

The Universal Church and the Ecumenical Movement

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I

More than 50 years have passed since William Temple could acclaim ‘this world-wide Christian fellowship, this Ecumenical Movement, as it has been called, as the great new fact of our era’.¹ Indeed, the suggestion is often heard that we are now in an ‘ecumenical winter’, that after the apparent gains made by the Second Vatican Council, or the creation of the World Council of Churches (WCC), for example, very little has in fact been achieved. Where once there were worries that the flush of ecumenical enthusiasm might breed a culture of ‘indifferentism’ to ecclesial or doctrinal differences, there is now a sense of indifference about ecumenical projects instead. Nor is it necessarily the case that, what one of the contributors in this book calls, the ‘ecumenical distemper’² has been generated by a parochial attachment to older theological confessions, as these evolved in times of schism. Rather, it is especially among modern Evangelicals and Liberals that the historical lines of church division are often thought to be of no real significance any longer. R.R. Reno has traced this state of affairs to a debilitation within churches today. ‘To a great extent,’ he writes, ‘the current ecumenical impasse stems from difficulties faced by the churches themselves. Doctrinal apnesia seems widespread. The churches are shaped by a cultural captivity that overrides distinctively Christian commitments, and this has produced a crisis of mission and catechesis.’³ Moreover, the impression is commonplace that the ‘ecumenical movement’ has not achieved the ‘visible unity’ among Christians it once promised. As Ola Tjørhom pointed out during a symposium assessing recent ecumenical proposals, ‘The huge amount of agreement that has been piled up within the dialogues is rarely converted into real communion.’⁴ This, in spite of the continuing efforts of organizations such as the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology in

1 Quoted in G.K.A. Bell, *The Kingship of Christ. The Story of the World Council of Churches* (London: Penguin, 1954), p. 18.

2 Philip G. Ziegler, ‘Stumbling upon Peter? The Question of the Church in Ecumenical Dialogue’, p. 17.

3 R.R. Reno, ‘The Debilitation of the Churches’, in C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds), *The Ecumenical Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 46.

4 Ola Tjørhom, ‘Reformation and Ecumenism: At the threshold of the third millennium’, *Pro Ecclesia*, VI.1 (Winter 1997), p. 56.

Princeton, or the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity; and of common statements, declarations and consensuses in which the old anathema are lifted (or said to be no longer applicable), and convergent positions are reached. Robert Jenson describes the familiar pattern: 'As the dialogues have worked down the program of controversies, and as each traditional controversy has in the event been mitigated, its divisive power has seemed merely to rise from it and settle elsewhere; nor is the process terminated by completing the program, since the process seemingly proves circular.'⁵

The essays in this volume are ventures in a particular type of ecumenical theology, or theological ecumenism. They are exercises in 'straight-talking', not because they hark back to the mood of mutual suspicion and stigmatization which, as Nicholas Thompson shows, made matters so difficult for ecumenists in the 16th century⁶ – but because they take the ecumenical winter seriously. They tend to be dissatisfied with the conclusion, reached in some ecumenical circles, that the present 'ice-jam' results from feet-dragging on the part of church authorities, or from a lack of theological imagination in the churches. If they are tradition-critical, this is not because they are impatient at the sort of 'conservatism' that feels responsible for what is inherited, but because they are convinced that the ecumenical movement is best served, not by laying aside confessional identity, but by operating 'out of' it.

Perhaps, however, the very term 'ecumenical *movement*' has been unhelpful, in so far as it conveys the impression that ecumenism happens in a 'place' above and beyond the churches themselves. Karl Barth, who was soon uneasy about the movement, saw the dangers at an early stage. In a paper written for the first World Conference on Faith and Order in 1937 (which he did not attend), Barth worried about the effectiveness of assemblies that took place on 'neutral ground outside or above the churches',⁷ pointing out that

such inter- and supra-denominational movements as thus come into being are either ineffective because they do not seriously tackle the problems of the Church, of doctrine, of order and life, or they have an effect because they do take them seriously, and lo and behold, they are engaged in forming a church; a new church or church-like society comes into being, and neutrality is abandoned, and the old question regarding unity is met with another which concerns the movement which is trying to give unity a visible shape.⁸

Indeed, it is an open question whether an 'ecumenical spirit' was more at work in those who regretted the non-participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the Faith and Order Assembly, or between that Roman See and a Protestant like Barth, who only had respect for its reserve.⁹ On the other hand, among Catholics especially,

5 Robert Jenson, *Unbaptized God. The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1992), p. 3.

6 Nicholas J. Thompson, 'A Reformed Papacy? The Treatment of Papal Primacy in the *Worms Book* (1540)', p. 170.

7 Karl Barth, *The Church and the Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 50.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 39. It is clear from the address of W.A. Visser 't Hooft to the Amsterdam Assembly of the WCC in 1948 (where he was the General Secretary), that the possible traps

a grassroots ecumenism took hold after Vatican II, borne out of the desperate sense that the progress made by the Council was now being frustrated by a recalcitrant conservatism on the part of the authorities. While it may have challenged the view that ecumenism is only done through official channels, Ratzinger points out that this kind of grassroots ecumenism ‘ultimately produces only splinter-groups which divide communities and do not even sustain any more profound unity among themselves despite their joint propaganda throughout the world’.¹⁰

The subsequent development of the ecumenical movement has followed a trajectory where, for all the ‘advances’ that have been made, many have found themselves left behind, and not necessarily because they were inveterate confessionalists. A recent case in point has been the discussions between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. While Fr DiNoia could see a positive ecumenical significance in the lengthy deliberations taken by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) over approving the Joint Declaration on Justification, welcoming them as a sign that the LWF was taking seriously its magisterial responsibility for Lutherans, other Lutherans regarded the eventual agreement as a poor compromise made on their behalf by some unworthy representatives. Gerhard Forde, for example, came to feel exasperated that

Our ecumenists seem to be dedicated to the ideology of unity spawned by the Romanticism of late nineteenth-century ecclesiastical politics and the drive towards consensus rather than showing interest in what Lutherans might have to contribute theologically. This is a dubious and questionable road to take, to say the least. Lutherans actually have something of value to say, and it is not a proper or faithful move to leave it all behind to enter the middle kingdom where all cats are gray.¹¹

The present volume aims at an ecumenicity that is not of the ‘middle kingdom where all cats are gray’. Its contributors are not ‘professional ecumenists’ but committed, in their own ways, to the traditions they come from. It is in that light, for example, that the suggestion of Donald McLeod ought to be judged that, rather than a unity of compromise, there be no more than ‘peaceful co-existence’ between Rome and Reformed Protestants (or the Free Church of Scotland, at any rate).¹² On the other hand, these are intended as attempts in *ecumenical* theology, frank assessments of the state of affairs afforded by a robust theological identity, but unsettled by the

were quickly noted. Indeed, he favoured the term ‘movement’ precisely to guard against the temptations of institutionalization and clericalism to which the WCC might succumb, and insisted that ‘None of the functions which the Council sets out to fulfil can be performed unless the whole membership of our churches participates, directly or indirectly, in its life’. W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, ‘The Significance of the World Council of Churches’, in *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design. The Amsterdam Assembly Series vol. 1: The Universal Church in God’s Design* (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 194.

10 Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics. New essays in ecclesiology* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1998), p. 136.

11 Gerhard O. Forde, *A More Radical Gospel. Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 188. For a comparable position, see Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith. A theological study with an ecumenical purpose*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

12 Donald McLeod, ‘The Basis of Christian Unity’, p. 119.

visible divisions between churches, and aware of the challenges these impose. McLeod immediately adds, 'Even better: let there be a *creative* disaffiliation.'¹³ In short, each chapter is an essay in evangelical and catholic theology, operating under the conviction, nicely put by Michael Root, that 'Truly catholic theology has always been evangelical, if only we have the ears to hear.'¹⁴ The point is well taken when we attend to the eschatological reserve contained in the concluding conditional clause which, as it were, draws a bracket around the equation 'catholic = evangelical', that has just been asserted, not cancelling it out but qualifying it. 'Catholic' and 'evangelical' are not *obviously* harmonious, but are only so in ways that need first to be discovered. The statement indicates that, once the 'poison of hostility'¹⁵ has been drawn out of them, confessional loyalties are not anti-ecumenical, but the framework within which ecumenicity becomes possible. And so Root maintains, 'A central task of a catholic and evangelical theology in the immediate future ... is the development of a more nuanced form of ecclesial loyalty. If a catholic and evangelical theology is always an ecclesial theology and if the *ekklesia* within which and for which theology is done is always a historically concrete community and not an imaginary and invisible construct, then we must do theology within specific traditions.'¹⁶

Quite understandably perhaps, it is not always clear that the ecumenical movement has been able to live with that tension. However, this 'central task' is the challenge taken up by these essays: it is the task, not just of re-examining the classical ecumenical *loci* but, in so doing, of reflecting on the ecumenical enterprise itself. This is particularly clear in Charles Morerod's chapter, when he argues that, rather than simply being the bone of contention in ecumenical dialogues, some *shared* understanding of primatial infallibility is perhaps the necessary presupposition for their success. Otherwise, he points out, there is no way of enforcing, in the local churches themselves, the conclusions that have been reached; in which case, this is not a *committed* ecumenism. '[I]f a community is not at least looking for some realistic and theologically grounded way of proclaiming its faith,' he asks provocatively, 'is it legitimate to take part in an ecumenical dialogue whose purpose is visible unity in faith?'¹⁷ At the same time, this 'formal' precondition does not foreclose the issue about renewal of the papal office, but it might offer some guidance about the nature of that renewal, about the type of papacy that might be expected.¹⁸ For instance, Morerod challenges on these grounds interpretations of collegiality in terms of locally devolved power. He remarks that: 'The limitation of a decentralized primacy is as follows: if a personal authority in the church is required in order to articulate the faith in controversial situations, it is not clear theologically why such authority could be attributed to a small group of bishops any more than to an individual. Basically it is the same type of question. And above all, if that authority has to be decisive in

13 Ibid.

14 Michael Root, 'Catholic and Evangelical Theology', *Pro Ecclesia*, XV, no. 1, p. 12.

15 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, p. 138.

16 Root, 'Catholic and Evangelical Theology', p. 15.

17 Charles Morerod, 'The Ecumenical Meaning of the Petrine Ministry', p. 129.

18 Ibid., pp. 130ff.

the communion of the Church, the first of these bishops to speak would have to be infallible.¹⁹

Susan Frank Parsons sees similar issues at stake in some of the ways of talking about reform.²⁰ She wonders whether, in reality, the terms are often set by an attachment to some undisclosed principles of the individual will, which itself dreams up the kind of unity it wants under the apparently pious pretension of a ‘commitment to ecumenism’. ‘Is the self the one whose decision is to be committed to the doing of something,’ she asks, ‘or is it that which becomes committed by what is put upon it and so stands over it?’²¹ If it is the former, do we have a serious basis for discussing reform, or is that discussion now little more than ‘some kind of re-envisioning exercise or other, in which the pattern for our working together must be formulated from scratch’?²² In other words, the kind of unity, the kind of ‘church’ that is envisaged is abstract, because it does not precede reflection on it, but is, at best, its imaginative product. ‘In all the forms of abstract unity, the church is understood to be a thing, an institution that is entirely sociologically defined whose unity is determined in consequence of some concept or directing idea from out of which the institution itself is understood to be driven.’²³ On the other hand, properly exercised, the office of pope offers a quite different model of engagement, indeed one that might be exemplary of Christian commitment as such, if (with von Balthasar) we see in Peter his ‘prototype’. For Peter ‘stands at the turning point, marked by the transition that is taking place as the Word of God dwelt among us’.²⁴

In each of these arguments, then, the ecumenical ‘obstacle’ is reconsidered in such a way as to throw the question back onto the ecumenical imperative itself, to challenge its motivations and assumptions in different kinds of ways. Are we sure that the perceived stumbling-block is the really divisive issue? At the same time, this challenge is turned back again to the particular controversy in question, in order to suggest an alternative approach that might be ecumenically fruitful. This is *theological* ecumenism and *ecumenical* theology.

Or again, David Hart discusses the way in which modern ecumenical disputes have been conducted between the East and the West, and discovers a similar phenomenon here to the one remarked upon above by Robert Jenson, in the context of Catholic-Protestant dialogues: namely, the astonishing inventiveness with which an already existent schism has the power to generate all sorts of pretexts for its continuation. Hart comments that ‘where there remains some desire to rationalize and deepen division between the churches, the sheer speculative plasticity of theological reflection and language allows for an endless multiplication of ever newer “ancient” differences’.²⁵ In other words, it turns out that the assortment of reasons offered for the division between the Orthodox Churches and Rome – whether theological

19 Ibid., pp. 134.

20 Susan Frank Parsons, ‘Watch and Pray: A Reflection on the Meaning of *Ut*’, p. 81.

21 Ibid., p. 86.

22 Ibid., p. 89.

23 Ibid., p. 90.

24 Ibid., p. 92.

25 David Bentley Hart, ‘The Myth of Schism’, p. 100.

or doctrinal – are the decidedly modern strategies that have been invented both to justify its perpetuation, and to evade the one historic question – concerning pontifical jurisdiction – that caused it. Having exposed these as ‘either purely polemical or ultimately frivolous’²⁶ he turns to ‘the real root of our division, ecclesiology’.²⁷ Even here, though, it transpires that, until recently, the partitions between the churches was relatively porous, and never absolute even in the modern period. The urgent ecumenical question is not, then, how might unity be restored, nor ‘how do we dare to remain disunited? – but a purely canonical one: are we sure that we are?’²⁸

II

If this book exemplifies a particular sort of ecumenism, it seems worthwhile to suggest how that might belong (or not) within the wider ecumenical movement, as it developed during the last century. While historians of the movement have often noted its precursors in, say, the Prussian Union, or the formation of the (World) Evangelical Alliance in the 19th century, they generally trace its origins to the World Missionary Conference that took place in Edinburgh in 1910.²⁹ The fact is significant in so far as it indicates where modern ecumenism found much of its motive energy after 1918. Where in the First World War the Protestant churches in Europe were still marked by strong national identities which made them as ineffective in resisting the militant patriotism which sustained that war as the International Socialist Movement turned out to be, things were different in the 1930s. By 1939, the ecumenical movement had helped establish a network of contacts between Christians, which transgressed the traditional ecclesial and national frontiers and made possible a united and international Christian resistance, where there was the will to participate.³⁰ This experience undoubtedly fuelled the urgent excitement that surrounded the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948, just as ecological and socio-economic issues have galvanized ecumenical endeavour more recently. The WCC became the umbrella which would gather together in a single organization the previously independent ‘Life and Work’ and ‘Faith and Order’ movements. Where the former concentrated on establishing a united church front *ad extra*, the latter worked *ad intra* at a confessional rapprochement between churches divided over matters of doctrine and order. In general, this appears to have been a successful arrangement in the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that tensions existed from the start, when one considers that an early slogan of the Life and Work movement (in the 1920s) had been ‘doctrine divides, service unites’; and these were only exacerbated in 1993 when Konrad Raiser was elected General Secretary of the WCC. His critique of ‘ecclesiocentric’ ecumenism, and suggestion

26 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

29 For a brief, but useful account of the development of some of the ecumenical institutions, see Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘The Global Structures of Ecumenism’, in *The Ecumenical Future*, pp. 11–28.

30 For a first-hand account of this, see Bell, *The Kingship of Christ*, pp. 34–42.

that a shift be made away from a ‘christocentric universalist’ paradigm towards a more ‘trinitarian’ one,³¹ was the theological basis for a shift in policy towards what is sometimes referred to as ‘secular ecumenism’. Rather than focussing on ‘internal’ issues, which were seen as being *inevitably* divisive, priority ought to be given to the external dynamic of the church’s witness in the world, to inter-religious dialogue and socio-political matters. Raiser asked:

What moves the ecumenical movement? The reference remains important, indeed, that the challenge still very much exists to make the unity of the church that God wills visible; yet the discussion also falls short ... The central problem areas of the discussion on unity in church and theology, that is, the questions of offices, the binding authority in doctrine, and the common structures of decision-making, are, for the majority of church members, problems internal to church institutions, problems that have little or nothing at all to do with their experience of reality.³²

As an assessment of a state of affairs, the point is hard to deny, yet it is unclear that the current indifference to theological and church-historical matters in congregations ought to determine ecumenical policy in the direction of what has been called a ‘conciliar process of mutual commitment’ in practical action.³³ As Harding Meyer has shown, this disturbs the fine balance that must be maintained between what he calls the ‘ecumenical imperative’ and the ‘ecumenical indicative’³⁴ which alters the nature of the task in fundamental ways. For ‘this communion in faith required for the conciliar process is presupposed as already given, lived, and celebrated also in worship. It is not perceived as *a task to be met*, for which reason the unity of the church is not counted – not even in a preliminary and secondary way – as part of the aim that the conciliar process itself pursues and *strives* to achieve.’³⁵ Nor is it clear that a unity of concerted action *ad extra* will be the same thing as the essential oneness of the church *ad intra* that is intended by Jesus’ prayer in John 17. For it has no *positive* identity beyond the agenda it pursues. When this is exhausted, when the common enemy is overcome, what remains of that ‘one Church’? If, as Hart maintains, the ‘vacuous barbarisms’ of nihilist consumerism in the West make the unity of the church an imperative that has become increasingly urgent of late,³⁶ even

31 See Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (WCC: Geneva, 1991).

32 ‘Was bewegt die ökumenische Bewegung?’, in *600 Jahre Kloster Frensewege* (1994), pp. 14f., cited in Harding Meyer, *That All May be One. Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999), p. 145.

33 That this remains the centre of gravity for the WCC may be seen from a look at the agenda of its 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre (2006). In particular the moderator’s report might be consulted, in which freighted talk about ‘institutional boundaries’, transcendence of ‘traditional forms’, and ‘dogmatic, ethical, theological, ethnic, cultural and confessional walls’ protecting the churches set the terms for the discussion (see especially paras 15–18): <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/assembly-documents/2-plenary-presentations/moderators-general-secretarys-reports/report-of-the-moderator.html>.

34 Meyer, *That All May be One*, pp. 9–13.

35 *Ibid.*, p.144.

36 Hart, ‘The Myth of Schism’, p. 106.

the unlikely event of a general agreement between Christians over this phenomenon is not itself the 'unity we seek'.

In fact, the terminology '*ad intra/extra*' is unfortunate if it conveys the impression that authentic and essential unity involves ecclesial introspection over *adiaphora*, and indifference to secular concerns. In reality, the point is rather that an ecumenism of common, 'grassroots' concerns provides no more guarantees of supplying the 'visible unity' that is desired than did the 'ecumenism of negotiation' (Ratzinger's expression), with its painstaking diplomatic quest for appropriate theological language. In his epilogue to this book, John Pontifex shows that ecumenical relations can certainly have far-reaching social and political consequences where the church is a minority presence. And where the church is persecuted the impulse toward unity can only become more urgent. But the example he cites of the limited success of ecumenism in Iraq goes to show that it might not be enough for Christians to come together on the basis of purely tactical alliances. There has been nothing more deleterious to Anglican-Roman Catholic relations than the debates over the ordination of women and then homosexuals in the Anglican communion, which have often been conducted on grounds of social justice, in language about 'rights'. This is not to make a judgment about the decisions that have been or are being reached in the Anglican communion; merely to point out that ethical issues can also prove to be ecclesially factious (as they also were in 1930s Germany). This was emphasized by a Roman Catholic (Walter Kasper) in a speech made to Anglicans in 2006,³⁷ and by an Anglican theologian (John Webster) in this book.³⁸

Ratzinger notes that the unity of the church envisioned by the New Testament is quite different. It is, he says, a theological or religious unity, by which he means that it is not the product of diplomatic dexterity or of a chain of events that has made it necessary to take up a common cause, but of a third factor that lies beyond human production. He states:

that the stability of the phenomenon of religion comes from areas that are not comprehended by grassroots ecumenism and that the search for what is beyond our control also marks the boundary of all activity by the authorities of the Church. This means that neither an isolated grassroots ecumenism nor an isolated authority comes into consideration as the subject of ecumenical activity; effective ecumenical action presupposes the inner unity of the authorities' action on the one hand and the Church's real life of faith on the other.³⁹

Of course, this way of putting things is also open to misunderstanding if it is taken to mean that there are official channels through which ecclesiological disputes are conducted, 'over the heads' of ordinary Christians as it were, after which it is then announced to them that a doctrinal unity of some sort does, in fact, exist between them, about which they would otherwise have known nothing whatever. The

³⁷ Walter Kasper, 'Mission of Bishops in the Mystery of the Church. Reflections on the question of ordaining women to episcopal office in the Church of England' (see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20060605_kasper-bishops_en.html).

³⁸ John B. Webster, '*Ut Unum Sint*: Some Cross-Bench Anglican Reflections', p. 43.

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, p. 137.

‘grassroots’ of the church remain an ecumenical challenge, and not simply in the sense that they will not permit a ‘unity’ to be forced on them from authorities above, where none is really experienced below. The problems identified above by Raiser remain (and are perhaps more serious now than then), in so far as they identify a widespread indifference among congregations to the ecumenism of doctrines. This is true especially in the case of Evangelicals and Pentecostals, who are also the fastest growing Christian groups in many parts of the world. The question that hangs over all such ecumenism (and over the essays in this book as well) is, ‘By what right do we continue to worry about these matters?’ Are they anachronisms, artefacts of an era of the church that has (thankfully) now passed, or do they belong to its treasures, the resources which it can ill afford to squander if it hopes to discover its truthful identity in the modern world? Raiser’s conclusions are inescapable if it is supposed that ecumenism is carried out on two parallel levels: between designated authorities on doctrine, on the one level, and on the ground between Christians of various backgrounds, as they try to confront concrete concerns together.

The problem is related to the collection of issues sometimes referred to as ‘reception’ in the theology of ecumenism. There is perhaps something spiritually healthy about the bemusement that has occasionally been the response of Christians when told that they are now at one, over some matter, with a confession from whom they have been historically divided. It is the expression of astonishment at a model of reconciliation which leaves both parties, essentially, unchanged. If the chapters here are examples of ‘mediating’ theology, then they are so in such a way as to recognize that such a theology, if it is to be *theology*, ought to leave *neither* side unchanged. It is something of the logic behind Philip Ziegler’s claim ‘that ecclesiological questions can never be settled within ecclesiology itself ... because what makes the church the church is *not* the church, but God’.⁴⁰ As he puts it, the church’s identity is ‘asymmetrical’ and ‘referential’, which means that high-level dialogical negotiations will stand no more chance of ecumenical success than grassroots action if the ‘divine logic’ that constitutes that identity is ignored.

In fact, the dilemma indicates that the *ad intra* – *ad extra* terminology (usually used to refer to the difference between the inter-churchly debates over issues of theology and polity and ‘secular ecumenism’) might be turned in a different direction. It clarifies that an alternative tension is at play in ecumenical work: between the need to nourish theologically the *sensus fidei* within a particular confession (*ad intra*), and the need to continue the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ between the confessions (*ad extra*). If both tasks do not occur simultaneously, then it may well be that many of the gains made *ad extra* (in the second sense) turn out to be false dawns in a time when theological sensibilities are again stimulated, and it will seem that the unity that was then enjoyed had been based on a gross misunderstanding. Indeed, it may well be wondered whether the *basic* ecumenical posture in the present time ought not to be *ad intra* (again, in the second sense), devoted to the kind of work which could shape minds through a particular tradition that would be capable of reading and understanding the Bible.

40 Ziegler, ‘Stumbling upon Peter? The Question of the Church in Ecumenical Dialogue’, p. 25.

Yves Congar already saw this at the start of the ecumenical movement: 'It seemed to me (...) that each individual's ecumenical task lay in the first place at home among his own people. 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 common sources.'⁴¹ As this quotation makes quite clear, this is indeed an *ecumenical* posture, not simply the basis for renewing 'confessionalist' proclivities. It is the spirit behind what John Webster describes as his 'cross-bench Anglican' position. His concerns about the *communio* ecclesiology that has often set the terms for Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenism are coupled with a disappointment about the 'dispiriting predictability'⁴² of the flat disavowals of it, by Anglican evangelicals at the other end of the spectrum. This is why the 'reinvestment in the gospel, and in the authority of the gospel as it is enunciated in Holy Scripture'⁴³ which he counsels, is not exclusive of the kind of 'mobility' that appears to be ecumenically necessary. Indeed, such reinvestment is probably the means by which the right sort of mobility can be promoted. 'If this is not a hopelessly compromised stance,' he writes, 'it is because I am persuaded that it is possible to be wholeheartedly committed to Christian reconciliation whilst retaining a certain distance from some of theology and practice by which that reconciliation is sought.'⁴⁴

The division in this volume between 'Theological Ecumenism' (Part I) and 'Ecumenical Theology' (Part II) is intended to capture something of the balancing-act that is at stake here, and to mark out the danger that lurks on either side. On the one hand, a *theological* ecumenism will not take the unity of the church for granted: if it confesses that the church is indeed *una sancta*, this may only be in the way of acknowledgment of a gift, and in the sober recognition that it must also work to correspond more clearly to this reality. On the other, an *ecumenical* theology will not take *itself* for granted: if it rightly refuses any form of compromise over the truth, this may not mean that it has ceased listening out for a truth that it does not, in fact, know already but must continue to discover, perhaps in resources other than its own. While Part I is devoted more to the practice of ecumenism itself, the chapters in Part II tend to focus more specifically on some of the familiar doctrinal topics that continue to be the currency of ecumenical reflection.

The division between Parts I and II is somewhat artificial, of course, and none of the essays belongs wholly within one or the other. Cross-over is unavoidable, and points to the complexity of some of the issues. For example, Peter Donald's piece

41 Yves Congar OP, *Dialogue between Christians. Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism* (Geoffrey Chapman: London, 1966), p. 21.

42 Webster, 'Cross-Bench Anglican Reflections', p. 30.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 31. For a more sympathetic endorsement of the theological and ecumenical potential of *communio* ecclesiology in this volume, see Francesca Aran Murphy, 'De Lubac, Ratzinger and von Balthasar: A Communal Adventure in Ecclesiology'. Far from cultivating a Platonizing idiom, which would make the historical church immune from the criticism of its *praxis* that is the essential basis for any serious reform, Murphy contends that it offers the spiritual resources that are necessary for the concrete ecumenical proposals in the encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (see especially pp. 62–8).

might fit more comfortably in Part I, in so far as he is pressing for the Eucharist (communion) to be foregrounded in the ecumenical debate. To that extent, it belongs alongside Francesca Murphy's chapter on *communio* ecclesiology. Equally, however, Donald seeks to evoke the Eucharistic celebration as the 'generator of unity'⁴⁵ in the church. 'History needs eschatology,' he contends, 'so that the church does not trap itself in the imperfect past: the meal is to be shared until Christ comes again. Pneumatology needs Christology, so that there can be good discernment: Christ the Word and the Holy Spirit will be present at the Lord's Supper, to the glory of the Father.'⁴⁶ If, then, ecumenical dialogues need 'to work from the Eucharist out',⁴⁷ Eric Puosi suggests how, between Reformed Protestants and Roman Catholics, there are grounds for a considerably more convergent understanding of the sacrament than might at first be thought.⁴⁸ Similarly, within Part II, the three divisions themselves are porous. For instance, Vigen Guroian's chapter on the primacy of Peter demonstrates the important place accorded to the ministry of Peter in Orthodox liturgy.⁴⁹ But in that case, it turns out, the *Eucharist* indicates the theologically (and ecumenically) appropriate basis for understanding the primatial office, for it emphasizes the pope's 'priority' in the context of a 'communion of love', rather than lending support to the ideologies of power that have historically dogged church polity. In short, ecumenical theology and theological ecumenism are two ways of talking about the one task, about its evangelical basis and its catholic implications.

Taking up an image used in Vatican II, John Paul II described ecumenical dialogue as 'an exchange of gifts'.⁵⁰ The expression articulates a model of ecumenical encounter in which frank and real differences are not left at the door, but brought to the table to be examined. Then, it is to be hoped, the resources of one are not available to be 'plundered', as Robbin Gibbons warns, but to enrich the life of others.⁵¹ This is not yet 'visible unity', of course, but it is an anticipation of it. It is such an encounter that this book seeks to promote.

45 Peter Donald, 'All Change? Eucharist is Key', p. 180.

46 Ibid., p. 179.

47 Ibid., p. 178.

48 Eric Puosi, 'Ecclesiastical Communion: In Dialogue with Calvinism', p. 184.

49 Vigen Guroian, 'A Communion of Love and the Primacy of Peter: Reflections from the Armenian Church', pp. 148ff.

50 *Ut Unum Sint*, § 28.

51 Robbin Gibbons, 'Persecution and Ecumenism', p. 219.