Paul II makes this clear: "To believe in Christ means to desire unity."<sup>154</sup> As Henn observes, the significance of *UUS* can perhaps best be seen in conjunction with other papal encyclicals on Christian unity, such as Leo XIII's *Satis Cognitum* (1896) and Pius XI's *Mortalium Animos* (1928).<sup>155</sup> These two encyclicals affirm the return model of ecumenism. Like the other encyclicals, *UUS* also deals with ecclesial unity but it does so in light of the teachings of Vatican II.<sup>156</sup>

In particular, unity is considered with reference to *LG*'s much discussed statement that, while the Church of Christ "subsists in" the Catholic Church, "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure."<sup>157</sup> With this acknowledgement, the teachings of Vatican II, re-affirmed in *UUS*, appear to shift away from the return model of ecumenism, and open the way for a more open Catholic ecumenical engagement. However, whether or not there is in fact a movement away from the return model is still debatable.

Paragraph 86 of *UUS*, which paraphrases *LG* no. 8 and *UR* no. 3, could be read as

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<sup>151</sup> The concept first appears in Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1964, no. 64. The actual expression "an exchange of gifts" then appears in *LG*, no. 13, and is referenced by John Paul II in *UUS*, no. 28.

<sup>152</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 6.

<sup>153</sup> William Henn, "Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism," *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 2 (2000): 235.

<sup>154</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 9.

<sup>155</sup> Henn, "Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism," 234.

<sup>156</sup> Henn, "Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism," 235.

<sup>157</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 8.

either supporting the return model or moving away from it: “the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church... Full unity will come about when all share in the fullness of the means of salvation entrusted by Christ to his Church.”<sup>158</sup>

Henn points out the ambiguity here: “Are the Council and pope really saying nothing different from what was said by earlier popes, only now with a deceptively honeyed tongue?”<sup>159</sup> However, he declares after consideration, “I think not.”<sup>160</sup> Following Henn, Vatican II can be seen as broadening the horizons of ecumenical engagement beyond a simple “return” model. This is a point of particular importance for RE, as RE is incompatible with the return model. Certainly, as discussed above, Vatican II signals a change in tone in ecumenical discourse – which is clearly conveyed in *UUS*.

Though there is common agreement that ecumenism pertains to God’s will, one of the major distinctions between John Paul II’s encyclical and earlier papal letters on unity mentioned above, is the tone of expression. Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright describes *UUS* as “personal... in style, passionate in tone, and pastoral in aim... [It] expresses gratitude and joy at what has so far been achieved in the ecumenical movement and calls for continued conversion.”<sup>161</sup> In particular, compared to earlier encyclicals, its attitude is one of evident humility. Here, Henn’s analysis of *UUS* is worth quoting in detail:

The golden thread running through these paragraphs is an emphasis on that humility which acknowledges failure and seeks reform (paras 18-20), which prays that God’s grace will overcome what seem insuperable obstacles to unity (paras 21-27) and which will allow dialogue to be genuinely a moment of conversion (paras 28-39, esp. 33-35). The comments about the relative fullness and defects of the various Christian communities need to be understood within these affirmations about the humility

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<sup>158</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 86.

<sup>159</sup> Henn, “Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” 238.

<sup>160</sup> Henn, “Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” 238.

<sup>161</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, “Ut Unum Sint,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky, et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 1184.

needed to change. It is clear in these texts that the Catholic Church also needs to change. Indeed, the most explicit calls for conversion and forgiveness in this encyclical concern the conversion of Peter (paras 4, 91-94) and the request for forgiveness of any painful recollections which may have resulted from the past exercise of papal authority (paras 88).<sup>162</sup>

As Henn makes clear, humility is an underpinning note throughout the encyclical. This tone of humility and the recognition of the need for the Catholic Church's own continuing conversion, resonates strongly a decade later in RE.

Rather than a one-sided return model demanding that other Christians acknowledge their failures and be reconciled with the Catholic Church, the Church comes to humbly acknowledge "*the weaknesses of her members.*"<sup>163</sup> Humility must inform ecumenical endeavour, as *UUS* maintains: "Even after the many sins which have contributed to our historical divisions, *Christian unity is possible*, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion."<sup>164</sup> John Paul II takes seriously Vatican II's assertion that the Church is a "pilgrim Church."<sup>165</sup> He goes so far as to refer to himself as a "pilgrim" in *UUS*.<sup>166</sup> Ecumenism is possible if we humbly recognise our mistakes, and strive for conversion, which in itself can be considered an act of humility. The conduct of ecumenism in a spirit of humility leads to understanding Christian unity as an exchange of gifts, which is the third key feature of relevance.

John Paul II states, "Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts.'"<sup>167</sup> This is a highly significant statement for Catholic ecumenical dialogue. An ecumenical exchange of gifts means that the pilgrimage towards conversion cannot be undertaken alone. As he describes,

<sup>162</sup> Henn, "Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism," 238.

<sup>163</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 3.

<sup>164</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 34.

<sup>165</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 50.

<sup>166</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 25.

<sup>167</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 28.

“Communities strive to give in mutual exchange what each one needs in order to grow towards definitive fullness in accordance with God’s plan.”<sup>168</sup> Ecumenism as a “gift exchange” emphasises profound humility, as the Catholic Church recognises both areas within *itself* for improvement, and its need to receive gifts from *other* ecclesial groups.<sup>169</sup> Through this exchange of gifts, the church community may move closer towards fuller realisation of the body of Christ. Moreover, “This mutual help in the search for truth is a sublime form of evangelical charity.”<sup>170</sup> Ecumenism is therefore, above all, an act of love.

Ecumenism is not only undertaken on the level of the head, or intellectual level, but also at the level of the heart, and the change of heart entailed in conversion. Vatican II’s acknowledgement of elements of truth within other churches invites the Christian community to search for greater unity through an exchange of gifts: “Communion is made fruitful by the exchange of gifts between the Churches insofar as they complement each other.”<sup>171</sup> Such an exchange benefits all, as John Paul II observes, referencing *UR* no. 4, “everything that the Spirit brings about in ‘others’ can serve for the building up of all communities.”<sup>172</sup> This exchange is both the cause and effect of the dialogical nature of ecumenism in the light of the Church’s eschatological hope. Therefore, the ecumenical path is a “long and arduous pilgrimage,” performed with an “attitude of conversion to the will of the Father and, at the same time, of repentance and absolute trust in the reconciling power of...Christ.”<sup>173</sup> Consequently, according to *UUS*,

Ecumenism implies that the Christian communities should help one another so that there may be truly present in them the full content and all the requirements of the ‘heritage

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<sup>168</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 87.

<sup>169</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 57.

<sup>170</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 78.

<sup>171</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 57.

<sup>172</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 38.

<sup>173</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 82.

handed down by the Apostles.’ Without this, full communion will never be possible.<sup>174</sup>

An ecumenical exchange of gifts means that ecumenism cannot be undertaken alone. This pilgrimage towards conversion takes place in the company of others. In this spirit, John Paul II reflects on what the Catholic Church has already received through ecumenism.<sup>175</sup> He explains that “this process of mutual enrichment must be taken seriously into account.”<sup>176</sup> Moreover, he suggests that this exchange of gifts, made possible due to our real but partial communion, leads to the mutual improvement of the churches, and ultimately towards the final goal of ecumenism, which is nothing less than full visible unity.<sup>177</sup>

In one of the most well-known passages of *UUS*, John Paul II offers an example of this “exchange of gifts” in a spirit of humility regarding the Petrine ministry. Not without justification, Peter Cross describes this section of *UUS* as “a bombshell.”<sup>178</sup> Firstly, the Pope acknowledges that the Papal office “constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians.”<sup>179</sup> He then asks,

Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21)?<sup>180</sup>

The importance of this section is attested to by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson in their edited volume devoted to offering “an ecumenically representative response” to this part of the encyclical.<sup>181</sup> The humility expressed in the request, and as

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<sup>174</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 78.

<sup>175</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 87.

<sup>176</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 87.

<sup>177</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 87.

<sup>178</sup> Cross, “John Paul II and Ecumenism,” 124.

<sup>179</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 88.

<sup>180</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 96.

<sup>181</sup> Braaten and Jenson, “Introduction,” 1.

Henn notes, the implied “openness to modify the present forms of the exercise of this ministry,” reflects the shift in attitude towards ecumenism brought about by Vatican II.<sup>182</sup> Such a statement represents significant change since encyclicals such as *Mortalium Animos*, and highlights the ground-breaking import of *UUS*.

A decade later, Murray explains the influence that *UUS* has upon his development of RE. He expresses that John Paul II’s call to theologians and leaders in Christian traditions to reimagine the role of the papacy “is an invitation which exemplifies the strategy and virtues of Receptive Ecumenism as here called for.”<sup>183</sup> Our investigation of RE’s ancestry leads us now to consider a more immediate influence on RE, that of the work of Walter Kasper.

### 3.2.5. Walter Kasper’s Emphasis on Spiritual Ecumenism

The context of RE, particularly in the years immediately preceding it, was considerably influenced by the prominent ecumenist, Cardinal Walter Kasper (1933 - ). Kasper is president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, serving as president from 2005-2010. He has authored dozens of books.<sup>184</sup> More to the point, he is highly supportive of RE. He describes it as no less than a “new spring within the ecumenical movement.”<sup>185</sup> His support is explicitly recognised in the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume, dedicated to Kasper, “with gratitude...for his inspiration in the way of Receptive Ecumenism.”<sup>186</sup> Kasper also contributed a chapter to the volume.<sup>187</sup> Unfortunately, a consideration of the breadth of Kasper’s work on ecumenism is not possible here. Therefore, this section will be limited to his influence on RE. In this regard, two key aspects

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<sup>182</sup> Henn, “Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” 243.

<sup>183</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 13.

<sup>184</sup> Some of his important books on ecumenism include *That They May All Be One* (2004), *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (2007), and *Harvesting the Fruits* (2009).

<sup>185</sup> Kasper, “Foreword,” viii.

<sup>186</sup> See the Dedication Page of Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*.

<sup>187</sup> Kasper, “Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam.”



are of particular importance: Kasper's assertion that ecumenism is in a state of transition; and his focus on Spiritual Ecumenism.

Kasper repeatedly states that ecumenism is in a "transitional" period, requiring a fresh approach.<sup>188</sup> He is acutely aware of the need for a shift in ecumenical thinking and practices. In *Harvesting the Fruits*, he discusses both the achievements of the Ecumenical Movement, and the challenges it still faces.<sup>189</sup> He seems in little doubt of the existence of an "ecumenical winter," as is Murray after him. As Kasper asserts, "The fact that ecumenism is facing a critical moment cannot be denied."<sup>190</sup> During his 2005 presentation at the event marking the 40th anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, he states:

In order to start with renewed enthusiasm and energy in the new century we have to clarify the foundations, the vision, the ways and the practice of the ecumenical movement; above all, there is a need for spiritual ecumenism.<sup>191</sup>

In this regard, Kasper draws explicitly upon the foundations laid by Vatican II as he writes,

Full communion cannot be achieved by convergence alone but also, and perhaps even more, by conversion which implies repentance, forgiveness and renewal of heart. Such a conversion is also a gift of grace.<sup>192</sup>

He is implying a shift in ecumenical focus, in line with Vatican II. He focuses on the spiritual attitudes underpinning ecumenism, and above all, readiness for conversion, rather than just the doctrinal or intellectual issues that were previously the main consideration. He explains, "in the end it is not we who 'make' and create unity. The unity of the Church is the gift of God's Spirit."<sup>193</sup> While

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<sup>188</sup> Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century."

<sup>189</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*.

<sup>190</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century."

<sup>192</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 45.

<sup>193</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 45.

ecumenism is in a state of change, any solution must be seen in light of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, with an awareness of repentance, forgiveness, and conversion.

Kasper's acknowledgment that unity stems ultimately from the Holy Spirit echoes the more humble tone of *UR* and *UUS*. He is quite definite on the need for Catholic ecumenical theology to "be linked to spiritual ecumenism."<sup>194</sup> He argues that the solution to current problems must be looked for within the "very heart" of ecumenism, namely, Spiritual Ecumenism.<sup>195</sup> For him, SE "does not mean any spirit but the Spirit of Jesus Christ."<sup>196</sup> Only by surrendering to the Spirit and developing a renewed ecumenical spirituality, can progress occur.<sup>197</sup> On the topic of "ecumenical spirituality," he writes:

Ecumenical spirituality means listening and opening ourselves to the demands of the Spirit who also speaks through different forms of piety; it means a readiness to rethink and convert, but also to bear the otherness of the other, which requires tolerance, patience, respect and, not least, goodwill and love....<sup>198</sup>

Thus, Kasper contributes much to the growing rediscovery of the significance of SE, and to the broader issue of ecumenical spirituality.<sup>199</sup> Here, a distinction is necessary: while considerations of ecumenical spirituality and SE inevitably overlap, the connotations of ecumenical spirituality are more general. Spirituality is a problematic term, requiring critical assessment. Kasper concedes that there are types of spirituality which are "superficial," and "even so-called ecumenical spirituality."<sup>200</sup> He proposes that every spirituality "must be questioned about the

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<sup>194</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 45.

<sup>195</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 156. Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century."

<sup>196</sup> Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century."

<sup>197</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

<sup>198</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 160.

<sup>199</sup> Kasper attempts to work out what "could be an appropriate ecumenical spirituality," on the "basis of a reflective theology of the Holy Spirit," using three steps: universal effectiveness, Christological basis, and Life of the Church. See *That They May All Be One*, 162-168.

<sup>200</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 161.

spirit behind it, whether it is the Holy Spirit or the spirit of the world.”<sup>201</sup> The postmodern tendency to uncritically embrace spirituality must therefore be tempered by prayer, openness to the Holy Spirit, and solid theological ecumenism.

This is where the value and stability of SE can be found. SE is concretely grounded in *UR*, and represents a specific, Catholic perspective on ecumenism, with a particularly pneumatological focus. In short, the terms, “ecumenical spirituality” and “Spiritual Ecumenism” are not interchangeable. One refers to a myriad of diverse approaches and emphases, whereas the other is firmly structured in an ecclesiology and a specific perspective, clearly stemming from the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement.

What is more, Kasper sees SE as particularly suited to our postmodern context.<sup>202</sup> He considers that SE:

corresponds to our present intellectual milieu which, on the one hand, is influenced by post-modern relativism and scepticism and on the other also longs for spiritual experience and a spiritual alternative to our modern and post-modern lifestyle, which many feel to be empty and void.<sup>203</sup>

He explains that the postmodern context involves suspicion of doctrines, ideologies, authority, and institutions.<sup>204</sup> But it also entails a desire for spiritual experience, “vague and residual as it often may be.”<sup>205</sup> This means that a renewed focus on Christian spirituality, and SE in particular, is the way forward for ecumenical, and indeed, missionary progress.<sup>206</sup> At a time which may not be receptive to theological ecumenism alone, ecumenical renewal depends on re-emphasising SE as at the core of the ecumenical endeavour.

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<sup>201</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 161.

<sup>202</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

<sup>203</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

<sup>204</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

<sup>205</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

<sup>206</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

Many of the key themes of Kasper's work are found in RE. RE was initiated on the understanding of the contemporary period as an interim stage for ecumenism. Aspects of Kasper's SE are also central to RE, such as the central emphasis on interior conversion. Kasper writes that ecumenical dialogue with other churches and ecclesial communities "presupposes" an initial *inward* step which entails us "learning from each other and self-reform."<sup>207</sup> In this respect, he asserts that ecumenism is both *ad extra* in its relationship to other churches, and *ad intra* in recognition of the Catholic Church's need for conversion.<sup>208</sup> In Kasper's theology, "interior conversion" is the hallmark of SE. He thus foreshadows the methodology of RE as involving a cycle of internal reflection (on what the church may lack), and external engagement (on what others may have to offer). Kasper's interpretation of SE is grounded within *UUS*, Vatican II, and Couturier. We can clearly see significant connections between RE and the broader Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, a heritage which is further evidenced in the work of Margaret O'Gara.

### **3.2.6. Margaret O'Gara's *Ecumenical Gift Exchange***

Margaret O'Gara (1947-2012) was a distinguished academic, working at the University of St Michael's College, Toronto from 1975 to 2012. She was a "champion of ecumenism," a Catholic ecumenist who served from 1976 to 1993 on Canada's Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue.<sup>209</sup> She has also been a member of the Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue since 1983, the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue since 1994, the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada since 2008, and the Lutheran-

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<sup>207</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

<sup>208</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44, 74.

<sup>209</sup> Diana Swift, "Margaret O'Gara 1947-2012," *Anglican Journal* 138, no. 8 (2012): 8.

Roman Catholic International Commission for Unity from 1995-2006.<sup>210</sup> She was a founding member of a North American organisation facilitating dialogue between Mennonites and Catholics, called Bridgefolk, from 2002-2012.<sup>211</sup>

Her contribution to ecumenical work is staggering, and is “unusual, even within the ranks of dedicated ecumenical theologians,” as her husband, Michael Vertin points out.<sup>212</sup> While O’Gara served on more than one dialogue at a time, if the years she spent on these dialogues were to be added together, the cumulative total would be an extraordinary eighty-nine years of ecumenical service.<sup>213</sup>

Moreover, O’Gara was also President of the North American Academy of Ecumenists (1987-1989) and the Catholic Theological Society of America (2007-2008).<sup>214</sup> Thus, O’Gara’s significance as a Catholic ecumenist is one worthy of recognition and her legacy is still to be fully discovered.

More specifically, O’Gara is also connected to the development of RE. In 2006, she co-facilitated the first RE colloquium. She also contributed a chapter to the major *Receptive Ecumenism* volume.<sup>215</sup> O’Gara’s chapter is the second in the volume, after Murray’s own. However, unlike the other influences discussed here (Couturier, Congar, *UUS*, and Kasper), according to Murray, O’Gara’s work did not influence the development of RE. Murray attests that he did not read her work either before the RE conferences, or in the initial stages of RE’s conception.<sup>216</sup> This fact makes the parallels and similarities between O’Gara’s and Murray’s ecumenical approaches even more striking, as will be seen. It also lends credence

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<sup>210</sup> Margaret O’Gara, “Witnessing the Ecumenical Future Together,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2011): 368.

<sup>211</sup> Michael Vertin, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), xx.

<sup>212</sup> Vertin, “Editor’s Introduction,” xx.

<sup>213</sup> Vertin, “Editor’s Introduction,” xx.

<sup>214</sup> Swift, “Margaret O’Gara 1947-2012,” 8.

<sup>215</sup> O’Gara, “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue.”

<sup>216</sup> I asked Paul Murray about Margaret O’Gara and her involvement in Receptive Ecumenism at the third Receptive Ecumenism conference in Fairfield, June 2014, and the statement in the above text was his reply. To the best of my knowledge, Murray has not written anything about Margaret O’Gara’s work, nor has he referenced her work.

to the proposition that both O’Gara and Murray developed their ecumenical approaches out of the common source, so to speak, of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement.

O’Gara has written numerous articles and two books, one of which, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, can be seen as putting forward the key points of her ecumenical theology.<sup>217</sup> She planned a sequel, *No Turning Back*, which was edited and published posthumously by her husband in 2014.<sup>218</sup> Between them, the books serve as a collection of O’Gara’s work from 1986 to 2012. In particular, there are two key concepts found in Vatican II teachings and *UUS* which she expands on: ecumenism as “an exchange of gifts,” and the need for conversion. The two concepts are intertwined, as O’Gara points out, “Ecumenical dialogue allows the churches to receive gifts they need, but it also demands a readiness for such reception.”<sup>219</sup> Hospitality is a third important concept in her work.

In her 1998 book, O’Gara defines ecumenism as fundamentally a gift exchange: “In ecumenical dialogue, each Christian communion brings one or many gifts to the dialogue table, and each receives riches from their dialogue partners as well.”<sup>220</sup> This beneficial sharing of each other’s gifts leads all towards a greater fullness than would be possible in isolation. O’Gara rejects a charge frequently levelled at ecumenism, that it seeks to be “a kind of melting pot,” leading to the “elimination of the distinctive gifts of the many churches” and a “loss of identity.”<sup>221</sup> Instead, she argues, “the gift-giving enriches all of the partners, since we do not lose our gifts by sharing them with others.”<sup>222</sup> She

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<sup>217</sup> Margaret O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>218</sup> The book is *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014). Michael Vertin explains that O’Gara selected most of the papers, and began the editing process for the book, before illness forced her to stop. He finished the book according to her intentions. A complete bibliography of her work is also included.

<sup>219</sup> O’Gara, “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue,” 26.

<sup>220</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, vii.

<sup>221</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

<sup>222</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, vii.

provides some examples garnered over her years of ecumenical experience, which is worth quoting in length:

Where my Anglican partners have a rich understanding and practice of the conciliarity of the Church, they need and are seeking the leadership in teaching that can be provided in the Roman Catholic communion by the bishop of Rome. Where my own Roman Catholic communion has emphasized the communal character of faith and decision-making, we need to receive from my partners in the Disciples of Christ their effective emphasis on the personal appropriation of faith within the community of baptized believers. . . . Where one communion is clear about the priority of grace, another is clear about the implications of the Gospel for the social order. Where one communion is open to the opportunities provided by modern culture for proclaiming the Gospel, another is clear about the centrality of our trinitarian foundations.<sup>223</sup>

O’Gara has clearly experienced the ecumenical gift exchange in action, not just as a theoretical concept. So much so, that the gift exchange is a central theme of her ecumenical theology. It is also a unifying thread throughout the two collections of her papers.<sup>224</sup>

O’Gara builds on both *UR* and *UUS* in illustrating the ecumenical exchange of gifts. The notion of gift exchange becomes the fundamental basis for ecumenical activity: “the gifts exchanged in ecumenical dialogue are more like a mosaic, where every piece is. . . . needed for the full picture of the one Church of Christ.”<sup>225</sup> Here she emphasises the heart of John Paul II’s teachings on dialogue as fundamental to the nature of the human person, and essential to the Church.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, she explains, “The mosaic picture is damaged if any of the pieces is missing.”<sup>227</sup> It is only through dialogue with one another, through conversion, that the church can fully realise itself. This is why ecumenical dialogue is essential to the Catholic Church. As John Paul II asserts, “ecumenism is an

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<sup>223</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 3.

<sup>224</sup> Those two volumes being of course, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* and *No Turning Back*.

<sup>225</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

<sup>226</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 28 and no. 31.

<sup>227</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

organic part” of the Church’s “life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.”<sup>228</sup> Therefore, O’Gara explains, wherever “a church tradition’s emphases” may be “distorted due to isolation,” they “are corrected and complemented in the emerging mosaic that results from ecumenical gift exchange.”<sup>229</sup> In this way, the gift exchange inspires reform.

To accept a gift acknowledges at some level a *lack*. A sense of deficiency is itself an impulse towards conversion. As O’Gara writes, “Frequently the strength that one partner has to offer, the other partner lacks and needs.”<sup>230</sup> In this way, she writes that Catholics “have something to learn from the Mennonite tradition,” namely that the Mennonites have a long tradition of “ecclesial responsibility, including mutual accountability,” that “is shared by everyone in the church.”<sup>231</sup> She also believes that greater accountability to the people of the church would be a valuable gift, particularly in light of the scandal of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.<sup>232</sup> The similarities between O’Gara’s concept of the ecumenical exchange of gifts and RE, including an emphasis on learning, is unmistakable.

Moreover, she attests that any authentic ecumenical gift exchange arises out of humility and hope. Humility is required to acknowledge where the church in any way has not realised its fullness; and where another tradition might be able to inspire growth in that direction. And hope that Christ’s prayer will be answered, “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). There can be no hope without the humility that allows for the acceptance of gifts from another tradition. In O’Gara’s words, the Catholic Church undertakes ecumenism “in a spirit of repentance and a

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<sup>228</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 20.

<sup>229</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

<sup>230</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 3.

<sup>231</sup> Margaret O’Gara, “The Catholic Church in the World Today,” in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>232</sup> O’Gara, “The Catholic Church in the World Today,” 6.



new hope.”<sup>233</sup> She goes on to explain that, “These two spirits are linked together: repentance and the hope for reception of gifts.”<sup>234</sup> It is important to recognise this interplay of hope and humility in O’Gara’s conception of ecumenism, particularly in view of how ecumenism as a gift exchange interweaves with the recognition of ecumenism as conversion.

With her emphasis on conversion, O’Gara thinks of the Ecumenical Movement as fundamentally a reform movement within the church.<sup>235</sup> This assertion is based on *UR*’s declaration that ecumenism centres on “interior conversion.”<sup>236</sup> As with ecumenical gift exchange, in her discussion of conversion, the virtues of humility and hope work together. She argues that “reception” of ecumenical gifts is “prepared [for] by repentance and hope.”<sup>237</sup> From her practical experience with ecumenical dialogue, O’Gara observes that:

Colleagues involved in ecumenism share that same poignant experience of love for their own church traditions and restlessness within them, a kind of cognitive and emotional dissonance peculiar to the ecumenical task.<sup>238</sup>

Therefore, the desire for conversion stems out of love for one’s own tradition and impels toward reform.

However, the gift exchange is also a challenge, as she explains, “One of the gifts that Christian churches bring each other in dialogue is serious criticism.”<sup>239</sup> Lest the focus of the ecumenical endeavour veer off course into mutual condemnation or bitterness, however, O’Gara adds that “in this way...the Holy Spirit is using the ecumenical dialogue today to bring about the renewal of the Church.”<sup>240</sup> In line with Vatican II teachings, ecumenism must always remain

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<sup>233</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 3.

<sup>234</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 3.

<sup>235</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 4.

<sup>236</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>237</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, vii.

<sup>238</sup> O’Gara, “Witnessing the Ecumenical Future Together,” 376.

<sup>239</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

<sup>240</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

grounded in the Holy Spirit, as unity is “the work of the Holy Spirit among us.”<sup>241</sup>

Ecumenism offers not only the possibility of constructive criticism from the outside, but also requires a “self-critical repentance” from within.<sup>242</sup> With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church may critically reflect on itself, in consideration of where improvements could be made, or where forgiveness might need to be sought.

The impulse of ecumenism thus moves from the inside out, not merely from the outside in: as we have seen, this is also a key point in Kasper’s ecumenical theology. The ecumenical gift exchange is not asking the church to bare itself abjectly towards other Christian communities, and accept their judgment. Rather, the church is to consider itself critically, and then, with humility, approach other Christians for possible gifts that can be of mutual benefit. The basis for this comes from the real but partial communion present among separated Christians.<sup>243</sup> From out of this understanding, and in continuity with Vatican II teachings, O’Gara re-asserts that “the goal of ecumenical dialogue is the restoration of full, visible communion of the one Church of Christ for the sake of its mission.”<sup>244</sup> As such, recognition of the communion already in existence among Christians places an impetus on the theological concept of hospitality.

Underpinning the ecumenical gift exchange is the virtue of hospitality. There are two key aspects of significance here. Firstly, hospitality is a key theme in *Spiritual Ecumenism*.<sup>245</sup> Secondly, ecumenical hospitality is also grounded in

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<sup>241</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, xi.

<sup>242</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 3.

<sup>243</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>244</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 18.

<sup>245</sup> David Pascoe, “Hospitality Grounded in Humility: A Foundation for Inter-Ecclesial Learning,” (presentation, the Second International Receptive Ecumenism Conference: Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to be Church Together, Durham, January 2009), 2.

humility.<sup>246</sup> O’Gara emphasises hospitality as a powerful resource for ecumenical dialogue, stating: “ecumenical friends and colleagues from other church communions offer each other intellectual and emotional hospitality on the journey toward full communion.”<sup>247</sup> She goes on to express that “[i]n experiencing the hospitality of our dialogue partners, we often experience the deeper hospitality of mutual reception that is the goal of dialogue itself.”<sup>248</sup> The ecumenical gift exchange can only be properly undertaken within a spirit of hospitality. As she states, “real ecumenical collaboration calls for willingness to enter into relationships, to risk vulnerability for the sake of the common effort, and to reject competition.”<sup>249</sup> Therefore, this commitment to hospitality over competition is essential for the success of ecumenism.

The parallels between O’Gara’s and Murray’s ecumenical approaches are unmistakable. In considering the place of RE within the broader context of the Ecumenical Movement, Murray re-affirms that ecumenical unity is the work of the Spirit.<sup>250</sup> It is the Spirit, he explains, which inspires us “both in grace-filled delights in another’s beauties and in a longing awareness of a fitting match between our own particular lacks and needs and the other’s particular gifts.”<sup>251</sup> He writes that RE stems from the hope that ecumenism can shift away from past disappointments towards a new period, where,

within each of our traditions, we become more sharply aware of our own respective lacks, needs, and sticking points and our inability to tend to them of our own resources without recourse to the particular gifts of other traditions.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Pascoe, "Hospitality Grounded in Humility," 4.

<sup>247</sup> O’Gara, "Witnessing the Ecumenical Future Together," 376.

<sup>248</sup> O’Gara, "Witnessing the Ecumenical Future Together," 376.

<sup>249</sup> O’Gara, "Witnessing the Ecumenical Future Together," 373.

<sup>250</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>251</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>252</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

Ecumenical growth, then, depends on our ability to engage with the other, and in particular, to recognise the intrinsic fact that ecumenism cannot be undertaken alone. Here we can clearly see the model of the ecumenical gift exchange underpinning RE. The church cannot fully realise itself on its own; or, as O’Gara puts it, “every piece is needed for the full picture of the one Church of Christ.”<sup>253</sup> Murray alludes again to the importance of conversion, writing that: “fundamental to...Receptive Ecumenism...is a process of conversion – that is at root not a loss, nor a diminishment, but a finding.”<sup>254</sup>

However, a key difference between them is that of scope. O’Gara posits no claim to be creating a new ecumenical methodology. Her approach to ecumenism (characterised by the ecumenical gift exchange, conversion, and hospitality) is explicitly grounded within Vatican II. She draws out, highlights, and builds upon the concepts found in Vatican II, but does not advocate what she is doing as a new manner of approaching ecumenism. In this way, her work maintains integrity to the Catholic faith. However, it may also be more likely to be overlooked.

O’Gara’s work took place mostly in the specific context of North America, working through established dialogues between churches. In contrast, Murray’s aim is to incite international interest and reflection on RE, and therefore help reinvigorate the ecumenical milieu. He takes the concept of ecclesial learning and fashions it as a fresh ecumenical methodology, explicitly highlighting dormant features of ecumenical activity. Rather than just working on ecumenical commissions and dialogues, Murray sets up international conferences, and aims to seed the concept of RE internationally. RE’s sphere of influence may, therefore, be potentially greater than that of O’Gara’s ecumenical approach.

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<sup>253</sup> O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

<sup>254</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 282.

Murray and O’Gara, however, can be seen to address essentially the same idea. But whereas O’Gara has worked long and tirelessly, her achievements are quiet, reflecting not so much back on herself personally, but on the church she loved.<sup>255</sup> In contrast, Murray’s ecumenical work is currently a fraction of that of O’Gara’s, but it is much less quiet, and instead, has a revolutionary aim.

Where O’Gara aligns her work as closely as possible to the official approach of the Catholic Church, Murray sets RE up as a new methodology, and one which potentially challenges the Catholic Church. However, where O’Gara’s ecumenical theology is fully thought-out, grounded, and supported, RE is still in need of some clarification and grounding. Where O’Gara’s work has primarily been at the service of the Catholic Church in ecumenical dialogues, Murray’s aim is to reinvigorate the ecumenical milieu as a whole. But, it bears repeating, the idea at the heart is essentially the same, albeit with a difference of scope and intention. There is undoubtedly a common heritage between O’Gara’s work on ecumenism as an exchange of gifts and RE.

### **3.3. Discerning Aspects of Spiritual Ecumenism in Relation to Receptive Ecumenism**

In view of what has been said above, a picture of Spiritual Ecumenism begins to emerge. SE, despite being the very soul of ecumenism, has been relatively neglected in the decades following Vatican II. It is rarely mentioned or raised as integral to the ecumenical endeavour, with the notable exceptions of the work of Kasper and Rowan Williams. Murray argues that “Spiritual Ecumenism

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<sup>255</sup> This does not seem out of character for O’Gara, according to those who knew her. For instance, Bishop Richard Sklba writes of O’Gara, in the Foreword of *No Turning Back*: “Margaret was always respectfully involved and eventually willing to share her wisdom. She invariably participated in the group’s patient theological search for ecclesial reconciliation without ever dominating the exchange. If anything, she seemed to prefer a touch of quiet reflection in her thoughtful consideration of other members’ comments... There was always a certain thrill to watching how Margaret quietly wove her research and knowledge into the conversation.” Richard J. Sklba, “Foreword,” in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), ix.

articulated precisely the vision of receptive ecumenical hospitality and fruitfulness” envisaged in RE.<sup>256</sup> However, he also critiques SE for having a narrow emphasis, as being orientated towards personal matters and individual conversion.<sup>257</sup> He sees this limited orientation as the “one caveat” between RE and SE. The consequence of this narrow scope is to “leave out of account the crucial need also for deep structural, institutional learning from each other” which is the focus of RE.<sup>258</sup> Therefore, in Murray’s evaluation, RE’s concern for structural and institutional conversion is what distinguishes it from SE. However, is this interpretation of SE accurate? To approach this question, the key elements of SE need to be drawn out.

### 3.3.1. Key Elements of Spiritual Ecumenism

From our examination above, Spiritual Ecumenism has four key facets: interior conversion; pneumatology; the ecumenical exchange of gifts; and an emphasis on the affective and spiritual levels of ecumenical engagement. The following is a brief description of these aspects.

Firstly, SE presents ecumenism as primarily an activity towards deepening conversion, grounded in Vatican II’s conception of the “pilgrim Church.”<sup>259</sup> As such, SE both *overarches* and properly forms the *basis* for rational and doctrinal ecumenical dialogue. As the soul of ecumenism, SE is vital for every type of ecumenism. According to *UR*, “there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion;” and interior conversion is no less than the core of

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<sup>256</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

<sup>257</sup> For example, on the connection between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism, Murray states: “Receptive Ecumenism both resonates with Cardinal Kasper’s and Archbishop Rowan Williams’ joint advocacy of the need for ‘spiritual ecumenism’ and expands upon this by explicitly drawing out the interpersonal and structural-institutional dimensions alongside the more obviously personal that is the focus of spiritual ecumenism.” Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>258</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

<sup>259</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 48.

SE.<sup>260</sup> This means that SE is, in some manner, the measuring stick for all types of ecumenism. Ecumenism of any variety should lead the community, personally and communally, deeper in conversion to Christ through the Spirit. Put simply, without SE, the ecumenical endeavour lacks its soul.

Therefore, anything that is not genuinely open to the movement of the Spirit cannot be called ecumenism. Ecumenism that is not guided by love misses the mark. In a 2003 speech, Walter Kasper makes reference to “two dangers” that stem from a failure to remember SE: “an ecumenism which is only an academic affair for professional theologians,” and “an ecumenical activism defined primarily by an endless series of meetings, conferences and symposia.”<sup>261</sup> He goes on to posit “spiritual ecumenism” as the necessary remedy in both cases.<sup>262</sup> In continuity with *UR*, Kasper explains that “ecumenism *ad extra*,” ecumenism aimed at engaging with other Christians, “presupposes...ecumenism *ad intra*,” and therefore, as he says, “theological ecumenism must be linked to spiritual ecumenism, which is the heart of ecumenism.”<sup>263</sup> Therefore, SE is primarily directed towards interior conversion.

Openness to the Holy Spirit is therefore of central importance to SE. John Paul II calls “docility to the Holy Spirit” the “deepest center of the ecumenical attitude.”<sup>264</sup> As expressed in the work of Couturier, Congar, Kasper, and O’Gara, ecumenical activity is the work of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual Ecumenism is fundamentally grounded in pneumatology, and requires prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>260</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>261</sup> Referenced in C. Christopher Epting, “Exercises in Spiritual Ecumenism,” *The Ecumenical Review* 55, no. 3 (2003): 272.

<sup>262</sup> Epting, “Exercises in Spiritual Ecumenism,” 272.

<sup>263</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

<sup>264</sup> John Paul II, “To the Delegations From Other Christian Churches, October 22 1978,” in *John Paul II: Addresses and Homilies on Ecumenism 1978-1980*, ed. John B. Sheerin and John F. Hotchkin (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1980), 2.

A further key aspect of SE is the ecumenical gift exchange. Through this giving and receiving of gifts, the church community may move towards fuller realisation of the body of Christ. The eschatological dimension of this hope is evoked by John Paul II's assertion that Christ's prayer "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21) is simultaneously his prayer "that the Father's plan may be fully accomplished."<sup>265</sup> The humility expressed in *UR* is connected to this sense of hope. As the Decree states, "the church... makes its pilgrim way in hope towards its goal."<sup>266</sup> This statement accentuates the humble self-understanding of the church as a "pilgrim," emphasising the eschatological "not yet" of the journey. But it is a striving towards God undertaken with a sense of hope. Recognition of the roles of humility and hope within the ecumenical gift exchange raises consideration of Spiritual Ecumenism's focus on the spiritual, emotional and virtuous aspects of ecumenism.

SE places particular attention to the affective and spiritual dimensions of ecumenical engagement. This is important, as SE should be intertwined with practical and theological ecumenism. Together, they provide necessary balance to ecumenism. While theological ecumenism focuses primarily on ideas, SE emphasises the spiritual and affective levels of ecumenical activity. This is important, as ecumenism is far more than just a rational endeavour. It is a mystery that requires trust and hope in Christ, as well as the humility to recognise that unity is ultimately in God's hands, rather than our own. Kasper explains this point well:

Without spiritual communion, communion's entire structure would be nothing more than a soulless apparatus. Indeed, communion is first and foremost a gift. To decide

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<sup>265</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 9.

<sup>266</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2.



when, where and how unity will be achieved is not in our hands but in God's; we must trust him.<sup>267</sup>

Ecumenism therefore involves a change of heart, such as that experienced in *metanoia*. SE entails spiritual, affective, and virtuous aspects that are of vital importance to the contemporary Ecumenical Movement, but which have not always been emphasised. SE implies that genuine ecumenical relations and activities arise from a “change of heart,” together with a sense of repentance.<sup>268</sup>

As *UR* has already affirmed, these are interior experiences, coming from the heart, and stimulated by the Holy Spirit. This change of heart is necessary for personal conversion, as well as the conversion of the whole church. With this in mind, the Decree states that:

The faithful should remember that they promote union among Christians better, that indeed they live it better, when they try to live holier lives according to the Gospel. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual love.<sup>269</sup>

Therefore, the impulse to Christian unity comes first from the interior to the exterior, rather than the other way around. Our essential calling to be followers of Christ is what drives ecumenism. It is only by growing closer to God, through deeper conversion, that we will be able to grow in love. *UR* underlines this point as central to SE: “This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, ‘spiritual ecumenism.’”<sup>270</sup> It is further highlighted by John Paul II: “the commitment to ecumenism must be based upon the conversion of hearts.”<sup>271</sup> Here, SE points to the mystery of

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<sup>267</sup> Kasper, "Charting the Road of the Ecumenical Movement."

<sup>268</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>269</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 7.

<sup>270</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>271</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 2.

Christian unity: that is the one Spirit who calls us to Christ who also calls us to unity.

Now that we have a more complete picture of Spiritual Ecumenism, we need to consider its importance and place in the Ecumenical Movement. While Kasper has done much to emphasise the vital importance of SE for contemporary ecumenism, it is still frequently overlooked. The question of why SE needs rediscovery, at all, raises the point of how well SE has been received. As with other Vatican II documents, opinions differ. Moreover, the question of how well Vatican II's ecumenism has been received is necessarily linked with the process of reception for any Vatican II document, particularly as ecumenism was one of the key themes of the Council as a whole.

However, the question becomes more complicated when we turn, specifically, to the reception of SE. Catholic involvement in the Ecumenical Movement has made great strides since Vatican II. However, the type of ecumenism which has generally been practiced, and has achieved much success, is theological ecumenism, rather than SE.

Kasper provides helpful clarification, writing that *UR* distributes ecumenical dialogue into "three dimensions:" "theological dialogue, where experts explain the beliefs of each individual church," "practical cooperation and especially common prayer," and thirdly, "the renewal and reform of our own church."<sup>272</sup> Using these categories, the focus has been on theological and practical ecumenism, on dialogue, reaching consensus, and on matters of doctrine. Ecumenism as fundamentally concerned with conversion, and in this case, with the interior conversion of the Catholic Church, or ecumenism as a virtuous and spiritual endeavour, has received less attention. While interior conversion, or SE,

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<sup>272</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

should in many ways take priority over the other categories, it conversely appears to be the most neglected.

Duffy argues that the *Decree on Ecumenism* has not been received fully or deeply within the Catholic community. He writes of the need to “protect the principles of *Unitatis Redintegratio* against the retrenchment and obfuscation of recent years lest they die the death of a thousand qualifications.”<sup>273</sup> He maintains that the fundamental principles of *UR* are “endangered by a lack of understanding and ecumenical commitment” and that they have not been “widely understood and internalized by Catholic clergy and laity.”<sup>274</sup> Ecumenism on the level of the heart, as a virtuous and spiritual activity engendering conversion, under the guidance of the Spirit, has perhaps not been as deeply received as other types of ecumenism.

In a similar manner, O’Gara also attests to “what a long way the Roman Catholic Church must go before receiving fully the commitment to ecumenism made by the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>275</sup> In looking towards its future, it is to the reception of SE that the ecumenical endeavour must now turn, in all hope and humility. SE is therefore vital for the renewal of the Ecumenical Movement.

### **3.3.2. Receptive Ecumenism — A New Name for Spiritual Ecumenism?**

Our investigation into SE revealed four key unifying threads in the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. As such, there is a continuity of development and inspiration between them: Couturier’s Spiritual Ecumenism and Congar’s ecumenical work is adopted by Vatican II, Vatican II’s emphasis on Spiritual Ecumenism is reiterated and developed in *UUS*, and forms the basis for the ecumenical approaches of both Kasper and O’Gara. It seems fair to argue,

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<sup>273</sup> Duffy, "Catholicism's Search for a New Self-Understanding," 27.

<sup>274</sup> Duffy, "Catholicism's Search for a New Self-Understanding," 27.

<sup>275</sup> Margaret O’Gara, “Friendship in the Ecumenical Movement,” in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 35.

therefore, for the existence of a Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, from Couturier through to O’Gara and Kasper, and undoubtedly, many other ecumenists.

Moreover, the key concepts characteristic of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement are also central to RE. Murray acknowledges that RE builds on SE, explaining:

Specific forerunners are to be found in Couturier’s ‘spiritual ecumenism’; in Congar’s writings, in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, in the work of the *Groupe des Dombes*, in *Ut Unum Sint*, in Walter Kasper’s ecumenical writings, and in aspects of the bilateral dialogues, particularly the recent work of the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue. So Receptive Ecumenism grows out of a certain trajectory of ecumenical endeavour, which it develops in distinctive ways.<sup>276</sup>

The substantial and significant commonalities between Murray’s approach and that of SE necessitates the question: is RE merely a new name for SE?

Murray argues that SE has become relegated to the personal sphere.

However, it must be noted that Murray holds to a fairly narrow interpretation of SE.<sup>277</sup> Due to this interpretation, he argues that RE is able to apply ecumenical conversion in a broader fashion than SE has managed. He writes:

Receptive Ecumenism seeks to reclaim the full radical intent of Couturier’s spiritual ecumenism by seeking to rescue it from the reduction to praying together and receiving of each other’s spiritual and liturgical riches to which it can sometimes be reduced and to set its potential free for structural, institutional, ecclesial, and theological renewal.<sup>278</sup>

A number of assumptions underpin this argument. Firstly, that SE has become relegated to a solely personal sphere of influence. Secondly, that SE must be “rescued” from “the reduction” to common prayer, which implies that prayer is limited in scope. Thirdly, that RE can take Couturier’s SE and apply it to a broader scope. These assumptions need to be critically analysed. For instance, one

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<sup>276</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>277</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>278</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

can argue that SE has never been limited in scope, from Couturier, to Vatican II, to Kasper, and so on. Further, whether Murray's treatment of the implications and scope of ecumenical prayer is warranted, is another matter for consideration.

Moreover, if RE retrieves the essence of Couturier's Spiritual Ecumenism, does that make it a form of SE in Murray's opinion? If so, why does Murray make so few explicit references to Spiritual Ecumenism?

The connection to SE, therefore, raises questions concerning the "newness" of RE. A word, then, on the kind of novelty that RE represents. To a high degree, RE is in continuity with broader Catholic ecumenical theology. Murray himself, quoting William James, states that RE can be considered "a new name for some old ways of thinking."<sup>279</sup> What RE seeks "to articulate and promote have been features of ecumenical thought and practice and of Catholicism throughout."<sup>280</sup> However he qualifies this statement: "But, of course, formally naming a way of thinking or proceeding and so drawing it to explicit attention can release a strategic potential and shaping influence in ways previously unforeseen."<sup>281</sup> Murray appears to be basing RE's distinctive contribution to Catholic ecumenism on explicitly highlighting a process that has been working underneath ecumenism without sufficient recognition.

As he elucidates, "Receptive Ecumenism represents the concern to bring to the fore the prior necessary disposition to receptive transformational learning that the bilateral processes presuppose."<sup>282</sup> Therefore, RE is a new development, in continuity with what has come before. Murray sees the distinctiveness of RE being in its humility. RE emphasises only learning, not teaching, and only receiving, rather than giving. In this way, it intentionally focuses on one aspect of

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<sup>279</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>280</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>281</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>282</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 14.

the ecumenical exchange of gifts, in order to place a priority upon reception.

Therefore rather than being considered as an entirely new approach to ecumenism, RE is innovative and builds on what has come before.

However, this is not to say that RE has nothing distinctive and valuable to offer to Catholic ecumenical theology. Rather, tightly weaving RE into broader Catholic ecumenism as a form of SE would serve to strengthen and enrich RE. Simplicity is simultaneously both the strength and weakness of Receptive Ecumenism. Simplicity is its great strength: its fundamental principle expressed in the question, “what can we learn from other Christian traditions?” is undeniably appealing and in some measure disarming, particularly at a popular level. However, it is also a problem, due primarily to its apparent lack of depth. Where is the depth or richness to be discovered within RE?

If looked at without reference to the context of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, RE may appear to be lacking in substance, especially in consideration with ecumenical theologies such as those of Couturier, Congar, Kasper, and O’Gara. However, considered in relation to SE, RE can be perceived in a different light. RE can be understood as a development of Spiritual Ecumenism, rather than as a new ecumenical approach. Either implicitly or more explicitly, RE presents key elements of SE. RE, therefore, has a rich and valuable heritage that deserves critical appreciation.

Nonetheless, an area of tension between RE and SE is that of a differing interpretation of the latter’s scope. Murray regards SE as having been largely relegated to the personal sphere, and individual conversion. He argues that SE is “personal” in focus where RE deliberately highlights the “interpersonal and structural-institutional dimensions” that need to accompany the personal.<sup>283</sup> In this interpretation, RE adds to SE by widening its scope to encompass the conversion

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<sup>283</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

of the entire church. He considers SE somewhat narrowly as referring to personal conversion, and prayer, whereas RE is engaged with the structural conversion and renewal of the entire church. However, from examining key texts from the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, there appears little evidence that Couturier, the conciliar documents, Kasper, or O’Gara would so limit the scope of SE.

RE’s inherited elements and commonalities to SE, as illustrated in RE’s connection to Couturier, Vatican II, Kasper, and O’Gara, are too great to be ignored. RE implies an ecumenical methodology of surprising simplicity. It emphasises the aim of *UR*, which is reiterated in *UUS*, O’Gara, and Kasper: full visible unity. RE is described as “a total ethic that is as simple yet all pervasive as the Gospel it represents.”<sup>284</sup> Murray writes that RE,

requires the churches to make an analogous move to that advocated more generally by the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in calling for a fundamental shift from each assertively defending their own perceived rights in competition with each other, to each instead prioritizing the need to attend to and to act upon their specific responsibilities revealed in the face of the other....<sup>285</sup>

This immediately recalls O’Gara’s emphasis upon ecumenism as hospitality, not competition. Murray explains: “For this to happen...it requires some to take responsibility, to take the initiative, and this regardless of whether others are ready to reciprocate.”<sup>286</sup> RE focuses, therefore, more on the benefit to be gained by one’s own tradition through discovering the “other,” rather than any type of *quid pro quo* ecumenical competition. This evokes Kasper’s point of the *ad intra* aspect of ecumenical dialogue. As Murray comments,

the fundamental principle within Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning is that each tradition should focus first on the self-critical question: ‘What can we learn, or receive, with integrity from our various others in order to

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<sup>284</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>285</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>286</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

facilitate our own growth together into deepened communion in Christ and the Spirit?<sup>287</sup>

This is the fundamental methodology of Receptive Ecumenism: each tradition should critically reflect upon what it can learn from another tradition. By doing so, each community and tradition will be enriched, without setting any precondition for the involvement or performance of others.<sup>288</sup> In line with this, Murray notes that,

receptive ecumenical awakening is properly a matter of the heart before it is a matter of the head; a matter of falling in love with the experienced presence and action of God in the people, practices, even structures of another tradition and being impelled thereby to search for ways in which all impediments to closer relationship might be overcome.<sup>289</sup>

RE clearly stems from the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, but focuses explicitly on structural conversion, and full visible unity. In this way, RE cannot simply be considered a new name for SE. RE is a dynamic development of Spiritual Ecumenism, with significant potential for ecumenical renewal.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

Our investigation of RE's spiritual roots led us to analyse how major figures and texts of SE have directly influenced RE's development. From this, we were able to clarify key aspects of SE in relation to RE. The correlation between the two indicates that RE is a branch of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, but not simply a new name for SE. Discussing their affective and virtuous aspects led to a brief comment on the importance of two virtues in particular: humility and hope. This leads us to make a more in-depth examination of the interplay between humility and hope in the ecumenical context.

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<sup>287</sup> Murray, "Preface," ix.

<sup>288</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>289</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 14.



## **Chapter 4: A Spiritual, Virtuous, and Affective Ecumenism**

### **4.1. Humility, Hope, and Ecumenical Activity**

Humility and hope are essential virtues for both Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism – humility, in the recognition of present failures and shortcomings; hope, in the confidence that progress is possible. In what follows, we investigate the role of these two virtues in the Ecumenical Movement. We do not intend to give a full treatment of these virtues, but rather to explore the relationship between the two, and their significance for ecumenism. In order to do so, the virtue of humility will be examined first, focusing on humility as the basis for all other virtues, including hope. We then address Christian hope as an act of humility. Having analysed the two virtues, we go on to explore how the combination of humility and hope create a particular attitude, here termed “hopeful humility,” which is of particular significance for ecumenism. Finally, we look to the importance of drawing on the spiritual and affective aspects of ecumenism for contemporary ecumenism.

### **4.2. On Humility: The Basis of Virtue**

This section sets out to make two main points: first, that the virtue of humility can be misunderstood (there are tensions regarding its position in the virtues); and second, that humility acts as the basis for virtue. Christian perspectives on humility involve a paradox. On the one hand, humility is fundamental to Christianity. Humility is highlighted throughout the Scriptures as

essential.<sup>1</sup> The significance of humility in Jesus' teachings is undeniable.<sup>2</sup> As Michael Casey points out, humility is "distinctive" of "Jesus' personal style," and he himself is the "model" of humility.<sup>3</sup> Humility receives priority within many spiritual writings.<sup>4</sup> Illustrated by Christ's act of kenosis in the incarnation (Phil 2: 5-11), humility appears to be a divine attribute. As Augustine attests, humility "comes from elsewhere, from the One who, being the Most High, wished to humble himself for us."<sup>5</sup> In a similar fashion, the eighteenth century missionary, Cajetan Mary da Bergamo declares: "Humility is a virtue that belongs essentially to Christ, not only as man, but more especially as God."<sup>6</sup> Humility appears to be rooted within nothing less than the humility of God, exemplified in Christ's kenosis. "Humility matters," as Mary Margaret Funk writes. "It is at the core of our experience of life in Christ."<sup>7</sup>

However, despite this, humility is often viewed as something distasteful instead of desirable. Rather than listed as the foremost of the virtues, humility is relegated to being a lesser virtue, or worse, it is sometimes even not considered a "virtue" at all. Humility is something of a "despised" virtue, as Tom Frame observes.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some Biblical references to humility include: Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 66:2; Job 5:11; Psalms 25:9, 149:4; II Chronicles 7:14; I Corinthians 1:27-29; Matthew 5:3-10, 11:25, 11:29, 19:30, 20:16, 20:27; Mark 9:35, 10:15, 10:31, 10:44; Luke 13:30; Philippians 2:5-9; 1 Peter 5: 5-6. See the following article for a useful outline on the importance of humility in the Scriptures: James S. Spiegel, "The Moral Irony of Humility," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2003): 138-141.

<sup>2</sup> Spiegel, "The Moral Irony of Humility," 140. Michael Casey, *Truthful Living: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Casey, *Truthful Living*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the spiritual writings such as those of St Benedict, Bernard of Clairvaux, Ignatius de Loyola, Thomas à Kempis, Cajetan Mary da Bergamo, and André Louf.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in André Louf, *Humility* (London: The Catholic Truth Society, 2005), 11. For a discussion of Augustine's approach to humility, see Stephen Pardue, "Kenosis and its Discontents: Towards an Augustinian Account of Divine Humility," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, no. 3 (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Cajetan Mary da Bergamo, *Humility of Heart*, trans. Herbert Vaughan (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2006), 4. Originally published c. 1905.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Margaret Funk, *Humility Matters for Practicing the Spiritual Life* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Frame, "Humility: The Despised Virtue?" *Quadrant* 51, no. 4 (2007): 36.

Thus, despite its centrality to Christianity, the meaning of humility can be misconstrued. As Josef Pieper remarks, “the notion of humility has become blurred even in the Christian consciousness.”<sup>9</sup> Humility is often described in the negative, as the “absence” of pride, rather than in any positive sense.<sup>10</sup> The prevalence of this is such that, even in a contemporary article, Stephen Pardue goes to some pains to attest that Augustine understood humility as something that “empowers” and not just restrains.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, humility is often defined as having a low opinion of oneself, and linked with self-abasement.<sup>12</sup> For example, the author of a recent article defines humility as primarily centring on “self-assessment,” writing that “humility picks up an attitude that emphasizes the lowliness of the self.”<sup>13</sup> However, defining humility in terms of the self and in particular, as advocating a low opinion of oneself, seems difficult to reconcile with its depiction in Scripture. Joan Chittister explains some of the historical changes humility has undergone:

Later centuries distorted the notion and confused the concept of humility with lack of self-esteem and substituted the warped and useless practice of humiliations for the idea of humility. Eventually the thought of humility was rejected out of hand, and we have been left as a civilization to stew in the consequences of our arrogance.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, outside of Christianity, humility is often disparaged. The notion of humility seems nonsensical compared with contemporary notions of “success,” as

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<sup>9</sup> Josef Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, trans. Daniel F. Coogan (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), 106.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the prevalence of this opinion can be traced back to Thomas Aquinas, who viewed humility largely in conjunction with pride, as its absence. See Frame, “Humility,” 37.

<sup>11</sup> Pardue, “Kenosis and its Discontents.”

<sup>12</sup> Mark Button, “A Monkish Kind of Virtue? For and Against Humility,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 6 (2005): 842; Norvin Richards, “Is Humility a Virtue?” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1988): 253; June Tangney, “Humility: Theoretical Perspectives, Empirical Findings and Directions for Future Research,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19, no. 1 (2000): 71. Lisa Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility: A Thomistic Apologetic* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Jamie Schillinger, “Intellectual Humility and Interreligious Dialogue between Christians and Muslims,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 23, no. 3 (2012): 399.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (New York: Crossroad, 2010), 77.

it opposes trends towards arrogance, prideful ambition, and selfishness.<sup>15</sup> It also confronts contemporary notions of individuality and personhood. Humility is therefore “counter-cultural,” opposing “a status quo that encourages arrogance and self-aggrandizement at the expense of others.”<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, secular philosophy does not typically accord humility with much veracity. As André Louf (1929-2010) points out:<sup>17</sup>

In the eyes of Nietzsche, humility is the great lie of the weak that cunningly transforms cowardice into apparent virtue. For Freud it is a form of the masochistic guilt complex. For Adler, it runs close to a feeling of inferiority.<sup>18</sup>

While there is some indication that this situation may be changing, humility is still often reviled.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, the word “humility” seems to have largely negative connotations, such as guilt, fear, obedience, low self-esteem, inferiority, punishment, humiliation, submission, and weakness. The prevalence of these misconceptions presents a skewed concept of humility with little resemblance to the actual virtue. As Elizabeth Dreyer attests, despite popular misconceptions, humility “does not demand that one become a doormat.”<sup>20</sup> Rather, humility is about having a true understanding of oneself, rather than one which is over, or under, emphasised. As Pieper elucidates, “the ground of humility is man’s

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<sup>15</sup> Frame, “Humility,” 36. Frank Pakenham also makes this point, and recounts some of his own experiences in trying to understand humility, and why it is perceived so negatively. See: Frank Pakenham, *Humility* (London: Fontana Books, 1969), 16-22.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth A. Dreyer, “Humility,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 349.

<sup>17</sup> Louf is a Cistercian monk, who served as abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Mont-des-Cats in France from 1963 to 1997.

<sup>18</sup> André Louf, *The Way of Humility*, trans. Lawrence S. Cunningham (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Recent research, undertaken from such fields as psychology, health, education, business and philosophy, appear to place more value on humility. See for example, Dusya Vera and Antonio Rodriguez-Lopez, “Strategic Virtues: Humility as a Source of Competitive Advantage,” *Organizational Dynamics* 33, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>20</sup> Dreyer, “Humility,” 349.

estimation of himself according to the truth. And that is almost all there is to it.”<sup>21</sup>

As such, Pieper expresses disbelief over how humility has subsequently become such “a bone of contention.”<sup>22</sup>

However, even within Christianity, humility faces “an ambiguous situation.”<sup>23</sup> “If humility is such an important virtue,” asks Lisa Fullam, “what happened? Why is it missing from most contemporary accounts of the virtues?”<sup>24</sup> Part of humility’s lack of regard is due to the negative misconceptions it has suffered. As Michael Casey points out, it is not “unusual to find exhortations to humility and obedience coupled with a disregard for the rights of persons” or used as an excuse to deny participation in the Church.<sup>25</sup> He observes, “For many people humility does not seem like an appropriate ideal. This was true for the ancient Greeks, and it certainly corresponds to the way many of our contemporaries feel.”<sup>26</sup> As he points out, humility does not receive positive treatment in Greek philosophy. Indeed, in ancient Greece, humility was “disdained, equated with low social status, lack of freedom and inability to influence the public arena.”<sup>27</sup> Clearly, there is an essential disparity between the Christian and Greek understandings of humility, the ramifications of which have rippled through theology over the centuries. This is one of the key points made by Louf.

In his influential essay, *The Way of Humility*, Louf seeks to recover the concept of humility using the theology of the Desert Fathers.<sup>28</sup> This retrieval is necessary in view of the influence of Thomas Aquinas’s theology of the virtues,

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<sup>21</sup> Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, 106.

<sup>23</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Casey, *Truthful Living*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Casey, *Truthful Living*, 10. Casey offers a helpful outline of common reservations against humility on pages 14-23.

<sup>27</sup> Dreyer, “Humility,” 238.

<sup>28</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*. The essay was first published in Italian in 2000, and French in 2002, before being translated into English.

which can be seen as unfortunately contributing to a skewed understanding of humility.<sup>29</sup>

In attempting to integrate Christianity with Aristotle, Aquinas faced a particular problem with humility. While humility is extolled in Scriptures with the highest of import, it is not included in Aristotle's list of virtues.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Greek philosophy considers pride to be a virtue. In "a risky move," Louf writes that Aquinas "took as his own Origen's assertion" that humility is included within the Greek concept of moderation.<sup>31</sup> This leads Aquinas to classify humility "as a by-product (if one dares use the word) of the virtue of temperance."<sup>32</sup> As Servais-Théodore Pinckaers explains, "humility thus receives an overly modest position, which is understandable among pagan authors, but St. Thomas knows perfectly well its importance in Christian tradition."<sup>33</sup>

Consequently, humility ranks quite low in Aquinas's account of virtues, placed after the theological virtues, the intellectual virtues, and justice.<sup>34</sup> It is relegated as a lesser virtue, as Aquinas situates humility as part of temperance, rather than as a virtue in its own right. Temperance is a virtue of moderation of the appetites, especially those of "desire and pleasure," such as sex and food.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, he views it almost exclusively in relation to pride, therefore in a

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Aquinas was born between 1224 and 1226 CE. He is one of the most influential of Western thinkers. His teachings are so important that he is considered not just a Doctor of the Church, but the "Universal Doctor of the Church." Thomas O'Meara points out that Aquinas has "influenced Western Christians for seven centuries." He is particularly important to Catholic theology, as O'Meara writes "He still fashions ways in which Roman Catholics think" xiv. See O'Meara's book for a useful introduction to Aquinas: Thomas F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). The works of Josef Pieper are extremely valuable in understanding Thomas Aquinas and his theology.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Cordner, "Aristotelian Virtue and Its Limitations," *Philosophy* 69, no. 269 (1994): 293.

<sup>31</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, "The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Amazon Digital Services: Coyote Canyon Press, 2010), II-II, q.61, a.65. Hereafter referred to as *ST*.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.141, a.143.

negative rather than positive sense.<sup>36</sup> Aquinas justifies including humility as part of temperance, rather than among the theological virtues (e.g., by relating it to the theological virtue of hope), by stating that “whatever virtues restrain or suppress...are reckoned parts of temperance.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, he goes on, as “humility suppresses the movement of hope [the passion, not the theological virtue], which is the movement of a spirit aiming at great things,” therefore humility belongs to temperance.<sup>38</sup>

Replying to an objection, he affirms the place of the theological virtues, as “the causes of all the other virtues,” and even though “humility is caused by reverence for God” this “does not prevent it from being part of temperance.”<sup>39</sup> In sum, humility is not a theological virtue, the highest of virtues which underpin all other virtues. Rather it acts to restrain the passion of hope, which can lead to pride, and therefore is properly classed as part of temperance, which is to do with suppressing human appetites. Aquinas’s understanding of humility certainly seems to undervalue humility given its significance in scripture. However, as Louf points out, the position of humility within Aquinas’s own system is not without tension.

Aquinas perceives the role of humility as restraining us from aiming “at greater things through confiding in one’s own powers” (pride). But humility does not, of course, inhibit us from aiming “at greater things through confidence in God’s help...[as] the more one subjects oneself to God, the more is one exalted in God’s sight.”<sup>40</sup> This leads Aquinas to state that “humility holds the first place [among the virtues], inasmuch as it expels pride...and makes man submissive and

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<sup>36</sup> Daniel J. Harrington and James F. Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 145.

<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.164.

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.164.

<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.164, reply to obj.161.

<sup>40</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.162, reply to obj.162.

ever open to receive the influx of Divine grace.”<sup>41</sup> In relation to deterring pride, humility is “first” in the virtues. However, in relation to other virtues, namely love, it ranks quite differently. One reason Aquinas objects to humility being the “greatest of the virtues” is because “charity is set above all virtues.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, from Aquinas’s perspective, while humility is not the greatest of all virtues, it does enable grace by countering pride, which is “the most grievous of sins.”<sup>43</sup> This somewhat oddly recognises humility’s importance against its opposite (pride), but does not grant it a central place among the virtues, despite the preeminence of pride as a sin. Lisa Fullam expounds on this point, writing that in Aquinas’s view:

Humility is not the greatest virtue, even though it opposes a vice which can be one of the greatest sins. Humility can, however, hold its head up as an enabling virtue, by weeding out the pride which gets in the way of the acquisition of other virtues.<sup>44</sup>

In view of all this, Louf explains that we should “not cast stones at Saint Thomas” as his “inculturation of the Gospel with the thought of Aristotle” was largely successful. However, “we might inquire whether, in such a system, humility might find itself a bit constricted or even demoted from the central role it plays in Christian experience.”<sup>45</sup> The problem is compounded, as Louf explains, because while Aquinas himself apparently “tried to re-configure the equilibrium with a larger emphasis on humility,” the same cannot always be said of those who followed after him.<sup>46</sup>

Aquinas himself manifestly expressed humility in his life and teachings.

Pieper illustrates this point, writing on the “negative element” or “silence” of

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<sup>41</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.165.

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.165.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q. 162, a.167, reply to obj. 164.

<sup>44</sup> Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility*, 56.

<sup>45</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 8.



Aquinas' work.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, Aquinas surrenders to the mystery and incomprehensibility of God, attesting: "this is the ultimate in human knowledge of God: to know that we do not know Him."<sup>48</sup> And, famously, Aquinas abandons writing his *Summa*, stating "All that I have hitherto written seems to me nothing but straw... compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me."<sup>49</sup> Pieper explains that Aquinas's last teaching is one that "God exceeds all our capabilities of possessing Him, that our knowledge can only be the cause of new questions, and every finding only the start of a new search."<sup>50</sup> This is nothing if not the heart of humility. Thus, the position of humility among Christian virtues is far from clear-cut. The history of humility is paradoxically one of both recognition of its centrality to Christianity, and misunderstandings over its meaning.

Therefore, as we have seen, there are different theological understandings of humility. Regarding its relation to other virtues, it could be seen that humility is a tangential rather than central virtue (following Aquinas). Indeed, Michael Casey argues that "humility is powered primarily by the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity."<sup>51</sup> This seems to place humility after the theological virtues, and arguably misunderstands the essence of humility. There is another way of viewing humility's position amongst the virtues: that it acts as the basis for all other virtues. This is a key point over which many thinkers, ancient and contemporary, appear to be in accord. A brief selection of quotes from different thinkers serves to emphasise the point.

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<sup>47</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. Daniel O'Connor (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, 5, 2 ad 11, quoted in Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 45-46.

<sup>50</sup> Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 47.

<sup>51</sup> Casey, *Truthful Living*, 78.

Augustine (354-430) states: “Humility is the only thing required for the Christian life.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the fourth century monk, Evagrius of Pontus writes: “Just as one who goes down into the bowels of the earth to find gold, so the one who humbles himself with the gold of humility extracts all virtues.”<sup>53</sup> Humility forms the foundation of St Benedict of Nursia’s (480-547) highly influential Rule.<sup>54</sup> For Benedict, humility is the ladder Jacob saw leading to heaven.<sup>55</sup> He writes: “Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, we will quickly arrive at the ‘perfect love’ of God which ‘casts out fear.’”<sup>56</sup> Here, humility is the very basis for spiritual life, and the underpinning of love. In a similar vein, the sixth century monk, Dorotheus of Gaza, recalls that: “An Elder said: ‘Above everything, you must have humility...No virtue is attainable without humility.’”<sup>57</sup> However, humility was not only considered important in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries.

The reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) places a great deal of emphasis on humility. He argues that humility is the “sovereign virtue...the mother and root of all virtue.”<sup>58</sup> This theme is reiterated by the eighteenth century missionary priest, Cajetan Bergamo: “Therefore whoever possesses this virtue may be said...to possess all virtues, and he who lacks it, lacks all.”<sup>59</sup> Among contemporary theologians, Fullam writes that humility “functions as a kind of meta-virtue, a virtue of the acquisition of virtue.”<sup>60</sup> And finally, Louf, after elaborating on the difficulties of categorising humility, even as a virtue, in the end writes

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<sup>52</sup> Augustine, quoted in Louf, *Humility*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 35.

<sup>54</sup> There appears to be some debate over his date of death; I am using the same date as Mary Margaret Funk.

<sup>55</sup> Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict*, 78.

<sup>56</sup> Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 39. St Dorotheus of Gaza wrote instructions for monks, which have been compiled in *Directions on Spiritual Training*.

<sup>58</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Job*, lxxx, quoted in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 269.

<sup>59</sup> Bergamo, *Humility of Heart*, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility*, 3.

passionately: “If one still wishes to speak in the language of virtue it would be an all-encompassing virtue – the heart of stone shattered and restored to life as the heart of flesh – the virtue from which all other virtues are derived.”<sup>61</sup>

All this raises the question: if humility does indeed ground all other virtues, how does it do so? Put simply, humility lays the foundation for all other virtues because of its orientation towards truth. Humility’s foundational aspect consists in its alignment to the truth regarding ourselves, others, creation, and especially God. Far from being self-abnegating, to have humility is to recognise the fundamental truths of our existence. Bernard of Clairvaux repeatedly emphasises this point in his classic work on humility and pride: “the knowledge of truth is the fruit of humility.”<sup>62</sup> Bergamo also declares, humility “is nothing else but a true knowledge of God and of oneself.”<sup>63</sup> Or even, as Casey puts it, “Truth-filled living is the soul of humility.”<sup>64</sup>

The theological notion of humility, therefore, is not about low self-regard but rather about having “a true knowledge and awareness of oneself as one really is.”<sup>65</sup> In this respect, humility is intrinsically “other-orientated.”<sup>66</sup> It is relational, focusing outward – the self in relation *to* others; ultimately, God. “We are not the centre of the universe,” as Anthony Kelly remarks.<sup>67</sup> Here is the crux of humility. Its focus is not centred on the self, but rather the opposite.

Therefore, to behave humbly is to exhibit other-orientated behaviour. As William Temple states, “Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of

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<sup>61</sup> Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, trans. M. Ambrose Conway (Trappist: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 30.

<sup>63</sup> Bergamo, *Humility of Heart*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Casey, *Truthful Living*, 30.

<sup>65</sup> Norvin Richards, quoted in Spiegel, “The Moral Irony of Humility,” 137; Tangney, “Humility,” 73-74; David Pascoe, “Living as God’s Steward’s: Theological Foundations,” (presentation, Stewardship Conference, Brisbane, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> Everett L. Worthington, “Humility: The Quiet Virtue,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27, no. 3 (2008): 273.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 5.

other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself at all.”<sup>68</sup> Humility is not about demeaning ourselves, but recognising our place within creation, as lovingly made by God. As Pieper points out, “above all, it is candid acceptance of this one thing: that man and humanity are neither God nor ‘like God.’”<sup>69</sup> A humble attitude towards God recognises God’s perfection and grace, against human sin and corruption. As Pieper comments, “Humility is the knowledge and acceptance of the inexpressible distance between Creator and creature.”<sup>70</sup> Humility towards each other acknowledges all of us to be imperfect creatures, nevertheless beloved of God. Humility towards creation admits that humanity co-exists with, and depends upon, the earth. As Joan Chittister outlines, “Humility, in other words, is the basis for right relationships in life.”<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, humility permits humankind not to take itself so seriously. Pieper points to a “hidden connection” between humility and the “gift of humour.”<sup>72</sup> This is one of the liberating qualities of the virtue. Exercising humility suddenly allows the universe to be a much larger place – so infinite that human knowledge of it cannot but fall short. As such, humility recognises that all attempts at interpretation, or expressions of the transcendent, must necessarily be inadequate. God is truly beyond our grasp. We are limited and God is limitless. Conversely, by recognising the limitations of human understanding, humility conveys the limitlessness of God. A humble perspective, perhaps surprisingly, is one of infinite openness, not negativity. It is to see ourselves and the universe as it really is, broken and imperfect, but above all else, a gift. In other words, humility allows

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Worthington, “Humility,” 271.

<sup>69</sup> Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, 109.

<sup>70</sup> Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 102.

<sup>71</sup> Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict*, 77.

<sup>72</sup> Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, 109.

grace. Therefore, humility is the basis for all other virtues, including the theological virtues of hope, faith, and love, because it is to see the truth, of who we are, and who God is.

Humility is indeed “all encompassing,” as Louf argues, because it penetrates to the heart of the mysteries of Christianity (of sin, grace, and redemption), where words and ideas cannot help but remain inadequate. Humility requires a certain kenotic surrender of the self to God. Louf concludes his essay by quoting from Catholic philosopher, Jean Guitton’s (1901-1999) final work, written months before his death at almost a hundred years old. Guitton writes:

To be plunged into humility is to be plunged into God, for God is the foundation of that abyss...Humility obtains for us things which are too lofty to be taught or explained; humility attains and possesses what even speech cannot.<sup>73</sup>

The importance of humility, which resonates so strongly from Jesus’ teachings, through the words of many theologians and spiritual writers (over the centuries and in the present) can be approached by understanding the virtue of humility as awakening in us a sense of the truth, a necessary step towards conversion.

Humility belongs to the heart, to the mystery of conversion, and the gift of grace. In this manner, humility inspires hope.

### 4.3. Hope as an Act of Humility

Hope has become more prominent in theology over recent decades, since the twentieth century’s rediscovery of eschatology.<sup>74</sup> It is also a term frequently used in ecumenical discourse. Indeed, Kasper writes that “Ecumenism is linked with hope” on the second page of the *Receptive Ecumenism* volume.<sup>75</sup> Yet what hope means for ecumenism is often frustratingly passed over. The theological

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<sup>73</sup> Jean Guitton, quoted in Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 22-24.

<sup>74</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 472.

<sup>75</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

dimensions and import of hope for ecumenism is rarely examined in detail. In this section, it will be argued that hope is an essential aspect of the humility characterising ecumenical communication.

Since humility grounds all virtues, it also affects Christian hope, so much so that hope can be seen as an act of humility through its trust in, and surrender to, God. Ecumenical hope draws its energy from Christ's prayer that, "They may all be one" (Jn 17:21). In such a context, how is hope best described and, where necessary, defined? Two key questions need to be asked: firstly, what are the differences between Christian hope as opposed to natural hope?<sup>76</sup> Secondly, how does the eschatological tension between "now" and "not yet" illustrate the interplay between hope and humility?

Firstly, it is important to differentiate between natural hope and Christian hope. A natural form of hope is an intrinsically human quality. Hope is widely regarded as a human phenomenon (it is anthropological), and as such it is not unique to Christianity.<sup>77</sup> Hope of some kind appears to be a basic human impulse.<sup>78</sup> It is in our nature to hope, and as such, hoping is not learned but rather instinctive; we are hope-oriented creatures. Pieper remarks, "Hope, like love, is one of the very simple, primordial dispositions of the living person."<sup>79</sup> Hope of some kind motivates almost all human action, to the degree that Macquarrie

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<sup>76</sup> The term "natural hope" is borrowed from Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 101.

<sup>77</sup> Hope has become an increasingly significant theme since World War II, both for theologians and philosophers. One important example is that of Ernst Bloch's highly influential work, written between 1938-1947, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986). Bloch's work is particularly influential on theologians Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes Baptist Metz, who are both key players in the theology of hope. See Gerald O'Collins article for an outline of Bloch's influence: Gerald O'Collins, "The Theology of Hope," *The Way* 8, no. 4 (1968). Another important example is Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1951).

<sup>78</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (London: Mowbrays, 1978), 4; Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), 59. William F. Lynch, *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 31.

<sup>79</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 100.

argues for the existence of hope as a “universal phenomenon.”<sup>80</sup> Natural hope usually pertains to the future, which, because it is future, is something beyond our control.

Broadly speaking, the future can either be approached with an attitude of hope, or one of fear. Natural hope also can be quite narrow in its perspective, limited usually to the personal (oneself, family, friends, and events in the immediate future). The strength of natural hope depends on its basis, whatever that may be, and so it may vary based on the person or situation. Natural hope is also contingent on its object, whatever that may be. This raises the interesting point that natural hope may have *any* object, even one that is not good, and yet remain hope. Pieper expresses this point: “When justice ceases to be directed toward good, it ceases to be justice. Hope, on the other hand, can also be directed...toward what is objectively bad and yet remain real hope.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, considering that the object of natural hope may be almost anything, hope can be unrealistic.

Hoping for something improbable is one of the key pitfalls of natural hope, as it may fail and lead to despair. In sum, two things can be said with certainty regarding natural hope: it is a fundamental attribute of being human; and it usually addresses the future. But its foundation and object, and consequently, strength, are all contingent upon the hoper.

While the experience of hope is integral to the human person, the *form* hope takes within Christianity is distinctive. Christian hope is exceptional in its breadth: it is a “total hope.”<sup>82</sup> The all-encompassing scope of Christian hope reaches out to all of creation, to fellow human beings, even out beyond the reach of death. Christian hope is the encompassing hope for “a new heaven and a new

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<sup>80</sup> Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 100.

<sup>82</sup> Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, 1.

earth” (Rev 21:1) when, as the Protestant theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann emphasises, God will “be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).<sup>83</sup> As the Kingdom of God was the central focus of Jesus’ ministry, exploring Christian hope brings us to the crux of Christianity. Hope is central to Christianity, to the extent that Christianity can be seen as *defined* by its hope.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, theologian Johannes Baptist Metz argues that theology itself is “a defence of hope.”<sup>85</sup> He remarks: “Christianity is not primarily a moral system, but a hope; its theology is not primarily an ethics, but an eschatology.”<sup>86</sup> The breadth of Christian hope is illustrated in its *telos*: God. Christian hope has both its foundation and its object in God, as the fulfilment of all hopes. Pieper puts it, “Christ is the actual foundation of hope.... [And] at the same time, the actual fulfilment of our hope.”<sup>87</sup> While natural hope may have any object, even an impossible one, Christian hope is firmly centred on God. This means, as Edward Oakes says, that “Christian hope, on the contrary, is always *realistic*” because it has God for its object, “who *is* Reality.”<sup>88</sup> Christian hope is therefore “hope against hope,” strong in the face of any circumstance, and wholly incapable of giving in to despair. Christian hope keeps us from giving up, it is “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:19) and the “the anchor guiding the Church through her pilgrimage on earth,” as Oakes puts it.<sup>89</sup>

Classifying Christian hope as a theological virtue further distinguishes it from natural hope. Kelly outlines the significance of hope as a virtue.<sup>90</sup> Virtue

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<sup>83</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 23.

<sup>84</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>86</sup> Johannes Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 134.

<sup>87</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 106.

<sup>88</sup> Edward T. Oakes, “The Radicality of Christian Hope,” *Chicago Studies* 51, no. 1 (2012): 15.

<sup>89</sup> Oakes, “The Radicality of Christian Hope,” 8.

<sup>90</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 6.



comes from the word *virtus*, “a capacity to act well.”<sup>91</sup> Kelly argues that hope is more than just “wishing,” it is “a mode of living and acting.”<sup>92</sup> Unlike natural hope, which can remain an ephemeral sensation akin to optimism or wishful thinking, Christian hope is meant to be translated into action. It is not enough just to hope for the future existence of the Kingdom; rather Christian hope urges us to work to bring the Kingdom in some measure into the present. Christian hope is therefore challenging, since Christians are called to live their lives in a particular way, in hope. As Cessario comments, “By definition, virtue makes its possessor good here and now.”<sup>93</sup> This raises an interesting distinction between natural hope and the theological virtue of hope.

Whereas natural hope is anthropological, part of us as human persons, possessing the God-given virtue of hope aids in the realisation of our full humanity. It brings forward a good from the Kingdom into the present. Moreover, hope is not just a moral virtue, but a theological virtue. The theological virtues are so named because God is their source and their object, and through them God is “attained directly.”<sup>94</sup> Henry Bars explains: “for by faith we believe in God, by hope we trust in him, by charity we love him.”<sup>95</sup> As a theological virtue, hope ranks among the highest of God-given and God-oriented virtues which have love as the pinnacle. The theological virtues cannot be acquired, as they are “beyond, far beyond, our powers.”<sup>96</sup> Rather, they are “supernatural virtues,” and “we can only receive them as gifts.”<sup>97</sup> While natural hope is part of our human nature, Christian hope comes from God. Therefore, while hope is certainly not a

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<sup>91</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Romanus Cessario, “The Theological Virtue of Hope,” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 233.

<sup>94</sup> Henry Bars, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), 9.

<sup>95</sup> Bars, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 9.

<sup>96</sup> Bars, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> Bars, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 10.

distinctively Christian phenomenon, Christian hope differs from natural hope in its expansive breadth (extending to all of creation), its foundation, source, and object in God, and how it acts, not just as part of our humanity, but to *realise* our human destiny in God.

Aquinas distinguishes the “passion” of hope, and the “theological virtue” of hope, in reference to what we have called natural hope, and Christian hope, respectively. His understanding of hope both as passion and as virtue serves our understanding of what is meant by Christian hope. As Fullam explains, “virtues perfect powers of the soul, while passions are appetites requiring ordering for their perfection.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, virtues improve (perfect) our human nature, whereas passions are impulses that come from our human nature. Passions are therefore “neither good nor bad,” as Dominic Doyle observes, and only “become morally significant” when “ordered by reason.”<sup>99</sup> That is, passions, like instincts, have to be controlled by reason. As a virtue, hope can never be in excess. Aquinas affirms this point, stating: “hope has...no extremes...since it is impossible to trust too much in the Divine assistance.”<sup>100</sup> However, as a passion, hope can be in excess, and therefore may require discipline.<sup>101</sup> This point brings us to consider the way humility acts on hope, both as theological virtue and as passion.

Humility acts to underpin the virtue of hope. There is some contention over hope’s position as a theological virtue. As already noted, theological virtues are virtues that have God as their object.<sup>102</sup> One argument against hope as a theological virtue is that “by hoping, one does not attain God.”<sup>103</sup> In contrast, Aquinas asserts that hope is a theological virtue because it “unites the believer

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<sup>98</sup> Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2011), 76.

<sup>100</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.17, a.15 reply to obj. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism*, 79.

<sup>102</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.17, a.15.

<sup>103</sup> Cessario, “The Theological Virtue of Hope,” 233.

with God.”<sup>104</sup> In answering the question, “Whether hope is a virtue?” Aquinas replies: “It is therefore evident that hope is a virtue,” because “in so far as we hope for anything as being possible to us by means of the Divine assistance, our hope attains God himself, on Whose help it leans.”<sup>105</sup> Here, Aquinas appears to be implying that hope is a virtue because, through reliance on divine help, it brings us to our fulfilment in God. This is one indication of how the virtue of hope is founded in humility, as humility is what allows us not just to recognise the need for God’s help, but to accept it. Doyle remarks, “Hope becomes virtuous...when it relies on God’s help to attain some good.”<sup>106</sup> As Aquinas states, hope “leans” on God’s help.

The connection between hope and help is one that William Lynch explores in a therapeutic setting. According to Lynch, hope is always linked with the idea of help.<sup>107</sup> He states, “The truth is that hope is related to help in such a way that you cannot talk about one without talking of the other...hope is an interior sense that there is help on the outside of us.”<sup>108</sup> For Christian hope, of course, the ultimate help is from God. James Alison writes in a similar vein: “The one hope you have in the face of death is a hope that rests on *another*,” that is, help from someone outside of oneself.<sup>109</sup> It is the very fact that we can ask God for help that leads us to hope, and the acknowledgement that we need help is itself one of humility. Hope is therefore based on trusting in God’s help. As Kelly describes, hope “is trustful, for it is relying on something or someone for the help that is needed.”<sup>110</sup> The point is further emphasised by Lawrence Hennessey as he writes,

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<sup>104</sup> Cessario, “The Theological Virtue of Hope,” 233.

<sup>105</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.17, a.11.

<sup>106</sup> Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism*, 85.

<sup>107</sup> Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 40.

<sup>109</sup> James Alison, *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 166.

<sup>110</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 1.

hope “invites...a radical trust in God.”<sup>111</sup> In other words, hope is founded on the knowledge (truth) that God will give us what we need; this indicates humility’s underlying role in the virtue of hope.

Humility also acts on the passion of hope in a particular fashion.

According to Aquinas, the role of humility is to restrain “presumptuous hope.”<sup>112</sup>

Humility acts to restrain the passion of hope, because, as it is not orientated towards God, it *can* be excessive. As a human passion, hope may require restraint so as not to either over-reach itself (become presumptuous), or fall into despair.

Aquinas considers presumption and despair to be the two “contrary vices” opposing hope.<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, the remedy for both presumption and despair is humility. Pieper explains, “Pride is the hidden conduit that links the two diametrically opposed forms of hopelessness, despair and presumption.”<sup>114</sup>

According to Aquinas, presumption is a sin against the Holy Spirit.<sup>115</sup> The sin of presumption is when someone takes God’s grace for granted, such as those who hope for forgiveness but “persevere in their sins,” or hope for glory “who cease from good works.”<sup>116</sup> This role properly belongs to humility, as Cessario explains, because “presumption is born of pride.”<sup>117</sup> Therefore, humility acts against presumptuous hope (which comes from pride) by channeling hope into what is possible through proper acceptance of *God’s* help.

At the other extreme, despair is the second form of hopelessness.

According to Aquinas, despair is “an error in faith-judgment” that holds that God will not fulfill God’s promises.<sup>118</sup> To despair means that one has given up on God.

As such, it is no wonder Aquinas calls it “not only a sin but also the origin of

<sup>111</sup> Lawrence Hennessey, "Editor's Corner," *Chicago Studies* 51, no. 1 (2012): 3.

<sup>112</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.161, a.162.

<sup>113</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.20.

<sup>114</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 123.

<sup>115</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.21, a.22.

<sup>116</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.21, a.22.

<sup>117</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 240.

<sup>118</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 240.

other sins.”<sup>119</sup> As he defines it, “despair consists in a man ceasing to hope for a share of God’s goodness.”<sup>120</sup> Surely, deciding that God will not give grace is just as arrogant as presumption. Pieper points to the long recognised link between pride and despair.<sup>121</sup> Thus, humility acts to safeguard hope; hope needs humility to keep it from falling into the extremes of either presumption or despair. Humility is therefore important in understanding not just the theological virtue of hope, but the passion of hope as well.

However, despite the distinction between the passion and virtue of hope, Aquinas describes certain features that are “common to every kind of hoping.”<sup>122</sup> Robert Miner makes the point that Aquinas supposes a solid understanding of the passions before moving on to consider the virtues.<sup>123</sup> The passion of hope and the virtue of hope are not oppositional; they have some features in common, even though hope as a theological virtue far surpasses the passion. Aquinas applies the following characteristics of hope for both the passion and the virtue.<sup>124</sup> For him, “the object of hope is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain.”<sup>125</sup> Here, he defines hope as having four characteristics: the good, the future, the difficult, and the possible. The first criterion is that hope is for something good, which distinguishes it from fear. Secondly, hope is for something future, something that is not “present and already possessed,” and thereby differs from joy. Thirdly, hope is for something difficult, for “we do not speak of any one hoping for trifles, which are in one’s power to have at any time.”<sup>126</sup> He argues that hope “regards

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<sup>119</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.20.

<sup>120</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.20, a.23.

<sup>121</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 122.

<sup>122</sup> Cessario, “The Theological Virtue of Hope,” 232-233.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>124</sup> Aquinas references these four characteristics for the passion of hope in I-II, q.40, a.1, and for the virtue in II-II, q.17, a.1 and again, in II-II, q.20, a.4.

<sup>125</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.17, a. 11.

<sup>126</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q.40, a.41.

something arduous, to be obtained by another's help," namely, God's.<sup>127</sup> Here hope is closely linked with humility because the theological object of hope is outside of human ability to achieve it. Finally, "that this difficult thing is possible to obtain," because hope cannot desire something impossible, or else it would lead to despair.<sup>128</sup> It follows that not "everything can be hoped for."<sup>129</sup> As Cessario notes "only something that is attainable elicits hope; a person must judge that the hoped-for reality lies within the realm of possible options."<sup>130</sup> Hope's connection to a possible good is what makes it strong, Lynch states: "there is nothing as strong as hope when it knows how to limit itself."<sup>131</sup> Aquinas's theological-scholastic treatment of hope is valuable when applied to ecumenical dialogue.

Rephrasing Aquinas, Lynch writes, "Hope therefore involves three basic ideas that could not be simpler: what I hope for I do not yet have or see; it may be difficult; but I *can* have it – it is possible."<sup>132</sup> Each of the qualities of hope is applicable to the hope for unity, the impetus behind ecumenism. Firstly, hope is for something good. Christian unity is most certainly for something good, as it is what Christ himself prays for us: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one" (Jn 17:20-21). Unity is something Jesus asks of God, not just for his disciples' good, but also the good of the world, because disunity hinders us in acting properly as His witnesses in the world.

The next quality is that hope applies to something future. Christian unity lives within the paradox of the "now" and "not yet." A degree of unity exists already, binding all Christians together as the body of Christ. Yet, this unity is

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<sup>127</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II. q.17, a.15.

<sup>128</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, I-II. q.40, a.41.

<sup>129</sup> Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 47-48.

<sup>130</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 233.

<sup>131</sup> Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 47.

<sup>132</sup> Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 32.

incomplete. The fullness of unity will only come through God's will, and in God's time. It is something future, of which we receive only a foretaste. The hope for Christian unity is also something difficult, in line with the third quality. It is arduous, in view of the suffering, violence, and persecution Christians have suffered at the hands of other Christians over history, the memory of which cannot be forgotten. It is difficult in view of the many real differences that separate Christians, structurally, doctrinally, liturgically, and spiritually; differences that cannot simply be dismissed. It is difficult because it is not "a trifle," but something that comes from the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and therefore is an imperative for all Christians.

Finally, this good, future, but difficult hope is something possible. Christian unity is possible because it is ultimately the work of God, for whom all things are possible. Moreover, it is not just possible but realistic, as it is Christ's desire for us, inspired within us by the Holy Spirit. Further, it is not just realistic, but actually promised. True Christian unity will come to pass, for God will one day be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the hope for Christian unity can be understood in the context of Aquinas's four key qualities of hope. Understanding the hope for unity in this manner may help to strengthen the hope of ecumenism, as it is not a wishful hope, but one that is good, future, difficult but possible. Ecumenists may take heart from this hope, which is certainly something vital for the future of the Ecumenical Movement.

#### **4.4. Hopeful Humility: A Virtue for Ecumenism**

Having inquired into both humility and hope, it is now time to consider the interplay between the two. The humility grounding hope is evoked in the eschatological tension between "now" and "not yet." Aquinas connects the virtue of hope with the notion of the human person as a "wayfarer," or *viator*, "someone

on the way.”<sup>133</sup> Pieper explains, “The virtue of hope is pre-eminently the virtue of the *status viatoris*; it is the proper virtue of the “not yet.”<sup>134</sup> This concept is helpful in understanding the interconnection between humility and hope. He writes, “The only answer that corresponds to man’s actual existential situation is hope.”<sup>135</sup> The recognition of the truth of existence, of what humanity is before God, is therefore, the fruit of humility. This implies that hope arises from humility, from the acknowledgement of the truth. Pieper goes on,

In the virtue of hope more than in any other, man understands and affirms that he is a creature, that he has been created by God.<sup>136</sup>

Here Pieper asserts that hope, even more than other virtues, illustrates humility, and it is this acknowledgement that causes hope to be proper to us as humans. The form of hope is shaped by humility. “The ‘not yet’ of the *status viatoris*,” explains Pieper, “includes both a negative and a positive element: the absence of fulfilment and the orientation towards fulfilment.”<sup>137</sup> It is a “now” but “not yet” that illustrates how humility and hope interact. Cessario points out, “As a virtue of the wayfarer, hope develops a connatural clinging to God, a sure expectation that God will provide whatever is needed to reach happiness.”<sup>138</sup> It is God that provides, as our “own resources and the feebleness of one’s own efforts” are not enough.<sup>139</sup>

It is here that humility and hope interweave so closely as to become inseparable. Humility recognises the “not yet,” while hope sees the “now,” just as humility helps us see the “now,” the provisional nature of all theology, and hope pushes us towards the “not yet” of its fullness. Hope is radical in that it sees the world how it *will* be, the eschatological vision of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is

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<sup>133</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.18, a.14.

<sup>134</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 98.

<sup>135</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 98.

<sup>136</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 98.

<sup>137</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 93.

<sup>138</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 239.

<sup>139</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 239.



only *inaugurated* in the present, while the fullness is yet to come. This is the “new heaven and [the] new earth,” where “God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Rev 21:1-4). This is the vision Christian hope strives towards. Yet hope is nourished from the “now,” the aspects of the future which exist, already, in tension with the present world. This eschatological tension is also at the core of the Ecumenical Movement. Paradoxically, the very reason Christians can strive for full unity is because that unity exists already, although only partially.

Like humility, Christian hope unflinchingly recognises the reality of the existence of sin, evil, hate, grief, and death, and the corruption of creation. At the heart of Christian hope is the recognition that hope must also work in “darkness.”<sup>140</sup> The distinctiveness of Christian hope compared to other types of hopes is due to the humility which lies at its heart. This connection is recognised by Kelly. He argues that hope “is never far from humility” in requiring from us a trustful surrendering of ourselves, a realisation that we are not in “total control” of everything.<sup>141</sup> As he comments, “However confident and courageous hope might be, it has to move forward without any controlling vision of what is to come.”<sup>142</sup> Christian hope requires us to trust and hope in a future beyond what we can even imagine. Kelly writes, “Christian hope is always more than the catalogue of particular hopes, for it looks to an incalculable fulfilment in terms of what can never be fully expressed.”<sup>143</sup> Moreover, he acknowledges that hope must carry on with “not only not-understanding and not-representing but also with a certain not-

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<sup>140</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 54.

<sup>141</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 54.

<sup>143</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 13.

willing...it must yield” to the Spirit.<sup>144</sup> This makes sense only in the context of the kenotic humility of Christian hope, which accepts God’s will and God’s plan for creation, over our own. As Paul attests, “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). Considering the unfathomableness of the mystery at the heart of Christian hope, Kelly states, “hope relies on God alone.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, Christian hope itself is an act of humility, a humble hope. It is, after all, a theological virtue that cannot be attained, but must be given by God as a gift.

Yet, what does this hopeful humility mean for ecumenism? There is no doubt that the Ecumenical Movement could profit from a deeper humility and more unconditional hope. Kelly’s concept of “inter-hope dialogue,” although proposed as a replacement for inter-faith dialogue, suggests a reevaluation of the role of hope in ecumenism. He explains that “Inter-hope dialogue would highlight the unimaginable “otherness” of eschatological fulfilment. It looks beyond what is, to what is to come.”<sup>146</sup> Dialogue can be grounded in hope because “the future is what we have in common.”<sup>147</sup> God is the goal for all Christians. The past is broken with division, yet the future will be found in the one body of Christ. He writes that “Christian hope can be especially creative” if Christians look together toward “a hoped-for future.”<sup>148</sup> In the future, “the other is essentially welcomed into the communion of ultimate life” and must be received as truly brother and sister, rather than holding on to “the distance and fragmentation” of our past.”<sup>149</sup> The future thus, ironically, offers us a shared starting point for dialogue, because it is the “not yet,” when unity will be fully realised.

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<sup>144</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 57.

<sup>145</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 54.

<sup>146</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 16.

<sup>147</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 16.

<sup>148</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 16.

<sup>149</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 17.

Humility is necessary for the “now,” however. The first letter of Peter tells us that “all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another” (1 Pet 5:5-6). Paradoxically, we need to humble ourselves in order to be exalted. Humility therefore comes with the hope of exaltation. In the setting of ecumenism, to clothe ourselves in humility means to focus on the other *first*. It also means to recognise our faults, sins, weaknesses, and mistakes, and to be truthful about our failings to each other. Chittister writes that humility requires us to “cease to wear our masks, stop pretending to be perfect, and accept the graces of growth that can come to us from the wise and gentle hearts of people of quality around us.”<sup>150</sup> Hopeful humility recognises the provisional nature of theological thinking; we are still in the time of the “now,” lacking the “not yet” of full evidence. God is still the incomprehensible mystery of grace inspiring and energising our hope. We speak insofar as we have words, but acknowledge that words will always fail, as Aquinas experienced when he put down his pen.<sup>151</sup>

Humility, therefore, allows us to look around in hope that someone else (or some other ecclesial community) has found words more adequate than our own. As Steven Harman states, in a rare paragraph on the value of humility for Christian unity:

Humility in the service of the unity of the church means being willing to contemplate the possibility that other Christians from whom we’re divided may have preserved some conviction or practice belonging to the wholeness of the church’s faith that our own church currently lacks, even while humbly offering the distinctive gifts of our own church to the rest of the body of Christ.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict*, 89.

<sup>151</sup> Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 46.

<sup>152</sup> Steven R. Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 43.

It means also being open “to the possibility” that we could be in the wrong.<sup>153</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that humility is at the heart of RE.

As a primal other-orientated attitude, humility means being open and receptive in regard to others and the gifts they may have to offer. The humility of ecumenism is far from negative. It acknowledges both our current imperfections, recognised by our pilgrim state, and our hope for the fullness of the gift of God to all. In this way, humility finds its partner in hope in its receptivity to the gifts God wishes to give to the Christian community. These gifts are given in order to enrich its common knowledge of the truth and to increase its charity. Humility is intrinsically other-orientated in its reliance on God, and Christian hope is hope in God for all others, encompassing all creation. In response to the imperfections of the present, humility acts to ground Christian consciousness, while hope inspires and moves it forward. Combined, humility and hope offer, therefore, a lens by which to see the universe in a different way: at once, both fallen and already redeemed. A hopeful humility and a humble hope collaborate in giving us the ability to make a critical, realistic assessment of the “not yet” character of the present world, while also recognising the unconditional extent of God’s love.

The contribution of hopeful humility to ecumenical activity is therefore positive and liberating. Theological formulations of agreement are inevitably incomplete and part of the limitations of the present. As such, Vatican II presents the image of the pilgrim Church.<sup>154</sup> To approach the ecumenical endeavour with hopeful humility also has consequences. The focus shifts from the ideal of attempting to find perfect cognitive agreement on the doctrinal level, to focusing on the mystery of conversion. Conversion, or *metanoia*, speaks directly to a hopeful humility which allows mystery to remain what is, as God acts, and all

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<sup>153</sup> Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too*, 43.

<sup>154</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 2.

involved remain receptive to the gifts of the Spirit. The Ecumenical Movement must work “in the dark,” but with the confidence that comes from trusting in God’s help.

#### 4.5. The Spiritual, Virtuous, and Affective Aspects of Ecumenism

The role of hope and humility as essential virtues for Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism leads to broader awareness of the importance of emphasising the spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions of ecumenical engagement. Contemporary theology has seen something of a revival of focus on the virtues, and a rediscovery of the importance of the affective dimensions of human experience. This trend ties in with phenomenology, which seeks to explain not what something is, but rather how it is experienced.

Ecumenism has never just been an intellectual endeavour. It is something that must also be *felt*. Congar explains that, “The first step in the work of the Holy Spirit is to convince us of our sins, to awaken in us a realization that we are not all that we should be.”<sup>155</sup> He goes on, stating that this experience of humility is,

the tap-root, as it were, from which the fruits of the Holy Ghost, enumerated by St Paul, must spring (Gal 5:22). No unitive endeavour can succeed unless it is based on a sense of our own guilt, of the ills we have inflicted on each other and an acknowledgment of it.<sup>156</sup>

Humility is, therefore, to be considered the foundation from which desire for Christian unity originates, as its necessary predisposition. Congar calls humility “the psychological manifestation of truth.”<sup>157</sup> It is the feeling and experience of truth, which leads us towards reform and *metanoia*.

Kasper also emphasises the virtues behind ecumenical engagement. He writes that,

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<sup>155</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 103.

<sup>156</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 103.

<sup>157</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 104.

A distinction is often made between the dialogue of love and the dialogue in truth. Both are important, but neither can be separated; they belong together. Love without truth is void and dishonest; truth without love is hard and repelling. So we must seek the truth in love, bearing in mind that love can be authentic only when it is an expression of truth.<sup>158</sup>

As such, ecumenism requires recognition of its intrinsic affective and virtuous levels. He asserts that,

Even high-level academic dialogues function only if more than theological skills emerge; indeed, on the merely intellectual level anybody is capable of expounding an argument against what has been said by the other side. The very nature of academic dialogue embodies the continuity of discourses. Only when there is more – mutual trust and friendship, mutual understanding and sharing on a spiritual level, and common prayer – can ecumenical dialogue advance.<sup>159</sup>

Ecumenism always entails more than just an intellectual pursuit, or even shared practical initiatives. Ecumenical progress depends also on these more spiritual and affective aspects, which are experienced affectively, rather than operating on the rational mode alone.

O’Gara places a similar emphasis on these affective and virtuous aspects of ecumenical engagement. She writes that ecumenism “takes imagination, faithfulness, and perseverance. These are virtues that will be needed by the next generation of ecumenists.”<sup>160</sup> Like Congar, O’Gara has a particular emphasis on repentance, saying that “In a sense the entire ecumenical movement rests on recognizing the need for repentance, a willingness to ask whether we have a beam in our own eye before concerning ourselves with the mote in the other’s eye.”<sup>161</sup>

This accent on humility is also represented in RE’s self-critical focus.

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<sup>158</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

<sup>159</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 45.

<sup>160</sup> Margaret O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue: The Next Generation,” in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Michael Vertin (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 217.

<sup>161</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 218.

On that point, Murray frequently refers to the virtuous and affective levels of ecumenical activity, such as hope and imagination. He is careful to point out that RE's self-critical attitude is motivated by love, by which he means "the full-blooded commitment of heartfelt passion, with all that suggests about gratitude, delight, desire, the determination to struggle for something worth struggling for, and the patience to bear with it, even, if necessary, to suffer for it."<sup>162</sup> RE is therefore driven by love, guided by humility, and ultimately undertaken out of hope, as he posits, "We must...seek to live courageously and imaginatively in hope."<sup>163</sup>

The recognition of the affective, virtuous, and spiritual dimensions of ecumenism serves to illustrate the experience of ecumenism as operating at far more than just an intellectual level. Ideally, ecumenism balances head, heart, and soul. It is a holistic endeavour, but one which stems from desire, fanned by the breath of the Spirit into our hearts. By focusing on humility and hope, Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism bring these dimensions to the forefront. After all, Christian unity is a hope, and a humble one.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter enquired into the meaning of humility and hope for ecumenism. After looking at humility, and how it serves as the foundation for virtue, Christian hope was examined, focusing on how humility informs hope. Next, humility and hope were investigated together using a phenomenological outline of an ecumenical virtue that could be properly described as hopeful humility. Finally, we turned to consider the importance of recognising the affective and virtuous dimensions of ecumenism for the contemporary

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<sup>162</sup> Murray, "Preface," xiv-xv.

<sup>163</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 89.

Ecumenical Movement. It is time now to return to the relationship between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism; namely, how they act to enrich each other.



## **Chapter 5: The Complementarity of Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism<sup>1</sup>**

### **5.1. A Mutually Enriching Dynamic**

Up to this point, our attention has been on the respective characteristics of Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism, examining their similarities and differences. What has emerged from this investigation is that there must be some form of mutual enrichment between the two. In what follows, we wish to further explore this aspect of their dynamic. We seek to address the question of their complementarity, in that RE emerges from SE, but also adds to SE in its own way. First, we will investigate how RE enhances and expands on SE. In the second section, we will consider how, for its part, SE enriches RE by fostering its maturation as an ecumenical methodology. Finally, we will explore how RE can itself be considered a *reception* of the principles of SE.

### **5.2. The Value of Receptive Ecumenism within the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement**

In discerning the potential value of RE for the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, a number of queries need to be raised:

- Does RE bring anything wholly new to SE?
- Does RE explicate or highlight certain features of SE that may be overlooked?
- If so, does RE actually replace SE?
- If not, should RE be considered as essentially the same as SE, rather than as making a substantial contribution to SE?

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<sup>1</sup> Sections of this chapter have been published in *Pacifica* (forthcoming).

These questions will be investigated by assessing Murray's claim that RE is both indebted to, and expands upon, SE.<sup>2</sup> We will examine in detail three key areas where RE expands on SE: RE's emphasis on structural rather than personal conversion; RE's focus on learning; and RE's appeal and accessibility. Finally, outlining these key areas brings us to consider the validity of the argument that RE should be treated as a fundamentally new type of ecumenism, rather than as a development of SE.

### **5.2.1. Institutional and Structural Conversion**

According to Murray, a fresh ecumenical methodology is needed to address institutional and structural transformation, an area where he considers SE to be lacking.<sup>3</sup> He acknowledges a level of continuity between SE and RE, explaining that "Receptive Ecumenism resonates both with ... "spiritual ecumenism", and expands upon" the "more obviously personal that is the focus of spiritual ecumenism."<sup>4</sup> Furthering this interpretation, he explains that the "one caveat" between Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism,

was that Spiritual Ecumenism could potentially be heard as speaking of the need for receptive learning purely at the level of one's personal spirituality or, if extended to the collective level at all, to the need for such learning merely in relation to respective spiritual and liturgical traditions.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, to Murray, the key distinction between them is that SE focuses on the personal, whereas RE is concerned with institutional and structural conversion. RE's role, therefore, is formulated as filling the need to also focus on structural and institutional conversion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>5</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

<sup>6</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 85.

Murray further stresses that “Receptive Ecumenism seeks to reclaim the full radical intent of Couturier’s spiritual ecumenism.”<sup>7</sup> He argues that RE seeks to “rescue” Spiritual Ecumenism “from the reduction to praying together and receiving of each other’s spiritual and liturgical riches to which it can sometimes be reduced.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the scope of SE properly extends beyond just “prayer” and personal conversion.<sup>9</sup> To that degree, RE is a “rescue” attempt designed to “set its [SE’s] potential free for structural, institutional, ecclesial, and theological renewal.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, RE attempts to recover Couturier’s SE, which is in need of restoration after becoming focused on personal conversion to the point of distortion. Hence, RE’s stated aim is, “To emphasize that the ecclesial dimension of conversion includes the ongoing development of the organizational, structural, cultural, and practical aspects of the church.”<sup>11</sup> It is these broader elements of SE that Murray considers have been lost. For him, RE must *restore* the integrity of SE. However, what is the validity of this interpretation?

There is little doubt that SE is in need of *rediscovery*. As we have seen in previous chapters, SE has been neglected, with few academic resources available on the topic. The Ecumenical Movement has largely focused on theological and practical ecumenism, rather than on the spiritual dimension. Due to the overuse of these approaches, it would seem timely to return to the roots of ecumenism. However, is SE clearly in need of *recovery* and *expansion* before it can be of value to the contemporary ecumenical milieu? Or, does SE simply need to be remembered and rediscovered?

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<sup>7</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>8</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>9</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>10</sup> Murray, "Growing into the Fullness of Christ."

<sup>11</sup> Centre for Catholic Studies, "About Receptive Ecumenism," *Durham University*  
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/about/>

SE has always been concerned with conversion at personal, communal, and institutional levels.<sup>12</sup> For example, *UR* urges that the “primary duty” of Catholics “is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself.”<sup>13</sup> Personal conversion extends to the communal and institutional. In fact, emphasis on the renewal of the whole church outweighs individual conversion in the vision of SE.<sup>14</sup> However, this communal perspective may indeed have become narrowed over time.

When SE has been considered at all, it has often been practiced as a component of practical ecumenism. Kasper’s *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* is a case in point: rather than being an academic contribution to understanding SE, it largely focuses on prayers for ecumenical gatherings.<sup>15</sup> As such, in the context of practical ecumenical gatherings, there is a tendency for the focus of SE to be concentrated on the personal to the detriment of an integrated personal, communal, and institutional notion of conversion. Here lies the validity of Murray’s concern over the excessive concentration of SE on the individual and personal character of conversion.

Nonetheless, there is the opposite extreme, namely to focus on institutional conversion to the exclusion of all else. The individual and the communal, the personal and the institutional, are inextricably linked. Personal conversion is in most cases a component of institutional conversion: “Renewal and conversion of heart includes both personal and institutional aspects.”<sup>16</sup> This holistic perception of conversion is well recognised in SE, as Couturier, Vatican II and Kasper all attest. While Murray claims that RE serves to “rescue” SE by emphasising institutional conversion, RE should be wary of falling into the opposite extreme,

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Three, especially section 3.2.1., on Couturier and section 3.2.3., on Vatican II.

<sup>13</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (New York: New City Press, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.”

and downplaying personal conversion. SE has a more holistic perception of conversion than RE, and RE may need to adopt, in a more thoroughgoing fashion, SE's emphasis on the connection between the personal and institutional in the ecumenical domain of conversion.

Nevertheless, while SE contains a holistic conception of conversion, the fact remains that SE has often been largely overlooked. The most evident aspect of SE is, as Murray argues, its focus on personal conversion. It follows, therefore, that RE's focus on institutional conversion is arguably more a case of rediscovering and remembering SE, than expanding it. While perhaps not given high visibility, institutional aspects of conversion can be found throughout SE's primary source material.<sup>17</sup> To this degree, SE has not so much been distorted, as forgotten, or never highly emphasised in the first place. Nevertheless, by emphasising the structural and institutional dimensions of conversion, RE acts to highlight one of the neglected aspects of SE. However, this is not the only point where RE enriches SE.

### **5.2.2. Ecclesial Learning**

Unsurprisingly, prayer holds the preeminent place within Spiritual Ecumenism. SE is intrinsically a prayer movement leading more deeply into relationship with Christ.<sup>18</sup> Couturier emphasises prayer above all else. The proper response to Christian division is repentance and prayer, which opens hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Prayer is the "source of power, the only power which can move all."<sup>20</sup> It is the driving force behind Christians coming "to discover each

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter Three for an in-depth treatment of Spiritual Ecumenism.

<sup>18</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 337.

<sup>19</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 343.

<sup>20</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 337.

other, recognize each other, and love each other.”<sup>21</sup> Without prayer, we “would otherwise be helpless before these crippling separations!”<sup>22</sup>

However, RE places a special emphasis on *learning*, with its fundamental question, ““What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?””<sup>23</sup> Here lies a key difference between RE and SE. In fact, RE does not place significant emphasis on prayer at all. Needless to say, prayer and learning have significantly different connotations, such that greater clarification is required. We ask, then, does RE place enough emphasis on prayer? Does RE’s emphasis on learning open up new directions for ecumenical engagement?

The topic of ecumenical learning has the advantage of novelty compared to ecumenical prayer alone. The phrases “Catholic learning,” “ecclesial learning” and “receptive learning” are distinctive to RE. There are also significantly different phenomenological ramifications implied. Learning implies humility (“I do not know everything”), receptiveness (“I am ready to learn or receive”), willingness to work (“In order to learn, I need to...”), and the goal of gaining knowledge (“once I finish learning, I will now know...”). Praying also implies humility and receptiveness, but in a different sense (humility as: “awe at the thought of God in relation to myself” and receptiveness as “listening to God’s will”). However, instead of the willingness to work toward the goal of gaining knowledge, prayer involves hope (“I can trust in God”). Learning implies active involvement and engagement, while prayer requires a more passive, receptive and kenotic attitude. Where learning emphasises the intellectual level mainly, prayer focuses on the spiritual dimension. For RE, learning is directed at learning from

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<sup>21</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 337.

<sup>22</sup> Couturier, "The Ecumenical Testament," 337.

<sup>23</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

other Christians, whereas, for SE, prayer aims at being receptive to the grace of God.

This is to suggest that learning has broader connotations and accents the cognitive and the objective, whereas prayer is specifically spiritual in the sense already explained. When learning, the learner is expected to achieve a certain result, whereas prayer is self-surrender and conformity to the will of God. Learning also has wider secular connotations: it is an activity that must be capable of being grasped, where the responsibility falls on the learner to learn, and which should achieve a concrete result. A phenomenology of learning can certainly contribute to ecumenical activity. With its cognitive and empirical criteria, RE's distinctive emphasis on learning rather than prayer is understandable. Such an emphasis on learning, especially if such learning is understood as a component of the larger activity of prayer, opens up an area for mutual enrichment in ecumenical activities and attitudes.

There are, of course, contextual considerations. Couturier places a high regard upon virtues traditionally emphasised in a monastic lifestyle, as has already been noted.<sup>24</sup> A monastic focus necessarily influences his ecumenical approach. The primacy he places on prayer, and the need for self-emptying humility, is consonant with his personal commitment as an ordained priest in the Society of St. Irenaeus. In contrast, as I have also already noted, Murray is a married layman, and is engaged in academic work. His emphasis on learning rather than prayer, may be explained by a context other than that of Couturier's undoubtedly monastic approach. Murray clearly pushes SE in a different direction from that of Couturier. And that has ecumenical consequences.

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<sup>24</sup> Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, 8.

Conceiving of ecumenism in terms of learning implies a possible outcome, which is our responsibility to strive towards, and which is possible to achieve. However, there is no reason why learning and prayer should not be undertaken together. In this regard, the lack of emphasis on prayer within RE points to an area where RE could be also be enriched by SE. After all, the entire Ecumenical Movement is founded upon a prayer (Jn 17:21). And, within the eschatological horizon of ecumenism, all agree that unity will not be achieved by human endeavour, but by the will of God. Accordingly, prayer should always have the first place. Nonetheless, RE's focus on learning introduces something new into SE.

### 5.2.3. Appeal and Accessibility

A third aspect of RE of value to SE is its accessibility and popular appeal. RE is deliberate in its intent to engage with a broad array of people, both lay and professional.<sup>25</sup> As Murray firmly states, RE is "quite clear that asking the basic receptive ecumenical question ... is not the exclusive preserve of an elite caste of theologians."<sup>26</sup> Rather, the premise is that "everyone at every level of church life is capable of asking in relation to any given issue, problem, area of understanding, or responsibility, what might fruitfully be learned from one's ecumenical others in this specific regard."<sup>27</sup> In a somewhat radical manner, RE recognises the role of the *whole* church in ecumenical engagement.

The simplicity of RE's methodology makes sense, given that it is explicitly intended to be practical. For instance, it insists that the academic serve practical, or real life, ecumenism: "the point is that the basic process is one in

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<sup>25</sup> Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>26</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 90.

<sup>27</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 90.



which all can share.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, RE’s integrity depends on its accessibility, as an affective experience, not just an academic one. In this sense Murray argues that “all effective ecumenical learning,” while “always in need of being tested by the “head,”” nevertheless ‘consists most deeply in an affair of the “heart.”’<sup>29</sup> As such, RE explicitly draws on the affective levels of ecumenical encounter, rather than intellectual study and abstract research alone.<sup>30</sup> The deliberate simplicity of RE is intended to make ecumenism accessible to newcomers and more general audiences. It aims to provide widespread access to the ecumenical endeavour to all Christians, especially laypeople, or those without a high level of theological education, or ecumenical expertise. RE, then, counteracts the high-brow, theological ecumenism which is inaccessible to most Christians. It is also an important feature for the future of the Ecumenical Movement.

Kinnamon argues that increasing lay participation and commitment to ecumenism will be a critical factor for the future.<sup>31</sup> After all, ecumenism is properly the activity of the entire Body of Christ, not just of an academically-minded few of its members. RE aims to revitalise ecumenism by honing ecumenical activity down to its core, namely, that we have need of each other.

Instead of approaching ecumenism from an academic perspective and the examination of theological texts and doctrines, RE focuses on lived traditions – in accord with its practical orientation.<sup>32</sup> For Murray, the “intention” of RE is to “not simply be a highly theorised endeavour” or to become “abstracted from the ordinary lived practice of the traditions concerned.”<sup>33</sup> Rather,

the core focus in Receptive Ecumenism is on the lived practice of traditions, their organisational, structural and

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<sup>28</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 90.

<sup>29</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 86.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>31</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 154.

<sup>32</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>33</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

procedural realities, and the wounds and tensions to be found there that call out for repair through potential receptive learning from another's particular gifts.<sup>34</sup>

He is concerned about the tendency of ecumenical approaches to become wholly theological affairs. RE, he says, "should arise out of the felt needs and experienced difficulties of the participant traditions" rather than from an academic examination of theological or doctrinal differences.<sup>35</sup> Here RE can collaborate with different ecumenical approaches, such as bilateral dialogues, rather than aiming to replace them.<sup>36</sup> To focus on lived traditions amounts to calling on the whole church community to participate in the ecumenical project.

Further, the accessibility of RE is increased in that it is formulated as a question, rather than a structured methodology. It does not require lengthy study to participate. As Clive Barrett puts it:

The only pre-requisites for this [RE] are an openness to the Spirit leading us to change and growth, together with sufficient ecumenical awareness, a mindset for unity, to make us look to each other in the first place.<sup>37</sup>

Fundamentally, all RE requires is an open receptiveness both to the Holy Spirit and to other Christians. It is not the work of a closed mind or heart, and there lies its appeal – and its importance for the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement.

While central to Catholic approaches to ecumenism (as evidenced in *UR*), SE has been underemphasised in the decades following Vatican II, with little scholarly work in this area, apart from the key figure of Kasper. As such, SE is not readily accessible to broader audiences, and is not well canvassed even within ecumenical circles. In contrast, RE is highly visible in contemporary ecumenism, particularly in the Catholic Church. Its activities reach broader audiences and stimulate lay interest. In this respect RE serves to push aspects of SE into greater

<sup>34</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>35</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 91.

<sup>36</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 40-41.

<sup>37</sup> Clive Barrett, "An Overview of Ecumenism," in *Unity in Process: Reflections on Ecumenism*, ed. Clive Barrett (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2012), 22.

prominence. For instance, RE's focus on what we have to learn from other Christians can only be carried out within an overarching awareness of the Holy Spirit as directing ecumenical efforts. Further, central to RE is its focus on conversion. Both of these points, as already discussed, are key to SE. Receptive Ecumenism, therefore, implicitly leads to greater engagement with Spiritual Ecumenism.

#### **5.2.4. Is Receptive Ecumenism a New Type of Ecumenism?**

Thus, RE enriches SE in three key areas: its focus on structural conversion, emphasis on learning, and the high level of its appeal and accessibility. But questions remain:

- Are the three key points discussed above significant enough to justify consideration of RE on its own, without reference to SE?
- Should RE be considered as a fundamentally new type of ecumenism?
- Or is RE intrinsically located within SE, so as to explicate SE's underlying features?

Murray states that RE both "resonates" with and "expands" on SE, which has strong implications for the importance of SE in understanding RE. By implication, RE needs to be considered in relation to SE. Therefore, RE could not exist without the prior development of SE.

According to Murray, RE's emphasis on structural conversion is a rediscovery of Couturier's SE. Although the emphasis on learning represents a significant departure of RE from SE, this can be explained by contextual differences. Moreover, RE's emphasis on learning may have potential riches to offer SE, especially if the process of learning is considered within the broader activity of prayer. Finally, RE's accessibility is dependent on the fact that practicing RE does not require academic ecumenical expertise, but rather

openness to other Christians through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, while RE is seemingly more accessible than SE, its accessibility is essentially based on Spiritual Ecumenism.

The three above-mentioned dimensions suggest areas where RE highlights what may be implicit, or even dormant, within SE. RE can, therefore, be seen as a valuable development of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, rather than as a fundamentally new type of ecumenism. Having investigated where RE may potentially enrich SE, we also need to consider how SE enriches RE.

### **5.3. The Importance of Spiritual Ecumenism for Receptive Ecumenism**

We turn now to consider the other side of the relationship: does SE have the potential to enrich RE? A decade after its initial launch, RE has been recognised as an exciting new approach to ecumenism, one that may rejuvenate the ecumenical landscape. However, RE is also still developing, and is, in many ways, still a question in search of an answer. How can RE develop, adapt, and *mature* as an ecumenical methodology? Despite its apparent simplicity, certain elements of RE's methodology require clarification.

What, for instance, is RE's theological context? How can it be understood in relation to other ecumenical approaches? Most critically, what criteria can be used to measure Receptive Ecumenical learning? It is at this point that SE can foster RE's development along the lines of a deepened Christological and pneumatological vision. Christology and pneumatology are tightly linked in ecumenical theology. As Congar asserts, there is "no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology."<sup>38</sup> RE can therefore benefit from SE's familiarity with these two key concerns. Accordingly, we proceed now to consider three major points where RE is enriched by engagement

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<sup>38</sup> Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 1.

with SE; namely, in its Christology, pneumatology, and the ecumenical exchange of gifts.

### 5.3.1. Christological Basis

Michael Putney, a renowned Australian ecumenist and Catholic bishop places a strong emphasis on SE.<sup>39</sup> He makes the point that the pre-eminent relationship for Christian unity is not relationships between *Christians*, but relationship with *Christ*. He explains:

It would be a mistake when talking about unity between the churches or the unity within any one Christian community to start with or focus upon the relationship of Christians with each other. The unity that Christians are called to, established in, or formed into involves a very particular kind of relationship. It is not only modelled on the kind of relationship that Jesus has with his Father... but involves a participation by Christians in that very same relationship.<sup>40</sup>

That Christ is the centre of unity can easily be taken for granted, especially for RE with its focus on inter-Christian learning. Hence, RE's need for a stronger Christological basis. What, then, is the Christological basis of SE? Three considerations come into play: i) ecumenism as willed by Christ; ii) baptism as the basis for ecumenical endeavour; and iii) the example of Jesus' radical hospitality.

At the heart of SE is the assertion that Christian unity is the will of Christ. Ecumenism arises within Christ's prayer "that all of them may be one" (Jn 17:21), and is, therefore, intrinsically Christological. Christ's prayer for unity is both the inspiration and foundation for ecumenical endeavour. The ecumenical imperative derives from Christ, and this is emphasised throughout key Catholic ecumenical texts. Couturier calls Christ's prayer for unity the "prototype of all prayer for

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<sup>39</sup> Putney, "One Man's Ecumenical Journey," 1.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," in *My Ecumenical Journey*, ed. Elizabeth Delaney, Gerard Kelly and Ormond Rush (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014), 184.

Unity.”<sup>41</sup> Congar recounts that it was while meditating upon John 17 that he “recognized” his “vocation to work for the unity of all who believe in Jesus Christ.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, *UR* states that “division openly contradicts the will of Christ.”<sup>43</sup> This assertion is reiterated throughout *UUS*.<sup>44</sup> As Henn reports, “Some of the strongest words of *Ut Unum Sint* concern unity as God’s will, even as the primary motive of the whole Christ-event.”<sup>45</sup> Here, the ecumenical importance of Christology clearly emerges.

Couturier’s emphasis on ecumenism as Christ’s will and prayer for all Christians achieved remarkable results. His focus on the common prayer and Christological basis for SE allowed Christians to pray in accordance with Christ’s command, without demeaning their own traditions. Couturier expressed his Christological ecumenism in the formula: “to pray for the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ as He will and when He wills.”<sup>46</sup> Spiritual Ecumenism of this kind (rather than theological or practical ecumenism) provided much of the impetus for the development of Catholic ecumenism.<sup>47</sup> In applying RE to a particular issue or locality, emphasising the common will of Christ for all Christians would reinforce an ecumenical sense of transcending human desires, bias, fear of change, or pride. It would frame ecumenism as a matter of self-transcendence in conformity to the will of Christ. As Couturier realised, Jesus’ prayer for unity provides a common ground and imperative for all Christians. Kasper reiterates this point:

“Ecumenical work, therefore, is a spiritual task and can be nothing other than

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<sup>41</sup> Couturier, “The Ecumenical Testament,” 329.

<sup>42</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Christ’s call for unity is a key theme throughout *UUS*. See paragraphs 1 and 6 for explicit treatment of the issue.

<sup>45</sup> Henn, “Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” 235.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Lukas Vischer, “The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church,” in *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968*, ed. Harold E. Fey (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 321.

<sup>47</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 156.

participation in the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus.”<sup>48</sup> Christ’s will and his prayer is foundational to all ecumenical endeavour. This is why *UR* can proclaim SE to be the “soul” of the whole ecumenical movement.<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, there is the centrality of baptism. *UR* asserts that baptism places Christians from other traditions into “some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.”<sup>50</sup> This means that “all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ,” as brothers and sisters.<sup>51</sup> Fruitful dialogue, not to mention the exchange of gifts, is made possible by this baptismal bond. Baptism is a sacrament of unity, where many different members are incorporated into the one Body of Christ. John Paul II asks,

How is it possible to remain divided, if we have been “buried” through Baptism in the Lord’s death, in the very act by which God, through the death of his Son, has broken down the walls of division?<sup>52</sup>

Baptism into Christ unites all Christians, despite their divisions. It is relationship with Christ through baptism, which enables relationships with other Christians.

According to Congar, “on the basis of the baptism which incorporates us into Christ and the Word which is our Christian norm, [ecumenism’s] aim is to carry out the will and the prayer of Christ, which is that his disciples should be united.”<sup>53</sup> The Christological foundation of SE affirms that ecumenism is not our idea or goal, but rather Christ’s will and prayer for us. Moreover, Christian unity already exists to some extent among all baptised Christians because of their relationship with Christ. Only through Christ is ecumenism possible. Kasper explains that SE’s fundamental Christological basis means that “Ecumenical

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<sup>48</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 3.

<sup>52</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 132.

spirituality ... will also be a sacramental spirituality.”<sup>54</sup> Baptism is “therefore a basic element of ecumenical spirituality.”<sup>55</sup> The Christological foundation of unity in baptism allows the mutual learning commended by RE. Kasper, emphasising this point, considers that, “we can already live this still imperfect communion....For we have more in common than what divides us.”<sup>56</sup> RE should, therefore, not lose sight of the fact that it is Christ who stands at the centre of ecumenism, and so, can benefit from SE in this respect.

There is a third consideration, namely, hospitality. For Murray, one of RE’s “core values” is “responsible hospitality.”<sup>57</sup> However, he does not further explicate the meaning of hospitality for RE. Here, SE has something to offer. In the RE volume, Sheldrake places a strong emphasis on hospitality as an “important concept.”<sup>58</sup> For him, hospitality is “not the same as assimilation of what is ‘other’ into me.”<sup>59</sup> Rather, hospitality “concerns the reception of what is strange and what remains strange, or at least ‘other.’”<sup>60</sup> This is an important point for RE: Hospitality expects nothing in return for giving.

Kasper makes the point that the Jesus revealed throughout the Gospels is a “person for others,” who “did not come to dominate but to serve.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, radical hospitality was characteristic of the historical Jesus. SE emphasises Christian hospitality by placing, as its first duty, love for one another. SE is, therefore, not concerned with changing others or trying to convert them. It exists within an understanding of hospitality which respects the “otherness” of the other.

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<sup>54</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 164.

<sup>55</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 165.

<sup>56</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 16.

<sup>58</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 55.

<sup>59</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 56.

<sup>60</sup> Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People," 56.

<sup>61</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 39.



In a paper presented at the second RE conference, David Pascoe explains the notion of hospitality as foundational for ecclesial learning.<sup>62</sup> He argues that deepening interior conversion results from “hospitable engagement with another church whose gifts are recognised and received.”<sup>63</sup> There results a process of “transformational learning” wherein a tradition becomes more deeply itself through engagement with others. This has its “foundation in what is proper to spiritual ecumenism.”<sup>64</sup> In light of the positions of Murray, Sheldrake, and Pascoe, RE would do well to place greater emphasis on hospitality, particularly in regard to the “other.”

Hospitality also acts as a counter and critique to RE’s deliberate focus on the benefits to be gained through ecumenical engagement. RE asserts that other communities have much to teach one’s own community, and therefore, ecumenical engagement will strengthen and enrich one’s own tradition. However, a key dimension of hospitality is not to require anything from the “other.” Therefore, an ecumenism of hospitality would undertake ecumenical engagement without expecting anything in return – in accordance with Christ’s example of hospitality.

Pohl makes the point that “seeking to gain advantage through hospitality undermines it as a moral practice. If hospitality is calculated, the moral bond between host and guest is destroyed.”<sup>65</sup> She asserts that, “Hospitality is fragile because it is to be offered out of kindness only.”<sup>66</sup> Hospitality neither aims to incorporate the “other” into the self, nor even into one’s own tradition. Nor should it be undertaken out of any sense of reciprocity. Hospitality is giving without any

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<sup>62</sup> Pascoe, “Hospitality Grounded in Humility.”

<sup>63</sup> Pascoe, “Hospitality Grounded in Humility.”

<sup>64</sup> Pascoe, “Hospitality Grounded in Humility.”

<sup>65</sup> Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 142.

<sup>66</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 142.

expectation of receiving, after the example of Christ. For Pohl, “Our hospitality both reflects and participates in God’s hospitality.”<sup>67</sup> Hospitality, when understood as engagement with the “other” with no requirements or expectations, constitutes an important critique of RE with its focus on the gains to be had by receiving, rather than giving. Pohl makes the point that hospitality can be misused:

The temptation to use hospitality for advantage remains an important issue today because we tend to be so instrumental in our thinking, so calculating, so aware of costs and benefits. We continually ask, almost as an expression of good stewardship, “Well, what will it accomplish? How is it useful?”<sup>68</sup>

For RE, this is a considerable critique. RE is an ecumenism undertaken for the purpose of learning from others, and thereby enriching one’s own community. RE must, therefore, be careful not to misuse or neglect the notion of Christ’s gratuitous hospitality which is not tied to pragmatic concerns and criteria.

Hospitality “depends on a disposition of love because, fundamentally, hospitality is simply love in action.”<sup>69</sup> A stronger emphasis on Christological hospitality is necessary for RE, lest it become too narrowly focused on concrete goals and achievements, on what can be gained from another tradition, rather than Christ’s selfless love. According to Pohl, “Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specifically gifted for it.”<sup>70</sup> The same can be said of ecumenism itself, as RE recognises. While RE intentionally focuses on receiving, rather than giving, hospitality places its emphasis on giving instead of receiving. Hospitality is therefore an important value which is yet to be fully refined and promoted in RE.

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<sup>67</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 172.

<sup>68</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 144.

<sup>69</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 172.

<sup>70</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 31.

When Christ is the axis of unity, relationships with all Christians become possible. Putney explicates this point: “The unity Christians have with each other arises from this prior unity they have through Christ.”<sup>71</sup> Inter-Christian learning, the focus of RE, needs to be explicitly based on our unity in Christ. However, this Christological foundation requires an accompanying emphasis on pneumatology.

### 5.3.2. Pneumatological Foundation

As analysed in Chapter Two, pneumatology is one of the major themes within the RE volume.<sup>72</sup> Murray himself, however, offers little explication of the pneumatological basis of RE. He recognises that RE is “a Spirit-driven movement of the heart, mind, and will.”<sup>73</sup> For him, one of RE’s “guiding principles” is that “we need to ‘lean-into’ the promise of God’s purpose and the presence of God’s Spirit and to ask what it means in practice for us to enter into this more fully in the here and now.”<sup>74</sup> While RE thus presumes a pneumatological foundation, it clearly requires further explication. RE can benefit from the richness and depth of pneumatology expressed within SE, especially under the three following headings: i) ecumenism as the work of the Spirit; ii) the importance of pneumatology in developing criteria for RE; and iii) the significance of the “sense of the faithful” (*sensus fidelium*) for RE.

For its part, SE is deeply pneumatological. The spirit at the heart of SE is none other than the Holy Spirit. According to Kasper, SE “does not mean any spirit but the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who confesses ‘Jesus is the Lord’ (1 Cor 12:3).”<sup>75</sup> Ecumenism is not the achievement of human beings, but rather the work of the Spirit implementing Christ’s will for unity. Christology and pneumatology

<sup>71</sup> Putney, “A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 184.

<sup>72</sup> Pneumatology receives a significant focus in three chapters: Walter Kasper, Chapter 6; Denis Edwards, Chapter 14; and Geraldine Smyth, Chapter 20.

<sup>73</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 16.

<sup>74</sup> Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 89.

<sup>75</sup> Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.”

are interconnected in ecumenism, as Kasper attests, “It is the Spirit of God that makes us increasingly aware of Jesus Christ’s commandment of unity to his disciples.”<sup>76</sup>

It is the Holy Spirit, Congar explains, who acts to “convince us of our sins, to awaken in us a realization that we are not all that we should be.”<sup>77</sup> Awareness of sin and our own incompleteness are critical factors in fostering the desire for unity: “No unitive endeavour can succeed unless it is based on a sense of our own guilt, of the ills we have inflicted on each other and an acknowledgment of it.”<sup>78</sup> This affective experience of repentance and longing for fulfilment is inspired by the Spirit, and is a fundamental dimension of SE. Repentance and yearning for fulfilment can also be seen as prerequisites for RE, as RE implies an awareness of deficit that can only be corrected by learning from others. The sense of repentance accompanying the desire for unity witnesses to the necessary role of the Spirit in ecumenical activity.

SE places primary importance on the assertion that unity is the work of the Spirit. As Kasper explains, “Christian unity cannot only be the fruit of human effort; we cannot as human beings ‘make’ or organize it. We can only receive it as a gift of the Spirit.”<sup>79</sup> Ecumenism is, then, essentially a spiritual activity, a point reiterated by Putney: “Ecumenism is always an intensely spiritual experience. It occurs in the Spirit. To engage in dialogue is no more than to respond to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>80</sup> What, then, are the implications for RE?

RE emphasises the need of learning and receiving from Christians of traditions other than one’s own – without demeaning one’s own spiritual inheritance. *UR* states “that anything wrought by the grace of the holy Spirit in the

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<sup>76</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 103.

<sup>78</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 103.

<sup>79</sup> Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.”

<sup>80</sup> Putney, “A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 185.

hearts of our separated brothers and sisters can contribute to our own edification.”<sup>81</sup> The key point here, is that it is the activity or gifts of the *Spirit* bestowed on these traditions that the Catholic Church can accept and receive into itself. The guidance of the Spirit, therefore, is the principle of discernment as to what the Catholic Church may, or may not, authentically receive. The task of the Spirit is not only to *foster* ecumenism, but also to *guide* the Church in the reception of gifts. The need for guidance and discernment points to the necessity of RE developing a deeper, more nuanced, pneumatological foundation.

The development of a set of criteria to guide Receptive Ecumenical learning has been raised previously. Clearly, such criteria must have a spiritual foundation. Congar writes on this point: “The Holy Spirit, then, leads us and guides us into ‘all truth.’”<sup>82</sup> Such learning and guidance require trust in the Spirit, along with the humility to recognise that unity is ultimately the work of God. SE’s pneumatological basis, therefore, has special value in formulating a set of guiding criteria for RE.

Congar remarks, in reference to *UR*, that ecumenism is “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit,” but that “Christians should ‘go forward...without prejudging the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>83</sup> If ecumenism is truly the activity of the Spirit, ecumenists must leave unity up to the Spirit of God, without presuming or restricting its movements. There is a sense of proceeding in a “cloud of unknowing,” and with a distinctive *via negativa* – for the shape of Christian unity and the paths to it remain unknown. SE requires trust in the Spirit for guidance and surrender of human control and calculation. In this respect, trust in the Spirit is paradoxically liberating. Douglas Koskela remarks,

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<sup>81</sup> Vatican II, *UR*, no. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 104-105.

<sup>83</sup> Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 132.

If the Spirit who is the principle of unity in the church is moving in new and surprising ways, constantly developing and shaping the very being of the community of faith, then fresh hope emerges for overcoming deep and longstanding disunity between Christian communities.<sup>84</sup>

Trust and hope in the Holy Spirit is also a theme reflected upon memorably by Putney,

The Spirit will never lead them in any direction other than to him. The Spirit will never lead them to think something contrary to what he has taught; and the Spirit will find ways of revealing to them what is God's will, even when they are resistant. One can conclude from these fundamental affirmations that the Spirit has never revealed to Christians different truths. Because God respects their different cultures, languages and histories, the Spirit will have revealed the one truth to them in different forms. Sometimes too the Spirit will have revealed to one or another a new insight into the truth which is meant as a gift for all, even if the gift is first received by one divided from another. Perhaps, too, the Spirit is hindered from revealing 'everything' because of the barriers which divisions have created in the hearts and minds of Christians.<sup>85</sup>

Putney's words raise six important points relevant to RE's commitment to ecclesial learning: i) the Spirit will guide ecumenical endeavours; ii) what is required from us is prayer, repentance, and trust; iii) while there is only one truth, there may be different interpretations of that one truth; iv) the Spirit may have given one community a gift meant for the whole body of Christ; vi) and the Spirit will not lead us astray.

In a similar way, Denis Edwards's application of Congar's notion of the charisms of the Spirit to RE breaks new ground.<sup>86</sup> Edwards argues that "a theology of institutional charisms can contribute to the development of receptive ecumenism."<sup>87</sup> He concedes that while a pneumatological focus on charisms

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<sup>84</sup> Koskela, *Ecclesiality and Ecumenism*, 150.

<sup>85</sup> Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 185.

<sup>86</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church."

<sup>87</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 457.

cannot explicitly be seen in the RE volume, it is still “implicit in much of the discussions.”<sup>88</sup>

In addressing the topic of Congar’s discussion of the charisms of the Spirit for RE, he endorses the primary importance of the Holy Spirit for all ecumenical endeavours: “there is a need to invoke the Spirit at every point along the journey and to be open to the Spirit leading us into the new.”<sup>89</sup> This receptivity towards the Spirit may lead to the realisation that other traditions “may embody an institutional charism.”<sup>90</sup> This point supports Putney’s assertion that the Spirit may give one tradition a gift (charism) intended for all. Edwards defines these charisms as “gifts of nature and grace given for the fulfilment of the mission of the church.”<sup>91</sup> In continuity with Vatican II’s teachings, therefore, an institutional charism, once recognised as given by the Spirit for the entire Church, can be authentically received by the Catholic Church.

Consequently, while RE is concerned with the value of inter-Christian learning, it must develop a capacity for authentic reception in regard to the teachings, values, and institutions of other Christian communities. Otherwise, RE may degenerate into fragmentation and relativism, rather than promoting genuine conversion.

A basic question remains. How can such an institutional charism be discerned? Edwards calls on Congar to clarify what is implied in the discernment of charisms in a partner church.<sup>92</sup> Accordingly, he offers six criteria for the recognition of an institutional charism. Firstly, that the charism must be recognised as “an authentic expression” of faith. Secondly, that the charism leads

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<sup>88</sup> With the exception, he points out, of the article by Ladislav Örsy. Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 457-458.

<sup>89</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 460.

<sup>90</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 460.

<sup>91</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 459.

<sup>92</sup> Edwards, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church,” 462.

to Christ. Thirdly, that it does not undermine the ecclesiology of the receiving church. Fourthly, that it can be considered an “organic development” of the receiving church’s faith. Fifthly, that it brings the receiving church “renewed energy and life.” Sixthly, that it is “accompanied by the fruits of the Spirit.”<sup>93</sup> Meeting these conditions, he argues, means that the charism can be “celebrated as an institutional charism of the Spirit” and as “a gift of God for the receiving church.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, Edwards provides a starting point in the process of developing criteria for Receptive Ecumenical learning. Notably, his suggestions are both pneumatological and Christological.

The positions of Edwards and Putney on the need for RE to be guided by the Holy Spirit mitigate the risk of fragmentation. Here, mutual learning is solidly grounded in Christ and the Spirit. Without this theocentric perspective, division and fruitless argument may surely result. This is, therefore, a key point where RE can be significantly enriched by engagement with SE.

In this context, the notion of the *sensus fidelium* as informing RE emerges with fresh relevance. In a keynote address given at the second RE conference in 2009, Ormond Rush provides a pneumatological justification for RE. He states, “any theology of Receptive Ecumenism must be grounded in a pneumatology which gives appropriate weight to this active ‘principle of reception’, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>95</sup> He explains that “the ecclesial instrument for learning, given by the teaching Spirit, is faith’s organ for understanding, the gift of a ‘sense’ of/for the faith.”<sup>96</sup> Here Rush identifies RE as fundamentally grounded in pneumatology,

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<sup>93</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 462.

<sup>94</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church," 462.

<sup>95</sup> Ormond Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*: Expanding the Categories for Catholic Ecclesial Discerning," (presentation, the Second International Receptive Ecumenism Conference: Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to be Church Together Durham, January 2009).

<sup>96</sup> Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*."



and, for him, the specific mechanism operating in inter-Christian learning is the sense of the faithful, given by the Holy Spirit.

Vatican II's notion of the *sensus fidelium* presumes that the Holy Spirit works through the whole people of God, and that the people of God "cannot be mistaken in belief," for this sense of the faith is "sustained by the Spirit."<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, Rush defines the *sensus fidelium* as an "ecclesial gift in which all individual believers participate and which enables the whole church to receive and to transmit the faith effectively and faithfully into new cultures and contexts."<sup>98</sup> In view of the fact that RE explicitly presents itself as a "democratised" ecumenism, involving the entire church, then, as Rush argues, this *sensus fidelium* provides a pneumatological basis for RE. RE's concept of democratised ecumenism can therefore be developed further in relation to the *sensus fidelium*.

However, Rush acknowledges that the process of actually discerning the *sensus fidelium* "is somewhat problematic," because "it is a spiritual reality."<sup>99</sup> His understanding of the relationship of the *sensus fidelium* to RE strongly suggests that RE is a form of SE. Nonetheless, despite problems involved in discerning the sense of the faithful, Rush believes that "employing the rubric of *sensus fidei* for conceiving faith's organ of recognition for determining what is true or false to the faith can open new perspectives in ecumenical dialogue."<sup>100</sup> He goes on to outline seven potential advantages.<sup>101</sup> A word on each: the first advantage to RE is "*methodological*," by grounding "reception" within the "double gift exchange" of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The second is "*pneumatological*," as "it seeks a theology of Receptive Ecumenism that is

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<sup>97</sup> Vatican II, *LG*, no. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>99</sup> Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*."

<sup>100</sup> Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*."

<sup>101</sup> Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*."

explicitly pneumatological, in a way that balances the mission of the Word and the mission of the Spirit.”<sup>102</sup> These two points correlate with our argument that RE needs to deepen its Christological and pneumatological foundation. The third advantage for RE is “*eschatological*,” as emphasising the pneumatological “source of the gift of faith” highlights the “eschatological dimension of Christian truth.” The fourth is “*pisteological*,” by “focusing on faith as the reception of revelation,” particularly “the *sensus fidei*, given to all the baptised by the Holy Spirit.” Rush explains that “It is this *sensus fidei* that constitutes the organ of recognition in ecumenical dialogue.” The fifth advantage is “*hermeneutical*,” by explicating the “interpretative dimension of all practices and doctrines.” Number six points to “its *heuristic* possibilities,” because “it may just open up new perspectives on Receptive Ecumenism.” He provides the example of “framing” the analysis, and discussions of current divisions “in terms of differentiated interpretations or senses of the faith.” This is “one way of further developing the differentiated consensus methodology of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.”<sup>103</sup> The final advantage is “*pedagogical*,” focusing on what the Catholic Church may be able to learn regarding the interior “reception of the *sensus fidelium*.”<sup>104</sup>

In an earlier book, Rush discusses the concept of a “reception pneumatology.”<sup>105</sup> This asserts that while it is our “responsibility” to seek to “understand, interpret, and apply the Gospel anew... *it is not our work*.”<sup>106</sup> That work belongs to the Holy Spirit, “who is our communal memory, preventing

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<sup>102</sup> Rush, “Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*.”

<sup>103</sup> Rush, “Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*.”

<sup>104</sup> Rush, “Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*.”

<sup>105</sup> Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 77.

<sup>106</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 77.

ecclesial amnesia and igniting our creativity.”<sup>107</sup> This “reception pneumatology” is clearly a resource for the further development of RE’s pneumatological basis.

The central importance of pneumatology for RE clearly emerges. At a fundamental level, RE, following SE, is a call to Spirit-inspired conversion. Developing these pneumatological dimensions is vital for RE’s maturation, especially in the area of ecclesial learning. The role of the Holy Spirit within ecumenical activity is well expressed by Congar, in an article originally published in 1950:

The Holy Spirit is the sun of the soul and, at the same time, the wind ‘blowing where it will’ (John 3:8), sowing the seed of its choice where no human hand has planted. He is also the life-thrust urging on its growth and he provides the soil to nourish it.<sup>108</sup>

The metaphor of the Spirit as “the sun of the soul” anticipates Vatican II’s later description of SE as the “soul” of the ecumenical movement. For RE to realise its full potential, the centrality of the Spirit must be fully appreciated.

### **5.3.3. The Ecumenical Exchange of Gifts**

As discussed previously, RE places priority upon receiving and learning.<sup>109</sup> To that degree, RE intentionally focuses on only one half of the exchange of gifts. However, the ecumenical exchange of gifts, and the related theme of the indivisibility of teaching and learning, are two of the key themes in the RE volume – mentioned in at least a third of the contributions.<sup>110</sup> This unevenness in RE’s primary source material will require further analysis as RE continues to develop. The notion of the ecumenical exchange of gifts is, therefore, a third key area in which RE may be enriched by SE.

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<sup>107</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 77.

<sup>108</sup> Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, 102.

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter Two.

We have already treated the ecumenical gift exchange within both RE and SE.<sup>111</sup> Here we dwell only briefly on the specific value of SE to RE in this respect. In Receptive Ecumenical learning, the question arises as to what should be received, and what rejected. Who decides, and how do genuine gifts filter through the entire ecclesial community?

On this point, O’Gara’s discussion of the need for the discernment of gifts or teachings is particularly helpful. She asks, “How do we distinguish between offering bread and offering a stone? Churches engaged in dialogue are familiar not just with the joy of having a gift accepted but also with the pain of having a gift refused out of fear that it is actually poison.”<sup>112</sup> She allows that “refusing gifts is a complicated issue,” as different traditions emphasise different values.<sup>113</sup> For her, the avoidance of relativism consists in a discernment process guided by “a firm foundation in Christological and trinitarian faith.”<sup>114</sup> On this issue, SE’s ecumenical exchange of gifts has something to offer RE. The reception of gifts can be approached only with humility and hope, grounded in Christ and the Spirit. The criteria for receiving or rejecting a gift therefore derives from a deepened Christological and pneumatological foundation.

In this respect, SE’s concept of the gift exchange maintains the indivisibility of the process of teaching and learning, giving and receiving. While it is possible to emphasise one aspect over the other, the other is always implied. In this manner, even though RE emphasises only the receiving of gifts, the ecumenical gift exchange can still be seen as underpinning RE. The question arises regarding the possibility of receiving something if it has not, first, already been given? RE’s focus on the receiving of gifts ignores the fact that reception of

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<sup>111</sup> See Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>112</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 222.

<sup>113</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 223.

<sup>114</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 225.

a gift presupposes the offering of the said gift by another tradition. Giving and receiving are, therefore, reciprocally dependent.

It follows, then, that an emphasis on the gift *exchange* (rather than on reception alone) presents a more holistic vision of ecumenical activity. The two sides of the exchange inform and extend each other, in much the same way as personal and institutional conversion are dynamically related. Ecumenism is not only concerned with what can be received or learned, but also with what can be shared with one's fellow Christians. For example, the Catholic Church has gifts and teachings to impart to other Christian communities, which they could authentically receive as gifts of the Spirit, just as these other Christian communities have gifts for the Catholic tradition. Ecumenism is, as John Paul II affirmed, an *exchange*, not just a reception, of gifts.

Moreover, gift-giving is as much a process requiring discernment from the Spirit as gift-receiving. As O'Gara and Putney point out, some gifts may need to be adjusted or repaired before they can be offered and given. For instance, Putney considers the gift of "priesthood and authority" in the exchange between Catholics and Methodists. He explains that differing understandings of priesthood and authority could be "an exchange of gifts which requires that one gift be adjusted in order to make room for the other to be received."<sup>115</sup> O'Gara also places a strong emphasis on the indivisibility of the gift exchange. In regards to the issue of the papacy, O'Gara writes that:

Roman Catholics should desire not only that such a gift be received, but that they should want to offer this ministry as a gift to the whole church of God...[R]eceiving gifts is not the only difficult part of the ecumenical gift exchange. Even offering them suitably can be a challenge.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Putney, "Receptive Catholic Learning Through Methodist-Catholic Dialogue," 127.

<sup>116</sup> O'Gara, "Christ's Church Local and Global," 21.

Since she wrote these words a year after the first RE conference, her statement suggests a constructive critique of the methodology of RE. Clearly, she appreciates both sides of the gift exchange – not just the challenges of receiving, but also those of giving. She implies that there is particular challenge in “suitable” gift-giving.<sup>117</sup> Christians should desire to give as well as receive, to the extent that sometimes, “a gift needs to be repaired or changed before it is offered.”<sup>118</sup> She remarks on the reluctance that may exist among Catholics to offer such gifts, and therefore appear to be giving away something vital to Catholic ecclesial identity.<sup>119</sup> On this concern, O’Gara declares that we “must learn to want to share the gift of the papacy with others.”<sup>120</sup> Her assertion of the indivisibility of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts highlights an area where RE may profit from further development.

After all, ecumenism is an active pursuit, a movement into the future. As a call from Christ, and a vocation, ecumenism also requires stepping outside of comfort zones, giving to others, and may, at times, necessitate one to be the first to move towards another. In short, ecumenism is giving as well as receiving. But the exchange of gifts that may occur is never abstracted from its context of faith in Christ and surrender to the Spirit. It is only through the unity already given in Christ that Christians can share in and contribute to the exchange of gifts. Likewise, the Spirit is responsible for the gifts within the different communities, and for their exchange within the entire body of Christ. SE’s sense of the importance of the exchange of gifts is, therefore, a third key area where RE may be enriched by SE.

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<sup>117</sup> O’Gara, “Christ’s Church Local and Global,” 21.

<sup>118</sup> O’Gara, “Christ’s Church Local and Global,” 21.

<sup>119</sup> O’Gara, “Christ’s Church Local and Global,” 22.

<sup>120</sup> O’Gara, “Christ’s Church Local and Global,” 22.

#### 5.4. Receptive Ecumenism as Reception of the Principles of Spiritual Ecumenism

After considering where RE enriches SE, and where SE enables RE's further growth, the dynamic of the relationship between these two types of ecumenism clearly appears as that of mutual enrichment.

As mentioned previously, Murray considers RE's role as one of expanding SE. However, the connection between the two appears to be more of a dynamic exchange. RE is not the same as SE, yet RE can best be understood as a part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. Its inherited elements and commonalities to SE are too great to be ignored, even if RE cannot simply be considered a new name for SE. As discussed, RE pushes SE in different directions, and places distinctive emphases on key ideas and practices: where SE focuses on the gift *exchange*, RE emphasises *receiving* from others. Where SE emphasises *prayer*, RE focuses on *learning*. Therefore, while part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, RE interprets SE in a different manner. The areas of difference, as we have noted, are points of dynamic exchange and enrichment.

We must conclude, then, that RE is best understood within the framework of SE, explicitly drawing on the contributions of Couturier, Vatican II, Kasper, Putney, and O'Gara. The interconnection between RE and SE is portrayed by Jeffrey Gros who writes that "To the spiritual disciplines should be added a 'receptive ecumenism.'"<sup>121</sup> In short, RE cannot be properly understood without reference to SE. All four of SE's core aspects, interior conversion, pneumatology, the exchange of gifts, and the emphasis on the virtuous and affective levels of ecumenical activity, underpin RE. Moreover, SE provides a theological context for RE, above all in providing the pneumatological criteria for Receptive

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<sup>121</sup> Gros, "The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian," 377.

Ecumenical learning. However, the relationship between the two is dynamic in the sense that RE newly interprets and applies SE – and is, therefore, born out of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. RE is not SE – but it is the child of Spiritual Ecumenism. As such, SE still has a parental role to play in the maturation process of RE.

Furthermore, the differences between these two types of ecumenism is more complementary than contrary. To that degree, RE can be considered a reception of the principles of SE as it emerged over fifty years ago in Vatican II, and, prior to the Council, in the work of Couturier and Congar. “Reception,” Rush explains, “is always a selection from the past. From the treasure house of tradition, the church brings to the foreground what was previously neglected or explicitly rejected.”<sup>122</sup> Perceiving RE as a reception of the principles of SE is helpful in understanding RE, not only methodologically, but also in conjunction with other ecumenical theologies.

In line with Rush’s statement, RE can be seen as highlighting aspects of SE which have been neglected or overlooked (for example, institutional conversion). Moreover, recognising RE as a *reception* of the principles of SE concurs with Murray’s assessment of RE as “a new name for some old ways of thinking.”<sup>123</sup> Murray points out at length that,

...the question needs to be asked as to whether there is actually anything that new here and, if so, what exactly? After all, has not the idea of being open to learning and receiving from the separated Christian other been a feature of ecumenical thought and practice throughout? Was it not as the heart of Abbé Paul Couturier’s visionary work? Is it not presupposed in the bilateral and multilateral processes and the relationships of trust and mutual openness that makes their work possible? Indeed, do not some of the more recent bilateral documents explicitly acknowledge the need for a mutual receptive learning that goes beyond the concern to bring differing languages into reconciled

<sup>122</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 79.

<sup>123</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.



conversation, most notably *The Gift of Authority* of the second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and the most recent document of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, *The Grace Given You in Christ?* Again, are the priorities of Receptive Ecumenism not in evidence in exemplary form in Pope John Paul II's remarkable call in his 1995 encyclical letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, for theologians and leaders in other traditions to help re-imagine the papacy so that it might once again be the focus of communion rather than the continuing cause of division it currently is? And similarly, as already noted, does it not resonate with the call expressed by Cardinal Walter Kasper and Archbishop Rowan Williams for a 'Spiritual Ecumenism'?<sup>124</sup>

Murray concedes that "all of this is true," but he sees the distinctiveness of RE as proposing a "strategic, programmatic priority to it."<sup>125</sup> That is to suggest that RE is reformulating and re-emphasising key elements of SE, in an attempt to release "its potential" in the contemporary milieu – in a way that fits in with Rush's definition of reception. In this case, RE can, therefore, be properly understood as a reception of SE.

From this point of view, the relationship between RE and SE is dynamic and interdependent. Together, they represent the heart (RE) and soul (SE) of the ecumenical endeavour. As a form of SE, RE involves the spiritual and affective dimensions of ecumenical engagement, within the overarching Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. At a time when some consider that an "ecumenical winter" has occurred, in which theological and practical ecumenism appear to be largely dormant, the time seems ripe to tap into the enlivening influences of the spiritual and affective aspects of ecumenism.

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<sup>124</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 38.

<sup>125</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 39.

### **5.5. Conclusion**

Our purpose here was to address the connection between Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism as one of mutual enrichment, in order to highlight their complementarity. Three key points of RE which enrich SE were discussed: its focus on institutional conversion, its emphasis on learning, and its accessibility and appeal. The question of whether RE should be considered as a wholly new type of ecumenism was also considered. We then examined three key areas where Spiritual Ecumenism can further RE's development: in regards to a deepened Christological and pneumatological foundation, and the ecumenical exchange of gifts. Finally, we presented RE as a reception of the principles of Spiritual Ecumenism, and indeed, a development of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. RE's significance for the contemporary ecumenical context must now be explored.

## **Chapter 6: Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement**

### **6.1. The Potential of Receptive Ecumenism**

The last few years of the Ecumenical Movement have witnessed urgent calls for ecumenical renewal. Yet, if we are to rekindle the ecumenical flame, effective approaches need to be developed for the contemporary context. As one such response, RE claims to light the way forward for ecumenical progress. But is it up to the task? The previous chapters proposed understanding RE as part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement. Maintaining this view, we turn now to address the potential and effectiveness of RE as an ecumenical strategy.

RE's potential to stimulate ecumenical growth will be investigated by examining its suitability for the current ecumenical climate. This will be undertaken by analysing it in relation to four key challenges: the ecumenical winter, pluralism, ecclesial identity, and full visible unity. Next, we address RE's effectiveness by considering the major ways it has been implemented to date: the international conferences; the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*; ARCIC III; and Receptive Ecumenism in Australia. This leads to an assessment of the difficulties to be overcome if RE is to succeed. Finally, we offer an evaluation of the import of RE for the future of the Ecumenical Movement.

### **6.2. Receptive Ecumenism and Contemporary Ecumenical Challenges**

There is no doubt that the contemporary context is challenging for ecumenical engagement. The early 21<sup>st</sup> century brings with it particular challenges, such as globalisation, postmodernity, pluralism, and increasing

secularism. Kasper defines our ecumenical milieu as “ambiguous,” and draws attention to the fact that ecumenism necessarily responds “to the signs of the times.”<sup>1</sup> The goal of ecumenism is to reach unity so that Christians can properly bear witness to Christ. As such, ecumenism is entwined with broader issues facing Christianity, especially those around dialogue with the world.

However, religion faces a difficult situation, especially in Western society, where attitudes range from disinterest to outright hostility. On this point, Australian theologian James McEvoy explains that, “If the church is to proclaim the gospel effectively, a coherent and insightful view of the contemporary place of religion is essential.”<sup>2</sup> Societal and cultural pressures placed on the Catholic Church necessarily have ramifications for its ability and willingness to engage in inter-Christian relationships. In addition, the Catholic Church is still grappling with the “polarized climate” experienced in the wake of Vatican II.<sup>3</sup> This impacts on ecumenism in particular, as ecumenism is generally supported by liberal, rather than conservative, sections of the Church. Moreover, the types of problems and challenges between denominations have also changed. As O’Gara explains, “the generation of theologians entering ecumenical dialogue today...are faced with a bewildering new cluster of arguments that cause new divisions between and within churches.”<sup>4</sup> As we can see, ecumenical activity is bombarded by external, internal, and inter-denominational challenges. However, with these challenges also comes opportunity.

Rather than condemning the contemporary milieu as wholly negative, McEvoy asserts that “this age is not, in itself, hostile to belief. Rather, we find

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<sup>1</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> James McEvoy, *Leaving Christendom for Good: Church-World Dialogue in a Secular Age* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2014), 49.

<sup>3</sup> McEvoy, *Leaving Christendom for Good*, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 220.

ourselves in a new place.”<sup>5</sup> A new place requires new ways of acting and understanding, such as RE.

To be effective, RE must be able to navigate the particular challenges posed by the contemporary context. Sweeney makes the point that RE is not only of “intra and inter-ecclesial significance but [also] of profound extra-ecclesial significance, bearing directly on the authentic mission of the Church.”<sup>6</sup> To illuminate this point, RE will be considered in relation to four major ecumenical problems: the “ecumenical winter,” pluralism, ecclesial identity, and full visible unity. While these are far from the only obstacles facing ecumenism today, they must be addressed in order for the Ecumenical Movement to move forward, and continue to play a vital role in the life of the Church.

### **6.2.1. The Ecumenical Winter**

References to the “ecumenical winter” are commonplace in contemporary ecumenism. The notion of the ecumenical winter conveys a sense of frozenness in ecumenical endeavours (along with the imagery that evokes, such as coldness, darkness, dormancy, immobility, hardship; a time of waiting it out, instead of moving forward, of survival rather than flourishing). It names a general feeling permeating the ecumenical endeavour, of the season in which ecumenism now finds itself. The ecumenical winter reflects both the experience of ecumenical decline over the last decades, and the difficulties facing ecumenism today.

Ecumenical decline has many different symptoms, such as: a lack of both professional and lay participation in ecumenical engagement; an aging generation of ecumenical leaders; a loss of interest in ecumenical concerns; a lack of priority placed on ecumenical engagement; a deficit of funding for ecumenical activities; uncertainty of direction and initiative for Christian unity; and ecumenical apathy.

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<sup>5</sup> McEvoy, *Leaving Christendom for Good*, 93.

<sup>6</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 343.

Kelly provides a discomfiting picture of the situation, reflecting that “most churches face critical questions in relation to their internal life.”<sup>7</sup> He canvasses problems to do with authority and ministry, gender and sexuality, declining numbers of clergy, a generally aging church demographic, and the lack of young people to take their places.<sup>8</sup> “Most churches are dealing with diminishment in some form or other,” he explains.<sup>9</sup> “All churches, in some manner or other, are likely to be thinking about how to present the gospel in the postmodern world where indifference has often been replaced by hostility.”<sup>10</sup> There is also something of a loss of conviction in ecumenical goals, such as full visible unity. Coupled with this is the trend towards defensiveness over ecclesial identities, known as re-confessionalism, which is unreceptive towards the ecumenical agenda.

The ecumenical winter also refers to the perceived exhaustion of traditional ecumenical methods, and the need to find a way around the current impasse. Kelly explains,

On the negative side many would feel that we are at an impasse. Despite years of dialogue and the overcoming of some of the major doctrinal issues that divided us, we often appear to be lost and looking for a way forward. This is another reason why the time is ripe for a new ecumenical methodology.<sup>11</sup>

Recognition of the ecumenical winter is often expressed hand-in-hand with efforts to find effective ecumenical approaches. The ecumenical winter is not an appeal to give up on the ecumenical endeavour, but rather a call to regroup and reconsider. Despite its nebulous nature, we can identify two key challenges in particular posed by the ecumenical winter: negativity surrounding ecumenism,

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<sup>7</sup> Gerard Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," (presentation, Diocesan Ecumenical Commissions Biennial Conference Adelaide, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 2.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 2.

<sup>10</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 2.

<sup>11</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 1-2.

and the need to develop suitable ecumenical methods. It is to these problems that RE most directly responds.

RE was born in the ecumenical winter. It is therefore intrinsically attuned to its challenges, especially that of ecumenical negativity. While the ecumenical winter reflects the generally deteriorating state of ecumenical affairs, the negativity engendered by the notion itself represents a challenge to ecumenism. The use of the term “ecumenical winter” itself contributes towards the negative conception of ecumenism. It evokes a sense of ecumenism as a bygone golden age, a great achievement of the twentieth century, but not necessarily of key importance today. In contrast, RE offers a positive solution to a largely negative situation. It responds to the negativity surrounding ecumenism by proposing a realistic approach grounded in hope, rather than optimism. At our current vantage point in the midst of the ecumenical winter, it is time to be humbly realistic, rather than overly optimistic. It is RE’s “more realistic” approach, by acknowledging the current situation as an intermediary one, that Kasper particularly welcomes.<sup>12</sup>

The enormity of the challenges facing ecumenism must be recognised. However, despite appearances, ecumenism is not in its dotage, and is far from being over. Ecumenism was not only of importance for the twentieth century, but remains important for all generations, up until the time of the eschaton. However, we must believe that ecumenical progress is possible, if it is to be made. Our responsibility to pray and work towards Christian unity must be reaffirmed, not laid aside.

RE provides a strategy where progress is possible and realistic. It finds the medium between negativity and optimism. It is founded on viewing our current stage as an interim period, where the goal is to learn from each other and, with myriad small steps, regain some ecumenical momentum. Instead of aiming for

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<sup>12</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," vii.

ultimate goals, which are out of current reach, RE refocuses ecumenical energy on what is possible to be accomplished for the here and now. As Murray makes clear, the point is not to give up on ecumenical unity, but “to ask what it means to live *now* oriented on such goals.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, RE manages to sweep away some of the frozen negativity surrounding the Ecumenical Movement, replacing disillusioned optimism with hope.

RE also directly responds to the ecumenical winter’s call for new ecumenical methods. It is a new approach explicitly designed to push ecumenism forward. Murray explains that “Receptive Ecumenism offers a constructive way ahead where such dialogues seem to have run out of steam.”<sup>14</sup> However, if the Ecumenical Movement is to survive, it must also reignite the interest of laypeople, and engage the entire church community. RE aims for a balance between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism; it is a democratised ecumenism, inviting participation from all church members. Moreover, it also engages churches in ecumenism out of solidarity.

As Kelly explains above, many churches face similar problems. RE advocates learning from each other, in an attempt to tackle together some of the key problems facing the entire body of Christ in the world. As he outlines, part of RE’s potential is that it enables churches to “look with fresh eyes at their own situation, particularly the challenges and threats they face.”<sup>15</sup> By offering a fresh viewpoint, “Receptive Ecumenism may offer a way to learn from others in facing up to these challenges. In some cases it could result in breaking through the

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<sup>13</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 12.

<sup>14</sup> Paul D. Murray, "Engaging with the Contemporary Church," in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, ed. Mike Higon and Jim Fodor (London: Routledge, 2015), 292.

<sup>15</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 2.



impasse.”<sup>16</sup> By learning from each other, RE has the potential to aid churches in surviving the challenges of the contemporary milieu.

Therefore, RE has the potential to combat the negativity surrounding ecumenism, as well as providing a fresh ecumenical method suitable for the contemporary context. It is Kasper’s conviction that “it will contribute to a new start and a hopefully also a new spring within the ecumenical movement.”<sup>17</sup>

However, while the ecumenical winter encompasses the broadly negative context surrounding ecumenism today, we need to look more deeply into some of the particular challenges of our context, such as pluralism.

### **6.2.2. Pluralism**

Pluralism is one of the key challenges facing contemporary ecumenism, and indeed, the church as a whole. As Kasper explains, the Catholic Church has had problems with pluralism for a long time, and only started to grapple with it after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>18</sup> Pluralism is a challenge across all three levels: within the Catholic Church, between denominations, and from culture and society.

Pluralism is a dominant feature of contemporary Western society. As part of the context of postmodernity, pluralism places positive value upon diversity and plurality. Instead of one truth, there is a multiplicity of interpretations. Instead of uniformity, there is diversity. Pluralism is intertwined with individualism, and respect for personal autonomy, all hallmarks of contemporary culture. Ecumenism cannot hope to inspire new generations unless it grapples seriously with the reality of pluralism. The cultural and social impact of pluralism represents a significant challenge to the Ecumenical Movement, which, at its heart, calls for unity.

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<sup>16</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 2.

<sup>17</sup> Kasper, "Foreword," viii.

<sup>18</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 174.

However, it must be emphasised that the positive value of pluralism, diversity, must be distinguished from the extreme form of pluralism that is relativism.

Diversity is acceptable and even desirable. John Paul II talks about “legitimate diversity” which “is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission.”<sup>19</sup> Diversity within the Catholic Church has, thus, become recognised as “not only possible but even desirable.”<sup>20</sup> The paradox between unity and diversity is one with which Christianity is intimately familiar. The central belief of the Christian faith is the Triune God, who is both one and three. Legitimate diversity within the Catholic Church is, therefore, desirable. But what about diversity between Christian denominations?

More than 30,000 different Christian churches currently exist.<sup>21</sup> The richness these different churches brings to Christianity cannot be denied. However, it is also indisputable that all Christians are called by Christ to unity, as One Body. However, it is not the ecumenical goal that all different expressions of Christianity become submerged into one homogenous, generic “church.” Ecumenism has long sought to resist critics who argue that ecumenism is a “melting pot,” where differences are boiled down to lowest common denominator type consensus. The tension between one and many characterises Christianity. Diversity may be in tension with unity, but it is also fundamentally a part of unity. As Meyer explains: “‘Diversity’ is, therefore, a constitutive element in the understanding of communion. .... *diversity* and *unity* belong together in the church.”<sup>22</sup> Pluralism can be a positive value, as long as it does not fragment unity. Therefore, pluralism is both a challenge and an enrichment for ecumenism.

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<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *UUS*, no. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 175.

<sup>21</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 69.

Avis's work on pluralism and ecumenism is particularly valuable. He argues that ecumenism must take diversity much more seriously, especially at the official level.<sup>23</sup> He emphasises the contradiction between the fundamental Christian belief that the Church is one and the fact of Christianity diversity.<sup>24</sup> Avis also makes the point that unity used to be synonymous with uniformity.<sup>25</sup> The push towards pluralism did not occur until after the Enlightenment, and in conjunction with growing secularism.<sup>26</sup> However, uniformity is now considered to be far from desirable. He explains how diversity itself is a positive value, arguing that "the more successful the Church's mission is, the more diverse church life becomes."<sup>27</sup> He clarifies that the "opposite of unity is not diversity but division. The opposite of diversity is not unity but uniformity."<sup>28</sup> Unity and diversity are therefore not opposed to each other, but rather belong in tension.

Relativism, however, is the opponent of ecumenism. Postmodern relativism, the belief that no truth claims can be made, that individuals are free to pick and choose and swap at random, is the antithesis of the ecumenical search for unity, which seeks truth. Relativism leads to fragmentation and opposes unity, it prioritises individuality rather than community. While the acknowledgment of legitimate diversity may appear to condone relativism, this is not the case. As Avis remarks,

When we acknowledge the principle of diversity in the expression of Christian faith, we thereby relativize our own standpoint. We cannot make absolute claims for our own particular grasp of the truth while at the same time recognizing that other interpretations have authenticity. The truth stands beyond any individual's grasp of it.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, viii.

<sup>24</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 29.

However, the crucial point is that acknowledging “diversity in principle” by accepting the incompleteness of our own grasp of the truth, “does not relativize the Truth itself.”<sup>30</sup> There is therefore a distinction between human comprehension of God, and the reality of God. We need to be aware of our own inadequacies, while trusting in God. As Avis makes clear, “Ultimately, the truth is identical with God.”<sup>31</sup>

There is a link, therefore, between diversity and the *via negativa* tradition. The positive value of diversity reiterates the eschatological tension between the “now” and “not yet.” We have not yet achieved the fullness of knowledge and truth in Christ, yet that fullness does already exist in part. The eschatological nature of the Church means that we have only interpretations of the mystery still yet to be revealed. Or, as Avis puts it, “there is much that we cannot see clearly, much that we can never know, a vast hinterland of mystery.”<sup>32</sup> As such, diversity serves to express where a church may have come closer to the truth in one area rather than another. Avis proposes that a “realist approach to diversity” takes differences seriously: “It is not that various traditions and theologies are all saying the same thing in different words and idioms, but that they are actually saying some different things (as well, of course, as some very important things on which they speak with one voice).”<sup>33</sup> He cautions that “Ecumenical work jumps too readily to the conclusion that differences are only semantic.”<sup>34</sup> The real differences between traditions must be recognised and grappled with, not glossed over.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 30.

While he does not refer specifically to RE, Avis's statements shed light on how an ecumenical method can positively approach diversity. Pluralism is both a challenge and an obstacle to the Ecumenical Movement. The goal of ecumenism is fundamentally eschatological, just as the Church is an eschatological reality. We must be careful to distinguish unity from uniformity, and to recognise the positive value of diversity. Ecumenism does not aim either towards division or towards uniformity, but the extreme of relativism must be countered. The question is: How can pluralism be maintained as a positive value within a movement directed towards unity, without leading to relativism?

Murray writes that the contemporary ecumenical context requires that we grapple with the question of how to take "traditioned particularity seriously, and the inevitable plurality of diverse traditioned particularities this suggests, without collapsing into...closed, relativistic tribalism."<sup>36</sup> In other words, how can we take the positive value of diversity without succumbing to relativism?

He argues that RE is "the primary means by which, and the primary locus in which, the separated Christian traditions can witness to what it might mean to live difference" in a healthy and "flourishing" manner.<sup>37</sup> RE is acutely aware of the tensions and challenges involved in navigating the pluralist context. Murray both emphasises the gravity of the challenge of pluralism, and argues for RE as the most effective response.<sup>38</sup> He argues that "*The* key question of our age is as to whether we can live difference for mutual flourishing rather than mutually assured destruction."<sup>39</sup> He insists that we must consider how to undertake ecumenism "in relation to the all-pervasive situation of irreducible pluralism – even blood-soaked

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<sup>36</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 7.

<sup>37</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

<sup>38</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 31.

conflictual difference – that we late-moderns find ourselves in.”<sup>40</sup> Pluralism must be taken seriously, but without falling into what he calls “closed, relativistic tribalism.”<sup>41</sup> The reality of different manifestations of Christianity must be accepted seriously, and as a positive opportunity for learning and deepening conversion.

However, RE does not go so far as embracing relativism, where no truth claims or judgments can be made at all. Murray advocates a position of “committed pluralism.”<sup>42</sup> This approach is one of being “committed to acknowledging and negotiating appropriately the pluralist reality of the world of difference in which we exist; committed also to the legitimacy and rationality of particular rooted commitments precisely in this context.”<sup>43</sup> This approach is presented by RE, Comparative Theology, and Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>44</sup> The three methods not only focus on taking “differing traditioned identities seriously,” but also on traditions being “enriched through the very process of also taking another’s tradition seriously.”<sup>45</sup> Pluralism is accepted positively, rather than demonised.

Instead of the goal being to mitigate differences between traditions, the focus is on learning from those differences, in order to enrich one’s own tradition. Pluralism is legitimate, in light of the eschatological nature of the Church. There are also overtones of the *via negativa* approach to theology in RE, where full comprehension of God’s mystery is beyond our grasp. The approach to truth represented in RE is certainly not the Enlightenment version of knowledge and truth which characterised modernity.

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<sup>40</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

<sup>41</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 7.

<sup>42</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 8. See also Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 79.

<sup>43</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 79.

<sup>44</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 79.

<sup>45</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 79.

As Murray explains, knowledge is not seen as “a superstructure progressively erected on the basis of sure and certain, discretely verifiable foundations,” or in other words, Enlightenment metanarratives.<sup>46</sup> Rather, knowledge is “a complex, flexible, context-specific web.”<sup>47</sup> RE is a child of postmodernity. Truth is no longer seen “in terms of cognitive understanding and conceptual articulation,” in line with the dominant focus on reason that characterises modernity.<sup>48</sup> Rather, truth is “also about discerning and living in accordance with the fruitful possibilities that the open-textured reality of things presents,” and is therefore concerned not just with reason but with “efficacy and fruitfulness.”<sup>49</sup> Again, RE’s focus on the affective and spiritual aspects of ecumenism is brought to the fore.

In this way, RE, as an approach of committed pluralism, is able to tackle the ecumenical challenge of pluralism. Murray explains,

[T]he call to the separated Christian traditions to embrace the way of Receptive Ecumenism...represents not simply a piece of arcane ecclesial housekeeping; nor even simply a means of potentially enhancing the quality of ecclesial existence within each of these traditions when freshly orientated upon their eschatological goal. Rather, the call to embrace the way of Receptive Ecumenism...comes to appear as the primary means by which, and the primary locus in which, the separated Christian traditions can witness to what it might mean to live difference as grace and blessing and for mutual flourishing.<sup>50</sup>

Rather than working towards homogeneity, which would not receive widespread support in current Western society, difference and diversity are positively recognised. RE is therefore able to adapt to the times, and as such, has the ability to appeal to a new generation of ecumenists.

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<sup>46</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 80.

<sup>47</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 80.

<sup>48</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 80.

<sup>49</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 80.

<sup>50</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 18.

The pluralist context is therefore not just a positive value for RE, but its native habitat. RE is based on the recognition of the positive value of diversity, and could not flourish in a context which valued uniformity. RE's repudiation of uniformity contrasts with the "classical Christian ecumenical tendency...to seek to neutralise and overcome difference as efficiently as possible."<sup>51</sup> Murray argues that negativity towards difference and pluralism "has increasingly appeared unrealistic as the likelihood has opened up of a prolonged interim stage of having to live with in un-reconciled divisions."<sup>52</sup> As such, RE's primary focus is on diversity rather than unity. Murray explains that "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."<sup>53</sup>

Born out of the pluralist context, RE offers an ecumenical strategy with a positive approach to diversity. It centres on the value of difference as an opportunity for interior conversion, and takes difference seriously, without surrendering to relativism. It engages with the challenge of pluralism, transforming it into an opportunity, rather than an obstacle. However, pluralism is far from the only challenge facing the Ecumenical Movement.

### **6.2.3. Ecclesial Identity**

Issues surrounding ecclesial identity constitute one of the most significant challenges for ecumenism today. Identity is of vital concern to all churches. As Avis makes clear, "As historic institutions, churches guard their identity."<sup>54</sup> Identity is developed and strengthened by drawing on their historic contexts, their standpoints on key issues, such as gender and ministry, and their beliefs about

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<sup>51</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 78.

<sup>52</sup> Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 78.

<sup>53</sup> Murray, "Engaging with the Contemporary Church," 292.

<sup>54</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 19.



relating to God. Avis explains that differences also serve to distinguish a church's identity from others, such as how the Pope contributes to Catholic identity.<sup>55</sup>

The Christian landscape has seen something of an increase in emphasis on denominational differences, what Murray calls a "post-modern heightening of the particularity of identity over against any easily assumed commonality."<sup>56</sup> The difficult situation many churches face in the contemporary context can lead to a defensive posture for some churches. These churches protectively withdraw in on themselves and steer away from inter-denominational engagement; a phenomenon termed re-confessionalism. While not necessarily inappropriate, Kelly clarifies that "renewed confessionalism" is negative "if it builds walls around churches, effectively entrenching division."<sup>57</sup>

This tendency is a major obstacle for the Ecumenical Movement, and for the flourishing of Christianity as a whole. Effective dialogue and engagement is critical to the entire body of Christ. Sweeney argues that "churches will only re-establish their role in late modern society if they succeed in cultivating a reflexive and self-critical identity, humble enough and secure enough to engage in dialogue."<sup>58</sup> As such, negative re-confessionalism is of concern not only to ecumenism, but for the whole Church. However, a more positive aspect is the renewal of ecclesial identity, "which leads to a more authentic expression of church life, learning from the richness of the whole *oikumene*."<sup>59</sup> Any ecumenism that appears to denigrate or diminish identity is therefore suspect, but the pitfalls of rigid defensiveness must also be avoided.

The perception that ecumenical engagement leads to the erosion of identity, wherein a church's distinctiveness is boiled away to create a bland

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<sup>55</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 19.

<sup>56</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 35.

<sup>57</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 4.

<sup>58</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 343.

<sup>59</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 4.

homogenous whole, is a contributing factor to the current ecumenical impasse. As Kasper explains, “Even in a world which is characterized by globalization, many ask: Who are we? Who am I? Nobody wants to be absorbed in an anonymous and faceless whole.”<sup>60</sup> Churches may be unwilling to engage in ecumenism for fear of losing their identities. However, far from seeking to diminish ecclesial identity, authentic ecumenical dialogue depends on those involved having strong ecclesial identities. As Kasper clarifies, “Only partners with a clear identity can undertake dialogue without fearing the loss of their identity within the dialogue.”<sup>61</sup> The conception that ecumenism aims towards lowest common denominator consensus is the very opposite of its process and purpose. What is needed, therefore, is an ecumenical approach which values and protects ecclesial identity, without leading to negative re-confessionalism.

RE is acutely aware of the need to protect ecclesial identity. As Örsy makes clear, ecclesial learning can only be authentic if it supports a church’s identity.<sup>62</sup> Grounded in this concern, RE seeks not to detract, but rather to enrich, ecclesial identity. In RE, identity is not diminished, but rather found through engagement with others, through deepening conversion and becoming more authentically what we already are. Murray proposes that “ecumenical theological learning should be about the enrichment rather than diminishment of identity. This is a great gift to bestow: to help another become him/herself in all his/her difference from you.”<sup>63</sup> RE aims towards a deepening of conversion, and thus of ecclesial identity. He emphasises that: “It is a process of growth and change – a process of conversion – that is at root not a loss, nor a diminishment but a finding,

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<sup>60</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 15.

<sup>62</sup> Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 42.

<sup>63</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 82.

a freeing, an intensification, and an enrichment.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it cannot lead towards loss of identity. Any learning or change which takes place through ecclesial learning must be authentic to that tradition.

This is why RE cannot be imposed on a church, but is the self-critical responsibility of each church to undertake for itself. Only the members of that church, under the guidance of the Spirit, can discern whether what is learned is authentic to their ecclesial identity. As such, the purpose of RE is to help a church seek out where it has not fully realised itself (its “woundedness”) through a process of ecclesial learning. As Avis asserts, “The witness of RE is needed to remind all churches that they are wounded and incomplete and need to be made whole by divine mercy.”<sup>65</sup> It is prefaced on humility, and necessitates a deep level of self-understanding. RE is, therefore, a process of healing and deepening conversion, of becoming more fully what we already are, rather than less.

In an article based on a presentation given at the second RE conference, Catherine Clifford offers valuable insight into how RE approaches the challenge of ecclesial identity.<sup>66</sup> She observes that ecumenical activity seems “to have stalled in a kind of fear of moving forward, of taking concrete new steps toward fuller communion.”<sup>67</sup> She proposes that the problem revolves around insecurity of ecclesial identity, as churches ask ““Can we possibly change without sacrificing something that is essential, that defines us as who we are as Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, or Protestant Christians, without betraying a tradition that has been entrusted to us by the apostles?””<sup>68</sup> In tackling this insecurity, she emphasises the work of the *Groupe des Dombes* in asserting that “some of what needs correcting

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<sup>64</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 6.

<sup>65</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 232.

<sup>66</sup> Catherine E. Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church: Putting on the Mind of Christ," *One in Christ* 43, no. 2-5 (2009).

<sup>67</sup> Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church," 2.

<sup>68</sup> Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church," 2.

is our very sense of self, our sense of identity, which has too often confounded confessional identity or self with the identity or self of the one church of Christ.”<sup>69</sup>

There are eschatological overtones here, in the need to recognise that there is a difference between the Church of Christ and our earthly churches. Clifford explains:

The impulse to retrenchment in denominational identities reveals that we have at times reversed the order of priority and placed the sense of confessional identity above fidelity to the church of Christ, or confused historically and culturally conditioned forms of doctrine and church practice with the timeless tradition of the apostolic faith.<sup>70</sup>

Certainly, this assertion is at the heart of *LG*'s contentious statement that the Church of Christ “subsists” in the Catholic Church. Acknowledging the eschatological incompleteness of the church provides a way of being receptive, rather than defensive, regarding ecclesial identity. Rather than pressure to change ecclesial identity in the face of other Christians, the focus is on converting deeper into the identity of Christ.

On this issue, she posits that: “To move forward on the path of receptive ecumenism we must have the humility to make an honest assessment of where our churches may have a distorted perception of their ecclesial selves.”<sup>71</sup> This attitude of humility is essential to RE. Grounded in SE, it maintains that all churches require further conversion into Christ. This is why RE results in a deepening sense of identity, rather than a loss of identity.<sup>72</sup>

Emphasising this point, Clifford argues that churches “might need to be freed from a false sense of self,” and that “these false selves” must “be emptied,” and replaced with the mind of Christ.<sup>73</sup> “Every faith community must pass

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<sup>69</sup> Clifford, “Kenosis and the Church,” 4.

<sup>70</sup> Clifford, “Kenosis and the Church,” 5.

<sup>71</sup> Clifford, “Kenosis and the Church,” 5.

<sup>72</sup> Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 16.

<sup>73</sup> Clifford, “Kenosis and the Church,” 5.

through this kenotic way if we are to grow in genuine communion," she says.<sup>74</sup> Ecumenism, as she puts it, calls for "the churches to move from being self-centered, or confessionally centered, to adopting a sense of church that is Christ-centered."<sup>75</sup> Ecclesial identity must therefore be viewed through the lens of Christ. It is to Christ's identity that we must conform, and it is Christ's identity which cannot be compromised or sacrificed. We must allow Christ and the Spirit to "become the criteria for our unity in the place of our particular ecclesial selves."<sup>76</sup> Ecclesial communities need to reflect critically on how they express Christ, and allow themselves to be challenged to deeper communion.

Identity is therefore an important critique for all churches. RE sidesteps the stumbling block of ecclesial identity by refocusing on conversion into Christ. RE's response to the challenge of ecclesial identity is vital for both the Ecumenical Movement and the life of the church. Thus far, we have seen how RE responds to some pressing ecumenical concerns, by navigating their pitfalls and emphasising their positive aspects. But how does it engage with the ultimate, far from unproblematic, aim of ecumenism: full visible unity?

#### **6.2.4. Full Visible Unity**

The aim of full visible unity, once the driving impetus of ecumenism, is far from uncontested in the contemporary context. Full visible unity has been, and cannot but remain, the ultimate goal of the Ecumenical Movement. However, concerns over the concept require us to ask whether full visible unity is still relevant and useful for ecumenical endeavour?

In 1995, Nilson argued for a shift away from a focus on full visible unity, asserting that "now is the time for realism, time to mute people's expectations and

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<sup>74</sup> Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church," 5.

<sup>75</sup> Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church," 5.

<sup>76</sup> Clifford, "Kenosis and the Church," 5.

hopes for a church that is vibrantly and visibly one.”<sup>77</sup> He considers that full “reconciliation is impossible and perhaps it is even unnecessary for the foreseeable future.”<sup>78</sup> He is not advocating that ecumenism is a failed project, which should be relegated to the dusty shelves of history. Rather, the “ecumenical question for us today,” he says, is not “if” or “whether” we should undertake ecumenism, but “*how*” best to do so.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast to Nilson, Meyer upholds full visible unity as the aim of the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>80</sup> He contests the tendency to “be content with the present ecumenical achievement and to leave matters as they are with the present existing peaceful and cooperative coexistence of the churches.”<sup>81</sup> This is because anything less than full visible unity is a “downgrading” of the ecumenical aim.<sup>82</sup> If the goal of ecumenism is simply to establish friendly relations with each other, and to work together in shared mission, then the Ecumenical Movement can count its task as complete, and has only to maintain what has already been gained. However, ecumenism cannot be reduced to merely the attainment of co-operative relationships. No matter how unfashionable, the goal remains no less than Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one.” Nonetheless, full visible unity does not seem to grip imaginations today in the way that it inspired previous generations.

The trend towards asserting denominational differences (re-confessionalism) certainly plays a part in the negative perception attached to full visible unity. In a time when difference is celebrated, and identities are, at times militantly, protected, it is not surprising that full visible unity does not have the same appeal it once had. Cassidy explains that disappointment in ecumenical

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<sup>77</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, vi.

<sup>78</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, vi.

<sup>79</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, vii.

<sup>80</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 153-154.

<sup>81</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

<sup>82</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 152.

progress also contributes to the shift away from full visible unity. He observes that, “The difficulties that the churches are encountering in this quest bring a natural tendency to limit the goal.”<sup>83</sup> It is a trend that must be countered, however. Geoffrey Wainwright makes the point that, “An unremitting attachment to the visibility of unity will remain imperative in face of the perennial temptation to Docetism or Gnosticism and the current danger of acquiescence in the postmodern mood of fragmentation.”<sup>84</sup> Perhaps now, more than ever, the Ecumenical Movement requires reaffirmation of the goal of full visible unity.

However, Avis reflects that although full visible unity is still upheld by churches, especially by Anglican and Catholics, “the practical realization of the goal seems to be receding.”<sup>85</sup> He acknowledges that the traditional understanding of full visible unity, “defined as all Christians in each place in visible unity with all Christians in every place... has not been translated into reality, except in a piecemeal and fragmentary way.”<sup>86</sup> While affirming that the “eschatological hope of the full visible unity of the Body of Christ” remains valid, he recognises that it can be understood in different ways.<sup>87</sup> As such, he argues that we need to have “greater realism” about unity, and that moving towards this goal requires a “sober, steady but progressive method.”<sup>88</sup>

In a similar vein, Kasper affirms that visible unity should not be understood as “uniformity but as unity in plurality and as a communion of churches.”<sup>89</sup> Full unity includes “cultural diversity, different liturgical rites, different forms of piety, different but complementary emphases and perspectives,

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<sup>83</sup> Cassidy, “Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective,” 13.

<sup>84</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, “Ut Unum Sint in Light of ‘Faith and Order’ - or ‘Faith and Order’ in Light of *Ut Unum Sint?*,” in *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II’s Encyclical Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 89.

<sup>85</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 22.

<sup>86</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 22.

<sup>87</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, ix.

<sup>89</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 43.

etc.”<sup>90</sup> Clearly, the concept of full visible unity needs to be reinterpreted for the contemporary context.

As Christian unity is an eschatological reality, we cannot fully grasp the form that unity will ultimately take. Where, then, does all this leave us? Full visible unity needs to be re-affirmed as the goal of the Ecumenical Movement, but it must also be approached realistically and with sensitivity to the concerns of the current context. This point brings us to discern how RE engages with the concept of full visible unity.

RE is premised on what Murray terms “two apparently opposed points” in regards to full visible unity.<sup>91</sup> First, the recognition that full visible unity is not viable as the immediate aim of ecumenical endeavour.<sup>92</sup> Second, that full visible unity must, nonetheless, remain the ultimate goal of the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>93</sup> Holding these points in tension, RE focuses on what is directly achievable now, but is ultimately directed towards the eschatological fullness of unity.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, it is a realistic interim measure, rather than one aimed directly at achieving full reconciliation. While Murray asserts full visible unity as the ultimate goal of ecumenism, RE is not aimed immediately towards this goal. This is because full visible unity is not an achievable short-term goal for our current point in time.<sup>95</sup> As such, it is not a direction from which the movement will be able to regather momentum. To get ecumenism moving again, we need to start working towards realistic goals. However, this is always undertaken in light of eschatological full visible unity, which exists already in part, if not fullness. RE is therefore proposed as the way to move towards full visible unity, by restarting

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<sup>90</sup> Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 144.

<sup>92</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 144.

<sup>93</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 144.

<sup>94</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 144.

<sup>95</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 34.



ecumenical progress. Murray explains that “this way of reparative receptive ecumenical learning... is the only way in which the currently divided traditions can walk towards full structural, ministerial, sacramental communion and their own healing together.”<sup>96</sup>

Therefore, RE is an interim measure designed to regain ecumenical momentum. It both sidesteps the obstacle of full visible unity (that it is not possible to achieve right now) and reasserts its central place in the ecumenical agenda (that it is the ultimate eschatological aim). Full visible unity remains the goal, but the focus is on restarting the Ecumenical Movement. This approach acknowledges the eschatological and spiritual aspects of ecumenism, as something which will come into fullness according to Christ and the Spirit. RE offers an eschatological approach to full visible unity, where we must work with the tension of “now” but “not yet.” It recognises the pervading sense that full visible unity is not possible at this time, but reaffirms its necessity by attesting that the point is to live in its light anyway. Murray argues that RE takes the present moment, one he names as “post-euphoric optimism and pre-realisation of the hopes there ignited,” as an opportunity for conversion and ecclesial learning.<sup>97</sup> Our time represents “a long-term learning opportunity in which the churches might progress towards their calling and destiny in the only way possible – by slow and difficult growth in maturity.”<sup>98</sup> RE offers no short cuts to full visible unity; the difficult realities of our time are taken seriously, but not pessimistically. In this way, RE navigates the rocky terrain surrounding the concept of full visible unity, by offering a realistic approach that we must work however we can, but which is shot through with eschatological promise.

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<sup>96</sup> Murray, "Engaging with the Contemporary Church," 292.

<sup>97</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 36.

<sup>98</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 36.

We have seen how RE has the potential to navigate some of the key challenges facing the Ecumenical Movement today. Because of this, Kelly's observation of "how eagerly people embrace it – almost as though it may be the saviour of an ecumenical movement which for some seems to have entered a period of malaise" is not surprising.<sup>99</sup> He goes on, "I agree that receptive ecumenism has the potential to give new energy to the ecumenical movement."<sup>100</sup> He offers a word of caution, however. For it to realise its potential, "we need to be aware of just exactly what receptive ecumenism is and consider how we can make it a successful methodology in our own situation."<sup>101</sup> We turn now to consider how RE can be implemented successfully.

### **6.3. The Implementation of Receptive Ecumenism as an Ecumenical Strategy**

As we have seen, RE has the potential to respond to the challenges of the contemporary milieu, thereby fostering ecumenical progress. The question becomes, then, that of RE's *feasibility* as an ecumenical strategy. How has RE been applied, and to what success? To date, there have been four major implementations of RE: the international conferences; the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church*; ARCIC III; and RE in Australia. These projects will be discussed in turn, before addressing the challenges that need to be overcome for successfully applying the Receptive Ecumenical methodology.

#### **6.3.1. The International Conferences**

Much has already been said in regards to the three major RE international conferences. Here we focus on their effectiveness as an application of RE. The first conference (REI) was highly successful. Murray reports that it was described

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<sup>99</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>100</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

<sup>101</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 1.

as “‘historic’, ‘groundbreaking’, the most significant academic theological event in the UK in living memory’ and as ‘providing the much-needed fresh thinking and practical model that could be applied elsewhere.’”<sup>102</sup> The proceedings were published in 2008, in a volume that constitutes one of the key resources available on Receptive Ecumenism.<sup>103</sup> The success of REI is further testified by the fact that it paved the way for two more international conferences, and a variety of international projects. However, REI was primarily Catholic, focusing on the question of Catholic learning. There were other limitations as well, as outlined by a report on the conference, pointing to a “relative lack of broad involvement of and ownership by the local Church.”<sup>104</sup> Participants were primarily international academic experts, rather than representatives of the local church community.<sup>105</sup> Questions remained over how RE would work in practice.

The second conference (REII) was held in 2009. It was jointly organised by Durham’s Centre for Catholic Studies and the Ecclesiological Investigations Network. REII intentionally broadened its scope beyond the specifically Catholic focus of REI. It aimed to critically explore RE’s potential, address its implications for other Christian traditions, and assess its practical relevance for local church life.<sup>106</sup> Proceedings from the conference still await publication by Oxford University Press. In light of the fact that it focused on ecclesial learning, the volume’s contribution will certainly be significant. However, the delay in publishing the volume may have negatively impacted on RE’s development.

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<sup>102</sup> Murray, "Preface," x.

<sup>103</sup> This volume was analysed in detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>104</sup> Centre for Catholic Studies, "Report on 2006 Conference," *Durham University* <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/projects/catholiclearning/catholiclearning/>

<sup>105</sup> Centre for Catholic Studies, "Report on 2006 Conference."

<sup>106</sup> Ecclesiological Investigations Network and Centre for Catholic Studies, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to Be Church Together Conference Program," *Ecclesiological Investigations Network* [http://www.ei-research.net/uploads/microsoft-word-jan09-reconf-briefingparticipants\\_web\\_.pdf](http://www.ei-research.net/uploads/microsoft-word-jan09-reconf-briefingparticipants_web_.pdf).

The work undertaken, and the theological insights and developments presented by those at REII, are yet to be engaged with. One example is Ormond Rush's insightful paper drawing connections between RE and the *sensus fidelium*, which will be exclusively published in the volume.<sup>107</sup> Another example is the paper by David Pascoe on ecclesial learning as essentially underpinned by humility and hospitality.<sup>108</sup> Despite the success of the conference itself, the lengthy wait for the volume's publication represents something of a suspension on RE's continuing development.

The third, and intended final, conference (REIII), was held in 2014 at Fairfield University in Connecticut. One notable feature of REIII is its variety of sponsors, which indicates a significant amount of growth and interest in RE.<sup>109</sup> The conference aimed to examine how RE, "virus-like rather than brand-like" has been applied and adapted to different contexts on a global scale.<sup>110</sup>

While the diversity of papers presented at REIII showcase RE's potential, they also represent a lack of theological depth. One major critique was the lack of criteria for ecclesial learning. A prominent theme was the coming of age of Receptive Ecumenism.<sup>111</sup> Murray declared that "if RE has legs, then let it walk."<sup>112</sup> He does not envision organising any further conferences, or necessarily taking RE further himself.<sup>113</sup> While this attitude serves to re-emphasise the collaborative nature of RE, there is no doubt that Murray has been the key figure

<sup>107</sup> Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and the *Sensus Fidelium*."

<sup>108</sup> Pascoe, "Hospitality Grounded in Humility."

<sup>109</sup> REIII was sponsored by: ATF Press; The Anglican Communion Office; The Association of Interchurch Families; The Australian Catholic University; The Centro Pro Unione, Rome; The Commission for Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches; The Episcopal Church; The Global Christian Forum; The Institute for Church Life, University of Notre Dame; The Irish School of Ecumenics; The RASKOB Foundation; The South Australian Council of Churches; and The United Reformed Church of Great Britain.  
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/REinInternationalPerspectiveDraftProgramme140416.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Centre for Catholic Studies, "Draft Programme of Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective."

<sup>111</sup> This was the theme of Murray's introductory session at REIII.

<sup>112</sup> This was one of Murray's comments in the introductory session at REIII.

<sup>113</sup> These comments are from Murray's introductory session.

and proponent of RE, the captain at the helm of the ship, so to speak. If RE is to continue to flourish, then it will be through the work and enthusiasm of others. REIII therefore represents a turning point for RE. The success of REIII is more mixed than the previous conferences. RE received international attention, and the eventual publication of the conference proceedings will make a significant contribution to RE. But REIII also signals the end of this stage of RE. The shape of the next stage, if there is to be one, is yet to be seen.

The conferences represent the major academic implementation of RE to date. They have been internationally successful, and have stimulated ecumenical activity. However, there is a backlog of work awaiting publication, spanning the years from 2009 to 2014. The publication of these volumes will incite further interest in RE, and contribute greatly to its further development. The success of the conferences indicate that RE can be applied to many different ecumenical questions. However, a natural consequence of this medium is that the majority of academic work on RE has been undertaken in a disconnected and individual, rather than systematic and comprehensive, manner.

As such, as discussed previously, inconsistencies and contradictions exist within the body of work on RE. There is a lack of overarching criteria to guide ecclesial learning. If RE is to have lasting value, there needs to be clarification over its meaning and application. Rusch's concern about ecumenical reception becoming a "catchall" term is equally applicable for RE.<sup>114</sup> RE must be careful not to become an umbrella phrase, for as Rusch explains, "words that mean everything ultimately mean nothing."<sup>115</sup> This is why explicating RE as a form of SE, with a rich heritage and specific characteristics, is vital to its continuing development. A further limitation of this application of RE is its academic nature.

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<sup>114</sup> William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 59.

<sup>115</sup> Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 59.

The conferences undertook theoretical testing of RE; whether RE works in *practice* is another matter entirely.

### ***6.3.2. The Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church***

Discerning RE's value for practical ecumenism is the focus of the *Regional Comparative Research Project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church* (abbreviated by Murray as *RE&LC*).<sup>116</sup> *RE&LC* was developed by Durham's Centre for Catholic Studies as a major cross-disciplinary, collaborative undertaking.<sup>117</sup> It aims to involve the participation of as many churches in England's North East as possible.<sup>118</sup> While originally intended as a three year study from 2007 to 2010, it has been extended several times, and is ongoing at the time of writing.<sup>119</sup>

*RE&LC* arose from a perceived need for a practical and empirical project "that would examine the actual relevance, viability and on-the-ground implications of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of local church life."<sup>120</sup> It was developed as a practical complement to the conferences' implementation of RE, which were "at a relatively abstract, theorized level."<sup>121</sup> *RE&LC* was established in accord with Murray's conviction that RE remain focused on the church as "not primarily a doctrine, a theory, but a living, breathing life-world."<sup>122</sup> RE argues

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<sup>116</sup> For the most detailed account of *RE&LC* to date, see Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church."

<sup>117</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 138. It involved Durham's Theology and Religion Department and Business School, St John's College, and the North East Institute for Christian Education, as well as regional ecumenical officers and members of local churches. See Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 43.

<sup>118</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 43-44. Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 138. It involves the Dioceses of Durham, Hexham & Newcastle, Newcastle, the Northern Baptists Association, the Northern Division of the Salvation Army, and the Northern Synod the United Reformed Church.

<sup>119</sup> Murray, "Engaging with the Contemporary Church," 291.

<sup>120</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 43.

<sup>121</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 145.

<sup>122</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 145.

that churches must be engaged in a holistic manner, recognising their multiplicity as theological, affective, spiritual, and living contexts.

The scope of the project is ambitious. Participant churches were treated as living traditions, focusing on their systems and practices, rather than as theoretical ideals.<sup>123</sup> The practical and organisational receive priority, as “portals into the theological rather than the other way around.”<sup>124</sup> However, Murray and Guest articulate that the aim of *RE&LC* goes beyond simply understanding and describing each community.<sup>125</sup> The aim was to “identify areas of difficulty, tension, incoherence, awkwardness, even dysfunction, with a view to exploring how they might each potentially be rewoven in order to address their respective difficulties.”<sup>126</sup> The project put RE as a reparative ministry into practice. As Murray and Guest put it, “This is to view the task of ecclesiology as a form of diagnostic, therapeutic analysis; as a means of address and repair for systemic ills; as an agent of change.”<sup>127</sup> *RE&LC* aimed to consider how each local church may “fruitfully learn from the respective best practice of the other participant groupings.”<sup>128</sup>

The project is organised in three major research teams of eight people, each led by an expert in the field: *Governance and Finance, Leadership and Ministry*, and *Learning and Formation*.<sup>129</sup> *RE&LC* also employs an empirical methodology based on social scientific methods.<sup>130</sup> The empirical methodology was chosen in an attempt to move beyond abstract, theoretical understandings of the church. As Murray and Guest explain, “the aim is to escape the tendency...of pursuing ecclesiology in an abstract, purely theoretical-conceptual mode that

<sup>123</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 43.

<sup>124</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 43.

<sup>125</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 143.

<sup>126</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 143.

<sup>127</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 143.

<sup>128</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 138.

<sup>129</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146.

<sup>130</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 149.

operates in an ideal realm detached from the concrete reality of church life.”<sup>131</sup>

This evokes Murray’s argument that RE is “properly a matter of the heart before it is a matter of the head.”<sup>132</sup> However, the approach is not anti-theological.

Theological analysis and methods will be undertaken once the practical and organisational factors have been considered.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, theological methodologies will be required to discern the integrity of the identified areas for ecclesial learning.<sup>134</sup> It is clear that RE seeks a balance between academic and practical, rational and affective.

The project is envisaged in six stages.<sup>135</sup> The first stage involved identifying the theological self-understanding and challenges within each participating church.<sup>136</sup> Phase Two began in 2008.<sup>137</sup> It aimed to move beyond theory to the “lived reality and actual practice” of each church.<sup>138</sup> This stage had three major aims:

- (1) to test how the respective theories work in practice; (2) to begin to identify respective areas of good practice and difficulty/dysfunction alike; (3) to begin to identify where fruitful receptive learning might potentially take place across the traditions, whereby one tradition’s particular difficulties might be tended to, or enabled, by another’s particular gifts.<sup>139</sup>

This phase was undertaken through a range of empirical approaches, such as questionnaires, interviews, and group listening exercises.<sup>140</sup> The third stage

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<sup>131</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 162.

<sup>132</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning," 15.

<sup>133</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 164.

<sup>134</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 164.

<sup>135</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146. The number of envisaged “phases” has grown along with the length of the project. Earlier articles by Murray discuss four, and then five, envisaged phases. However, the latest article (April 2014), asserts that there are now six phases. See Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 279. I have discussed six phases here, in light of the latest research.

<sup>136</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146.

<sup>137</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 44.

<sup>138</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146.

<sup>139</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146.

<sup>140</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 146.



focused on ethnographic studies for each church.<sup>141</sup> The aim was to consider the challenges posed by decreasing numbers of clergy and ministers, and what strategies have been undertaken in response.<sup>142</sup> The project is currently up to Phase Four.<sup>143</sup> This stage focuses on analysing the data to identify areas of good practice (gifts) and problems (needs) in each church.<sup>144</sup> The end result of the project is a tailored proposal for each church on what it may be able to receive from other churches to promote its own growth.

Of course, each proposal needs to be considered carefully. The fifth intended stage is envisaged as a process of testing each proposal, in terms of “intensive coherence,” “extensive coherence,” and “pragmatic coherence.”<sup>145</sup> Namely, the proposal must cohere with the church’s doctrinal integrity.<sup>146</sup> As such, one factor to consider is how much the “overall web can be legitimately reconfigured, even rewoven in order to accommodate the proposal in question.”<sup>147</sup> Both the proposal’s practicality and whether it will receive support within the church also needs to be tested.<sup>148</sup> The testing process seeks to identify possible objections and discern a “reasonable way forward” for each church.<sup>149</sup> Proposals that pass testing will then be offered to each church.<sup>150</sup>

The final intended phase is that of the dissemination of results on several levels.<sup>151</sup> Firstly, each church will be provided with a report detailing “a number of well-thought-through and tested practical proposals for real potential receptive

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<sup>141</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 147.

<sup>142</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 147.

<sup>143</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 279.

<sup>144</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 147.

<sup>145</sup> Murray, "Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice," 280.

<sup>146</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>147</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>148</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>149</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>150</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>151</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

learning.”<sup>152</sup> This will be accompanied by discussions between each church and the research team.<sup>153</sup> The third type of dissemination is the publication of a major volume, “providing a thorough methodological and theological analysis of the project.”<sup>154</sup> Finally, the research will be distributed through a series of popular publications.<sup>155</sup> One of these includes a resource book by Churches Together on how to undertake RE in parishes.<sup>156</sup> Murray anticipates that the project “will contribute fresh knowledge” in practical ecclesiology, ecumenism, and “organisation studies more generally.”<sup>157</sup> It will result in “academic conference papers, published essays and two further major volumes.”<sup>158</sup> He also hopes the project will lead to “real receptive learning” for the participant churches.<sup>159</sup>

In a paper presented in 2011, Kelly comments on the distinctiveness of the project’s methodology, emphasising that the project’s emphasis is on organisational and practical concerns, which “is a very different paradigm to the normal ecumenical methodology, which is characterised by theological dialogue.”<sup>160</sup> This focus directly counters the tendency of much theological ecumenical work to focus on ideas and doctrines, which may have little relation to the actual lived reality of churches. It is not high-brow ecumenism, but an ecumenism aiming to foster ecumenical progress, or as he puts it, “to assist the churches to learn.”<sup>161</sup> Moreover, he considers the three key research areas of *RE&LC* to be “crucial areas where all churches are confronted with questions

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<sup>152</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 148.

<sup>153</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 149.

<sup>154</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 149.

<sup>155</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 149.

<sup>156</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 149.

<sup>157</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 45.

<sup>158</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 45.

<sup>159</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 45.

<sup>160</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 6.

<sup>161</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 6.

about best practice and how to respond to the demands of modern organisational and economic life, while at the same time remaining faithful to the gospel.”<sup>162</sup>

Nonetheless, the project has some significant limitations. The academic dissemination of the research has yet to be published. As such, there is a backlog of valuable research on RE, covering a period of eight years. Until the research is published, it cannot be gauged whether or not the project succeeded in inspiring transformative change in the participating churches. There has also been little secondary material published on *RE&LC*. Furthermore, Murray recognises that a “major limitation” is that the project’s empirical social-scientific methodology means that it cannot “easily translate” or be “further applied by those without specialist social-scientific training.”<sup>163</sup> This is a major drawback.

While *RE&LC* emphasises much continuity with RE, the use of a specialised empirical social-scientific methodology opposes RE’s key assertion of accessibility. It is not a methodology that can be practiced by all members of the church, and therefore, does not emphasise RE’s democratised ecumenism. All of the limitations entailed by this methodology also necessarily apply. As such, Murray suggests that rather than using this type of methodology and analysis more broadly, “what is required is for groups in diverse local contexts themselves to take on the responsibility of identifying what is difficult and in need of repair in their respective contexts.”<sup>164</sup> They can then “pursue the Receptive Ecumenical question as to how their particular difficulties can, with integrity, be creatively addressed and tended to through appropriately receiving from the gifts of other traditions.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 6.

<sup>163</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 92-93.

<sup>164</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 92-93.

<sup>165</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 92-93.

Murray is therefore not advocating the methodology used in *RE&LC* more broadly. It is up to different churches to decide how they want to respond to the basic RE methodology. He goes on to express that it is “heartening and humbling” that RE is already being received and adapted to local contexts “in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Germany, Scotland and England.”<sup>166</sup> Murray’s suggestion of different groups discerning their own questions and challenges in relation to RE is open-ended, and does not provide a criteria for their engagement with RE. This raises concerns as to how useful the *RE&LC* project will be outside of its particular context. As the project is specifically tailored to the participant churches, it lacks general applicability. It also raises concerns as to the cohesiveness of RE as a whole. As RE develops further, will there be a myriad of different “receptive ecumenisms”? Or will local manifestations of the methodology be generally recognisable as a single movement? If RE is to maintain cohesiveness, as has been argued previously, there is a need to ground it firmly within SE. Much has been said here about the distinctiveness of RE compared to traditional theological ecumenical approaches. Perhaps surprisingly, then, a third key manifestation of RE sees the methodology entwined with a high profile bilateral dialogue: ARCIC III.

### 6.3.3. ARCIC III

A further significant application of RE is its adoption by the third phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III). ARCIC is the official dialogue between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches. It is comprised of members appointed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Department for Unity, Faith and Order of the Anglican

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<sup>166</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 92-93.

Communion. ARCIC's first phase was held from 1970-1981.<sup>167</sup> Phase II ran from 1983-2011.<sup>168</sup> The current third phase was mandated in 2009 by Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

The overarching aim of ARCIC III is "the Church as Communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching."<sup>169</sup> ARCIC III also seeks to address how the goal of full communion in faith and sacramental life can be addressed in the contemporary situation.<sup>170</sup> A third goal is to assist the reception of the work of ARCIC II.<sup>171</sup> In order to address these aims, ARCIC III has adopted RE "as providing an appropriate way of proceeding and theological orientation for this next phase of the Commission's work."<sup>172</sup> As the key figure in RE, Murray is one of eight Catholic members of ARCIC III.

It needs to be acknowledged that there is some disillusionment and doubt over the ARCIC process, due to recent divisions between the two traditions over ministry. Murray argues that what is needed now is not learning about each other, but "direct, explicit and effective self-criticism, growth, development, change," or in other words, interior conversion.<sup>173</sup> He points out that the limitations of the methods employed by ARCIC I and II were starting to be recognised in the later work of ARCIC II.<sup>174</sup> He writes that ARCIC I and II are "best viewed as strategies of clarification and explication rather than of growth, change and conversion *per*

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<sup>167</sup> The key agreed statements produced by ARCIC I are as follows: Eucharistic Doctrine (1971); Ministry and Ordination (1973); Authority in the Church I (1976); Elucidations on the Eucharist (1979); Authority in the Church II (1981); Elucidations on Authority in the Church (1981); The Final Report (1981).

<sup>168</sup> The key agreed statements produced by ARCIC II are as follows: Salvation and the Church (1986); Church as Communion (1990); Life in Christ, Morals, Communion and the Church (1993); Clarifications of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry (1994); The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III (1998); Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (2004).

<sup>169</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>170</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>171</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>172</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 208.

<sup>173</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 208.

<sup>174</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 206.

*se.*”<sup>175</sup> He goes on, arguing that in “substantive rather than perceptual and relational terms they effectively leave things as they are.”<sup>176</sup> While acknowledging their achievements, he attests that they have, at least for now, “quite possibly gone as far as they can on most fronts.”<sup>177</sup> This is because many of the challenges facing ecumenical dialogue today require a different approach.<sup>178</sup> As such, a new ecumenical methodology is required, namely, RE.<sup>179</sup>

The communique from the 2011 meeting defines RE as an approach “which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our partner, rather than simply asking our partner to learn from us.”<sup>180</sup> ARCIC III identifies RE as being “more about self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other.”<sup>181</sup> A method such as this is valuable for Anglican-Catholic relations as “Anglicans and Roman Catholics can help each other grow in faith, life and witness to Christ if they are open to being transformed by God’s grace mediated through each other.”<sup>182</sup> As such, “ARCIC is committed to modelling the receptive ecumenism it advocates.”<sup>183</sup> Grounded in RE, the Commission focuses on how Catholics and Anglicans respectively approach decision making, and how difficulties between them may be resolved through mutual learning.<sup>184</sup>

Murray sees two main ramifications of ARCIC III’s adoption of RE. First, that ARCIC III’s focus will be phrased in terms of ecclesial learning, rather than seeking agreement or consensus.<sup>185</sup> For example, it would once have been asked: “How can Catholics and Anglicans seek to come directly to a common mind on

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<sup>175</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 205.

<sup>176</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 205.

<sup>177</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 207.

<sup>178</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 207.

<sup>179</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 207-208.

<sup>180</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>181</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>182</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>183</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>184</sup> ARCIC III, "ARCIC III."

<sup>185</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 209.

issues such as decision making at local and universal levels?”<sup>186</sup> However, Murray wants the question to be: ““What respective difficulties are there in each of our traditions around decision marking and how can these potentially be helped by learning from what is strong in the other tradition?””<sup>187</sup> The focus is clearly on ecclesial learning.

The second implication is that “ARCIC III will both seek to model this process in its own work and seek to stimulate similar processes at all levels” of the churches.<sup>188</sup> He considers the process of RE as being “actually more important than seeking to arrive at a theorised conclusion in a convergence statement.”<sup>189</sup> This certainly marks a departure from the aims of ARCIC I and II. Because of this shift away from agreed statements, he explains that “the final statements arising from ARCIC III will very likely include clear acknowledgment of continuing areas of substantial and substantive disagreement between the traditions.”<sup>190</sup> It is important to recall that RE does not aim to work out differences between traditions, but rather, to inspire interior conversion.

Rather than working towards common agreement, Murray attests that “each tradition will be called, as an ecclesial spiritual discipline analogous to individual examination of conscience....to grow in specific ways in its respective practices and structures of decision-making through effective receptive ecumenical learning.”<sup>191</sup> Therefore, following this methodology, ARCIC III will not concentrate on agreed statements and consensus, but rather on ecclesial learning. Murray explains, “This requires a very challenging move *away* from the refined articulation of theorized, doctrinally-driven accounts and *towards* also

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<sup>186</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 209.

<sup>187</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 209.

<sup>188</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 209-210.

<sup>189</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 210.

<sup>190</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 210.

<sup>191</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 210.

asking after the lived experience of decision-making in each tradition and the real difficulties and tensions to be found there.”<sup>192</sup> It prioritises the *ad intra* dimension of ecumenical engagement, rather than the more traditional *ad extra* focus.

ARCIC III therefore strikes out in a different direction to ARCIC I and II. It aims for “realistic” achievements and to instigate further ecumenical progress. Murray elaborates on this point:

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.<sup>193</sup>

ARCIC III’s adoption of this approach certainly represents an achievement for Receptive Ecumenism. On this point, Murray relates a comment from a “bishop friend,”

‘Receptive Ecumenism has now moved from being a good idea discussed by some academics and ecumenists with some church support to being embraced by the most significant international bilateral process in the English-speaking world that has in turn tended to influence the methodology of all the other dialogues. It has gone global!’<sup>194</sup>

However, Murray seeks to place this success “in perspective.”<sup>195</sup> He reiterates that RE “is a way of thinking and acting that has been long incubated in the ecumenical movement.”<sup>196</sup> Thus, if the receptive ecumenical methodology is successful it will only be because it represents “the coming of age” of implicit aspects of ecumenism.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, he concludes,

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<sup>192</sup> Murray, “Engaging with the Contemporary Church,” 291.

<sup>193</sup> Murray, “Engaging with the Contemporary Church,” 291.

<sup>194</sup> Murray, “ARCIC III,” 210.

<sup>195</sup> Murray, “ARCIC III,” 210.

<sup>196</sup> Murray, “ARCIC III,” 210.

<sup>197</sup> Murray, “ARCIC III,” 210.



[I]t is profoundly engendering of hope to recognise, contrary to the prophets of doom who would write-off formal institutional ecumenism in general and ARCIC in particular as a now redundant exercise, that ARCIC continues to work at the forefront of the ecumenical agenda, exploring and in some respects pioneering a path appropriate to our age.<sup>198</sup>

It is clear that Murray sees the adoption of RE as exhibiting how ARCIC is at the forefront of ecumenism. His conviction that RE is the necessary way forward for the Ecumenical Movement is also apparent. Nonetheless, the shift from focusing on agreed statements to interior ecclesial learning represents a significant change between the first two phases of ARCIC and the third. The effectiveness of ARCIC's integration of RE over the coming years will provide much needed information on RE's feasibility and complementarity with ecumenical dialogues.

To date, five meetings have been held.<sup>199</sup> The official communique from the fourth meeting in 2014, explains that ARCIC III intends to integrate RE with the methods used in ARCIC I and II.<sup>200</sup> However, the manner in which RE will be integrated with ARCIC I and II's methodology is, unfortunately, not outlined. It is only explained that the 2011 schema was revised in 2014.<sup>201</sup> The fifth meeting, April 2015, included a private audience with Pope Francis. The Pope congratulated ARCIC on its work, and reaffirmed the importance of ecumenism for the Catholic Church. He states,

The cause of unity is not an optional undertaking and the differences which divide us must not be seen as inevitable. Some wish that, after fifty years, greater progress towards unity would have been achieved. Despite difficulties, we must not lose heart, but we must trust even more in the

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<sup>198</sup> Murray, "ARCIC III," 211.

<sup>199</sup> The first meeting was held in Bose in 2011. The second was in Hong Kong in 2012. Third was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2013. The fourth meeting was held in Durban, South Africa in 2014. The fifth meeting was held in Villa Palazzola from the 28<sup>th</sup> April to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2015.

<sup>200</sup> ARCIC III, "Communique from the Fourth Meeting," *ARCIC & IARCCUM* [http://www.anglicancentreinrome.org/Articles/403558/Anglican\\_Centre\\_in/ARCIC\\_IARCCUM\\_Dialogues/ARCIC\\_III/ARCIC\\_III\\_Fourth.aspx](http://www.anglicancentreinrome.org/Articles/403558/Anglican_Centre_in/ARCIC_IARCCUM_Dialogues/ARCIC_III/ARCIC_III_Fourth.aspx).

<sup>201</sup> ARCIC III, "Communique."

power of the Holy Spirit, who can heal and reconcile us, and accomplish what humanly does not seem possible.<sup>202</sup>

Francis's emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of ecumenism is clear, and re-affirms the need for an approach which highlights the spiritual within the ecumenical.

However, there was no mention of RE in the latest communique.

Nevertheless, RE's central role in ARCIC III raised its profile as an ecumenical approach. It also emphasises its complementarity to other ecumenical methods. As with the conferences and the *RE&LC* project, ARCIC III's work is ongoing. As such, the effectiveness of RE as part of ARCIC is yet to be seen. The implementations of RE discussed so far have all directly involved Murray. It is important now to consider an application of RE led by others, in a context which has warmly embraced the method: Australia.

#### **6.3.4. Receptive Ecumenism in Australia**

Australia has been involved with RE since its initial development. The amount of engagement with RE, both academically and practically, in that country is remarkable. Australians have been a significant presence at the conferences. Australian theologians, such as Gerard Kelly, Denis Edwards, Neil Ormerod, Ormond Rush, Michael Putney, and David Pascoe, to mention only a few, have contributed substantially to its developing methodology. There have also been ground-breaking practical initiatives in RE.

The South Australian Council of Churches organises a variety of Receptive Ecumenical projects and workshops, which have been highly

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<sup>202</sup> Philippa Hitchen, "Pope Francis meets Members of ARCIC III," *Vatican Radio* 2015 <https://ecumenism.net/2015/04/pope-francis-meets-members-of-arcic-iii.htm>

successful.<sup>203</sup> Executive Officer of the SACC, Geraldine Hawkes, describes how the participants of a 2010 workshop experienced:

A deep sense of the Spirit among the gathering; they commented on the time as being one of a 'gift of grace', of having 'experienced the community that is at the heart of the Trinity'.... 'new humanity in Christ', 'new vision and direction', 'affirmation and hope.'<sup>204</sup>

Furthermore, in 2012, the SACC organised a lecture tour for Murray in Australia and New Zealand. One element of this was a five-day workshop with over 215 participants.<sup>205</sup> Significant themes to emerge from these intensive sessions included: a renewal of ecumenical energy and commitment, igniting interest in RE; a focus on learning, especially the difference between learning *from* in contrast to learning *about*, starting with the problems within one's own tradition; and democratised ecumenism.<sup>206</sup> There were also major emphases on the affective and spiritual dimensions of the method, namely: openness, sharing our woundedness, humility, trusting in the Spirit, and "receiving others in ecumenical way of love."<sup>207</sup> One of the key insights shaping RE in Australia is that: "RE is not a method or a tool, but ultimately a disposition of the heart."<sup>208</sup>

Australian RE has a strong affective and spiritual emphasis. In a presentation given in 2013, Hawkes explains that:

Receptive Ecumenism requires a disposition of love and humility. It requires us to know – and accept – that we are each different, that we each have our own gift, our own charism – and that we are beautiful and loved. Receptive Ecumenism also invites us to receive the beauty and the

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<sup>203</sup> See their website for a full list of projects:

[http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en\\_receptive+ecumenism](http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_receptive+ecumenism)

<sup>204</sup> Geraldine Hawkes, "Receptive Ecumenism: Encounter with Beauty, Truth and Love," (presentation, South Australian Council of Churches Annual Ecumenical Lecture, Adelaide College of Divinity, Adelaide, 2013).

<sup>205</sup> The lecture tour ran from 24-28<sup>th</sup> of July 2012. More details can be found at

[http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en\\_receptive+ecumenism](http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_receptive+ecumenism)

<sup>206</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Receptive Ecumenism," *South Australian Council of Churches* [http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en\\_receptive+ecumenism](http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_receptive+ecumenism)

<sup>207</sup> South Australian Council Churches, "Receptive Ecumenism."

<sup>208</sup> South Australian Council Churches, "Receptive Ecumenism."

truth of one's own church and of the church of the other,  
in love.<sup>209</sup>

Here, the focus on virtuous, spiritual and affective dimensions of RE comes to the fore.

The SACC also produced a booklet on RE, which was endorsed by Murray at the third conference.<sup>210</sup> Much like RE, the booklet is a continuously developing, collaborative enterprise. The booklet describes the key features of RE, stressing its spiritual and affective dimensions.<sup>211</sup> It also emphasises RE's focus on institutional conversion and its accessibility to all members of the church.<sup>212</sup> The pneumatological underpinning of RE is highlighted, as the booklet frequently references RE as "a movement of the Spirit."<sup>213</sup> It outlines a number of exercises and activities, which strongly emphasise the spiritual and affective aspects of the methodology.

Consider the first activity, "Ecclesial Examination of Conscience," described as a process of prayer.<sup>214</sup> The first step is prayer. The second step is giving thanks to God for our tradition and all it has offered us. The third step is acknowledging some point (whether a process, practice, system or structure) where our tradition has "diminished, obscured, ignored or overlooked" Christ or God's grace. Fourth is to reflect on these areas where we have not adequately represented Christ and pray for guidance from the Spirit. The fifth step is to ask for the grace to be open and receptive to the gifts of other traditions.<sup>215</sup> RE's heritage from SE becomes evident in this activity.

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<sup>209</sup> Hawkes, "Receptive Ecumenism."

<sup>210</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands." This booklet was discussed in Chapter One, in the literature review.

<sup>211</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 1.

<sup>212</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 1.

<sup>213</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 2.

<sup>214</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 3.

<sup>215</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, "Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands," 3.

A second activity instructs groups to consider what gifts they have each received from another tradition.<sup>216</sup> A third activity revolves around picking a question, such as “how does your Church nurture an active congregation?” Each member of a different church then responds to the question, while the others listen.<sup>217</sup> The fourth activity asks each participant to share an area of weakness or “woundedness” in their own tradition.<sup>218</sup> These activities involve humility, receptiveness, listening, and trust in the Spirit. They emphasise interior conversion and the ecumenical exchange of gifts. They are as much an exercise in SE as in RE.

Hawkes was also a consultant for the New South Wales Ecumenical Council’s parish workbook on RE, published in 2013.<sup>219</sup> The editor, Gideon Goosen, explains that the workbook is designed to guide parishes “in reflecting on receptive ecumenism, and hopefully help them to come up with some practical suggestions of their own.”<sup>220</sup> The booklet includes an important article by Gerard Kelly, which has already been discussed in some detail.<sup>221</sup>

Having defined RE, the booklet outlines five sessions on RE, involving prayer, reflection, ecumenical stories and experiences, questions and discussion points.<sup>222</sup> There is a notable focus on listening, reflection, and prayer, as well as a theological understanding of ecumenism and other traditions. A checklist for identifying a receptive ecumenist includes characteristics such as: being constructively critical of one’s own tradition, and positive towards other traditions; seeking to help your tradition change positively, and striving to see

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<sup>216</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 4.

<sup>217</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 5.

<sup>218</sup> South Australian Council of Churches, “Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands,” 5.

<sup>219</sup> Goosen et al., *The Gift of Each Other*.

<sup>220</sup> Gideon Goosen, “Foreword,” in *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians*, ed. Gideon Goosen (Sydney: The New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013), 4.

<sup>221</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” This was also discussed in Chapter One, section 1.4., in the literature review.

<sup>222</sup> Goosen et al., *The Gift of Each Other*.

where we can move forward by learning from others. The booklet emphasises that RE requires humility, the willingness to be vulnerable, and openness to the Spirit.<sup>223</sup>

The spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions clearly emerge in these two workbooks. It may be that, to fit the purpose of the workbooks, RE has been distilled down to its most distinctive and appealing aspects. When put into practice, RE's heritage as part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement shines out. This point is further illustrated by a ground-breaking initiative facilitated by the SACC, the pilot programme "Receptive Ecumenism: Gifts of Healing."<sup>224</sup> The programme was initiated in 2013 and is currently ongoing. It involves the Anglican Ecumenical Network (AEN) and the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission (DEIC), part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide. The aims of the project are:

- To learn more about RE processes as a way that leads to greater flourishing of own church (in a practice, attitude, system....).
- To draw closer to a deeper appreciation of the other and their gifts
- To contribute to the general learning about Receptive Ecumenism.
- Longer Term: to discover something more that may be lacking/absent in our own expression of church and to discern how to integrate that learning, without diminishing who we are, but rather lead to greater flourishing.<sup>225</sup>

The first session was organised around the SACC workbook activities discussed above. Each participant reflected on areas of perceived deficiency, shared hospitality, prayed together, and listened to each other. There was also a central focus on the exchange of gifts.<sup>226</sup> The programme was undertaken with the intent

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<sup>223</sup> Goosen et al., *The Gift of Each Other*, 42.

<sup>224</sup> Geraldine Hawkes, "Gifts of Healing: Receptive Ecumenism Process Draft," (SACC, May 2013). Used here with permission.

<sup>225</sup> Hawkes, "Gifts of Healing."

<sup>226</sup> Hawkes, "Gifts of Healing."

to generate realistic transformative change within each tradition. As such, the issues tackled by the two churches needed to be considered attainable.<sup>227</sup>

At the second meeting, held in 2014, the DEIC asked to listen to the AEN in order to reflect on how the DEIC may be able to improve their collaborative decision making.<sup>228</sup> The pilot programme showcases how Australian applications of RE emphasise the principles of SE along with RE's distinctive focus on realistic change. While still ongoing, the programme has already yielded positive results for both participants.<sup>229</sup> This implementation of RE, organised by the SACC, demonstrates how RE can be applied without recourse to specialist methodologies. Unlike the *RE&LC* project, Australian initiatives such as the two workbooks, and the pilot programme, have applied RE in a spiritual fashion, rather than an empirical social-scientific manner. The activities in the workbooks are readily adaptable to other contexts.

RE also continues to develop academically in Australia. A team of Australian academics and ecumenists led by Hawkes is currently organising the fourth international Receptive Ecumenism conference (REIV), to be held in Australia in 2017. Whilst still in its nascent stage, REIV aims to be a significant continuation of the other conferences, focusing on areas such as developing a criteria for ecclesial learning, elucidating RE's facilitation of ecclesial conversion at all levels, and considering RE in relation to contemporary ecumenical challenges.<sup>230</sup> Australia's undertaking of the conference highlights the energy and commitment to RE found in Australia.

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<sup>227</sup> Hawkes, "Gifts of Healing."

<sup>228</sup> Geraldine Hawkes, "Receptive Ecumenism: Gifts of Healing - A Pilot Project. Executive Officer Reflections," (The South Australian Council of Churches, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

<sup>229</sup> Hawkes, "Receptive Ecumenism Pilot Project."

<sup>230</sup> As part of the REIV team, I am involved in the planning and organisational process. This information is referenced here with permission.

All four implementations of RE strongly demonstrate its spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions. Along with an initial flush of success, there is also a sense of ongoing development. However, as RE continues to develop, we must also inquire into the challenges that face its long-term effectiveness.

### **6.3.5. Challenges Facing Receptive Ecumenism**

The implementations of RE discussed above illustrate its adaptability for a variety of purposes and contexts. Now, we turn to consider the challenges involved in employing RE, with a focus on its long-term effectiveness.

The difficulties facing RE must be taken seriously, as Gerard Kelly indicates.<sup>231</sup> He asserts that non-theological issues, such as organisational, psychological, sociological, and cultural factors, can impede ecclesial learning.<sup>232</sup> He outlines four key challenges facing the Receptive Ecumenical methodology, the first being that it is counter-intuitive.<sup>233</sup> RE inverts the traditional ecumenical orientation. The natural inclination of many ecumenists is to focus primarily on other traditions, rather than on ourselves.<sup>234</sup> RE therefore goes against the grain, which means that undertaking it requires a conscious effort. However, this fact is also part of its success. RE's fundamental argument is that ecumenical progress has plateaued. Therefore, restarting ecumenical momentum necessitates focusing on achievable goals. While we may not be able to further our ecumenical relationships at the current time, we have instead the "opportunity to do some work on our own house," as Kelly puts it.<sup>235</sup> Looking at ecumenism from a wholly different angle brings new possibilities. Therefore, while this challenge needs to

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<sup>231</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 6.

<sup>232</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 4.

<sup>233</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 6.

<sup>234</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 6.

<sup>235</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.



be taken seriously, any sense of awkwardness because of its counter-intuitiveness can be alleviated by understanding why its *ad intra* orientation is required.

The second problem is not so easily overcome. If RE is to be successfully employed, then the churches involved must be open to change. However, as Kelly explains, “all of our churches can be remarkably resistant to change.”<sup>236</sup> Moreover, RE does not require change of *other* churches, which may be more palatable, particularly where a church is concerned to protect its ecclesial identity. Rather, it demands change within our *own* tradition. Resistance to change cannot be underestimated, as Kelly points out, “Let’s not forget that the bottom line is that we are talking about change – not other churches changing, but my church changing. Change is never easy!”<sup>237</sup> However, RE will not succeed unless a tradition is open to change.

This is, therefore, a major difficulty for the approach, compounded by the fact that resistance to change is complex. Kelly asserts that it is often not about “ill will,” but rather expresses “a lack of imagination in identifying those areas where we need new ways of thinking and acting.”<sup>238</sup> There needs to be a self-critical and imaginative consideration of where renewal needs to occur. RE can draw on the resources of SE in overcoming this hurdle, especially prayer. However, internal diversity within a tradition also makes agreement over areas requiring change problematic.<sup>239</sup> The Catholic community itself is far from homogenous. Openness to renewal is further complicated by the link between change and authority.<sup>240</sup> The authority structures within a tradition are directly connected with the mechanisms for change. As Murray and Guest reflect:

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<sup>236</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>237</sup> Kelly, “Receptive Ecumenism,” 4.

<sup>238</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>239</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

<sup>240</sup> Kelly, “What is Receptive Ecumenism?” 7.

The project [*RE&LC*] assumes the desirability and legitimacy of questioning the status quo. This raises numerous tricky questions: Who has the right to offer critique, and how do they earn it? ... What place is to be given to critical voices that might emerge from each domain but which clash with one another...?<sup>241</sup>

The underlying structures that foster ecclesial change must therefore be engaged.

However, there is no simple way for the ensuing problems to be overcome.

The challenge of RE is that it demands change. It entails that we, as members of the body of Christ, consider what we still have to learn. After identifying what can be received, the next step becomes one of actually receiving it, authentically and with integrity, into the host tradition. Here, RE flows into the field of ecumenical reception, with all of its challenges and obstacles. There is no doubt that the practice of RE can lead a church community to consider what it may need to learn from its Christian brethren. But whether, and how, this learning can be implemented, so that real, concrete change occurs, is another matter. Of course, RE cannot, on its own, resolve the problem of ecumenical reception. That is the continuing task of the entire Ecumenical Movement, of all Christians.

Above all, it is the task of the Holy Spirit.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that RE cannot succeed if a church is not open to transformative change. It is here that the true challenge of the methodology becomes apparent. RE cuts to the quick of ecumenism, drawing on its roots as a spiritual movement. It points to a further stage in the ecumenical endeavour, moving past mutual understanding and partnership, towards conversion. If there is no experience of interior conversion, then RE has not succeeded. Resistance to, or fear of change, is therefore a critical challenge. However, fear is overcome by love, and courage comes from hope in Christ. SE,

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<sup>241</sup> Murray and Guest, "On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church," 150.

through prayer, and kenotic surrendering to the Spirit, must be relied on to lead a tradition to open itself, humbly and hopefully, to conversion.

The third challenge highlighted by Kelly is the difficulty of approaching, and asking to learn from, ecumenical partners, once areas requiring change have been decided.<sup>242</sup> He explains that this is made more difficult if the issue is one involving fundamental doctrinal differences, such as ministry.<sup>243</sup> Differing, even competing, ecclesial doctrines may impede a church from approaching ecumenical partners. RE challenges the Catholic tradition's tendency to search within itself, for native resources, when it requires renewal; what is known as the "fortress church" mentality.<sup>244</sup> In contrast, RE requires a tradition to open itself to other churches in a spirit of humility and hope. The difficulty centres on RE's nature as an "ecumenism of the wounded hands," where we show others our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Lest this requirement seem to denigrate ecclesial identity, Kelly emphasises that ecclesial learning does not mean "doing things the way the other church does them, or even accepting their basic theological stance."<sup>245</sup> Instead, the purpose of ecclesial learning is for other traditions to help us see our problems in a new light.<sup>246</sup> After all, RE aims to foster conversion, not lowest common denominator consensus. Nonetheless, approaching others for help requires both humility and hope.

In this sense, RE would not have been possible fifty years ago, when relationships between Christians were veiled in fear and misunderstanding. This method is only feasible on the basis of pre-existing ecumenical friendships. In order to counter any reluctance to approach and ask others for help, RE must be

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<sup>242</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>243</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>244</sup> Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'," 334.

<sup>245</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>246</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

undertaken with trusted ecumenical partners. It is not an introductory type of ecumenism, seeking to establish, or even deepen, ecumenical relationships. On the contrary, it can only be launched from the firm foundation of longstanding relationships, grounded in trust and friendship. It fosters interior conversion, rather than external relations, in the same way that at times a person's positive growth requires a friend's constructive criticism and advice, which is asked for and accepted on the strength of that relationship.

This is a further step in the ecumenical process, past learning about each other, to learning from each other. Putney's explanation of the stages in the Ecumenical Movement is helpful here. He explains that early ecumenism was "like a honeymoon in a marriage, or the first flush of friendship," which involves becoming friends and getting to know each other.<sup>247</sup> However, as he says, "That easy, exciting period is past."<sup>248</sup> The next stage is that of maintaining and deepening the relationship.<sup>249</sup> Gradual deepening of friendship includes points where "friends have to challenge each other when they do not believe the other is being their best possible selves, and to forgive each other when they fail, or offend."<sup>250</sup> This later stage is where RE comes in, and why it necessitates learning from ecumenical friends in order to learn about oneself.

A further challenge facing RE is the breadth of its scope.<sup>251</sup> Its key methodology can apply to any and all areas of a church. As such, it must be adapted by local communities to suit their needs.<sup>252</sup> This requires commitment on behalf of individual churches to critically reflect on their own contexts.<sup>253</sup> Kelly

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<sup>247</sup> Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 189.

<sup>248</sup> Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 189.

<sup>249</sup> Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 189.

<sup>250</sup> Putney, "A Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 189.

<sup>251</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>252</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>253</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

argues that RE may be most effective in relation to a church's practical life.<sup>254</sup> For the Australian context, he believes there to be an implicit example of RE in "the way the churches have been willing to learn from each other about responding to the crisis of sexual abuse."<sup>255</sup> Some areas where engaging RE may prove fruitful include: the problem of decreasing numbers of clergy; falling church attendance, and an aging church population; how to engage young people; how to effectively respond to local issues, such as poverty; and how to improve the quality of worship or liturgy.<sup>256</sup> The success of RE therefore depends on local churches or ecumenical groups being engaged, self-critical, and self-driven.

An excellent example of this, of course, is the SACC. However, not all churches necessarily have the resources, ability, or mindset to be able to engage in RE. It is a serious commitment, which should permeate all areas of ecclesial life. There is no doubt that RE is hard work, and an undertaking that will challenge a church community to its core. Because it focuses on the affective and spiritual levels of ecumenical engagement, transformative conversion cannot be achieved by half-hearted lip service. Commitment must be genuine, and preferably shared by each member of the church. While there is no way of enforcing commitment (as it must come from the Spirit), the lack of criteria to guide local applications of RE can be tackled. A set of criteria would enable a church's initial engagement with RE, by providing a framework which can be adapted to their context. Kelly's four challenges have highlighted significant difficulties for implementing RE. Several further problems must also be noted.

Another challenge for RE is its apparent negative focus on one's own church. RE depends on a self-critical attitude towards one's tradition. Parishioners may not be willing to do this, especially if they feel defensive of their ecclesial

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<sup>254</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>255</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

<sup>256</sup> Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" 7.

identities. This factor may be especially challenging for the Catholic Church, as Örsy indicates, due to the Catholic belief that the Church of Christ “subsists” in the Catholic Church.<sup>257</sup> On this basis, the Catholic community may not feel the need to learn or receive.<sup>258</sup> However, this tendency is mitigated by belief in the eschatological nature of the pilgrim church. Nevertheless, any conceited disposition that one’s church does not need to learn or change is a difficulty for implementing RE. In such a process, the attitude of humility is required, with all of the challenges the virtue brings with it. Örsy clarifies this point, explaining that the receiving community must fully realise “its own limitations and incompleteness.”<sup>259</sup>

Avis mentions another perception which may hinder RE: fears that it means to replace the “formal bilateral and multilateral dialogues that have been the theological backbone of the ecumenical movement for 40 years and more.”<sup>260</sup> Discussing the relationship between RE and ecumenical dialogue is important. RE is designed as an alternative approach to formal dialogues. A key conviction behind RE is that bilateral or multilateral dialogues are no longer as fruitful as they once were. However, the argument that we need to focus on other forms of ecumenical engagement is hardly new.

Twenty years ago, Nilson argued that one reason behind ecumenical decline “is the dead end that bi-lateral dialogues seem to have reached.”<sup>261</sup> He explains that “Dialogue was deemed the royal road to mutual knowledge and the dissolution of the factors that divided the churches.”<sup>262</sup> The very success of dialogues is why theological ecumenism has dominated over other forms of

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<sup>257</sup> Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 45.

<sup>258</sup> Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 45.

<sup>259</sup> Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 45.

<sup>260</sup> Avis, "Are We Receiving 'Receptive Ecumenism'?" 230.

<sup>261</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 2.

<sup>262</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 2.

ecumenical engagement, such as SE. However, Nilson illustrates that there were arguments, two decades ago, that “dialogue alone is no longer the way toward church unity.”<sup>263</sup> He clarifies that while formal dialogue continues to be important, it “alone cannot carry us to that full, visible unity that is the ecumenical goal.”<sup>264</sup> The issue is that formal dialogues “will produce only more agreed statements, which the churches will also keep at arm’s length.”<sup>265</sup> This is the problem with theological ecumenism. To counteract this, Nilson argues that, “The partner churches must begin sharing their lives with one another as much as possible.”<sup>266</sup> The emphasis is on ecumenism as something that must be lived, that integrates head, heart, and soul. As such, RE aims not to create more agreed statements, which may not be received into the church. It focuses instead on the lived experience of the church itself.

However, RE is not designed to replace, but rather complement, ecumenical dialogues. It is a democratised ecumenism, independent of official dialogues, which can be undertaken by all members of the church. It is an ecumenism that aims toward the heart, the lived experience of being a Christian. RE’s clear intention of complementarity, rather than opposition, to theological ecumenism is illustrated by its role in ARCIC III.

In conjunction, theological and Receptive Ecumenism provide much needed balance to the Ecumenical Movement. Therefore, overcoming this challenge requires greater clarity over RE’s position within ecumenical theology. It is not a replacement for formal dialogue, but an alternative that operates alongside theological ecumenism. RE is dependent on the riches which already have been mined through bilateral dialogues and theological ecumenism. It is only

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<sup>263</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 4.

<sup>264</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 5.

<sup>265</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 5.

<sup>266</sup> Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary*, 5.

feasible on the basis of the hard yards already won. This is why Kelly argues that RE “is appropriate to the degree of unity that we already share, particularly after the success of over forty years of ecumenical activity.”<sup>267</sup> However, RE is “also necessary at a time when we seem to have reached a road block.”<sup>268</sup> It is a complementary alternative to traditional ecumenical approaches, which can only flourish on the basis of what has already been accomplished.

Thus, RE’s successful implementation, and long term success, faces serious challenges. Belying its apparent simplicity, RE is a challenging, advanced form of ecumenical engagement. Affective and spiritual conditions are important for its success. It cannot succeed unless it is undertaken with humility and receptiveness, attention to listening, imagination, and space for the Holy Spirit. RE is not an abstract theological process, but rather needs to be experienced. At a presentation given in 2013, Hawkes provides a checklist of requirements for undertaking RE, worth quoting at length:

Do we have a spirit of humility and willingness to embrace our vulnerability? Do we have a desire for healing, from within as well as across? Can we be trusting enough to share our ecclesial pain, the woundedness, the felt-absence, lack of authentic expression with our ecumenical other? What steps might we with others take to share our grief about those parts of our being that are ‘false’ or wounded and seek the ministering hands of our ecumenical other in becoming more authentic, more fully who we are and who God made us to be?<sup>269</sup>

RE requires humility and hope. It requires prayer. Moreover, if it is to be successful, it must be adopted willingly and wholeheartedly, by at least the majority of the church community. As Kelly remarks, “before we rush headlong into the future, championing receptive ecumenism as the solution to all our woes, we need to be confident that it is something that our church can embrace

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<sup>267</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 7.

<sup>268</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 7.

<sup>269</sup> Hawkes, "Receptive Ecumenism."



willingly.”<sup>270</sup> Unless this is the case, it cannot succeed. A more traditional form of ecumenism may be more suitable if a church is not ready to undertake the transformative change required by Receptive Ecumenism.

#### **6.4. Receptive Ecumenism and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement**

The Ecumenical Movement is at a turning point, teetering towards either further decline or reinvigoration. Undeniably, ecumenism’s future depends on capturing anew the hearts and minds of Christians. To do so, it requires new direction and energy. The required renewal calls for a restoration of balance between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism. In comparison to theological and practical ecumenism, SE is remarkably underdeveloped. Its potential has not been fully realised. As such, ecumenism’s future depends on tapping into the spiritual and affective levels of ecumenical engagement in order to restore ecumenical equilibrium between “head,” “hands,” “heart,” and “soul.” This is not to denigrate the importance of theological and practical ecumenism, but to reassert the neglected value of Spiritual Ecumenism, which serves as a necessary complement.

The significance of RE for the future of the Ecumenical Movement boils down to two key assertions: (1) that ecumenism must be renewed as a spiritual movement, in balance with theological and practical ecumenism. And (2), that as a form of Spiritual Ecumenism, RE offers a way forward. The claim that we need to re-emphasise the spiritual within the ecumenical is a common thread uniting the work of the key ecumenists we have discussed.

Deliberating on perceived ecumenical stagnation, Putney determines that: “If there is a loss of interest or passion for ecumenism the cause may well lie in a failure to tap the spiritual roots of the ecumenical movement and to act instead as

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<sup>270</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 4.

if it is simply a human work.”<sup>271</sup> To counteract this tendency, the spiritual core of ecumenism must be rediscovered. Ecumenism is grounded in the Trinity: it is God’s unity; it is Christ’s will and prayer; it is the Spirit’s work. Ecumenism carries with it a Christological imperative akin to partaking of the Eucharist.

However, as Putney explains, working for Christian unity is all too often seen in terms of activities for justice and peace, with prayer as “simply an addendum.”<sup>272</sup> The lack of priority placed on prayer is more than “a minor lapse in one aspect of ecumenical activity.”<sup>273</sup> It points to “a profound gap between ecumenical activity and its source, between activity and spirituality.”<sup>274</sup> As Putney reminds us, ecumenism is above all else a spirituality. It is not primarily theological or practical. As such, he asserts: “Action for Christian unity ought to flow from this divine prayer for unity rather than the other way around.”<sup>275</sup> Contemporary ecumenism requires a reorientation towards SE, drawing on prayer as the wellspring for all ecumenical endeavours. Putney’s ecumenical convictions have been shaped in no small part by Couturier, the father of Spiritual Ecumenism. It is Couturier who explains that “Prayer is the fundamental force.”<sup>276</sup> This is not to denigrate the importance of theological and practical ecumenism, but rather to recover the importance of SE.

O’Gara’s discussion of the future of ecumenism hits on a similar point. She draws attention to the fact that prayer has continually nourished ecumenism, predicting that prayer will be of “continuing importance” for “future ecumenical work.”<sup>277</sup> The realisation that ecumenism is a spiritual task is something she

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<sup>271</sup> Michael Putney, “The Approach of the Catholic Church to Ecumenism,” in *My Ecumenical Journey*, ed. Elizabeth Delaney, Gerard Kelly and Ormond Rush (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014), 169.

<sup>272</sup> Putney, “The Approach of the Catholic Church to Ecumenism,” 169.

<sup>273</sup> Putney, “The Approach of the Catholic Church to Ecumenism,” 169.

<sup>274</sup> Putney, “The Approach of the Catholic Church to Ecumenism,” 169.

<sup>275</sup> Putney, “The Approach of the Catholic Church to Ecumenism,” 170.

<sup>276</sup> Couturier, “The Ecumenical Testament,” 343.

<sup>277</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 230.

considers to be “even clearer to young ecumenists today.”<sup>278</sup> As such, she posits, “perhaps we will not be surprised when the spiritual ecumenism of which the Second Vatican Council speaks becomes an even more central instrument for dialogue between Christians in the coming decades.”<sup>279</sup> It is apparent that O’Gara believes that the future of the Ecumenical Movement will see a shift towards spirituality. And, vitally, it is this spiritual emphasis which resonates with younger generations.

SE is also, of course, of key concern for Kasper. He explains that there are three aspects to ecumenical dialogue: theological dialogue, practical ecumenism, and interior conversion and renewal.<sup>280</sup> With *UR*, Kasper asserts that there can be no ecumenism without “personal conversion and institutional renewal.”<sup>281</sup> While theological and practical ecumenism are vital to the Ecumenical Movement, forward progress also requires emphasising SE. As Kasper explains, “we can only widen the ecumenical dialogue when we deepen it. Only spiritually can we overcome the present crisis.”<sup>282</sup> Elucidating further on SE’s vital importance, Kasper posits that “we will only be able to make progress in our missionary endeavour if we return to the spiritual roots of Christianity in general and of ecumenism in particular and search for a renewed ecumenical spirituality.”<sup>283</sup> Rekindling ecumenical energy requires placing priority on Spiritual Ecumenism, the roots of the Ecumenical Movement.

The importance of Spiritual Ecumenism for the ecumenical future is also asserted by Kinnamon. SE is necessary to counteract what he views as contemporary ecumenism’s fixation on ecumenical activity as committees,

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<sup>278</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 230.

<sup>279</sup> O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue,” 230.

<sup>280</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

<sup>281</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 44.

<sup>282</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 17.

<sup>283</sup> Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 157.

conferences, reports, and dialogues, rather than as something Spirit-led.<sup>284</sup> He argues that the renewal of the Ecumenical Movement hinges on emphasising spiritual ecumenism and lay participation.<sup>285</sup>

The Ecumenical Movement is coalescing into a new stage. Building on all that has been accomplished, on carefully established and nourished ecumenical relationships, attention can now also be focused on conversion and renewal. Interior conversion needs to be prioritised, in accordance with *UR*'s teaching that there can be no ecumenism without a change of heart. This is where ecumenical growth can take hold and flourish, and inspire ecumenical renewal. The way forward for ecumenism is that of Spiritual Ecumenism: interior conversion; the exchange of gifts; an emphasis on the virtuous and affective dimensions of ecumenical activity; openness to the Holy Spirit; and above all, prayer. Emphasising the spiritual aspects of ecumenism is the way to foster a new generation of ecumenists. Asserting the importance of SE for the ecumenical future brings us to our second key point: that RE is capable of reinvigorating ecumenism precisely because it is based in SE.

While Kinnamon does not refer to RE by name, RE contains both of the remedies he describes as necessary for the revitalisation of the ecumenical movement: Spiritual Ecumenism and lay participation. RE is a form of Spiritual Ecumenism which is designed to foster the engagement of the entire church. RE focuses on the affective and spiritual level, on transforming attitudes and engendering conversion. Rather than continuing to push up against the ecumenical impasse, RE sidesteps the obstacle and tackles ecumenical endeavours from a new angle: Spiritual Ecumenism. It is the spiritual and affective aspects of RE that engages the hearts and minds of people today. By drawing explicitly on the

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<sup>284</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 153.

<sup>285</sup> Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed?* 152.

spiritual and affective dimensions of ecumenism, RE can engender ecumenical progress.

Another key concern for the ecumenical endeavour is the problem of genuine reception. Ecumenical apathy is, no doubt, also generated by the sense that ecumenical activities ultimately lack value, as they are often not received into the life of the church. Murray makes the point that despite success “over the past forty years unpicking complex knots of doctrinal disagreement...the amount of actual change in the lives of the churches... that has taken place at more than a notional or theoretical level, might be thought to be rather thin.”<sup>286</sup> If ecumenism is to have a future, then it must be seen as relevant, and its work must make a genuine impact. Here we come to something of a deal breaker: is RE able to fruitfully enable reception? If the answer is negative, then it would be hard to imagine RE having much long-term value for the Ecumenical Movement. However, fortunately, this is far from the case. Kelly attests to the value of RE in terms of its connection with reception, stating:

I am confident that this new methodology can serve us well – not just because it is new, but because it emerges out of the ancient idea of reception. These deep roots in the Christian tradition suggest that receptive ecumenism is not an ephemeral moment in ecumenical time, but has the potential to develop into a lively instrument for ecclesial learning.<sup>287</sup>

RE has deep ecumenical roots, and as Kelly elucidates, its connection with reception is a vital part of its potential.

However, it should be emphasised that RE’s approach to reception is characterised by SE, rather than theological ecumenism. RE cuts to the heart of reception, which is transformative change. If conversion has not occurred within a church community, then RE has failed. As such, there are fewer layers between

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<sup>286</sup> Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 37.

<sup>287</sup> Kelly, "Receptive Ecumenism," 7.

RE and reception than between theological ecumenism and reception. This is because RE is already at the core of reception. It concentrates on interior conversion, whereas theological ecumenism generally focuses on coming to doctrinal agreement. Because it is more separate from the lived traditions of communities, theological ecumenism can be undertaken regardless of whether it achieves its intent to foster real change. However, RE is intrinsically a process of reception, which means that it will either succeed in engendering transformative conversion (reception) or fail altogether. But it does not require a distinct process of reception, such as that necessitated by ecumenical dialogues.

Therefore, RE has the potential to resolve the deadlock of reception, by causing transformative change, because it is primarily grounded in spiritual, rather than theological, ecumenism. However, unlike theological ecumenism, if it does not enable reception, it may well simply fizzle out. This raises the point that RE may either be extremely fruitful, and end up shaping the ecumenical future; or, it may just be a brief blaze of warmth in the ecumenical winter.

What is definite is that RE has the potential to open new horizons of ecumenical engagement, rooted in all that has already been accomplished. This is because it represents a reorientation and renewal of SE, rather than a wholly new approach. As Murray affirms: “If Receptive Ecumenism is indeed fruitful for our times, it represents the coming of age and to full voice of a gift born within and given by all *that* has and all *who* have gone before in the ecumenical movement.”<sup>288</sup> RE’s strength comes from its deep roots. As such, he declares that:

the appropriate attitudes are those of gratitude, rejoicing, humility and confidence in as much as Receptive Ecumenism is indeed right and fitting for our times, it will be shown to be so by its fruits and, in as a much as it is not, it will in due course be similarly discerned not to be

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<sup>288</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 94.

and so be suitably adapted and developed by the community of the church.<sup>289</sup>

RE ultimately offers itself up to the will of the Spirit, and the sense of the faithful. Any achievements of RE are properly recognised as stemming from God, rather than ourselves.

However, RE is a gift that requires us to have the humility and the hope to open ourselves to the Spirit. It does not offer any magical short cuts; rather it requires hard work, commitment, self-criticism, and the courage of hope. It challenges us to enter more deeply into conversion in Christ and the Spirit, by learning from our ecumenical partners. This is certainly no easy task, but one which offers great rewards.

The future of the ecumenical endeavour rests on rediscovering ecumenism as a spiritual practice (not just about theological knowledge, or practical mission, but about conversion into Christ through the Spirit). Largely untapped, it is the spiritual dimension of ecumenism that opens up new horizons for ecumenical engagement. Thus, it is SE which marks the next stage of the Ecumenical Movement, and RE, as its development, which shines a light on the long journey ahead.

## **6.5. Conclusion**

This chapter is the culmination of our investigation into Receptive Ecumenism. In Chapter One, we proposed RE as a valuable development of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, one with the potential to reignite ecumenical progress. After demonstrating throughout the intervening chapters that RE properly belongs to SE, we honed in on RE's potential in response to four major challenges facing contemporary ecumenism. We turned then to evaluate its effectiveness by outlining the major implementations of RE to date, and noting

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<sup>289</sup> Murray and Murray, "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," 94.

the challenges that need to be overcome for its success. Finally, we evaluated RE's importance for the future of the Ecumenical Movement. It is necessary, now, to draw together the arguments made throughout this thesis in a final summation of what, precisely, the connection with Spiritual Ecumenism means for Receptive Ecumenism.



## **Conclusion: Ecumenism of the Heart and Soul**

### **7.1. Overview of Investigation**

This study set out to illuminate RE's place and potential within the contemporary Ecumenical Movement. The argument was structured around six questions:

- What is Receptive Ecumenism?
- How is it grounded in Spiritual Ecumenism?
- What is the significance of the two approaches emphasising the spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions of ecumenical engagement?
- How are Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism complementary?
- What is the feasibility of Receptive Ecumenism, and its significance for the future of ecumenism?

The thesis undertook a systematic analysis of Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism, revealing major areas of convergence between the two approaches. The key common themes discovered were:

- the centrality of interior conversion;
- an emphasis on the affective, virtuous, and spiritual dimensions of ecumenism;
- openness to the Holy Spirit;
- the eschatological reality of ecumenism;
- a high level of accessibility, as RE is designed to be undertaken by every member of the church, not just an elite few.

There were also some divergences:

- the ecumenical exchange of gifts;

- personal versus institutional conversion;
- learning rather than prayer.

However, these differences are not sufficient enough to consider RE as a fundamentally separate type of ecumenism. Rather, they result from RE re-interpreting SE, and even pushing SE in different directions in an attempt to restore its neglected elements. Because of this, RE explicitly addresses the spiritual, virtuous, and affective dimensions of the ecumenical endeavour. As such, it is well suited to respond to the contemporary challenges facing ecumenism, such as the “ecumenical winter,” pluralism, the problem of identity, and the question of full visible unity.

In light of the investigation carried out here, the argument that RE should be seen as a new form of ecumenism, rather than as part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, is refuted. On the contrary, RE gains much needed grounding and richness from being understood as a type of SE. In fact, further emphasis on their inherent relationship is needed to develop RE’s Christological and pneumatological basis more deeply, and to establish a more nuanced approach to the ecumenical exchange of gifts.

Furthermore, the viewpoint that RE is the same as SE, and does not contribute anything essentially new to SE was found to be lacking. RE is a valuable development of SE because it brings key principles of SE to the forefront. In this way, RE acts to redress the ecumenical imbalance of focusing on theological and practical ecumenism at the cost of Spiritual Ecumenism. RE’s focus on institutional conversion, from the perspective of SE, is also highly significant.

Moreover, the argument that RE has only limited potential as an ecumenical methodology was dismissed. While RE has considerable challenges to

overcome if it is to be successful, it has enormous potential to renew the Ecumenical Movement. It is a realistic approach to ecumenism, albeit one which requires much of those who embark on it, such as a self-critical perspective.

Finally, we opposed the view that emphasising the spiritual and affective dimensions of ecumenism is not important to ecumenism's future. In fact, much of RE's potential rests on its ability to tap into these levels of engagement. The renewal of ecumenism calls for a renewed focus on these elements, to redress the imbalance which has grown between ecumenism as an intellectual, practical, and spiritual endeavour.

### **7.1.1. Results and Contribution**

The purpose of this study was to explore the connection between Receptive and Spiritual Ecumenism, with the hope that doing so may fortify and enrich RE as an ecumenical methodology. This thesis therefore offered a significant contribution to RE, because while RE has considerable potential, it has not been systematically set out and engaged with. Nor had its inheritance and characteristics from SE been elucidated. As such, we aimed to fill in some of the gaps in the Receptive Ecumenism methodology. The intent was to clarify RE by interpreting it within the framework of Spiritual Ecumenism. In this way, we hoped to strengthen and deepen RE, and help it to reach its potential as an effective ecumenical strategy. We also wanted to affirm the importance of SE, including RE, for the renewal of the Ecumenical Movement.

It was proposed that RE is best understood in dynamic relationship to Spiritual Ecumenism. In fact, RE is capable of reinvigorating ecumenism precisely because it is based in Spiritual Ecumenism. To undertake this argument, we employed a hermeneutical analysis of relevant Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism texts, focusing on examining key concepts between them, such as:

interior conversion, ecclesial learning, pneumatology, an emphasis on the affective levels of ecumenical engagement, and a renewed focus on virtues, particularly humility and hope. We also gave particular attention to the themes of humility and hope.

RE was found to be a valuable development and application of SE because it contributes to furthering Spiritual Ecumenism in the contemporary context, which is essential for redressing the equilibrium between theological, practical, and Spiritual Ecumenism. As a form of SE, RE offers an ecumenical strategy for engaging the challenges currently facing ecumenism, which is vital for the future of ecumenism.

### **7.1.2. Seven Critical Reflections**

We have considered at length the potential of RE for the future of the Ecumenical Movement, along with areas where it still needs to be developed, and the enriching dynamic between RE and SE. This leads us to affirm seven final critical reflections on the implications of RE as a form of Spiritual Ecumenism.

1. The centrality of Spiritual Ecumenism must be re-emphasised if the Ecumenical Movement is to move forward. Prioritising the spiritual within the ecumenical is vital to the future of ecumenism. The contemporary Ecumenical Movement has focused on theological ecumenism, to the detriment of Spiritual Ecumenism. Without SE, the Ecumenical Movement devolves into a matter merely of academic or theoretical interest, rather than conversion. Ecumenism must be renewed as also a spiritual movement, of the heart and soul.
2. Christian unity is above all else a hope, and a humble one. Ecumenism must be undertaken humbly and prayerfully, with openness to the Holy Spirit, and a central focus on Christ. Theology, and ecumenical

theology, is experiencing a turn towards the affective and spiritual. This is a growth area for the Ecumenical Movement. There needs to be an approach that can tap into and engage with this level, such as RE.

3. RE is capable of reinvigorating ecumenism precisely because it is based in SE. However, RE needs to explicitly acknowledge its connection to SE, so that it can deepen its theological basis, and reach its potential. In particular, RE needs to emphasise Christ as standing at the centre of ecumenism. RE's emphasis upon inter-Christian learning should be undertaken with awareness that the primary ecumenical relationship is with Christ, not with other Christians. The Christological dimension of RE needs to be expanded and brought to the forefront. Moreover, RE needs to realise a deepened pneumatological foundation. As a form of SE, RE is contingent upon the Holy Spirit. RE's emphasis on ecclesial learning is part of conversion, which is the role of the Spirit. Finally, RE needs to develop a holistic understanding of conversion. RE's central focus on institutional conversion should not be seen as divorced from personal conversion. RE can draw on SE to develop a more nuanced conception of conversion.
4. RE needs to establish a set of criteria to guide Receptive Ecumenical learning. If RE is to mature into a lasting ecumenical methodology, it needs to develop more than just a question. RE must have a set of criteria for the discernment of learning and reception. What can be received? What should be rejected? Denis Edwards's framework for receiving charisms of the Spirit offers a basis for this criteria.<sup>1</sup>
5. As a type of SE, the conditions required for RE to be effective are primarily spiritual, virtuous, and affective. RE needs to consciously

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church."

develop a space for prayer, humility, love, desire, and friendship. RE would benefit from explicitly emphasising the affective and spiritual dimensions of ecumenism.

6. RE needs to uphold the integral connection between learning and teaching, giving and receiving. Even if the focus of RE remains on receiving, there needs to be an underpinning awareness of the indivisibility of giving and receiving. SE's focus on the ecumenical exchange of gifts is the underlying basis for ecclesial learning. Emphasising the indivisibility of giving and receiving may offer RE greater integrity and balance.
7. RE needs to take seriously the critique of hospitality. While RE emphasises that there is much to learn from other Christians, it should be undertaken with the awareness that the primary call of all Christians is to love one another. Ecumenism therefore is important, whether or not one's tradition directly or concretely benefits from engaging with another. The purpose is deepening conversion into Christ through the Spirit.

These critical reflections highlight the conviction that the future of the Ecumenical Movement rests upon rediscovering ecumenism as a spiritual practice, of conversion into Christ, as well as about theological knowledge, and practical mission.

If RE is to mature as an ecumenical methodology and fulfil its potential, it must deepen its connection to SE, and become more deeply what it already is. It is the spiritual dimension of ecumenism that will open up new vistas for contemporary ecumenism. There is a need to recover the spiritual within the

ecumenical. Consequently, Spiritual Ecumenism, particularly as developed in Receptive Ecumenism, presents a way forward for the Ecumenical Movement.

### **7.1.3. Recommendations for Future Research**

This study illustrated RE's connection to SE, its potential and significance, and highlighted the importance of emphasising the spiritual and affective levels of ecumenical engagement. However, many questions still remain, which were beyond the scope of the current research.

There is a need to explore RE in relation to other ecumenical methodologies, such as comparative ecumenism, bilateral dialogues, and to interreligious dialogue. The rich connection between RE and inter-faith dialogue is yet to be mapped. Fruitful research could be undertaken on exploring RE in relation to key inter-faith methodologies. One example of a valuable area for future research would be to explore the correlation between RE and the work of Raimon Panikkar. Furthermore, as the current study was undertaken from a specifically Catholic perspective, there is much more work to be done on understanding RE from other Christian perspectives.

It would also be highly significant to apply RE to specific, divisive ecumenical issues, such as the question of married or female ordained ministers, and issues of sexuality and morality. Additionally, an investigation of the dialogue between the different rites within the Catholic Church, such as the Ukrainian, Maronite, or Chaldean rites, would be helpful as RE progresses. The diversity within the Catholic Church across its different rites could prove to be a valuable example of RE.

Another helpful line of enquiry would be to document RE in local contexts, such as Australia, so as to explore how it functions as a method of undertaking ecumenical dialogue in a concrete situation. Addressing how RE may

be able to engage with Pentecostal Christians, who are generally antagonistic towards ecumenism, would also be a vital area of future research. RE may prove to have great potential to engage with the Pentecostal movement. Moreover, while this study has explored the significance of humility and hope for ecumenical engagement, in light of RE and SE, there is much work to be done on examining the role of virtues in general for ecumenism.

Furthermore, research will need to be conducted on the three major volumes which are to be published in the near future: the proceedings of the 2009 and 2014 conferences, and the results of the *RE&LC* study. The publication of these volumes is certain to have an enormous impact on our understanding of RE. Work will need to be undertaken in analysing how these volumes further develop RE. It will be especially interesting to see how the theme of Spiritual Ecumenism, so prominent in the current volume, is carried out in the next two major publications. Evaluations of RE's long-term contribution and significance also represent fruitful avenues for future research.

While this study has gone some way to exploring the breadth of Spiritual Ecumenism, undertaking more research is vital in understanding how Spiritual Ecumenism applies to the Ecumenical Movement in general, rather than specifically for RE. Spiritual Ecumenism is significantly underdeveloped in comparison to theological and practical ecumenism, which means it has untapped energy to contribute to the contemporary ecumenical endeavour. Further research needs to be commenced, investigating the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, defining the key characteristics of Spiritual Ecumenism, and highlighting its importance for the renewal of the Ecumenical Movement. The lack of academic engagement with Spiritual Ecumenism represents a significant gap in contemporary ecumenical studies, and one that requires urgent attention.



## 7.2. Conclusion: Spiritual Ecumenism, Receptive Ecumenism, and the Ecumenical Future

The Ecumenical Movement requires renewal. Yet, while theological and practical methods of ecumenism have been used almost to the point of exhaustion, Spiritual Ecumenism has been barely tapped into. Spiritual Ecumenism offers a new angle for ecumenical endeavours, one that accentuates unity as the work of Christ, and draws on the rich resources of Catholic ecumenical theology; from Couturier, Congar, Vatican II, and *Ut Unum Sint*, to contemporary theologians such as Kasper and O’Gara. Spiritual Ecumenism reminds us that ecumenism is also experienced within the heart and soul, as *metanoia*. It is a virtuous activity, one of hopeful humility, which must be *felt* as well as intellectually understood. Ecumenism needs to be re-emphasised and re-discovered as an act of love, if it is to inspire the passions of future generations. It is always an act of witness, and constantly challenges us to seek out where we may more fully become one with, and in, Christ.

Nonetheless, ecumenism may never be particularly popular; it may not be fashionable; it may not suit the purposes of current authorities; it may even upset the status quo. It may be counter-cultural, especially in a postmodern milieu which prioritises diversity and difference. At times, such as when churches are protectively drawing back in on themselves, it may fly in the face of what appears to be common sense. This is because ecumenism ultimately comes from God, not from any human initiative or imagination. Ecumenism requires us to trust in God’s mystery. It goes beyond the “now” and stretches us into the barely imaginable “not yet,” where God will “be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). Ecumenism is a spiritual learning experience, and as such, as a development of Spiritual Ecumenism, RE offers us a hopeful and humble way forward.

Whilst its full significance and place within the contemporary Ecumenical Movement cannot yet be measured, RE provides fresh hope in the coming of a new ecumenical spring. Emphasising Spiritual Ecumenism, in balance with theological and practical ecumenism, opens up new possibilities for ecumenism. As a development of SE, RE offers an ecumenical strategy for engaging some of the critical challenges currently facing ecumenism, which is vital for the future of the Ecumenical Movement. It is certainly fitting that, in searching for a new way forward, the Ecumenical Movement should return to its roots.

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