

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**RECEPTIVE HERMENEUTICS IN THE
DIALOGUE BETWEEN ROMAN
CATHOLIC AND EASTERN ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANS: NEW APPROACHES**

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTORATE IN PHILOSOPHY
AT THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF MALTA

September 2020

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the theory of Receptive Ecumenism as a potential in doing ecumenism, especially with its focus on the reception of gifts from each tradition. Receptive Ecumenism is deemed as a positive way of doing ecumenism, by bringing to the fore the process of reception without eschewing what has been achieved by way of bilateral dialogues. This perspective is very useful in delving into the process of the Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox dialogue. Hence, this research follows the interpretation of the process underlying Receptive Ecumenism.

While a lot has been achieved in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Christians, there still remain stumbling blocks, with the main bone of contention being the role and function of the Petrine ministry. Hence, the theory of Receptive Ecumenism and its hermeneutics are applied to the dialogue between the two traditions in order to analyse how the two Churches can receive gifts from each other, enhancing them in the process. This greatly contributes towards the edification of the One Church of Christ.

Acknowledgements

The itinerary involved in the whole process of writing a thesis, starting from the research to the finished work would not have been possible without the constant help and support of a number of persons. It is also a venture which has helped me grow not simply in academic terms but also in being “present” within the whole complexity of the Ecumenical Movement.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Rev. Msg. Prof Hector Scerri B.A. Phil., S.Th.B. (Melit.), S.Th.L. (Melit.), S.T.L. (Greg.), S.T.D. (Greg.) for his constant support and encouragement throughout the whole process, coupled with his meticulous corrections and the wealth of advice also stemming from experience of ecumenical dialogue at the international level.

A special thanks also goes to my co-supervisor, Rev. Prof Edward Farrugia SJ, B.A. (St Louis University, Mo., USA), M.A. philosophy (St Louis University, Mo., USA), Lic.Ph.(St Louis University, Mo., USA), Ph.D. (St Louis University, Mo., USA), Mag.Theol., (Innsbruck), Ph.D. (Tübingen) for his advice with regard to Orthodox theology and ecclesiology, based on countless experiences of dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

I am indebted to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta for its constant support throughout my journey in theological studies, an uninterrupted journey starting from my bachelor’s degree, on to Master’s degree, and culminating with the doctoral dissertation. A special thanks goes to Rev. Dr Mark Sultana B.A., S.Th.L., Ph.D. (Greg.) for his advice and suggestions.

Finally, this journey would not have been possible without the constant support of my husband and my two young sons. Your presence has been a tremendous gift and a source of inspiration!

Biblical Abbreviations

1 Chronicles	1 Chr	Jeremiah	Jer
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	Job	Jb
1 John	1 Jn	Joel	Jl
1 Kings	1 Kgs	John	Jn
1 Maccabees	1 Mc	Jonah	Jon
1 Peter	1 Pt	Joshua	Jo
1 Samuel	1 Sm	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess	Judges	Jgs
1 Timothy	1 Tm	Judith	Jdt
2 Chronicles	2 Chr	Lamentations	Lam
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	Leviticus	Lv
2 John	2 Jn	Luke	Lk
2 Kings	2 Kgs	Malachi	Mal
2 Maccabees	2 Mc	Mark	Mk
2 Peter	2 Pt	Matthew	Mt
2 Samuel	2 Sm	Micah	Mi
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess	Nahum	Na
2 Timothy	2 Tm	Nehemiah	Neh
3 John	2 Jn	Numbers	Nm
Acts of the Apostles	Acts	Obadiah	Ob
Amos	Am	Philemon	Phlm
Baruch	Bar	Philippians	Phil
Colossians	Col	Proverbs	Prv
Daniel	Dn	Psalms	Ps/s
Deuteronomy	Dt	Qohelet	Qoh
Ecclesiastes	Eccl	Revelations	Rev
Ecclesiasticus	Ecclus	Romans	Rom
Ephesians	Eph	Ruth	Ru
Esther	Est	Sirach	Sir
Exodus	Ex	Song of Songs	Sg
Ezekiel	Ez	Titus	Ti
Ezra	Ezr	Tobit	Tb
Galatians	Gal	Wisdom	Wis
Genesis	Gen	Zechariah	Zech
Habakkuk	Hb	Zephaniah	Zep
Haggai	Hg		
Hebrews	Heb		
Hosea	Hos		
Isaiah	Is		
James	Js		

Abbreviations of Magisterium, Papal Pronouncements, and other Documents

AA	<i>Apostolicam actuositatem</i>
AG	<i>Ad gentes</i>
CL	<i>Christifideles laici</i>
EG	<i>Evangelii gaudium</i>
ES	<i>Ecclesiam suam</i>
HG	<i>Humani generis</i>
LG	<i>Lumen gentium</i>
LS	<i>Laudato si'</i>
MA	<i>Mortalium animos</i>
MCC	<i>Mystici corporis christi</i>
OE	<i>Orientalium ecclesiarum</i>
OL	<i>Orientale lumen</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris missio</i>
RO	<i>Rerum orientalium</i>
SA	<i>Slavorum apostoli</i>
TMA	<i>Tertio millennio adveniente</i>
UR	<i>Unitatis redintegratio</i>
UUS	<i>Ut unum sint</i>

Introduction: Receptive Hermeneutics in the Dialogue between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians: New Approaches

Relevance of the topic of the thesis

Since its inception a little over a century ago, ecumenism has made huge strides in its achievements. It is safe to say that it has become one of the keywords in doing theology in the contemporary world, and not without reason, since it has served to bring about Christians together in every sphere of life, be it theological or social. Reiterating the Catholic Church's irrevocable commitment to ecumenism, Pope John Paul II's voice continues to reverberate throughout the ages: "his unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission."¹ It has certainly served (and still continues doing so) in making each Christian tradition more aware of its identity vis-à-vis the other Christian traditions. Such is the case in the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.²

Notwithstanding, it is still the case where different people from different walks of life still ask questions regarding the origin of the divisions and how their own identity differs from that of other Christian identities. While it may be surprising, this may throw a light on the positivity of ecumenism. The fact that people may ask this very question shows a renewed interest in each other. This certainly facilitates the increasing trend of people coming together for worship and other religious events. It might seem that ecumenism is parallel to the globalisation of the world.

¹ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), par. 9.

² Throughout this thesis, the term Orthodox will invariably be applied to the Eastern Orthodox Churches, as opposed to the Oriental Orthodox Churches, formerly known as Pre-Chalcedonian Churches.

What has been achieved in a little over a century is astonishing, to say the least. This is true when seen against a backdrop of centuries of separations. What is doubly encouraging is that the vast majority of Christian Churches and ecclesial communities show a commitment to ecumenism, while trying to pursue it along practical lines. Nevertheless, the path to the eventual reunion is littered with obstacles.

Ecumenism gathered momentum especially thanks to the Second Vatican Council, when the Roman Catholic Church, long aloof from the developments of the Ecumenical Movement which had started in 1910, involving especially the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox world, made a Copernican shift in order to fully embrace the Ecumenical Movement, going as far as to place it at the centre of its priorities, *pari passu* with its development of an ecclesiology of communion. Since then, the Roman Catholic Church has never looked back and continues to labour in the field. The same holds true for the Eastern Orthodox Church, where during the Pan-Orthodox Conferences held in Rhodes (1961, 1963, 1964), it showed its commitment to engage in dialogue with other Churches and ecclesial communities. It is indeed ironic and, indeed, a great pity that this commitment to ecumenism is not equally shared amongst all the autocephalous Churches.

Re-confessionalism seems to be the problem among some of the Churches. They have been ridden with a fanaticism and nationalism which have made them suspect to the Ecumenical Movement as a whole. On the Orthodox side, the reason for these suspicions might be the fear of an imperialistic attitude on the part of Rome, after having been burdened with centuries of oppressive and hostile regimes. On the other hand, it must also be admitted that fundamentalism is not foreign to groups of believers within the Catholic Church herself, who see in the Ecumenical Movement a dilution of identity in order to always accommodate the other, perhaps not uninfluenced by the secular inculturation movement in Europe towards non-Christians, which is invariably driving some governments to adopt harsh and extreme attitudes against people from different backgrounds.

What is the aim of this research? This thesis delves into the application of Receptive Ecumenism to the development in ecumenism within the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, moving from an “ecumenism of return” – predominant in the

first half of the twentieth century – to an acknowledgment and appreciation of elements of sanctity present in the other Churches and ecclesial communities. The aim of this thesis is to interpret and apply the theory of Receptive Ecumenism, developed at Durham University by Paul Murray, to the dialogue between the Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians. The genesis of Receptive Ecumenism itself can be traced to an international research colloquium at Ushaw College, Durham in 2006, when a great number of theologians, ecumenists and others from various Christian Churches and ecclesial communities came together to explore a new way of doing ecumenism vis-à-vis the contemporary situation.³

Receptive Ecumenism is influenced by various factors, explored in this thesis, yet they are brought together in order to realign the different aspects which exist within theology and bring them into dialogue. This can be considered as fortuitous in face of the danger of fragmentation which permeates contemporary society, and which also affects theology itself. Two factors which are especially analysed at length are Spiritual Ecumenism and the American Idealist-Pragmatist system especially that espoused by Nicholas Rescher. The hermeneutics of Receptive Ecumenism are crucial in interpreting the dynamism which is brought forth in the dialogues.

This underscores the importance of *hermeneutics* within the Ecumenical Movement, owing to the need for a common interpretation of the plethora of the various forms of expressions within the diverse traditions within the One Church. This warrants an analysis into the kind of hermeneutics which is especially relevant to the Ecumenical Movement, especially in ecclesiology and ecumenism. This importance has been recognised by Faith and Order Commission since its Fourth World Conference in Montreal in 1963, in turn leading to the 1998 paper *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*.⁴ The discourse of heremeneutics becomes especially focal in the process of interpreting and, in the process, uncovering the various layers of confessionalism. Within this process, the receptive and creative aspect of hermeneutics are key in ecumenism. Ultimately, as Pablo Ardiñach asserts:

³ For more information, see Paul D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ See Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Faith and Order Paper no.182 (Geneva: WCC/Faith and Order, 1998).

A study on ecumenical hermeneutics should lead us to be able to read our own tradition with critical eyes, to purify it from the inside, to make it more faithful to the scriptures, and finally, to be a part of a church more willing to extend its hand, to present the gospel in a way which is more genuine and more sensitive to the necessities of our times.⁵

This is an especially pertinent argument, especially in the light of the understanding of Scripture and Tradition, an important point in the understanding and reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.

Receptive Ecumenism itself does not present itself as a completely new reality. As Paul and Andrea Murray admit, “Receptive Ecumenism can be viewed as bringing to the fore certain background values and assumed dispositions that have always been quietly recognised as being essential to good ecumenical work.”⁶ The legacy of Paul Couturier and Yves Congar, along with the Second Vatican Council, are important threads in the reasoning of Receptive Ecumenism. This serves to situate Receptive Ecumenism with a tradition which gives it strong foundational basis. Its novelty arises out of placing the process of learning at the centre of the ecumenical dialogue. Each Church is given the responsibility to receive the gifts the other tradition brings with it, ensuring that this content is in line with tradition. Only by venturing outwards in dialogue can a Church be more fully the Church of Christ. Indeed, “Receptive Ecumenism is about having evoked in us the desire to become more fully, more freely, and more richly what we already are through the expansion of possibilities that relationship brings.”⁷

Hence, there is no danger of diluting each identity vis-à-vis tradition, but only the confessionalist façade through the process of appropriating what is received, and realigning it with Tradition. This explains the importance given to the creative aspect, coupled with the analytic and the pragmatic. In this process, humility and conversion are

⁵ Pablo R. Ardiñach, “Reflections on *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*,” in *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Peter Bouteneff and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 128.

⁶ 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), 79.

⁷ Paul D. Murray, “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), 15-16.

crucial. Yet, it is a process which itself involves ongoing conversion, the backbone of proper change, also reiterated at length in *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium* and, consequently, in Receptive Ecumenism. *Lumen gentium* reminds each Christian that the Church is a pilgrim church, made up of sinners and this calls for humility in acknowledging that each church is riddled with imperfections. This is the key to holiness, in receiving, learning and going forth. Doing ecumenism brings into dialogue the *krónos* and the *kairós*, redeeming the limitations in the process. Hence, the spiritual aspect is crucial as it underpins the whole Ecumenical Movement. The strength of Receptive Ecumenism lies in envisaging the Ecumenical Movement within various aspects which are complementary.

In turn, this spurs the process of the Churches' own reflection about themselves, in that although they constitute the Church of Christ, they are not perfect since each Church is made up of sinners. The years following the Second Vatican Council witnessed the goodwill of both the Orthodox and the Catholic Church regarding the initiation of dialogue. Hence, the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue was born in 1979, with the aim of the reestablishment of full communion⁸ between two Churches which both trace their origin to the time of the undivided Church, itself born from the mission entrusted by Jesus to the apostles (Mt 28, 19-20; Mk 16, 15-16; Lk 24, 47).⁹

The title speaks of "Christians" rather than Churches. This warrants a brief explanation. The thesis deals with the Church at the institutional level in chapter 6, especially the Petrine ministry which is a central theme in the Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic debate. This ministry is analysed through the work of various theologians, both Catholic and Orthodox. Hence, it is a case of various Christian theologians looking at the institutional Church. This interplay of Christians and Churches in the thesis is important as it serves to assert an important point later on in the same chapter, that of primacy and synodality. Hence, one cannot simply look at the institutional Church without relaying various contributions of individual Christian theologians. After all, the institutional aspect cannot function without the contributions of the individual experts in various

⁸ Ronald G. Roberson, "The Dialogues of the Catholic Church with the Separated Eastern Churches," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 2 (2010): 142.

⁹ All biblical quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

fields. Moreover, the reflections in chapter 5, namely the attributes of humility, repentance and conversion, *apply to all Christians* (especially in the light of the synodal aspect which encompasses the whole people of God, discussed in chapter 6), such as the need for an unbiased evaluation of historical events, the role of monasticism, and the reception of saints from different traditions. Furthermore, the non-theological factors which affect ecumenism itself are related to all the people. This is understandably the case for education in ecumenism. Though ecumenism is already happening at the grassroots, the need for education in the ecumenical field, in this case in the Orthodox-Catholic dimensions of theology help to cement Receptive Ecumenism in practice and also to promote a positive worldview among the populations who still harbour suspicion and fear in engaging with the other. Receptive Ecumenism does not eschew change at the institutional level of the Church, but it seeks to place that change along a larger spectrum of change which encompasses the whole people of God.

Chapter 5 actually involves all Christians, while most of chapter 6 offers an analysis of the institutional aspect with the aim of service towards all Christians, most importantly within the plethora of Catholic and Orthodox perspectives. On the other hand, the reception of martyrdom from both traditions, for example, cannot but reflect the living witness of the many Christians who constitute the living Church of Christ. Hence, one concludes that it is pertinent for the title to include the term “Christians,” rather than “Churches” because the thesis touches on both the grassroots level and the institutional level.

The reason why this thesis looks at the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches is that both Churches have much in common and also much to offer, yet at times the differences may appear to outweigh what is common to both Churches. And yet, to use the metaphor first employed by Yves Congar, and subsequently by Pope John Paul II, the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches constitute the two lungs of the Church of Christ. Hence, “the Church must breathe with her two lungs!”¹⁰ Within both the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, the bishops trace their origin to the apostolic succession itself. The Church must breathe with both her lungs. The lungs need to function together, not in separation. The same applies

¹⁰ *UUS*, 54.

to the two Churches. Going beyond mathematical formulae, or into the realm of meta-mathematics,¹¹ it can be affirmed that both the Catholic and the Orthodox Church constitute the Church of Christ. Rather than two Churches, it is with the two Churches in unison, that the Church of Christ radiates in its splendour, akin to the Transfiguration on the Mount.

A stronger sense of urgency to the need for unity is added by the countless Christians of various Churches who are currently facing persecution or, worse still, martyrdom for their identity. The irony of it all is that along the ages, the persecutors have never distinguished between Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, and so on, but have meted out punishments on the sole identity of being Christian. While the current plight of the Middle-Eastern Christians draws the attention to the ongoing persecution of Christians, it must be borne in mind that persecution against Christians has always continued throughout history, spanning continents, albeit sporadically at times. It is an undeniable truth that the blood of martyrs constitutes the invigoration of the Church as, indeed, martyrdom in contemporary times may serve to instil a new sense of identity in an otherwise soulless Christian West.

The Church was built on martyrs and continues to be nourished and edified by Christ in the Holy Spirit, through the blood of countless martyrs. The spiritual leaders, such as the Pope John Paul II's attempted assassination, are not exempt from this kind of testimony. Of this, we are reminded by one of the foremost Orthodox theologians, Olivier Clément, who states that: "For the blood then shed made without any doubt of the *Pontifex maximus* the *Servus servorum Dei*."¹² This is reminiscent of the *kenosis* of God himself, for the love of humanity, a total surrender out of love which transcends the realms of human logic, but proves all the more the greatness of God.

The inspiration behind this thesis is the reflection that the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches is more necessary in the contemporary times than ever

¹¹ See Olivier Clément, *You are Peter* (Hyde Park/NY: New City Press, 2002), 15. This term, employed by the Church Fathers, is used by Clément to define the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Here, the term is employed on a different note, to imply that both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches constitute the true Church of Christ, albeit not a perfect one.

¹² *Ibid.*, 95.

before, if the Christian Church must make herself more credible in the contemporary world. Only a unified Christian Church can make a greater impact on the current trends which constitute a plague to the present times. A unified Church is a stronger witness to Christ's undivided message of truth and love than a divided one. All the popes and patriarchs of Constantinople after Pope John XXIII and Athenagoras have committed themselves to the ecumenical cause, which more often than not, has come at a cost. However, it is undeniably the case that the cause of Christianity cannot be as convincing as that proclaimed with one voice, a voice of a unified Church.

Whatever the difficulties in the dialogue, patience and creativity are key. The apparent antinomy between the two does not make them mutually exclusive. Patience is required when things do not come to fruition, or do not seem to work. This calls for creativity in order to search for new methods which can greatly aid the budding dialogue between the two Churches.

Receptive Ecumenism did not emerge out of nothing. Hence it is of paramount importance to understand the milieu which contributed to its development, together with its hermeneutics. It is still in process of development. Yet, Receptive Ecumenism can already greatly contribute to the Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue. The premise behind this objective is that there is much fertile ground for reception, learning, and teaching to take place between two traditions which trace their origin to the undivided Church.

Structure

It must be stated from the outset that the thesis does not adopt a linear structure. One of the main reasons for this approach is to engage the reader in the further exploration on the tenets of Receptive Ecumenism in relation to the Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox dialogue. Perhaps, a linear structure may appear academically less challenging, yet it hardly does justice to the complexities permeating the whole Ecumenical Movement. So, for example, Receptive Ecumenism is presented in the first subsections of Chapter 1, followed by a brief itinerary delving into the Roman Catholic-Eastern Orthodox dialogue,

in order to acquaint the reader with the developments, finally leading to an application of Receptive Ecumenism to the dialogue in a later chapter.

The first chapter aims to delineate the scope of this thesis. Specifically, it analyses the tools which are applied. Hence Chapter 1 sets the parameters by exploring Receptive Ecumenism as a strategy which seeks to analyse existing differences among traditions, and to present alternatives which are in line with Tradition, thus hinging on the notion of creativity. Various aspects (namely, historical, theological, hermeneutical, and so on) interact in order to provide as holistic a view of the arguments as possible. Hence, the thesis first seeks to answer what kind of reception is being explored. What kind of hermeneutic underlies the discourse in Receptive Ecumenism? How has the discourse within the philosophical sphere shaped the premises in Receptive Ecumenism? More importantly, what is their validity to the dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches? This makes Receptive Ecumenism an interesting strategy which owes its legacy to the Second Vatican Council and which tries to respond to the issues of the contemporary world, especially the issue of pluralism without itself becoming pluralist. At the same time, it being an evolving process, Receptive Ecumenism does not come without its shortcomings, which are analysed in order to maximise its potential to the ecumenical arena.

The next two chapters trace an itinerary which presents a description and reflection on the work so far achieved in terms of the official dialogue within the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, together with symbolic gestures. The reason for the presentation of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue is to shed a light into major bilateral dialogues carried out between the two traditions.

This is coupled with important contributions within the World Council of Churches, with particular attention being given to the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches and the Faith and Order Commission, especially with regard to work on reception, a fact which underscores the mutual realisation of a more thorough understanding of the process of reception within the Ecumenical Movement.

It is crucial to understand that ecumenical dialogue transcends the bilateral dialogues though they are by no means divested of their important role. Moreover, the reason for retracing the steps in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches prior to the advent of Receptive Ecumenism, serves to situate the latter itself within a larger process of dialogue, which can greatly benefit from it. It serves to understand the success and shortcomings of the previous theological dialogues in a fresh light and also seek alternative solutions to the impasse generated by various setbacks.

Owing to the limitations of this thesis in terms of length, only the most pertinent documents have been analysed. It can be seen how much has been achieved in a relatively short time, especially during the 80s. The topics of the documents discussed can act as springboards for further instances of reception in other theological aspects. Not unjustifiably, this has been the cause for much hope of an eventual reunion between the two Churches.

This section of the thesis deals with the achievements which crown the work of the Commission during the decade, namely the 1982 Munich document, *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, the 1987 Bari document, *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church*, followed by the 1988 Valamo document, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church*. This positive work attests to the fact that both Churches agree on fundamental aspects of dogma, such as the truths of the Trinity, the Church and *koinonia*, the sacraments of initiation and holy orders.

For all the ground-breaking achievements, the dialogue came to crisis in the post-Communist era, which heralded the re-emergence of the so-called “Uniate” Churches. These events marked a difficult chapter in the relationship between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, as old (and not so old!) wounds, such as proselytism, began to resurface. While attesting to the fragility of the dialogue between the two Churches, this situation has also served as an eye-opener on the difference between the two Churches, a difference which cannot go unheeded. Desperately seeking reconciliation, the Commission sought to address the dire situation with the 1993 Balamand document,

Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion, albeit with little success. Nevertheless, for all the difficulties, the dialogue resumed with the emphasis on what is common amongst the two Churches. This led to the Ravenna document, *Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority*, dealing with the topics of ecclesial communion, conciliarity, and authority, in that order. While considered a breakthrough, at the time of writing this has still not led to a common understanding of the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

As can be seen, for all the success, it cannot be denied that the dialogue is a fragile one, at times beset by many difficulties, not least of these is the acceptance of each other by the common people. The bilateral dialogues attest to the common doctrinal issues shared by both Churches, however, it must be admitted that these dialogues alone do not seem to penetrate the negative sentiments and grudges held by Catholics and Orthodox against each other at the grassroots. Hence, other methods need to be employed in addition to the bilateral dialogues at the theological level. This is where Receptive Ecumenism comes in. The theory of Receptive Ecumenism, as affirmed earlier by Murray, does not do away with the bilateral dialogues, but hinges on the importance of reception and learning. While reception and learning are always behind the process of dialogue, they are here brought to the foreground.

Chapter 4 presents a review and assessment of the evolving theory of Receptive Ecumenism, highlighting its contributions and also its need for further development. Reception vis-à-vis plurality is here explored, together with the criteria which warrant a safe dialogue and reception of a plurality of gifts in accordance with the Tradition. An especially significant note regarding the relevance of Receptive Ecumenism is its relative hailing from the Orthodox side, namely Open Sobornicity. Since both Churches share quite a similar approach (with notable exceptions!) on the relevance of the other Churches and ecclesial communities, it is deemed ripe to apply the tool of Receptive hermeneutics to the very important dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The axiom which encapsulates the theory of Receptive Ecumenism is what can the Churches and ecclesial communities learn from each other, rather than the more obvious

notion of what each Church or ecclesial community can teach the others. As Murray himself states:

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 facilitate our own growth together into deepened communion in Christ and the Spirit?’¹³

Hence, the focus lies on reception and learning, rather than the act of teaching. This serves to equip each Church and ecclesial community with the initiative and the potential to take action. Of course, this argument can also be subject to criticism, namely that learning itself takes place within a larger process which, even implicitly, includes teaching.

Knowing that the Orthodox Church herself envisages the need to learn from other Churches and ecclesial communities is a very encouraging sign for Receptive Ecumenism itself, and ecumenism as a whole. It serves to provide a simultaneous teaching and learning (as teaching cannot be detached from the learning process!) experience, where the locus of control is at the hands of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches respectively. Each of these Churches is equipped with gifts, bestowed by the Holy Spirit, which are there to be shared with the other Christians, for their own edification. Coming in contact with another tradition certainly serves to enhance the gifts proper to each Church, as genuine contact only serves to elevate the spiritual status of each Church and her members. This is the fulcrum of the whole thesis.

Receptive Ecumenism does not purport to provide the whole solution to the dialogue between the two Churches, but it has great potential to facilitate this dialogue, especially since each Church is called to equip herself with the correct dispositions in order to become a better Church, and hence, more purified and perfect.

Chapter 5 thus, suggests and explores the correct predispositions in order to enhance a more proper reception and in turn, learning, from the other tradition. In learning from the

¹³ Paul Murray, “Preface,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ix-x.

other tradition, each Church becomes a teacher in herself, in setting the example in being a proper disciple of Christ. The core dispositions entail prayer, humility, and conversion. It is a grace of God that each Church is able to acknowledge its mistakes and be humble enough to learn from the other tradition. *Unitatis redintegratio*'s conviction that "spiritual ecumenism" "... should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement" is certainly timeless.¹⁴ Within this perspective, the proper discernment in recognising what entails a genuine reception is of fundamental importance. Another important aspect is the psychological dimension. Fear in the encounter with the other who is different, is quite a normal feeling and needs to be addressed. What is different can, at times, be seen as a threat to one's own identity. This entails an awareness of the psychological literature which sheds a relevant light on how a person (or a Church) can learn from the other person without letting go of their identity. Suggestions are given on how this can take place.

Another important aspect here involves understanding what genuinely pertains to one's ecclesial identity, while peeling off layers of construed aspects which are superficial. The Groupe des Dombes' work, *For the Conversion of the Churches*, can be of great help within this perspective.¹⁵ An honest look at history serves as an important part of the healing process, especially if this dark dimension is approached by both partners in dialogue, where both lay claim to their respective responsibilities. In a way, this can be seen as a reception of the shared responsibility for all the past events. The process itself can be a process of reflection, conversion, and an opportunity for the growth of mutual trust. This is especially so in the light of the fact that this time history is not viewed simply by the victim, but by the eyes of both sides in a committed and sincere dialogue. This process must be undertaken within an unequivocal call for proper education within ecumenism, especially among the priests, the laity, and even the monks. Proper education can do wonders in allaying misplaced fears which can have detrimental consequences to the dialogue between the two Churches. Education does not involve instilling a false sense of peace or doing away with all the essentials of doctrine, but it is certainly important in understanding the other traditions and appreciating them, rather than

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism, 21 November 1964, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Mumbai: St Pauls, 1999), par. 8.

¹⁵ See Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993).

envisaging them as enemies of the Church of Christ, or worse still, as schismatics and heretics.

This position of trust between the two Churches can be especially fostered through the reception of the gift of sainthood, by acknowledging the luminous testimony of the various witnesses within the two traditions as bulwarks to the faith. This is a crucial task which the whole People of God stands to benefit from it. While proper reception navigates through the endless positive plurality of witness, again, this serves to gravitate the splendour of the differences of charisms and saintly lives towards the one Truth of the Word of God which is the unshakeable denominator of both traditions. In other words, plurality is realigned together with the one Truth, from which everything else emanates.

Chapter 6 seeks to apply the tool of receptive hermeneutics to the role of the Bishop of Rome (which understanding has so far been a bone of contention among the two Churches). So far, there have been various inroads in these aspects, whereby reception has been taking place all long. It must be borne in mind that reception cannot occur within a vacuum. Thus, for example, the reception of Orthodox synodal structures does not necessarily entail creating some new ones which are alien to the Roman Catholic mentality. A proper receptive exercise could perhaps set the ball rolling for the transformation of existing Roman Catholic synodal structures into their fuller potential by applying the fruits of Receptive Ecumenism. While synodal structures do exist within the Roman Catholic Church, they still need to be realigned along a broader understanding of the people of God in line with a re-reception of the Second Vatican Council. This process is a corollary of the rediscovery of the full meaning of synodality. Moreover, this would contribute towards an active and consistent function of these synodal structures. Conversely, the Eastern Orthodox Churches could strive towards a restructuring of their synodal structures which, at times, have hindered rather than enabled progress within the Orthodox world.

In turn, it is hoped that this will spur a further willingness to apply the process of reception and learning to other domains. It will be shown how creativity can be harnessed in applying the process of Receptive Ecumenism within the latter, time and time again.

Reception is an act of humility which, if harnessed in a genuine way, will pave the path towards an unselfish kind of teaching in order to extend the horizon of each respective Church, serving to merge them under a common denominator, while maintaining their respective identity and ecclesial structure. It would not be too much to state that such a way would be a proper emulation of that supreme example of unity in diversity through perfect love, the Holy Trinity. It is indeed a fortuitous time because Receptive Ecumenism, can help to realign the way of doing theology and charter the present process in the right direction within the final unity of the Church. It is a moment of *kairós* which would be a grace for all the Christians committed to ecumenical dialogue. As such, the role of Receptive Ecumenism, with its strengths and limitations, is to ensure that ecumenical dialogue traverses both present and future, binding them irrevocably. As Murray states:

Christian existence is properly viewed as a *living from and towards this* promised end. As such, the point is not to relegate it to the irrelevant future but to live in the light of it, anticipating it and being drawn into it as fully as possible amidst present conditions.¹⁶

¹⁶ Murray, "Establishing the Agenda," 15: (my italics).

Methodology

The research in this thesis has been conducted by a thorough analysis of Receptive Ecumenism, also with regard to important influences because these permeate the mentality underpinning the whole process. This is synthesised with an appropriate analysis of the key hermeneutic endorsed within Receptive Ecumenism.

In turn, literature dealing with the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Orthodox has been examined and evaluated. This entailed a lot of research conducted both locally and abroad. Apart from the aspect of dialogue, the research has also delved into both Catholic and Orthodox theology, in order to extract their similarities and complementarity, especially with regard to the reception of mutual gifts, which help to exalt the whole Church of Christ. This has helped to substantiate the notion that reception has been taking place all the time, but only now has it been put at the foreground. Suggestions have been given regarding the role of Receptive Ecumenism, where at times it has also been compared with Open Sobornicity.

The aim in this thesis is to try and be as impartial as possible, although this entails an extremely difficult and painstaking task. Hence, a substantial part of the research has been dedicated to Orthodox theology in order to gain an insight into the Orthodox frame of mind. It has been shown how an honest appraisal of the gifts bestowed upon each Church could be enhanced through a sincere and genuine dialogue with the other Churches. Each of the two Churches has a lot to learn from the other. In this thesis, the theological dimension has been integrated – without being too exhortative – with the spiritual aspect, as theology can only be meaningful when clothed with spirituality. Strictly speaking, they should not be separated, and this thesis has adopted a similar approach.

While this thesis does not purport to solve the existing problems between the Catholics and Orthodox, since this involves a journey culminating in the eschatological consummation, nevertheless, its purpose is to offer suggestions of a deeper rapprochement between the two Churches. The process itself is an invitation for each

Church to grow and mature, as always in the present as well as in the future. It is to be hoped that the response to this invitation will be forthcoming.

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: Receptive Ecumenism and Hermeneutics

1.01 Introduction

The thesis revolves around “Receptive Ecumenism,” “dialogue,” “hermeneutics,” and “reception.” It is essential that these should be discussed prior to a deeper analysis of the reconfiguration which binds them and Receptive Ecumenism with regard to the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Most importantly, an assessment should be made of the tools and the terms applied to the discourse. These terms cannot be taken for granted. Additionally, the employment of one perspective contradicts the very nature of and logic behind Receptive Ecumenism. A variety of perspectives needs to be explored in order to arrive at a holistic view as much as this is possible. Hence, the itinerary of the development of Receptive Ecumenism and its hermeneutical principles in its application to the dialogue between the two aforementioned traditions needs to be laid out and approached from different perspectives, which serve to enrich the understanding of the whole process. It is a process where the various disciplines of hermeneutics, theology and spirituality, history and ecumenics interact in order to achieve as full a meaning as possible.

The relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches is a very complex one, and very much steeped in history, some of which is tragic. An unbiased reading of history is central in moving towards a rapprochement. Receptive Ecumenism is of key value in this process of dialogue since it explores the various perspectives and the disciplines outlined above which underscore the ecumenical process of reception. Indeed, this analysis warrants a dynamic attitude between the factors which are brought to the fore, hence the multi-disciplinary approach undertaken in this thesis.

1.02 Receptive Ecumenism and its Potential in the Ecumenical Dialogue

An important recent breakthrough in ecumenism has been the project of Receptive Ecumenism, launched by Paul D. Murray with an international conference at Ushaw

College, Durham, in January 2006.¹ This conference was, in turn, followed by another conference in January 2009 dealing with *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Ecclesial Learning*, whose aim was to take the steps further by inviting representatives from an even wider range of ecclesial traditions in order to actively pursue the exercise of reception within the other traditions present, in turn underscoring the relevance of the strategy to the local ecclesial level.² While the first conference focused on the Catholic Church as the vehicle for learning, the second conference opened up to the different traditions and their process of learning and reflection from others.³

The third conference which took place in the United States, in June 2014, titled *Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective: Contextual Ecclesial Learning*, put Receptive Ecumenism within global Christianity, with its complexity and challenges.⁴ Christians from different corners of the globe from a wide range of contexts were able to bring the grassroots challenges and opportunities for Receptive Ecumenism on the dialogue table. This attests to a movement which is both centrifugal and centripetal at the same time.⁵ It is constantly emerging to cater to the wider ecclesial reality while, concurrently delving even deeper into the core of the church structure.

The fourth international conference, titled *Leaning into the Spirit: Ecumenical Perspectives on Discernment and Decision-Making in the Church*, took place in Canberra, in November 2017 with the aim of addressing specific decision-making issues inherent in the complexities and difficulties amongst the different traditions. The main theme explored in the conference “implies that it is God who will lead the Church into its fullness in grace,” yet “the other elements in the theme denote the kind of participation

¹ See Paul D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

² The Durham University Centre for Catholic Studies provides more details, with the Resources and the Report of the 2009 Conference, accessed 29 March, 2020, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/projects/churchtogether/>.

³ See Gerard Kelly, “Receptive Ecumenism,” *Diocesan Ecumenical Commissions Biennial Conference, Adelaide*, 3 September, 2011, 1, <https://www.catholic.org.au/commission-documents/bishops-commission-for-ecumenism-inter-religious-1/celebrations-and-events-1/1225-receptive-ecumenism-by-g-kelly-1/file>.

⁴ See Thomas Ryan, “Third International Receptive Ecumenism Conference: A Report,” *Churches Together in England*, accessed 20 November, 2016, <http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?id=176851>.

⁵ See *ibid.*, for a more detailed analysis.

that ecumenism requires, that is discernment, decision-making and reception.”⁶ Indeed, “productive ecumenical exchange presupposes the ecumenist is formed in the principle of Christian love, intellectually prepared for the exercise, free of political agendas, and actively in pursuit of Christian unity and/or ecumenical mission work.”⁷ The path undertaken by Receptive Ecumenism testifies to the twofold nature of the Ecumenical Movement: the grace brought about by God in dialogue with the unceasing work of the human being.

1.03 The Assumptions of Receptive Ecumenism

Receptive Ecumenism is indebted to the Second Vatican Council. Murray acknowledges that “the same deeply Vatican II-mediated Christocentric cosmology and correlative openness to appropriate learning across difference lies at the heart of Receptive Ecumenism.”⁸ Since 2006 Receptive Ecumenism has been invariably hailed as having a great potential for the Ecumenical Movement and during this decade has gained enormous popularity.⁹ Nicholas Adams describes Receptive Ecumenism as a reparative practice, that is, it identifies particular problems in existing practices, “resolving them through diagnosis and presenting alternatives.”¹⁰ The main assumption of Receptive Ecumenism can be summed up as follows:

The central aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to take seriously both the reality of the contemporary ecumenical moment – wherein the once widely held hope for structural unification in the short-medium term is, in general, now widely recognised as being unrealistic – and the abiding need for the Christian churches precisely in this situation to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity.¹¹

⁶ Virginia Miller and David Moxon, “Introduction,” in *Leaning into the Spirit: Ecumenical Perspectives on Discernment and Decision-Making in the Church*, ed. Virginia Miller, David Moxon, and Stephen Pickard (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Paul D. Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 82.

⁹ See Paul Avis, “Are we Receiving Receptive Ecumenism?” *Ecclesiology* 8 (2012): 223.

¹⁰ Nicholas Adams, “Long-Term Disagreement: Philosophical Models in Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 155.

¹¹ Paul D. Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs,” *Louvain Studies* 33, no. 1-2 (2008): 32.

While it is admittedly geared towards Roman Catholicism, having arisen within the Roman Catholic Church, Receptive Ecumenism applies to all the other Churches and ecclesial traditions or, as Avis puts it, "... it is also 'an ecumenical matter.'"¹² Indeed "Receptive Ecumenism is about each tradition taking responsibility at every level of its life for its own continued learning and potential further flourishing in the face of the other."¹³

What about the existing differences between the Churches and tradition? Murray states that:

The assumption is that we will be living with the remaining differences for some time to come and that for each tradition the others' differences represent valuable gifts from which they are called to learn and receive. Doing so will both enrich our own tradition and help to create the conditions in which full communion will eventually become possible.¹⁴

Reception itself is already present within the ecumenical movement, though this discourse merits further discussion in due course. Kelly admits that reception goes all the way back to the earliest Christian witness.¹⁵ Citing the example of the apostle Paul in admonishing the Corinthians (1 Cor 11) serves to drive home the point that "apostolic faith must always be received before it can be handed on. When it is received it takes on a life in a new context among a new people."¹⁶ Therefore, "reception is integral in shaping the faith, life and witness of this people."¹⁷ All the dialogues and agreements between the different Churches and ecclesial traditions have been possible thanks to the process of reception itself. Avis goes as far as to state that "the fact that reception is going on within ecumenism all the time – that ecumenism is essentially the process of reception – is the saving grace of the ecumenical movement."¹⁸

¹² Avis, "Are We Receiving Receptive Ecumenism?" 224.

¹³ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning," 32.

¹⁴ Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Quincentennial Anniversary of Lutheran Reformation," *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* [web edition], no. 92 (2017): 10.

¹⁵ See Kelly, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Avis, "Are We Receiving Receptive Ecumenism?", 224.

Receptive Ecumenism brings to the fore the process of reception, an implicit process which is often passed over or taken for granted.¹⁹ This leads to the question. What is reception? This concept may appear subtly straightforward, yet the denotation of what constitutes reception has evolved over time, going back to Yves Congar, and this merits a deeper analysis in chapter 4. Ironically, this is linked to one of the major flaws in the exposition of Receptive Ecumenism itself, an aspect which is explored in a later section of this chapter. To return to the assumption of Receptive Ecumenism, as D’Costa argues, the process is inextricably bound to the bilateral and multilateral dialogues but its distinctiveness lies “in asking one’s own community critical questions and learning through that process.”²⁰ It engages each tradition in a positive and dynamic way. Indeed, Receptive Ecumenism “entails a *meta-leap*, in that by appreciating and, where this is possible, embracing the positive aspects of another Tradition, one progressively becomes a better member of one’s Church.”²¹ Receptive Ecumenism aims to

uncover or bring to light a process or dynamic that is already crucial to ecumenism and to hold it up for our attention, reflection and action. It moves to centre stage the imperative that we should receive and learn from each other across the divisions between the churches. If that were to happen, it would do much to re-motivate, re-energise and redirect the ecumenical movement in our time.²²

As stated by Murray himself, rather than having each tradition asking what other Churches or ecclesial communities need to learn from it, in contrast

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 facilitate our own growth together into deepened communion in Christ and the Spirit.’²³

Therefore, Receptive Ecumenism “is a way for churches to learn, to grow and to change. In this way they become truer to their apostolic origins, and thus more able to offer a precious gift to the whole church.”²⁴ This genuine dialogue presupposes a journey of conversion, where each tradition recognises its own mistakes. This is the first step in the

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ Gavin D’Costa, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning. Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism,” *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 17, no. 3 (2010): 403.

²¹ Hector Scerri, “The Ecumenical Attitudes of Pope Francis,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 65, no. 7 (2018): 24.

²² Avis, “Are we Receiving Receptive Ecumenism?” 225.

²³ Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, ix-x.

²⁴ Kelly, “Receptive Ecumenism,” 4.

process of Receptive Ecumenism. In this journey of dialogue, O’Gara highlights the right attitudes, that is, a change of heart, a change of mind, and cultivating new habits of heart and mind.²⁵ In humility, each tradition recognises that it is not complete by itself, and it needs the other tradition/s. What O’Gara says of the Roman Catholic Church applies to all traditions:

Reception involves a process of exchanging gifts among churches, and to this gift exchange, the Roman Catholic Church brings many rich offerings. But it needs as well the readiness to receive from other churches what it lacks in its poverty, for a full and fruitful proclamation of the Gospel. Part of the change of heart means a willingness to be self-critical: to criticize first not the mote in the other’s eye, but the beam in our own.²⁶

This is not about a relativism of truth, or that reception of the other tradition implies a dilution of one’s own belief in the truth. Each Church or tradition claims to believe in the one truth. Where does reception come in? Congar, in his work *Dialogue between Christians*, makes a distinction between “immediate and superficial faithfulness and a fidelity in depth.”²⁷ Fidelity in depth is described by Congar as “the realisation that the truth which men hold, although it is fundamentally received from God, must always be matched against its source and its norm, that it *tends towards equality* with them, but has not yet achieved it.”²⁸ As Congar continues, engaging in dialogue with the other Church or tradition, “is not a question, then, of abdicating from one’s own position, since one professes nothing else than the desire to grasp the whole truth, nor of minimising or relativizing the latter but of giving it the greatest possible plenitude.”²⁹

Moreover, the notion of gifts, which forms the backbone of Receptive Ecumenism, presupposes the beauty with which each tradition is endowed, and what it can offer to the others. In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis reminds us that

In the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality.

²⁵ See Margaret O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville/MINN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 2-28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷ Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1966), 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.³⁰

The beauty of each tradition is there to be shared with the others. Contrary to some fears, this is not a matter of losing one's identity. As Murray states:

Receptive Ecumenism is about having evoked in us the desire to become more fully, more freely, and more richly what we already are through the expansion of possibilities that relationship brings. From the Roman Catholic perspective, for example, 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.³¹

This sounds exciting, in the sense that it extrapolates the real meaning of being a fuller Christian, transcending confessions, yet encompassing them in their fullness (notice the repetition of "appropriate" in what Murray affirms). This is explained elsewhere: "Receptive ecumenical learning, when pursued with dynamic integrity, is not about becoming less but about becoming more deeply, more richly, more fully, more freely what we already are: about our becoming all that we are called to be."³² It is important to take into consideration how other Christians might understand this. It might be misunderstood by staunch fanatics in each of the different traditions. It must also be taken into consideration that the understanding of ecumenism might not be uniform among all traditions. In other words, the experience of the Ecumenical Movement might vary within each tradition. So, what does taking stock of these words imply?

Murray argues that the endeavour to engage in dialogue in order to explore the riches of the other tradition is not necessarily a mutual enterprise. Herein lies another distinctiveness of Receptive Ecumenism, namely "its unilateral character, which does not wait on the other party receiving first."³³ Murray states that "rather than worrying unduly about what others may need to learn, each should take responsibility for their own

³⁰ Francis, "*Evangelii gaudium*: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World." 24 November 2013, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2013), par. 246.

³¹ Murray, "Establishing the Agenda," 15-16.

³² Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning," 87.

³³ Gregory A. Ryan, "'Receiving with Dynamic Integrity?' *Ecumenical Commitments and Reception Hermeneutics*," in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2018), 137.

learning, mindful that ‘We cannot change others, we can only change ourselves but doing so can also promote change in others.’”³⁴ With this in view:

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 currently prepared to do likewise.³⁵

Receptive Ecumenism is not presented as a substitute to what has been accomplished so far in terms of international bilateral dialogues.³⁶ As Murray himself puts it so aptly: “Rather, Receptive Ecumenism represents the concern to bring to the fore the prior necessary disposition to receptive transformational learning that the bilateral processes presuppose.”³⁷ This is corroborated by Cardinal Walter Kasper in the introductory section of the book, where “this enterprise is thus a part of an ‘ecumenism of life’ which needs to accompany the ‘ecumenism of truth’ reflected in the dialogues.”³⁸

As a process essentially focused on the act of learning, rather than teaching, Receptive Ecumenism makes the Churches the locus of control, endowing them with the responsibility for their actions in relation to the others. As Ford argues: “the formidable challenge of ‘ecumenical reception’ is to translate ecumenical agreements from the theological or national level to the practical or pastoral level.”³⁹

This is why this is all about Christians, rather than primarily the Church at the institutional level, though it must be stressed that Receptive Ecumenism also focuses on the changes which occur at the institutional level, which are crucial. Although, in chapter 6 this thesis does focus on the institutional aspect of the Church, this exercise is carried out within the ampler space of synodality, through the eyes of various individual theologians.

³⁴ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 87.

³⁵ Ibid.; see also Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

³⁶ See Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 13-14.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ John T. Ford, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism (review),” *The Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (April 2011): 338.

Ultimately, however, Receptive Ecumenism transcends the purely ecclesiological aspect.⁴⁰ This seeks to undermine the inherent competitiveness which may exist between traditions.⁴¹ As Sheldrake states, “Catholicity does not concern merely a certain *style*, distinct from other competing Christian forms.”⁴² It is a journey in holiness which is embedded within the greater experience of human life, “expressing unity in diversity by journeying with a family of faith that has integrity and yet is open to a God who cannot be confined within its boundaries.”⁴³ This larger story, the whole of Jesus Christ’s story incorporates the wholeness of the human being, also the acknowledgements of “the ambiguity of lives that are both graced and sinful.”⁴⁴

This act entails an amount of humility as each community of believers is called to go beyond itself and transcend its egocentrism, in order to open up to a mutual enrichment, and thus grow in maturity. Of course, as has been seen, such an action must move beyond the question of whether others are willing to reciprocate.⁴⁵

Churches are called to embark on a journey of learning, in order to make a more genuine claim to their identity. Such a journey becomes a journey of unlearning in order to learn more from the other. It is a journey of discovering what the other tradition has to offer, and it is little wonder that the beautiful image of “gifts” is employed, in *Ut unum sint* in the celebrated phrase: “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an exchange of gifts.”⁴⁶ The originality of Pope John Paul II with respect to the image of “gifts” is his application of the image to the ecumenical dialogue.⁴⁷ This image is then taken up by O’Gara, in her beautiful book *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ See 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.

⁴¹ See Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

⁴² Sheldrake, “Becoming Catholic Persons,” 52.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (CTS, 1995), par. 28.

⁴⁷ For more detail regarding the way ecumenism is envisaged as “an exchange of gifts” according to John Paul II, see Michel Mallèvre, “L’œcuménisme comme ‘échange de dons’ selon Jean-Paul II,” *Istina* 53, no. 1 (2008): 51-52.

⁴⁸ See O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*.

The fact that Receptive Ecumenism acknowledges the impact of non-theological factors on the process of ecumenism, even inhibiting it, is of great importance. As Pizzey argues: “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 purely an academic exercise, but a deeply meaningful, spiritual experience, linked to conversion.”⁴⁹

Besides situating Receptive Ecumenism, and ecumenism itself within the larger scale of life, at the same time, this attests to the exercise of ecumenism going beyond the theological factors to include organisational, sociological, historical, psychological, identity defensiveness, and so on, many of which are analysed in chapter 5.⁵⁰ Ecumenism cannot be disconnected from the temporal realm. Hence, this is an important contribution which Receptive Ecumenism makes. These various factors attest to the greater task of each Church in the process of transformation. This process of becoming occurs also within the secular precincts. Lived human experience is both secular and spiritual. Transformation must occur on both levels. As Peter McGrail argues in his contribution about the factors which consolidate the insularity of the “fortress church:” “each denomination must negotiate a way forward that permits to hold with integrity what is essential to its authentic existence and yet be open to the real opportunities presented by learning from and with other denominations.”⁵¹

Learning from each other is no chore but an exciting venture in a bid to become a more authentic Christian. Most significantly, it dispels any fears that this might lead to a dilution of one’s identity. Within this perspectives O’Gara speaks of the gift exchange within ecumenical dialogue as a mosaic, “where every piece is valuable and every piece

⁴⁹ Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, vol. 7, *Brill’s Studies in Catholic Theology* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 51.

⁵⁰ The non-theological factors in Receptive Ecumenism are discussed in the following the articles in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): Geraldine Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens, and Zurich – Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Factors Inhibiting Receptive Ecumenism,” 285-302; Brendan Tuohy and Eamonn Conway, “Managing Change in the Irish Civil Service and the implications for Transformative Ecclesial Learning,” 303-318; Peter McGrail, “The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction? Sociological Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning in the Church in England and Wales,” 319-332; James Sweeney, “Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the ‘Tribe,’” 333-345; Thomas J. Reese, “Organizational Factors Inhibiting Receptive Catholic Learning,” 346-356, in. See also Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 51.

⁵¹ Peter McGrail, “The Fortress Church Under Reconstruction?” 330.

is needed for the full picture of the one Church of Christ.”⁵² This beautiful metaphor extols the beauty of each tradition. Appreciating and accepting the beauty of the other can only lead to self-enhancement. The same is true of each tradition. The same is also true of sanctification. The humility in accepting that one is in constant need of learning from others is the acceptance of God’s gifts to each person in the form of those around oneself. Genuine humility is the presupposition of sanctification, as it entails acceptance and collaboration with God’s will, which becomes especially incarnate through the other. The end result of Receptive Ecumenism can only be the enrichment of each Church and ecclesial community, and not its effacement.

1.04 Key Influences in the Development of Receptive Ecumenism

Various factors have played a key role in the inception and development of Receptive Ecumenism. It would be helpful to illustrate these as they serve to authenticate the claim that this movement can respond convincingly to the ecumenical impasse. Indeed, one of the influencing factors is Murray’s need for a fresh ecumenical approach in light of the stalemate in the Ecumenical Movement. These other factors are the American idealist-pragmatist philosophical tradition, especially that espoused by Nicholas Rescher, and Scriptural Reasoning, and Spiritual Ecumenism.⁵³ The influence of the American idealist-pragmatist philosophical tradition is analysed separately in section 1.06 because of the need to extrapolate the importance of the hermeneutics of Receptive Ecumenism and its application, which is a pertinent topic in this thesis.

Receptive Ecumenism arose in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, along with two other strategies, Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Theology⁵⁴ The aim of these three strategies is to respond to the phenomenon of plurality. Hence, “rather than seeking

⁵² O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, viii.

⁵³ For more detail on these influencing factors see Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 22-31.

⁵⁴ See Paul D. Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* no. 29 vol. 4 (2013): 77.

underlying commonalities or reconciled agreement, each seeks for learning across and from difference.”⁵⁵

Scriptural Reasoning can be explained as “a type 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.’”⁵⁶ The fact that it engages in dialogue with pluralism “as a way of going deeper simultaneously into one’s own faith and into the faith of others through study and mutual mentoring,”⁵⁷ makes the similarity between Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism obvious. Murray speaks of “committed pluralism,” since both Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism (together with Comparative Theology) are strategies “for taking seriously and living fruitfully the fact of diversely traditioned particularity without collapsing into a closed, conflictual tribalism, or reverting to a universalising common core theory of religious traditions.”⁵⁸ Receptive Ecumenism harnesses the method and applies it to the ecumenical arena, where “this influence is expressed in its concern for an ecumenism that entails entering more deeply into one’s ecclesial identity (conversion), rather than compromising it.”⁵⁹ Murray explains the relationship between Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism as such:

Whilst Receptive Ecumenism came to articulation independently of Scriptural Reasoning, its operative epistemological commitments and related understanding of human rationality derive from a period of doctoral research supervised by David Ford and influenced by Daniel Hardy at the time when they were working towards Scriptural Reasoning in collaboration with Peter Ochs and Aref Nayed. There was doubtless collateral influence, especially around the handling of particularity and plurality.⁶⁰

Its significance stems from the fact that, “the philosophical habits of participants in inter-faith engagement and ecumenical dialogue often display signs of foundationalism and secular universalism: Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism explicitly aim to change these habits.” To use Nicholas Adams’ words:

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 29; 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), 82.

⁵⁷ Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 82.

⁵⁸ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 79.

⁵⁹ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 29.

⁶⁰ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 77.

Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism will be characterised as strategies for dealing with long-term disagreement, that is, as strategies that do not seek to preserve or promote such disagreement, but which face it in a non-utopian manner and seek to maintain a concern with truth while taking questions of tradition seriously. The significance of Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism lies in their mediation of a sophisticated anti-foundationalism and a rejection of secular universalism in practices whose participants are not experts in philosophy.⁶¹

In other words, the two methods of doing theology are strategies which do not purport to solve conflicts but to deal with a conflict on a long-term basis. They aim to face the challenges presented by foundationalism and universalism in a pragmatic manner. Both Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism can be described as “reparative practices,” in that “they identify particular problems in existing practices, resolving them through diagnosis and presenting alternatives.”⁶² This is especially important to evade the trap of falling into the maelstrom of pluralism leading to relativism. Their similarities do not eschew their differences. While Receptive Ecumenism is more concerned with addressing “existing practices of ecumenism that display failure of various kinds,” Scriptural Reasoning seeks to address “the existing practices of the study of religious life (and the errant philosophical methods they rely on).”⁶³ Admittedly, the aim is not to draw a list of the similarities and differences between the two movements, yet it is important to underscore the influences on Receptive Ecumenism. These two movements can be described as “pragmatic.” Such pragmatism is aimed at repairing the deficiencies that characterise foundationalism and secular universalism.⁶⁴

This warrants a brief definition of these two movements which are both counter to tradition. Foundationalism, inherited from a Cartesian model, puts doubt and certainty at different ends of the spectrum. Since “foundationalism is likely to be corrosive not only of the claims of other traditions, but of one’s own tradition, ... the need for the pragmatic repair persists so long as foundationalist habits are widespread.”⁶⁵ Hence, this pragmatism, be it Scriptural Reasoning, or Receptive Ecumenism, “attempts to soften

⁶¹ Nicholas Adams, “Long-Term Disagreement: Philosophical Models in Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* no. 29, vol. 4 (2013): 154; see also Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 78.

⁶² Adams, “Long-Term Disagreement,” 155.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 157; 159. Both foundationalism and secular universalism are explained at length in by Adams in this same article.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

doubts and certainties. It reverses the priority of doubt and certainty.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, secular universalism entails “the pursuit of neutral ground” which “refuses appeals to authorities and instead recommends “neutral” appeals to reason.”⁶⁷ The role of the pragmatic repair to this thought entails refusing “to attribute criteria for judgement to neutral reason, but to identify them as reasons located in traditions and thought.”⁶⁸ Both Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism embrace triadic forms of reasoning besides the binary ones.⁶⁹ The dual shift envisioned in the two methods of theology “suggests an understanding of religious traditions as complex webs of thought and practice, allowing for integrity and stability across time and context but also variability, adaptability, creativity, and, inevitably, tension.”⁷⁰ Strange as it may seem, both Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism tend to pursue strategies for long-term disagreement.⁷¹ Adams gives a relevant example of the inclusion or omission of the *filioque* among the Catholics and the Orthodox respectively. In their action of inclusion or omission both Catholics and Orthodox are making important yet different assumptions. As Adams states again, a triadic form permits equivocation; “a failure to equivocate over the *filioque* is arguably a failure to understand Catholic and Orthodox doctrine. *Triadic forms stimulate investigation into equivocation.*”⁷²

Receptive Ecumenism has been partly inspired by Spiritual Ecumenism, tracing its roots to Abbé Paul Couturier’s spiritual ecumenism and Yves Congar.⁷³ Couturier’s development of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (developed on Paul Wattson’s Octave of Christian Unity) is built on the pillars of humility and repentance, ecumenicity of prayer for unity, and religious freedom, which are perceived in Receptive Ecumenism.⁷⁴ Murray also acknowledges Congar’s work, especially his later work,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 159-160.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 160.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁰ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 80-81.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 81.

⁷² Adams, “Long-Term Disagreement,” 164.

⁷³ See 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): 277; see also Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 62.

⁷⁴ See Murray, “Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity,” 277; see also Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 63; also Geoffrey Curtis, *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1964); also Catherine E. Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes: A Dialogue of Conversion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 17-19.

Dialogue between Christians, “as being of abiding significance and as representing a decisive forerunner of Receptive Ecumenism.”⁷⁵ The influence of Congar in the development of “the key principles that come to articulation in Receptive Ecumenism” is evident in the unwavering focus on the “full structural and sacramental unity” as the objective of ecumenism, combined with “the attentiveness to the lived particularity of the various Christian traditions.”⁷⁶ This is balanced with the necessity for each church to assume the responsibility for renewal and conversion in view of the other traditions.⁷⁷ The repeated emphasis on conversion in Receptive Ecumenism, added to the key feature of humility, is also the result of the influence of Ignatian spirituality on Murray. As both Paul and Andrea Murray assert: “at the heart of all such Ignatian-style prayer, reflection and direction is a call to personal conversion but understood explicitly as the call to greater life, interior freedom and flourishing.”⁷⁸ The Ignatian way, focused on the imaginative prayer related to the Scripture and discernment in response to the movement of the Holy Spirit, is crucial at the “affective” level Receptive Ecumenism. Indeed, “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.”⁷⁹ This serves to maintain the balance between “the imaginative, the creative, the ‘dreaming of dreams’ and their critical testing and scrutinising.”⁸⁰

Receptive Ecumenism works in tandem with Spiritual Ecumenism, and expands on it “by explicitly drawing out the interpersonal and structural-institutional dimensions alongside the more obviously personal that is the focus of spiritual ecumenism.”⁸¹ This comes as no surprise since Spiritual Ecumenism is one of the factors behind the movement of Receptive Ecumenism.⁸² The obvious relationship between Receptive Ecumenism and Spiritual Ecumenism has been pointed out by Pizzey, who remarks that “It is surely no coincidence that Kasper, who has done much to stress SE’s importance, also strongly

⁷⁵ Murray, “Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity,” 284; see Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (London/Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966).

⁷⁶ Murray, “Expanding Catholicity through Ecumenicity,” 301.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 83.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

⁸² See Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*. The relationship between Receptive Ecumenism and Spiritual Ecumenism is explored later on in this chapter.

supports RE.”⁸³ She goes on to say that Receptive Ecumenism can be considered as “a part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Project.”⁸⁴ However, Pizzey states that:

where SE focuses on the gift exchange, RE emphasizes receiving from others. Where SE emphasizes prayer, RE focuses on learning. While part of the Spiritual Ecumenical Movement, RE interprets SE in a different manner. These areas of difference may be points of dynamic exchange and enrichment.⁸⁵

Regarding the relationship that exists between Receptive Ecumenism and Spiritual Ecumenism, the latter engenders those spiritual attitudes which make Receptive Ecumenism more easily possible. The words of Paul to the Philippians, “Put on the mind of Christ” (2, 5) are especially evocative. Being spirit-filled in the embrace of Christ’s attitudes, enables the believer to move forward in the path of Receptive Ecumenism. Indeed, as the next chapter sets out to address the proper dispositions in order to authenticate reception, it will be seen how these dispositions are primarily set out in Spiritual Ecumenism. Such dispositions include (but are not limited to) prayer, conversion, humility, a life in communion, and being proper witnesses to the Word of God, all of which are inextricably and dynamically bound. For it is only through the Spirit that the proper ecumenical venture can come to completion. As Kasper illustrates so clearly, “unity is a gift from above, stemming from and growing toward loving communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁸⁶ First and foremost, the authentic propensity to ecumenism includes prayer in all forms, not least for unity. Kasper describes prayer as

the royal door of ecumenism: it leads Christians to look at the kingdom of God and the unity of the Church in a fresh way; it deepens their bonds of communion; and it enables them to courageously face painful memories, social burdens and human weaknesses.⁸⁷

⁸³ Antonia Pizzey, “On the maturation of Receptive Ecumenism: The connection between Receptive Ecumenism and Spiritual Ecumenism, *Pacifica* 28, no. 2 (2015): 116, where RE and SE stand for Receptive Ecumenism and Spiritual Ecumenism respectively.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (New York: New City Press, 2007), 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

Since spirituality is the common denominator for all proper forms of doing theology, such as ecumenism, since it encompasses “the soul of the whole ecumenical movement,”⁸⁸ at this stage one may ask whether the term “Spiritual Ecumenism” is apt as a term, since all ecumenism must first and foremost be spiritual. Moreover, labels connote variety, and thus lead to the danger of categories since they lead to compartmentalisation, a problem which has greatly compounded modern Western theology. One may deem it more proper to speak of a spirituality which underlies the whole Ecumenical Movement.

It is certainly the case that Receptive Ecumenism offers a more holistic approach to the Ecumenical Movement as it encompasses and addresses all facets of the ecumenical character. This is especially evident in the varied chapters of Murray’s book *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, which address the issue from a multi-faceted perspective. This fact is the main reason for the decision to select Receptive Ecumenism as one of the main foci in this thesis.

Closely related to Spiritual Ecumenism is pneumatology, and “Receptive Ecumenism has a strong, although somewhat implicit, pneumatological basis.”⁸⁹ Though Murray describes briefly the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of Receptive Ecumenism, this aspect being also a legacy of Ignatian spirituality, this still merits further development.⁹⁰ The role of pneumatology is crucial in the dialogue with Orthodoxy.⁹¹ As Denis Edwards correctly notes, in delineating the significance of the theology of Walter Kasper, there must be a “general need for western receptivity to the East with regard to a proper balance between pneumatology and Christology.”⁹² It also reflects the danger of the fragmentation of the Trinitarian relationship. This has important ramifications for a re-reception of a reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry, which is the main thrust of chapter 6. The neglect of the Spirit in the Western tradition (which, it must be admitted, is slowly being reappropriated especially as a result of deeper ecumenical

⁸⁸ Vatican Council II, “*Unitatis redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism,” 21 November, 1964, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 8.

⁸⁹ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 58.

⁹⁰ See Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 83.

⁹¹ See 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), 197.

⁹² *Ibid.*

relations with the Eastern traditions) has led to the accusations of “a one-sided Christomonism in Roman Catholicism,” which, it is believed “results in an ecclesiology that gives priority to authority, to the juridical institution, and to the papacy.”⁹³ Ecclesiology certainly can only achieve its full meaning within pneumatology and Christology working in tandem. After all, Pentecost spurred the birth of the Church and its expansion. As such, the reconfiguration of pneumatology is central to the Receptive Ecumenism exercise. As Congar affirmed in *Dialogue between Christians*, “the Holy Spirit, then, leads us and guides us into ‘all truth.’ It seems to me that here we come to the point which corresponds most closely to the specific work of ecumenism ...”⁹⁴

However, there has been a wider acknowledgement of the role of pneumatology within Receptive Ecumenism. This is especially significant since, while Receptive Ecumenism hinges on the process of learning, it itself is undergoing a process of development. Such consciousness serves to strengthen the role of Receptive Ecumenism in the Ecumenical Movement. In an article titled “Forward: Receptive Ecumenism as a Leaning-in to the Spirit of Loving Transformation,” Murray, speaking of the importance of attending in the Spirit, accords a pivotal role to the Spirit in stirring in action the dialogue between dreaming and the analysis of the current situation of each Church: “When the movement of attending in the Spirit to our own and the other’s reality is lent wings and achieves take-off then we have need and desire conjoined: both repentant recognition and the dreaming of dreams.”⁹⁵ The influence of Ignatian Spirituality is evident in Murray’s argument, especially in the process of discernment.⁹⁶ While, as Murray acknowledges, Receptive Ecumenism is “an affair of the heart, a Spirit-led soul-journey of intuition and desire,”⁹⁷ on the other hand, it must be accompanied by the process of discernment. Thus, “where the heart leads, the head (*intellectus/ratio*) must follow and there do its crucial critical work of testing, scrutinising, and discerning.”⁹⁸ Murray admits the role of the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, 104.

⁹⁵ Paul D. Murray, “Foreword: Receptive Ecumenism as a Leaning-in to the Spirit of Loving Transformation,” in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2018), xxii; see also See Paul D. Murray, “Foreword: Serving the Spirit of Receptive Ecumenism,” in Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, vol. 7, *Brill’s Studies in Catholic Theology* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), xii.

⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, also Murray and Murray, “The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism,” 83.

⁹⁷ Murray, “Foreword: Receptive Ecumenism as a Leaning-in to the Spirit of Loving Transformation,” xxii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.

Spirit along with that of the Word, where the description of the former process “relates to the inextricable and the necessary enfolding of the Pneumatic and the Christic, with the former as the movement and energy of God’s being-in-act and the latter as its expressed form.”⁹⁹

Within the arena of the Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox dialogue, the relationship between Receptive Ecumenism and the reconfiguration of pneumatology is crucial. Drawing on Rahner’s experience of the Spirit, Denis Edwards highlights the concept of synodality, a recurrent theme in chapter 6, as one example which can profit from Receptive Ecumenism and the role of pneumatology. Hence, while testing the reception of synodality against various criteria which ground reception within Tradition,¹⁰⁰ yet, the reception of synodality must also be brought “to the deepest place of my personal experience of the Spirit, and testing with this experience of the Spirit.”¹⁰¹ Yet, this should not be disconnected from the “communal, ecclesial event of the Spirit.”¹⁰²

This multifaceted background serves to equip the movement with a solid foundation which tackles all the domains of the Ecumenical Movement. Its influences are especially apparent in its assumptions.

The enthusiasm and response garnered in the early 20th century, reaching their zenith with the Roman Catholic wholehearted embrace of the Ecumenical Movement in the Second Vatican Council, petered out to the present situations where, with notable exceptions, “we are now in a position where it is widely recognized that, on most fronts, the aspiration for programmed structural unity in the short-medium term is simply unrealistic.”¹⁰³ The lack of compromise has resulted in impatience, evident in the swinging of balance towards “collaborating in practical activities of service and mission rather than on unravelling arcane matters of faith and order regarded as blocking the way to structural unity.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid., xvii; see also xxiii.

¹⁰⁰ For more detail, see Denis Edwards, “Ecclesial Decision-Making: Exploring an Insight from Karl Rahner,” in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2018), 27.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰² Ibid., 34.

¹⁰³ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 10.

This is exacerbated by the re-emergence of reconfessionalism which stems from the fact that:

In keeping with the characteristic late-modern or postmodern heightening of the particularity of identity over assumed commonality, a further significant contemporary factor in each of the Christian traditions as an increased appreciation for – and, in its most extreme forms, rigid defensiveness of – the particularity of distinctiveness of traditions. Indeed, when allied with an impatience with any perceived coercion into the terms of another’s debate, this postmodern turn to the particular can not only be invoked as a due celebration of difference but as justification even for its conscious deepening in the short-medium terms.¹⁰⁵

The first section of *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, published in 2007, sets the principles behind the project and explores various aspects which lie behind a true understanding of reception in ecumenism. It is composed of various contributions made by ecumenists, theologians and other scholars. Of paramount significance is the examination of the process of reception from various angles, theologically, spiritually, and psychologically. As such, it covers the various facets of the human experience. One can hardly miss the well-written chapters by Margaret O’Gara on the notion of gifts and what these gifts entail, a notion which is an echo of *Ut unum sint*.¹⁰⁶ Understanding the notion of reception might bely a seemingly straightforward act, however the contrary is true. It is imperative that genuine reception be distinguished from other types of false reception. It must also be borne in mind that the notion of authentic reception, as vehemently stated by Murray, does not entail a dilution or a letting go of one’s identity. Rather, genuine reception entails an affirmation of one’s identity through an encounter with the other. This is why Ladislav Örsy delves into the aspect of what makes authentic learning and reception, in an article which is an important eye-opener regarding what reception really entails.¹⁰⁷ In his article, Philip Sheldrake explores Catholicism in its wider context, and the importance of the Eucharist as a space for reconciliation.¹⁰⁸ The exploration of learning and reception, then, serves to affirm what pertains to one’s tradition. Nicholas Lash, then, sets out four questions in order to explore how Catholics can become faithful and effective witnesses of Christ’s

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁶ See 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), 26-38.

¹⁰⁷ See 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), 39-51.

¹⁰⁸ See Philip Sheldrake, “Becoming Catholic Persons and Learning to Be a Catholic People,” 52-62.

word in the contemporary world.¹⁰⁹ Walter Kasper takes up the relationship between the Catholic and Protestant tradition in relation to the unity and sanctity of the church,¹¹⁰ while Riccardo Larini exposes Receptive Ecumenism within a hermeneutical perspective.¹¹¹

The second section of the proceedings of the 2006 Conference deals with the meaning of reception within Anglicanism, Methodism, Lutheranism and Orthodoxy. These reflections are especially helpful for the Roman Catholic committed to ecumenism because, taken together, they offer a broad horizon for a reflection of the real meaning of engaging with the other and learning. As acknowledged by Murray himself, “these indicative exploratory forays into receptive Catholic Learning are not simply about taking stock of where we have got to; of what the story *has* been. Much more significantly, they are about exploring what lies open.”¹¹² Put simply, these reflections, which impinging on the present situation, are projected onto the future.

Since this thesis is focused on the Roman Catholic – Orthodox dialogue, one cannot help but commend McPartlan’s work within this perspective. Indeed, “McPartlan’s essay on learning from Orthodox ecclesiology is a double delight, in itself.”¹¹³ In his essay, he explores the significant issues which are ripe for learning from the Orthodox tradition. He highlights aspects wherein the Catholic Church has made great inroads, especially regarding its ecclesiology. The influence of Afanasiev together with de Lubac on the Second Vatican Council (which has already been explored) bears a vital mark on the development of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. It is an example *par excellence* of the dynamics of receptive ecumenism.

¹⁰⁹ See Nicholas Lash, “The Church – A School of Wisdom?” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63-77.

¹¹⁰ See Kasper, “Credo Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam,” *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 78-88.

¹¹¹ See 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), 89-101.

¹¹² Murray, “Preface,” xiii.

¹¹³ D’Costa, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning,” 404.

The journey of self-exploration continues in the third section, with an analysis on certain issues as lived and practised within the Roman Catholic tradition, such as apostolicity, primacy and collegiality, lay participation in ecclesial decision-making, and how these might be “constructively tended through appropriate receptive Catholic Learning from across the other Christian traditions.”¹¹⁴ Thus, James Puglisi explores Catholic learning within apostolicity and ecclesiality, with a reflection upon the wider meaning of apostolicity.¹¹⁵ A case in point which is certainly pertinent to this work is Joseph Famerée’s work on Orthodox issues in relation to collegiality which might be relevant to the Catholic tradition.¹¹⁶

The fourth section explores the pragmatic arena of Receptive Ecumenism. It probes the factors which impede receptive ecumenism from taking place within Catholicism itself in the real-life situation. This is taken from an interdisciplinary perspective, namely the psychological, the sociological and the organizational, since these are required “to make headway in understanding and ministering the psyche, the culture, and the body politic of Catholicism.”¹¹⁷ Geraldine Smyth’s work on the psychoanalytical perspectives behind the inhibition of Receptive Ecumenism sheds an important light on the notion of embracing a true identity vis-à-vis the much pervasive confessionalism which is a veritable barrier to what constitutes true ecumenism.¹¹⁸ This can be hailed as a breath of fresh air as, admittedly, the psychological perspective has, until recent times, played only a marginal role in the field of ecumenism. This theme, which is of undeniable importance, will be taken up later in the thesis.

The chapters of the final section build up on the previous articles. These chapters reflect “back on aspects of earlier chapters and probing how the Receptive Ecumenism and

¹¹⁴ Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, xiii.

¹¹⁵ See James F. Puglisi, “Catholic Learning Concerning Apostolicity and Ecclesiality,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 181-196.

¹¹⁶ See Joseph Famerée, “What Might Catholicism Learn from Orthodoxy in Relation to Collegiality?” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 211-225.

¹¹⁷ Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, xiv.

¹¹⁸ See 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), 285-302.

Catholic Learning agenda might be taken forwards in diverse ways.”¹¹⁹ Paul McPartlan discusses the topic of eucharistic ecclesiology within a Catholic-Orthodox framework. Andrew Louth, then, takes up both McPartlan and Famerée’s arguments in his presentation of Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning within an Orthodox Perspective, especially in relation to the eucharistic ecclesiology, synodality, and *sobornost*.¹²⁰

D’Costa is correct in stating that:

Receptive Ecumenism is an important project with a lot more rich fruits to be grown and harvested. It demands that Roman Catholics work further at the principles of the development of doctrine and the ability to discern that which is open to change and that which is not and to be accountable for such decisions. It also requires Roman Catholic agreement on the precise sense of subsists in *Lumen Gentium* and one that does not contradict official teachings on its meaning.¹²¹

To sum up,

it might simply be observed that one of the particularly laudable characteristics of receptive ecumenism is that it encourages the sharing of concrete interim-fruits at local levels, and does not just focus on the final finish line of full unity. As such, it makes a vital contribution to the critical task of keeping the Ecumenical Movement moving.¹²²

Receptive Ecumenism, thus, is not just concerned with the final aim of the re-establishment of Church unity, but with the whole process and the experience underlying it. While the Ecumenical Movement is a harbinger to the final aim of reunion, at the same time it is about constantly engaging in dialogue, fostering trust and respect, and learning from each other. Receptive Ecumenism facilitates this process.

¹¹⁹ Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, xv.

¹²⁰ See 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 Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 361-372.

¹²¹ D’Costa, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning,” 404-405.

¹²² Ryan, “Third International Receptive Ecumenism Conference: A Report.”

1.05 The Role of Hermeneutics

The tool of hermeneutics is pivotal to ecumenical dialogue. In fact, the principal aim of this thesis lies in demonstrating that hermeneutics is a crucial tool in the application of Receptive Ecumenism. An agreed understanding on hermeneutics serves towards a common interpretation of the richness of the expression of traditions which encompass the One Church of Christ. In the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order held at Montreal in 1963, the need for an agreed acknowledgement on understanding was expressed, especially in the light of Scriptures and Tradition. Paragraph 55 of the Report of this Conference asserts that:

Modern biblical scholarship has already done much to bring the different churches together by conducting them towards the Tradition. It is along this line that the necessity for further thinking about the hermeneutical problem arises: how we can reach an adequate interpretation of the Scriptures, so that the Word of God addresses us and Scripture is safeguarded from subjective or arbitrarive exegesis. ...¹²³

While the developments which characterised each tradition after the schism, and the richness in each tradition celebrated, it must never be eschewed that the common denominator is the one Truth espoused in the message of the Jesus Christ. Hence, there must be a healthy tension between the reception of the various traditions and also the reception of the one Truth, and so how that Truth is expressed in various ways.

In the aftermath of the 1982 Lima document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, this was recognised by the Faith and Order's Fifth Conference in 1993 at Santiago de Compostela and later in the 1998 document *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*.¹²⁴ As described by Körtner, this document "seeks to bring together previous discussions on the issues and the goal of ecumenical hermeneutics and to indicate prospects for further work on this topic."¹²⁵ This document

¹²³ P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer, ed., "Section Report II: Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions," in *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 55.

¹²⁴ See Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Faith and Order Paper no.182 (Geneva: WCC/Faith and Order, 1998).

¹²⁵ Ulrich H. J. Körtner, "Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Diversity: Some Remarks on the Hermeneutical Challenges of the Ecumenical Movement," in *Theology Today* 68, no. 4 (2012): 448; see also Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, par. 5.

is an important step forward within the ecumenical world since it acknowledges the need for reflection about hermeneutics, especially in the light of the interpretation of important documents such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, *Confessing the One Faith*, and *Church and World*, which “have raised hermeneutical questions for the life of the churches.”¹²⁶ Ardiñach lauds *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* as “a landmark which ought to be celebrated as a fundamental step.”¹²⁷

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels underlines the “unsearchable mystery of God’s love” (par. 1) as the common denominator for all theological interpretations.¹²⁸ On the other hand, the transmission of this mystery “none the less ‘relies upon human forms of expression and interpretation, dialogue and communication, all of which are fragile and all too often fragmented embodiments, none of which is completely adequate.’”¹²⁹ In a way, this situation can serve to lead towards a greater sensitivity towards members of the different traditions, so much so that “once we have been awakened to our neighbour’s values, ecumenical hermeneutics should lead us to be able to criticise and to be criticised.”¹³⁰

In comparison with the Montreal statements, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* broadens the hermeneutical horizons beyond an interpretation of texts. This is corroborated by Körtner who argues that “Schleiermacher broadened the scope of hermeneutics and began a development which continued through Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer to the concept of a universal hermeneutics and hermeneutical philosophy.”¹³¹ Thus,

theological hermeneutics concerns itself with texts, symbols, and practices which have been inherited and shaped within a tradition of faith. For Christians this tradition of faith includes the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments and the expressions of the Christian faith transmitted and re-expressed through the centuries. Within theological hermeneutics, ecumenical hermeneutics serves the specific task of focusing on how texts, symbols and practices in the various churches may be interpreted, communicated and mutually received

¹²⁶ Ibid., 11. See also Pablo R. Ardiñach, “Reflections on *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics,” in *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Peter Bouteneff and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 128.

¹²⁷ Ardiñach, “Reflections on *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*,” 128.

¹²⁸ See 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), 90.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 2.

¹³⁰ Ardiñach, “Reflections on *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*,” 128.

¹³¹ Körtner, “Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Diversity,” 454.

as the churches engage in dialogue. In this sense it is a hermeneutic for the unity of the Church.¹³²

This is further elucidated in paragraph 35:

In addition to textual and oral tradition, meaning is conveyed through non-verbal symbols: Christian art and music, liturgical gestures or colours, icons, the creation and use of sacred space and time, Christian symbols or signs are important aspects of the way in which the various dialogue partners understand and communicate their faith. Ecumenical hermeneutics needs to be intentional about incorporating this rich, but also neglected, source material for interpretation, communication and reception.¹³³

Yet, language is the glue which binds the various signs and symbols together, since it is through language that these are expressed and explained. While images, symbols, and rites are important ways of expression, ultimately, “if we want to clarify the meaning of understanding we have to use verbal language.”¹³⁴ This calls for a wider exploration into the richness of language within ecumenical hermeneutics because “the medium of language, in any case, remains central to Christianity’s communication of the gospel.”¹³⁵

The document speaks of the importance of a “hermeneutics of coherence,” which should be healthily accompanied by a “hermeneutics of suspicion.”¹³⁶ Thus, “in a constantly ongoing process, a responsible ecumenical hermeneutics will try to serve the truth, alerted by suspicion but always aiming at coherence.”¹³⁷ The document operates along a hermeneutics of suspicion vis-à-vis a “hermeneutics of confidence,” “whereby Christians from various cultures and contexts, as well as different confessions, may encounter one another respectfully, always open to a metanoia which is a true ‘change of mind’ and heart.”¹³⁸ Moreover, the Church is described as a “hermeneutical community” which includes the whole Church. The whole Church at various levels is involved in the interpretation of “texts, symbols and practices so as to discern the Word of God as a word

¹³² Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³⁴ Körtner, “Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Diversity,” 458.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ See Faith and Order, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 6; see also par. 28.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

of life amid everchanging times and places.”¹³⁹ This is further elucidated in paragraph 50:

Hermeneutics, perhaps especially ecumenical hermeneutics, is not the work of specialists. Ecumenical hermeneutics, in the pursuit of visible church unity, is first and foremost the work of the whole people gathered in believing communities in diverse contexts. Believers, pastors, theologians, and biblical exegetes, each have distinctive gifts to bring to the hermeneutical task. These gifts are most appropriately brought together and exercised within the various settings in which the Church carries out its work as a hermeneutical community.¹⁴⁰

Employing Wittgensteinian language, Körtner adds that: “the Church, or the individual churches, are the communities of interpretation in which ‘language games’ educate people for a particular way of life.”¹⁴¹ This has been so since the very beginning, since the formation of the early Church and eventually the transmission of the Gospels. This is also true of the different Christian confessions who

distinguish themselves from one another by presenting coherent, but different, overall interpretations of the Gospel witness of the New Testament. The same signs and words can therefore have different meanings. And, depending on the topic, different signs and words can have equivalent meanings.¹⁴²

This awareness of the varying interpretations among each tradition is crucial since the interpretation which occurs on various levels needs to be carried out by the members of the differing communities. That ensures that ecumenism happens at the hermeneutical level from the grassroots. It is an ecumenism which brings both the various Christians who are experts in their field, together with the institutional level of the Church. Hermeneutics would serve to bring two polarities together: an honest interpretation and appraisal of one’s own tradition, and an interpretation of the other’s tradition. This would entail an ongoing dialogue between the different traditions regarding the process underlying doctrinal development, and so on, rather than simply coming together with a baggage of different methods of analysis in order to engage in dialogue on a result.

¹³⁹ Faith and Order, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 49.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴¹ Körtner, “Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Diversity,” 464.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

On the other hand, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* does not come without its fair share of criticisms. Ingolf U. Dalferth criticizes it for what he thinks is a false exposition of the visible unity of the Church.¹⁴³ To quote Körtner again:

As long as the ecumenical movement does not give up its “ecclesially-centred perspective of a visible unity of doctrine, ministry and church,” he says, one cannot speak of the “ecumenical movement as having arrived in the modern era in this regard.”¹⁴⁴

Moreover, taking up the topic of hermeneutics, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* falls short of defining the very notion of hermeneutics itself. Indeed, “it is striking that the word ‘hermeneutics’ itself is never precisely defined anywhere in the document.”¹⁴⁵ The document does speak about the “hermeneutics of coherence,” a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” and a “hermeneutic of confidence” and, yet, they are not expounded upon at length. This, in itself, is one of the main weaknesses of the document which “makes further work on the topic difficult. Without a clear theory of hermeneutics and its methods, there can be no progress in the ecumenical dialogue.”¹⁴⁶ This is corroborated by Riccardo Larini who argues that the document, “despite noting the relevance of the contributions of the human sciences to contemporary hermeneutics, ... makes very little use of them, limiting itself to the general principles that could be better defined with the aid of such tools.”¹⁴⁷

While it does speak about the interpretation of signs, “texts, symbols and practices in the various churches,”¹⁴⁸ yet these methods of interpretation are hardly dwelt upon. Getting at the meaning of language – or signs – embraced within a confession, for example, requires an understanding of the particular grammar behind that language.¹⁴⁹ The same argument can be applied to the expression of the Christian faith, as Körtner correctly points out. Hence,

In the New Testament, we can already see how concepts and images have different meanings as used by the various writers. The same goes for confessions. They distinguish themselves

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 451.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 452.

¹⁴⁷ Larini, “Hermeneutical Reflections, 91.

¹⁴⁸ Faith and Order, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ See Körtner, “Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Diversity,” 464.

from one another by presenting coherent, but different, overall interpretations of the Gospel witness of the New Testament. The same signs and words can therefore have different meanings. And, depending on the topic, different signs and words can have equivalent meanings.¹⁵⁰

The Christian faith has always been dynamic in its diversity ever since its humble beginnings. The different interpretation of Mt 16, 18 among the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox is a case in point, which we return to in more depth in chapter 6.¹⁵¹ Or this might even go back to the composition of the Gospels themselves, using an example of literary hermeneutics with regard to Scripture. This is confirmed by Larini, who argues that:

there is no single and unilateral sign-system which imposes itself in early Christianity. There is more than one narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, probably not a unique way to celebrate the Eucharist, different meanings attached to baptismal rites, varying ethical emphases.¹⁵²

The Church Fathers who gave varied interpretations is another case in point. Yet, this did not pose major conflicts within Christendom. *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* rightly alludes to the importance of a pneumatological hermeneutic, which will be explored in chapter 6. Thus, "ecumenical hermeneutics is not an unaided human enterprise. It is an ecclesial act led by the Spirit and therefore it should be carried out in a setting of prayer."¹⁵³

To conclude, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* should be seen as a window with the opportunities to foray into the hermeneutical world and its relevance in ecumenism. Theories of hermeneutics are continually developing. Acknowledging this fact, the Faith and Order Commission has been working on building on *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*.¹⁵⁴ However, there needs to be caution regarding specific caveats. First, each particular method of hermeneutics which is constantly evolving needs to be seen in

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See also Rodger and Vischer, "Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions," 54. As can be expected of a thesis analysing Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox dialogue, this subject is treated in chapter 6.

¹⁵² Larini, "Hermeneutical Reflections," 93.

¹⁵³ Faith and Order, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 32.

¹⁵⁴ For more detail see Pablo R. Andiañach, "Interpreting our Faith: The Ecumenical Journey and its Consequences." Faith and Order Plenary Commission, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 28 July – 6 August, 2004, World Council of Churches website. file:/// C:/ Users/ dbuttigieg532/ AppData/Local/ Packages/ Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/kuala-docs16-andinach%20(4).pdf..

conjunction with a larger picture of the hermeneutical process in ecumenism. Otherwise, there is the risk of compartmentalisation of perspectives, an inheritance from the secular society which is plaguing theology itself. It is, admittedly, the case that studies in theology have become too fragmented at times. Second, there needs to be an awareness of and consistency – on the part of the two parties involved in dialogue – of the hermeneutical tool applied.

The ecumenical endeavour is the perfect arena to apply the marriage of two aspects of hermeneutics: the receptive and the creative aspect. Chung-Ying Cheng distinguishes between the ontological which corresponds to the receptive, and, the epistemological and methodological referring to the creative.¹⁵⁵ Hence,

The receptive of the hermeneutic consists in acknowledging what has happened, observing what there is as historically-effected, foretelling what will happen as a matter of future projection of possibilities, and disclosing/discovering conditions and fore-structures or horizons of human understanding. The creative of the hermeneutic, on the other hand, consists in reflecting on what human sensibilities and human desires and needs are, conceptualizing what is factual and real based on participations of human cognitive and volitional faculties and experiences, recognizing the end-goals and regulative ideals of our normative pursuits, and searching for best possible ways or methods to reach our end-goals which will enhance human beings as autonomous entities and moral agents in the world.¹⁵⁶

One feels that this is very true to the ecumenical field. The added challenge is that ecumenical partners need to work together to uncover and interpret the various layers which have yielded an oftentimes fossilised confessionalism. This delicate process also includes interpreting and highlighting the distinction between the Tradition itself and the various traditions, as also explained in the Montreal document. It also includes the painstaking process of discarding the confessional biofilm which acts as a barrier to dialogue and positive influence from the other tradition. As it will be shortly seen, Receptive Ecumenism shows us that this can be carried out.

All confessions stem from a firm belief in the Gospels. What is important is that we can share a horizon with another person because each of us has a historical consciousness related to our present situation, and as such, consciousness is historically effected and

¹⁵⁵ See Chung-Ying Cheng, “Receptivity and Creativity in Hermeneutic: From Gadamer to Onto-Hermeneutics (Part One),” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 42, no. 1-2 (2015): 13.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

effective we must share something in common as we look at things historically and yet we also could differ in our views of things because of the HEC (Gadamer's idea of historically effected consciousness) we each have.¹⁵⁷ Added, yet connected to this baggage of history and language is also the geographical and cultural aspect. These are especially pertinent since we are dealing with two traditions going back to the earliest times, and yet (as all other traditions) deeply impacted by the multiplicity of factors (linguistic, cultural, historical, geographical) accumulated over time to give a stamp of unicity to each particular tradition.

As can be expected, the dynamics in the process of two traditions coming together, and of eventual reception is complex, to say the least. It involves the untangling and the unlayering of each tradition's unique baggage in order to be perused and if, seen in accordance with Tradition, is eventually accepted by the other tradition in dialogue. Such an encounter touches upon all aspects of the human being, and (as a corollary) collectively by each representative tradition. This complexity is analysed meticulously by Larini:

The psychological reaction prompted by such encounter is always of a double kind, and is due to the movement from common origin to a plurality of contexts: on the one hand, there is the impression of belonging together, of sharing something; on the other hand, there is the surprise, disturbance even, caused by the diversity of languages and theologies adopted to express supposedly analogous elements of the faith.¹⁵⁸

Reception is a dynamic process because in dialogue, each tradition is motivated to look inwards, that is it "brings us to listen to our own tradition in order to unveil its crucial questions and developments, applying the same critical hermeneutical tools to ourselves as to our neighbours."¹⁵⁹ One cannot do justice towards this complexity unless it is analysed in a holistic perspective.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁸ Larini, "Hermeneutical Reflections," 94.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

1.06 Receptive Ecumenism, Pragmatic Realism, Idealism, and Pluralism

One of the factors underpinning the development of Receptive Ecumenism in the philosophical movement is the American idealist-pragmatist tradition, especially as developed by Nicholas Rescher. The other factors, apart from this philosophical tradition, which influenced the genesis of Receptive Ecumenism have been analysed earlier, yet the philosophical tradition is taken up here since it is crucial to unravel the hermeneutic as developed within Receptive Ecumenism.

The main line of logic behind what Murray calls the “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic learning project” owes its existence to the pragmatic idealism of the German-American philosopher, Nicholas Rescher. Rescher’s thought, synthesised in his masterpiece *A System of Pragmatic Idealism*, constitutes elements drawn from various philosophers, namely Leibniz, Kant, Wittgenstein, together with a form of pragmatism developed by Peirce, which together result in “a sophisticated combination of subtle realism, expansive coherentism, and recursive fallibilism in Rescher’s thought.”¹⁶⁰

The pragmatism advocated by Murray attempts to counter and repair the problems inherited from foundationalism (problematic features inherent in certain philosophical practices); as already argued, it aims to moderate doubts and certainties.¹⁶¹ As Antonia Pizzey points out, Paul Murray’s first book, *Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective* underscores the importance of Rescher’s pragmatist-idealist method.¹⁶²

At this stage, it is best to focus on the significance of the American pragmatist-idealist philosophical system as espoused by Rescher. Rescher’s position arises out of a contemporary pluralist world. Indeed, “Rescher and Murray place a positive value on

¹⁶⁰ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 8; see also idem., “Fallibilism, Faith and Theology: Putting Nicholas Rescher to Theological Work,” *Modern Theology* 20, no. 3 (2004): 339-340.

¹⁶¹ See Adams, “Long-Term Disagreement,” 157.

¹⁶² See Paul D. Murray, *Reason Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004); see also Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 25.

pluralism.”¹⁶³ Does this mean succumbing to the trends of the outside world? Philosophy is especially helpful in analysing the current situations and enabling theology to extrapolate the important and useful tools to engage in dialogue with the world.

Moreover, this pluralism is especially present among different Christians; it is certainly “one of the key challenges facing the Ecumenical Movement.”¹⁶⁴ So, it is equally sound to employ a hermeneutic which is relevant in a pluralistic world, while avoiding the dangers of relativism. Pizzey states that “by grounding it within Rescher’s pragmatist idealism, and advocating the committed pluralist approach, the hope is that Receptive Ecumenism may be able to navigate the pluralistic context facing ecumenism without succumbing to the pitfalls of postmodern relativism.”¹⁶⁵

This is not to imply that this variety of perspectives is an embrace of relativism. For Rescher, “the basic fact of there being a legitimate plurality of perspectives on any given aspect of reality cannot be taken as legitimating a thoroughgoing relativism for which all possible perspectives are equally good.”¹⁶⁶ The problem in itself is not pluralism. As seen earlier, pluralism has been present since the earliest days of the Christian Church. The danger lies in relativism as a possible end result of the lack of discernment of the manifold of pluralist positions. “Total relativism leads to a stance of indifference, where all positions are accepted as equivalent and equally valid. Against this, Rescher pragmatically asserts that, in fact, each person naturally considers their own position superior to that of others.”¹⁶⁷ As a result, “Murray follows Rescher in maintaining a concern for truth and a conviction that however elusive and difficult identifying truth may be, we are closer to it when we pursue it than when we abandon the quest.”¹⁶⁸

So, the discourse with the contemporary, pluralist world, even that of Christianity itself, equips the individual to an active engagement with the world. Rescher eschews any notions of pluralism which spur isolation and tribalism. Rather, “he recurrently stresses

¹⁶³ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 26.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Murray, *Reason, Truth and Theology*, 124.

¹⁶⁷ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 26.

¹⁶⁸ Ryan, “Receiving with Dynamic Integrity,” 138-139.

the need for pragmatic negotiation in situations of ineliminable dissensus and for mutual accommodation between different spheres of discourse and competing interest groups.”¹⁶⁹

An active engagement with the pluralist world underscores the importance of imparting and learning, possibly leading to reception. The twofold process is described by Murray, whereby Rescher “emphasises the continuing responsibility to be able to present an account claimed to be *one* legitimate perspective among others, but how it can be claimed – other things considered – to be the most reasonable one.”¹⁷⁰

Such an endeavour accords control and maturity. Murray argues that:

The need is for a dialectical tension between the distinctiveness and transformative potential of the Christian gospel on the one hand and the need for its real engagement with the diverse, particular situations in which the Church exists on the other.¹⁷¹

Murray affirms that:

An appropriation of Rescher’s recursively expansive, determinedly fallibilist and avowedly postfoundationalist account of human rationality can help all the more so to give real emphasis and due shaping power to the appropriate character and balance of an authentically Christian theological ethic. Alternatively stated, it can act as a resource to enable the practice of Christian theology to be more fully itself.¹⁷²

This entails a call to respond to new challenges and to acquire a freshness and renewal in the process. As Ryan affirms, “part of the distinctiveness of Receptive Ecumenism is that it is orientated, at least initially, not to direct consensus *between* traditions but refreshing, expanding, healing *within* a tradition through learning from the other.”¹⁷³ Tradition does not entail a fossilization but a relevance to respond to and be relevant to particular circumstances, juxtaposing the past with the present and the future. Murray gives a valid

¹⁶⁹ Murray, *Reason Truth and Theology*, 125.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷² Murray, “Fallibilism, Faith and Theology,” 352.

¹⁷³ Ryan, “Receiving with Dynamic Integrity,” 139.

example of the case of the Second Vatican Council's image of the Church as "the pilgrim people of God."¹⁷⁴ This case corroborates Rescher and Murray's argument, in that it:

rejects static stability and settled security in recognition of the authentically dynamic—even contested—character of Christian truth and the need for the Church's continual conversion. In particular, rather than resting content with the mere repetition of the sedimented and embedded identifying rules of Christian life and discourse (what in Roman Catholic tradition are regarded as infallibly articulated dogmatic pronouncements), the view maintained here emphasises the need also for a collaborative ecclesial discipline of patient and humble learning of ever new yet faithful ways to speak and to act in a diverse multiplicity of situations. Living within the tradition is not a state of arrival but of continuing navigation via key points of reference. It entails responsibility to the tradition's present and future as surely as to its past.¹⁷⁵

The fact that pneumatology plays an important part in this process within Receptive Ecumenism (though implicitly, at times) is an illustrative point because it pours ever new life in the soul of the Church. As Ormond Rush 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."¹⁷⁶ It is no surprise, therefore, that Receptive Ecumenism is also "an affair of the heart, a Spirit-led soul journey of intuition and desire."¹⁷⁷ Reference to the pneumatological dimension will be made in Chapter 6. The strength of Receptive Ecumenism lies in its three-fold process of attending, discerning, and acting "in terms of the imaginative *poetics* and *poeisis* of the 'dreaming of dreams', the *analytics* of testing and scrutinising, and the pragmatics of institutional religion." These three voices are, according to Murray, "the three key voices in which all good ecclesial theology is performed."¹⁷⁸

1.07 A Criticism of Receptive Ecumenism

Receptive Ecumenism does not come without its criticisms. After all, it is still in its infancy. In the light of its potential, it is still in need of development. Certainly, directions

¹⁷⁴ See Murray, "Fallibilism, Faith and Theology," 352. See also Second Vatican Council, "'*Lumen gentium*:' Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999).

¹⁷⁵ Murray, "Fallibilism, Faith and Theology," 352.

¹⁷⁶ Ormond Rush, "Receptive Ecumenism and Discerning the *Sensus Fidelium*: Expanding the Categories for a Catholic Reception of Revelation," *Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (2017): 560-561.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Murray, "Foreword: Receptive Ecumenism as a Leaning-in to the Spirit of Loving Transformation," xxii.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Murray, "Preface," xi.

might especially help to propel Receptive Ecumenism forward. Although it might seem early in the thesis to criticise Receptive Ecumenism, it is deemed useful to present these considerations at this point. This will be helpful in evaluating the ups and downs in Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox dialogue in subsequent chapters.

The first book which was the result of the first conference (*Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*) has been laudably acclaimed, yet certain flaws are apparent. The need for further maturation is evident. These weaknesses are also analysed by Antonia Pizzey.¹⁷⁹ One of the major issues is the notion of the exchange of gifts, which has also been presented in a previous section, and which needs further clarification and elucidation. This is also in the light of the mutual process in which receiving and giving occurs. A number of authors, such as David Chapman and Andrew Louth present the perspective of giving and receiving as a two-way process, which “somewhat contradicts Murray’s conception of Receptive Ecumenism as a unilateral process.”¹⁸⁰ By way of example, O’Gara’s argument, “as elucidated in the theology of Vatican II and *Ut unum sint*,” with regard to the exchange of gifts is not restricted or specific to Receptive Ecumenism, “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 actually use the term ‘Receptive Ecumenism.’”¹⁸¹

Another main weakness is the dearth of definition surrounding the term “reception.”¹⁸² This is ironic, considering that reception is the key feature in the whole perspective! As Pizzey states, the notion of reception has various meanings which would merit further exploration.¹⁸³ Riccardo Larini comments on the fluidity in the connotations of the “reception” in the various developments in the Ecumenical Movement.¹⁸⁴ The term remains ambiguous. The ambiguity surrounding this important term is one of the main reasons why reception is taken up and explored from both a classical and an ecumenical

¹⁷⁹ See Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 43 – 61.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² See *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸³ See *ibid.*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ See 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), 90.

perspective in chapter 4. The agenda needs to be clear in order to enable real reception to take place. In all fairness, this weakness might be overcome in due course as Receptive Ecumenism develops and gathers momentum.

Yet, another criticism levelled at Receptive Ecumenism is that it mainly focuses on the practical aspect. This leads to a focal issue, namely the separation of theology from the practical aspect. If this separation is apparent, how is Receptive Ecumenism to find unanimous support and vocalisation in the academia? For example, Pizzey states that:

RE appears relatively successful practically; certain academic aspects require further development, such as criteria and theological groundwork. There is still more work needed in the analysis of RE as an academic discipline, and in the maintenance of a careful balance between head and heart.¹⁸⁵

Receptive Ecumenism is in a process of evolution and maturation. While the focus is certainly on the practical side, it is the practical aspect that leads to a series of evaluations on Receptive Ecumenism itself. It can be said that the method of Receptive Ecumenism follows an inductive approach. In fact, Murray himself asserts that too often the ecclesiology at the theoretical level has constructed a blueprint of how the Church should be.¹⁸⁶ He argues that one of the assumptions behind Receptive Ecumenism is “that the ecclesial learning that is at issue here must ultimately be practical and not simply theoretical, or purely doctrinal in character.”¹⁸⁷ Yet, care must be taken not to dissociate the theoretical from the practical, otherwise Receptive Ecumenism itself runs the risk of being fragmented with little appeal among the various stakeholders in the Ecumenical Movement.

This point needs further clarification. It is certainly the case that Receptive Ecumenism hinges on the importance of learning. It has been stated that since teaching and learning can be envisaged as making up a whole, then Receptive Ecumenism’s thrust is only a part of that whole. Pizzey, for example, states that: “RE intentionally focuses on one half of the ecumenical exchange of gifts in order to place a priority upon receiving and

¹⁸⁵ Pizzey, “On the Maturation of Receptive Ecumenism,” 111.

¹⁸⁶ See Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning,” 36.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

learning.”¹⁸⁸ It is undeniably true that learning underpins the whole process of Receptive Ecumenism. This is shown at the outset with the title itself bearing the word “learning” within Catholicism as an indication to the main focus of Receptive Ecumenism. It is true that “learning here takes appropriate precedence over teaching.”¹⁸⁹ Moreover, as asserted by Murray himself, “Catholic Learning more substantively identifies the specific activity – learning – that Catholicism is here engaged upon. Here we are dealing with Catholicism in explicitly receptive, learning mode rather its, perhaps more familiar, teaching, repeating, judging, and defending modes.”¹⁹⁰

While Murray himself claims that teaching, among other modes, has its place within Catholic learning, especially in the form of bearing witness,¹⁹¹ this notion of teaching is not developed further. It would be legitimate to claim that the focus of the project is the learning process, and that may be why the teaching process is relegated to the background. This is taken up by the Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware and explored in a later section of this chapter. It is surely an act of humility to recognise that instead of the usual role with which the Roman Catholic Church is especially associated, that is the teaching role, it recognises also the need of learning, more specifically from other Traditions. On the other hand, in focusing solely on one aspect, that is learning, it would be futile to compartmentalise two ends of the same continuum, since teaching and learning are interconnected in the same dynamic process.

1.08 The Rationale for the Application of Receptive Ecumenism to the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Dialogue

Having been conceived in Britain, Receptive Ecumenism developed mainly within a Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Reformed milieu, however it can hardly be limited to one particular tradition. Since Receptive Ecumenism is deeply grounded in a marriage of

¹⁸⁸ Pizzey, “On the Maturation of Receptive Ecumenism,” 122.

¹⁸⁹ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Spiritual Ecumenism on one side, and a pragmatic-idealist philosophical perspective on the other, it has the potential to be effective in other dialogues between other traditions. Since the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Churches share so much, it is believed that Receptive Ecumenism can offer great insights in paving the way towards unity.

It must be stated at the outset that the arguments proposed in this thesis do not purport to exhaust all possibilities which exist out there. Having seen a great potential in Receptive Ecumenism, the aim in this thesis is to apply the concept to the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. This is not as a substitute to what has been achieved so far, or an interim project on the other hand, but, one convincingly affirms, a way forward for ecumenism to develop and bear fruit. While applauding the successful bilateral dialogues, it is acknowledged that the stakes in the ecumenical endeavour are still high and this requires new methods of doing ecumenism without discarding what has been proven successful.

Receptive Ecumenism does not come without its flaws; it is also itself on a journey to maturation. Yet, it is believed that this is a concept which engages the interested ecumenical partners to the core since it equips them with the control in order to forge ahead in the road to unity. It engages each committed Christian, and eventually the whole Church on various levels. This is the reason why Receptive Ecumenism can work on various levels which together constitute a whole person and, eventually, a whole Church.

The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox traditions have both retained the sacraments and they both trace back in time the ordination of bishops through apostolic succession. This common heritage can be a firm foundation for harnessing Receptive Ecumenism. Yet, this does not eschew the complexity and the frailty of the relationship between the two traditions. While dogmatically speaking both share a common heritage, from a cultural perspective the distances are much larger. After the East-West Schism, each of the two Churches evolved and developed separately, so the two traditions in dialogue must seek to learn new developments to the other's identity. Added to that, the baggage is not simply religious or theological, but also national or political, especially with regard to the Orthodox Churches, a point to be considered later on.

The Faith and Order Conference at Montreal speaks unequivocally about the concept of tradition as envisaged by the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics:

In the Orthodox Church the hermeneutical key is found in the mind of the Church, especially as expressed in the Fathers of the Church and in the Ecumenical Councils. In the Roman Catholic Church the key is found in the deposit of faith, of which the Church's *magisterium* is the guardian.¹⁹²

Thus, there is fertile ground for the application of Receptive Ecumenism between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. The fragility of the dialogue owing to a complexity of diverse factors can be greatly mitigated by the application of this concept of Receptive Ecumenism. Yet, the step in the right direction is the harmony of the teaching and learning process. As already seen, Receptive Ecumenism's main thrust is the learning process, however compartmentalising learning without a process would still swing the pendulum dangerously to the other extreme of the sole teaching agenda in ecumenism.

Kallistos Ware rightly argues that “giving and receiving, teaching and learning, are mutually interdependent.”¹⁹³ This is why, instead of drawing up two lists which focus on what the Orthodox Church can learn from others and what Orthodoxy can give to the other traditions respectively, he comes up with one list. Wherefore so? The reason is that the gifts Orthodoxy can give to the world can also be the subject of maturation within the same tradition.¹⁹⁴ In an open act of humility, Ware acknowledges the need for the Orthodox Church to reflect and “understand far better” the gifts Orthodoxy can offer to the others.¹⁹⁵ So, through sharing, not only do the other traditions learn from Orthodoxy, but even Orthodoxy itself can learn more about her own gifts. The same is true for all the other traditions. Hence, “everyone is learning, an emphasis that correlates with RE.”¹⁹⁶ Ware himself quotes Macmurray who speaks of personhood in this phrase: “I need you in order to be myself.”¹⁹⁷ This is what Receptive Ecumenism is all about.

¹⁹² Rodger and Vischer, “Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions,” 53.

¹⁹³ Kallistos Ware, “Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 50.

¹⁹⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Pizzey, “On the Maturation of Receptive Ecumenism,” 122.

¹⁹⁷ John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 69, quoted in Ware, “An Orthodox Perspective,” 52.

This interesting contribution by Ware has been the inspiration behind the topic to be dealt with in this thesis. The thesis focuses on the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox traditions, and on how they can learn from each other, in turn becoming better Catholics and Orthodox. It is the case that each tradition needs to be able to learn from its own strengths, while also presenting them to others. Teaching and learning are taking place all the time. The beauty of Receptive Ecumenism is that it enables traditions to get to know each other and themselves with more clarity, thus enabling a greater *rapprochement* between the traditions. As Murray states, “this is ecumenism as an instrument of ecclesial reform and renewal and as a practice of *ressourcement* against the lost gifts of Christ and the Spirit present in the other traditions.”¹⁹⁸ It is also the arena which enables each tradition to respect and esteem the others, envisaging them as God’s gift. As explained various times, this goes hand in hand with theological dialogue. Hence, ecumenical dialogue is taking place both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, to use Kasper’s terms.

1.09 Conclusion

The hermeneutic employed by Receptive Ecumenism attests to a real need to be relevant in contemporary times, a corollary to a Church in a pilgrim movement. The role of hermeneutics in ecumenism does justice to the different traditions in the exploration of the different means of expression. Receptive Ecumenism embraces a process of becoming, juxtaposing the present process itself with the future expectation. In other words, it looks to the future by threading onto the path of encounter. The re-working of a hermeneutic within a pluralistic world advocated by Rescher is a portal to the appreciation of the richness of different traditions which still trace their origins, and are oriented towards the one truth. Moreover, the Receptive Ecumenism hermeneutic sits well within the receptive and the creative aspects in hermeneutics. The pluralism of ecclesial realities in this way becomes a way for each particular church to move forward through her interaction with the other traditions along the way, in turn receiving and reshaping its own tradition in line with Tradition. An honest appraisal of what has been achieved in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox traditions

¹⁹⁸ Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and the Quincentennial Anniversary,” 10.

in terms of bilateral dialogues and other gestures, together with the self-criticising attitude of each tradition, are crucial before moving forward to the receptive and creative hermeneutically aspect in the dialogue between the two traditions.

It is believed that the dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox is fertile ground for the application of Receptive Ecumenism. This is so especially because of the common ground between the two traditions – the consecration of bishops traced through the apostolic succession and also the sacraments. The reception of gifts between the two traditions serves to bond to the positions of trust which started blooming in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. One recent example of reception with success was the contribution of the Orthodox perspective in the encyclical *Laudato si'* by Pope Francis. The importance of the environment within the divine salvific plan has been partly rediscovered by the Catholics especially thanks to Orthodox theology, which underscores the transfiguration of the cosmos through the workings of humankind by the grace of God.

On the other hand, Receptive Ecumenism can be fruitful in mitigating the perennial difficulties which remain between the two traditions. One of the reasons is that Receptive Ecumenism is inspired by various factors, as already seen. This wide range of factors behind Receptive Ecumenism serves to cement its credibility as a solid foundational method for doing ecumenism. Having such a varied baggage of factors, Receptive Ecumenism seeks a dialogue between the academic and the practical ways of doing theology. It balances the poetic, the analytical and the pragmatic aspects necessary to the ecclesial renewal. The spiritual aspect which permeates Receptive Ecumenism ensures that doing ecumenism in the present is reconfigured within the working of the Spirit in the whole Ecumenical Movement. Moreover, as has already been seen, the locus of control lies with the traditions involved in dialogue. Receptive Ecumenism, building on the positivity inherent in each of the churches, seeks to realign the traditions in harmony. It does not seek to achieve uniformity or a solution to the existing differences. It provides a challenge to the traditions. As Murray states unequivocally:

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 currently prepared to do likewise.¹⁹⁹

It engages traditions in dialogue, at times perhaps going through a process of unlearning in order to take steps forward. Such a challenge is tempered by trust and hope in the divine project. Indeed, “throughout, it must always be remembered that progress towards our ecumenical goal is fundamentally God’s work and calling into which we are being drawn rather than any merely human project of our own creation, possession and control.”²⁰⁰ How this happens will be seen in later chapters. The application of Receptive Ecumenism to the complex relationship between the rich Catholic and Orthodox traditions is achieved by looking at the traditions from a holistic perspective – academic, spiritual and psychological. Most importantly, it fosters a connection between both the academic and the practical. How this connection occurs still remains to be seen and analysed. This is one of the reasons why this movement cannot be simply envisaged as a short-term interim movement. While it is still in stages of maturation, this movement is of great importance in the Ecumenical Movement, if not one of the principal ways forward.

¹⁹⁹ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 87.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: The Genesis of the Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox Dialogue

2.01 Introduction

Receptive Ecumenism does not take place in a vacuum. It is a process which focuses on the positive differences between the Church and seeks to foster dialogue on the basis of mutual reception, learning, and transformation. Yet, this cannot occur without understanding the whole process of ecumenical dialogue between the churches, and what has been achieved so far, not least in terms of bilateral dialogues and other gestures. Receptive Ecumenism is not a substitute for the bilateral dialogues, as affirmed in the previous chapter. Rather, it seeks to understand the whole process and engage in practice with a wider lens. While ecumenism is beyond bilateral dialogues themselves, the latter are important in understanding the theological framework of each church engaging in dialogue, in this case the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

As a result, this chapter retraces the steps in the participation of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, both individually and also in the mutual dialogue between the two churches. All this takes into account the various aspects of dialogue: the theological dialogue undertaken at the higher levels of the Church, the symbolic gestures between the two traditions, the dialogue which is sustained by the witness of the contemporary Christian martyrs from both traditions, and so on, which are explored in the next chapter in a continuum. It must be admitted that in most cases ecumenism starts from the grassroots, and then proceeds to the higher institutions of the Church. Rather than looking at a rigid top-down or bottom-up approach, both movements must be seen in unison. The image of the angels descending and ascending the ladder at Jacob in Bethel (Gen 28, 10-22) is so evocative.

Owing to the constraints of the thesis, the main aspects explored in this chapter are the emergence of the participation of the two traditions independently of each other. This is also followed by their participation in Faith and Order. The reason for going through a brief history of the emergence of the Churches in the ecumenical arena is that history is part of the character blueprint of both Churches. Hence, going back is essential to pick the threads and proceed forward in mutual trust. The Second Vatican Council provides the turning tide for the Roman Catholic Church participation in the Ecumenical

Movement. Admittedly, the Second Vatican Council has been an important factor behind the development of Murray's Receptive Ecumenism. Moreover, it also provides the springboard for the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and with the Eastern Orthodox through the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue, together with its complexities. Parallel to this development is the dialogue occurring on various levels, such as that within Faith and Order, and also the testimony to the faith displayed by martyrs. These and other facets together gravitate towards one Ecumenical Movement. One can appreciate the role of the faithful within the Church in harnessing ecumenism in its various forms in order to strive towards One Church of Christ, akin to the relationship between the parts of the body with different functions (1 Cor 12, 12-31).

2.02 The Initial Opening of the Eastern Orthodox Churches to the Ecumenical Movement

When the Ecumenical Movement was set at the forefront of the Second Vatican Council, it was greeted with great enthusiasm. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church had caught up with the ecumenical process which commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ Indeed, while the Ecumenical Movement was embraced by other Churches and ecclesial communities, the Roman Catholic Church formally stood aloof from these activities. The World Council of Churches itself, founded in 1948, was, for a long time, viewed with suspicion by the Catholic Church.²

On the other hand, the Eastern Orthodox Church, was involved in the Ecumenical Movement since its very inception. While "The Orthodox Church claims to be the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of the Nicene Creed, going back through an unbroken continuity to the years of Jesus Christ and the Apostles,"³ it has been

¹ For more details on the beginnings of the ecumenical movement, confer Teresa Francesca Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2012), section three: *La storia*.

² See Walter Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno: comunione, dialogo ecumenico, evangelizzazione* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2005), 52.

³ Vasil T. Istavridis, "The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement: 1948-1968," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 2, ed. Harold E. Fey (Eugene/OR: World Council Publications, 2004), 289.

unflinching in its commitment to ecumenism, albeit at varying levels among some sections comprising the Eastern Orthodox world. As Chrysostomos Konstantinidis states:

Ecumenism is, above all, a fellowship of people: it is only when believers – filled with love for one another, drawn together by a common desire for unity, longing for the seamlessness of Christ’s robe – make efforts to grow together in Christ. Only then it is true ecumenism.⁴

In 1902, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III wrote the well-known encyclical to the local Orthodox churches, underscoring the relationship and collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches, and the Orthodox Church.⁵ He clearly states that:

Of course, the union of them and of all who believe in Christ with us in the Orthodox faith is the pious and heart-felt desire of our Church and of all genuine Christians who stand firm in the evangelical doctrine of unity, and it is the subject of constant prayer and supplication...⁶

Here, the understanding of unity as expressed by the Patriarch on behalf of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches was the return envisaged of the Western Church to the Orthodox Church, what today can be termed an “ecumenism of return.” Of course, today it would be easy to say that the criticism levelled at the Western Church, that is, Catholicism and Protestantism, in the next part of the sentence, is quite one-sided. The Western Churches are here described as being persistent on:

Doctrines on which, having taken their stand as on a base hardened by the passage of time, they seem quite disinclined to join a road to union, such as is pointed out by evangelical and historical truth; nor do they evince any readiness to do so, except of terms and bases which the desired dogmatic unity and fellowship is unacceptable to us.⁷

⁴ Chrysostomos Konstantinidis, in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*, ed. Constantin G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 15.

⁵ Joachim III, “Patriarchal and Synodical Encyclical of 1902,” in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*, ed. Constantin G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 27-33; cf. Metropolitan Chrysostomos, “Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 51, no. 4 (1999), 334; see also Gennadios Limouris, ed., *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement 1902-1992*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 1-5; see also Edward Farrugia, “Lumen Gentium” in the Light of Orthodox Involvement in the Ecumenical Movement,” *One in Christ* 52, no. 2 (2018): 210-212.

⁶ Joachim III, “Encyclical of 1902,” 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*

One might well argue that though the Orthodox Church considers itself as the *Una Sancta*, yet, it must be borne in mind that for the Orthodox, unity is here taken genuinely at heart, even to the extent that the Church “must be one and not many, differing from each other in dogmas and fundamental institutions of ecclesiastical government.”⁸ Moreover, it must be admitted that the Catholic Church itself remained reticent during and following the unfolding of the whole Ecumenical Movement, founded some eight years later. Thus, from the very beginning, unity was at stake for the Orthodox Church, and it was at the forefront in suggesting ways and means of achieving unity, even though on the practical side this was delayed until the genesis of the Ecumenical Movement at Edinburgh.

The next encyclical dealing with the question of unity was written ten years after the 1910 events at Edinburgh which had set the Ecumenical Movement on a sure, though arduous, path. This was the 1920 letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere*.⁹ Prior to the time the encyclical was written, relations were being cultivated between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and various churches, such as the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the Episcopal Church in the USA.¹⁰

The first secretary general of the World Council of Churches, Willem Visser 't Hooft was correct in describing this encyclical as “an initiative which was without precedent in church history.”¹¹ Very importantly, this encyclical makes use of the New Testament word *κοινωνία* (fellowship) four times, albeit with various meanings throughout the encyclical itself.¹² It proposes the creation of a “league of churches,” in parallel to the then recently established League of Nations.¹³ Anna Marie Aagaard underscores three interconnected elements in the encyclical which have influenced Orthodox ecumenical thought, even in more recent studies about the Orthodox Churches’ participation in the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See Ecumenical Patriarchate, “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920: Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Constantin G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 40-43; see also Heinz Joachim Held, “Orthodox Participation in the WCC: A Brief History,” *The Ecumenical Review* 55, no. 4 (2003): 295-296.

¹⁰ See Ecumenical Patriarchate, “Encyclical,” 40.

¹¹ See Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, ed., *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 11.

¹² See *ibid.*, footnote no. 1 for more details.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 43; Anna Marie Aagaard, “The Orthodox Churches and the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 51, no. 4 (1999): 340-341.

World Council of Churches in the present day.¹⁴ First, there is the emphasis on “the real interest of each particular church.” Second, doctrinal differences are not an impediment to the rapprochement between the various churches and fellowship between them. The third aspect centred on the manifestation of the Ecumenical Movement, whether it would be envisaged in political terms (as a “league”), in theological terms (as a “fellowship”), or in both.¹⁵ Hence, it becomes certainly the case that the *koinonia* is not envisaged solely in terms of unity across churches but also in terms of fellowship; both are seen as mutual.

A new point of departure with respect to the 1902 encyclical is its understanding of unity with regard to the reunion of the Churches. One can concur with Germanos of Thyateira who, citing the example of Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople (a topic which will be the subject of discussion in chapter 4), accentuates the then position of the Orthodox Church in stressing that:

Although the Orthodox Church considers unity in faith a primary condition of reunion of the Churches, yet it rejects that exclusive theory according to which one Church, regarding itself as the one true Church, insists that those who seek reunion with it shall enter its own realm. Such a conception of reunion, amounting to the absorption of the other Churches, is in every way opposed to the spirit existing in the Orthodox Church, which has always distinguished between unity on the one hand and uniformity on the other.¹⁶

The distinction between unity and uniformity, which is echoed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council pertaining to the ecumenical domain, is not a new concept, but has been endorsed by the Orthodox Church by going back to the events of the first millennium. It entails a careful re-reading of history and discernment in the light of the present circumstances, something which the Catholic Church would pick up only decades later.

It is also significant that the 1920 encyclical highlights areas in which the rapprochement between the churches can take place on various levels, relational, academic and pastoral. It starts by appeal for the abrogation of the “mutual mistrust and bitterness between the

¹⁴ See Aagaard, “The Orthodox Churches and the Ecumenical Movement,” 341.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁶ Germanos of Thyateira, in *The Ecumenical Movement, An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 14.

different churches which arise from the tendency of some of them to entice and proselytise adherents to other confessions.”¹⁷ This refers to the situation at the time, which was having profound repercussions on the Eastern Churches. It will be seen that the aspect of proselytisation, which is taken up later on in the next chapter, has always been a very sensitive issue for the Eastern Orthodox Church, and not always understood as it should have been. A second important aspect underscored by the encyclical is that “love should be rekindled and strengthened among the churches, so that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ”¹⁸

The encyclical then lists some practical endeavours which can be taken up by the different churches in order to enhance the trust among them, apart from getting to know each other more. This includes the proposal of acceptance of a uniform calendar for the celebration of the Christian feasts by all the churches at the same time.¹⁹ The enhancing of relationships between theological schools and professors of theology is encouraged, whereby an exchange of theological and ecclesiastical reviews and other works published by each church is promoted.²⁰ Within this perspective, student exchange between the seminaries of the different churches is encouraged.²¹ Other suggestions include the convocation of pan-Christian conferences to explore common questions pertaining to all churches, the impartial and deeper historical study of doctrinal differences, respect for the traditions and practices within different churches, finding a solution to the situation of mixed marriages within the different confessions, and so on.²²

It must be borne in mind that Eastern Orthodoxy itself was affected by various developments which were unfolding in Europe such as the Second World War and later the beginning of Communist rule in Eastern Europe.²³ The election of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople in 1948 helped to ease matters, especially since his policy was that of greater cooperation both within Orthodoxy itself and also between Orthodoxy

¹⁷ Ecumenical Patriarchate, “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920,” 41.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ See *ibid.*, 42.

²¹ See *ibid.*

²² See *ibid.*

²³ See Istavridis, “The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement,” 289-230.

and the other Churches and ecclesial communities.²⁴ This took form in various Pan-Orthodox Conferences held at Rhodes (1961, 1963, 1964) where there were agreements in favour of dialogue with other Churches and ecclesial communities.²⁵ Thus, it can be argued that “the attitude towards the Ecumenical Movement was affirmative and hopeful.”²⁶

Representatives of local Orthodox Churches participated in the preparatory meetings leading to the conferences on the Life and Work Commission, in Stockholm in 1925, and in Oxford in 1937, and also the Faith and Order Commission, in Lausanne in 1927, and in Edinburgh, in 1937.²⁷ When these two movements were unified to form the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, several Orthodox Churches participated, though other churches remained reticent and quite antagonistic towards the Ecumenical Movement, most probably due to the influence and pressures wrought by post-war communist regimes.²⁸ The Orthodox Church of Russia could not yet become a member, owing to its total isolation and persecution.²⁹ The decline to participate in the newly founded WCC on the part of these churches, among them, the Russian Orthodox Church, owing to various misconceptions, “showed lack of knowledge of the nature and work of the World Council of Churches.”³⁰

However, by 1961, many of these churches joined the WCC. Orthodox presence and participation gradually increased.³¹ Yet, is an acknowledged fact that the Orthodox participation in the WCC was not without its own problems, especially in more recent years in relation to its voice being lost among the multitude of Protestant churches and also their concern about the ecclesiological vision inculcated within the WCC and also certain “modernist” theological language espoused within the dogmatic thinking of various Protestant member churches (though these issues lie beyond the scope of this

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 230.

²⁵ See *ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See Held, “Orthodox Participation in the WCC,” 296.

²⁸ See Chrysostomos, “Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement,” 334.

²⁹ See Held, “Orthodox Participation in the WCC,” 296.

³⁰ Istavridis, “The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968,” 304.

³¹ For more detail regarding Orthodox participation from 1948-1968 see *ibid.*, especially pages 303-307.

thesis).³² Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that it has striven to cultivate good relationships with the other churches and ecclesial realities, without compromising on its own tenets, best summed up by Metropolitan Chrysostomos himself: “Isolation and self-limitation do not constitute a goal for our church. Bearing witness to anyone who asks about the truth and the hope that is in us, about grace and doctrine, represents a principal task for our church.”³³

2.03 The Position of the Roman Catholic Church

It would seem surprising that the Roman Catholic Church, the church with the greatest number of adherents, remained at the backwater of the Ecumenical Movement in its early stages. Looking at the origins of the Ecumenical Movement which started in the twentieth century, this happened outside the confines of the Catholic Church.³⁴ The Protestants, and later the Orthodox, became actively involved in the Ecumenical Movement. 1948 was an important event for ecumenical matters because, as affirmed earlier, that was when the World Council of Churches was founded. While the Catholic Church observed its development, it remained detached from it. During the eight days of prayer for Christian Unity in January of each year, Roman Catholics prayed for the return of the Protestants to the true Catholic Church and the end of the Orthodox schism.³⁵ To this day, even after the embrace of ecumenism heralded by the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches, though it is involved in a Joint Working Group which has existed for over fifty years, and meets once a year in plenary session.³⁶

³² Held examines the details of the Orthodox positive and, also uneasy, perception of the WCC, together with its contributions and also the reasons for the discomfort on the part of the Orthodox Churches. See “Orthodox Participation in the WCC,” 298-306.

³³ Chrysostomos, “Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement,” 332.

³⁴ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 52.

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ The beginnings of the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church are explained at length by Lukas Vischer in his chapter “The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol 2, ed. Harold Fey (Eugene/OR: World Council Publications, 2004), 313-352; also Annemarie C. Mayer explores the facts around the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in “An Instrument of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches,” *The Ecumenical Review* 70, no. 3 (2018): 526-552.

Though the unfolding of history did prove to be much different, the earlier involvements of the Roman Catholic Church within the arena of ecumenism were fraught with hesitation and suspicion. It must also be borne in mind that a few decades before the origins of the Ecumenical Movement, the First Vatican Council was convened. This served to cement the important position of the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the First Vatican Council needs a re-appraisal against a context where various threats were endangering the position of the Roman Catholic Church. Far from being an excuse to justify the stance taken by the latter, it is useful to see things in a critical way so as to understand the various actions taken by different churches. A re-appraisal of history is necessary in order to put things into perspective and see how history can be embraced in order to come to terms with the understanding of how things stand.

To return to the First Vatican Council, this council is chiefly remembered for its highly debated doctrine on the infallibility of the pope. However, in the light of what has been argued earlier, this demands a re-reading of the First Vatican Council against its wider ecclesiological context and its particular circumstances.³⁷ The French Revolution had left a great impact on such an entrenched current as Gallicanism.³⁸ However, the influence of the turbulent events in France extended to the widespread collapse of the monarchic system and the emergence of the nation states.³⁹ In the promulgation of its dogma, the Council was battling, among other things, Gallicanism which sought the dominance of the State over the Church,⁴⁰ and as a result,

Catholic laypeople and clergy in Europe were striving for a strengthening of the papacy because they saw it as the only hope of protecting the church against encroachments by the evolving nation states insisting on their absolute sovereignty towards church and pope.⁴¹

On the other hand, Farrugia suggests that parallel to the assumption of Gallicanism, especially the Fourth Gallican Article, the development of a “magisterium-less sobornost” by Khomiakov, “whose ultimate criterion for truth was reception by the

³⁷ See Walter Kasper, “Petrine Ministry and Synodality,” *The Jurist* 66 (2006), 301.

³⁸ Edward G. Farrugia, “Vatican I and the Ecclesiological Context in East and West,” *Gregorianum* 92, no.3 (2011): 452.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, 453.

⁴⁰ See Hermann J. Pottmeyer, “The Petrine Ministry: Vatican I in the Light of Vatican II,” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 65 (2004): 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

people,” was a dangerous idea which had to be tackled by the Council.⁴² Hence, the circumstances leading to the First Vatican Council were complex indeed.

This helps one to realise, therefore, that the reaction by the Catholic Church in front of the nascent Ecumenical Movement, did not mean a disinterest in the nascent Movement on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. On a personal level, there was a gradual interest in the other Christians on the part of the popes.⁴³ There were signs of encouragement by Popes Leo XIII (1878-1903), and Benedict XV (1914-1922), who in their writings and actions showed a desire for Christian unity.⁴⁴ In his apostolic exhortations *Praeclara gratulationis* (1894), *Unitatis christianae* (1895), and the encyclical *Satis cognitum* (1896), Pope Leo XIII expressed his pronouncements in favour of Christian unity.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, for all good intents and purposes, the unity of Christians as envisaged at this time was envisaged in terms of “... a return to that community governed by bishops in communion with the successor to Peter.”⁴⁶ This is so especially in the light of the importance attached to the structures of episcopacy and primacy as stemming from Christ’s will itself.⁴⁷ A glance at the same *Satis Cognitum* should suffice, where the prevailing style in these Papal documents is crystallised in such terminology as: “If those about to come back to their most loving Mother ...”⁴⁸

Pope Benedict XV advanced his relationship especially with the Orthodox, founding the Pontifical Oriental Institute and the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in 1917, apart from helping Russian Orthodox clergy and faithful after the war.⁴⁹

The aura of suspicion was not relieved, however. An important case in point is the publication of Pope Pius XI’s (1922-1939) encyclical *Mortalium animos* (1928), which reiterated the return to the Catholic Church as the solution to the division within

⁴² See Farrugia, “Vatican I and the Ecclesiological Context,” 467.

⁴³ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 257.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 258-259; Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 53.

⁴⁵ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 259; see Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*: Encyclical Letter on the Unity of the Church, 29 June 1896 (West Monroe/LA: Athanasius Press, 2016).

⁴⁶ William Henn, “*Ut unum sint* and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 2 (2000): 234.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*, 1.

⁴⁹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 260.

Christendom.⁵⁰ Ecumenical gatherings were seen in a bad light, as confounding the position of the Catholic Church.⁵¹ As a result, the Catholic faithful were prohibited from participating in such gatherings.⁵² On a practical level, however, Pius XI encouraged the studies on orthodoxy and oriental Christianity. This is especially evident in the encyclical *Rerum orientalium*.⁵³

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) developed the doctrine of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Church of Christ in *Mystici corporis* (1943) and in *Humani generis* (1950).⁵⁴ Here, the Church of Christ is identified with the Roman Catholic Church,⁵⁵ to the detriment of all the other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.⁵⁶ As Murphy states: “The encyclical’s identification of the visible, Roman Church with Christ’s Eucharistic body gave no ecclesial status to non-Catholic Christians.”⁵⁷ The then cardinal Ratzinger also criticised the legal vision ascribed to the Catholic Church.⁵⁸

On the other hand, the pontificate of Pope Pius XII can be credited with an important step forward for the Catholics within the ecumenical arena. In 1949, one witnesses the publication of the *Instruction* titled *Ecclesia catholica*, which granted permission for the Catholic faithful to participate in gatherings with the other Christian faithful, albeit with a certain reserve.⁵⁹ Whatever its limitations, especially its restrictiveness, this is, nevertheless, an important step forward because it attests to the seriousness with which

⁵⁰ See Pius XI, *Mortalium animos*: Encyclical on Religious Unity, 6 January 1928 (Kansas City/MO: Angelus Press, 1998); see also Henn, “*Ut unum sint* and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism,” 234.

⁵¹ See Pius XI, *Mortalium animos*, 8; Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 260.

⁵² See Pius XI, *Mortalium animos*, 10; see also Paul D. Murray, “Vatican II: On Celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and Ecumenical,” *The Second Vatican Council: Celebrating its Achievements and the Future*, ed. Gavin D’Costa and Emma Jane Harris (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 92.

⁵³ See Pius XI, *Rerum orientalium*: Encyclical on the Promotion of Oriental Studies, 8 September 1928., *Vatican Website*, 13 July, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280908_rerum-orientalium.html.

⁵⁴ See Pius XII, *Mystici corporis christi*: Encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ, 29 June 1943, (Mahwah/NJ: Paulist Press, 1970); idem. *Humani generis*: Concerning some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine, *Vatican Website*, 12 August, 1950, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, *Mystici corporis*, par. 13.

⁵⁶ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 261.

⁵⁷ Francesca Aran Murphy, “De Lubac, Ratzinger and von Balthasar: A Communal Adventure in Ecclesiology,” in *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Christopher Asprey (Aldershot, Hampshire/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 47.

⁵⁸ See Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology*, trans. Robert Nowell and Fridesiwide Sandeman (Slough: St Paul Publications/NY: Crossroad, 1988), 15.

⁵⁹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 262.

the Ecumenical Movement was being taken.⁶⁰ It has to be said that spiritual gestures contributed to a gradual acceptance by the Roman Catholic side. These include the commitment of Abbé Paul Couturier and his emphasis on “spiritual ecumenism,” especially evident in the Week of Christian Unity, itself a more universal development on Paul Wattson’s Catholic Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity.⁶¹ This attests, therefore, to a gradual openness by the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenical dialogue, in preparation for the full embrace of the Ecumenical Movement brought by the Second Vatican Council.

2.04 The Second Vatican Council, Ecumenism, and the Council’s Impact on Receptive Ecumenism

While the previous chapter, in section 1.04, looked at the influence of Spiritual Ecumenism vis-à-vis the inception of Receptive Ecumenism, especially the contributions of Couturier and Congar, yet the Second Vatican Council’s long-lasting impact on Receptive Ecumenism has been recognised by Murray, who speaks of its “lineage” within the Second Vatican Council.⁶² Indeed, he acknowledges that “the same deeply Vatican II-mediated Christocentric cosmology and correlative openness to appropriate learning across difference lies at the heart of Receptive Ecumenism.”⁶³ Also, this serves to cement the relevance and importance of Receptive Ecumenism. So, rather than a short-term strategy, Receptive Ecumenism can lay claim to bridging tradition with transition. The fact that Spiritual Ecumenism becomes central to the whole Ecumenical Movement has an immediate resonance with Receptive Ecumenism. Also, as Antonia Pizzey points out, “Receptive Ecumenism is in clear continuity with Vatican II, and acts as something of a reception of Council teaching for the contemporary context.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*

⁶¹ See Murray, “Vatican II,” 92; see also Geoffrey Curtis, *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1964).

⁶² See Paul D. Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism,” *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 81; see also Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, vol. 7, *Brill’s Studies in Catholic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 79.

⁶³ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 82.

⁶⁴ Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 88.

With the promulgation of the decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* on the 21st November, 1964 came the official Catholic endorsement of ecumenism from its highest authorities. Although this occurred after Pope John XXIII had passed away, he can rightly be called the spiritual father of the decree on ecumenism.⁶⁵ He announced the convocation of the Second Vatican Council at the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on the 25th January, 1959.⁶⁶ On Pope John XXIII, Kasper goes on to state: “it was he who wanted the council and who defined its aim, the renewal within the Catholic Church and the unity of Christians.”⁶⁷ Ecumenism was, thus, at the forefront of the Council.

The key word which encapsulates the aim of the Council is that of *aggiornamento*, a term which can be roughly translated as “renewal.” A most poignant description of this term is given by Annemarie Mayer, who describes it in the following way:

It does not simply mean adapting to today. It means making Tradition, understood as the truth that has been believed thus far, present in its newness, thus making it also true and authoritative in the future. Such truth is put into a new light and into a more comprehensive horizon; it shines anew and so becomes, in a certain sense, newly visible.⁶⁸

This renewal entailed *ressourcement*, going back to the sources of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers, “... so that the old, original and lastingly valid *Traditio* does not appear old but newly asserts itself as the message of the Gospel. This Gospel is never just familiar, but also eternally new.”⁶⁹ It was thus acknowledged that the Church was in need of renewal, a renewal which entailed going back to the original roots, in order to discover itself anew. As Rossi puts it, ecumenism lies at the crossroads between the waves of *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*: “the urgency of unity and communion lie at the roots

⁶⁵ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 53.

⁶⁶ See Marcelo Barros, “El ecumenismo y los 50 años del Vaticano II,” *Horizonte* 9, no. 24 (2011): 1222.

⁶⁷ Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*. The original text in Italian is the following: “... è lui che ha voluto il concilio e che ne definì lo scopo, il rinnovamento all’interno della Chiesa cattolica e l’unità dei cristiani,” 53. See also Barros, “El ecumenismo,” 1222.

⁶⁸ Annemarie C. Mayer, “The Second Vatican Council 50th anniversary: Visions and Re-visions,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 14, no. 4 (2014): 338.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

of the Christian message but the reality of the Ecumenical Movement and theology are the innovation received by the Council.”⁷⁰

However, as Kasper points out,

When the Catholic Church embraced the Ecumenical Movement at the Second Vatican Council, it was only possible because it had been preceded by a radical consideration of the essential nature of catholicity, carried out by theologians like Henri de Lubac, in his 1938 work *Catholicisme*, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthasar and many others.⁷¹

Apart from being a much-needed breath of fresh air for the Church, the Council can be considered from many aspects as the most Catholic Council (in the original meaning of the word “catholic”).⁷² Many exterior aspects of the Council seemed to hint at the direction it was taking. To start with, Vatican II was “catholic” in a far more geographically universal scope than any of the previous Councils.⁷³ Some women were invited, along with those who had once been ordered to be silent, namely, such illustrious people as Congar and Murray.⁷⁴ The progress of the events of the Council was to be monitored by many groups; among them was the World Council of Churches.⁷⁵

Perhaps the most important aspect was the invitation of non-Roman Catholics to share in the work of the Council as observers. Gradually their number was increased during the following sessions; moreover, they were not relegated to the task of just observing events, but were encouraged to comment.⁷⁶ In Norwood’s own words:

Rome found it hard, and still finds it hard, to admit that she needs help from any other church or ecclesial community. But she no longer claims that the Roman Catholic Church is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of the ecumenical creed without, so to speak,

⁷⁰ Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 340: “l’esigenza di unità e di comunione è all’origine del messaggio Cristiano, ma la realtà del Movimento e della teologia ecumenici è una novità accolta dal concilio.”

⁷¹ 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, 2010), 79.

⁷² See Donald W. Norwood, “Vatican II: The Most Catholic Council?” in *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 4(2014): 421.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 422.

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 423.

⁷⁵ For more details see Lukas Vischer, “The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement. Volume 2: 1948-1968*, ed. Harold E. Fey (Eugene/OR: World Council of Churches Publications, 2004), 313-340.

⁷⁶ See Norwood, “Vatican II,” 424-425.

remainder. She is more so than any other church, but does not occupy all the space afforded by the description in the creed.⁷⁷

This is especially hinted at by the crucial term “subsistit in,” to be explored in a later section of this chapter. To conclude, the Council and its aftermath can be described as a “shift from denominational to ecumenical sensibility.”⁷⁸ This, indeed, is evident in various aspects, such as an increase of interchurch outreach in aspects of social domains, the establishment and growth of interchurch dialogues, most notably the bilateral dialogues.⁷⁹

2.04.01 *Unitatis redintegratio*

The invitations for renewal and reform which are made in *Unitatis redintegratio* correspond to the motives in Receptive Ecumenism. The individual Churches and traditions are empowered to bring about change from within by undergoing a radical conversion. This is corroborated by Murray who argues that “Vatican II maintains an appropriate orientation to receptive ecumenical learning on Catholicism’s behalf.”⁸⁰ Moreover, “it is clear recognition that Catholicism is itself engaged on a continuing story of reform, growth, and renewal.”⁸¹

Unitatis redintegratio can be considered as the basis of Catholic doctrine on ecumenism and the “magna carta” for the Roman Catholic Church’s entry into the modern Ecumenical Movement.⁸² It resulted, in turn, in other important documents, the most important being the *Directory for the application of norms and principles for ecumenism* (1993), and St John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995). Hence, there are complementary documents, albeit of a diverse nature; the latter two documents reiterate and develop the doctrine set forth in *Unitatis redintegratio*.⁸³ From now onwards, the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 425-426.

⁷⁸ See Lorelei F. Fuchs, “Introduction to the NAAE 2012 Presentations: ‘The Ecumenical Legacy of the Second Vatican Council, 50 Years Later,’” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2013): 145.

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Murray, “On Celebrating Vatican II,” 96.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² See Michael Putney, “A Roman Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Ecclesiology* 2, no. 2 (2006): 180.

⁸³ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 343.

ecumenical path trodden by the Catholic Church has become irreversible and irrevocable.⁸⁴ Ecumenism has been at the centre of the pontificates of the subsequent popes, Benedict XVI, and the present pope, Francis.

Thus, ecumenism, far, from being a mere addendum to other matters, immortalised in the general public's excitement at the meeting of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem, in January 1964, has acquired a centripetal force within the Church, especially integrated within the eschatological dynamic of the Church expressed in *Lumen gentium*, paragraph 2. This notion has been more recently reiterated by Pope John Paul II himself, in stating that rather than an appendix, the Ecumenical Movement "... is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature."⁸⁵

The importance of ecumenism acquires a whole new perspective when it is made evident that the decree on ecumenism should be read together with the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen gentium*.⁸⁶ As Mayer points out: "... one is the hermeneutical key to the other."⁸⁷ This serves to dispel some thoughts that the doctrine on ecumenism is relegated to a decree, of a more limited doctrinal perspective than a dogmatic constitution. On the contrary, *Unitatis redintegratio* explains and completes *Lumen gentium*.⁸⁸ *Unitatis redintegratio* indicates the direction which the assertions in *Lumen gentium* should take, that is, within an ecumenical openness which is theologically responsible.⁸⁹ Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II openly associated *Unitatis redintegratio* with *Lumen gentium*.⁹⁰ As Cardinal Koch notes, this becomes especially obvious not only with regard to the fact that both documents were promulgated together on the same day, but also on the fact that *Unitatis redintegratio*, especially its first chapter, is directly linked to *Lumen gentium*.⁹¹

⁸⁴ See Putney, "A Roman Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 180; John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), par. 3.

⁸⁵ *UUS*, 20.

⁸⁶ See Kurt Koch, "Prospettive ecumeniche nella costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa," *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 39, no. 2 (2014): 519; Mayer, "The Second Vatican Council 50th anniversary," 340; see also Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 348.

⁸⁷ Mayer, "The Second Vatican Council 50th Anniversary," 340.

⁸⁸ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 38.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰ See Koch "Prospettive ecumeniche," 519.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*

Hence, coupled with *Lumen gentium*, *Unitatis redintegratio* is without doubt a milestone in the self-perception of the Church vis-à-vis the other Christian Churches and traditions. With reference to *Unitatis redintegratio*, Patrice Mahieu notes how “an Orthodox will quickly perceive how the Catholic Church understands itself and how it understands other Christian families, starting with the Orthodox Church.”⁹²

Unitatis redintegratio speaks of the Church founded by Christ, a pilgrim church in a state of growth and maturity as it moves towards her final destination to the house of the Father.⁹³ The journey upon which the Church has embarked presupposes a dynamic reality; this brings forth the eschatological dimension of the Church, whereby it is on a journey between the “here and now” and the “not yet.”⁹⁴ The notions of “journey” or “pilgrim” are found in, for example, *Lumen gentium* 2, 8, 9, and *Unitatis redintegratio* 2, 6. This characteristic of the Church is particularly important for Murray since, as Antonia Pizzey states, he “grounds Receptive Ecumenism within Vatican II, particularly the ecumenical principles of *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium*’s ecclesiological teachings about the church’s pilgrim nature.”⁹⁵

Ecumenism, is, therefore, integrated within this eschatological dynamic, wherein it asserts a prominent role in the drama of the Church’s journey towards its final destination.⁹⁶ Ecumenism, thus, becomes an integral part in the organic life of the Church and its pastoral activity, an aspect also reiterated in *Ut unum sint*.⁹⁷

This Church described in *Unitatis redintegratio* is not identified solely with the Roman Catholic Church, though the very fullness of grace and truth have been entrusted to the

⁹² Patrice Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l’unité: La Commission Internationale Catholique-Orthodoxe, 1975-2000* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2016), 34. The original text, in French, runs thus: “Un orthodoxe percevra rapidement comment l’Église catholique se comprend et comment elle comprend les autres familles chrétiennes, à commencer par l’Église orthodoxe.”

⁹³ See 1 Pt 1, 3-9; *UR*, 2; Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen Gentium*:’ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 8.

⁹⁴ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 54.

⁹⁵ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 88.

⁹⁶ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 54..

⁹⁷ *UUS*, 9, 20.

Catholic Church.⁹⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ is the *Una Sancta*, whereby Christ “perfects his people’s fellowship in unity: in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God.”⁹⁹ Moreover, “the pilgrim nature of the Church links with the Council’s 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.”¹⁰⁰ In its sojourn on this earth, it is entrusted with the mission of proclaiming the “gospel of peace to all mankind.”¹⁰¹ The deep communion of the body of Christ – *koinonia* – is a gift bestowed upon by God, and at the same time is a call to which the Churches must respond if they are ever to strive towards a full visible unity, disrupted by the wounds and hurts, the result of historical conflicts.¹⁰²

All those who have received the sacrament of baptism are called “brothers.”¹⁰³ The mark of baptism conferred upon the individual is an indelible mark which marks one’s inclusion within this one Church of Christ. To quote *Unitatis redintegratio* again: “For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.”¹⁰⁴

It is acknowledged that it is the Holy Spirit “... who brings about that marvellous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church’s unity.”¹⁰⁵ While the Church labours for the communion of the faithful, it is only the Holy Spirit who can bring it to fruition.¹⁰⁶ This would serve to humble the community of the faithful who recognize that while they are entrusted with a marvellous mission, at the same time it is realized that only God is the sole initiator and at the end of the whole process. All of the Church’s efforts are brought about by God and lead to him alone. This does not render the faithful passive. Rather, under the influence of the outpouring of grace by the Holy Spirit, Catholics are exhorted to “recognize the

⁹⁸ See *UR*, 3.

⁹⁹ *UR*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 89.

¹⁰¹ *UR*, 2.

¹⁰² See Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 344.

¹⁰³ See *UR*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *UR*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ See also Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 90.

signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.”¹⁰⁷ Hence, through dialogue, the Holy Spirit can lead the Catholic Church itself to a gradual perfection within both spiritual and ecclesial perspectives.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, the Holy Spirit, in his ever-creative force endows the members of the Church of Christ with “... various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries”¹⁰⁹ for its enrichment. While the Catholic Church is the full means of salvation, the separated Churches and ecclesial communities “... have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation.”¹¹⁰ Rather:

... some, even very many, of the most significant elements, or endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church herself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements.¹¹¹

On her part, the Catholic Church herself is made up of sinners, hence the image of the pilgrim church is so apt. Thus, this statement does not simply speak about the relevance of the other traditions, but it also says a lot about the Catholic Church herself. Indeed, as Murray states:

These ecclesial elements are significant for Catholicism itself, not simply for the status of the other traditions, for the divisions prevent the Catholic Church “from realizing in practice the fullness of catholicity proper to her” (UR, 4). Indeed, some of these ecclesial elements may have come to fuller flower in the other traditions than they have been able to do within Catholicism: “anything wrought by the grace of the holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated fellow Christians can be a help to our own edification. . . it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the church” (UR, 4).¹¹²

The Church is on her path towards ultimate union with God, but this journey is riddled with structures of sin, which are found among all Christians. “As a result, the radiance of the Church’s face shines less brightly in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God’s kingdom is retarded.”¹¹³ Analogous to the Lord’s

¹⁰⁷ UR, 4.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, 3; see Putney, “A Roman Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 181.

¹⁰⁹ UR, 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 84.

¹¹³ UR, 4.

Prayer, the decree exhorts all the faithful to ask God's forgiveness, "... just as we forgive those who trespass against us."¹¹⁴ Rather than envisaging the Catholic Church as the sole church making up the Church of Christ, it must be borne in mind that other Churches are also endowed with attributes stemming from a common heritage which can certainly serve to perfect the Catholic Church herself.¹¹⁵ This modest attitude on the part of the Catholic Church, while surprising in the light of earlier documents, attests to the fact that the Catholic Church has come a long way since the promulgations of Vatican Council I.

Throughout *Unitatis redintegratio* there is a lot of emphasis on renewal, conversion, and the notion of a change of heart.¹¹⁶ "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth."¹¹⁷ Indeed, this renewal, or "spiritual ecumenism" is what constitutes the soul of the entire Ecumenical Movement.¹¹⁸ Renewal is both *ad intra* and *ad extra*.¹¹⁹ This goes hand in hand with the image of the Church as a pilgrim. It is this notion of *ecclesia semper purificanda*, "this ecclesiological shift, from perfect society to pilgrim church, which allows discussion of the need for interior reform and opens the door to Spiritual and Receptive Ecumenism."¹²⁰ There can be no growth without renewal and transformation. Koch gives a thorough explanation on what real conversion entails:

In the first place, [real conversion] is not about the others' conversion, but one's own conversion, which entails the acknowledging of one's weaknesses and faults in a critical manner. Such a conversion requires, above all, the constant effort of putting the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a measure, and the willingness to restore that unity which has already been given by Christ in faith. This, in the light of conciliar ecclesiology, constitutes the real meaning of "unitatis redintegratio."¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁶ See Augustin Bea, *The Way to Unity after the Council* (London/Dublin/Melbourne: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 56-60.

¹¹⁷ *UR*, 6.

¹¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁹ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 12.

¹²⁰ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 88.

¹²¹ Koch, "Prospettive ecumeniche," 524. The text in Italian runs thus: "In primo luogo, non si tratta della conversione degli altri, ma della propria, che presuppone la disponibilità a riconoscere in maniera critica le proprie debolezze e le proprie mancanze. Tale conversione richiede soprattutto lo sforzo costante di prendere come metro di misura il Vangelo di Gesù Cristo e la volontà di ripristinare quell'unità che ci è già donata nella fede in Gesù Cristo. Questo, alla luce dell'ecclesiologia conciliare, è il vero senso di 'unitatis redintegratio.'"

This is very much in line with Receptive Ecumenism, since “*Unitatis redintegratio* professes the Catholic Church’s real need for renewal and conversion, but without compromising its integrity.”¹²² Most importantly, as asserted in chapter 1 of the thesis, “Receptive Ecumenism does not seek the elimination of differences but rather that, through learning from others, a tradition may become more deeply itself.”¹²³ The Roman Catholic Church, in this case, becomes more fully Catholic as it accepts the grace to renew herself and be open to transformation. Thus, Receptive Ecumenism, in line with this important thread from Couturier and Congar, to the Second Vatican Council, really underscores the importance of the practical aspect in doing theology. Conversion is a way not only of dealing with oneself but also in relation to others. Within the ecumenical arena, this acquires a tremendous force. It comes as no surprise that, in line with Spiritual Ecumenism, this should be pivotal in Receptive Ecumenism.

Participation in the Ecumenical Movement entails a new way of seeing things, the shedding of certain perspectives which might have been inculcated as undisputable truths, such as the formulations of certain doctrines, themselves distinct from the deposit of faith itself.¹²⁴ The decree attests to various forms of renewal within the Church itself,¹²⁵ and fifty years later it can be positively stated that this renewal is still going on, in response to the signs of the times. A renewed Church would certainly contribute much to the Ecumenical Movement. A transformed Church would view the other with a new perspective, most importantly in line with its mission, in recognising that it is at the service of the other, “and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them.”¹²⁶ The Church is invited to an ongoing transformation along the lines of the Sermon of the Mount (Mt 5, 3-12; see also Mt 18, 1-5). This change can only be brought through incessant prayer to the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷

¹²² Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 87.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ See *UR*, 6.

¹²⁵ See *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See *UR*, 7; see also *UUS*, 21-27.

The importance of ecumenical dialogue cannot be stressed enough. “Dialogue” is one of the key words in *Unitatis redintegratio*. Kasper gives one of the most beautiful descriptions of dialogue within ecumenism. Thus, he says:

Dialogue means listening to truth revealed in Jesus Christ, common listening to the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and witnessed in holy scriptures and Traditions. Dialogue does not produce truth; dialogue discovers the truth, which is given to us once for all in Jesus Christ.¹²⁸

It goes without saying that without dialogue there is no ecumenism. This important factor has been recognised by many theologians, and the notion of dialogue itself has been explored in depth, from various perspectives.¹²⁹ The history of salvation written down in the Scriptures is about God’s dialogue with the human being; the mission of proclaiming the Gospel is about dialogue with the different nations, cultures and philosophies, the most enduring being that of Paul speaking at the Areopagus (Ac 17, 22-34). Christianity is about dialogue between God and humankind. For all human limitations, it is dialogue with other churches and ecclesial communities which helps Christians “to know all the depths and heights of Jesus Christ.”¹³⁰ This, in turn, is as valid for the Roman Catholic Church as it is valid for the other churches and ecclesial communities. Hence, one cannot but agree with Putney in saying that:

Only through dialogue will it [the Roman Catholic Church] hear the call to conversion and receive the gifts that only other Christians can offer. For the Catholic Church to cease to be involved in ecumenical dialogue would be not just a moral failure, but an ecclesiological breakdown.¹³¹

Engaging in dialogue with other Christians does not mean compromising on one’s tenets of faith. *Unitatis redintegratio* is adamant in its rejection of a false irenicism: “nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false conciliatory approach which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its assured genuine meaning.”¹³² On

¹²⁸ Walter Kasper, “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 8 (2000): 294.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 60-96; important points related to dialogue are listed by Kasper in “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue:” these are “the goal of dialogue,” “dimensions of dialogue,” “structures of dialogue,” “methods of dialogue,” and “personal presuppositions, 296-298.”

¹³⁰ Kasper, “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 294.

¹³¹ Putney, “A Roman Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 179.

¹³² *UR*, 11.

the other hand, "... Catholic belief needs to be explained more profoundly and precisely, in ways and in terminology which our separated brethren too can readily understand."¹³³ The decree also refers to the "hierarchy" of truths in its reference to the task of comparing doctrines.¹³⁴ That is, not all the doctrinal aspects have the same relationship to the foundation of Christian faith.¹³⁵ This attitude is another example of the openness to the other on the part of the Catholic Church. Not only is the Catholic faith not compromised, but bishops are urged to express it differently for the sake of the "other."¹³⁶

The ramifications of *Unitatis redintegratio* for the method of Receptive Ecumenism lie in its dynamism. *Unitatis redintegratio*, as has been made evident, is not simply a foray into an academic exercise of dialogue among equal partners, but a dynamic exchange which enables the churches and traditions to go deeper into the recesses of their souls in their encounter with the other. Its emphasis on the virtue of hope, for example, sits very well within Receptive Ecumenism. The decree covers all facets of the human being, and all that makes the community as a church, hence the "Decree's emphasis on the virtues and the spiritual and affective dimensions of ecumenical engagement resonates clearly within Receptive Ecumenism."¹³⁷

2.04.02 "Subsistit in:" A Mark of Conversion

One of the more well-known terms for which the Second Vatican Council will go down in history is the innovative term "subsistit in." Present in the eighth paragraph of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, this term marks a point of departure from the verb "est," which identifies the Church of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church in such earlier documents as *Mystici corporis* (1943) and *Humani generis* (1950). This change in the verb from "est" to "subsistit in" denotes a development in doctrine; while the former connotes an exclusivity on the part of the Roman Catholic Church in its relation to other churches, the latter opens up a space in its recognition that elements of ecclesiality are

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*

¹³⁵ See *ibid.*

¹³⁶ See Putney, "A Roman Catholic Understanding of Ecumenical Dialogue," 181.

¹³⁷ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 91.

present even in the other churches and ecclesial communities.¹³⁸ This aspect of “subsistit in” is closely linked with what can be called the theology of the “elements,” in connection with the statements of the Council that other elements of ecclesiality pertaining to the Church of Christ can exist outside of the Catholic Church. This is evident in *Lumen gentium* 8, whereby these elements “... possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity.”¹³⁹ This notion is taken up and expanded in *Unitatis redintegratio*, where these elements are also exemplified.¹⁴⁰ The decree on ecumenism expands the doctrine of the elements in *Lumen gentium* in the sense of both a quantitative and a qualitative appraisal of the present elements.¹⁴¹

It might be tempting to argue that this shift in terminology lends itself to the Council’s break with Tradition and the ushering in of a completely different era within the Catholic Church’s thought vis-à-vis its relationship to the different churches and ecclesial communities.¹⁴² This is certainly not the case. Why? *Unitatis redintegratio* still affirms, after all, that “... it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.”¹⁴³ This, might, at face value appear quite insulting to the other churches and ecclesial communities whereby they might be interpreted as being deficient in comparison to the Catholic Church. However, it must be remembered that these rifts and lacerations within the one Church of Christ are a result of the structures of sin, which are found in all Churches and ecclesial communities. As Kasper asserts, in making references to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s declaration regarding the Catholic doctrine on the Church vis-à-vis the contemporary world, *Mysterium ecclesiae* 1 (24 June 1973), for example, the Church of Christ exists concretely in history, and is likewise concretely located in the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁴

Unitatis redintegratio hints that under the present conditions of division, the Catholic Church itself cannot attain fully her own catholicity.¹⁴⁵ This notion is taken up in *Ut*

¹³⁸ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 348; *UR*, 3.

¹³⁹ *LG*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ See *UR*, 3.

¹⁴¹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 356-357.

¹⁴² See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 53.

¹⁴³ *UR*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 59; Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 349.

¹⁴⁵ See *UR*, 4; Kasper, “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 294.

unum sint. This is where dialogue with the other churches and ecclesial communities comes in. When the unity of the churches comes about, there will no longer be the need for “subsistit in” because then the visage of the Church of Christ would be complete and Christ would be present fully in the all-encompassing Church of Christ, which goes beyond solely the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Protestant communities, etc., but these would reside in her, fully united together. Again, Murray’s conviction is a step in the right direction, namely that:

From the Roman Catholic perspective, for example, 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.¹⁴⁶

Hence, the identity of the Catholic Church is not at stake here, lest the Ecumenical Movement be seen by some as jeopardising the core identity of the Catholic Church itself! What is innovative is its assertion that the other Churches and ecclesial communities play an important role in the narrative of salvation of humanity starting, in this case, with the transformation of the Catholic Church herself, through encounter and dialogue, as echoed in the previous section. As Murray argues,

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.¹⁴⁷

Hence, it can be affirmed that the Council did lead to the beginning of something new, but not in the way many would have interpreted it (a break with the past and all it represented), but in the presentation of a renewed Church, a humble Church which acknowledges the operative presence of the Church of Christ within the other churches and ecclesial communities, while also acknowledging the structures of sin within the Church itself.¹⁴⁸ This Church, “embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy

¹⁴⁶ Paul D. Murray, “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), 16.

¹⁴⁷ Murray, “Families of Receptive Theological Learning,” 85.

¹⁴⁸ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 59, 60.

and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal.”¹⁴⁹

The fact that “subsistit in” is also present in *Dignitatis humanae*, paragraph 1, attests to the centrality of ecumenism to the Council and the Catholic Church itself.¹⁵⁰ The Church’s response to the Ecumenical Movement is, therefore, not a peripheral stance taken to appease the stakeholders in the Ecumenical Movement outside of the Roman Catholic Church, but an integral part of the Church’s very being; the Church, which acknowledges a constant need of renewal and purification in its journey – a humble Church, which in reply to Jesus’ calling must faithfully forsake all that is superfluously deemed important in order to follow Christ’s enduring invitation to salvation, in order to extend it to all structures of humanity.

2.04.03 Afanasiev and de Lubac in “dialogue:” Eucharistic Ecclesiology

The Church, as a pilgrim Church, is always in need of conversion and, thus, in the process of conversion, following in the steps of Christ, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. As the Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov affirms: “The Church of Christ is not an institution ... it is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵¹

One of the hallmarks of the recent centuries has been the retrieval of a eucharistic ecclesiology. Since the eucharist presupposes a complete *koinonia*, eucharistic ecclesiology is inextricably bound with the so-called “communio” ecclesiology.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *LG*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ See Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis humanae*: Declaration on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious, *Vatican Website*, 7 December, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

¹⁵¹ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 1.

¹⁵² Andrew Louth sees in “eucharistic ecclesiology” an example of Receptive Ecumenism between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, an opinion with which one concurs. This is a striking example of how the process of reception underscores ecumenism. See “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 Murray, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 370.

Henri de Lubac can be credited with being one of its founding figures. In his magisterial work *Corpus Mysticum*, de Lubac seeks to recover the ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist and the true meaning behind the term “mystical body of Christ,” a term which was initially associated with the Eucharist, rather than the Church itself.¹⁵³ As the veritable mystical body of Christ, the Eucharist is accorded a central position in the Christian community. Hence de Lubac’s most famous axiom: “The Eucharist makes the Church.”¹⁵⁴ As a result, he urges a return to the ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist, that which builds and shapes the Church.¹⁵⁵ This attests to the dynamic interaction between the Eucharist and the Church, a Eucharist “which does not simply look at the past, at the cross of Christ, but is oriented towards a future, on which depends the edification of the Church and the advent of ‘Truth.’”¹⁵⁶

However, it was an Orthodox theologian, Nicholas Afanasiev, who coined the term “eucharistic ecclesiology.” Taking his cue from the Slavophile school with Khomiakov at the helm and with its emphasis on *sobornost*, Afanasiev developed the eucharistic ecclesiology. Both Khomiakov and Afanasiev “develop a theology of the Church based on koinonia; this ecclesial koinonia is manifested supremely in the Eucharist.”¹⁵⁷ Afanasiev and, eventually, Zizioulas trace their thoughts to St Ignatius of Antioch in making the Eucharist at the centre of their doctrine of the Church.¹⁵⁸ As Ware points out, “It is the Eucharist that creates the unity of the Church. Unity is not imposed from the outside by the power of jurisdiction, but created from within by communion in the Body and Blood of Christ.”¹⁵⁹ Similarly to de Lubac, Afanasiev asserts that the link between the Eucharist and the Church would inevitably lead to the link between the Eucharist and

¹⁵³ See Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum: l’eucaristia e la chiesa nel medioevo*, trans. Luigi Rosadoni (Torino: Piero Gribaudi, 1968), 27-58; Paul McPartlan, “The Body of Christ and the Ecumenical Potential of Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” *Ecclesiology* 6 (2008): 159-161.

¹⁵⁴ De Lubac, *Corpus mysticum*, 126.

¹⁵⁵ See McPartlan, “The Body of Christ,” 68.

¹⁵⁶ De Lubac, *Corpus mysticum*, 94. The available text, in Italian, runs thus: “Infatti l’Eucaristia non è soltanto rivolta verso il passato, in dipendenza dal Calvario. È rivolta anche verso l’avvenire, verso un avvenire che dipende da essa: l’edificazione della Chiesa e l’avvento della ‘Verità’.”

¹⁵⁷ Kallistos Ware, “Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology: Aleksei Khomiakov and his successors,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 2-3 (2011): 218.

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 227.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 226.

the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ Also, the communal aspect is a direct result of these links as the three persons of the Holy Trinity itself are envisaged as participating in the Eucharist.

Afanasiév makes a distinction between “universal ecclesiology” and “eucharistic ecclesiology,” retracing his steps to the ancient Church Fathers.¹⁶¹ Based on the “world-wide” theory of the Church formulated by Cyprian of Carthage, universal ecclesiology espouses the notion of the Church as “a single organic whole, including in it itself all church units of any kind, especially those headed by bishops.”¹⁶² The Roman Catholic Church would fit this description. Afanasiév describes why Cyprian’s universal theory of the Church would need a doctrine of universal primacy.¹⁶³ Afanasiév, then, turns to another Church Father, Ignatius, who speaks of the Church of Rome as the Church “which presides in love,” that is, “in the concord based on love between all the local churches,” since “each local church is the Catholic Church and so manifests the Church of God in Christ.”¹⁶⁴ So, here is another concept of the Church, whereby the “Church of Rome indeed has the priority in the whole company of churches united by concord.”¹⁶⁵ Arguing along the lines of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Irenaeus, Afanasiév comes to the conclusion that

The Church of Rome had a special position, and this was not only the result of its actual status in fact; it also implied having a very definite ecclesiological system, which said that each local church was the Church of God in all its fullness. This system is what I have called eucharistic ecclesiology.¹⁶⁶

What certainly stands out in such an analysis is the variation in the theological interpretations of the position of the Church which existed then among the Church Fathers, all persons of great mark and repute. These interpretations were not seen as causing any serious rifts between the local Churches. A look at these possible interpretations, when seen in careful balance against each other, offers a myriad of alternatives which, rather than opposing each other, should be seen espoused as

¹⁶⁰ See McPartlan, “The Body of Christ,” 163.

¹⁶¹ See Nicholas Afanasiév, “The Church which Presides in Love,” in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 92.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ See *ibid.*, 101-102.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 135.

complementary to each other. A careful look at how things evolved within the early and undivided Church goes a long way to a healthy dialogue between both Orthodox and Catholics.

To return to Afanasiev, while certain aspects of Afanasiev's vision are criticised, most notably by Orthodox theologians, such as Zizioulas, what is certain is that Afanasiev's contribution was acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council. This is especially true of *Lumen gentium*, especially paragraph 26, which describes the crucial role of the bishop in the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁶⁷ Afanasiev was even cited in respect to the link between ecclesiology and the Eucharist in the second draft of *De ecclesia*.¹⁶⁸ Thanks to the role played by eminent theologians such as Afanasiev, de Lubac, and later, Zizioulas, the cause of ecumenism has been advanced amongst theologians, so much so, that

This renewed awareness stretches our minds and hearts and places us in a bigger space when speaking of Eucharist, a space in which not only western Christians amongst themselves but also western and eastern Christians have been able to dialogue in recent decades and reach agreements about the Eucharist that were unimaginable fifty years ago.¹⁶⁹

This is especially true of the earlier documents of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which deal with the Eucharist and the Church, documents which shall be brought to the fore in due course. In concord with McPartlan, the retrieval of the ecclesiological, pneumatological, and eschatological aspect of the Eucharist has served to sustain new levels of dialogue.¹⁷⁰ Most importantly, it has served to dwell and stand in adoration of that highest of gifts bestowed by Christ to all, the gift of his body for our nourishment and our growth towards sainthood.

¹⁶⁷ See *LG*, 26, McPartlan, "Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy – The Promise and Challenge of Eucharistic 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), 162.

¹⁶⁸ See McPartlan, "Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy," 162.

¹⁶⁹ *Idem.*, "The Body of Christ," 164.

¹⁷⁰ See *Ibid.*

2.04.04 The Implications of Eucharistic Ecclesiology: An Ecclesiology of Communion

One of the achievements of the Second Vatican Council was that it “not only identified more precisely the proximity of Orthodox, Protestant Christians, and non-Christians to the Church, but it also freed up the precise identification between the Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ.”¹⁷¹

The dialogue between the churches and ecclesial communities presupposes communion as the very nature of the Church of Jesus Christ.¹⁷² Kasper’s definition of communion is both vertical and horizontal, along Trinitarian and human lines:

Communion means, first, communion with God through Jesus Christ within the Holy Spirit and, only secondly, communion among Christians themselves through word, sacraments and diaconia, but also by communication, information, prayer, exchange, cooperation, living together, mutual visits, friendship, celebrating and worshipping together, witnessing together, suffering, together.¹⁷³

An important contribution of the Second Vatican Council is the rediscovery of a *communio* ecclesiology. It may be stated that this rediscovery goes hand in hand with the guidelines implemented during the Council, that is, *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*. *Communio* ecclesiology has an important place within ecumenism itself. Indeed, this imperative ecclesiological notion establishes the starting point of the first chapter of *Unitatis redintegratio*, in recognising baptism as the foundation of pertaining to the Christian people.¹⁷⁴ This communion ecclesiology – *koinonia* – is the communion of the Church of Christ.¹⁷⁵ Kasper also points out its importance in relation to the understanding of the notion of “elements of the church.”¹⁷⁶ *Unitatis redintegratio* does not envision the other churches and ecclesial communities as having conserved within them the remnants

¹⁷¹ Murphy, “De Lubac, Ratzinger and von Balthasar,” 48.

¹⁷² See Kasper, “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” 294.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 294-295.

¹⁷⁴ See Koch, *Prospettive ecumeniche*, 526.

¹⁷⁵ See Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 344.

¹⁷⁶ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 62.

of elements of a varying consistency, but as integral entities which bring to light these elements within their conception of a global ecclesiology.¹⁷⁷

The Second Vatican Council sought a return to the *communio* as present in the Bible and which also marked the primitive church, whereby the Council defines the deepest mystery of the Church, which is in the image of the Trinitarian *communio*, as an icon of the Trinity.¹⁷⁸

Herein lies the importance of baptism. The decree is adamant on this aspect, especially in describing the situation of the Protestant Churches and ecclesial communities which have not followed the apostolic tradition in their consecration of bishops, whereby: “By the sacrament of baptism, whenever it is properly conferred in the way the Lord determined, and received with the appropriate dispositions of the soul, a man becomes truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ ...”¹⁷⁹ Rightly enough, Kasper argues that baptism goes beyond mere friendship; being an act of the Spirit, it has ontological foundations and depth.¹⁸⁰

However, baptism is only the beginning: “a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ.”¹⁸¹ The climax of the incorporation of the Church is in the Eucharist, “... the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.”¹⁸² It is by the work of the Eucharist that “the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about.”¹⁸³ Echoing de Lubac and Ratzinger, “The church becomes one communion through God’s giving her the Eucharist.”¹⁸⁴

Unlike the Protestant communities, the Orthodox Churches have maintained the apostolic succession and hence also possess true and valid sacraments, especially those of the Holy Orders and the Eucharist.¹⁸⁵ Through the celebration of the Eucharist, these Churches

¹⁷⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ See *ibid.*; cf. *UR*, 2.

¹⁷⁹ *UR*, 22; see Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 63; Koch, *Prospettive ecumeniche*, 526.

¹⁸⁰ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 63.

¹⁸¹ *UR*, 22; see Koch, *Prospettive ecumeniche*, 526-527.

¹⁸² *LG*, 11.

¹⁸³ *UR*, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Murphy, “De Lubac, Ratzinger and von Balthasar,” 51.

¹⁸⁵ See *UR*, 15.

“... enter into communion with the most holy Trinity.”¹⁸⁶ As a result, “... in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature, while through the rite of concelebration their bond with one another is made manifest.”¹⁸⁷

Another important aspect within the ecclesiology of communion lies in unity in diversity. Rather than uniformity, such an ecclesiology leaves space for diversity without compromising its unity, an aspect acknowledged by the same *Unitatis redintegratio*.¹⁸⁸ It is also helpful to remember that even within the New Testament itself, there is a lot of space for divergent views.¹⁸⁹ The Pauline ecclesiological and christological vision, for example, is certainly different from that espoused by the Gospel writers in reference to their own communities.¹⁹⁰ And yet, this did not provoke any schism or rupture. It would be safe to claim that after all, the gospel writers and Paul were addressing different communities with their specific circumstances and needs, and this can only attest to the richness and depth of Christology and ecclesiology. Hence, diversity in itself is not a threat. However, it is also true that certain divergences regarding doctrinal beliefs and other aspects need to be addressed.

Such an important model can only be found within the Trinity itself.¹⁹¹ The three persons of the Holy Trinity are three distinct persons who play specific roles within the history of salvation, and yet they are united in a perfect unity through a perfect love. While such a unity cannot be reproduced here on earth solely through human efforts, the committed faithful can only strive with their utmost for such a unity, in the conviction that the Lord will shower them with abundant grace and his workings in the joint venture. We can concur with Rossi who states this communion is a gift:

... which comes from God and is really present in the churches, but at the same time it is also a call to which the churches are called to respond in the wake of historical wounds and doctrinal divisions, in order to build again wholeness and establish the full visible unity.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ See Kasper, *Non ho perduto nessuno*, 64; *UR*, 4.

¹⁸⁹ See Barros, “El ecumenismo y los 50 años del Vaticano II,” 1224.

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ See *LG*, 4.

¹⁹² Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 344. The original Italian passage is as follows: “... è un dono che viene da Dio ed è realmente esistente fra le chiese, ma allo stesso tempo è una chiamata cui le chiese devono

2.04.05 The Position of the “Eastern Churches”

The Eastern Churches are treated with great esteem in *Unitatis redintegratio*, and rightly so. This is readily obvious from the title itself, where the Eastern Churches’ position is described as special. One of the most obvious considerations is the council’s reference to these Churches as “sister,” churches, in terms of their relationship to each other.¹⁹³ This section, then, goes on to illustrate the various riches and contributions of these Churches. In accordance with Cardinal Bea, the Council’s joyful tone towards these Churches reflects what has been argued earlier on, namely that Catholics must acknowledge the Christian gifts and riches stemming from a common heritage, also found among those who are separated from them.¹⁹⁴

The section dealing with the Eastern Churches does not come without its criticisms from the Orthodox world, especially in relation to the term “Eastern Churches.”¹⁹⁵ Nikos Nissiotis argues that this term is imprecise and too vague, a term that can include within its parameters also the Pre-Chalcedonian Churches.¹⁹⁶ Nissiotis rightly states that such generic terms can serve to create confusion among the Christian masses.¹⁹⁷ This calls for more sensitivity in the understanding of the identity of the variety which exists within a too generic term!

At any rate, *Unitatis redintegratio* 14 illustrates the important contributions of the Eastern Churches. There is an admiration for the existence of the “... many particular or local Churches; among them the Patriarchal Churches hold first place; and of these, many glory in taking their origins from the apostles themselves.”¹⁹⁸ It reminisces with gratitude the

rispondere, a motive delle lacerazioni storiche e delle divisioni dottrinali, per ‘ricostituire’ l’interezza, ristabilirne la piena unità visibile.”

¹⁹³ See UR, 14. Detail is also provided in the Ninth Report (2007 – 2012) of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ. Appendix A: Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress*, 68-72.

¹⁹⁴ See UR, 4; Bea, *The Way to Unity after the Council*, 46.

¹⁹⁵ See Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l’unité*, 36.

¹⁹⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ UR, 14.

vast treasury of the Churches of the East from which the Western Church has inherited concerning doctrine, liturgy, spirituality and the religious life.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the basic dogmas of Christianity were drawn at ecumenical councils held in the East.²⁰⁰ It is also worth remembering that Christianity was born in the East and from there spread to other areas in the Roman Empire. The decree also acknowledges that “to preserve this faith, these Churches have suffered much, and still do so.”²⁰¹ This touches on martyrdom, what has been termed by Pope Francis as “ecumenism of blood,” where in a later section in chapter 3, a discussion ensues on how martyrdom has been, and still is a phenomenon having an impact upon all the faithful of the Church of Christ.

The Council also endorses variety in the reception of the heritage handed down by the apostles, which lamentably, due to a lack of perception and understanding, has been cause for dissent instead of gifts for sharing.²⁰² For this reason, and also to ensure the right condition for the desired communion between the Eastern and Western Churches, the Council recommends that the persons involved

give due consideration to these special aspects of the origin and growth of the Churches of the East, and to the character of the relations which obtained between them and the Roman See before the separation, and to form for themselves a correct evaluation of these facts.²⁰³

The love which the Eastern Churches express in their liturgy, especially in their celebration of the Eucharist, is evident.²⁰⁴ Indeed, “through the celebration of the Eucharist of the Lord in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature, while through the rite of concelebration their bond with one another is made manifest.”²⁰⁵ Their sacraments are endorsed as true sacraments by the Council, since they follow an apostolic succession.²⁰⁶ The East also thrives with the riches of spiritual traditions, especially in monasticism, which “later flowed over into the Western world, and there provided a source from which Latin monastic life took its rise and has often

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ See *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² See *ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, 15.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*

drawn fresh vigour ever since.”²⁰⁷ As a result, Roman Catholics should not only appreciate but “avail themselves more often of these spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers.”²⁰⁸

The way these Churches govern themselves, which is different from the centralised way of the Catholic Church, is not an obstacle to unity.²⁰⁹ Rather, it should be a way of looking for inspiration regarding the renewal of governing structures within the Catholic Church itself, as shall be explored in Chapter 6. The notion of unity in contrast to uniformity (“legitimate variety”) can also be applied to the theological expression of doctrine.²¹⁰ Since they are deeply rooted in Scripture and nourished by the apostles’ living tradition and the patristic writers, “these various theological formulations are often to be considered as complementary rather than conflicting.”²¹¹

The main way of going forward entails “prayer and ... fraternal dialogue on points of doctrine and the more pressing pastoral problems of our time.”²¹² Of course, it remains to be seen how much of this has been accomplished in the light of the present relationships between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

2.05 An Orthodox Reception of the Second Vatican Council

In her appraisal of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, Despina Prassas highlights an important event which was unfolding long before the conciliar events embraced ecumenism and promoted it to a centre-stage position. This was the work being carried out in France among a group of Catholic scholars and Russian Orthodox émigrés who had fled the 1917 Bolshevik

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 16.

²¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 17.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² *UR*, 18.

Revolution.²¹³ Indeed, “their work and the subsequent dialogue that took place were crucial for the presence, years later, of Orthodox at the council.”²¹⁴ It was, certainly, an auspicious beginning, and would be reflected in the “dialogue of love” which ensued between Athenagoras and Paul VI.²¹⁵

The dialogue which took place between Paul VI and Athenagoras “was focused on discovering the will of God,”²¹⁶ and that is what real dialogue should be about. In her response to the Second Vatican Council, Prassas focuses firstly on the aspect of conciliarity. Conciliarity is embedded within the Orthodox framework, which considers that “each of the baptized – not just the bishops – exercises a form of authority in the Church.”²¹⁷ An examination of this aspect of conciliarity is found in the response given by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation to the Ravenna statement of the Joint International Commission of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church.²¹⁸

It would appear that different Orthodox theologians responded positively to Vatican II. Maximos Vghenopoulos examines the criticisms espoused by various Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox theologians.²¹⁹ The point of departure for most Orthodox scholars is *Lumen gentium*. According to Greek Orthodox scholars such as Karmiris, *Lumen gentium* “is one of the most significant results of Vatican II and that it has a central place in the overall work of the council.”²²⁰ Indeed, the teaching of the Constitution “formulated in the ecumenical spirit that inspired Vatican II, is generally an improvement to be welcomed by the Orthodox.”²²¹

²¹³ See Despina Prassas, “The Legacy of the Second Vatican Council: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2013): 167.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 168.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 169.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ See *ibid.*; North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, “Orthodox-Catholic Consultation Responds to ‘Ravenna Statement,’ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 4 November, 2009, <http://www.usccb.org/news/2009/09-225.cfm> (accessed 28 July, 2017).

²¹⁹ See Maximos Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective*, (DeKalb/ILL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 96-156. Most of the works of such theologians such as Karmiris and Harkianakis are in Greek, but Vghenopoulos gives a detailed explanation of their views and so it is being reproduced here.

²²⁰ See *ibid.*, 97.

²²¹ Ibid.

The teaching on the Church as a “mystery” and as “the body of Christ” in the first chapter of *Lumen gentium* have gone well with the Orthodox, as Karmiris, Harkianakis, and Zizioulas point out.²²²

On the other hand, the eighth paragraph of *Lumen gentium* has garnered criticism with regard to the Roman Catholic ecclesiological view:

This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which He erected for all ages as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth". This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.²²³

Speaking of Karmiris, Vghenopoulos asserts that “this identification of the confines of the true Church solely with those of the Roman Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter and by bishops in communion with him is unacceptable to the Orthodox Catholic Church.”²²⁴ This is especially the case if the Roman Catholic Church considers the Orthodox Church as a “sister” Church. How can a sister Church be relegated to “outside the visible confines” of the Catholic Church? Here Karmiris sees a contradiction between this section of *Lumen gentium* and the other teachings on the “Church as a ‘mystery’ and as the ‘body of Christ,’ analysed at length in the first chapter of the dogmatic constitution.”²²⁵

Conciliarity is also found in Vatican II, in *Lumen gentium*, 25, for example. In a point of departure from Vatican I, Vatican II refers to the magisterium of the bishops and their role together with the pope in the definition of a point of faith or dogma.²²⁶ Rightly so, Prassas does not see this emphasis on conciliarity on the part of Vatican II as contradictory to Vatican I’s stance on papal infallibility.²²⁷ This is in line with earlier comments in this

²²² See *ibid.*, 98-99; also 111.

²²³ *LG*, 8.

²²⁴ Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 99.

²²⁵ See *ibid.*

²²⁶ See Prassas, “The Legacy of the Second Vatican council,” 170; *LG*, 25.

²²⁷ See Prassas, “The Legacy of the Second Vatican Council,” 171.

chapter; that is, Vatican II shows a new development over the previous council, not a break with tradition.

An important aspect within Orthodoxy is that conciliarity is also extended to the laity. One of the most pronounced examples, also highlighted by Prassas herself, is the laity's rejection of the decisions of the Council of Florence (1438 – 1439), in favour of the reunion between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.²²⁸ Indeed, Vatican II acknowledges the importance of the laity in the Church and the world. The Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* focuses on the ministry of the laity,²²⁹ while *Lumen gentium* itself dedicates a whole section to the role of the laity, whereby:

These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world.²³⁰

In speaking of this section on the laity, Karmiris sees considerable improvement in their role, which “in the past was ignored by the hierarchical autocracy of the Roman Catholic Church.”²³¹ This,

for Karmiris, is without doubt an improvement for the Roman Catholic Church and, in a way, a point of meeting with the Orthodox Church, which has always recognised the laity's place in ecclesiastical organisation and the rights of the laity, as members of the body of Christ, to participate in ecclesiastical services, which derive from their participation in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ.²³²

Looking at the early Church, there was no articulate theology on the significant distinction between the ordained and the lay people within the people of God.²³³ The distinction

²²⁸ See *ibid.*

²²⁹ See Second Vatican Council, “*Apostolicam actuositatem*: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People. 18 November, 1965, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (St Pauls, New Delhi, 1999), 676-702.

²³⁰ *LG*, 31.

²³¹ Vgenopoulos, “Orthodox Reactions,” 101.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ See *Epistle to Diognetus*, 5, as quoted in Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church. Nature, Reality and Mission* (London et al.: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 168; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XX, 10; Ambrose, *De sacramentis* IV, 3; Leo the Great, *Sermones* III, 1, as referred to by Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 196-200, especially 200; 220-224; also Paul Lakeland, “Potential Catholic Learning Around Lay Participation in Decision-Making,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*:

between the two groups only emerged later, and has still persisted into the present times. Moreover, lay people were consulted about such church matters such as the selection of the church leaders.²³⁴ It is Vatican II that reinstates the proper position of the laity, which by baptism, “are consecrated into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.”²³⁵ Moreover, Vatican II attributes great importance to the *sensus fidelium* in its role of upholding the truth of the church dogma, wherein it too expresses a kind of infallibility.²³⁶

Lamentably, in the post-Vatican II era, the role of the laity within the Roman Catholic Church has been relegated to the background, or simply ignored, especially when it comes to decision-making. It is safe to agree with Lakeland who argues that: “While traditions vary considerably, almost all except Roman Catholicism have clearly defined expectations of lay participation in governance at some level.”²³⁷ This is especially important as lay people have much to contribute to the growth of the Church herself, as a considerable number is composed of professional people, and the number of lay theologians is on the increase.

This role of the laity, highly developed in the other Churches and ecclesial communities, is one of the “forgotten” contributions of the Second Vatican Council from which the Church herself would greatly benefit in applying to the present situation, not only in terms of a substitute for the dwindling number of the ordained, albeit such a reason is shallow and superficial. The unique vocation of the laity is stressed in *Lumen gentium*: “the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth.”²³⁸ Prassas’ examination of the Orthodox concept of conciliarity which also involves the laity is a reminder of an important aspect which the Roman Catholic Church should harness. Within this respect, perhaps, 1 Cor 12, 4-13 rings truer today than ever!

Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 227.

²³⁴ See Lakeland, “Lay Participation in Decision-making,” 230-231.

²³⁵ *LG*, 10; see Lakeland, “Lay Participation in Decision-making,” 229.

²³⁶ See *LG* 10, in Lakeland, “Lay Participation in Decision-making,” 229.

²³⁷ Lakeland, “Lay Participation in Decision-making,” 227.

²³⁸ *LG*, 33.

Prassas credits the Second Vatican Council with the improvement of relations between the Vatican and the communist countries.²³⁹ The invitation and eventual attendance of representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church was an auspicious beginning, which eventually paved the way for the thawing of the strained relationships between the Vatican and the totalitarian countries.²⁴⁰ It is agreed that the Holy See played an important role in the break-up of communism,²⁴¹ which eventually ushered in new problems for the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church by the so-called “uniatism,” a problem that, in fact, while being dormant for a long time, erupted following the demise of communism. These Churches who are in communion with Rome have a long history which goes back several centuries, but the various upheavals during the twentieth century have simply put to the fore the various problems existing between these Churches and the mainstream Orthodox Churches, especially in the Eastern European countries. This situation will be treated in a later section of chapter 3.

Prassas mentions the enduring dilemma of the role of the papacy of Rome, which lies at the heart of the conflicts between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.²⁴² This is a view shared by many Orthodox scholars. Karmiris considers that the Constitution is a continuation, completion, and in part a correction of the ecclesiological teaching of Vatican I and that it thus differs on various points from Orthodox ecclesiology.”²⁴³ This criticism is especially levelled at the third chapter of *Lumen gentium*, which reiterates the supreme role of the pope.²⁴⁴ According to Karmiris, the document shows a discussion on episcopal collegiality, however, there is also “a strengthened and completed double dogma on primacy and infallibility,²⁴⁵ even though this dogma was not discussed anew at the council.”²⁴⁶ For him, “it is clear that for the Roman Catholic Church, despite the enactment of episcopal collegiality, the absolute monarchy of the pope remains unaffected.”²⁴⁷ Indeed, there is “a lack of reciprocity,

²³⁹ See Prassas, “The Legacy of the Second Vatican Council,” 172.

²⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 172-173.

²⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 173.

²⁴² See *ibid.*

²⁴³ Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 97-98.

²⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 98.

²⁴⁵ See *LG*, 18; 22.

²⁴⁶ Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 102.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

which allows the pope, the head of the college, to act without the consent of the other members of the college while the college cannot act without its head,” a view also shared by another Greek Orthodox theologian, Harkianakis.²⁴⁸

Paragraph 22 of *Lumen gentium* seems to suggest a universalistic conception of episcopal collegiality, affirming the role of the pope as a universal head and bishop.²⁴⁹ Similarly to Zizioulas, Meyendorff “complains that Vatican II applies the image of the local community to the universal church, that is, a single ‘universal bishop’ surrounded by a college of presbyters-bishops.”²⁵⁰ There seems to be the suspicion, on Zizioulas’ part, that Vatican II seems to envision two ecclesiologies, the universalistic and the local one. In his article on Episcopal Conferences, Zizioulas ponders on this dilemma:

It is difficult for an outsider to decide what in fact the Roman Catholic position is in this case. Is the idea of episcopal collegiality identical with a universalist ecclesiology or not? How is it to be understood so that it can be reconciled with the recognition of the fullness and catholicity of the local diocese by Vatican II? Or is it perhaps true that the council operated with two ecclesiologies at the same time, one universalist and the other local?²⁵¹

This view is also posited by Clément.²⁵² Also, Zizioulas asserts that Christology underlies such a historical notion of apostolic succession. What about the role of pneumatology? In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas argues that generally speaking, “in comparison with Christology, Pneumatology did not play an important role in the council’s teaching on the Church.”²⁵³ In addition, “it was observed that the Holy Spirit was brought into ecclesiology after the edifice of the Church was constructed with Christological material alone.”²⁵⁴

Vghenopoulos asserts that:

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 104.

²⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 113.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. 114.

²⁵¹ John Zizioulas, “The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox Reflection,” *The Jurist* 48 (1988): 379; also Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 114.

²⁵² See Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 114-115.

²⁵³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 123.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

It is evident that LG 22, in dealing with the collegiality of bishops, moves along the Christological line: it implies that Christ sends out the apostles who form a college with authority and the power of preaching, teaching, and governing the Church and that by analogy the order of the bishops, as successors to the college of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, has supreme and full authority over the universal Church.²⁵⁵

To sum up, while Vatican II has moved forwards with regard to the vision of the Church as a mystery, and the role of laity, the role of the primacy and the episcopal college really need to be redefined along the communion ecclesiology endorsed by the same council. The proper role of the Petrine ministry needs to be reconsidered in a genuine and veritably ecumenical manner. The nearest anything of serious reflection regarding the exercise of the bishop of Rome has come to is the encyclical by Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* (1995).

2.06 *Ut unum sint*

Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) is the most important papal document on the ecumenical sphere in the wake of *Unitatis redintegratio*. Pizzey is right in stating that "it is also a key influence on Receptive Ecumenism."²⁵⁶ Most importantly, it explores ecumenism within the perspectives proposed by the Second Vatican Council,²⁵⁷ within a pastoral dimension. While *Ut unum sint* has a pastoral character, on the other hand, it covers a diverse range of aspects regarding the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church, without compromising on importance aspects of faith and doctrine.²⁵⁸ The many references to *Unitatis redintegratio* show that *Ut unum sint* does not only follow along the lines of the Council, but it also seems to attest to the fact that "much of the council's vision still goes unrealized."²⁵⁹ Cardinal Cassidy, a former President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, gives a beautiful analysis of the aim of the encyclical in stating:

It is, however, above all a renewed and fervent appeal on the part of the Bishop of Rome addressed not only to the bishops, clergy, religious and faithful of the Catholic Church, but

²⁵⁵ Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church*, 116.

²⁵⁶ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 96.

²⁵⁷ See Henn, "*Ut unum sint*," 235.

²⁵⁸ See Edward Idris Cassidy, "*Ut unum sint* and the Great Jubilee Year 2000," *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 49 (1996): 3.

²⁵⁹ John Nilson, "John Paul II, Ecumenist, asks Prayers for His Own Conversion," *Commonweal* (1995): 5.

to all Christians – an appeal for greater efforts in the cause of unity, “especially as the year 2000 approaches, a year in which Christians will celebrate as a sacred Jubilee the commemoration of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who became man in order to save humanity.”²⁶⁰

The encyclical takes up the theology of *koinonia* and develops it further.²⁶¹ Henn points out two important themes which permeate the whole document: the notion of unity as God’s will and the fact that unity assumes “a visible communion of faith, sacraments and communal life under the guidance of ordained ministers.”²⁶²

In line with *Unitatis redintegratio* 1, *Ut unum sint* re-asserts the seriousness of Christian division, especially since the central objective of Christ’s mission is the “unity of all divided humanity.”²⁶³ This seriousness is especially poignant in John 11, 51-52, which affirms that the purpose of Jesus’ death is “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”²⁶⁴ In this light, the desire for unity becomes an ever-urgent and prominent issue. This is especially evident in the title of the encyclical itself, “Let them be one.” (Jn 17, 21) Most important, this yearning for unity serves to make the Christ-event ever more meaningful in today’s world, where anything which does not belong to the scientific-technological realm is reduced to shambles. The Pope’s plea in paragraph 1 is especially touching: “If they [Christians] wish truly and effectively to oppose the world’s tendency to reduce to powerlessness the mystery of redemption, they must profess together the same truth about the Cross.”²⁶⁵ The undeniable importance of ecumenism in the Christian life is asserted by John Paul II himself: “To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the church; to desire the church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ Cassidy, “*Ut unum sint*,” 4.

²⁶¹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 362.

²⁶² Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 235.

²⁶³ *UUS*, 6; cfr. Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 235.

²⁶⁴ See Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 235.

²⁶⁵ *UUS*, 1.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

The way of ecumenism, as expressed in *Ut unum sint* is that of communion. It is evident that John Paul II's ecclesiology of communion has been inherited from the notion of ecumenism as expressed in Vatican II.²⁶⁷

In effect, this unity bestowed by the Holy Spirit does not merely consist in the gathering of people as a collection of individuals. It is a unity constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and hierarchical communion. The faithful are *one* because, in the Spirit, they are in *communion* with the Son and, in him, share in his *communion* with the Father.²⁶⁸

It is this communion (*koinonia*) or “fullness of communion” which becomes the subject of reference in John Paul II's statements throughout the encyclical.²⁶⁹

In grounding these aspects of communion in the life of the early Church (Ac 2, 42), John Paul II attributes a continuity between the early Church and the present Church of Christ, despite the multifaceted divisions. This view espoused by Vatican II stands in stark contrast to the pre-Vatican II's exclusive identification of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church with the Catholic Church.²⁷⁰ Concurring with Henn:

... faith is not just a matter of doctrines; it is a response to God's grace which engages one's whole existence and in which one commits one's entire self to God in acceptance and trust. Obviously, there have been and are many believers from many different Christian communities who are outstanding examples of faith.²⁷¹

Faith denotes a dynamic relationship between God and the believer. It certainly goes beyond any exclusivist identification with any one church. That would bring a great risk since it shuts out any predisposition to receive gifts which are conducive to sanctification and edification; gifts which are certainly present in the other churches.²⁷² A very important way of promoting this aspect takes the form of the reference to the Church as the Church of Christ, rather than its identification with the Catholic Church.

²⁶⁷ See Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 235.

²⁶⁸ *UUS*, 9.

²⁶⁹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 364.

²⁷⁰ See Henn, “*Ut Unum Sint*,” 236.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² See *UR*, 3; *UUS*, 22.

Ut unum sint goes on to reiterate another important aspect of *Unitatis redintegratio*, that of the existence of ecclesial elements in the other churches and ecclesial communities.²⁷³

As Pope John Paul himself states:

It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities.²⁷⁴

While this point is essentially relevant to the various Protestant ecclesial communities, this quotation has been singled out as an example of the Pope's disposition, following the conciliar teaching, in accepting what is essentially enriching in the other ecclesial structures and communities. In an act of humility, he acknowledges the important salvific elements also present in the other Churches and ecclesial communities.

An important aspect of *Ut unum sint* is its ample dedication to the ecumenical practice itself.²⁷⁵ The main part of the first chapter of the encyclical is indeed dedicated mainly to the notion and conversion and renewal, the primacy of prayer, doctrine, "... ecumenical dialogue and cooperation on pastoral, cultural and social levels as well as in witnessing together to gospel values."²⁷⁶ While already present in *Unitatis redintegratio*, here they are expounded upon at greater length.

First of all, there is an emphasis on renewal and conversion, both on a personal and a communal level.²⁷⁷ It is a conversion which might shake and rattle us; being Christian entails a state of perpetual conversion and becoming. Jesus's invitation to repentance and conversion, at the beginning of his mission (Mk 1, 14-15), rings truer than ever, especially in the ecumenical arena. This is corroborated by John Paul II himself in stating: "Each one therefore ought to be more radically converted to the Gospel and, without ever losing sight of God's plan, change his or her way of looking at things."²⁷⁸

²⁷³ See *LG*, 15; *UR*, 3; *UUS*, 11.

²⁷⁴ *UUS*, 13.

²⁷⁵ See also Henn, "*Ut unum sint*," 238.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ See *UUS*, 15.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Doctrine is not relegated to an inferior position but, rather, what is at stake here is the way it is formulated. The word of God needs to be presented in a meaningful way to the particular people and culture addressed. Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17, 22-31 is one example. It attests to the force of the living word and the creativity of the Spirit who impels the preacher to proclaim the gospel in an intelligible way. The Pope cites the example of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who "... laboured to translate the ideas of the Bible and the concepts of Greek theology in the context of very different historical experiences and ways of thinking."²⁷⁹ Their aim was to ensure that the word of God be "made accessible in each civilization's own forms of expression."²⁸⁰ The road to unity does not entail uniformity. "It does not require that every church and every Christian use the same formulae to profess the one faith."²⁸¹

All this works in tandem together with prayer, which permeates the whole ecumenical process, and can be rightly called "spiritual ecumenism."²⁸² Indeed: "The common prayer of Christians is an invitation to Christ himself to visit the community of those who call upon him: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (*Mt* 18:20)."²⁸³

Another important theme which is expounded upon at great length is the notion of dialogue and what it entails. In fact, paragraphs 28 to 40 are dedicated to the various aspects of dialogue. Dialogue within ecumenism cannot be stressed enough. Dialogue serves various functions. First, dialogue is seen as an examination of conscience, whereby, to quote 1 Jn, 8-9 in *Ut unum sint*, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."²⁸⁴ The aim of dialogue is also to settle disagreements, especially when it comes to the laying out the differences in doctrinal formulations.²⁸⁵ Moreover:

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Slavorum apostoli*: Encyclical Letter on the Evangelisation of St Cyril and St Methodius, *Vatican Website*, 2 June 1985, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_19850602_slavorum-apostoli.html.

²⁸¹ Nilson, "John Paul II," 6.

²⁸² *UR*, 8; *UUS*, 21.

²⁸³ *UUS*, 21.

²⁸⁴ 1 Jn 8-9; see *UUS*, 34.

²⁸⁵ See *UUS*, 38.

dialogue puts before the participants real and genuine disagreements in matters of faith. Above all, these disagreements should be faced in a sincere spirit of fraternal charity, of respect for the demands of one's own conscience and of the conscience of the other party, with profound humility and love for the truth.²⁸⁶

The second chapter of the encyclical, aptly titled “The Fruits of Dialogue,” retraces the ecumenical achievements in the thirty years in the wake of the Council. A change of attitude was instilled among the Christians in their relationship to their fellow brethren from different churches and ecclesial traditions.²⁸⁷ Indeed, “Christians have been converted to a fraternal charity which embraces all Christ’s disciples.”²⁸⁸ This attitude, far from being of a philanthropic nature, is “rooted in recognition of the oneness of Baptism and the subsequent duty to glorify God in his work.”²⁸⁹

As befitting a dialogue of love, Christians have also begun to see the beauty and goodness of others, an act which, in the long run, can only serve to enhance one’s positive qualities in the tireless work towards the Church’s perfection.²⁹⁰ Indeed, “this direct contact, at a variety of levels, with pastors and with the members of these Communities has made us aware of the witness which other Christians bear to God and to Christ.”²⁹¹

Pope John Paul II then turns to specifically highlight the positive relations with the communities of the East and the West. Rightly, Henn points out these specific themes which emerge from this content, that is, the focus on legitimate diversity in the discussion of relations with the Eastern Churches, while the relations with the West are envisaged as a dialogue towards unity in faith.²⁹² On account of the theme of this thesis, the intention is to delve into the aspect of legitimate diversity vis-à-vis the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches, and what it entails.

In the past thirty years the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches has served to improve the relationships between the two parts, although the

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

²⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 42.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ See *UUS*, 47; *UR*, 4.

²⁹¹ *UUS*, 48.

²⁹² See Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 239.

journey is far from over. The path is long and arduous; it must be remembered that for a millennium there had been virtually no communication between the two churches. Both *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Ut unum sint* seem to state that disagreements on doctrinal issues played less a part than one would have expected. In speaking of Vatican II, *Ut unum sint* states that: “The Council, for its part, considered the Churches of the East with objectivity and deep affection, stressing their ecclesial nature and the real bonds of communion linking them with the Catholic Church.”²⁹³ Indeed, these churches’ possession of true sacraments due to their link with the apostolic succession, serves to cement the ties between them and the Catholic Church.²⁹⁴

Most significantly, John Paul II looks at the first millennium, which may serve “as a kind of model”²⁹⁵ regarding the way unity operated in the first millennium, with the existence of the local or particular churches which trace their origin to the apostles themselves.²⁹⁶

The following text is loaded with poignancy:

The Church's journey began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and its original expansion in the *oikoumene* of that time was centred around Peter and the Eleven (cf. *Acts* 2:14). The structures of the Church in the East and in the West evolved in reference to that Apostolic heritage. Her unity during the first millennium was maintained within those same structures through the Bishops, Successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Bishop of Rome. If today at the end of the second millennium we are seeking to restore full communion, it is to that unity, thus structured, which we must look.²⁹⁷

This renewed relationship is also envisaged as a reverting to the time when the local churches’ communion was understood as the relationship between sisters:

By participating in the gifts of God to his Church we are brought into communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit ... In each local Church this mystery of divine love is enacted, and surely this is the ground of the traditional and very beautiful expression “Sister Churches”, which local Churches were fond of applying to one another (cf. Decree, *Unitatis redintegratio*, 14).²⁹⁸

²⁹³ *UUS*, 50.

²⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, *UR*, 15.

²⁹⁵ See *UUS*, 55.

²⁹⁶ See *ibid.*; *UR*, 14.

²⁹⁷ *UUS*, 55.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

This doctrine of “sister churches” has been at the basis of the fostering of communion between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, where the method to be adopted is “followed towards full communion is the dialogue of truth, fostered and sustained by the dialogue of love.”²⁹⁹ It is a unity which can be achieved within the harmony of diversity, an aspect reminiscent of the gift of different tongues which the Holy Spirit conferred upon the apostles, in Acts 2, 4-12.

2.06.01 The Ministry of the Bishop of Rome: Courageous Initiatives by the Popes since 1995

In the third chapter of *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II devotes an entire section (paragraphs 88 to 96) to the issue which, unarguably, lies at the very centre of various disagreements between the Churches and ecclesial communities, especially between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The fact that John Paul chose to deal with this issue attests to the acknowledgement on the part of the Catholic Church on the need for this issue to be confronted and tackled. This section is especially poignant in bringing out the commitment to engage in dialogue with the other traditions in order to reconfigure the role of the Petrine ministry, and this is an important influence on Receptive Ecumenism. As asserted by Murray, the development in Catholic understanding of ecumenism is affirmed in *Ut unum sint*:

Particularly so in the remarkable invitation he issued to theologians and leaders in other Christian traditions to help reimagine the performance of Petrine ministry so that it might once again become a focus for unity rather than the continuing cause of division it currently is – an invitation which itself exemplifies the strategy and virtues of Receptive Ecumenism as here called for.³⁰⁰

Indeed, Murray regards this invitation as “a clear, prophetic expression of the courageous commitment to one’s own tradition’s conversion that is necessary if the churches are

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 60.

³⁰⁰ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 13.

really to progress beyond friendship to the full catholicity of the one Church of Christ.”³⁰¹ On the other hand, caution is called for. One case in point which sheds light on the complexity of the situation was Pope Benedict XVI’s decision in 2007 not to use the title of “Patriarch of the West” anymore. This move, discussed in a later chapter of this thesis, was misinterpreted by various Orthodox and non-Orthodox, yet it also attests to the delicate aspect inherent in the ecumenical dialogue.

In speaking of his ministry, John Paul II affirms that among all the Churches and ecclesial communities, the Catholic Church “has preserved the ministry of the Successor of the Apostle Peter, the Bishop of Rome,” whose role is that of “*servus servorum Dei*.”³⁰² In speaking of the primacy, it is significant that he refers to himself only as “*servus servorum Dei*,” “successor of Peter,” and “bishop of Rome.”³⁰³ The change in linguistic change to “ministry” and “service” is of paramount significance, since it reflects “a new interpretation and reception in the light of the gospel, not renouncing its essential nature but setting it in a new wider spiritual understanding, on the theoretical as well as on the practical level.”³⁰⁴ However, he does not hesitate to recognise that this role “constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians, whose memory is marked by certain painful recollections.”³⁰⁵ As is so typical of him, for these, he asks forgiveness.³⁰⁶

Pope Francis also followed in these steps, in speaking of himself as the “Bishop of Rome,” as he did on his election on the 13th March 2013. The fact that he is signing the most recent documents from the Palace of St John Lateran rather than from the Vatican, is another indication of the wish to highlight that he is, above all, the Bishop of Rome who has his cathedra at St John Lateran which is his cathedral church.³⁰⁷

³⁰¹ Murray, “Roman Catholicism and Ecumenism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), cited in Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 102.

³⁰² *UUS*, 88; see also Henn, “*Ut unum sint*,” 242.

³⁰³ See Nilson, “John Paul II,” 6.

³⁰⁴ Walter Kasper, “Petrine Ministry and Synodality,” *The Jurist* 66 (2006): 308.

³⁰⁵ *UUS*, 88.

³⁰⁶ See *ibid.*

³⁰⁷ See, for example, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* to the People of God and to all Persons of Good Will, 2 February 2020, given in Rome, at the Cathedral of St John Lateran.

On the other hand, the controversy surrounding the issue of the Petrine primacy has had its benefits too. As Pope John Paul II states:

It is nonetheless significant and encouraging that the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome has now become a subject of study which is already under way or will be in the near future. It is likewise significant and encouraging that this question appears as an essential theme not only in the theological dialogues in which the Catholic Church is engaging with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, but also more generally in the ecumenical movement as a whole.³⁰⁸

As also attested by Henn, John Paul II starts his reflection by mentioning the martyrdom of both Peter and Paul in Rome.³⁰⁹ Hence, the Church of Rome becomes the Church of Peter and Paul, two eminent apostles who are portrayed prominently in the New Testament. However, the Polish pope does not stop there. He takes his cue from the main texts where Jesus assigns Peter an important mission in his Church and then expounds his personal reflection.³¹⁰ He is adamant that Christ's entrusting Peter with his mission departs out of grace and a need for conversion. It is not a privilege with some fringe benefits but rather, a responsibility borne out of mercy. Concurring with Henn:

Noting that Jesus' words in Luke – and especially in John – are said within the context of Peter's failure to admit that he knew the Lord, the pope suggests that Peter's ministry within the community originates in a powerful experience of the mercy and forgiveness of God, so much so that his subsequent ministry must be understood as a ministry of mercy.³¹¹

Pope John Paul II also affirms that: "It is just as though, against the backdrop of Peter's human weakness, it were made fully evident that his particular ministry in the Church derives altogether from grace."³¹² It is Christ who is the initiator of the whole act, and the task of the Bishop of Rome "within the College of all Pastors consists precisely in 'keeping watch' (*episkopein*), like a sentinel, so that, through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches."³¹³ The task of the pope is, in this way, to promote communion between all the Churches; "for this reason he is the first servant of unity."³¹⁴

³⁰⁸ *UUS*, 89.

³⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 90; see also Henn, "*Ut unum sint*," 242.

³¹⁰ See Henn, "*Ut unum sint*," 242.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *UUS*, 91.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

While acknowledging the need for a successor to Peter’s ministry, on the other hand, Pope John Paul II’s invitation to all theologians is, perhaps one of the greatest examples of an act of service. Kasper affirms that the Pope John Paul II “wants to look for new forms of exercising the petrine ministry, without renouncing its essence.”³¹⁵ Basically, “the encyclical letter distinguishes between this unchangeable essence and the changeable forms.”³¹⁶ While not hesitating to ask for forgiveness for the instances when this role was misused throughout history, he also invites Church leaders and theologians to engage with him “in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject.”³¹⁷ It is safe to agree with Nilson that: “*Ut unum sint* again and again emphasizes the collaborative, collegial dimension of the office.”³¹⁸ It is an invitation which will go down in history, which attests to a Copernican revolution on the part of the leader of the Catholic Church. As argued earlier, this does not mean a break with tradition, but the development of the Church’s attitude vis-à-vis the way she perceives the other Churches and ecclesial communities.

2.06.02 An Orthodox Reception of *Ut unum sint*

Through the voice of *Ut unum sint*, the papacy acknowledges – as pointed out above – the need for reform of its very structures, and also invites theologians for help in this immense task. According to many Orthodox theologians, the Petrine ministry is the main stumbling block to a reunion between the two churches. However, as Adam DeVille asserts, Orthodox responses have been somewhat muted, unlike the Protestant world.³¹⁹ The whole situation is a bit perplexing, to say the least, but this merits a deeper look at the Orthodox world in general.

One of the prominent voices from the Orthodox world who speaks about *Ut unum sint* is Kallistos Ware. In his article about the Ravenna document (to be discussed in chapter 3), he rightly criticises the encyclical as sticking to the dyadic scheme of “pope/episcopate,”

³¹⁵ Walter Kasper, “Petrine Ministry and Synodality,” 299.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ *UUS*, 96.

³¹⁸ Nilson, “John Paul II,” 6.

³¹⁹ See Adam A.J. DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: “Ut unum sint” and the Prospects of East-West Unity* (Notre Dame/IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 12.

ignoring the notion of regional primacy altogether, an aspect already criticised by other members of other ecclesial traditions.³²⁰ This shows how difficult it is to assume another aspect which might be foreign to one's ecclesial identity.

To explain the otherwise silence from the world of Orthodoxy, DeVille suggests a number of reasons (in ascending order of importance) for this lack of official response. First, the centuries-old suppression of Orthodox Churches under the Ottoman regime and later under the czarist regime, communism, and Islamic fundamentalism has left the Churches in a struggle for survival, and keeping abreast of the Western developments, especially within the domains of reason was not a priority.³²¹ Another suggested reason is that of ignorance, whereby DeVille argues that if it is a fact that many Catholics themselves remain in ignorance of the very existence of *Ut unum sint*, it is quite unreasonable to expect that the Orthodox themselves will have read it.³²² However, this argument might not be very valid, for the simple reason that since the encyclical deals with ecumenism, some of the Orthodox will undoubtedly have perused it, especially the section dealing with the Bishop of Rome.

Another reason for a lack of an official response is the sheer multitude of pronouncements made by Pope John Paul II during the spring of 1995.³²³ Thus, one highlights *Evangelium vitae*, (1995), *Oriente lumen*, (1995), and *Ut unum sint* itself, (1995).³²⁴

The last two reasons are especially pertinent. The Orthodox Church lacks an internal organizational mechanism which would serve to present a co-ordinated response.³²⁵ This lack of centralization allows only sporadic pronouncements, independent from other churches. This is a problem even for the Orthodox Church itself. This flaw has been especially evident in the Pan-Orthodox council held in Crete, between the 19 and 26 June 2016.

³²⁰ See Kallistos Ware, "The Ravenna Document and the future of Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue," *The Jurist* 69, no. 2 (2009): 771.

³²¹ See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 13.

³²² See *ibid.*

³²³ See *ibid.*

³²⁴ See *ibid.*, 14.

³²⁵ See *ibid.*

The last issue is especially troubling. In the last decades there has been a resurgence in anti-ecumenical attitudes among some Orthodox.³²⁶ Two reasons which have aggravated the whole matter have been the new re-emergence of problems associated with the so-called Uniate Churches in the light of events during the times of communism and its subsequent downfall, and the decision by the Holy See to create four fully-fledged dioceses in Russia, in the wake of the collapse of communism, a move which has exacerbated the mistrust in the Catholic Church, envisaged as making aggressive imperialist claims.³²⁷ These issues are addressed in chapter 3, under the section dealing with uniatism.

In any case, it is important that the voice of *Ut unum sint* does not go unheeded because it provides a very powerful call from which nobody interested in the pursuit of unity can shy away. Olivier Clément calls *Ut unum sint* an “unprecedented and prophetic initiative.”³²⁸ He states that: “I find it inadmissible that the proposal has gone almost unheard. I would hope that the Oriental Patriarchs would get to work and be in a position to present their reflections to Pope John Paul II.”³²⁹ Of course, this did not happen and John Paul II is since long dead. However, Clément’s call remains open. One hopes his voice will be heard, and that a response will be forthcoming.

2.07 Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council had far-reaching effects on the Ecumenical Movement. Its influence on Receptive Ecumenism is undeniable, especially with regard to the openness to learning across different traditions, coupled the ecclesiological teaching permeating *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Lumen gentium* about the pilgrim nature of the Church. Acknowledging the reality of the endowments of other traditions, also evident in the retrieval of *communio* ecclesiology as a result of the ecumenical partners, served to herald a new era in the Ecumenical Movement.

³²⁶ See *ibid.*

³²⁷ See *ibid.*, 15.

³²⁸ Olivier Clément, in an interview in *Avvenire*, “Notes on *Ut unum sint* and the Orthodox Response,” in DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 12.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

Unitatis redintegratio speaks of two ways of doing ecumenism. The most apparent aspect in the ecumenical field deals with the bilateral dialogues. In paragraphs 9 to 12, the document speaks of the necessity of engaging in the doctrinal dialogue. This attests to the effort on the part of the Second Vatican Council to engage in the dialogue with the various traditions, also serving to build trust between the various ecumenical partners. The theological discussion between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches is the subject of the next chapter. The dialogue cannot be eschewed from the theological divergences, a position also taken within Receptive Ecumenism. In the aftermath of centuries-long divisions and estrangement, the first aspect which emerges from the ecumenical adventure is “getting to know each other.” This can be achieved by the discussion on aspects presumed to be divisive in nature in order to get closer to the other side, without jeopardising one’s identity. This is also important in order for both sides to clearly understand the framework of each other, thus doing away with prejudices inherited from a painful history. In paragraph 9, one encounters the following:

When they are properly prepared for this study, Catholics need to acquire a more adequate understanding of the distinctive doctrines of our separated brethren, as well as of their own history, spiritual and liturgical life, their religious psychology and cultural background. Of great value for this purpose are meetings between the two sides, especially for discussion of theological problems From dialogue of this sort will emerge still more clearly what the true posture of the Catholic Church is. In this way, too, we will better understand the attitude of our separated brethren and more aptly present our own belief.³³⁰

On the other hand, “spiritual ecumenism” is significant in the section dealing with the practice of ecumenism, wherein *Unitatis redintegratio* refers to this kind of ecumenism before the bilateral dialogues, without diminishing the importance of the latter. However, spiritual ecumenism is what equips the persons involved with the tools which help them to get to know the other party. This entails a change in attitude, renewal and conversion, that is, “a change of heart and holiness of life.”³³¹ It is of no wonder, then, that spiritual ecumenism, is regarded as the “soul of the whole ecumenical movement.”³³² It is also inextricably bound to Receptive Ecumenism because the strategy emphasises the need for

³³⁰ *UR*, 9.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³³² *Ibid.*

change on various levels in order to be ready to receive what the other tradition has to offer.

This process of renewal and conversion are also attested to in the vision of the Petrine ministry in *Ut unum sint*, for example, which hinges on God's grace, especially in light of the vulnerability of all the disciples. This grace continues to be bestowed unto the end of time upon all the members of the Church, since all members are sinful, as *Lumen gentium* takes great care to emphasise. As Paul states in Rom 5, 20, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Hence, in this vision, the process of conversion is a process of unfolding the layers of distortions of many centuries, when the authority of the Church was equated with temporal power.

This is especially crucial because spiritual ecumenism is also a solid foundation behind the inception of Receptive Ecumenism which looks at ecumenical change from a three-dimensional, rather than a two-dimensional change. Change takes place across different dimensions which work together. This does not deny the complexity of this process itself, yet Receptive Ecumenism can prove very credible in providing the fitting contribution in order to spur the Ecumenical Movement forward. The lesson which Receptive Ecumenism drives home is the need for the collaboration between the different facets which encompass ecumenical change; and most importantly, theology itself.

Chapter 3: The Encounter between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches

3.01 Introduction

The aftermath of the Second Vatican Council heralded great optimism, which resulted in the various Churches resuming talks with each other in order to mend the lacerations of the past wounds. Most of these included bilateral talks, since most of the dialogue was envisaged as a healing of major theological disputes which caused the rifts among the various traditions. The bilateral dialogues between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, coupled with the work within the World Council of Churches, are central in this respect because they attest to so much positive work between the two Churches. Most importantly, an analysis of the major works, coupled with setbacks, serves to better understand the ecumenical relationship between the two Churches, and this serves to better apply the premises of Receptive Ecumenism to the dialogue.

This chapter focuses on the Church at the more institutional level, especially since it revolves around the major documents. Yet, this does not bely the fact that the institutional level alone does not encompass each Church or tradition, as was affirmed in the Second Vatican Council. The important contributions of the various Catholic and Orthodox theologians in the Joint International Theological Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches cannot be denied. Yet, this must ultimately be translated to all Christians. It must be remembered that ecumenical dialogue is, first and foremost, an encounter.

Indeed, this attests to the need to transcend the notion of the ecumenical dialogue as mainly pertaining to the realm of purely doctrinal discourse. This is where Receptive Ecumenism is so useful and, as a result, follows in the next chapter. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the understanding of what encompasses ecumenical dialogue has also been a subject of gradual development, parallel to the development of the Churches themselves, so the move to understand the Ecumenical Movement as pertaining to, and comprising of, all Christians has only recently started to be focal in the ecumenical dialogue. This is another reason why an analysis on prophetic gestures has been included in this chapter.

At the end of the Second Vatican Council, there was great enthusiasm among the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in finally restoring relationships. As Waclaw Hryniewicz states: “only the second half of the 20th century of ecumenism could finally bring the rapprochement of the Catholic and Orthodox Church, ... two ‘sister churches.’”¹ The Second Vatican Council and the Pan-Orthodox Conferences in 1961 and 1963 were instrumental in bringing the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches together in the path towards dialogue.² In the wake of the Council and the Pan-Orthodox Conferences, events were set in motion. However, trust and confidence between the Catholics and the Orthodox were, and remain, pivotal.³ After almost a millennium of mutual estrangement there were endless opportunities for theological dialogue, however, both sides needed to tread cautiously.

A number of historical encounters and symbolic gestures which preceded the theological dialogue served to pave the path. The watershed was the historical meeting in January 1964 between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem. The third Pan-Orthodox conference, held at Rhodes in 1964, served to facilitate the Orthodox preparation for eventual dialogue with the Catholic Church.⁴ On the 7th December 1965 a common declaration was issued simultaneously by Rome and Istanbul, whereby the mutual excommunications of 1054 were lifted and cast into oblivion from the memory of the Church.⁵ Two years later, the Patriarch and the Pope exchanged visits in Rome and Istanbul. It is safe to agree with Roberson who states that “the growing personal friendship between these two church leaders symbolized a welcome easing of tensions and misunderstandings that had existed for centuries.”⁶

¹ Waclaw Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church,” *Exchange* 33, no. 2 (2003): 169.

² See *ibid.*

³ See Ronald G. Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church with the Separated Eastern Churches,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 2 (2010): 142.

⁴ See *ibid.* See also Mahieu, *Se preparer au don de l’unité: La commission internationale Catholique-Orthodoxe, 1975* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2016), 43-57.

⁵ See Vatican – Ecumenical Patriarchate. *Tomos Agapis. Vatican-Phanar, 1958-1970.* (Vatican City: Impr. Polyglotte Vaticaine, 1971), 278-294.

⁶ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 142.

3.02 The Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches

1976 saw the establishment of a joint commission with the explicit task of preparing for an official dialogue.⁷ The joint commission submitted a document to the respective church leaders in 1978, wherein it recommended that the goal of the dialogue be the “reestablishment of full communion.”⁸ The official announcement of the beginning of the theological dialogue was made jointly by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios I on the 30th November 1979 in Istanbul.⁹ Thus, the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Church was born.¹⁰ Patriarch Bartholomew has correctly affirmed that:

This dialogue – through the Joint International Commission – has proved fruitful and has made substantial progress. A common sacramental conception of the Church has emerged, sustained and passed on in time by apostolic succession. In our Churches, the apostolic succession is fundamental to the sanctification and unity of the people of God.¹¹

The Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches commenced very positively. Indeed, the bilateral dialogues of the first decade of the Commission were immensely fruitful. In the first plenary session, held at Patmos and Rhodes in 1980, the plan for dialogue as adopted in the 1978 document was endorsed, and the initial themes for examination were chosen.¹²

⁷ See *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ See *ibid.*

¹⁰ Mahieu describes in detail the genesis of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, in *Se préparer au don de l'unité*, 59-117.

¹¹ John Paul II – Bartholomew, “Major Declarations: Religion and the Environment: I. Common Declaration signed by HH Pope John Paul II and HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Vatican on June 29, 1995,” in *In the World, Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 291.

¹² See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 143.

The 1980s can be credited with the production of three important documents which centre on fundamental theological themes.¹³ These serve to highlight what the two churches have in common.¹⁴ The reason that these documents are also explored in this thesis is to extract the fruits of success in the encounter between the two Churches, in order to proceed to address the fragility of the dialogue later on in the chapter. These documents are *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* (Munich, 1982), *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (Bari, 1987), and *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of the Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God* (Valamo, 1988). The documents are closely linked to each other. Moreover, McPartlan sees important instances of resonance between the first document and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which would be published a decade later.¹⁵

The Eucharist lies at the basis of this dialogue, as evinced also in the documents.¹⁶ McPartlan states: “It is instructive to note several dimensions of the Eucharist and of the Christian mystery more widely that, after lengthy intervals of neglect, have been strongly recovered by Catholic theology in recent times.”¹⁷ This is another affirmation of the fact that the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox strongly agree on the basic doctrinal issues. Indeed, “it has become clear that the unity of the basic faith can exist in a diversity of traditions, customs and practices” while, on the other hand, “they have created a solid basis for the discussion of the dividing ecclesiological issues, such as authority and synodality in the Church, and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.”¹⁸ The latter issue has been presented in the final pages of Chapter 2. The dialogues, therefore, merit more examination, since at present the literature on these documents is somehow limited.

¹³ See *ibid.*

¹⁴ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church,” *Exchange* 33, no. 2 (2003): 169.

¹⁵ See Paul McPartlan, “Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy – The Promise and Challenge of Eucharistic 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), 167.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue” 169.

The dialogue is conducted in a language which is biblical, patristic and liturgical.¹⁹ *Koinonia* is an intrinsic aspect of the whole discourse.²⁰ Also, it is a dialogue suffused with a Trinitarian perspective.²¹ It is highly suitable to conduct the dialogue using as model that relationship of persons in perfect communion *par excellence*. Indeed, the relationship between the persons of the Trinity permeates the whole series of dialogues. One cannot help but refer to evocative examples, such as the one cited here, wherein “this consummation in unity brought about by the one inseparable operation of the Son and the Spirit, acting in reference to the Father in his design, is the church in its fullness.”²² Perhaps, the image of the Trinity as model for the unity in the Church might appear obvious to some; one would venture to say that sometimes the metaphor of the Trinity is used frequently but often in a perfunctory manner. If the communion of the Trinity were to be reflected upon in a sincere and profound way, it can indeed be life-changing, and thus lead to personal, ecclesial, and social conversion.

3.02.01 The Munich Document: *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* (1982)

The first document, *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* (1982), also known the Munich document, is the initial result of the dialogues between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. It delves into one aspect of the Church, namely (as set forth in the title), the aspect of the Church and the Eucharist vis-à-vis the mystery of the Trinity. Within this document, the ecclesiological orientation is present in two forms: a Eucharistic and a Trinitarian ecclesiology.²³ As evident in the text, the Eucharist is central. As Mahieu puts it gracefully, Christians are invited to ponder upon “... the Eucharist, sacrament par excellence of the Church, which edifies the Church.”²⁴ This is inextricably related to the

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ See *ibid.*

²¹ See *ibid.*

²² “The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist,” 57.

²³ See Mahieu, *Se Préparer au don de l'unité*, 155.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: “... l'Eucharistie, sacrament par excellence de l'Église, qui édifie l'Église.”

ministry of the Trinity. Indeed, “based on central Scriptural texts, this ecclesiology [Trinitarian ecclesiology] presents the Church as the mystery of the Trinitarian love, the divine communion, communicated to humans through the Eucharist.”²⁵

Two important theologians, Jean-Marie Tillard on the Roman Catholic side, and John Zizioulas on the Orthodox side, were very instrumental in the compilation of the document, so much that “their role in authoring the document also means that their work gives us a deeper understanding of what is said in the document itself.”²⁶ While the document is rooted in the past, at the same time it speaks in contemporary language. Hence, the first paragraph speaks of the “Christ event,” as a contemporary existential term.²⁷

The sharing of each other’s traditions is especially made apparent in the use of various Greek words such as “*tropos*,” “*ephapax*,” “*anamnesis*,” “*epiclesis*,” “*synaxis*,” “*episkope*,” and the more familiar “*koinonia*.” This use of patristic language is a product of one of the initial decisions of the joint commission.²⁸ It can truly be said that this document is a prime example of the commission’s aim in “reintegrating the achievements of a common past into a statement that looked toward a common future.”²⁹ On the other hand, great credit must be given to Zizioulas for his integration of reflection on the patristic sources, with a critical approach.³⁰ This is an approach which the whole of Orthodoxy can profit from, in order for the patristic sources not to remain fossilised but for these sources to be recreated and interpreted in a contemporary world. Furthermore, the opportunity of an affinity with the liturgical traditions and spirituality of both sides was certainly instrumental in the dialogue on such an important theme as the Eucharist, especially when conducted within faithfulness to one’s tradition and, at the same time, while embracing an appreciation for the mutual traditions.³¹

²⁵ Ibid. The original text is the following: “Reposant sur des textes scripturaires centraux, cette ecclésiologie présente l’Église comme le mystère de l’amour trinitaire, la communion divine, communiquée aux hommes par l’Eucharistie.”

²⁶ Myroslaw Tataryn, “The Munich Document and the Language of Unity,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26, no. 4 (1989), 648.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 650.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 652-653.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 653.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 655.

³¹ See Dimitri Salachas, *Il dialogo ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: iter e documentazione*. Quaderni di O Odigos 94 (Bari: Centro Ecumenico San Nicol, 1994), 58.

The relationship between the Eucharist and the Church is on two levels. In paragraph 4 c, one encounters the following:

... on the one hand, the church celebrates the eucharist as expression here and now of the heavenly liturgy; but on the other hand, the eucharist builds up the church in the sense that through it the Spirit of the risen Christ fashions the church into the body of Christ.³²

All the persons of the Trinity participate in the whole process wherein the Eucharist builds the Church, and the specific functions of the three persons of the Trinity are perused at length. The Trinitarian perspective resonates from the patristic sources, and at the same time is a common denominator in both Tillard's and Zizioulas' works.³³ Of special significance is the function of the Spirit in the growth of the Church through the celebration of the Eucharist. It can be said that the document is situated within a pneumatological arena.³⁴ It is explicitly stated that the aim of the document is not to make a list of the differences between the West and the East regarding the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son, but the aim is to focus on what is readily acceptable to both Churches:

we can already say together that this Spirit, who proceeds from the Father (*Jn* 15, 26) as the sole source in the Trinity and who has become the Spirit of our sonship (*Rom* 8, 15) since he is also the Spirit of the Son (*Gal* 4, 6), is communicated to us particularly in the eucharist by this Son upon whom he reposes in time and in eternity (*Jn* 1, 32).³⁵

The second part of the document reflects on the concept of Church as assembly and all that it entails. When the Eucharist is celebrated within the local Church "a new unity is communicated which overcomes divisions and restores communion in the one body of Christ."³⁶ It is a unity which "transcends psychological, racial, sociopolitical or cultural unity. It is the 'communion of the Holy Spirit' gathering together the scattered children of God."³⁷ This Eucharistic and Trinitarian *koinonia* has two dimensions – a vertical and

³² Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity (Munich, 1982), in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press), par. 4 c.

³³ See Tataryn, "The Munich Document and the Language of Unity," 656.

³⁴ Mahieu, *Se Préparer au Don de l'Unité*, 157.

³⁵ "The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist," 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, II, par. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

horizontal dimension.³⁸ The celebration of the Eucharist within the church, with the faithful gathered around the priest or bishop, explicates various aspects of *koinonia*.³⁹ *koinonia* is both eschatological and kerygmatic, and at once ministerial and pneumatological.⁴⁰ However, *koinonia* is not just a gift bestowed upon by God, but also the response of the human being.⁴¹

The document proceeds to describe the role of the bishop where, apart from any ministerial function, his role is “an organic” one.⁴² It is a function which is inextricably bound to the eucharistic assembly which he presides at:⁴³

By consecrating the gifts so that they become the body and blood the community offers, he [the bishop/priest] celebrates not only for it, nor only with it and in it, but through it. He appears then as minister of Christ fashioning the unity of his body and so creating communion through his body. The union of the community with him is first of all of the order of *mysterion* and not primordially of the juridical order.⁴⁴

All this is a living witness of how the Eucharist builds up the Church in unity; it is the gift given by God in order that his Church can grow and be constantly renewed. It is the Eucharist which gathers the assembly to unity.

Moreover, the communion between the local and universal church is simultaneous; unity and diversity do not exclude each other. Each local church can be considered as a microcosm of the universal church, provided that two criteria are met. These are the notion of catholicity in time and mutual recognition.⁴⁵ These churches show a bond of communion which mirrors that of the New Testament, which can only be brought about by the work of the Spirit of the risen Lord.⁴⁶ This relationship between the local and universal churches is discussed at length in chapter 6. The bishops are united together with the apostolic communion, whereby “they too form a college rooted by the Spirit in

³⁸ See Tataryn, “The Munich Document and the Language of Unity,” 657.

³⁹ See “The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist,” II, 2.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*

⁴¹ See *ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, III, 3.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 4.

the ‘once for all’ of the apostolic group, the unique witness to the faith.”⁴⁷ Finally, “the *episkope* for the universal church is seen to be entrusted by the Spirit to the totality of local bishops in communion with one another. This communion is expressed traditionally through conciliar practice.”⁴⁸ However, the implementation of conciliarity on the practical level is a topic which merits further consideration.⁴⁹

The document has had its fair share of criticism, explored in detail by Salachas.⁵⁰ For example, as the then Cardinal Ratzinger states, while the document has as its prime foundations the eucharistic ecclesiology laid down by Afanasiev, this kind of ecclesiology does not do justice to all the various conceptions, both Catholic and Orthodox, that exist regarding what constitutes the unity of the Church.⁵¹ Another example lies with the lack of definition regarding what makes up the Church. Metropolitan Chrysostomos Konstantinidis is adamant in stating that: “ecclesiology is done in the document, without a definition of the Church; the document speaks of sacramentology, without any precise definition of the sacraments.”⁵²

Notwithstanding the fact that certain issues in the document are not set forth as clear as one would have hoped, or remain unresolved, the document itself is certainly an important starting point by way of an official theological dialogue, especially since it deals with such themes which are central for both traditions. Mahieu states that “the very existence of this document attests to the fact that both Catholics and Orthodox are capable of speaking unanimously on central topics of the Christian faith.”⁵³ Lanne himself states that

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*

⁵⁰ See Salachas, *Il dialogo ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la chiesa ortodossa*, 59-68.

⁵¹ Cardinal Ratzinger’s remarks are especially poignant in this respect. See Salachas, *Il dialogo ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 62; also Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l’unité*, 160-161.

⁵² Salachas, *Il dialogo ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 62: “Nel testo si fa ecclesiologia, senza dare la definizione della Chiesa; si parla della sacramentologia, senza dare precisazioni sui sacramenti.”

⁵³ Mahieu, *Se Préparer au don de l’unité*, 168.

It was the first time since their separation that an official Commission of the two Churches, consisting on each side half of bishops, half of theologians, had drawn up and accepted a text dealing with the deepest roots of ecclesial existence.⁵⁴

3.02.02 The Bari Document: *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987)

The second document *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (Bari, 1987), was the product of the fourth plenary session of the Joint International Theological Commission held in a place which is sacred to both Orthodox and Roman Catholics,⁵⁵ and follows on the previous one. Akin to the previous document, here the Commission has departed from the themes which are shared by both traditions surrounding the theme of faith and its formulation, in order to unravel the problems and confusions arisen during long centuries of estrangement.⁵⁶ The Bari document starts with a brief introduction, followed by two sections, crucial themes for a full communion between the two Churches, followed by an analysis of the three sacraments of initiation.⁵⁷

The first part of the document is especially important, as “in a document, the theologians from both Churches formulate an identical doctrine regarding the relationship between faith and sacraments, an important aspect in the quest for full unity.”⁵⁸ It is affirmed from the outset that

⁵⁴ Dom Emmanuel Lanne, “Catholic – Orthodox Dialogue: in Search of a New Direction,” *One in Christ* 21, no. 1 (1985): 19. Mahieu provides a detailed description of the background to the Bari document, in *Se préparer au don de l’unité*, 171-210.

⁵⁵ As the place which holds the relics of St Nicholas of Myra, one of the bishops revered by the universal Church, Bari has always been an important place of pilgrimage for both Catholics and Orthodox. Moreover, the Istituto di Teologia Ecumenica “San Nicola” has held various international conferences on ecumenical dialogue. For more details, and also the interventions of the then Archbishop of Bari, Mariano Magrassi, see Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 81-82; the topic is amply expanded in another book by Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa Ortodossa: la quarta assemblea plenaria di Bari, 1986-87* (Bari: Centro Ecumenico San Nicola, 1988).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: iter e documentazione*, 83.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 98. The original text runs thus: “L’importanza consiste nel fatto che i teologi di ambedue le Chiese formulano in un documento commune una identica dottrina sul rapporto fra fede e sacramenti, rapporto fondamentale per l’intera ricerca della piena unità.”

faith must be taken as a preliminary condition, already complete in itself, which precedes sacramental communion; and also that it is increased by sacramental communion, which is the expression of the very life of the Church and the means of the spiritual growth of each of its members.⁵⁹

Faith is a divine gift, yet at the same time, it presupposes a human response.⁶⁰ Faith itself attests to the “synergy of the grace of God and human freedom.”⁶¹ Through faith, the human being has access to the free gift of salvation through the mystery of Christ, “who constitutes the Church and whom the Church communicates through the Holy Spirit who dwells in it.”⁶²

Faith brings about interior change and transformation in the human person, provided that one responds to this gift.⁶³ Moreover, “faith is a presupposition of baptism and the entire sacramental life which follows it. Indeed, one participates through baptism in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*Rom 6*).”⁶⁴ Therein lies the special role of the sacraments. It is through the sacraments that faith is lived. The document highlights the most fitting example of baptism, where in both the Byzantine and the Latin liturgical traditions, faith is expressed as central to the reception of baptism.⁶⁵ The liturgical celebration, then, “as an authentic interpreter of revelation,” becomes “the criterion for the expression of true faith.”⁶⁶ As put so succinctly,

indeed, it is in the liturgical expression of the faith of our churches that the witness of the Fathers and of the ecumenical councils celebrated together continues to be for believers the sure guide of faith. Independently of diversity in theological expression, this witness, which itself renders explicit the “kerygma” of the Holy Scriptures, is made present in the liturgical celebration. In its turn, the proclamation of the faith nourishes the liturgical prayer of the people of God.⁶⁷

The celebration of the sacraments ensures that each local church manifests its profound personality.⁶⁸ “It is in continuity with the Church of the apostles and in communion with

⁵⁹ Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church,” June 1987, in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), par. 3.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, I, par. 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 23.

all the churches which share one and the same faith and celebrate the same sacraments.”⁶⁹ The expression of true faith through the celebration of the sacraments is an important aspect of ecclesial communion.⁷⁰ Reminiscent of *Unitatis redintegratio*, a certain diversity in the formulation of faith does not jeopardise the *koinonia* between the local churches, as in accord with the one apostolic faith.⁷¹ Diversity in the expression of genuine faith is a testimony to the beauty and diversity inherent in creation, evident also in diverse cultures which pertain to the one and true faith. As discussed earlier, this diversity is also evident in the New Testament itself, but it only serves to prove that the word of God is immutable. It is only the way the proclamation is carried out and the mystery celebrated that allows for diversity. The deposit of faith is the same across countries and cultures.

The problem arises with schisms and heresies which threaten the unity of the church itself. When these differences “represent a rejection of earlier dogmas of the Church and are not simple differences of theological expression,” there arises “a true division of faith.”⁷² To ensure that this kind of division is avoided, the document recommends certain criteria which must be met for a legitimate development of verbal expressions of dogmas according to the times.⁷³ First of all, there must be continuity with the tradition in the whole process.⁷⁴ Moreover, this expression of faith must be viewed within a doxological and soteriological perspective.⁷⁵ Finally, it must be borne in mind that since the meaning of an expression may change over the course of time, “an effort should be made to understand every formula according to the intention of its authors so as not to introduce into it foreign elements or eliminate elements which, in the mind of the authors, were obvious.”⁷⁶

The second part of the document focuses on the sacraments of initiation and their role within the unity of the church. Both the Orthodox and the Catholic concur on the fact

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 25.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷³ See *ibid.*

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

that “the three sacraments of initiation form a unity.”⁷⁷ While tracing the administration of the three sacraments to the Early Church and the way this was carried out, the document also highlights the significant points of agreement and divergence between the two Churches.⁷⁸ The East “has maintained the temporal unity of the liturgical celebration of the three sacraments, underscoring the unity of the action of the Holy Spirit and the full incorporation of the child in the sacramental life of the Church.”⁷⁹ On the other hand, for pastoral reasons, in the West, the eucharist is often administered before confirmation, the latter being postponed in order to maintain the contact with the bishop.⁸⁰ However, this happens in the case of the baptised infants, as the baptism of adults is always followed by confirmation and the eucharist.⁸¹ Finally, the document stresses the importance of each Church following its own practices, in accordance with the Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870).⁸²

While the Bari document espouses an acknowledgement of each tradition, there is a certain vagueness regarding the acknowledgement of the symbols of faith inherent within the traditions.⁸³ The Catholic Church has expressed its recognition for the sacrament of baptism and all the other sacraments celebrated within the Orthodox Church, however there has been a certain hesitation on the Orthodox side regarding the differences in the way baptism is administered.⁸⁴ As a result, the initial aim of a declaration regarding the reciprocal acknowledgment of the sacrament of baptism within each tradition has not been reached.⁸⁵ Moreover, the Catholic inversion of the order of the sacraments of the eucharist and confirmation has also been an issue among various theologians.⁸⁶ Speaking

⁷⁷ Ibid., II, 38.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 47-52.

⁷⁹ Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazioni*, 101. The original Italian text runs thus: “In Oriente è stata mantenuta l’unità temporale della celebrazione liturgica dei tre sacramenti, sottolineando così l’unità dell’opera dello Spirito Santo e la pienezza dell’incorporazione del bambino alla vita sacramentale della Chiesa.”

⁸⁰ See Joint International Commission, *Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church*, 48.

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 51.

⁸² See *ibid.*, 53.

⁸³ See Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazione*, 103.

⁸⁴ See *ibid.* See also Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l’unité*, 227-228.

⁸⁵ See Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazione*, 103.

⁸⁶ See, for example, the interventions of Dom Emmanuel Lanne and Patriarch Antonio of Transylvania, in *ibid.*, 106-108; see also Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission. 22 February 2007, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html (accessed 20 July, 2017).

about the meeting of the Commission in Crete in 1984, in preparation for Bari, Lanne is adamant in the situation as presented to the Orthodox side:

The chief objection among those put forward by the Orthodox party concerns the current Catholic practice of giving communion to the baptised before their confirmation. It is hard for the Orthodox to understand how this sacrament can be considered the ‘perfection’ of Christian initiation, its ultimate completion, when the candidate has already become a communicant member of the Church by sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ, and therefore a perfect Christian.⁸⁷

In his post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, Benedict XVI admits the different Western practice adopted regarding the order of the sacraments of initiation in relation to adults and children,⁸⁸ while acknowledging that “these variations are not properly of the dogmatic order, but are pastoral in character.”⁸⁹ In his reflections on *Sacramentum caritatis*, Roland Minnerath explains the circumstances surrounding the Western inversion of Confirmation and the Eucharist.⁹⁰ He makes a few observations regarding the importance of maintaining the pastoral practices of the Roman Catholic Church in line with the traditional doctrine on the sacraments of Christian initiation.⁹¹ The most important two observations include the observation of the norm of the order of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, for both adults and young people alike.⁹² Moreover, the relation of the confirmed with the Bishop must remain.⁹³

As De Halleux points out in his analysis of the final document drawn at Bari, the text of Bari has served to show that

it would be futile to wish to advance theological dialogue between the two sister churches on the basis of the initial observation of a deep communion already existing in sacramental matters, in the light of which the doctrinal differences would appear less divisive.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Lanne, “Catholic – Orthodox Dialogue: in Search of a New Direction, 23.

⁸⁸ Benedict XVI, “*Sacramentum caritatis*,” 18.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ See Roland Minnerath, “Reflection on *Sacramentum Caritatis*,” *L’Osservatore Romano*. (Weekly Edition in English) 26 September 2007, 9. Also <https://www.ewtn.com/library/Doctrine/minneratsacarit.htm> (accessed 20 July 2017).

⁹¹ See *ibid.*

⁹² See *ibid.*

⁹³ See *ibid.*

⁹⁴ André De Halleux, “Foi, baptême et unite: À propos du texte de Bari,” *Irénikon* 61, no. 2 (1988): 187. The original text, in French, is the following: “... le texte de Bari a mieux fait percevoir qu’il serait vain de vouloir faire progresser le dialogue théologique entre les deux Églises sœurs à partir du constat initial

Lanne cites Willebrands' address to Patriarch Dimitrios I on the 30th November, 1977, feast of Saint Andrew, on the preliminary work towards the establishment of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue: "This sacramental reality in which we live is the foundation for the solid relationship which has been established among our two Churches."⁹⁵ The same theme is reiterated by Patriarch Dimitrios himself, although the sacraments themselves are celebrated within a diversity of forms.⁹⁶ It is affirmed that both Churches have received and celebrate the "same sacraments." However, Lanne asks a pertinent question: "How can we speak of the 'same sacraments' if we do not also speak about the content of these sacraments and the grace they confer – which no party puts in question – and if they are not identical and the same?"⁹⁷ While in principle, both Churches affirm that they have the same sacraments, the notion of reciprocal recognition of the validity of the sacraments does not carry the same weight among the two traditions.⁹⁸

This should also serve as a reminder that the two Churches are still in their infancy regarding knowledge of each other and their own traditions. There needs to be more awareness of this and, as a result, more learning and appreciation of the each other. Receptive Ecumenism is of great help in this respect and this is why this thesis seeks to show how it can be harnessed to benefit both the dialogue between two Churches and the growth of each Church in the process. This situation calls for a more thorough analysis of the significance and the praxis of the sacraments of initiation within the Latin rite, especially in the prospect of unity.⁹⁹ After all, as Salachas states, "differences in the

d'une communion profonde déjà existante en matière sacramentelle, à la lumière de laquelle les divergences doctrinales apparaîtraient alors ramenées à des proportions moins divisives."

⁹⁵ Emmanuel Lanne, "Foi, sacrements et unité: Réflexions complémentaires sur le document de Bari," *Irénikon* 61, no. 2 (1988): 191. The original text runs thus: "Cette réalité sacramentelle dont nous vivons est la base des rapports solides qui s'établissent entre nos Églises."

⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, 191-192.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 193. The original text is the following: "Mais comment peut-on parler de 'mêmes sacrements' s'il ne s'agit pas aussi du contenu de ces sacrements, de la grâce qu'ils confèrent et qui – aucune des deux parties ne le met en doute – ne peut être qu'une et identique?"

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 204.

⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 182; see also Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazione*, 103.

liturgical celebrations of the three sacraments of Christian initiation have always existed from antiquity, without being a cause for rupture between East and West.”¹⁰⁰

3.02.03 The Valamo Document: *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988)

The third document of the Joint Commission is linked to the previous two, and explores the sacrament of ordination in relation to the Church. Having maintained the apostolic succession, the Churches examine together the episcopate, presbyterate, and the diaconate. In accordance with Eleutherio Fortino, “this document deals with its tripartite model (episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate) and its role in its Church, as well as the apostolic succession present within the two Churches.”¹⁰¹ Such a topic is of crucial importance within the prospective of unity between the two Churches.¹⁰² Both traditions affirm the crucial link between the work of Christ in his Church and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ Hence,

this understanding prevents us seeing in the economy Christ in isolation from the Spirit. The actual presence of Christ in his Church is also of an eschatological nature, since the Spirit constitutes the earnest of the perfect realisation of God's design for the world.¹⁰⁴

The role of the Spirit is expounded upon in paragraphs 6 to 13. As Mahieu points out, the presence of the Holy Spirit is twofold, either as that of an active Person or else it is envisaged as fulfilling the action of Christ.¹⁰⁵ This equilibrium points out to the determinative influence of Zizioulas, for whom christology and pneumatology condition each other mutually.¹⁰⁶ While the Spirit was actively involved in the Christ-event (see

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.: “... perché le differenze nella celebrazione liturgica dei tre sacramenti dell’iniziazione Cristiana esistevano sin dall’antichità, senza creare causa di rottura tra Oriente ed Occidente.”

¹⁰¹ Eleutherio Fortino, “Dialogo cattolico-ortodosso. Difficoltà e problemi,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 15 June 1986, quoted in Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazione*, 132.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, 133; see also Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, “The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church,” 26 June 1988, in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), par. 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ See Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l’unité*, 257.

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*

paragraph 6), it is at Pentecost that the Spirit becomes present in the Church, whereby “in the ministry of Christ as in that of the Church, it is the one and same Spirit who is at work and who will act with us all the days of our life.”¹⁰⁷ The hiddenness of the Spirit in relation to Christ’s work is developed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, where it is affirmed that the “the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed.”¹⁰⁸ The *Catechism* quotes St Gregory of Nazianzus who, in developing his theology of divine “condescension,” explains the progression of revelation of the Holy Spirit, whereby,

the Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself.”¹⁰⁹

The *Catechism* continues as follows: “Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully, until he himself has been glorified through his Death and Resurrection.”¹¹⁰ It is only on the day of Pentecost that “Christ’s Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.”¹¹¹ To return to the document, Christ is present in his Church through the Holy Spirit. As such, Christ’s work is rooted in history and oriented towards the Parousia.¹¹² The ministry of the Church is, hence, sacramental.¹¹³ Moreover, since the work of the Holy Spirit is oriented towards a future (the Parousia), Christ’s presence is also eschatological.¹¹⁴

For all its description of the work of the Holy Spirit, this document does not ponder at length on the problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which constitutes a point of divergence between the two Traditions.¹¹⁵ Indeed,

¹⁰⁷ Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue, “The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church,” I, par. 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Broadway/NY: Doubleday, 1995), par. 684.

¹⁰⁹ St Gregory of Nazianzen, *Oratio Theologica*, as quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 684.

¹¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 728.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 731.

¹¹² See Joint International Commission, “The Sacrament of Order,” 9.

¹¹³ See *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁵ See Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: Iter e documentazione*, 135.

The affirmation that the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son in time and eternity' is inserted as a solution to that problem which the West answered through the use of 'Filioque' and in the East with the formula 'Per Filium.'¹¹⁶

Notwithstanding the lack of a solution regarding this problem, what is most essential for both Churches is the agreement regarding the special role ascribed to the Father within the Trinity, as the only origin, cause of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷

As reiterated by Salachas, "both Churches have a common tradition regarding ordained ministers, the sacramental structure of the Church, and the apostolic succession. In both Churches, the structure of the Church is expressed in the sacramentality of the ordination of bishops, presbyters and deacons."¹¹⁸

Most importantly, the document points to the time before the rupture. Of course, this is present throughout the text. One important example is the constant reference from Scriptures and the direct reference to the work of the community of the Twelve (see paragraphs 13, 14 and 19 to 21). This is essential as a common footing upon which the dialogue between the two Churches can take place. The period of history of ecclesial communion shared by the two Churches before the rupture, that is the period of the one and undivided Church, always remains the point of reference for the rating of the later developments in the West and in the East, and for the solution of doctrinal divergences which are still present.¹¹⁹

The ecclesial ministry can be called apostolic for two reasons. On one hand, the twelve apostles are witness to the historical life of Jesus, his ministry, passion and resurrection, while on the other hand, since they are related to the Christ who is glorified, they provide

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 136. The original Italian text runs thus: "L'affermazione che lo Spirito Santo 'procede dal Padre e riposa sul Figlio nel tempo e nell'eternità' si inserisce come linea di soluzione in quella problematica alla quale in Occidente si è voluto rispondere con la formulazione 'Filioque' e in Oriente con la formulazione 'Per Filium.'"

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 134. "Ambedue le Chiese hanno una tradizione comune riguardo ai ministeri ordinati, alla struttura sacramentale della Chiesa, e alla successione apostolica. In ambedue le Chiese, la struttura della Chiesa è espressa nella sacramentalità dell'ordinazione dei vescovi, dei presbiteri e dei diaconi."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: "Il periodo della storia comune, prima della rottura della comunione ecclesiale, cioè il periodo della Chiesa indivisa, resta sempre il punto di riferimento per la valutazione degli sviluppi posteriori in Occidente ed in Oriente, e per la soluzione delle divergenze dottrinali ancora esistenti."

the link between each community until the end of days.¹²⁰ As paragraph 14 of the Bari document continues:

Thus, the ecclesial ministry will be called apostolic because it is carried out in continuity and in fidelity to what was given by Christ and handed on in history by the apostles. But it will also be apostolic because the eucharistic assembly at which the minister presides is an anticipation of the final community with Christ. Through this double relationship the Church's ministry remains constantly bound to that of the Twelve, and so to that of Christ.¹²¹

The second part of the dialogue deals with the role of the ministerial priesthood within the divine role of salvation. The document stresses time and again that the role of the priesthood is at the service of the Church.¹²² The priesthood, conferred by ordination “is at the service of the Church's life and continued existence by the Holy Spirit, that is to say, of the unity in Christ, of all the faithful living and dead, of the martyrs, the saints, the just of the Old Testament.”¹²³ The priest is entrusted a mission of service, which reflects that of Jesus himself (Lk 22, 27; Jn 13, 14-16).

This is true of the bishop, the presbyter and the deacon. While there is a diversity of ministries within the gathered assembly during the celebration of the eucharist – “each according to his or her status is ‘liturge’ of the *koinonia*, and is so only through the Spirit”¹²⁴ – the ministry of the bishop is, among all the charisms and ministries which the Spirit raises up, “a ministry of presiding for gathering in unity.”¹²⁵

The bishop lies at the centre of the local Church, “whose communion realizes the unity of all and expresses the fullness of the Church.”¹²⁶ Nevertheless, the local Church should always be in communion with the universal communion of Churches.¹²⁷ The local Church and the universal Church should not exclude each other. Even the way episcopal ordination itself is conferred attests to “the communion of the Churches with that of the person selected: it makes him a member of the communion of bishops.”¹²⁸

¹²⁰ See Joint International Commission, “The Sacrament of Order,” 14.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² See *ibid.*, II, par. 23.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., III, par. 24.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See *ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 27.

The document is adamant that the gift of episcopacy conferred upon the individual is a gift of service to the Church.¹²⁹ The role of the bishop, who follows in Christ's footsteps, is that of serving; any notions of privilege and juridical power only serve to go against the bishop's (and Christ's) actual mission! Christ's words in Matt 20, 26-28 should be constantly resonant:

but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The unity of the Christian community is especially present at the celebration of the Eucharist.¹³⁰ The bishop, as the one who is the spiritual father of his community, "presides at its praise and at its intercession, and he himself prays unceasingly for all those entrusted to him by the Lord, knowing that he is responsible for each one before the tribunal of God."¹³¹

The last two paragraphs which round off this section are dedicated to the priest and deacon. While the document focuses especially on the role of the bishop, only a few lines are dedicated to the priest, and scantier still is the reference to the deacon.¹³² These two important roles merit a more indepth reflection, which is evidently quite lacking in a document dealing with the sacrament of orders. The role of the priest is summarised in paragraph 42, which runs thus:

above all he is sent to a parish community to be its pastor: he presides at the eucharist at the altar (consecrated by the bishop), he is minister of the sacraments for the community, he preaches the Gospel and catechizes; it is his duty to keep in unity the charisms of the people (*laos*) of God; he appears as the ordinary minister of the local eucharistic community, and the diocese is thus a communion of eucharistic communities.¹³³

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 36..

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹³² See U.S. Theological Consultation, "A Joint Reaction by the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA to the International Orthodox-Roman Catholic Commission's Text: 'The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church with particular reference to the importance of apostolic Succession for the sanctification and unity of the people of God, in, *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue* (Crestwood/NY, 1996), 146; also Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 140.

¹³³ Joint International Commission, "The Sacrament of Order," par. 42.

In short, the role of the priest mirrors that of the bishop, albeit on a smaller scale. By contrast, the role of deacon since, properly speaking he has not embraced the priestly ministry is restricted to assisting the bishop and the priest "... in the liturgy, in the work of evangelization and in the service of charity."¹³⁴

Paragraph 32 is dedicated to the role of women in the Church. While there is an explicit reference to the "fundamental role played by women" or the fact that "their particular charisms are very important for important for the building up of the body of Christ," it does not explain how these charisms (which remain unspecified in the document)¹³⁵ can practically help the Church. What matters mostly, however, is that both traditions must "remain faithful to the historical and theological tradition according to which they ordain only men to the priestly ministry."¹³⁶

The last section deals with the apostolic succession. It attests to the work of Christ as a dynamic action, which is present in history¹³⁷ and stretches in an over-arching manner unto the end of times. The link of the document with the previous ones is made evident in its citation of the Munich document in stating that rather than a transmission of powers, the apostolic succession "is succession in a Church which witnesses to the apostolic faith, in communion with the other Churches, witnesses of the same apostolic faith."¹³⁸ Most significantly, it refers to the notion of "cathedra" (see) as having a crucial role in positioning the bishop at the heart of the ecclesial apostolicity.¹³⁹

The apostolic communion ensures the communion between the bishops and their respective communities.¹⁴⁰ Hence: "The bishops are thus rooted in the 'once for all' of the apostolic group through which the Holy Spirit gives witness to the faith."¹⁴¹ Paragraphs 50 and 51 highlight the tasks of the bishop in line with the apostolic

¹³⁴ Ibid., 43.

¹³⁵ See U.S. Theological Commission, "A Joint Reaction," 147.

¹³⁶ Joint International Commission, "The Sacrament of Orders," 32.

¹³⁷ See *ibid.*, IV, par. 44.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹³⁹ See Joint Commission, Munich Document, II, 4, in "The Sacrament of Order," 46.

¹⁴⁰ See Joint Commission, "The Sacrament of Order," 48.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

succession: maintaining the fidelity of the faith among his community, the defence of the community members entrusted to him, and constant attention to his community.¹⁴² Moreover, the bishop is entrusted with the organisation of the life of the church, and also watching over the selection of the persons who are to carry on responsibilities within his diocese.¹⁴³

The last four chapters of the document deal with the important concept of collegiality. Paragraph 52 describes the forms of communion practised among bishops, especially through the councils.¹⁴⁴ Mention is made of the organisation of the early Church in a pentarchy with the sees of Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, there were local and regional councils and conferences among bishops, whereby: “their forms could change according to different places and times, but their guiding principle is to manifest and make efficacious the life of the Church by joint episcopal action, under the presidency of the one whom they recognized as the first among them.”¹⁴⁶

Finally, the document suggests that this model of communion which exists at the local level can be used in order to address the main divisive issue which exists among the Churches, that of primacy, notably the primacy of Rome.¹⁴⁷ Much work remains to be done, but it is certainly the case that the “Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue has been moving toward greater maturity and comprehensiveness in the formulation of its agreed statements.”¹⁴⁸ To sum up, with the Valamo document,

the Joint Commission has concluded its undertaken route involving theological reflection on the sacramental structure in the Church. The essential agreement among the two parties, Catholic and Orthodox, is not solely theoretical, but reflects a common apostolic tradition lived and celebrated within the Church ever since its very beginning by both Churches.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² See *ibid.*, 50-51.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 52.

¹⁴⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ US Theological Commission, “A Joint Reaction,” 149.

¹⁴⁹ Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolico-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 145: “Si può pertanto affermare che con il documento di Valamo la Commissione mista conclude un lungo percorso di riflessione teologica sulla struttura sacramentale nella Chiesa. L’accordo essenziale delle due parti, cattolica ed ortodossa, non è solo teorico, ma rispecchia la comune tradizione apostolica vissuta e celebrata dai primordi della Chiesa fino ad oggi da ambedue le Chiese.”

These three documents, seen in unison, can be considered an important step forward in the dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. An important affirmation is the acknowledgement of the inextricable link between the Christological and pneumatological dimensions. While certain aspects covered in the documents, such as what constitutes the Church, and the notion of the mutual recognition of the validity of the sacraments, need further analysis, it can be asserted that embarking on the dialogue by discussing what the Churches have in common has been a wise idea. There are many points of agreement on the main theological aspects and this also affirms the fact that the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches are very close when it comes to the theological discourse. Moreover, the result achieved in these documents also served to enable the Churches to get to know each other along the process, and cement a position of trust. Yet, caution must be exercised because it might be easy for the success achieved to bely the reality of the simmering wounds inflicted by past events which also have ramifications into the 20th and 21st dialogue, such as the issues of uniatism, to be discussed in the next chapter. It must also be kept in mind that the process of mutual understanding is an arduous process, which requires a lot of effort on both sides.

3.03 The 1990s: The Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Re-ignition of the issue of Uniatism

The topic of conciliarity and authority in the Church, which was to be dealt with at Freising in June 1990, coincided with the fall of communism, which was spreading like wildfire throughout Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁰ The crumbling of communism heralded a new era for religious freedom but, ironically, it also precipitated tensions between the two Churches.¹⁵¹ This crisis, involving the issue of the so-called “uniatism” and proselytism, demanded an urgent response, therefore, the planned theological topics had to be postponed until that situation was resolved.¹⁵² The use of this term “is expressive of the

¹⁵⁰ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 143.

¹⁵¹ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 170.

¹⁵² See *ibid.*

centuries of conflicting claims, mistrust and pain which characterized Catholic-Orthodox relations until the sixties.”¹⁵³

Hryniewicz describes the events which precipitated the crisis between the two churches in Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁴ The emergence of the Eastern Catholic Churches and their demand for their former property (which had been earlier given to the Orthodox) in the post-Communist countries, led to a series of conflicts between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.¹⁵⁵ The question of what was derogatively dubbed by the Orthodox as “uniatism” and “a dangerous form of proselytism and source of divisions” had to be addressed during the next session at Freising/Munich in 1990 and, most importantly, in Balamand in 1993.¹⁵⁶

The position of the Eastern Catholic Churches is a very complex one and merits special attention. These Churches are in communion with Rome; despite their diverse ecclesiological traditions and liturgical rites:

in them, distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church.¹⁵⁷

However, their beginnings are very different from each other, so it would be a grave injustice towards these same Churches to apply a “one size fits all” analysis.

To begin with, the term “uniatism” for these Churches has been applied with different connotations by the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and disregarded altogether by some Eastern Catholic Churches.¹⁵⁸ The very notion of “uniatism” is replete

¹⁵³ John Borelli and John H. Erickson, eds., *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 160.

¹⁵⁴ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 159-166.

¹⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 170.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

¹⁵⁷ Vatican Council II, “*Orientalium ecclesiarum*.” Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, 21 November, 1964. In Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, edited by Austin Flannery, (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 1.

¹⁵⁸ For more details regarding the different applications of the term by the Eastern Orthodox and the Catholic Churches, see Edward G. Farrugia, “Uniatism,” in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, ed. Edward G. Farrugia (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2015), 1881-1882. A detailed analysis of the identity and existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches can be found in Michel Jalakh’s

with ambiguities.¹⁵⁹ The Eastern Orthodox have tended to employ the term in a derogatory fashion, referring to those Churches created artificially, especially through proselytism, “or the forced conversion from one sister Church to another, or perhaps latinization.”¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, some of the oldest Eastern Catholic Churches who do not trace the beginnings of their identities to any division from any of the Churches, reject this term.¹⁶¹ Such examples include the Melchite Church, who has been in union with Rome since its very origins. On the other hand, in the light of what has already been discussed above, many apply the term to those Christians who have been in union with Rome since the 16th century, since the Union of Brest-Litovsk.¹⁶² Bobrinskoy and Legrand even go as far as to employ “uniatism” positively, referring to the monastic communities such as those at Chevetogne, who promote an authentic ecumenism of the heart through prayer and service.¹⁶³ This goes to show the complexity of the situation which cannot be reduced to any generalisations but, rather, merits a certain sensitivity in the analysis of a complicated position. It is with reason that Legrand calls for caution against generalisations which can only inflict more pain in an already tense situation.¹⁶⁴ Legrand and Jalakh explore the three main divergent points of view: the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Catholic points of view.¹⁶⁵ The existence of these Eastern Catholic Churches poses, for the Orthodox a betrayal of the visible unity of the Church, based on a ‘return’ ecclesiology achieved by proselytism at the hands of the Church of Rome, originating “from an unacceptable and artificial ecclesiology, totally foreign to the Church of the first centuries.”¹⁶⁶ Jalakh cites Stavrou who sums up the Orthodox position to the existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches as follows: “The abnormal ecclesiological situation of the Eastern Catholic Churches cannot be tolerated except by economy; that is, considering the people and the human realities with love, compassion

thesis “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches: *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 30 and beyond,” *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 297 (Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 2014), 182-183.

¹⁵⁹ See Boris Bobrinskoy, “L’Uniatisme à la lumière des ecclésiologies qui s’affrontent,” in *Irénikon* 65, no. 3 (1992): 430.

¹⁶⁰ Farrugia, “Uniatism,” 1881. See also Hervé Legrand, “Une éventuelle relance de l’uniatisme portrait-elle s’appuyer sur Vatican II?” *Irénikon* 66, no. 1 (1993): 32.

¹⁶¹ See Farrugia, “Uniatism,” 1881.

¹⁶² See Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 182.

¹⁶³ See Bobrinskoy, “L’Uniatisme à la lumière des ecclésiologies,” 431; Legrand, “Une éventuelle relance de l’uniatisme,” 32.

¹⁶⁴ See Legrand, “Une éventuelle relance de l’uniatisme,” 32.

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 7-11; Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 175-181.

¹⁶⁶ Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 175.

and understanding.”¹⁶⁷ A similar attitude is shared by Bobrinskoy in referring to the situation of the Eastern Catholic Churches as the result of the universal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, whereby “outside this frame and these premises, they have no reason to be, because otherwise they would fall within the sphere of another spiritual realm, that is of the Churches of communion.”¹⁶⁸

A different perception of uniatism prevails within Catholicism, a perception which has varied across with the historical events, especially the Council of Florence and that of Trent. Ever since the 19th century, proselytism has been employed by the Catholic Church in viewing the potential of the Eastern Churches united together as a possible way to restore unity.¹⁶⁹ Indeed,

It begins to consider them as ‘bridge-Churches’ between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, which can be used for a better understanding of the East, and to convince the Orthodox of the possibility of being at the same time both fully Eastern and fully Catholic.¹⁷⁰

Unsurprisingly, uniatism is seen altogether differently by the Eastern Catholics themselves! A look at the history of the different Eastern Catholic Churches serves to point out the fact that this term cannot encapsulate the different realities of these Churches. Jalakh is definitely correct in stating that “it would be misleading to speak of a singular problem of the Eastern Catholics as if this problem was handled in the same way for all of them.”¹⁷¹ This is also corroborated by Salachas.¹⁷² Too often, these Churches, especially those situated in former Communist countries, have been the victims of grave injustices inflicted upon them by both Orthodox and at times by Catholics themselves.¹⁷³ Jalakh is especially poignant in stating that despite their differences, these

¹⁶⁷ M. Stavrou, “Les ‘ambigua’ du document de Balamand pour sa reception du côté orthodoxe, in Aa. Vv., *Les enjeux e l’uniatisme. Dans le sillage de Balamand*, (Paris, 2004), 332, in Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 177.

¹⁶⁸ Bobrinskoy, “L’Uniatisme à la lumière des ecclésiologies qui s’affrontent,” *Irénikon* 65, no. 3 (1992): 435: “En dehors de ce cadre et ces prémices, elle n’ont pas de raison d’être, car ells tomberaient dans la mouvance d’un autre espace spiritual, celui des Églises de communion.”

¹⁶⁹ See Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 178.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁷² See Salachas, *Il Dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa*, 157.

¹⁷³ See Legrand, “Une éventuelle reliance de l’uniatisme,” 7.

Churches “agree when it comes to their communion with Rome, even if the price of that communion was often, and still is, very high.”¹⁷⁴

Legrand’s conclusion regarding the role of the Eastern Catholic Churches and their important role in the dialogue between the Roman and the Orthodox Churches (without the need for a revival of uniatism) as sister churches and genuine partners in dialogue should be regarded as a step forward in the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox.¹⁷⁵ At the same time it also attests to the need for conversion on the sides of both Churches, even in the change of the logic behind their perceptions amidst this turbulent issue. It remains to be seen whether such advice will be heeded and the results of the application of good will on the part of all parties involved.¹⁷⁶

3.03.01 The Balamand Document: *Uniatism, Method of Union in the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion* (1993)

In the light of the communiqué issued at Freising, whereby uniatism was exposed in a generally negative light, the document of Balamand “studied uniatism in a wider, more articulate context.”¹⁷⁷ This document is titled *Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion*. As Roberson affirms: “The Balamand document was the first attempt to deal with this extremely delicate question, and therefore a major step forward. Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople supported it as a step in the right direction.”¹⁷⁸ The document is composed of two parts. The first part deals with ecclesiological principles, which is followed by practical rules, comprising about half of the statement. It is evident, therefore, that on the whole, the aim of this document is chiefly practical.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 181.

¹⁷⁵ See Legrand, “Une éventuelle reliance de l’uniatisme,” 31-32.

¹⁷⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 230-231.

¹⁷⁸ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 144.

¹⁷⁹ See Borelli and Erickson, eds., *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 164.

From the outset, it should be stated that two central affirmations make up the centripetal force of the whole document.¹⁸⁰ First of all, according to the documents, uniatism undermines the relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This is first affirmed in paragraph 2, in reiterating the conclusion drawn at Freising (1990) that “we reject it as method for the search for unity because it is opposed to the common tradition of our Churches.”¹⁸¹ This is also expounded in paragraph 12:

Because of the way in which Catholics and Orthodox once again consider each other in their relationship to the mystery of the Church and discover each other once again as Sister Churches, this form of ‘missionary apostolate’ described above, and which has been called ‘uniatism,’ can no longer be accepted either as a method to be followed nor as a model of the unity our Churches are seeking.¹⁸²

Uniatism is described as a method used in the past in order to attract believers from one church to another and not as the existence of the Oriental Catholic Churches.¹⁸³ Apart from the history in which Eastern communities reverted to communion with Rome, the root of the problem lies in proselytism, an aspect with negative implications, especially among the Orthodox. On the other hand, the document is adamant from the outset that the Oriental Catholic Churches, “as part of the Catholic Communion, have the right to exist and to act in answer to the spiritual needs of their faithful.”¹⁸⁴

After analysing the thorny issues regarding uniatism and its impact on the Catholic-Orthodox relationships, the document turns to practical matters. First of all, all parties must always strive for communion. As paragraph 20 states:

It is here that the dialogue of love must be present with a continually renewed intensity and perseverance which alone can overcome reciprocal lack of understanding and which is the necessary climate for deepening the theological dialogue that will permit arriving at full communion.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 144.

¹⁸¹ Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, “Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past and the Present Search for Full Communion,” June 17-24, 1993, in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), par. 2.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸³ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 144; Joint Commission, “Uniatism,” 176-177.

¹⁸⁴ Joint International Commission, “Uniatism,” 3.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

This involves abolishing all aspects which can incite discord and antipathy between the Churches.¹⁸⁶ This responsibility extends to the authorities of the Churches.¹⁸⁷

Moreover, pastoral activity in the Latin and Oriental Catholic Churches should aim “at answering the spiritual needs of its own faithful and it has no desire for expansion at the expense of the Orthodox Church.”¹⁸⁸ This is an answer to the problem of proselytism, which is a very sensitive subject for the Orthodox Church. This is a problem to which we will return shortly. All this should give way to mutual cooperation between the two Churches. On the other hand, both Churches should see to it that they do not stifle religious freedom to which all faithful have a right.¹⁸⁹

This is where dialogue and consultation between the Churches come in. Some suggestions are listed in paragraph 26, whereby:

Those in charge of the communities concerned should create joint local commissions or make effective those which already exist, for finding solutions to concrete problems and seeing that these solutions are applied in truth and love, in justice and peace. If agreement cannot be reached on the local level, the question should be brought to mixed commissions established by higher authorities.¹⁹⁰

Moreover, Catholic and Orthodox bishops operating in the same territory should consult each other before creating any pastoral projects “which imply the creation of new structures in regions which traditionally form part of the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church, in view to avoid parallel pastoral activities which would risk rapidly degenerating into rivalry or even conflicts.”¹⁹¹

This is why future priests who are to carry out work in a place which is traditionally under the jurisdiction of the other Church, should receive a holistic formation which entails a positive appreciation of the other Church, especially with regard to its authentic apostolic succession and sacramental life.¹⁹² This serves to dispel any inherited prejudices against

¹⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 22

¹⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁹² See *ibid.*, 30.

the other Church and to see things within a renewed perspective, thus avoiding the use of history to generate polemic.¹⁹³ To sum up: “this presentation will lead to an awareness that faults leading to separation belong to both sides, leaving deep wounds on each side.”¹⁹⁴ The document concludes by the exhortation to all parts to engage in deep and fraternal dialogue which, alone is the key to any real form of communion,¹⁹⁵ and to abet any form of proselytism and thirst for expansion at the expense of the Orthodox Church.¹⁹⁶ Only in a climate of sincerity and trust can real theological dialogue take place.¹⁹⁷

This statement was met with various reactions, some of them outright hostile, on the local level. Roberson claims that only in Ukraine did the Orthodox and the Eastern Catholic churches support the Balamand statement.¹⁹⁸ Other Orthodox Churches, such as those in Athens and Jerusalem rejected it altogether, while others showed a certain reservation.¹⁹⁹ Some possible reasons for this negative reaction to the statement might stem from a climate of suspicion of ecumenism in Eastern Europe, and a certain unfamiliarity with the work of the Joint International Commission in relation to the Balamand document.²⁰⁰ Notwithstanding, “although the document was not able to change the situation in the areas of conflict between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics, it has become a source of inspiration for some significant local initiatives.”²⁰¹

When talking about the variety of reactions to the Balamand document – in particular the negative reactions to uniatism – one will probably remain perplexed to learn about the Apostolic Letters published by the Slav Pope John Paul II to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Union of Uzhorod and the 400th anniversary of the Union of Brest. The latter, dated 12th November 1995 (on the significant memorial of St Josaphat), and

¹⁹³ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 31.

¹⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, 35.

¹⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, 34.

¹⁹⁸ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 144.

¹⁹⁹ See Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 237.

²⁰⁰ See Borelli and Erickson, *The Quest for Unity*, 165.

²⁰¹ Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 171.

the former, dated 18th April 1996, rejoice in the memory of the re-establishment of full union with Rome of certain Eastern Orthodox communities.²⁰²

The U.S. Theological Consultation has applauded the work of the International Commission in the Balamand document, especially in the realm of practical matters.²⁰³ The Consultation feels that the “will to pardon”²⁰⁴ is the most important of the practical rules, especially in the light of the turbulent past relations between the two churches.²⁰⁵

On the other hand, the U.S. Theological Consultation has questioned certain articulations which call for more in-depth analysis.²⁰⁶ Such examples include the origin of the Oriental Catholic Churches, together with their impact on the relations between Catholic and Orthodox, and the administration of such sacraments as baptism.²⁰⁷ Indeed, an important criticism of the Balamand document is its lack of distinction among the various Churches under the umbrella term of “uniatism.”²⁰⁸ It does not really explore the concept of uniatism and its various perspectives as they exist in reality. Notwithstanding, it is certainly the case that a diverse interpretation of the document ensued, especially from the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Eastern Catholics.²⁰⁹

While appreciating the effort of the Balamand document in presenting the ecclesiological principles which are foundational to the practical rules listed in the second part, the U.S. Theological Consultation feels that these ecclesiological principles as presented in the document merit further examination.²¹⁰ Furthermore, the Theological Consultation

²⁰² See John Paul II, “Apostolic Letter for the Fourth Centenary of the Union of Brest,” *Vatican Website*, 12 November, 1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19951112_iv-cent-union-brest.html; see also idem., “Apostolic Letter on the 350th Anniversary of the Union of Uzhorod,” *Vatican Website*, 18 April, 1996, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19960418_union-uzhorod.html.

²⁰³ See U.S. Theological Consultation, “A Response of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States to the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church: ‘Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past and the Present Search for Full Communion,’” in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 185-186.

²⁰⁴ Joint Commission, “Uniatism,” 178.

²⁰⁵ See U.S. Theological Consultation, “A Response of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation,” 186.

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, 187.

²⁰⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁸ See Jalakh, “Ecclesiological Identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches,” 231.

²⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 233-234.

²¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 188.

criticises the concepts of “religious freedom”, “respect for consciences,” and “freedom of conscience.” To avoid an understanding of such concepts in a way which would garner fragmentation (akin to our Western understanding of things), the Theological Consultation suggests “the need for a coherent understanding of community and therefore the need to locate individual rights and responsibilities within the common good.”²¹¹ To conclude, in the opinion of the U.S. Theological Consultation, “while pointing out some shortcomings of the Balamand Document, we nevertheless regard it to be a strong and positive contribution to the theological dialogue between our churches.”²¹²

In spite of its scant reception among the Orthodox and the Oriental Catholic Churches, the Balamand document did inspire some local initiatives, described in detail by Hryniewicz.²¹³ This includes work of the *Kievan Church Study Group*, composed of various hierarchs and theologians within the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, with the intention of restoring full communion between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, while remaining in communion with Rome.²¹⁴ Another initiative has been the dialogue between Melchite Greek Catholic Christians and Eastern Orthodox in the Patriarchate of Antioch.²¹⁵ In the late 60s, Elias Zoghby spoke in an encouraging tone regarding the role of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches: “In this dialogue, which primarily concerns the Latin and Orthodox churches, the Eastern Uniates will have a role as witnesses which, though secondary, is nevertheless necessary.”²¹⁶ However, despite the good will on the part of various persons, it can be concluded that, unfortunately, as of to-date, the situation of uniatism has not been resolved.

²¹¹ Ibid., 189.

²¹² Ibid., 190.

²¹³ For more details, see Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 171-173.

²¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 171-172.

²¹⁵ For full details, see *ibid.*, 172.

²¹⁶ Elias Zoghby, “Eastern and Western Tradition in the One Church,” in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Hans Küng et al., (Glen Rock/NJ: Paulist Press, 1964), 54.

3.03.02 Proselytism

This concept, especially sensitive to the Orthodox Church, merits some discussion here. It has been the cause of tension between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches until recently. This is seen in the problem which arose in Russia, when the Holy See decided in 1991 to create four “apostolic administrations,” though not formal dioceses, there.²¹⁷ Admittedly, it encouraged collaboration of the apostolic administrators with the Orthodox bishops, informing them of any pastoral initiatives they planned to undertake.²¹⁸ Yet, the situation was aggravated in 2002, when the Holy See decided to create four “fully-fledged” dioceses in Russia, a step which “provoked a deep crisis in mutual relationship.”²¹⁹

Prior to the collapse of Communism, the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church were on very friendly terms with each other. The decision of the Holy See was seen by the Orthodox as an act of proselytism, although the Catholic Church explained that proselytism consists in “gaining someone for another religion or denomination by using methods which are incompatible with the Gospel and human freedom.”²²⁰ The Orthodox conception of proselytism entails the evangelisation and pastoral presence which could attract non-believers.²²¹ Within this perspective of proselytism, missionary activity is thereby understood as “activity in the territory which traditionally belongs to another Christian Church, to the detriment of this Church.”²²² Yet, it must also be acknowledged that the Roman Catholic Church does not seem to have a problem in accepting the presence of Orthodox Metropolitans and Bishops in traditionally Catholic countries. This is a situation which is especially present in the United States of America, and which is discussed in a later chapter.

²¹⁷ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 174.

²¹⁸ See *ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*; see also Walter Kasper, “Le radici teologiche del conflitto tra Mosca e Roma,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* (16 marzo 2002) I, 531-541.

²²¹ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue,” 174-175.

²²² *Ibid.*, 177.

For all the Catholic Church's intents and purposes regarding this situation, which are undeniable genuine, three important points should be kept in mind. First, after almost a century under the grip of an atheist regime, people were still shaken after the collapse of communism and they needed a transition to a new way of life, which was far from easy. Second, different concepts of proselytism espoused by the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches show how little, in effect, do the two Churches know each other. Compared to almost a millennium of estrangement between the Churches, ecumenism is a very recent phenomenon, and the wounds of hurts inflicted on each other are still raw. The Churches should spend more time getting to know each other before engaging in activities which might aggravate the delicate relations between the two Churches. Getting to know each other at this stage is past the honeymoon period of the post-conciliar years. It entails understanding the thoughts of the other Church on issues which many might take for granted, and also understanding the reason behind that reasoning. One may conclude that plenty of time should be dedicated to this exercise between the two Churches.

Third, the Catholic Church's characteristic evangelising activity might prove threatening for the Orthodox Church, which itself has little evangelising tradition. The Orthodox Church might suspect that the activities initiated by the Catholic Church in their canonical territory might attract potential Orthodox believers.

In light of the above and of the previous subsection (3.03.01), the two Churches should be encouraged to meet and settle the issue of proselytism once and for all. Putting all the cards on the table, authoritative high level representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches ought to meet and explain to each other the actual implications of the presence of one Church in the territory traditionally ascribed to the other Church, the pastoral praxis of each Church, and how each can learn from the other, rather than igniting past rivalry.

3.04 From the year 2000 to the contemporary situation

The thorny of issue of uniatism remains unresolved. Following the scant reception of the Balamand document, the Committee decided to make another attempt to try and deal with

this issue. A draft text was produced in 1998, titled *The Ecclesiological and Canonical Implications of Uniatism*.²²³ After various delays, whose details are irrelevant to this chapter, a plenary session was held at Emmitsburg-Baltimore, from the 9th to the 19th of July, 2000. However, things remained at a standstill. What came out of this session was a joint communiqué issued on the 19 July 2000, stating that since the previously issued documents had met with strong opposition from some sectors and that an agreement had not been reached, it was deemed wise not to have a common statement at the time.²²⁴

This stalemate lasted for six years. It should not be overlooked that throughout these difficult years both Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew strongly advocated the resumption of the dialogue,²²⁵ leading by example. This is evident in the various actions aimed at a deepening of trust between the two Churches, such as Pope John Paul II's plea for forgiveness during his visit to Athens in May 2001.²²⁶ At Patriarch Teoctist of Romania's visit to Rome in October 2002, the two leaders called for the continuation of the dialogue in a signed common declaration.²²⁷ These are two of various dialogues held between John Paul II and other Orthodox leaders with the intention of deepening the trust and healing the misgivings between the two Churches. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, applauded the decision to continue with the dialogue, stating that:

This resumption of dialogue occurs subsequent to an inter-Orthodox agreement, of which His Holiness Bartholomew I informed the Catholic Church. Thus, it is especially important and constitutes a great responsibility; indeed, it is a question of doing the will of the Lord, who wants his disciples to form a harmonious community and to witness together to the brotherly love that comes from the Lord.²²⁸

For his part, in the years after Emmitsburg, “the Ecumenical Patriarchate sent out a delegation to visit the various autocephalous Orthodox churches to discuss ways of

²²³ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 144.

²²⁴ See *ibid.*, 144-145; Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, “Communiqué,” Emmitsburg – Baltimore USA, 9-19 July 2000, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20000719_baltimore_en.html (accessed 22 June, 2016).

²²⁵ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 145-146.

²²⁶ See *ibid.*, 145.

²²⁷ See *ibid.*

²²⁸ Benedict XVI, “Address to the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Church,” *Vatican Website*, 15 December, 2005, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051215_cattolici-ortodossi.html.

restarting the dialogue.”²²⁹ There was a general consensus among the Orthodox that the only way of approaching the problem of uniatism entailed addressing the underlying theological issues, especially those regarding the notion of primacy.²³⁰

The next plenary session was held at Belgrade from 18 to the 25 September, 2006. As Roberson points out, a significant factor determining the success of the session was the almost complete Orthodox representation at the session.²³¹ Another crucial factor was the return to the theological agenda outlined in the 1978 plan for the dialogue.²³² As Mons. Eleuterio Fortino remarks, thanks to this 9th plenary session, the theological dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church has, in a positive way, ushered in a new phase.²³³ Significantly, the Orthodox membership boded well for the beginning of this session.²³⁴ Hence, the commission set out to finish the work on the document which had been scheduled for the 1990 Freising meeting.²³⁵

3.05 The Ravenna breakthrough: return to the original plan

The aim of the tenth plenary meeting of the Joint International Commission in Ravenna, between the 8 and the 14 October, 2007 was to complete the unfinished work of the previous meeting in Belgrade. One cannot help but agree with Roberson in stating that “the great accomplishment at Ravenna was that the dialogue was able to finish work on the draft that had been prepared for Freising in 1990.”²³⁶ The title of the text is

²²⁹ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 146.

²³⁰ See *ibid.*

²³¹ See *ibid.*

²³² See *ibid.*, 147.

²³³ See Eleuterio F. Fortino, “Nuova fase del dialogo teologico cattolico ortodosso,” *Vatican Website*, October 2006, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20061024_fortino-dialogo_it.html. The original text in Italian runs thus: “Con la IX sessione plenaria della Commissione Mista Internazionale (Belgrado, 18-25 settembre 2006) il dialogo teologico fra la Chiesa cattolica e la Chiesa ortodossa nel suo insieme, ha imboccato in maniera positiva una nuova fase.”

²³⁴ See *ibid.*

²³⁵ See Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 147; also Fortino, “Nuova fase del dialogo teologico cattolico ortodosso.”

²³⁶ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 147.

Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority.

Tensions within the Orthodox Church created an inauspicious beginning at the plenary. Trouble had already been brewing at the Belgrade session, with the protests of one of the Moscow delegates, Bishop Alfeyev Hilarion against the draft text's treatment of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.²³⁷ At Ravenna, the tensions concerned the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople over the latter's invitation of delegates from the Autonomous Church of Estonia.²³⁸ As a result, the Moscow delegation walked out of the meeting. However, the session itself proceeded smoothly, as shown in the ensuing document itself.

The breakthrough of the Ravenna document consists in unravelling, for the first time (in the proceedings of the Joint International Commission), the real dividing issue between Catholics and Orthodox, that of the papal primacy, where "it is considered in a direct way."²³⁹ This affirmation agreed by both Orthodox and Catholics addresses the most serious obstacle to the dialogue between the two Churches, namely the notion of the primacy and the papacy.²⁴⁰ It also attests to the good will and maturity of the two sides in the preparation to deal with such a sensitive issue. Within this perspective, McPartlan's metaphor rings so true: "The Ravenna statement might be regarded as the establishment of base camp for an attempt on Mount Everest."²⁴¹ Admittedly, the document "does no more than open up the topic, without entering into details,"²⁴² but the very consideration of this sensitive topic to be penned down in such a document is a step towards a journey of hope in the dialogue between the two Churches.

The main purpose of the Ravenna document "is to reflect on how the institutional aspects of the Church visibly express and serve the mystery of *koinonia*. It takes as its starting point the relationship between the one Father and the other two hypostases within the

²³⁷ See *ibid.*

²³⁸ See also Paul McPartlan, "The Ravenna Agreed Statement and Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue," *The Jurist* 69, no. 2 (2009): 761.

²³⁹ Kallistos Ware, "The Ravenna document and the future of Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue," *The Jurist* 69, no. 2 (2009): 768. See also Gianfranco Ghirlanda, "Il documento di Ravenna della Commissione Mista Cattolici-Ortodossi," *Periodica* 97 (2008): 543-544.

²⁴⁰ See McPartlan, "The Ravenna Agreed Statement," 755.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Ware, "The Ravenna Document," 768; see also Ghirlanda, "Il documento di Ravenna," 544.

Holy Trinity.”²⁴³ Within this perspective, the document analyses the relationship between the one and the many; the local, regional, and universal.²⁴⁴ However, Gianfranco Ghirlanda is correct in stating that the document analyses the relationship between primacy and conciliarity at the local, regional, and universal level. The main thrust of the document is the “relationship between conciliarity and primacy at the universal level, that is between the action of all the bishops of the entire Church and their *protos*, the bishop of Rome.”²⁴⁵

One can hardly disagree with Kasper when he states that “we Catholics have to reflect more clearly on the problem of synodality or conciliarity, especially at the universal level,” while the Orthodox Churches will have to reflect more deeply on the role of the *protos* at the universal level, that is, the primacy of the pope.”²⁴⁶ This is an argument akin to that set forth by Bishop Kallistos Ware in speaking of “receptive ecumenism” (addressed in the first chapter) between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.²⁴⁷

Another important aspect which is evident in the Ravenna document are the references taken from Scriptures and the Church Fathers, considered by both Churches as authoritative.²⁴⁸ This reflects the very wise tendency to work on the aspects that pertain to both traditions, and which has proven successful in the past.

As stated earlier, the Ravenna document follows the plan adopted at its first meeting in Rhodes in 1980, as stated in the document itself.²⁴⁹ After highlighting the common

²⁴³ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 148.

²⁴⁴ See *ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Ghirlanda, “Il documento di Ravenna,” 544. The original text, in Italian, runs thus: “Comunque è certo che il punto cruciale è il rapporto tra conciliarità e primato a livello universale, cioè tra l’agire insieme dei vescovi di tutta la Chiesa e il loro *protos*, il vescovo di Roma.”

²⁴⁶ Walter Kasper, in Gerard O’Connell, “Vatican Top Ecumenist Hails Orthodox ‘Breakthrough,’” in *Our Sunday Visitor*, February 3, 2008, quoted in George Nedungatt, “The Council of Trullo Revisited: Ecumenism and the Canon of the Councils,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 651.

²⁴⁷ See Kallistos Ware, “Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 50-51.

²⁴⁸ See North American Orthodox – Catholic Theological Consultation, “A Common Response to the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church regarding the Ravenna Document,” *Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America*, 24 October, 2009, <http://www.assemblyofbishops.org/ministries/dialogue/orthodox-catholic/response-ravenna>.

²⁴⁹ See Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority,” *Vatican Website*, Ravenna 13 October,

affirmations inherent in the faith of both Churches, as evidenced in the Munich, Bari, and Valamo Documents,²⁵⁰ the document turns to its present objective: that of analysing the notions of unity and multiplicity:

Unity and multiplicity, the relationship between the one Church and the many local Churches, that constitutive relationship of the Church, also poses the question of the relationship between the authority inherent in every ecclesial institution and the conciliarity which flows from the mystery of the Church as communion.²⁵¹

The first part of the document deals with the foundations of conciliarity and authority. It looks at the etymological use of the term “conciliarity,” or “synodality,” and examines its various meanings. It would seem that the concepts of “conciliarity” and “synodality” are treated in a synonymous manner, imparting a certain ambiguity.²⁵² Ghirlanda distinguishes between the two terms, arguing that “collegiality” entails the collegial action of the bishops gathered together in an ecumenical or particular council.²⁵³ On the other hand, “synodality” describes the gathering of the various categories of the faithful in a wider sense.²⁵⁴

Most importantly, conciliarity “reflects the Trinitarian mystery and finds therein its ultimate foundation.”²⁵⁵ By means of the Eucharist, “the mystery of salvific *koinonia* with the Blessed Trinity is realized in humankind,”²⁵⁶ that is, all humanity in communion with each other at the celebration of the Eucharist. Moreover, thanks to the other two sacraments of initiation, that is Baptism and Confirmation, “each member of the Church exercises a form of authority in the Body of Christ. In this sense, all the faithful (and not just the bishops) are responsible for the faith professed at their Baptism.”²⁵⁷

2007, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html.

²⁵⁰ See Dimitar Arnaudov, “L’ecclésiologie du document de Ravenne (2007) de la commission internationale de dialogue catholique-orthodoxe,” *Istina* 59, no. 1 (2014): 342-343; also Thomas Pott, “Le document de Ravenne: Présentation et texte” *Irénikon* 80 (2007): 572-579.

²⁵¹ Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 4.

²⁵² See Ghirlanda, “Il documento di Ravenna,” 545.

²⁵³ For more detail regarding the various nuances of “collegiality” and “synodality,” see *ibid.*, 546.

²⁵⁴ See *ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 5.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

The document is very clear about the role of the bishops, whose task is to proclaim the faith of the Church and simplify the criteria for Christian conduct.²⁵⁸ It is a role which has its roots in its uninterrupted continuation with the apostolic age. The Ravenna document cites the Valamo document in order to reiterate the task of the bishops in line with their role as successors of the Apostles.²⁵⁹

In speaking of the importance of the councils and their roles, the document refers to the Valamo and Munich documents.²⁶⁰ It is through the councils that bishops come together in a special communion, “which binds all the bishops together linking the *episkope* of the local Churches to the College of the Apostles.”²⁶¹

Paragraph 10 of the document makes an important statement regarding this conciliar dimension of the Church’s life. It “is founded in the will of Christ for his people (cfr Mt 18, 15-20), even if its canonical realizations are of necessity also determined by history and by the social, political and cultural context.”²⁶² It is here that for the first time, the document makes mention of three levels of ecclesial communion where the conciliar dimension of the Church is present: the local, regional, and universal.²⁶³ These sections are expounded upon in the second part of the document.

The second part of Section 1 of the statement deals with authority, which often at times has been misinterpreted in terms of power and privilege. The statement is adamant when it says that “authority in the Church belongs to Jesus Christ himself, the one Head of the Church ... By his Holy Spirit, the Church as his Body shares in his authority.”²⁶⁴ Therefore:

²⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁹ See Joint Commission, “The Sacrament of Order,” par. 40, in “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority,” *Vatican Website*, 13 October, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html, par. 9.

²⁶⁰ See Joint Commission, “The Sacrament of Order,” 52; “The Mystery of the Church,” III, 4, in “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 9.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, “The Mystery of the Church,” III, 4, in “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 9.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 10.

²⁶³ See *ibid.*, 11.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13; see also Arnaudov, “L’Ecclésiologie du Document de Ravenne,” 350-351.

the authority linked with the grace received in ordination is not the private possession of those who receive it nor something delegated from the community; rather, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit destined for the service (*diakonia*) of the community and never exercised outside of it. Its exercise includes the participation of the whole community, the bishop being in the Church and the Church in the bishop.²⁶⁵

One cannot help but notice, in line with the previous documents, the reference to all three persons of the Trinity in the whole work of salvation extended to humanity. However, Ghirlanda rightly warns that the analogy between the human and the divine must be used with great care, as it cannot do justice to the great difference that exists between the two realities.²⁶⁶ To return to the Trinitarian analogy, the emphasis on service, described in paragraph 14, is especially based on Christ's life on Earth and his emphasis on serving. Accordingly, this authority extended to the bishops is:

an authority without domination, without physical or moral coercion. Since it is a participation in the *exousia* of the crucified and exalted Lord, to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, it can and must call for obedience. At a personal level, this translates into obedience to the authority of the Church in order to follow Christ who was lovingly obedient to the Father even unto death and death on a Cross.²⁶⁷

The second part of the document is devoted to the three levels of ecclesial institution through which *koinonia* is expressed: the local, regional, and universal (*oikoumene*) levels. It analyses each level by going back to the time of the ancient Church. It cannot be denied that this is of significant importance. In so doing, the Ravenna document challenges both Roman Catholics and Orthodox who "tend to reduce this threefold scheme into a dyadic structure," though in different ways.²⁶⁸ Put simply, Roman Catholics tend to neglect the regional level, thinking in terms of "episcopate/pope," while the Orthodox, on the other hand, in assigning to the pope just a title of honour, tend to reject the third level of universal primacy.²⁶⁹ Hence, the document is a reminder of the need for both sides to correct their myopic visions, and in so doing, inevitably come face to face with each other.

²⁶⁵ Joint Commission, "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences," 13.

²⁶⁶ See Ghirlanda, "Il Documento di Ravenna," 546.

²⁶⁷ Joint Commission, "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences," 14.

²⁶⁸ Ware, "The Ravenna Document," 770.

²⁶⁹ See *ibid.* However, Orthodox theologians such as John Zizioulas accord importance to the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome, within an Orthodox perspective. Ware's analysis of Zizioulas' views is found in pages 777-779.

The first, though not inferior level is that of the local level, wherein

there is a community gathered together in the Eucharist, presided over, directly or through his presbyters, by a bishop legitimately ordained into the apostolic succession, teaching the faith received from the Apostles, in communion with other bishops and their churches.²⁷⁰

As the North American Catholic – Orthodox Theological Consultation notes correctly, the local level in this document refers to the diocese.²⁷¹ One fault of the document at this stage is that there is no mention of the parish church, especially in relation to the diocese.²⁷² We feel that this merits an important analysis.

Every baptized person in the church is called to serve in the community according to the charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit.²⁷³ At this stage, thanks to communion, “whereby all the members are at the service of each other, the local Church appears already ‘synodal’ or ‘conciliar’ in its structure.”²⁷⁴ Synodality at this stage is expressed in other levels, such as the obedience of the community members to the bishop, “who is the *protos* and head (*kephale*) of the local Church, required by ecclesial communion.”²⁷⁵ As McPartlan notes, these terms are taken from Apostolic Canon 34, which dates to the late fourth century.²⁷⁶

Reference is also made to active participation of the laity from different walks of life, who in virtue of this difference, can enrich the community through “many forms of service and mission.”²⁷⁷ However, as the North American Catholic-Orthodox Theological Consultation notes, the document fails to address the participation of the laity in the higher level of governance the decision-making process, such as their participation in the selection of a bishop.²⁷⁸ This is an aspect which is especially intrinsic to the make-up of the Orthodox Church and its deeper implications could be especially rewarding for the Catholic Church.

²⁷⁰ Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 18.

²⁷¹ See American Catholic – Orthodox Theological Consultation, “A Common Response.”

²⁷² See *ibid.*

²⁷³ See Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 20.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ See Paul McPartlan, “The Ravenna Agreed Statement,” 754.

²⁷⁷ Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 20.

²⁷⁸ See North American Catholic – Orthodox Theological Consultation, “A Common Response.”

As already asserted in the Munich and Valamo documents, the communion at the local level must be reflected also in communion with the other Churches “which confess the same apostolic faith and share the same basic ecclesial structure, beginning with those close at hand in virtue of their common responsibility for mission in that region which is theirs.”²⁷⁹ The ordination of a bishop expresses this kind of communion among Churches.²⁸⁰ As the document continues: “when this is accomplished in conformity with the canons, communion among Churches in the true faith, sacraments and ecclesial life is ensured, as well as living communion with previous generations.”²⁸¹

A number of practices which attest to such a communion among bishops are listed, such an example being the participation of bishops from the neighbouring sees to attend the ordination of a bishop of the local Church.²⁸² The relationship between the bishop of each province to the *protos* is discussed. Any important initiatives should be done with the consent of both sides; moreover, each bishop is responsible for initiatives which relate to his diocese.²⁸³ The participation of all the bishops of a particular region is endorsed in a synod, which “is governed by the principle of consensus and concord (*homonoia*), which is signified by Eucharistic concelebration ...”²⁸⁴ This kind of synodality attests to the communal aspect, which is vital to the being of the existence of the Church itself. It is the place where “catholicity appears in its true light.”²⁸⁵ The document also mentions the practice of the episcopal conferences within the Roman Catholic Church in paragraph 29, as examples of “new configurations of communion between local Churches” within the Catholic Church.²⁸⁶ The role of the Episcopal Conferences is dealt with in greater detail in chapter 6. As the document asserts regarding these Episcopal Conferences, “these are not, from an ecclesiological standpoint, merely administrative subdivisions: they express the spirit of communion in the Church, while at the same time respecting the diversity of human cultures.”²⁸⁷

²⁷⁹ See Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 22.

²⁸⁰ See *ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² See *ibid.*, 23.

²⁸³ See *ibid.*, 24.

²⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, 26.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Then, there is a third level of communion, that is, at the universal level. Paragraph 32 states the following:

Each local Church is in communion not only with neighbouring Churches, but with the totality of the local Churches, with those now present in the world, those which have been since the beginning, and those which will be in the future, and with the Church already in glory.²⁸⁸

Reference is made to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which asserts the oneness and catholicity of the Church.²⁸⁹ The universal Church means that

The one and same faith is to be confessed and lived out in all the local Churches, the same unique Eucharist is to be celebrated everywhere, and one and the same apostolic ministry is to be at work in all the communities.²⁹⁰

While the Church is encouraged to be creative in its search for appropriate answers in response to contemporary problems, this must be done within the boundaries established by the Scriptures and the dogmas.²⁹¹ Problems regarding dogmas, authentic interpretation of the faith, and so on, were settled at Ecumenical Councils.²⁹² It is very significant that the first Ecumenical Councils which saw the establishment of the basic tenets of the faith were held in the East. It is a fact which attests to the Eastern spiritual heritage which is both ancient and special. Returning to the Ecumenical Councils, “their solemn doctrinal decisions and their common faith formulations, especially on crucial points, are binding for all Churches and all the faithful, for all times and all places.”²⁹³

In order for a council to come to a final decision in a universal manner, there should be a process of reception.²⁹⁴ It is a process (though interpreted differently in the West and the East) whereby

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 32.

²⁸⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

²⁹¹ See *ibid.*

²⁹² See *ibid.*, 35.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 37.

The people of God as a whole – by means of reflection, discernment, discussion and prayer – acknowledge in these decisions the one apostolic faith of the local Churches, which has always been the same and of which the bishops are the teachers (*didaskaloi*) and the guardians.²⁹⁵

It is for this reason, the document asserts, that conciliarity involves much more than the bishops assembled at the council – it involves also their Churches.²⁹⁶ The assembled bishops “are bearers of and give voice to the faith of the latter.”²⁹⁷ From this brief analysis, it is evident that the document acknowledges the importance of conciliarity and authority in all the three levels within the Church.²⁹⁸

The document is important in that it sheds light on the fact that the Orthodox are not against the universal role of the Bishop of Rome.²⁹⁹ However, the Orthodox disagree in their understanding of the primacy and the role of the Patriarch of Constantinople. It is evident that a serious and responsible discussion of the theme of primacy at an inter-Orthodox level must precede theological dialogue over this topic between Orthodox and Catholics.³⁰⁰

A sentence in paragraph 39 caused a stir within the Moscow Patriarchate. This sentence, which describes the role of the councils even after the split occurred between East and West states the following: “These councils gathered together the bishops of local Churches in communion with the See of Rome or, although understood in a different way, with the See of Constantinople, respectively.”³⁰¹ For the then Patriarch Alexei, this was tantamount to claiming that: “the significance of Constantinople for the Orthodox is equated with the significance of Rome for the Catholics.”³⁰² The situation sheds light on the tensions which exist within some of the autocephalous Churches within Orthodoxy, and on its existing structure of conciliarity, which in practice seems to be in jeopardy. Bishop Alfeyev himself admits that within the Orthodox Church, “there is no external

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, 38.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ See American Catholic – Orthodox Theological Consultation, “A Common Response.”

²⁹⁹ See Ghirlanda, “Il Documento di Ravenna,” 561.

³⁰⁰ Hilarion Alfeyev, “The Orthodox Understanding of Primacy,” Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, accessed 30 March, 2017, <http://orthodoxeurope.org/print/14/60.aspx>. See also McPartlan, “The Ravenna Agreed Statement,” 764.

³⁰¹ Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 39.

³⁰² McPartlan, “The Ravenna Agreed Statement,” 762.

authority – neither one person nor in the form of a collegial organ – to guarantee the unity of the Church in ecclesiastical questions.”³⁰³ At a deeper level, the discussions regarding the primacy need to be settled first among the Orthodox themselves, before proceeding any further.

The document then analyses the universal communion of the Churches in the first millennium.³⁰⁴ Both the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches agree that “Rome, as the Church that ‘presides in love’ according to the phrase of St Ignatius of Antioch ... occupied the first place in the *taxis*, and that the bishop of Rome was therefore the *protos* among the patriarchs.”³⁰⁵ However, there is disagreement regarding the interpretation of the role of the bishop of Rome as *protos*.³⁰⁶ This is something the document concedes needs to be studied in more detail.

What is essential is the dynamic relationship between primacy and conciliarity. As paragraph 43 of the document states:

Primacy and conciliarity are mutually interdependent. That is why primacy at the different levels of the life of the Church, local, regional and universal, must always be considered in the context of conciliarity, and conciliarity likewise in the context of primacy.³⁰⁷

This relationship between conciliarity and primacy was testified in the first millennium, with the existence of the “pentarchy,” with the bishop of Rome considered as the *protos* among the patriarchs.³⁰⁸ However, “this distinction of levels does not diminish the sacramental equality of every bishop or the catholicity of each local Church.”³⁰⁹

Ghirlanda attests to the effort between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics in the work behind this document. It would seem that the perspective of the document which especially underscores the importance of the local and synodal Church, certainly reflects an

³⁰³ Alfeyev, “The Orthodox Understanding of Primacy.”

³⁰⁴ See Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 40.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 41.

³⁰⁶ See *ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 43.

³⁰⁸ See Joint Commission, “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences,” 44.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

Orthodox ecclesiology.³¹⁰ However, Ghirlanda continues that in itself, this vision does not contradict Catholic ecclesiology.³¹¹ Rather, Catholics are invited to learn how to embrace more wholeheartedly an authentic spirit of synodality. This would be Receptive Ecumenism in practice.

While the Ravenna statement can be considered a great step forward for the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox, it was not universally embraced by all the Orthodox Churches. During the thirteenth plenary session of the Joint International Commission, held at Amman from 15 to 23 September in 2014, the representative of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Theodore of Georgia, orally stated that the Georgian Church rejected the Ravenna document on the basis of certain ecclesiological themes, especially that of the primacy at the universal level.³¹² The interpretation of the role of the primacy at the universal level at the time of the undivided Church was also the subject of criticism from the Moscow Patriarchate.³¹³ While shedding light on the fragility of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, at a deeper level, it points again at the existing problems within the Orthodox Churches, in having trouble coming at an agreement. However, apart from these hitches, this document was otherwise well-received.

Thanks to the Ravenna statement, a milestone in the dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches has been reached. As Nedungatt states “at Ravenna the Orthodox theologians of the Joint Commission recognized for the first time the universal level of ecclesial communion beyond the local and regional levels.”³¹⁴ Of course, the same applies to the Catholics, in recognizing the importance of the regional church. While previously, the Orthodox envisaged a two-tier structure of ecclesial communion and the Catholics likewise viewed ecclesial communion on two levels, albeit in different ways – namely in the diocese and universal church – thanks to the Ravenna document a recognition of a synthesis of three structures seems to have been achieved: “local church,

³¹⁰ See Ghirlanda, “Il Documento di Ravenna,” 560.

³¹¹ See *ibid.*

³¹² See Arnaudov, “L’Ecclesiologie du Document de Ravenne,” 339.

³¹³ See *ibid.*, 340.

³¹⁴ Nedungatt, “The Council in Trullo Revisited,” 652.

regional church, and universal church.”³¹⁵ Frans Bouwen, a Catholic participant at Ravenna affirms:

If the exercise of conciliarity at the regional level is clearly more evident in the East than in the West, at the universal level almost the opposite is noticeable. This last level is accentuated very pronouncedly in the West, but it is very little present in the consciousness of the East. At these two levels, the Orthodox and the Catholic traditions challenge each other very forcefully. Are they perhaps also called to complete each other?³¹⁶

This is an important aspect which forms one of the foundations of this thesis, an aspect which will be discussed in Chapter 6. Ghirlanda also reminds his readers that in the methodological quest for a reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry, both Churches need to be careful “not to confuse the essential aspect of the Petrine ministry, that is, a service of communion and unity in love, with the historical forms it assumed in its function, or assume that these forms are the only possible ones.”³¹⁷ There must be continuous discernment regarding the relationship between the various levels of Church as they can function in the contemporary Church. The Ravenna dialogue, as a starting point, has made it possible to start a dialogue regarding this important relationship, so central to the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics.

3.06 The Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches

While this chapter focuses on specific texts related to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox dialogue, a number of documents from the Faith and Order Commission are discussed in various chapters of the thesis, especially relating to particular topics such as hermeneutics and reception. Yet, this short section focuses on the tremendous work going on between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 653.

³¹⁶ Frans Bouwen, “Ravenna 2007 ...,” *Proche Orient-Chrétien* no. 58, (2008): 70, in Nedungatt, “The Council in Trullo Revisited,” 653.

³¹⁷ Ghirlanda, “Il Documento di Ravenna,” 594. The following is the text in Italian: “... di non confondere l’essenziale del ministero petrino come servizio di comunione, quindi di unità nell’amore, con le forme storiche che esso ha assunto, e neppure ritenere che esse siano le uniche possibili.”

Although the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches (which includes many of the Orthodox autocephalous churches), yet it is active in collaboration, especially through the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and also through its representation in the Faith and Order Commission.

The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches was founded in May, 1965, as a tool of collaboration between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, aiming to “explore possibilities of dialogue and collaboration, to study problems jointly, and to report to the competent authorities of either side.”³¹⁸ The Joint Working Group can be described as having an advisory function which reports to its parent bodies – the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.³¹⁹ The collaboration between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church is undertaken in various forms and also practical programmes which include ecumenical formation. It is also involved in projects related to mission and evangelism, ecumenical formation among the youth, interreligious dialogue, and justice, peace, creation, and human rights.³²⁰ The task of ecumenical formation, ingrained within the framework of the Joint Working Group is very crucial in the ecumenical endeavour.

The Joint Working Group has also been involved in a number of documents which range from theological and ecclesiological, to other issues of a pastoral and social nature. Relevant to this thesis is worth mentioning the Ninth Report of the Joint Working Group, covering the period of 2007 to 2012, which focused on the ecclesial reception of

³¹⁸ Joint Working Group, *Eight Report 1999 – 2005*, PDF file, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2005, file:///C:/Users/dbuttigieg532/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/8thjointworkinggroup%20(1).pdf, 17.

³¹⁹ See *ibid.*

³²⁰ More details about this enterprise are found in the various reports of the Joint Working Group. They can be accessed from the World Council of Churches website. Incidentally, the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches met in Malta in November 2011. The supervisor of this thesis was directly involved in the logistical arrangements regarding this meeting, co-chaired by Metropolitan Nifon and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin." More on this particular meeting can be found at: <https://church.mt/a-meeting-of-the-roman-catholic-church-and-the-world-council-of-churches/> as well as at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/jwg-rcc-wcc/joint-working-group-between-rcc-and-wcc> and <http://www.prounione.it/dia/jwg/Dia-JWG-15-9.pdf>.

ecumenical work and the spiritual roots of ecumenism, among other issues such as migration. This work, titled *Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Process*, provides an indepth analysis of the process of reception, discussed in chapter four.³²¹ This confirms the acknowledgement of the important role of reception and all that it entails, despite the fact that it is often in the background. Moreover, it seems to echo the need spearheaded by Receptive Ecumenism, to put the process of reception at the foreground.

The Faith and Order Commission has treated various important topics pertinent to all churches, including ecclesiology, worship and baptism, faith, hermeneutics, theological anthropology, and the bilateral dialogues.³²² As a result, these have important bearings on the dialogue between the different churches and ecclesial communities.

The Faith and Order Commission has been a catalyst in important breakthroughs, most importantly *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM)*, or the Lima document, published in 15 January, 1982. Indeed, this importance has been acknowledged by its being followed up by other documents such as *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition, among others*.³²³ Another important document is *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (6 March 2013), which addresses the growth in communion.³²⁴ A detailed Catholic Response to the document was published on 18 October 2019.³²⁵ This confirms the many points of agreement shared among the different Churches, together with the need for more analysis on important matters pertaining to the quest for unity. It has published other important papers, especially related to hermeneutics, most central of which is *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, discussed at length in chapter 1, itself the result of the increased need

³²¹ See Joint Working Group, *Ninth Report 2007-2012: Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ. Appendix A: Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Process*, PDF file, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013, file:///C:/Users/dbuttigieg532/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/JWG_9th_Report%20(1).pdf, 41-102.

³²² Details of all the documents, including the documents themselves are also to be found in the *World Council of Churches Website*: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/faith-and-order-publications-list>

³²³ See *World Council of Churches Website*: <https://www.oikoumene.org>.

³²⁴ Faith and Order, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order paper 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013)..

³²⁵ This Response is found at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo/commissione-fede-e-costituzione/2019-catholic-response-to-tctcv.html>. The Supervisor of the thesis, Mgr Prof. Hector Scerri, and the current Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Rev. Dr John Berry, were directly involved in the drafting of the Catholic Response, during meetings held at the Pontifical Council for the promotion of Christian Unity, in September 2018 and in October 2018.

for understanding the process of interpretation. Though, as affirmed in chapter 1, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* is not without its criticisms, yet it has been followed by other papers related to hermeneutics, again driving home the realisation for further analysis on salient topics which are felt by all the churches and ecclesial communities. The analysis on hermeneutics was followed up by a study titled *Interpreting our Faith: The Ecumenical Journey and its Consequences*, also discussed in chapter 1.³²⁶

An interesting contribution is its document *Towards a Common Date for Easter* (10 March 1997), the result of the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches Consultation (5 – 10 March, 1997), held at Aleppo. The result of this consultation garnered a response by the North American Theological Consultation, discussed in the next section. It is a response to a common urgency shared by many churches which has been felt for a long time:

Indeed, in some parts of the world such as the Middle East, where several separated Christian communities constitute a minority in the larger society, this has become an urgent issue. While there has been some discussion of this question, it still has not been given the serious attention that it deserves.³²⁷

The issue of finding a common day for the celebration of Easter/Pascha has been analysed from various perspectives: theological, historical, liturgical, catechetical and pastoral.³²⁸ This is an example of the practical issues which the World Council of Churches seeks to address, in turn serving to cement the common points of belief and also the trust shared among the Churches.

An important joint venture between the Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The present Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has undergone various developments,

³²⁶ See Pablo Ardiñach (Faith and Order Commission,) *Interpreting our Faith: The Ecumenical Journey and its Consequences*. 28 July – 6 August 2004, Kuala Lumpur, PDF format: file:///C:/Users/dbuttigieg532/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/kuala-docs16-andinach%20(1).pdf.

³²⁷ World Council of Churches – Middle East Council of Churches Consultation, *Towards a Common Date for Easter*, March 5 – 10, 1997, Aleppo, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/towards-a-common-date-for-easter/index.>, par. 1.

³²⁸ See *ibid.*, 4.

discussed in chapter 1.³²⁹ This includes the annual production of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The final material is then sent to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences and the member Churches of the World Council of Churches in order to translate, adapt, and contextualise the text.³³⁰ From 1973, a new procedure was introduced, whereby a local ecumenical group in a particular country prepares a first draft, which is then revised and adapted by the international working group in order to be used worldwide.³³¹ Certainly, “it has succeeded in bringing Catholic and non-Catholic together in common prayer.”³³²

To sum up, this joint work also underscores the recognition of the vital role played by Spiritual Ecumenism within the whole Ecumenical Movement. It is a difficult process which highlights the importance of conversion and also the disposition for each to:

allow our own confessional identity to be called in question, or at least relativized - which does not mean relinquishing it. It means relativizing our own ideas of unity and focusing the unity which God wants and on God's ways and means of achieving it.³³³

3.07 The Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in North America

A section dealing with the ongoing work in North America regarding the bilateral dialogues between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches has been included in this thesis.

³²⁹ For more detail, see Dagmar Heller, “The Soul of the Ecumenical Movement: the history and significance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” *The Ecumenical Review* 50, no. 3 (1998): 399-404.

³³⁰ See also *World Council of Churches Website*: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer/week-of-prayer>. (accessed 25 May 2020). The website also archives the material of the material from the previous years.

³³¹ See Heller, “The Soul of the Ecumenical Movement,” (1998): 401. The author of this thesis was directly involved in the presentation of the local material by Christians in Malta, in preparation for the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity 2020. The local group, composed of representatives from the different Churches and Christian Traditions in Malta, met between February and May 2018. A few months later, the author of the thesis was also involved in the encounter between the local group and the international group entrusted in finalising the material for January 2020. These two experiences were a practical example of Receptive Ecumenism, as directly witnessed by the author of the thesis.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid., 402.

Many of the studies regarding theological bilateral dialogues tend to focus on the international scene, mainly Europe, to the detriment of other places where important contributions are being made. On the other hand, it must be admitted that, together with the Middle-East and North Africa, Europe was the hub of antiquity, and of the development of the early Churches.

In speaking about the important contributions on North American soil, Roberson argues that “no other national or regional Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in the world today is as vital as this one.”³³⁴ It is not difficult to see why. Catholics and Orthodox came to North America as a new land, and therefore nobody could lay any jurisdictional claim on the continent. Roberson cites other reasons which are equally valid. This is due in part to the fact that Catholics and Orthodox live together side by side in North America largely free of the ethnic tensions that complicate relations in Europe. Furthermore, intermarriage is frequent. Also, since both groups are minorities in America, neither side feels threatened by the influence of the other in secular society.³³⁵

Apart from the Consultation’s feedback to the Joint International Commission’s work, it also focuses on the pressing practical issues faced by both Churches in North America. In this case, as will be seen, the Consultation’s interventions regarding the practical side of ecumenism can shed light on the real meaning of a lived ecumenism, not confined solely to theological dialogues while, on the other hand, not doing away with them either. This was the first joint Catholic-Orthodox consultation assembled during the late Vatican II era. This foundation attests to the thirst for mutual relations between the two Churches on the North American continent.

Since its first meeting in Worcester, Massachusetts on 9 September, 1965, the U.S. (later North American) Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation has made a number of important statements. An admirable step is the Consultation’s affinity with the Joint International Commission and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches with regard to the topics discussed.³³⁶ This was especially true of the period

³³⁴ Roberson, “The Dialogues of the Catholic Church,” 150.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ See *ibid.* All the statements of the North American (formerly US) Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, together with those of the US Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops and the

between 1980 to 1990. This includes important contributions regarding the central role of the Eucharist, the Mystery of the Church, and the relation of the Sacrament of Order in the life of the Church. Most noteworthy are the responses made by the Consultation to the documents produced by the Joint International Commission, also cited in the previous sections dealing with the documents of the Joint International Commission.³³⁷ This testifies to its interest in what is going on at the international level and its involvement in it.

During the crisis in the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, dominated by the problem of uniatism, the North American Theological Consultation was prompt in its interventions. One such example is *A Joint Communiqué of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States on current tensions between our Churches in Eastern Europe*.³³⁸ Calling an end to “all forms of violence, intimidation and coercion in violation of the religious liberty of persons, communities and churches,”³³⁹ it encourages the ecclesiastical authorities to persevere in their efforts in order to “develop adequate and effective procedures for dealing with specific points of tension.”³⁴⁰ It advises on the need for “further reflections on ecclesiological principles and continued practical efforts,” an aspect which proved very wise and fruitful in the ensuing success of the Joint International Commission after the difficult years of the 1990s. At the same time, it acknowledges the reality of the problem which is peculiar to the situation of Eastern Europe and, at the same time, far removed from the warm relationships in North America:

It is difficult for us in North America, living in circumstances very different from those in Eastern Europe, fully to appreciate the complexity of the religious, cultural, political and social situation there. Yet our experience in this consultation leads us to believe that genuine theological dialogue, in a spirit of mutual respect and love, is in fact possible, and that such dialogue can help our churches respond effectively to the many painful practical issues that still divide us.³⁴¹

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church up till 1995, are to be found in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli – John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996).

³³⁷ See Hryniewicz, “Ecumenical Relations,” 170.

³³⁸ See US Theological Consultation, “A Joint Communiqué of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States on Current Tensions between Our Churches in Eastern Europe,” in *The Quest for Unity*, eds. Borelli and Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 167-168.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

Especially significant are the inroads the Theological Consultation has made in relation to marriage and its practice in the contemporary world. This contribution achieves great significance especially in the light of the increasing situation of mixed marriages between Catholics and Orthodox in North America. Indeed, the issue of mixed marriage was discussed right from the early years of the Consultation.³⁴² Indeed:

True to the consensus of those who met regularly then, the Consultation balanced theological discussion of what divides Orthodox and Catholics with consideration of practical problems. It displayed an ardent desire to address especially those areas of pastoral care, reception of the eucharist and mixed marriages, that touched the lives of the faithful in the United States most often.³⁴³

The first work of the Theological Consultation on this theme was *An Agreed Statement on Mixed Marriage* (1971), which seeks to address briefly both pastoral and theological problems.³⁴⁴ This was followed by *An Agreed Statement on Respect for Life* (1974), *An Agreement Statement on the Sanctity of Marriage* (1978), and *Joint Recommendations on the Spiritual Formation of children of Marriages between Orthodox and Roman Catholics* (1980).³⁴⁵ More recent statements include, among others, *A Common Response to the Aleppo Statement on the Date of Easter/Pascha* (1998).³⁴⁶ This theme resurfaced in *Celebrating Easter/Pascha Together* (2010), where the Consultation once more emphasises the importance that all Churches and ecclesial communities celebrate the Easter on the same day.³⁴⁷ As the document states:

The need for such unity is great, for our world has changed drastically since the Aleppo statement was published in 1997. We have witnessed the growth of secularism and the global effects of tyranny and war. More than ever, there is a need for a unified Christian proclamation and a witness of the core of our common faith: the Resurrection of our Lord.³⁴⁸

³⁴² See Borelli and Erickson, *The Quest for Unity*, 193.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ US Theological Consultation, "An Agreed Statement on Mixed Marriage," 1971, in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli – John H. Erickson (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 198-199.

³⁴⁵ See Borelli and Erickson *The Quest for Unity*, 198-208.

³⁴⁶ See Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, "Celebrating Easter/Pascha Together," *Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America*, 1 October, 2010, <http://assemblyofbishops.org/news/scoba/celebrating-easter-pascha>.

³⁴⁷ See *ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

Of considerable importance is also the Theological Consultation's statement regarding the dividing issue of the *Filioque*. In a report titled *The "Filioque": A Church-Dividing Issue?* the Consultation gives a detailed analysis from a historical perspective in order to better illustrate the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the *Filioque*.³⁴⁹ This is then followed by theological reflections, while wisely emphasising that: "the division between our Churches on the Filioque question would probably be less acute if both sides, through the centuries, had remained more conscious of the limitations of our knowledge of God."³⁵⁰ While addressing the basic expressions of theology which act as a common denominator to both traditions, it reflects upon the matter making use of hermeneutical tools in its inspection of terminology, while remaining grounded in the theology of the Church Fathers, and in its analysis of dividing issues in the spheres of theology and ecclesiology.³⁵¹ The document concludes with recommendations, among them those of engaging in more reflection regarding the origin and person of the Holy Spirit and also that the Catholic Church make use of the original Greek text only translating the Creed for catechetical and liturgical purposes.³⁵²

This brief sketch of some of the most significant work made by the North American Theological Consultation serves to show a number of invaluable contributions which, it is felt should also be taken into consideration by the Joint International Commission in its painstaking work and the need for new solutions to pressing issues which still constitute a division between the two Churches.

3.08 Spiritual Ecumenism and Prophetic Gestures in the Context of Catholic – Orthodox Encounters: An Ecumenism of Love

³⁴⁹ See North American Theological Consultation, "The Filioque: A Church-Dividing Issue?" *The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 25 October, 2003, <https://www.usccb.org/committees/ecumenical-interreligious-affairs/filioque-church-dividing-issue-agreed-statement>.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ See *ibid.*

³⁵² See *ibid.*

Father Cantalamessa's fifth Lenten Homily of 2016, addressed to the Pontifical Household, deals with the reality of ecumenism and its influence on the contemporary world.³⁵³ Reiterating *Unitatis redintegratio*, he speaks of spiritual ecumenism in the following words: "Alongside this official and doctrinal ecumenism, an ecumenism of personal encounters and reconciliation of hearts has arisen since the very beginning."³⁵⁴ This kind of ecumenism also comprises such activities as praying and proclaiming the gospel without the intention of luring the faithful from their tradition over to the other side.³⁵⁵

The path of spiritual ecumenism in the relationship between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches has been markedly stimulated and set on the right track with the preeminent encounter between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. This encounter of "love" paved the way for subsequent encounters between the two Church leaders and their respective successors. Both in the momentous embrace which has gone down in history as the indelible symbol of ecumenism and in their meetings which promote ecumenism, both the Pope and the Patriarch are

certain that they are expressing the common desire for justice and the unanimous sentiment of charity on the part of their faithful ... remembering the command of the Lord: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled to your brother." (Mt 5, 23-24)³⁵⁶

From then onward, the Church leaders did not look back. This memorable meeting was followed by innumerable meetings between Paul VI's successors and the leaders of the various Orthodox Churches. The correspondence between the Vatican and the Phanar in the years during and following the Second Vatican Council is a testament to this warm relationship expressed by the two leaders.³⁵⁷ Moreover, a delegation from each church is sent each year to the other "sister church" on the occasion of their feasts, to Rome on 29th

³⁵³ See Raniero Cantalamessa, "Fifth Lenten Sermon: The Path to Unity among Christians: Reflections on *Unitatis redintegratio*," 18 March, 2016, *Zenit*, <https://zenit.org/articles/father-cantalamessas-5th-lent-homily-2016/>.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Thomas F. Stransky, John B. Sheerin, eds., *Doing the Truth in Charity: Statements of Pope Paul VI, Popes John Paul I, John Paul II, and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity: 1964-80* (Ramsey/NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 179.

³⁵⁷ See Vatican – Ecumenical Patriarchate, *Tomos-Agapis*.

June for the feast of St Peter and St Paul, and to Istanbul of the 30th November to mark the feast of St Andrew the apostle. Another episode expressive of this encounter of love is that between the same Pope Paul VI and Metropolitan Meliton, representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the lifting of the anathemas, where Pope Paul VI, to the astonishment of those present, knelt down and kissed the foot of the Metropolitan.³⁵⁸

The various visits by Pope Paul VI's successor, Pope John Paul II, to various Orthodox Churches, are a testimony to this good will, both on the side of the Vatican and also the various Orthodox Churches in their warm reception. In 1999, the pope visited Romania, where he was greeted by Patriarch Teoctist, who returned the visit in 2002. This meeting was crowned with the *Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope John II and His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist*, where the two church leaders emphasise that:

Today's meeting reinforces our dedication to pray and to work to achieve the full and visible unity of all the disciples of Christ. Our aim and our ardent desire is full communion, which is not absorption but communion in truth and love. It is an irreversible journey for which there is no alternative: it is the path of the Church.³⁵⁹

While they acknowledge wounds inflicted on each other due to mistakes committed in the past, they still envision a future “illuminated by the grace of God.”

This was followed by a visit to Bulgaria in 2002, returned by a visit of the delegation of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to Rome in May, 2003. Other important contacts were made between the Vatican and the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2002 and 2003. This resulted in regular meetings between the two sides.

One of the most important visits to Orthodox territory was to Greece, made as part of a journey encompassing Greece, Syria, and Malta in May, 2001. The first such visit in over a millennium, it was a visit which was deemed as a difficult encounter, since the Greek Orthodox Church's stance in respect to ecumenism is quite antagonistic. Nevertheless,

³⁵⁸ See Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 112.

³⁵⁹ John Paul II – Teoctist, “Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope John II and His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist,” *Vatican Website*, 12 October 2002, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20021012_john-paul-ii-teoctist.html.

the Pope undertook this journey, at the Greek president's invitation, and asked forgiveness for the sufferings inflicted by the Catholics on their Orthodox brethren: "For the occasions past and present, when sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have sinned by action or omission against their Orthodox brothers and sisters, may the Lord grant us the forgiveness we beg of him."³⁶⁰ He recalls the gesture of love of his predecessor and Patriarch Athenagoras who removed the mutual excommunications, a gesture which stands as "a summons for us to work ever more fervently for the unity which is Christ's will."³⁶¹

Apart from his innumerable visits and exchanges with various Orthodox patriarchs, Pope John Paul II returned the important relics of St John Chrysostom and St Gregory Nazianzen (known to the Orthodox as "the Theologian") to the Orthodox Church during a special service at St Peter's Basilica on the 27th November 2004.³⁶² As Roberson argues: "Both John Paul II and the patriarch knew that the return of relics that had been removed from Constantinople during the Latin occupation of the city in the 13th century would help ease a longstanding grievance among the Orthodox."³⁶³ Hardliners would argue that the pope was not doing anything extraordinary except restoring to the Orthodox what simply had belonged to them. However, things should be seen in a larger perspective. The pope's gesture should be seen as a gesture of goodwill during the years of impasse that hampered the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches during the years dominated by uniatism.

Indeed, this decision, on behalf of the pope, to return the relics to Constantinople, "was one of several gestures he made in recent years in an effort to foster good will between Catholics and Orthodox."³⁶⁴ Another important gesture by the same pope was the return of the 18th century copy of the image of the Mother of God of Kazan to the Russian Orthodox Church in August of 2004. The gesture assumes an important meaning

³⁶⁰ John Paul II, "Address of John Paul II to his Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and Primate of Greece," Vatican Website, 4 May 2001, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2001/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010504_archbishop-athens.html.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶² See Ronald G. Roberson, "Facing East: New Initiatives toward the Orthodox," *America* 17, no. 192 (2005): 8; Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 112.

³⁶³ Roberson, "Facing East," 8.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

especially within the deteriorating relationship between the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate since 2002, when the Catholic Church established four dioceses in Russia.³⁶⁵

This itinerary which follows the developments between the Church leaders attests to the importance of fostering relationships at the local level, especially after the problem of uniatism. As Roberson asserts, “this energy in Orthodox-Catholic dialogue has shifted to the local level and to relations between the Holy See and individual Orthodox Churches.”³⁶⁶ While the problem of uniatism is still unresolved, other agreements have been reached, as seen in the previous section. However, the fostering of relationships at the local level serves to forge and cement important ties and also gives a degree of attention to the Orthodox Churches at the local level, wherein each church has both its individual needs and contributions to make.

For Pope Benedict XVI, too, ecumenism was high on his agenda. It is noteworthy that all the popes of the Vatican II and post-Vatican era have sought to promote and deepen what has been achieved by their respective predecessor/s. This is something worthy of admiration and, again, attests to the importance of ecumenism within the Roman Catholic Church. One of his most significant visits was that undertaken to Turkey in 2006 in order to repair the rift caused among Muslims because of some controversial remarks about Islam at Regensburg, but also to advance the cause of the Orthodox Church there.

In his meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, on the 29th November 2006, Pope Benedict XVI traces the importance of the land which he was visiting, a land rich in diverse ways, such as its ancient history of Christianity, it being the birthplace of great Church Fathers who lent the world some of the greatest Christian spirituality, such people as Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom.³⁶⁷ During the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom on the feast of St Andrew, the pope appeals to the

³⁶⁵ This argument has been discussed in a previous section; see also Roberson, “Facing East,” 9.

³⁶⁶ Roberson, “Facing East,” 9.

³⁶⁷ See Benedict XVI, “Meeting with His Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople: Address of the Holy Father,” *Vatican Website*, 29 November 2006, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061129_bartholomew-i.html.

task of working towards unity, a task made more urgent by the current situation in the world:

This charge left us by the holy brothers Peter and Andrew is far from finished. On the contrary, today it is even more urgent and necessary. For it looks not only to those cultures which have been touched only marginally by the Gospel message, but also to long-established European cultures deeply grounded in the Christian tradition. The process of secularization has weakened the hold of that tradition; indeed, it is being called into question, and even rejected. In the face of this reality, we are called, together with all other Christian communities, to renew Europe's awareness of its Christian roots, traditions and values, giving them new vitality.³⁶⁸

The urgency of the message is also heightened by the plight of many people in the current times, be it poverty, war, exploitation in its many forms, that of the environment being one example.³⁶⁹ Hence, the need for unity between the two churches becomes all the more poignant, whereby “Our theological and ethical traditions can offer a solid basis for a united approach in preaching and action.”³⁷⁰

Following in the steps of his predecessors, the current Pope Francis has been wholeheartedly committed to ecumenism. This is especially seen in his “very personal approach to the question of the unity of the Christians.”³⁷¹ Indeed, Francis has advocated a “culture of encounter” with the other Churches and traditions.³⁷² This is continuously shown in his attitude. Indeed,

As he elaborates this culture of encounter, he continually shows exemplary respect and complete trust in his ecumenical partners. The latter are often moved by his whole-hearted generosity and authentic love. Francis treats his ecumenical partners as equals, with no sense of superiority whatsoever. Again, the humility he shows when he meets the leaders of other Churches and Christian Traditions is, to say the least, disarming.³⁷³

³⁶⁸ Benedict XVI, “Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom on the Feast of St Andrew the Apostle: Address of the Holy Father,” *Vatican Website*, 30 November 2006, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_divine-liturgy.html.

³⁶⁹ See Benedict XVI – Bartholomew I, “Common Declaration of Pope Benedict XVI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I,” *Vatican Website*, Fanar, 30 November 2006, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_dichiarazione-comune.html, par. 5.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ Hyacinthe Destivelle, “Le pape François et l’unité des Chrétiens: Un œcuménisme en chemin,” *Istina* 60, no. 1 (2015): 8. This paper analyses Pope Francis’ ecumenism. The text, in French, runs thus: “... une approche très personnelle de la question de l’unité des chrétiens.”

³⁷² See *ibid.*, 20-21.

³⁷³ Hector Scerri, “The Ecumenical Attitudes of Pope Francis,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 65, no. 7 (2008): 22.

This culture of encounter also presupposes a journey. Indeed, the notion of unity as journeying together is central to Francis, as is evident in many of his discourses. One example is Francis's speech at the Ecumenical Centre, on the occasion of his visit to the World Council of Churches on 21st June 2018. He invites all those present to "ask the Father to help us walk together all the more resolutely in the ways of the Spirit."³⁷⁴ Within this culture of encounter, which entails a veritable dialogue, "the two Church leaders, namely Pope Francis and the head of the other Church, are together, so as to speak, involved in the 'writing of an icon.'³⁷⁵ Implicitly, Pope Francis is already harnessing the concept of "receptive ecumenism," a concept of great importance, to be discussed at length in chapter 4.³⁷⁶

Pope Francis has been involved in a number of ecumenical encounters. Two of them stand out in particular. These are the meeting of Pope Francis with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in 2014 and the meeting of the pope with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in February 2016 which, as Cantalamessa states correctly, "opened up a new horizon for the ecumenism."³⁷⁷ During Pope Francis' apostolic visit to Jerusalem in 2014, a Joint Declaration was issued by the pope and Patriarch Bartholomew on the 25 May, stating the meaning of this "fraternal encounter," an encounter which is "a new and necessary step on the journey to which only the Holy Spirit can lead us, that of communion in legitimate diversity."³⁷⁸ The declaration mentions the importance of "the confession of the one faith, persevering prayer, inner conversion, renewal of life and fraternal dialogue."³⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it also acknowledges the importance of theological dialogue and the progress made so far.³⁸⁰ In applauding the results of the theological dialogue, the declaration is adamant that:

the theological dialogue does not seek a theological lowest common denominator on which to reach a compromise, but is rather about deepening one's grasp of the whole truth that

³⁷⁴ World Council of Churches, "Pope Francis Affirms Catholic Church's Commitment to the Ecumenical Journey," *World Council of Churches*, 21 June 2018. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/pope-francis-affirms-catholic-churchs-commitment-to-the-ecumenical-journey>.

³⁷⁵ Scerri, "The Ecumenical Attitudes," 23.

³⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 24.

³⁷⁷ Cantalamessa, "Fifth Lenten Sermon."

³⁷⁸ Francis – Bartholomew, "Joint Declaration by Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew," *Apostolic Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: The Brothers of Galilee: Peter and Andrew in the Holy Land*, 25 May 2014, <https://www.apostolicpilgrimage.org/joint-declaration>, par. 2.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 4.

Christ has given to his Church, a truth that we never cease to understand better as we follow the Holy Spirit's promptings.³⁸¹

The Declaration also touches upon respect and proper use of the created order and the safeguarding of the Christian faith in the contemporary society.³⁸²

In the encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015), in “an unprecedented gesture in the context of the Papal Magisterium,” Pope Francis endorses his indebtedness to Patriarch Bartholomew I, “The Green Patriarch,” regarding the care of the planet.³⁸³ In paragraph 8, he states that:

Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet, for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”, we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.³⁸⁴

It is an example of what Scerri calls “the orthopraxis of the ‘culture of encounter.’”³⁸⁵ The ecumenical vision of Pope Francis is, thus, a practical vision where dialogue and action are enacted at the grassroots. The meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia took place in Havana, Cuba on Friday 12th February 2016, to sign a historic joint declaration. It was the first time such a meeting had taken place. Both sides acknowledge “with a particular sense of urgency the need for the shared labour of Catholics and Orthodox, who are called, with gentleness and respect, to give an explanation to the world of the hope in us.”³⁸⁶ While the road the unity is strewn with various obstacles, nevertheless, the Declaration commits the Orthodox and Catholics to join forces in order to respond to the dilemmas of the contemporary world.³⁸⁷ In paragraph 7 we read the following:

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² See *ibid.*, 6-7.

³⁸³ See Scerri, “The Ecumenical Attitudes,” 24; see also Francis, *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter on Care for our Home*, 24 May 2015, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), par. 7-9.

³⁸⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 8.

³⁸⁵ Scerri, “The Ecumenical Attitudes,” 24.

³⁸⁶ Francis – Kirill, “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill,” *Radio Vaticana*, 12 February, 2016, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/02/12/joint_declaration_of_pope_francis_and_patriarch_kirill/1208117, par. 3.

³⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 6-7.

Orthodox and Catholics must learn to give unanimously witness in those spheres in which this is possible and necessary. Human civilization has entered into a period of epochal change. Our Christian conscience and our pastoral responsibility compel us not to remain passive in the face of challenges requiring a shared response.³⁸⁸

This is indeed an important challenge offered by the secular world from which Christianity cannot avert its gaze. The volatile situation fraught with violence peculiar to our own times might be a situation which enables the Churches to work closely together.³⁸⁹ Indeed, many pressing issues demand immediate action. These include the displacement of refugees, many of them Christians, from their war-torn countries, the ugly beast of terrorism and the martyrdom of many Christians hailing from different traditions.³⁹⁰ With regard to the issue of refugees, one striking example that stands out is the joint visit to the island of Lesbos by Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, together with Archbishop Ieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, on the 16th April 2016.³⁹¹ He states strikingly:

I have come here with my brothers, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos, simply to be with you and to hear your stories. We have come to call the attention of the world to this grave humanitarian crisis and to plead for its resolution.³⁹²

Other pertinent issues include discrimination against Christians, even in societies devoid of any religious affiliations.³⁹³ Then there are the issues of marriage, abortion and euthanasia. This declaration attests to how much is common to both traditions. This should be a driving force in order to compel the two Churches forward in their endeavour towards unity, rather than any competition between them. Paragraph 24 of the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill is so succinct regarding this aspect:

Orthodox and Catholics are united not only by the shared Tradition of the Church of the first millennium, but also by the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ in the world today. This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism. We are not competitors but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

³⁸⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 8-13.

³⁹¹ See Francis, "Speeches of His Beatitude Ieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and of All Greece, of his Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and of Pope Francis," *Vatican Website*, 16 April, 2016, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2016/outside/documents/papa-francesco-lesvos-2016.html>; see also Scerri, "The Ecumenical Attitudes," 25.

³⁹² Francis, "Speeches;" also Scerri, "The Ecumenical Attitudes," 25.

³⁹³ See Francis-Kirill, "Joint Declaration," 15-16.

Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be “in harmony with one another” (Rm 15:5).³⁹⁴

When embraced wholeheartedly, these basic attitudes can prove to be solid paving-stones on the path of Receptive Ecumenism. This journey will be studied thoroughly in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.09 Unto Martyrdom: An Ecumenism of Blood

Martyrdom is not a thing of the ancient past. In our own times, even more than in the past, countless Christians are dying for the fact that they are Christians.³⁹⁵ As Pope Francis states:

In this moment of prayer for unity, I would also like to remember our martyrs, the martyrs of today. They are witnesses to Jesus Christ, and they are persecuted and killed because they are Christians. Those who persecute them make no distinction between the religious communities to which they belong. They are Christians and for that they are persecuted. This, brothers and sisters, is the ecumenism of blood.³⁹⁶

The expression “ecumenism of blood” is an expression particular to and used frequently by Pope Francis.³⁹⁷ For the persecution of Christians transcends traditions and church affiliation. This wound inflicted upon the Church of Christ is a further cause for unity.³⁹⁸ As Patriarch Yuhanna X affirms, “the blood of the martyrs calls us to be united with the One Body of Christ, in such a way that history is ransomed and sanctified.”³⁹⁹

The persecution of Christians has made the way in all the official dialogues and documents relating to ecumenism. For those who might ponder on the reason for this

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁹⁵ For more details see Tamara Grdzeldze and Guido Dotti, ed., *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for Ecumenical Commemoration* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2011).

³⁹⁶ Francis, “Pope Francis says ‘Ecumenism of Blood’ is Uniting Christians,” *Catholic Herald*, 26 January, 2015, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/01/26/pope-francis-says-ecumenism-of-blood-is-uniting-christians/>.

³⁹⁷ See Destivelle, “Le pape François,” 33-35.

³⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 34.

³⁹⁹ Yuhanna X, “Blood of Martyrs, Seed of Communion,” at the XXIV Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox Spirituality “Martyrdom and Communion,” *Monastery of Bose*, 7-8 September, 2016, PDF file, <http://monasteriodibose.it/en/hospitality/conferences/orthodox-spirituality/1484-2016-martyrdom-and-communion/10813-blood-of-martyrs-seed-of-communion>, page 2.

inclusion, the immediate answer is that ecumenism is being lived out in the world with all its grittiness, away from the conference rooms and the muted dialogues. It is the ecumenism which entails an aspect of what can be called “practical ecumenism” or “ecumenism of the grassroots.” The sheer numbers of people who have been required to bear witness to their faith (there is no need to ponder on the real meaning of martyrdom at this stage!) in various forms, is astonishing, to say the least. And this has not gone unnoticed in the Second Vatican Council⁴⁰⁰ and in the ensuing dialogues between the various traditions. Even before the Second Vatican Council, Pope Pius XII recognised the persecution the faithful of the Eastern Churches have undergone, and were still suffering in his encyclical *Orientales ecclesias*.⁴⁰¹

In a contribution during the XXIV Ecumenical Convention of Orthodox Spirituality, held at Bose Monastery from the 7th to the 10th of September 2016, Patriarch Yuhanna X, of Antioch and the Orient, reiterated the plight of his people, arguing that

It is as if our Church were doomed to exist under the shadow of the conquerors and of all the religious oppression that followed, together with the many historical violations that helped fragmenting the body of the Antiochian Church into diverse ecclesiastical entities⁴⁰²

The fact that martyrdom has become a leitmotif in many of the Church leaders’ speeches serves to add a sense of urgency to the ecumenical venture. In front of this drama which is being lived even in contemporary times and in various parts of the world, for all talks of freedom of belief and expression, the various traditions are called to work together to combat this menace. Brodd rightly points out that: “Today, the martyrs have become increasingly important as signs and instruments of the unity of the church in time and space.”⁴⁰³ In a way, this is not so different from the emergence of the early Church amidst the gruelling persecutions Christians had to undergo. Rather, the existence of the Church is inextricably bound to these martyrs. The reason is that the heart of Christian

⁴⁰⁰ See Vatican Council II, *Unitatis redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism, 21 November, 1964, par. 14, in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1975).

⁴⁰¹ Pius XII, “Encyclical on the Oriental Churches in Communion with Rome, *Orientales ecclesias*,” *Vatican Website*, 15 December, 1952, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_15121952_orientales.html.

⁴⁰² Yuhanna X, “Blood of Martyrs, Seed of Communion,” 1.

⁴⁰³ Sven-Erik Brodd, “A Communion of Martyrs: Perspectives on the Papal Encyclical Letter ‘Ut unum sint,’” *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 2 (2000): 224.

martyrdom entails the prophetic imitation of Christ who loved his ones till the very end, by offering up his own life.⁴⁰⁴

On a more positive tone, it can be argued that if people from different traditions of the Christian faith are willing to lay down their life for something they believe in so convincingly, unity between the Churches can really happen if people from different traditions are willing to work for it untiringly and believe in it unceasingly. Looking at the persecuted Christians striving to make their faith survive in a hostile environment even as this thesis is being penned down, serves to humble even the most ardent confessionalist on one's journey of conversion!

In his concluding speech at the Bose Conference on Orthodox spirituality, D'Ayala Valva distinguishes between two groups which make up the Christian family: "those who suffer martyrdom for their faith, and those who are living their faith still 'safely,'" the latter group referring to the European churches.⁴⁰⁵ Hence, the recognition of the others' plights is of immense importance to the constitution and growth of the Church as the Body of Christ. D'Ayala continues: "In this sharing, a real exchange of gifts takes place between those Churches that today are Churches of martyrs and the others, which are physically safer, but are often much weaker spiritually."⁴⁰⁶ While the responsibility on part of the "safer" Christian communities towards their brethren in plight is great, and calls for practical action, at the same time, it also calls for an inward action within these communities for their transformation through conversion.

One of the most evident links between ecumenism and Christian persecution is present in *Ut unum sint*. The fact that it is mentioned in the first paragraph of the encyclical adds a sense of urgency towards situations where ecumenism is being lived in more gritty and harsh realities.

⁴⁰⁴ See Hector Scerri, "Come sangue versato. L'essenza della 'martyria' cristiana," *Ricerche Teologiche* 18 (2007): 198.

⁴⁰⁵ Luigi D'Ayala Valva, "Conclusions of the Conference." XXIV International Conference of Orthodox Spirituality Martyrdom and Communion, *Bose Monastery*, 7-10 September ,2016, PDF file, <http://monasterodibose.it/en/hospitality/conferences/orthodox-spirituality/1484-2016-martyrdom-and-communion/10865-conclusions-of-the-conference>, page 1.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of Churches and Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigour to the Council's call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the Kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.⁴⁰⁷

The reason for this articulation might be Pope John Paul II's experiences of persecution under the regimes of both Nazism and Communism.⁴⁰⁸ As Pontifex asserts:

Indeed, the pope points to acts of Christian martyrdom as an indication of the scandal of a divided church. The witness of total self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ – seen across the denominations – would seem to unpick the reasonableness of ecclesial division, making the points at issue almost petty, even irrelevant.⁴⁰⁹

This is a very sound argument. The contention on certain issues fades before the overwhelming testimony of these Christians who, in giving up their lives and going against the natural instinct for survival,⁴¹⁰ have achieved the highest degree of sainthood. *Ut unum sint* makes a distinction between “full” communion and “an imperfect but real communion.” However, in martyrdom, this communion is “already perfect,” as “*martyria* unto death” is “the truest communion possible with Christ.”⁴¹¹

The persecutions are many and varied. It is an undeniable fact that the many of the Christians who are currently the most persecuted hail from the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox traditions. A geographical look at the events should be enough to affirm this. Countless Christians of the Orthodox tradition struggled under the harsh regime of the Ottoman empire, while a great many others were silenced by the atheistic communist regimes. This is evident, for example, in the joint declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Teoctist of Romania. Within this perspective, it is no wonder that some of the more zealous Orthodox express fear and mistrust, and associate adherence to their church with a strong resurgence of nationalism. It is as a result of such issues that certain sections

⁴⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), par. 1.

⁴⁰⁸ See John Pontifex, “United We stand, Divided We Fall: Is Persecution Against Christians Breaking Down the Walls Between Churches?” in *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Christopher Asprey (Aldershot/Hampshire – Burlington/VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 203.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ See Scerri, “Come sangue versato,” 198.

⁴¹¹ *UUS*, 84; see also Brodd, “A Communion of Martyrs,” 225.

of the faithful have arrived to adopt an anti-ecumenical stance. These are factors which will be the focus of analysis later on in this thesis.

In other areas, the growth of a militant fundamentalism within some religions has inflicted a harsh penalty on Christians and other minorities who endorse different forms of faith. While secularity tries to do away with religion, at least, this is not done in an aggressive way. On the other hand, the burning of churches and the slaughter of Christians in Nigeria, bombings in Egypt and Pakistan, and the massacre of Christians in the Middle East is staggering to take in, especially in the twenty-first century.⁴¹² While the current targets are Christians from the Middle East and Africa, the tragedy of persecution has taken place across the ages and across all continents. Moreover, it does not distinguish between Catholic, Coptic or Orthodox. It is the systematic annihilation of people who cling to their faith. This has been denounced by many church leaders. As Gibbons states:

The Orthodox and Oriental Churches have need for the ministry of Peter, because a world-wide, universal community such as the organized Roman Catholic Church, with its command of media and close connections to political organizations is important for all Christian communities.⁴¹³

Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill's declaration strongly denounces this persecution while urging international leaders to step up aid.⁴¹⁴

We bow before the martyrdom of those who, at the cost of their own lives, have given witness to the truth of the Gospel, preferring death to the denial of Christ. We believe that these martyrs of our times, who belong to various Churches but who are united by their shared suffering, are a pledge of the unity of Christians. It is to you who suffer for Christ's sake that the word of the Apostle is directed: "Beloved ... rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly" (1 *Pet* 4:12-13).⁴¹⁵

However tragic the situation is, there is still hope. First of all, it has served to strengthen the faith of many Christians and shown that faith is still dynamic and meaningful even in

⁴¹² For more details, see Pontifex, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," 204.

⁴¹³ Robin Gibbons, "Persecution and Ecumenism," in *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st century*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Christopher Asprey (Aldershot/Hampshire – Burlington/VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 220.

⁴¹⁴ See Francis – Kirill, "Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia," *Vatican Website*, 12 February, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html, par. 8-12.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

our own times, as D’Ayala Valva has rightly pointed out. Secondly, this has become a cause for unity among Christians of different traditions. Where such unity was not achieved, there was only decline. This was the case, for example, in Iraq,⁴¹⁶ particularly in the second decade of the third millennium.

As a result, Christians are called to commit themselves to take a decision and work towards that goal. In this situation, Christ’s warnings on the urgency of taking a decision in our ecumenical endeavour assume a more nuanced meaning: “You also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Lk 12, 40) What is the harvest that Christians are to offer and for which all are responsible? Patriarch Yuhanna’s words should strike at the very heart of the firm Christian believer:

My brothers, the world today stands aghast and in chaos, expecting from us Christians to be the icon of prayer, of true communion, and of a real unity that transcends historical obstacles, sins, and wounds. Today, the world is in dire need of a Christian witness based on convergence and accord. It seeks a unified and clear Christian discourse that gives one answer from the gospel to questions that face modern man in all his crises of contemporary society.⁴¹⁷

3.10 Conclusion

This itinerary undertaken in order to trace the events leading to the dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches has brought to light the various factors at work in the commencement and continuation of the dialogue. It has, and still is, been a difficult journey but a rewarding one, in terms of perseverance and faith. Much has been achieved and this is cause for great joy on both sides. However, as it will be seen, the situation is far from settled. As progress has been made on some aspects, especially with regard to ecclesiology and the sacraments, other aspects such as the primacy of the bishop of Rome, the position of the Eastern Catholic Churches, together with certain attitudes such as a new anti-ecumenical wave among circles of both Catholics and Orthodox, constitute what seems a veritably unassailable wall. Time also changes the priorities at stake. At this

⁴¹⁶ See Pontifex, “United We Stand, Divided We Fall,” 206

⁴¹⁷ Yuhanna X, “Blood of Martyrs, Seed of Communion,” 2.

stage, the point made by Ware is so valid. The points of division which existed between the two Churches in the past are still present, but other problems which existed then have come to the foreground.⁴¹⁸ To give Ware's exact example, while the *Filioque* was the main dividing issue in the past, this has been overtaken by the problem of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.⁴¹⁹

And during all these times of strife, Christians are being persecuted for their faith. Are the cries of those Christian brethren who are laying down their lives for the treasure of the faith reaching deaf ears? They do constitute a living lesson whereby unity can transcend the wounds of history.

For all their achievements, it must be borne in mind that bilateral dialogues at the doctrinal level do not provide the whole answer. While consensus has been reached on a number of theological aspects, other aspects are the cause of disagreements. A number of points need to be considered. First of all, the sheer length of time of mutual estrangement and its effects on each tradition cannot be ignored. Compared to that, ecumenical dialogue is a relatively very recent experience. Apart from this, dialogue involves various other factors, namely understanding the other tradition within its cultural milieu. This process also involves the shedding of a certain defensiveness that seems to be present in all traditions. In other words, a change of attitude is necessary. It does not involve solely a few leaders and theologians at a conference table, but the whole Christian people. It is the people of God in its totality that makes up the Church, and the various Churches need to be made aware of the forces in play in the ecumenical endeavour. How are the people to understand that in the face of events that happened centuries ago, the present Christian people of different traditions are not the enemy? How can people be persuaded to accept that ecumenism is no danger to one's own Christian identity? This change in attitude takes time.

However, this does not entail adopting a fatalistic or passive stance, waiting for events to happen. In the meantime, Christians are called to commit themselves in their exploration of new ventures, which do not replace what has been achieved so far, but only serve to

⁴¹⁸ See Ware, "The Ravenna Document," 766.

⁴¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 767.

enhance what has been accomplished. A new way of thinking is required in order to foster real dialogue between the Churches. This is the important contribution of Receptive Ecumenism. This way of thinking (why not so new!), working in tandem with the ever-creative force of the Holy Spirit is to be explored further and constantly put into action, without being overwhelmed by the sometimes unavoidable fear of disrupting the *status quo*.

Chapter 4

Receptive Ecumenism: The Dynamics of Reception in Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox Relations and Encounters

4.01 Introduction

A glance back at the events and yielded results, as analysed in the previous chapter, can attest to the level of encounter between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The fifty years or so since the Second Vatican Council have seen a lot of events taking place between the Catholic and Orthodox sides, events deemed inconceivable years before.

The various bilateral dialogues of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have dismissed any reservations about great differences in the dogmas of the two traditions. Indeed, these documents attest to the similarity and complementarity of various topics, most notably those which deal with the sacraments. It also shows that amongst both Catholic and Orthodox theologians there seems to be a general acceptance of the importance of ecumenism. Moreover, the number of meetings between Pope Paul VI and his successors with different patriarchs of the various autocephalic churches, which meetings have been recorded through the media, express admirable warmth between the two sides, together with the determination to pursue in dialogue, in spite of various setbacks throughout the decades.

4.02 Unsolved Problems and Recurring Attitudes: The Fragility of the Dialogue Between Catholics and Orthodox

Is the Introduction of this chapter too optimistic, however? The obstacles which still lie in the way amount to a task of herculean proportions. The hurdles encountered along the way cannot be ignored. Some of them seem even insurmountable at present. First and foremost, for all the bilateral dialogues at the international levels, some of the most pressing issues remain unresolved. These are the notion of primacy and the situation of the Eastern Catholic Churches. No agreement has yet been reached on these two issues, and the speech of Hilarion Alfeyev regarding these Churches at the 14th plenary session

of the Joint International Commission, held at Chieti in September 2016, reveals how much work still needs to be done.¹ Justifiably, he points out the fact that the issue of uniatism has yet to surface again in the official dialogue after a ten-year hiatus. He admits that:

I can predict that there will be many divisive issues and that we will not agree on every point. However, the aim of our dialogue is not simply to agree on the points of which we agree anyhow, but we have to explore also the points of disagreement. And the issue of Uniatism is one such extremely burning issue.²

Though the topic explored in this plenary was the notion of primacy and synodality as exercised in the first millennium, the decision should have been to tackle this aspect and its evolution in the second millennium.³ Courage is required in order to face the aspects which are the main points of contention among the two Churches, and which will surely bring disagreement. One would comment that this might not be the ripe time, however determining when the right time is and taking action when the time comes also implies courage. To put it more bluntly, shelving the main divisive issues for future reference may only show that at the end there can be no agreement between the two Churches on the basis of these issues.

There has been criticism and scepticism of the ecumenical ground achieved employing theological dialogue as the sole method. The late Avery Dulles applauded the achievements of the bilateral dialogues conducted by what he termed as the “convergence method.” However, he argued that what proved successful during the first decades of ecumenical dialogue, (and has been particularly fruitful for traditions with a strong doctrinal tradition, such as Catholics and Orthodox),⁴ may not be so in the face of emerging circumstances. Hence, “dialogues conducted according to the dominant methods of the past century have tended to be reductive, and many doctrinally conservative Christians, strongly wedded to their beliefs, have abstained from ecumenical

¹ See DECR Communication Service, “The 14th Plenary Session of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church completes its work,” *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, 22 September, 2016, <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/09/22/news135848/>.

² Ibid.

³ See *ibid.*

⁴ Avery Dulles, “Saving Ecumenism from Itself,” *First Things* 178 (2007): 24-25.

involvements, for fear of doctrinal compromise.”⁵ Thus, among some circles there has been a “reconfessionalisation,” to use Dulles’ word.⁶ This has been true, especially with regard to some Orthodox groups.

Some of the dialogues committed to ecumenism run the risk of being a product of the characteristics of the contemporary world. Much can be said of the fragmentation and relativism which pervades every aspect of contemporary life. Less is said about this fragmentation and its bearings on the ecumenical movement. Among some groups, for all the good intentions of searching a common denominator in order to avoid conflicts, there is the tendency to overlap with social and political issues. While ecumenism cannot be isolated from the world of life, on the other hand, there is a feeling of theological inertia. Venturing outside of the theological realm can lead to fragmentation of doctrine itself. Sometimes there is the tendency to avoid stirring up certain debates and settling for social and other kinds of issues. This is especially true in the current century. Such a fragmentation in various directions can only lead to an ecumenical stasis. What is being achieved at the end of such debates? Everyone clings to their own tradition, as that is their bulwark against the unknown. It is little wonder, as a result, that some groups don an ultra-conservative stance against what is perceived as a new threat. Cardinal Kasper describes reconfessionalisation as “an apprehensive, self-absorbed, defensive attitude.”⁷

It must be acknowledged that the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox has been, and still is, fragile. The lukewarm reception Pope John Paul II received in Greece in his apostolic journey in 2001, even as he asked God for the forgiveness of past sins inflicted on the Orthodox side, stands out as one example.⁸ It is easy to counter the argument by stating that this event took place nearly two decades ago and things have since changed, but the events in Georgia in 2016 during Pope Francis’ visit belie a certain mistrust on the part of some of the more conservative Orthodox. Admittedly, Pope Francis was greeted warmly by the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church, however nobody on

⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Walter Kasper, quoted in Dulles, “Saving Ecumenism from Itself,” 26.

⁸ See Pope John Paul II’s plea for forgiveness. 4 May 2001, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/2001/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010504_archbishop-athens.html (accessed 25 July, 2017).

the Orthodox side showed up for the Pope's celebration of the Eucharist.⁹ Ultra-conservatives even carried slogans voicing opposition against the visit of the visible head of the Roman Catholic Church. The delicate issue of proselytism was taken up by the Pope himself in reminding the Catholics present that "they should not feel like they had a mission to convert Orthodox worshippers, saying this would be 'a great sin.'"¹⁰ He was reported to have stated: "Never try to practise proselytism against the Orthodox Church. They are our brothers and sisters."¹¹ Admittedly, this attests to new steps forward in acknowledging issues which are sensitive to the other tradition.

The fragility of the dialogue and its impact on the relationship between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches is especially evident in the reactions evident at the first erroneous step committed on one side. Such an example has already been illustrated in chapter 3, in reference to the decision on the Catholic side to establish four dioceses in Russia, an issue which provoked a great crisis, especially since there appeared to have been no consultation with the Orthodox Church itself.¹² It certainly did little to allay the Orthodox fears regarding conversion. With hindsight, it could be considered an unwise decision at the time, despite all good intentions and purposes. It goes to attest that much remains to be discovered about each respective side. Moreover, fifty years of dialogue without very productive results seen against the backdrop of a millennium of estrangement between the two sides pale in their significance. The dialogue is still in the process of the sides getting to know each other, acknowledging the hurts of the other and trying to heal these wounds. It must also be borne in mind that despite the fact that the two Churches are still getting to know each other, this does not certainly call for any lack of action in the theological arena. What is at stake is the sensitivity with which the action is carried out, implying that each tradition *knows about* the other sufficiently, when this may not be the case. Moreover, there is also the issue of real dialogue, which also involves consultation. It is also a situation which merits a deeper analysis of the implications of "canonical territory" and the process of two Churches working side by side.

⁹ See Reuters, "Pope Francis Addresses a Small Crowd of 3,000 at Service in Georgia," *The Guardian*, Saturday 1 October, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/01/pope-francis-addresses-small-crowd-of-3000-at-service-in-georgia>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For more details regarding the development of this crisis, see Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Ecumenical Relations and Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church," *Exchange* 32, no.2 (2003): 174-176.

This fear and mistrust are especially pervasive in the local people's attitudes regarding ecumenism. Herein lies a paradox. On one hand, there is the ecumenism that is lived among the local people themselves, where people from different sides help and support each other in daily living. However, at the level of the acceptance of each other's traditions, it can be a totally different story. Many people, even in this contemporary period of openness, are still wary of ecumenism. The spectre of communism still lingers upon some of these Christians, thus preventing them from readily embracing any legacies of the Western world. Some envisage the Roman Catholic Church as the harbinger of the West in its imperialistic attitude towards the Eastern world. Worse still is the misplaced fear in ecumenism some of these people have, especially the erroneous notion of being converted to the other side. This might explain the sensitivity around the concept of proselytism among the Orthodox. While, admittedly, the Roman Catholic Church is improving in its sensitivity towards the Orthodox, it must be borne in mind that throughout their history, the Orthodox Christians have suffered a lot in the subjugation of their territory under foreign powers, and the least they would expect would be another power trying to patronize and interfere in their territories, however good the intentions.

For all the spirit of the local churches, real education in ecumenism has remained the domain of the patriarchs and the theologians. Schooling in ecumenism is just trickling among the populace. One might wonder how this is achieved within the context of conciliarity. Exacerbating the situation is the important influence wielded by the monastics upon the community. In some of the monastic communities, an anti-ecumenical spirit unfortunately prevails. This would merit an analysis on the factors which harbour such fears and what could be done to combat them. One of the main factors which hinders any real acceptance of the other side on the side of the hardliners is the perception of otherness. Davies' remark regarding this situation is especially poignant. The notion of the Roman Catholics as heretics is not so much the primary issue. Indeed:

for many Orthodox Christians, however, such a claim is a secondary argument shoring up the main point, which is that Roman Catholics and Orthodox are just *different*. For many Orthodox, Rome's alleged heresies are inevitable because of differences in outlook and

traditions. Even if theological issues could be settled, that deep sense of otherness would remain a serious obstacle to reunion.¹³

Davies' contribution in his article "What Divides Orthodox and Catholics?" delves into the heart of the matter. A very important aspect which he underscores is the attitudes held in the perception of the other. For example, while Orthodox point to the differences in outlook and traditions, it is certainly true that Catholics tend to see tensions in an overly optimistic manner.¹⁴ It is the case that "Catholic attitudes likely reflect the casual assumptions typical of a dominant culture."¹⁵

It comes as no great surprise, therefore, that within some Catholic circles there emerges the complaint that the Catholic Church is too accommodating to the Orthodox Church, whereby some Orthodox tend to be less trusting. What is to be expected if there seems to be no convergence on even the perception of each tradition towards the other? One of the most important, and certainly challenging, tasks of the whole Ecumenical Movement, within this perspective, is addressing the concept of otherness and difference. When and how is this being addressed? This will be discussed in the next sections.

4.03 The Case for an Ecumenical Winter?

Highlighting present tensions existing between the two Churches can certainly trigger a sense of dejection over an eventual reunion. However, the problem seems to be that much has been expected in terms of reunion and little in the process leading to that reunion. It is easy to say that hopes of a quick reunion have been dashed, but in the light of the arguments presented by Davies, which are very valid, things need to be viewed within a larger perspective. This is not to undermine the progress achieved in terms of international bilateral dialogues, but it is an acknowledged fact that there is more to ecumenism than agreements of bilateral dialogues between theologians.¹⁶

¹³ Maximos Davies, "What Divides Orthodox and Catholics? How the Faithful can Foster Ecumenism at the Level of Church Culture," *America* (2007): 15.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 16.

As Murray asserts,

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, this move [ecumenical activity] released an enormous amount of ecumenical energy, goodwill, and optimism, excessively and prematurely so, perhaps, in the latter regard. In contrast, we are now in a position where it is widely recognised that, on most fronts, the aspiration for programmed structural unity in the short-medium term is simply unrealistic.¹⁷

For all the genuine enthusiasm for reunion, perhaps the conclusions out of these dialogues and events could not quite reach the high expectations experienced at the end of the Council. Many had hoped for an eventual reunion between the different Churches. When this was not to be, there was the talk of an ecumenical *impasse*, an ecumenical winter, a stage where things have come to a standstill.¹⁸

It is quite tempting to see things within this perspective. Two things must be pointed out, however. First, the metaphor of winter belies a certain optimism, in that winter, as Hietamäki states, is “in fact a very fruitful time.”¹⁹ Moreover, the Christian is called to stand up and take action. This resonates with Kasper’s words on the Catholic situation, which might as well apply to all traditions: “... the Catholic response in this situation is neither to become resigned to the current divisions, nor to rest content with a ‘reconciled diversity’ which stops well short of the unity Christ desires for his disciples.”²⁰ At a time when methods which were previously successful might no longer yield the expected results, it is necessary to venture into the realm of creativity in order to come up with new solutions. This can only be possible with the help of the Spirit.

Second, in the light of what has already been argued, there must be time and patience which, alas, are too often forgotten nowadays. It seems that the ecumenical process itself has fallen prey to the express culture which has come to dominate every aspect of

¹⁷ Paul 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), 9.

¹⁸ For more detail regarding the achievements and setbacks in ecumenism, see Jared Wicks, “Lights and Shadows over Catholic Ecumenism,” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 61 (2002): 11-17.

¹⁹ Minna Hietamäki, “Finding Warmth in the Ecumenical Winter: A Nordic Viewpoint,” *The Ecumenical Review* 65, no. 3 (2013): 368.

²⁰ 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.

contemporary life! If both Catholic and the Orthodox sides remain blindfolded to the real meaning of otherness, how can the ecumenical process proceed? Time and patience are especially important here, as is the consideration which Catholics must bear in mind that the ecumenical process is still in its infancy in relation to the millennium-long estrangement! It is important to tread slowly and carefully in order to avoid causing pain instead of ecumenical achievement, as has already happened on various occasions. However, it may be hard to distinguish between waiting for maturation on both sides before addressing a particular topic, or simply waiting for things to happen at a later stage! This might be better understood with two examples from the New Testament. One is that of watchfulness, which is highlighted so much by Jesus himself, and allegorically explained through various parables, such as the parable of the ten maidens who took their lamps to meet the bridegroom (Mt 25, 1 – 13). The second pericope which best defines the second case is a real situation which persisted among some Thessalonians, namely that some Christians were living idly, purportedly waiting for the end of times (2 Thess 2 – 3). This is why discernment is important. However, this will be the subject of a careful analysis in a later chapter.

Hence, the image of winter can only make sense if it embraces the notion of waiting and being creative throughout, rather than the doom and gloom of an ecumenical failure. A biblical example or lack of it here might suffice. The gospels say nothing of Jesus' activities during the first thirty years of his life, apart from the infancy narratives, together with Lk 2, 41 – 52. The gospels are devoted to Jesus' public evangelising activities in the last three years of his life. Yet, surely the first thirty years, though shrouded in silence, must have been crucial in the preparation for Jesus' mission, and in their silence do not in themselves preclude any kind of activity which was taking place even then in the preparation itself.

Another apt image to describe the post-Vatican II wave of hope and staidness is that of the honeymoon image. The honeymoon period was that period which was ushered at the close of the Second Vatican Council, with the two Churches finding each other again, and the joy it brought forth. The joy at getting to know each other again was in itself a supreme achievement. There was a great task ahead, which also involved catching up with each other. It is an undeniable fact that a great many things have been achieved, but

it is likewise true that feelings have somewhat cooled. It is a time which can be represented by the married state, a state of affirmation and implementation (in this case with regards to the Second Vatican Council) with the task of building the relationship between the two spouses and also striving to maintain it. It is also a time of knowing more deeply the other side. In the light of what has been already argued, the confrontation between the two sides brought by fear of the other shows how still unfamiliar the two traditions are with the other. The time may have come to try new methods and to be more creative in reaching out to the other side.

4.04 Receptive Ecumenism and the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Dynamics: Encounter and Growth

The sincere and recognition that the traditions engaged in dialogue are not bereft of the responsibility in inflicting the act of division is already a step forward in the right direction. Leithart's words are so apt here:

We are all Laodiceans, boasting of our health and wealth when we are poor, blind, wounded, and naked. No tradition has been spared the desolation of division. *Every* Christian tradition is distorted insofar as it lacks, or refuses, the gifts that other traditions have. *Every* Christian tradition must be as ready to receive as to give.²¹

The delicate relationship between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches is one of the arenas where Receptive Ecumenism would greatly benefit the two traditions. This is a response which focuses on the positive premise of gifts and the processes of humility and conversion, which sits very well with both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox traditions. Indeed, as already affirmed in chapter 1, Orthodox theologians such as Andrew Louth and Kallistos Ware have come up with favourable responses to Receptive Ecumenism.

²¹Peter J. Leithart, "Receptive Ecumenism," *First Things*, 27 February, 2015, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/02/receptive-ecumenism>.

As already seen in chapter 1, Kallistos Ware rightly argues for the interdependency of teaching and learning.²² This is why he focuses on one list of gifts the Orthodox Church can give to other traditions, while Orthodoxy itself can enhance that gift through contact with other traditions. The gifts Orthodoxy can give to the world can also be the subject of maturation and development within the same tradition.²³ This confirms Murray's main argument, namely that reception of the other traditions serves to make each Church and tradition even more Orthodox, Catholic, and so on. The Orthodox Church needs to reflect and "understand far better" the gifts Orthodoxy can offer to the others.²⁴ So, through sharing, not only do the other traditions learn from Orthodoxy, but even Orthodoxy itself can learn more about her own gifts. Hence, "if it does not mean abandoning our past, receptive ecumenism also does not leave the various Christian traditions intact."²⁵ The same is true for the Roman Catholic Church and all the other traditions. While this mutual reception has started taking place, yet one the main arenas for the fruition of reception among the two Churches occurs within the renewal of the roles of primacy and synodality, the main argument in chapter 6.

It is the case that each tradition needs to be able to learn from its own strengths, while also presenting them to others. Teaching and learning are taking place all the time. Acknowledging the need to learn and be allowed to receive that particular gift which is in line with Tradition, is one of the layers of conversion, a topic which is presented in more detail in the next chapter. The beauty of Receptive Ecumenism is that it enables traditions to get to know each other and themselves with more clarity, thus enabling a greater *rapprochement* between the traditions. As Murray states, "ecumenism is an instrument of ecclesial reform and renewal and as a practice of *ressourcement* against the lost gifts of Christ and the Spirit present in the other traditions."²⁶ It is also the arena which enables each tradition to respect and esteem the others, envisaging them as God's gift.

²² Kallistos Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective," *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 50.

²³ See *ibid.*

²⁴ See *ibid.*

²⁵ Leithart, "Receptive Ecumenism."

²⁶ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and the Quincentennial Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation," *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* [web edition], no. 92 (2017): 10.

4.04.01 Acknowledging the Need for Change within each Tradition

A great virtue is the recognition on the part of each Church or tradition of the need to change. This is one of the effects of Receptive Ecumenism. Change does not mean giving up one's identity but, rather, attaining a more genuine one. It entails going deeper into what constitutes that identity and improving upon it. This is where dialogue with other Christian traditions comes in.

This is what Kallistos Ware points out. He does that by highlighting three examples: ecclesiology, the ecological situation, and the human person. First, he argues that Orthodoxy has much to offer to Roman Catholicism in terms of conciliarity and sobornicity.²⁷ Surely, the Roman Catholic Church can benefit greatly from conciliarity within its present structures. However, even within Orthodoxy itself, "conciliarity has all too often become something atrophied and theoretical; in practice our conciliar structures have fallen largely into disuse."²⁸ Alfeyev admits that although the fifteen autocephalous churches within the Orthodox Church are autonomous in their internal administration, this brings with it various problems, such as the lack of a "supreme arbiter."²⁹ Such a mechanism would greatly facilitate matters in the resolution of the various conflicts dogging the autocephalous churches.³⁰

The Pan-Orthodox Council held in Crete in June 2016, in revealing such a flaw, has proven Ware's words prophetic. This is a very serious threat to Orthodoxy since it has proved difficult for all the autocephalous churches to settle any disputes. This is a real pity because the preparations for the Great and Holy Pan-Orthodox Synod had been in the offing for many decades.³¹ Its aim was to discuss situations at the heart of the

²⁷ See Ware, "An Orthodox Perspective," 50.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See Hilarion Alfeyev, "La primauté et la conciliarité dans la tradition orthodoxe," *Irénikon* 78, no. 1 (2005): 25.

³⁰ See *ibid.*

³¹ See Edward Farrugia, "Il Santo e Grande Sinodo Panortodosso," *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3984, no. 167 (25 giugno 2016): 524-527; see also Kallistos Ware, "Catholic-Orthodox Following the Holy and Great Council in Crete (2016)," *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin*, no. 93 (2018): 21.

Orthodox Church,³² and their application in the contemporary world. This can be seen in the variety of the documents promulgated, which run the gamut from the importance of fasting in the contemporary world, the relationship of the Orthodox Church with the non-Orthodox Christians, the autonomy of the Church, the Orthodox diaspora, the sacrament of marriage, and the mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world.³³

While “the Council was supposed to show that the principle of synodality or conciliarity in the Orthodox Church is not just a theory but a fact and a distinguished feature of its entire existence,”³⁴ the opposite proved true. The practice of conciliarity has been shown to be a fragmented one, with the absence of four autocephalous Churches.³⁵ These four Churches, that is the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, Antioch, Georgia, and Russia retracted their participation for various reasons,³⁶ however their conspicuous absence might have served to inflict a wound to the seemingly ideal practice of synodality within the Orthodox Church. On the other hand, despite the absence of four autocephalic Churches, this did not prevent the synod from taking place.³⁷ Despite this problem, synodality was the driving point behind the acceptance of the documents. The Churches which were absent were asked to present any modifications they deemed necessary, which would then be passed on for approval by all. However, it cannot be denied that synodality alone does not seem to prevent existing discords among the autocephalous Churches.

It comes as no surprise that Ware acknowledges that “we Orthodox also need a strengthened awareness of the meaning of universal primacy....³⁸” Hence, the universal primacy present in the Catholic Church can be very helpful within the Orthodox structure, but only if this primacy is reinterpreted “in terms that are pastoral rather than juridical.”³⁹ This is a suggestion which echoes Pope John Paul II’s plea for shared discussion

³² See Farrugia, “Il Santo e Grande Sinodo Panortodosso,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3991, no. 167 (8 ottobre 2016): 58.

³³ See *ibid.*, 58-65.

³⁴ Viorel Coman, “Learning Ecumenically from Each Other: ‘Open Sobornicity’ and ‘Receptive Ecumenism,’” in “Just do it? Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations. Selected papers from the 19th academic consultation of *Societas Oecumenica*,” *Perspectief*, accessed 3 December, 2016, 43. <http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Books/Perspectief/34/index.html#34>, 34.

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ For more information, see Edward Farrugia, “Il santo e grande sinodo panortodosso,” 54-55.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 65.

³⁸ Ware, “An Orthodox Perspective,” 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

regarding his role in *Ut unum sint*.⁴⁰ It is indeed the case where both traditions are “engaging simultaneously in a shared exploration.”⁴¹

On a positive note, it must be acknowledged that the Pan-Orthodox Synod has certainly served to show that ecumenism still matters for the Orthodox Church as a whole, as it is one of the six topics discussed during the proceedings. At the very beginning of the document, titled *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian world*, it is immediately stated that: “The Orthodox Church, as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, in her profound ecclesiastical self-consciousness, believes unflinchingly that she occupies a central place in the matter of the promotion of Christian unity in the world today.”⁴² Paragraph 4 reiterates the fact that the Orthodox Church has been at the forefront of the ecumenical endeavour,⁴³ a fact examined at the beginning of the second chapter of this thesis.

Although the Orthodox Church was a founding member of the World Council of Churches, some of the Churches, namely the Georgian and Bulgarian Churches, left the World Council of Churches in 1997 and 1998 respectively.⁴⁴ Looking at the situation in post-communist Bulgaria, the Orthodox Church was divided in two. The unofficial party was involved in ecumenism during the post-communist times.⁴⁵ Hence, the promulgation of a document which embraces the importance of ecumenism, (although adamant that it would not compromise the identity and dogma espoused by the Orthodox Church), has been a very courageous step on the part of the Pan-Orthodox Synod.⁴⁶

It is to be hoped that all the Orthodox Churches choose to pursue this path even in the current times. These are some of the very positive contributions of the Pan-Orthodox Synod, even though, unfortunately, the Synod seems to have made more headlines

⁴⁰ See John Paul II, *Ut unum Sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), par. 95.

⁴¹ Ware, “An Orthodox Perspective,” 51.

⁴² Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,” *Holy and Great Council*, accessed 18 April, 2017, <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world>, par. 1.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, par. 4.

⁴⁴ See Farrugia, “Il Santo e Grande Sinodo Panortodosso,” 59.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*

regarding its structural difficulties regarding the implementation of synodality, rather than its achievements. Only time will tell whether these contributions will outweigh the negative feeling experienced by some people.

The same example regarding shared learning amongst the two traditions holds true for the present-day ecological crisis. Orthodox theology has traditionally placed an important value upon the environment. As the adage by Chryssavgis goes: “a spirituality that remains uninvolved with outward creation is ultimately uninvolved with the inward mystery too.”⁴⁷ The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, dubbed the “Green Patriarch,” has been at the forefront in Christianity’s approach towards the safeguarding of the environment. This is especially evident in the number of symposia he has chaired on the subject.⁴⁸ While a lot of theological reflection owes itself to Orthodoxy, on the other hand, the scientific expertise which hails from the West certainly helps to provide a harmonious synthesis between theology and science. Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’* is itself a product of this synthesis, a synthesis which is able to make its voice heard in the wide world.

The last example delineated by Ware is the anthropological question, the doctrine of the human person, in a quest for a sound theological response to the contemporary world dogged by such concerns which run the gamut from the ordination of women, to such debates as homosexuality and same-sex marriages.⁴⁹ These seemingly unanswerable questions are plaguing the Catholic Church as well. Hence, simultaneous dialogue between the two Churches would be especially productive in moving towards a solution.

Change is not easy. Within the Orthodox Church, Kalaitzidis admits that “terms like reformation, revision, evolution and innovation have become taboo.”⁵⁰ This can be attributed to the emphasis of the Orthodox Church on tradition, together with centuries of

⁴⁷ John Chryssavgis, “A New Heaven and a New Earth: Orthodox Theology and an Ecological World View,” *The Ecumenical Review* 62, no. 2 (2010): 216.

⁴⁸ The details can be accessed on the website of the *Religious and Scientific Committee of the Ecumenical Patriarch*: <http://www.rsesymposia.org> or the *Website of the Ecumenical Patriarch*: <http://www.patriarchate.org>.

⁴⁹ See Ware, “An Orthodox Perspective,” 52; see also Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “Challenges of Renewal and Reformation Facing the Orthodox Church,” *The Ecumenical Review* 61, no. 2 (2009): 159.

⁵⁰ Kalaitzidis, “Challenges of Renewal and Reformation,” 137.

subjugation under powers hostile to the existence of Orthodoxy itself; however the stubborn resistance to change has become a contradiction, given the importance Orthodoxy attaches to pneumatology.⁵¹ Given the belief in the Spirit who is continually at work within the Church,⁵² “this reformation has nothing to do with the heart of the faith, with foundational tenets like our Trinitarian or Christological doctrines. Instead, they refer to temporal problems, dealing primarily with practical, moral, canonical and liturgical questions.”⁵³

In Western Europe, the Second Vatican Council has been a great watershed for the dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church with the wide world. *Lumen gentium* has been especially indicative of the new mood pervading the Catholic Church. The Church, as the People of God, is described as a pilgrim on earth, who, “while journeying in a foreign land away from her Lord, regards herself as an exile.”⁵⁴ In the Sacred Scriptures, the concept of journeying and being in exile is synonymous with purification and growth. This applies to the Catholic Church itself, as *ecclesia semper purificanda*. It can never be totally free of blemish while on this earth, but it can always strive for the highest possible perfection. It is an undeniable fact, that many of the propositions set down in the Second Vatican Council have yet to be implemented.

A case in point is that of the laity. *Lumen gentium* itself dedicates an entire section to the laity, however it remains to be seen how much the role of the laity is being accorded its due status. Over the past decades, the laity has become increasingly involved in the theological and ecclesiological sphere, although when coming to decision-making within Church governance, their role is in actual fact quite restricted. And yet *Lumen gentium* gives a lot of importance to the role of the laity in view of their baptism and their priesthood.⁵⁵ *Lumen gentium* 12, in particular, speaks of the *sensus fidelium*:

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 136-137.

⁵² See L.J. Patsavos, “Ecclesiastical Reform: At What Cost?” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 40 (1995): 1.

⁵³ Kalaitzidis, “Challenges of Renewal and Reformation,” 138.

⁵⁴ Vatican Council II, “*Unitatis redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism,” 21 November 1964, par. 6, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999).

⁵⁵ See *LG*, 10.

The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, 'from the bishops down to the last member of the laity,' it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.⁵⁶

Paul Lakeland, in analysing the role of the laity vis-à-vis the clergy and discussing Congar's *Lay People in the Church*, argues that the consent of the lay people in the election of bishops was already made clear by Cyprian of Carthage.⁵⁷ Of course, Cyprian's exposition of the role of the laity was not the norm in all the churches, however it was undeniably present.⁵⁸ It seems the other Churches and traditions have a thing or two to teach Catholics in this regard.⁵⁹

Denysenko presents a description of a bishop's ordination rites within Orthodoxy. While Denysenko admits that "episcopal synods select candidates, all the orders of the assembly gather to receive Christ at the eucharist, including the royal priesthood of the laity, and to participate in the official ordination of a bishop."⁶⁰ It is the case that within Orthodoxy, collegiality permeates all the groups comprising the People of God. In their "Axios" acclamation, the laity show their approval of the candidate's ordination to the ministry.⁶¹ Indeed "the participation of clergy and laity in exclaiming 'Axios!' assumes their active reception of divine activity in the Church (vertical) and demands their cooperation in the exercise of Church ministry (horizontal)."⁶² While collegiality is extended to the laity, on the other hand, as already seen, the practice of collegiality within the wider sphere is far from symphonic.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁷ See Paul Lakeland, "Potential Catholic Learning Around Lay Participation in Decision-making," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 230-232.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 230.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 233.

⁶⁰ Nicholas E. Denysenko, "Primacy, Synodality, and Collegiality in Orthodoxy: A Liturgical Model," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2013): 37.

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*

4.05 Receptive Ecumenism and Open Sobornicity

In speaking of Receptive Ecumenism, it is interesting to point to another, older development within the Orthodox tradition. This is the notion of “open sobornicity,” developed by the Romanian theologian, Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) during the late 60s. One of the most influential and dynamic Orthodox theologians of contemporary times, Stăniloae can be described as a person who was “genuinely concerned about Christian divisions and made a serious effort to contribute to the advancement of Christian unity.”⁶³ This puts to rest any accusations that Stăniloae was anti-ecumenical and highly critical of Western theology. Radu Bordeianu argues that such accusations are “based on marginal aspects of his works and do not reflect a balanced reading of his corpus.”⁶⁴ Moreover, a look at Stăniloae’s works attests to his inspirations drawn from the likes of the Church Fathers, especially Maximus the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa, to Western Church Fathers and theologians, such as Augustine and Von Balthasar.⁶⁵

While countering such a misinterpretation of Stăniloae’s complete works, Bordeianu gives three reasons why, at times, Stăniloae is polemical in his dealings with Western theology. First, Stăniloae’s isolation in communist Romania from the outside world ensured that he was not aware of developments taking place within the same theologies subject to his criticism.⁶⁶ Second, he witnessed first-hand the violence in Transylvania, erupting from the consequences of Byzantine Catholic proselytism.⁶⁷ Third, the kind of Western influence on Orthodox manual theology which he criticised was the mostly Neo-Scholastic theology (which spanned the 19th to the early 20th centuries), along with Protestant theology.⁶⁸ These factors, arising out of Stăniloae’s own experience (or lack of it!), carefully guarded by the communist regime, are very plausible in explaining

⁶³ Ronald G. Roberson, “Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity,” in *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, ed. Lucian Turcescu (Iași/Oxford/Palm Beach/Portland: The Centre for Romanian Studies, 2002), 104.

⁶⁴ Radu Bordeianu, “(In)Voluntary Ecumenism: Dumitru Stăniloae’s Interaction with the West as Open Sobornicity,” in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 241.

⁶⁵ This is the case, for example, in Stăniloae’s masterpiece, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*.

⁶⁶ See Bordeianu, “(In)Voluntary Ecumenism,” 241.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*

Stăniloae's limitations in his knowledge of the developments within Western theology. Furthermore, as Bordeianu rightly points out, during Stăniloae's own experience in prison, "the need to distance the Romanian Church from the manual styles of Neo-Scholasticism was directly related to his attempt to reunite dogma and spirituality."⁶⁹ What is certain is that "his limited (though intense) encounter with the West, however, is most helpful for contemporary ecumenism, especially concerning open sobornicity."⁷⁰

In 1971, Stăniloae wrote an article titled *Open Sobornicity*, as a positive response to the Faith and Order document *Scripture and Tradition*, the result of a meeting in Aarhus in 1964.⁷¹ Since the inspiration is derived from Scripture, the main thrust behind this document is "the unity of the Gospel as reflected in diverse, complementary, or even contradictory biblical testimonies. These testimonies reflect the diversity of God's actions in different historical circumstances and the diversity of human answers to God's actions."⁷²

Indeed, looking at the unity within the Scripture itself and the plethora of different literary genres and, at times, seemingly conflicting views, serves to provide a way forward for the exploration of a method in ecumenical dialogue in an encounter with a world characterised by pluralism. Stăniloae was intelligent enough to read through this unity in diversity within Scripture in order to come forward to the notion of open sobornicity. In the unity in diversity inherent within Scripture, he could read the implications of a healthy ecclesiology. Indeed, Stăniloae goes as far as to suggest that "biblical interpreters should not attach themselves to just one biblical passage, as central as it may seem, because this would lead to a misunderstanding of the richness and variety of the Bible."⁷³

Stăniloae's point of departure is the plenitude of the Orthodox Church. The description of this special position of the Orthodox Church is especially conveyed by Roberson in stating that:

⁶⁹ Ibid., 244.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 245.

Dumitru Stăniloae's whole theology makes clear that there can be only one Church because there is only one Christ, whose extended body it is. Gathered together by the Holy Spirit into the one Body of Christ, Christians have a sense of spiritual unity among themselves as Church. This spiritual oneness is manifested in unity in dogmatic expression, in the sacraments, and in hierarchical organization and communion. Stăniloae affirms that the visible Orthodox Church alone is this Church in the full sense of the word.⁷⁴

Sobornicity, a concept which owes its existence to the Slavophile school headed by Khomiakov, espouses the importance of unity in diversity, as resulting in the various charisms and gifts which emanate from the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ Indeed, "one who receives a particular gift has need of another's gift in order to turn his own gift to good account and to complete what he himself lacks."⁷⁶ A contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers, this is a very important aspect which imparts dignity to each human person. The complementarity of these gifts imparted by the Spirit to each person "makes the Church a well-ordered whole."⁷⁷

Two things must be borne in mind. First, the emphasis on the work of unity in diversity within the Church as envisaged by the Orthodox is the work of the Holy Spirit. The importance of the Holy Spirit as *a person* is an undeniable aspect in Orthodox theology, which can be seen as a contrast to the emphasis on Christology attributed to Catholic theology although, admittedly, the role of the Holy Spirit is being accorded its proper place within Roman Catholic theology. The second aspect revolves around different conceptions of unity embraced by the two traditions as envisaged by the Roman Catholics and Orthodox respectively. For example, as Stăniloae and countless other Orthodox theologians point out, sobornicity entails a unity of communion, whereas the Roman Catholic Church's concept of unity is seen as connoting universality, as "a body under command."⁷⁸ Whether this is admittedly the case in the eyes of Roman Catholics themselves, is another matter. What is certain is that this can provide an inkling on how the two traditions can change and develop certain perspectives thanks to the communication with the others, akin to the notion of the gifts as discussed in the previous paragraph.

⁷⁴ Roberson, "Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity," 105.

⁷⁵ See Dumitru Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 53.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 57.

While the Orthodox Church is envisaged as the one and true Church, however, the other ecclesial traditions do possess an ecclesial reality and are related to the one Church, “but as weaker, incomplete manifestations of that which is fully present in the Orthodox Church.”⁷⁹ In Stăniloae’s own words regarding the other Christian traditions vis-à-vis the Orthodox Church, “This church exists all the more in other Christian formations, given their relationship with Christ the incarnate Logos through faith, and given that they partly have a common faith in Christ with the Orthodox Church, the full church.”⁸⁰

While sobornicity denotes universality or catholicity, the use of the concept entails the inner life of the Church rather than any geographical extension.⁸¹ Sobornicity within Orthodoxy asserts “the sense of the active participation of all the faithful to the spiritual goods of Christ in the spirit of the full communion, this constituting the Church itself as organism or body of Christ.”⁸² Within “open sobornicity,” “every theological system is welcomed as offering some valid theological insight.”⁸³ It espouses the need of Orthodoxy “to let itself be enriched and inspired by the spiritual and theological acquisitions of other Christian traditions.”⁸⁴ In Stăniloae’s own words:

The restoration of unity is for Western Christianity a matter of abandoning the plane of exclusivist alternatives. It must rediscover the spirit of Orthodoxy which does not oppose one alternative or the other, but embraces in its teaching and equilibrium the points affirmed by both forms of Western Christianity. ... Of course, we must not pride ourselves with a satisfactory actualization of Orthodoxy on the plane of spirituality and with efficacy in the lives of the faithful. Besides this, Orthodox sobornicity nowadays must be enriched with the spiritual values actualized by Western Christians.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Roberson, “Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity,” 105.

⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. The Church: Communion in The Holy Spirit*. Translated and edited by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer, vol. 4 (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012), 67.

⁸¹ See Roberson, “Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity,” 100; see also Dumitru Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 56.

⁸² Cristian Sebastian Sonea, “‘The Open Sobornicity’ – An Ecumenical Theme in the Theology of Fr Dumitru Stăniloae,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 63, no. 7 (2016): 142.

⁸³ Lucian Turcescu, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?” in *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, ed. Lucian Turcescu (Iași/Oxford/Palm Beach/Portland: The Centre for Romanian Studies, 2002), 101.

⁸⁴ Coman, “‘Open Sobornicity,’ and ‘Receptive Ecumenism,’” 35.

⁸⁵ Stăniloae, “Sobornicitate deschisa (Open Sobornicity),” *Ortodoxia* 23, no. 2 (1971): 171, cited in Bordeianu, “(In)Voluntary Ecumenism,” 245.

Open sobornicity, hence, admits the need for the Orthodox Church itself to learn from the other traditions; “the Orthodox Church can learn and let itself be enriched by the theology of its ecumenical partners.”⁸⁶ Through open sobornicity, “one’s understanding is enriched, and thus a more symphonic, although not uniform, understanding of the universal and divine reality is achieved.”⁸⁷ This echoes Bordeianu’s statement, in that “all churches need to learn from each other not only in order to maintain diversity, but also to come to a symphonic unity without uniformity, just as the Scripture is unitary and diverse at the same time.”⁸⁸ For example, according to Stăniloae, Orthodoxy can learn a great deal from Roman Catholicism in terms of unity, and also from Protestantism in attributing a greater value to all instances of God’s revelation.⁸⁹

While there is a great similarity between receptive ecumenism and open sobornicity, the essential divergence lies in their premise. That is, their starting points come from opposing directions.⁹⁰ While within receptive ecumenism, the essential proposition is “what, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions,”⁹¹ open sobornicity envisages the Orthodox Church as possessing “ecclesial plenitude or fullness.”⁹² The description of the Orthodox Church is similar to that the Catholic Church accords herself in *Unitatis redintegratio*. The focus here is on what the Orthodox Church has to teach to the other traditions, while acknowledging its need to be enriched from the others.⁹³ As a matter of fact, article 1 of the draft document of the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Synod, held at Chambésy between 10 and 17 October 2015, titled *Relationships of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*, commences with the following affirmation about the Orthodox Church: “The Orthodox Church, being the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, in her profound ecclesiastical consciousness firmly believes that she occupies a central place in matters relating to the promotion of Christian unity within the contemporary world.”⁹⁴

⁸⁶ Coman, “‘Open Sobornicity’ and ‘Receptive Ecumenism,’” 36.

⁸⁷ Turcescu, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?” 102.

⁸⁸ Bordeianu, “(In) Voluntary Ecumenism,” 245.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 245.

⁹⁰ See Coman, “‘Open Sobornicity’ and ‘Receptive Ecumenism,’” 37.

⁹¹ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 12.

⁹² Coman, “‘Open Sobornicity’ and ‘Receptive Ecumenism,’” 36.

⁹³ See *ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁴ Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Synod, “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,” *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, accessed 3 December, 2016, <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/01/28/news127362/>.

It is safe to conclude that while receptive ecumenism focuses on the act of learning, open sobornicity starts with the claim to the act of teaching, eventually moving to the notion that Orthodoxy itself can greatly benefit from learning from other traditions. The contribution of these two theories serves to bring to the fore the inextricable bond between the acts of teaching and learning; both acts work in tandem and cannot be separated. At least, that is what happens in the real world, where the demarcation line between the two acts or processes is very obfuscated.

Evidence of the influence of Western theology on Stăniloae's own Orthodox manual theology is evident in, for example, his description of the threefold offices of Christ, as Prophet, Priest and King, a move criticised by Andrew Louth.⁹⁵ While, as Bordeianu notes, this is present in biblical and patristic traditions, this notion of Christ's threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King "is a theological construct consecrated by Calvin."⁹⁶ As long as it is present in biblical and patristic traditions, "it has become a part of the Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition. To suggest otherwise is to argue that the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church does not adapt to present challenges"⁹⁷

Other examples of the encounter between Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church are illustrated by Viorel Coman in his study. The first example is Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology and its impact on the Second Vatican Council,⁹⁸ discussed at great length in sections 2.04.03 and 2.04.04. The second example attests to a more reciprocal and simultaneous influence the two traditions have had on each other, namely the vision of "return to the sources" by both the Orthodox Neo-Patristic School, comprised of such distinguished theologians as Vladimir Lossky and Georges Florovsky, and the *Ressourcement* advocated by the Catholic *Nouvelle Théologie* School with Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou at its helm.⁹⁹ The third example highlights the adoption of the Augustinian thesis of the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son, a

⁹⁵ See Bordeianu, "(In)Voluntary Ecumenism," 247.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See Coman, "'Open Sobornicity' and 'Receptive Ecumenism,'" 40.

⁹⁹ See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 127-130; see also Coman, "'Open Sobornicity' and 'Receptive Ecumenism,'" 40-41.

paradigm incorporated and in turn, modified by Orthodox theologians.¹⁰⁰ To sum up, these examples embody the workings of receptive ecumenism and open sobornicity in practice, even before their very identification by this terminology. It is the case of the symphony of teaching and learning which goes on in real life, and the influence each tradition bears on the other.

4.06 The Complex Dynamics of Reception

While reception is the most salient feature of Receptive Ecumenism, the process of reception itself is hardly explained within the movement and this constitutes a shortcoming (analysed in the first chapter), especially in the light of the various developments of the notion of reception, highlighted in the next sections. The first step is to understand what genuine reception entails, in order to then proceed and explore the various perspectives which make up the process of reception. It is to be hoped that the notion of reception within Receptive Ecumenism is earmarked for a more thorough analysis. It is for this reason that the dynamics of reception are explained below, especially as set out in two broad categories: classical reception, and ecumenical reception. In this thesis, these elements are separated and analysed for the sake of exploration, hence the task might appear contrived. However, a word of caution is necessary here. First, it must be admitted that the classical and ecumenical definitions of reception below revolve around reception in general, and not particularly around Receptive Ecumenism. As Antonia Pizzey states:

Receptive Ecumenism and reception overlap in the sense that both are concerned with transformative change. However, reception is a broader process than Receptive Ecumenism. Receptive Ecumenism 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 on or changed that tradition.¹⁰¹

This is an important factor which merits a thorough analysis of the process of reception within Receptive Ecumenism itself. There needs to be a reintegration of the process of

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁰¹ Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, vol. 7, *Brill's Series in Catholic Theology* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 51.

reception within Receptive Ecumenism. Hence, while the exposition of the classical and ecumenical notions of reception are outlined and discussed here, it must be borne in mind that they operate outside of Receptive Ecumenism, but can also be part of the whole process and, thus, are of undeniably great help in enabling Receptive Ecumenism to arrive at an understanding of reception within the movement. This is an area which would surely be of great benefit in affirming the soundness of Receptive Ecumenism, while at the same time, turning that potential into a reality.

However, in reality, these two dimensions overlap and operate in tandem. Hence, reception is simultaneously occurring across both within the level of the Church itself, and also ecumenically. A form of reception does not necessarily occur at the expense of the other. Hence, this is why it is important to set out the parameters for reception, within which to situate the process of Receptive Ecumenism in its application to the Catholic – Orthodox dialogue.

4.06.01 Reception and the Birth of the Church

As has been correctly stated in the Chapters 1 and 3, the theory of Receptive Ecumenism does not present a new dimension; rather it takes reception hitherto relegated to the background, and brings it at the centre of the whole ecumenical process. Theologians such as Zizioulas were writing about the process of reception decades before the formulation of the theory of Receptive Ecumenism. The Catholic theologian Tillard speaks of reception as one of the most important theological rediscoveries of the centuries, largely due to its emphasis on the part of the Ecumenical Movement and the openness stemming from the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰² The Faith and Constitution Commission studies have also seen a re-emergence of the need for reception.¹⁰³ Reception has also been explored in depth by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.¹⁰⁴ The fact that “reception

¹⁰² See Jean-Marie R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 155-156; Melissa Carnall, “Ecumenical Reception, the Roman Catholic Church and Receptive Ecumenism,” in GETI Final Paper, 14 February, 2014, 3

¹⁰³ See Tillard, *Church of Churches* 136-139.

¹⁰⁴ See Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Eight Report: 1999 – 2005*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013, PDF file, file:///

is intimately linked with the nature and purpose of the ecumenical movement,”¹⁰⁵ attests both to the importance of reception as recognised by leading theologians from both Orthodox and Catholic circles and, on the other hand, the fact that Receptive Ecumenism itself has embarked on the correct path towards an authentic dialogue first and foremost.

Put simply, reception entails an understanding at the personal level, in turn leading to conviction.¹⁰⁶ The whole community is involved in the whole process.¹⁰⁷ Tillard is very explicit on this notion: “The communion between the members of the People of God, based on the *sensus fidelium* ... the defence of this People of God also plays a role at the level of its reception.”¹⁰⁸

Added to this, there is the imprint of the cultural milieu, within which what has been newly given and received becomes particular to the specific community.¹⁰⁹ Proper reception presupposes learning from each other. Reception itself predates both the ecumenical process and even the Church herself.¹¹⁰ Zizioulas goes so far to state that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity experienced reception itself:

Our Lord himself received not only *vertically* (the mission from his Father) but also *horizontally*, i.e. the history of the people of Israel to which he belonged as man. Our Lord belonged to a certain historical period, to a certain generation, and he did not speak except in and through what was transmitted to him historically in his own context.¹¹¹

Existing since the beginning of the Church, the direct notion of reception itself is rooted in the New Testament.¹¹² It is translated from two Greek words, λαμβάνειν (*lambanein*)

C:/ Users/ dbuttigieg532/ AppData/ Local/ Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/ TempState/Downloads/8thjointworkinggroup%20(3).pdf; see also idem., *Receiving One another in Christ: Ninth Report 2007 – 2012*.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁶ See Carnall, “Ecumenical Reception, the Roman Catholic Church and Receptive Ecumenism,” in GETI Final Paper, 14 February, 2014, 3.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Tillard, *Church of Churches*, 118.

¹⁰⁹ See Carnall, “Ecumenical Reception,” 4.

¹¹⁰ See Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of Reception,” *One in Christ* 21, no. 3 (1985): 187; also Thomas Rausch, “Reception: Past and Present,” *Theological Studies* 47 (1986): 499; Georgios Vlantis, “The Issue of Ecumenical Reception in Orthodox Churches and Theological Institutions,” in Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (eds.), *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education* (Oxford: Regnum Books International – Geneva: WCC and, 2014), 814.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of Reception,” 187; Rausch, “Reception: Past and Present,” 499.

and δέχεσθαι (*dechesthai*,) meaning “to receive” and “to accept,” respectively, together with their derivatives. This also serves to ground reception within revelation.¹¹³ As Vlantis states so truthfully and poignantly:

The creation itself receives its being from God. The whole history of Israel is focused on the way this people receives God’s word and the covenant. Jesus Christ calls the people to receive him, his word and his eschatological kingdom (e.g. John 1:11ff; Mark 4:20; 10:15). The *Acts of the Apostles* and the Pauline texts present the birth of Christian communities as acts of reception of the message of the new covenant.¹¹⁴

Without the need to go into too much detail, it may suffice to present some examples. In 1 Cor 15, 1, Paul speaks to the Corinthians thus: “Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received ...” As Rausch notes, the term as used in Paul is inextricably linked to receiving and accepting the tradition.¹¹⁵ The terms are also present in the Gospels, especially in Mt 10, 40 and Jn 13, 20 where Jesus explains that whosoever receives him and those he sends, receives also God the Father.¹¹⁶

4.06.02 The Classical Model of Reception

Like many other aspects, the notion of reception itself has a variety of meanings which have changed over time. In his acclaimed article on reception, Congar speaks of various kinds of reception, together with theories of reception, within the one Church.¹¹⁷ The process of reception permeates the very existence of the Church, and this is done on two levels. The original, or classical, concept of reception, explains Thomas Rausch, entailed “the acceptance by local churches of particular ecclesiastical or conciliar decisions.”¹¹⁸ Then there is reception in the ecumenical field, whereby it denotes “the acceptance by one church of a theological consensus arrived at with another church, and ultimately the

¹¹³ See Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Receiving One Another in Christ*, 44.

¹¹⁴ Vlantis, “Ecumenical Reception in Orthodox Churches,” 814.

¹¹⁵ See Rausch, “Reception: Past and Present,” 499.

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ See Yves Congar, “La ‘Réception’ comme réalité ecclésiologique,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques* 56 (1972), 370.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Rausch, “Reception: Past and Present,” 497.

recognition of the other church's faith and ecclesial life as authentically Christian."¹¹⁹ William Rusch argues that speaking generally, classical reception "is *reception* as it was understood before the rise of the modern ecumenical movement; *ecumenical reception* is *reception* as it is understood since."¹²⁰ Tillard states that within the ecumenical perspective, reception entails the groups involved not only to welcome the central aspects regarding the unity of faith and life, but also to be able to recognise each other on these points of agreement.¹²¹ Moreover, this reception includes "the broader process by which churches can receive elements, such as liturgy, spirituality and forms of witness from one another's traditions, and even the totality of the process by which churches may receive one another in full communion."¹²²

A look at the classical model of reception can be helpful in analysing the relationship between the two models and their implication for ecumenism. Zizioulas delves at length on the classical model which seeks to explain how reception takes place. First, the Church receives both from God and the world. The Church is "the body of the crucified Lord who takes upon himself the sins of the world."¹²³ Second, the Church is received, again, on various levels, one of which is within the ecumenical fold whereby a Church is being received by another Church.¹²⁴ The result from this reflection is that reception is being carried on two levels: the act of receiving something, whereby the agent (the Church) is willingly accepting and endorsing God's love expressed through the good news. The act of reception is a complex expression of a variety of factors at work, including theological discourse, spirituality, and the kerygmatic aspect.¹²⁵ It is an act which presupposes a totality of acceptance in its various forms.

In the second sense, the Church appears "passive" in that it must be accepted and received by others. Both levels are intertwined in a dynamic way. The acts of receiving and being received are mutually interdependent. The act of reception between the Roman Catholic

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 55.

¹²¹ See Tillard, *Church of Churches*, 157.

¹²² Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Ninth Report: Receiving One Another in Christ*, 43.

¹²³ Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" 189.

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*

¹²⁵ See Congar, "La réception comme réalité ecclésiologique," 374.

and the Orthodox Churches is essentially built on what the undivided Church received from the Holy Spirit. So, the first instance of reception in the early Church can lead to an act of reception between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, an act which, as Zizioulas makes clear, does not entail a particular Church imposing herself on the others.¹²⁶ After all

By giving his Son as his own very love, God does not impose the reception of this gift upon us. The Spirit is freedom, and reception of anything that is the content (the 'what') of reception cannot be imposed, on anyone by anyone. Truth is not authoritarian; it is authoritative by springing from an event of communion.¹²⁷

Next, Zizioulas seeks to answer what is being explored. The answer to this is both detailed and manifold. However, the first content is "*the love of God the Father incarnate in his own unique and beloved Son and given to us in the Holy Spirit.*"¹²⁸ It can be postulated that these words can never exhaust the depth of what is meant by the whole activity of reception in its spiritual action as springing forth from God. Certainly, they can never enough describe the inexhaustible action emanating from God!

The preciseness of the words *paralabon* and *paralabete* with their rich nuances, as in so many Greek words, employed in Col 2, 6 refers to the reception of the person of Christ, and in Heb 12, 28, to refer to the reception of the Kingdom.¹²⁹ Reception of God in Christ entails also reception of the Good News preached by Christ.¹³⁰ Within this historical perspective of a reception of historical facts, the Church receives in this way a Creed which she confesses to be a true statement of the acts of God in the history of his people and Man¹³¹ The Good News is received in a concrete way, hence the importance of the historical facts surrounding the Person of Jesus are equally important in what is being received by the Church.¹³² The Gospel alone may appear insufficient without the real presence of the Person of Jesus, that is, in the Eucharist.¹³³ In the Eucharist, the Word of God becomes actuality in the flesh. The Eucharist is the climax of reception because it is

¹²⁶ See Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" 189.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 190; also Rausch, "Reception: Past and Present," 499.

¹²⁹ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 9.

¹³⁰ See Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" 190.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See *ibid.*

¹³³ See *ibid.*

about the reception of the real presence of a Person, the very climax of the kenosis of God who, through the Second Person of the Trinity, offers up his very self as sacrifice for the salvation of humanity. The Eucharist brings the community together; it binds the community through an act of supreme love. The minimum separation from the Eucharist leaves us to death, as St John Chrysostom states.¹³⁴

Zizioulas describes the development of the magisterium whose proper role was “protecting this *kerygma* from heretical distortions.”¹³⁵ The role of the magisterium assumes prominence especially in conciliar decisions, in the guarding of proper reception, vis-à-vis heretical formulations which impinge of the proper reception of God’s gift of his love.¹³⁶

Lastly, the Church herself is an object of reception in twofold way: “her acceptance and reception by the world, and of the mutual recognition of *Churches* in the communion of the *One Church*.”¹³⁷ The Church as an object of reception, an end result of the process involving the one and myriad objects of reception at the same time, is what is especially relevant to this work. However, at the same time, it is important to trace the other aspects which lead to the identity of the Church, as this enables all those involved to retrace their steps along the authentic path set out by Christ himself, leading to the birth of the one and undivided Church.

4.06.03 The Ecumenical Model of Reception

Ecumenical reception mirrors classical reception, however, it is a more complex process encompassing a wide variety of diverse factors. It is certainly the case that ecumenical reception transcends “the reestablishment of cordial relations.”¹³⁸ This is an important reason why the hermeneutic of reception needs to be amplified within Receptive

¹³⁴ See Olivier Clément, *Alle fonti con i padri. I mistici cristiani delle origini: testi e commento*, 4th edition. (Rome: Città Nuova, 2004), 112.

¹³⁵ Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of ‘Reception,’” 190.

¹³⁶ See *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹³⁸ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 59.

Ecumenism, as it would have a more poignant effect on the interpretation and the application of the process to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox relations. Various definitions of the nature of ecumenical reception have been offered by celebrated and ecumenists and theologians. In 1982, Tillard, influenced by Congar, described ecumenical reception as

The approach by which an ecclesial body, judging that it *recognizes* there its own faith, *makes* its *own* a rule of faith, a specific doctrinal point, a norm which an authority of the Church has determined. It is not a matter of acquiescence, pure and simple, but of the welcoming that justifies the harmony between this which is proposed and that which one “knows” of the faith (often this is more a matter of instinct than of explicit science).¹³⁹

The distinction between the two kinds of reception across two levels has already been explained, however one should take a step further in acknowledging that though classical reception is especially understood as reception within the early and undivided Church, it can be stated that this kind of reception still occurs within a particular Church, albeit in a fragmented way (because of the divided Churches and communities). The classical reception would describe the reception which takes place within each Church or ecclesial tradition. On the other hand, ecumenical reception is what transpires across each of the Churches. Hence, it is safe to say that the classical notion of reception occurs at the internal level, while ecumenical reception occurs at the inter-church level. Both “thrive in an ecclesiology of communion, requiring an attitude of openness on the parts of churches.”¹⁴⁰ Hence, it is wise of Rusch to argue that one should not duly stress the differences between the two aspects.

Both of them overlap; however, the mechanism of ecumenical reception is, understandably, more complicated than that of classical ecumenism within the early Church. Rusch, rightly examines certain factors which put the two kinds of reception in stark contrast, despite the similarities. One of the more obvious factors is that, unlike full classical reception within the early and undivided Church, the context of ecumenical reception is a wide array of separated Churches and ecclesial communities, where “what

¹³⁹ B. Lauret and F. Refoulé, eds., *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, vol. 1, 165-166, in *ibid.* See also Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Receiving One Another in Christ*, 48.

¹⁴⁰ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 55.

is sought is not simply doctrinal agreement, but mutual ecclesial *reception*.”¹⁴¹ As affirmed by the Joint Working Group:

The forces of receptivity and receivability are at work in this critical process of reception. While receivability deals with recognizing the results of dialogue as true and conforming to the rule of faith, receptivity designates the evangelical attitude necessary to allow those results to be adopted in one’s own ecclesial tradition.¹⁴²

The stakeholders in ecumenical reception stem from different communities and traditions but who adhere to the one apostolic faith. Ecumenical reception calls for the reception elements within the other Churches and traditions, an aspect with which they have not been involved since their inception.¹⁴³ It requires little imagination to understand the big challenge which this presents, especially since it takes a lot more persons from different and, at times, widely differing perceptions of the apostolic faith, who can agree on the most salient points. It is especially a challenge since:

The church communities are now struggling to reinterpret their common heritage with new language, new emphasis, and new insights, all acquired by participation in the one ecumenical movement. This kind of reception must take into account of converging elements that the separated churches can confess together, as well as come to grips with painful questions that have divided the churches for centuries.¹⁴⁴

Back in the 1980s, Zizioulas had argued that reception among the Churches needs to revolve around the relevance of the gospel “to the actual existential needs of man ...,” where “Tradition has to be received in close relation with this attention to the needs of modern man and with due respect to the variety of cultural backgrounds.”¹⁴⁵ This perception is very valid since Christianity is currently assailed by various challenges of an anthropological nature.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴² Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Ninth Report: Receiving One Another in Christ*, 48.

¹⁴³ See also Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 55.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴⁵ Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of ‘Reception,’” 192-193.

4.06.04 Reception and Non-Reception

Most significantly, Congar speaks of non-reception, an antithetical aspect which few deign to discuss, although this aspect certainly merits a thorough examination. Non-reception entails “a reconsideration and rejection by the churches of those portions of their faith and life that obscure or distort the gospel as it has been understood and proclaimed through the centuries.”¹⁴⁶

While councils were acknowledging and accepting certain affirmations, on the other hand, groups of Christians rejected the proclamation of councils even in the first millennium, and were issued anathemas by the councils. Congar cites the example of the council of Chalcedon which was rejected by the Copts, Armenians, and the other Churches who would be called Oriental Orthodox Churches.¹⁴⁷ The reasons for these actions are multi-faceted, certainly not excluding the geopolitical factors of the day. The anathemas are examples of actions which no longer apply to the contemporary situations. Such actions might have been envisaged in line with the gospel at the time of their creation, “emphatically countering a particular false teaching;” however, “in a new time and context such teachings too often obstruct the gospel.”¹⁴⁸

Non-reception is of paramount importance when it comes to examining the dynamics of reception, especially in the ecumenical arena, since it is a subject which has various practical implications. Non-reception is one of the factors that stalls and stifles the ecumenical dialogue. It is believed that non-reception arises out of a multiplicity of factors, including misunderstanding, fear, confessionalism, and so forth. As such, non-reception is an issue which must be confronted, by searching reasons why this happens, and also by trying to create ways in which non-reception is transformed into reception, an act which can only become reality with the help of God.

¹⁴⁶ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 78.

¹⁴⁷ See Congar, “La “Réception” comme réalité Ecclésiologique,” 373.

¹⁴⁸ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 78.

Having analysed these points, it can be concluded that the classical model of reception must be envisaged as an ecclesiological reality “which emerged in the life of the Church of the first millennium.”¹⁴⁹ The Church was essentially a communion of distinct Churches, united in the One and Undivided Church.¹⁵⁰ Rausch rightly argues that looking at reception in the first millennium is much more helpful than later stages, especially because of the development of the church along more juridical and categorical lines.¹⁵¹ The reason is that the Church in the first millennium appears more simple yet effective in its function and in its admission of diversity within her unity. This does not entail that the situation was perfect; cultural and political factors were already pulling the sees of Rome and Constantinople apart. However, the Trinity is the source and model par excellence of how reception should be done within the ecumenical arena. As Vlantis asserts

The divine Logos received the human nature in a “critical” way (“without sin” – Heb 4, 15), recapitulating, healing it and providing an eschatological perspective for the humankind. By revealing the will of the Father and by inviting all nations to adopt his salvific message, Jesus Christ comes out as the initiator and also the way of a reception whose content is truth and whose gift is life, life in abundance (cf. Jn 14, 4).¹⁵²

Throughout this process, the Holy Spirit, as “Spirit of Truth and Communion,” “guides the fellowship of the faithful ‘into all Truth’ (Jn 16, 13) and establishes unity among them.”¹⁵³

Reception in the Roman Catholic Church has gathered new momentum ever since the Second Vatican Council. The Council “gave decisive impulses for modern, ecumenically-oriented Roman-Catholic approaches to a theology of reception.”¹⁵⁴ The Orthodox Church, together with other traditions, had been at the helm of the inception of the Ecumenical Movement, but the journey from the beginning of the 20th century

¹⁴⁹ Rausch, “Reception Past and Present,” 500.

¹⁵⁰ See *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*

¹⁵² Vlantis, “Ecumenical Reception in Orthodox Churches,” 814.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 813.

onwards has not been without its difficulties.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church has been involved in a number of receptive exercises, as illustrated by Vlantis himself.¹⁵⁶

On the other hand, there exists the need for reception whenever the Churches are not open for reception.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, reception is inextricably bound to the Eucharist. As Zizioulas goes on to say, “No matter how widely something is received in the Church unless it is received *in the context of the Eucharist* it has not yet been received *ecclesially*.”¹⁵⁸ The celebration of the Eucharist entails communion; the Eucharist is the pivot in Christian communal life.

4.06.05 A Communal Role in Reception

The importance of the community should never be underestimated. This might sound like a cliché but this notion needs to be stressed time and again. Congar is adamant that authority belongs only to the truth which lies at the heart of the community of the faithful.¹⁵⁹ The Church is encompassed of the entire people of God who share in the same baptism, hence all Christians alike share in this dignity.

One of the criticisms tends to be levelled at the Catholic interpretation of Church hierarchy in terms of juridical power. A charism bestowed upon through grace eschews the concept of power in its political meaning,¹⁶⁰ as much as Christ himself eschewed earthly power (Mt 20, 28, for example). A jurisdictional notion, nevertheless, has had its uses in history, especially in the safeguarding and proclamation of a dogma with the injunction of *anathema sit*.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, the proclamation of faith must gravitate towards truth. The concept of the content of truth cannot exist without the community. Indeed, “the whole body of the Church, which is locally structured into particular Churches, is animated by the Holy Spirit. The faithful and churches are real subjects of

¹⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 817.

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 817-818.

¹⁵⁷ See Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of ‘Reception,’” 191; also Congar, “La réception,” 373.

¹⁵⁸ Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of ‘Reception,’” 191.

¹⁵⁹ See Congar, “La réception comme réalité ecclésiologique,” 377; also 393.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 393.

¹⁶¹ See *ibid.*

activity and free initiative.”¹⁶² With regard to this, the “Axios” proclaimed by the community prior to the ordination of a priest and in the reception of a new bishop is an evocative reminder. An example of non-reception by the community which is worth resurrecting, is that of the Council of Florence where, though the Orthodox and the Catholic leaders signed an agreement in order to restore unity between the two Churches, such an agreement was not received by the people and, hence, was never ratified.

The role of the faithful has been given its due importance recently by the Catholic Church, especially in *Lumen gentium*. As it asserts in paragraph 32:

the chosen People of God is one: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because “there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bound nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all ‘one’ in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶³

Since the beginnings of the undivided Church, the importance of the community of the faithful leads to the role of the bishop with respect to his people. At the service of the Church, the role of the bishop, akin to the role of the Good Shepherd, is to minister to the spiritual needs of the community. On the other hand, any decision taken by the bishop would not contain much meaning if not received by the community, as was the norm in the undivided Church. As Zizioulas states, “this was a profoundly eucharistic approach to the reception, since the ‘Amen’ of the people always formed an integral and indispensable part of the Eucharist.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, there is an inextricable link between the local and the universal Churches, as already seen elsewhere. The local Church is a microcosm of the universal Church and at the same time part of it. This seeks an even greater call for communion as the reception takes place within a communion of local Churches which make up the universal Church. Hence the foundational role of the bishops.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen gentium*:’ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 32.

¹⁶⁴ Zizioulas, “The Theological Problem of ‘Reception,’” 192.

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*

Finally, there is no one way of receiving the gospel. Thus, reception takes place differently across different societies and cultures, making room for freedom of expression within different cultural and social milieux.¹⁶⁶

Next, Zizioulas addresses whether this model can be applied to the current ecumenical situation. The answer is in the affirmative, though with certain differing perceptions among the Churches.¹⁶⁷ It is the case that Churches are seeking more than before to relate the gospel to “the actual existential needs of man.”¹⁶⁸ This, in itself, is very positive as it allows the Church to communicate more relevantly with the contemporary world. It comes as no surprise that the ground in ecumenism is shifting from ecclesiology to anthropology. However, this leaves questions as to the relevance of tradition vis-à-vis contemporary humankind. This should not come as a hindrance in the question of reception between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches since both assign tradition a pivotal role, as both Churches trace their origin by means of the apostolic succession. However, questions related to anthropology which are currently bombarding both Churches, call for a creative way of expressing the faith today.

4.06.06 The Eucharist as the Crux of Reception

Zizioulas argues that the consensus is gravitating towards the Eucharist as the context of reception.¹⁶⁹ As Sheldrake rightly affirms, “the Eucharist is not simply a practice of piety but the enactment of the special identity of Christian community.”¹⁷⁰ In his seminal work *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas analyses the various dimensions of the Eucharist as the locus of truth within the Church.¹⁷¹ Most importantly, he argues that:

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 193.

¹⁷⁰ 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*, edited by Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59.

¹⁷¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 114-122.

In the Eucharistic assembly, God's Word reaches man and creation not from outside, as in the Old Testament, but as "flesh" – from inside our own existence, as part of creation. For this reason, the Word of God does not dwell in the human mind as rational knowledge or in the human soul as a mystical inner experience, but as communion within a community.¹⁷²

Participation in, and partaking of the Eucharist "is the difficult goal of the ecumenical movement."¹⁷³ However, the reception of gifts in a particular Church from another Church can be celebrated within the Eucharist of the particular Church, an act which ratifies and seals approval, because the whole community, as the Mystical Body of Christ, is voicing her approval. While not without its difficulties (especially since some members of the community might be hostile to ecumenism), this may apply for Orthodox and Catholics, especially since they share so many similarities. Such an important act is certainly an important step forward towards the day when both Churches can share the Eucharist together. As a starting point, this calls for the need to contemplate the real meaning of the Eucharist as the crux of Christian identity and its effects on the community, where

Every time the Eucharist is celebrated, all those who participate commit themselves to cross the boundaries of fear, prejudice, and injustice in a prophetic embrace of other people, without exception, in whom we are challenged to discover the 'real presence' of an incarnate God.¹⁷⁴

The office of the bishop, especially that of the Bishop of Rome, remains the main stumbling block, while there is a growing realisation that akin to the model of reception, as used to be practised in the past, the office of episcopacy "should be exercised in the sense of the *episkopé* and in unity with the *community*."¹⁷⁵

Most importantly, in one of his concluding remarks, apart from the importance of the Churches as communities, Zizioulas says that "we must realize that *all* Churches need to re-receive their own tradition and re-adjust themselves to the original apostolic community."¹⁷⁶ This, one concurs, is a very central idea. Churches are in an ever-constant need of reform, and this can only be achieved by reception. This is also, one observes, where the role of the other Churches comes in. As stated by Ware in *Receptive*

¹⁷² Ibid., 115.

¹⁷³ Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" 193.

¹⁷⁴ Sheldrake, "Becoming Catholic Persons," 60.

¹⁷⁵ Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception,'" 193.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

Ecumenism – An Orthodox Perspective, through reception, the other Churches can help each Church to become a better Catholic or Orthodox, and thus better align her tradition in line with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In this respect, the role of Receptive Ecumenism helps each Church to renew her own genuine identity in her journey towards unity.

While written over three decades ago, Zizioulas' arguments are still sound in the contemporary situation. And this is where Receptive Ecumenism comes in. It sets out a direction how a proper reception between Churches can occur in the present-day circumstances, without doing away with tradition. Critical judgement, to use the exact term by Stewart, is crucial in the process.¹⁷⁷ In faithfulness to tradition, each gift relative to the Christian faith to be received from the other Church is to be assessed in its harmony with the apostolic faith bestowed upon the Church. On the other hand, a proper reception calls for a proper evaluation of what is to be received and creativity in order to renew it without changing the substance of dogma. The phrase in Rev 21, 5: "I make all things new" is so pertinent from this perspective. Creativity does not mean doing away with dogma or faith. Rather, it is the opposite. It entails a renewal in the reconstruction and transmission of the faith handed down by the apostles, together with the understanding and reflection of the faith. If one believes in the Holy Spirit's creative force continually at work throughout the centuries, then the creativity that has been constantly at work ever since the dawn of Christianity cannot be denied. This has not stopped with the separation of the Churches. As Stewart states so precisely, "we must not forget that the long years of division have not been empty or sterile; each has developed in its own way in its understanding of its faith."¹⁷⁸

4.06.07 Genuine Reception

Reception is not as straightforward as it may imply. It can even be deceptive! Congar's dictum, that "Nor every exchange, nor even every conversation is a dialogue¹⁷⁹" rings so

¹⁷⁷ See Stewart, R. L., "Reception: What do the Churches do with Ecumenical Agreements?" *One in Christ* 21, no. 3 (1985): 195.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁷⁹ Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1966), 55.

true. It is a process that calls for a harmonious integration between factors. These are a sound understanding of one's tradition, a genuine disposition to truly learn from the other, and an understanding of what is to be received. Above all, a critical judgement is essential in linking what has been newly learnt with one's own tradition.

Proper reception, first of all, calls for knowledge and awareness of one's own tradition, in order to be faithful to it, both in presenting it as a gift (this term will be revisited shortly), and in the authentic reception of the other Church's gifts.¹⁸⁰ The identity of the human being in the Christian milieu cannot be separated from tradition. As Bond states: "Within Christianity itself ... we are constituted in our being by and grounded in different traditions from which reasoning proceeds and to which it returns."¹⁸¹ This cannot be taken for granted, especially in contemporary society, bombarded by its cries for secularism. As corroborated by Örsy, "the persons learning and receiving must have the right dispositions, the doctrine received must be rooted in truth, and the practice accepted must be an expression of Christian love."¹⁸² A question arises. How is this to be accomplished? How can one ensure that as Catholics engaged in dialogue with the Orthodox, the learning and reception are genuine? How does critical judgement take place? This is a crucial aspect, otherwise no sincere dialogue, learning and reception can take place. Örsy attempts to provide an answer by exploring three criteria for evaluating reception: preserving identity, true and false reception, and imprudent reception.

According to Örsy, the first criterion of ensuring proper authenticity is the preservation of identity. To understand his argument, it is useful to refer to the *Groupe des Dombes'* work, *For the Conversion of the Churches*. Their work describes three layers of identity which make up the historical nature of each community.¹⁸³ These are the Christian identity, the ecclesial identity, and the confessional identity.

¹⁸⁰ See Steward, "Reception," 197; also 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.

¹⁸¹ Maurice Bond, "Reconciliation: An Ecumenical Paradigm," in *Reconciling Memories*, ed. Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998), 86.

¹⁸² Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 38.

¹⁸³ See *ibid.*, 42; see also *Groupe des Dombes'*, *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993). The *Groupe des Dombes'* is a group of Roman Catholics and Protestants, based in France, founded by Couturier. Their various works attest to the combination of the theological aspects with spirituality, especially the call to conversion, a central theme in this book.

The Christian identity “is constituted by an existential confession of faith in relation to Christ which is enshrined in the Trinitarian confession and professed in church.”¹⁸⁴ Significantly, “Christian identity does not deny differences. It does not set itself up against others. It respects the identity of others and places its own specific difference in the service of a universal communion.”¹⁸⁵ A Christian identity is not restricted solely to an individual level. In fact, “the fact of the church and the belonging to it of each Christian are aspects of that identity.”¹⁸⁶ Hence, “by reason of the gift of the Spirit it is like the irreversible and unfailing presence of the gift God has given of himself to human beings in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸⁷

On the other hand, a confessional identity:

Lies in a specific historically, culturally and doctrinally located way of living out ecclesial identity and Christian identity. It is the typical “profile” of a group of churches, the common way in which these churches understand their spiritual specificity. Even if this profile undergoes changes in the course of history, a confessional constant remains which resists differences in time and place.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, the *Groupe des Dombes* distinguishes between “confessional allegiance” and “confessionalism.” The danger arises when confessionalism “withdraws into itself and rejects real confrontation with other confessions or denominations.”¹⁸⁹ The dangers posed by confessionalism are further expounded upon:

The era of confessionalism, in which the churches equate their confessional identity with full and sufficient ecclesial identity, illustrates the risk which such ecclesiology poses to any possibility of conversion. Turning upside down the priorities among the three conversions causes and consolidates ecclesial division. Confusing confessional identities, *plural*, with ecclesial identity can neither express nor produce unity unless we consider unity to be a reductionist uniformity or separated but tolerant side-by-side existence.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches*, 19-20.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

Ecclesial conversion “concerns church members whether collectively or as an institution, as members of the same communion of faith and sharing sinful attitudes. Ecclesial conversion is the constant effort of the church community as such to strive towards its Christian identity.”¹⁹¹ On the other hand, confessional conversion “relates to the specifically ecumenical efforts achieved by the still-divided churches in trying to regain full communion.”¹⁹² How can confessional identities be converted? The *Groupe*’s answer is quite pertinent and challenging:

Our confessional identities are an inheritance within which we have to apply a discernment based on the gospel in order to gather together all the positive values in the support of the rich diversity of forms in the church and abandon their sinful dimension.¹⁹³

The Ecumenical Movement is a challenge for the churches and ecclesial traditions to engage in a conversion exercise that does not mean shedding off all aspects of the confessional church. The challenge is to discern and recognise which sinful aspects need to be abandoned while celebrating the manifold diversity that exists across all churches and ecclesial traditions.” In reality,

we are constantly being re-informed. ... No disloyalty to our traditions is involved; on the contrary only thus can we really maintain them. Thus, just as ecumenics is impossible on the basis of static traditionalism, so is loyalty to our own traditions.¹⁹⁴

To conclude, according to the *Groupe*, the Ecumenical Movement is envisaged as:

A great process of conversion and reconciliation of our diversities in the quest for communion among confessional identities which, once cleansed of their unevangelical or sinful elements, can receive each other, become complementary and enrich each other. ... Confessional identities are not to be abandoned, but to be transformed. Such a vision aims at always linking the concern of unity with that of mission. It is received as faithfulness to the Spirit who leads us forwards.¹⁹⁵

The *Groupe des Dombes*’ contribution is of crucial importance, hence its analysis. However, this is only the first step. Receptive Ecumenism is an invitation to move

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁹² Ibid., 27-28,

¹⁹³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹⁴ Bond, “An Ecumenical Paradigm,” 88,

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 64.

beyond. Örsy rightly calls the *Groupe*'s invitation towards a process of "emptying" *kenosis*.¹⁹⁶ However, Receptive Ecumenism compels the partners in dialogue to move forward. The self-emptying of the Churches and ecclesial communities is the prerequisite which leads to a simultaneously faithful reception of each other. However rightfully, Örsy goes rightfully beyond this. Having emptied themselves from any of the hurdles which have no sound doctrinal basis in relation to identity and which prevent unity from taking place, the Churches

Could also enrich themselves by learning and receiving doctrinal insights and sound practices from each other. In addition, ... learning and receiving are possible on any level of identity: new insights into the Tradition can enhance Christian identity; fresh initiatives in charity can enrich ecclesial personality; humility and magnanimity can make a denomination a better agent for unity.¹⁹⁷

It can safely be stated that the *Groupe des Dombes*' invitation is for the Churches and ecclesial traditions to look inwards, while Receptive Ecumenism is an invitation to move outwards. The two aspects are inextricably bound. In order for the churches to be able to move outwards in their encounter with other traditions, they must, first and foremost, look within themselves in order to be able to discern the grey areas that are in need of conversion. Only once this has been accomplished, can they move forward towards an encounter with the other traditions with the hope of receiving the riches those traditions have to offer.

This leads back to the encounter between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. How can the Orthodox and Catholic Churches transform their confessional identity? How can this be accomplished in a critical, not negative, manner? The level of change here which is expected to be taking place is on a fuller level, both within each Church and across Churches, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and in harmony between the two aspects. It is a call to a self-reconfiguration at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels.

It is worth pausing to consider one important challenge which ecumenical reception brings with it. Since the situation is one of with divided Churches with different practices, traditions, and expressions of the one apostolic faith, one is to consider the different

¹⁹⁶ See Örsy, "Authentic Learning and Receiving," 42.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

yardsticks employed by each Church to receive the offerings of the other in a genuine way which is coherent with its own tradition. Indeed, “as churches struggle to be true to this foundation for ecumenical reception, they will no doubt employ the standards that have been valuable to them throughout their lives.”¹⁹⁸

What are the golden standards employed by the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Churches? The Roman Catholic Church looks at the dogmas, while the Orthodox Churches tend to refer to the early Church traditions.¹⁹⁹ The problem arises when these standards become obstacles to authentic reception of the other Church or tradition.²⁰⁰ The challenge for both Churches is to be open to accept that ecumenical reception entails transcending the particular standard in order to gain a better view of what is being offered. A proper encounter with the other Church means being able to go beyond any fossilised views pre-set by particular yardsticks. While the standards serve to safeguard faithfulness to the apostolic Tradition, on the other hand, there must be an acceptance of the possibility of transcending one’s own view. This is a reminder of the encounter with Christ. A true encounter with Christ calls the believer to go beyond certain preconceptions in order to become more integral and dynamic Christians. The same is true of the encounter and reception of the other Churches, with Murray’s reminder that receiving from the others does not make one less Catholic or Orthodox, but even more wholly Catholic and Orthodox.

It is now apt to return to Örsy’s criteria. When it comes to distinguishing between true and false reception, Örsy, in the second criterion he proposes, highlights the three hallmarks of true reception, based on John Henry Newman’s work, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. In this seminal work, Newman assigns genuine development under seven interrelated criteria which serve to cement a true and genuine continuation between present, past, and future in faithfulness to Tradition in a dynamic manner.²⁰¹ Örsy condenses these seven criteria in three headings. First, the new insight

¹⁹⁸ Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 63.

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 64.

²⁰⁰ See *ibid.*

²⁰¹ The seven criteria highlighted and explained in great detail by Newman are the following: preservation of its type; continuity of its principles; its power of assimilation; logical sequence; anticipation of its future; conservative action upon its past; and its chronic vigour. See John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, seventh edition (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890), 169 – 205.

acquired regarding doctrine serves to confirm the “foundational components of the institution,” without posing any threat to its leading principles.²⁰² Second, the development occurs in a harmonious balance with the old tradition, such that “the new can be rightly judged as the unfolding of a hidden potential in the old.”²⁰³ Tradition can be envisaged as a solid foundation upon which a building can be built in different styles. Third, this development breathes a new life and vigour within the community and leads to its edification.²⁰⁴

These points can be very helpful in analysing reception as it occurs between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. The first proposal can be very helpful in mitigating any fears and suspicions within the Churches, if carried out with sound maturity and honesty. With respect to the second point, it can be stated that this has already been happening in various facets of the two Churches, not least in their respective theologies. The return to the Church Fathers in Catholic theology and the Greek neo-Patristic synthesis are examples which have already been explored in the second chapter, as for example in section 2.04.03. Regarding the third proposal, the reception of something new, akin to the reception of a new gift, can serve as an invigoration and renewal of a present Church. How much can the Orthodox and Catholic Churches learn from each other! How much do they have to offer to each other!

The third criterion set out by Örsy runs parallel to the second criterion. This criterion, namely, the distinction between prudent and imprudent reception, has as its foundation the people who have been deeply committed and experienced within the community. This refers to “persons who lived for long in the would-be receiving community and who can have a better feel for what is suitable and attainable than dreamers who are roaming the world of ideals.”²⁰⁵ A mature and well-versed person who can gauge the well-being of the community can better judge and advance a prudent reception; “such down-to-earth feeling persons – they could be prophets or bishops – gather their knowledge from an affinity with the community.”²⁰⁶ One observes here that such a person – a bishop, a priest

²⁰² See Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception*, 43.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 44.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

or any other person – cannot be isolated from the community. As seen elsewhere, the importance of the community as that which makes up the Church, can never be underestimated.

Within this perspective, Örsy's poignant words offer a suitable finale prior to the conclusion of this chapter:

The dynamic of reception begins with critical self-knowledge, continues with the intelligence of the life of others, and concludes with the testing of new values in the crucible of the life and work of the receiving community. In this process an awareness of the Tradition, a capacity of discerning judgements, a good sense for practicalities are needed. They all together create the right dispositions and environment for receiving a gift of the Spirit.²⁰⁷

4.07 Conclusion

Receptive Ecumenism promises to be a key factor at play within the exciting ecumenical venture. While bilateral dialogues continue to hold an important place, the fulcrum shifts to other matters, mainly in the practical arena, yet strengthened by a hermeneutic which is grounded in a contemporary way of doing theology within ecumenism, in continuation with Tradition. This is the reason why a clever and discerning way of engaging with the world propels forth creativity in doing ecumenism. As a result, the dictum that a change in method is called for, is certainly true. At the same time, it is paramount to be on the guard so as not to neglect what has been proved to be successful so far.

The fact that Receptive Ecumenism puts the process of reception and learning at the centre, despite its apparent lacuna in trying to explain the notion of reception at a deeper level, thrusts each Church and tradition with the control in decision-making. It presupposes important aspects, not least of which is spiritual ecumenism. Why? Each Church acknowledges that not all is perfect within her, since it is made up of errant human beings. While both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches consider themselves to be the one true Church, each have their respective failings. Hence, it is necessary to embrace the humility to admit that each tradition is to accept and put to good use the gift

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

endowed to other Churches and traditions. The corollary is that each Church and tradition can learn from the other. Only then, can the Church of Christ be complete. Certainly, this entails a vital and dynamic process which serves to boost dialogue between the Churches.

Receptive Ecumenism does not purport to be the solution to all existing problems. The theory itself admittedly focuses on the practical, although it is based on contemporary philosophical theory, as thoroughly explained in Chapter 1. However, it is still in its infancy and needs to develop further. Over a decade has passed by since the formal inception of Receptive Ecumenism. That is not a long time. Things need to mature, but this does not call for a standstill. Maturation can only come about after the proper reflection and the subsequent action in the practical arena. An important aspect which needs to be considered within Receptive Ecumenism itself is the inextricable link between teaching and learning, a link which cannot be compartmentalised, as the two aspects form one line of communion, indeed one pedagogy. While the focus on learning within Receptive Ecumenism is a unique feature of the theory, at the same time learning cannot take place without some kind of implicit teaching, however indirect that might be. Hence Receptive Ecumenism must be rethought as one process entailing learning and teaching, with a focus on learning.

The aim of this thesis is to apply the theory of Receptive Ecumenism to the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. As this thesis amply demonstrates, this is a fertile ground for research because of the many aspects shared in common by both Churches. The challenges are great, as already evidenced earlier on. This is why the theory of Receptive Ecumenism can be employed in order to facilitate matters, despite the existing obstacles which still persist between the Churches.

A certainly promising aspect regarding the dialogue between Roman Catholic and Orthodox dialogue is that Receptive Ecumenism has a similar counterpart in the East, that of Open Sobornicity, as presented in section 4.05. While there are subtle differences between the two theories, both theories hinge on the need for the two Churches to learn from other traditions. This is a testimony to the fact that each tradition espouses ecumenism, albeit in its own way. Again, these differences need not be perceived as a threat. They can be considered as an opportunity to foray further into the depth of the

sacred mystery which permeates the very Church of Christ, radiating in a variety of expressions. Receptive Ecumenism is suited to engage with differences without the need to subsume each of them in one grand scheme of things. It is an analysis into the preconditions which allow a positive value on pluralism.²⁰⁸ In theory at least, each tradition is already open to the other. Its translation to the practical field has been more cautious at times, more difficult at others, since other elements come into play, such as the harbouring of past fears, suspicions, and lack of sufficient knowledge of each other. These aspects need to be addressed in order for communion to go ahead. Perhaps, both the Orthodox and Roman Catholics need to incorporate these aspects in their theologies. Only then, can real and genuine dialogue proceed.

While this thesis focuses on Receptive Ecumenism, the time has come to examine these two traditions in practice and look at how the tenets of Receptive Ecumenism can indeed be helpful in furthering the dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. Most importantly, the important presuppositions for meaningful reception and learning to take place are to be analysed further. Reception and learning entail various processes which interact together in a dynamic way. The analysis of these processes is the subject of the next chapter.

²⁰⁸ See Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 26.

Chapter 5: The Process of Reception between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches

5.01 Introduction

The Theory of Receptive Ecumenism, described in detail in the first and fourth chapters, is a theory grounded in the process of experience. It can only make sense if it is explored from the perspective of the processes underlying it. And the theory of Receptive Ecumenism, with all its limitations, does have potential to promote the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. Put in other words, an honest appraisal of the reception process is called for in speaking of a genuine reception, rather than an irenic show of solidarity which does little, apart from being careful not to stir the waters. This can, unfortunately, be the case in various meetings between the different Churches, where the aim would be to dialogue in diplomatic means. While this is called for, it does not necessarily follow that the reception process is always honest. An honest reception can also present a challenge, a challenge to look more deeply within oneself in order to be ready to enter in dialogue with the other side.

Furthermore, while the previous chapters have focused on theological dialogue from an academic perspective, this chapter explores the renewal brought forth by Receptive Ecumenism, by focusing upon the notion of gifts and the process of ecclesial renewal. As Antonia Pizzey states:

Receptive Ecumenism, while affirming the continued importance of both practical and theological ecumenism, directs our attention beyond learning about each other (theological ecumenism) *and* beyond simply cooperating with each other (practical ecumenism), to focus on learning *from* each other (receptive ecumenism). This is not to disregard the significance and value of theological and practical ecumenism, but rather to affirm that a balanced approach is necessary for today's context.¹

In its unique way, Receptive Ecumenism attempts to bridge the various compartmentalisations existing within the various aspects of theology, spirituality and so on. Murray argues that

¹ Antonia Pizzey, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning: A Constructive way of Approaching Ecclesial Identity and Renewal," in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes with a foreword and afterword by Paul Murray (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2018), 65.

The conviction is that the strategy of conceptual and grammatical clarification, if pursued in isolation, is in danger of simply reinforcing each sponsoring church within its own current logic, even whilst clarifying that it need not be seen as being in necessary conflict with the differently expressed logic of other traditions.²

This provides a wider picture of the whole Ecumenical Movement and does justice to the complexity of the Orthodox – Catholic dialogue.

Proper reception can only be understood within the complex and intertwining dimensions which it embraces, and the various elements which constitute the complexity of the human person, in speaking from a microcosmic perspective. The hermeneutics underlying Receptive Ecumenism address the various elements, which also exist beyond the person. This hermeneutic which hinges on the positive aspect of plurality does indeed apply to the situation and is very relevant to the whole Ecumenical Movement, especially to the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. Of course, it has its dangers but these will be discussed in due course. This is why this chapter attempts to examine the various practical impacts of Receptive Ecumenism on the aforementioned dialogue. The dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics is a dialogue within another dialogue, that of theology and the world around it. The validity of applying the hermeneutical aspect espoused by Receptive Ecumenism lies in the fact that the study does not simply take into account the two traditions themselves, but also the varying factors impacting and moulding each tradition, prior to the dialogue.

Chapter 4 has elaborated upon the explicitly external dynamics of reception in Roman Catholic – Eastern Orthodox relations and encounters. It is, therefore, highly appropriate – as expressed in the last lines of the previous paragraph – that this chapter involves the discussion of various factors, some of which reside internally within the person, and as a corollary, can be extended to the whole Church. In line with Paul and Andrea Murray's words:

The openness to growth, change, examination of conscience and continual grace-filled conversion that lies at the heart of Christian life pertains as much to the ecclesial as to the

² Paul D. Murray, "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), 14.

personal: to allowing, that is, one's own tradition to be challenged to expand and re-think how it understands and does things in relation to specific issues.³

Others are outside factors such as history and culture which are, nevertheless, crucial in their interaction with the whole tradition. These outside factors often radically affect the individual person, and thus, the individual Christian. Ecclesial renewal cannot be detached from the outside factors which affect it. It happens both within a particular cultural and social milieu and also through the grace of God through the Spirit. It is, thus, both present and eschatological.

5.02 The Passage from Incompatibilities to “Gifts”

The proper reception which takes place between Churches is a dynamic and fruitful enterprise which enriches both Churches. This might very well appear as tantamount to a kind of idealism and romanticism which must be avoided. Yet, the proper reception which occurs and enables each Church and tradition to learn from each other, is the path towards a true ecclesial identity. In the acknowledgement that each Church needs reform, the corollary that “ecumenism is an essential path to church reform” is also true.⁴

The encounter between the Churches is not always so fruitful, however, it can safely be asserted that the positive elements permeating each Church must be seen as foundational if proper ecumenical dialogue is to move forward. This is no mere compromise in order to stall hostility. Recognising the beauty and truth present in each Church is God's way of showing us that no single confessional Church is the sole Church of Christ in itself. Each Church has plenty to offer to the other Churches and ecclesial communities. *Unitatis redintegratio* had already shed a light on this important aspect with regards to the Eastern Orthodox Churches. This notion of gifts is especially reiterated and developed in John Paul II's apostolic letter, *Oriente lumen*, as well as in *Ut unum sint*. As Margaret

³ 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), 87.

⁴ 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 Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 354; see also Pizzey, “Receptive Ecumenical Learning,” 62.

O’Gara rightly says, “John Paul II also believes in a gift exchange, and he believes that ecumenism includes mutual enrichment among Christians.”⁵

Before proceeding to analyse which gifts can be shared and enjoyed between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Churches, it is worth pausing on the notion of gifts and all that it entails. Sometimes, the mistake of taking things for granted and glossing over them is often all too present. Thereby, a multitude of meanings which only serves to help go deeper in this analysis can be lost. The same applies for the notion of gift. A gift entails a free-willed sharing of something with another person. It implies love for the other and the compunction to share something beautiful with the other side. The all-too often quoted excerpt from 1 Corinthians speaks of the various gifts bestowed on various Christians which serve for the edification of the Christian Church. What about the gifts and traditions present in each of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches? They serve the purpose of enhancing each other because, as Kallistos Ware so rightly pointed out in a 2008 paper, in sharing a gift one realises that through dialogue with the other side, a gift can be greatly enhanced and can enrich the particular Church,⁶ even before the Church herself is ready to receive a gift from the other Church. In other words, a proper sharing with the other Church contributes to the edification of a particular Church. Harnessed in the proper way, Receptive Ecumenism enables each Church not only to retain its ecclesial identity without danger of diluting it, but also to reinforce it.

O’Gara makes an interesting point in stating that “the gift exchange of ecumenical dialogue is the discovery that some of the differences among Christians that were once thought to be contradictory are now recognized as complementary.”⁷ It must be admitted that Christians have come a long way since the days of the estrangement between the various Churches and traditions. Moreover, there has been a great deal of reflection regarding what really constitutes the differences between the various traditions. One might realise that the differences in dogma between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches do not constitute a big issue, but the real difference lies in the perspective, the constitution of the Church, and the expression of the faith among the Christian faithful.

⁵ Margaret O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 35.

⁶ See Kallistos Ware, “Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 49-52.

⁷ O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 35.

Over the years, the diversities in the understanding and expression of the Gospel within the Churches have contributed to a climate of fear and mistrust. It is worth pausing on the effects of the passage of time. The fractures between the two Churches occurred over a long period of time, and not as the result of one occurrence. This is reiterated by John Paul II himself who states that

We have increasingly learned that it was not so much an historical episode or a mere question of pre-eminence that tore the fabric of unity, as it was a progressive estrangement, so that the other's diversity was no longer perceived as a common treasure, but as incompatibility.⁸

It is as if the gradual estrangement between the two Churches has obfuscated and distorted each Church's vision of the other Church and of her qualities. The power of sin has inserted itself into the fabric of the Churches and has, thus, alienated Christians' perception of each other.

It is true that the differences of the other side might be viewed with suspicion and fear. It can be added that this fear is compounded by the different other. However, it must be admitted that it is a grace indeed that this difference is gradually being understood as an enrichment of one's Church. The move from distrust in relating to a different Christian Church towards realising the endowments of each particular Church as a gift to be shared has, one observes, been a great achievement. It appears that now the Churches are getting to know each other, and a true and sincere acquaintance looks at what is beautiful in the other side. O'Gara uses a beautiful metaphor which is worth quoting in order to convey Pope John Paul II's thoughts on the Christian East in *Orientalis lumen*, whereby "he opens the treasure chest of the East and describes lovingly many of the beautiful gifts he finds there for sharing with the whole Church."⁹

⁸ John Paul II, *Orientalis lumen: Apostolic Letter on the Light of the East*, May 2, 1995 (Boston/MA: St Paul Books and Media, 1995), par. 18.

⁹ O'Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 36.

5.03 Gifts which edify both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches

One aspect which is distinctively Eastern is the ability to absorb the Good News and translate it to different cultures. This is acknowledged by Pope John Paul II who states that: “from the beginning, the Christian East has proved to contain a wealth of forms capable of assuming the characteristic features of each individual culture, with supreme respect for each particular community.”¹⁰ This is the inheritance from the Acts of the Apostles, where the disciples are able to proclaim the Good News in the native tongues of their hearers. Tirelessly, the Pope revels in meditating on the endeavours of St Cyril and St Methodius who

desired to become similar in every aspect to those to whom they were bringing the Gospel; they wished to become a part of those peoples and to share their lot in everything; it was a question of a new method of catechesis.¹¹

One feels that this runs *pari passu* to the establishment of the various churches in Eastern Christendom. The cultural and social milieu in this vast area had a profound influence on the formation of the Churches. This did not run contrary to the foundation of the Universal Church, as the Universal Church is a kaleidoscope of various Churches which form a whole, though the latter Churches are also fully-fledged Churches in their own right. This is the Orthodox practice of conciliarity or *sobornost*. Their relevance is especially true in contemporary times:

At a time when it is increasingly recognized that the right of every people to express themselves according to their own heritage of culture and thought is fundamental, the experience of the individual Churches of the East is offered to us as an authoritative example of successful inculturation.¹²

¹⁰ *OL*, 5.

¹¹ *OL*, 7; see also “*Slavorum apostoli*: Encyclical Letter on the Evangelisation of St Cyril and St Methodius,” par. 5, *Vatican Website*, 2 June, 1985, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_19850602_slavorum-apostoli.html, par. 11.

¹² *OL*, 7.

On the other hand, as has already been clarified in the previous chapter, the practice of conciliarity, especially during the last years, has not really been a subject for emulation. As Ware himself admits, “our conciliarity has all too often become something atrophied and theoretical; in practice our conciliar structures have fallen largely into disuse.”¹³ In other words, while conciliarity in theory is a model from which the centralised Roman Catholic Church can benefit a great deal, on the other hand, conciliarity itself needs to be illuminated by a central agency which can surely alleviate the disputes which arise between the various autocephalous Churches.¹⁴ Although it can be a symbol of discord between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, the fact is that the primacy is a gift which can have an enormous positive impact on the current Orthodox structure. As McPartlan notes, Zizioulas makes an important case for the need of a primacy, where he affirms that: “In Orthodox tradition there has never been and there can never be a synod or a council without a *protos*, or *primus*. If, therefore, synodality exists *iure divino*, primacy must exist by the same right.”¹⁵

Of course, this also means that the universal primacy as currently exercised within the Roman Catholic Church needs, in turn, to shed its juridical aspect and become more pastoral.¹⁶ As McPartlan correctly states, “structure must arise from the Eucharist and correspond to the Eucharist, and it must respect and release the catholicity that the Eucharist gives to each local church.”¹⁷ When the Eucharist is put at the centre, everything else gravitates towards it and radiates out of it; hence the structure becomes Eucharist-oriented and it emanates from the same Eucharist. It can only be a structure which embodies love and service to fellow Christians. Christ’s life on earth has been a continual witness that God’s kingdom eschews temporal power. It must be readily admitted that sometimes the notion of temporal power has been the driving force behind certain actions carried out by the respective Churches. One must ask the question, albeit daringly, what lies behind the squabbles between the autocephalous Churches of Constantinople and Moscow. Although this can be a painful task, unless Christians are

¹³ Ware, “Receptive Ecumenism,” 51.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁵ John Zizioulas, in Paul McPartlan, “Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy: The Promise and Challenge of Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” in Paul Murray (ed.) *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 164.

¹⁶ See Ware, “Receptive Ecumenism,” 51.

¹⁷ McPartlan, “Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy,” 163.

ready to face reality with sheer humility and honesty, they cannot move forward. The existing situation is to be addressed and acted upon; only then can the next step be taken.

The structure of the Eastern Churches mirrors the Trinitarian life so cherished by the Eastern Orthodox. Until some decades ago, it was quite true to speak of Catholic theology as focusing on Christology. On the contrary, in Eastern theology, the Trinity is the centripetal force of all theology. In describing apophaticism which characterises theological thought and understanding within the Eastern Orthodox Church, Lossky states the following:

the goal to which apophatic theology leads – if, indeed, we may speak of goal or ending when, as here, it is a question of an ascent towards the infinite; this infinite goal is not a nature or an essence, nor is it a person; it is something which transcends all notion both of nature and of person: it is the Trinity.¹⁸

Both *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Orientalis lumen* dwell on the richness of the liturgy within the Eastern Churches (although this also applies to the Eastern Catholic Churches).¹⁹ Indeed, the beauty of the liturgy within the Orthodox Churches attests to the sacredness of the One whom we adore. In extolling the beauty of the Orthodox liturgy, Sergius Bulgakov states that “it unites the heights of Christian inspiration with the most precious heritage of antiquity received from Byzantium. The vision of spiritual beauty is joined to that of the beauty of this world.”²⁰ It is interesting to note at this point that Bulgakov himself does not hesitate to mention other gifts bestowed upon Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, that is, organisation and administration, and probity of life and intellectual honesty, respectively.²¹ As the translation of his work shows, he even uses the term “gifts.”²²

This constitutes the framework within Orthodox Christian thought. As corroborated by John Paul II, regarding the aim of the Eastern Christian faithful,

¹⁸ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1991), 44.

¹⁹ See Second Vatican Council, “*Unitatis redintegratio: Decree on Ecumenism*,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1975); par. 4; see also *UR*, 14-15; *OL*, 6.

²⁰ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (New York, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 129.

²¹ See *ibid.*

²² See *ibid.*

His or her goal is participation in the divine nature through communion with the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In this view the Father's "monarchy" is outlined as well as the concept of salvation according to the divine plan, as it is presented by Eastern theology after Saint Irenaeus of Lyons and which spread among the Cappadocian Fathers.²³

The celebration hinges on the celebration of the Eucharist. It comes as no surprise since

Holy Communion is a reliving of the miracle of the Incarnation. It is a constant presentation of man before the face of God. It gives man a meeting-place with Christ, fills all his being with mystic and exalted emotion. Man enters into contact with a higher world, and it enters into his life.²⁴

Christos Yannaras states:

Many people today seem to have forgotten this truth which defines and manifests the Church: the Church is the gathering in the Eucharistic meal. Not a foundation, not a religious institution, not a governing hierarchy, not buildings and offices and organizational arrangement. It is the people of God gathered in the "breaking of the bread" and the "blessing of the cup."²⁵

In his easily accessible masterpiece *The Orthodox Way*, Kallistos Ware highlights three elements which are crucial to the spiritual way of the Orthodox Christian; that is, the ecclesial quality, the sacramental aspect, and the evangelical nature of Christianity.²⁶ This section will speak only of the first two here, in relation to this research. As a pilgrim, the Christian is, first and foremost, a member of the Church.²⁷ Second, Ware correctly states that the spiritual way "presupposes not only life in the Church but *life in the sacraments*."²⁸ A very pertinent question would be that this is also the conviction of the Catholic Church. However, sometimes, there has been the feeling among numerous devout Catholics in the last decades that the Catholic liturgical celebration has been divested of its sacredness. Surely, the Catholic Church has made huge strides recently in the explanation of the rites and the readings, but many feel the need to recover the sacredness of the liturgical celebration; the sacredness which brings the faithful closer to

²³ *OL*, 6.

²⁴ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 146.

²⁵ Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 122.

²⁶ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 107-108.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 108.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the personal Trinitarian God while, at the same time, makes them stand in awe in front of God. Perhaps, Yannaras' statement above may serve as some consolation as it indicates that this is not a problem to be found solely within the Catholic world. Indeed, the Orthodox liturgy is surely not all perfection but one can surely learn a lot from what lies behind the richness of the celebration. Appreciation of the depth of the Orthodox liturgy can surely help Catholics towards an appraisal of the significance and depth of their rites and liturgy. Then one can surely concord with Lossky who states that

The Church's festivals make us participants in the events of Christ's earthly life on a deeper level than that of mere historical fact; for in the Church we are no more spectators who watch from without, but witnesses enlightened by the Holy Spirit.²⁹

One of the gifts which has had its genesis in the East and has since flowed to the West and has been embraced with enthusiasm in the Catholic world, albeit with major modifications, is that of monasticism. It is not with coincidence that Pope John Paul II dedicates an entire section to monasticism in *Orientalis lumen*. Although monasticism has been readily received within Catholicism, it is important to point out the diverse mentality behind the meaning of monasticism both within the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox realms. Indeed,

In the East, monasticism has retained great unity. It did not experience the development of different kinds of apostolic life as in the West. The various expressions of monastic life, from the strictly cenobitic, as conceived by Pachomius or Basil, to the rigorously eremitic, as with Anthony or Macarius of Egypt, correspond more to different stages of the spiritual journey than to the choice between different states of life. In any event, whatever form they take, they are all based on monasticism.³⁰

Another important characteristic of monasticism within the Orthodox world is that its charism is the contemplative life. Monasticism as it developed in the Catholic Church conveys a variety of charisms such as preaching and so on, not least of which is the contemplative life. However, even the contemplative section has a variety of monks and nuns, such as Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, the Poor Clares, Trappists and so on. Of course, this points out to what lies behind the variety of monastic orders and an

²⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 190.

³⁰ *OL*, 9.

attitude which is specifically that of the Catholic world. With regard to this, Bulgakov explains that in the Orthodox world, monasticism has retained an unparalleled uniformity:

Here [in the Orthodox world] monasticism does not show the variety and the shades of difference evident in Catholic religious orders. Contemplation in the West is proper only to certain orders; in the East it is the characteristic trait of all monastic life. The monastic state in Orthodoxy is “the acceptance of the angelic form,” that is the abandonment of the world for the service of prayer and ascetic practices, rather than for fighting in the word “ad majorem Dei gloriam.”³¹

This does not entail a diminishment of Eastern or Western contemplative life. Rather, it conveys a spiritual life of great riches. Another aspect which must be taken in consideration is that the varieties of monastic life within the Roman Catholic Church were founded on the particular needs of the society in the time in which they emerged. The varieties of charisms attributed to the monastic life in the Western world can only attest to the greatness and creativity of the Holy Spirit who breathes life through the uniqueness of each community. It must also be remembered that although the monastic life appears as a withdrawal from the world, in reality its task is to sanctify the world. So, the monastery is no escapism from the social angst, so often created by the toll of the excesses in the secular world, but

The prophetic place where creation becomes praise of God and the precept of concretely lived charity becomes the ideal of human coexistence; it is where the human being seeks God without limitation or impediment, becoming a reference point for all people, bearing them in his heart and helping them to seek God.³²

Hence monasticism, inextricably bound to the Eucharist, becomes both personal and communal:

Monasticism shows in a special way that life is suspended between two poles: the Word of God and the Eucharist. This means that even in its eremitical forms, it is always a personal response to an individual call and, at the same time, an ecclesial and community event.³³

More will be affirmed about monasticism, particularly in relation to ecumenism in section 5.07 of this chapter. It must be borne in mind, even as Pope John Paul II himself asserts,

³¹ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 152.

³² *OL*, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

that certain aspects of monasticism, are not specific to the Eastern Orthodox world, and vice-versa, nor is monasticism the only way of the journey undertaken by the Church of Christ towards the eschatological consummation.³⁴ Otherwise, as has been the case, one can easily fall in the trap of polarising the different characteristics of each Church, as is common in some Orthodox writers such as Lossky. While Lossky's brilliance must be given due credit, at times the focus in some of the paragraphs in his masterpiece *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* seems to be more on comparing the two Churches rather than concentrating on the unparalleled characteristics of each of the Churches. Comparisons should only be made in order to explore what can be mutually shared by each of the Churches, not in order to show what is lacking in a particular Church.

One of the Roman Catholic Church's gifts is its missionary character. This is solemnly affirmed in the Second Vatican Council, in the decree *Ad gentes*: "The Church on Earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit."³⁵ In the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, Pope John Paul II states the following:

From the beginning of my Pontificate I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern. My direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the *urgency of missionary activity*, a subject to which I am devoting the present encyclical.³⁶

The various missionary journeys undertaken by Pope John Paul II and his successors are a microcosmic activity of the mission of the Catholic Church. Indeed, "the missionary thrust ... belongs to the very nature of the Christian life, and is also the inspiration behind ecumenism: "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21)." Missionary activity in its purest form of understanding and accomplishment has nothing to do with a forced proselytism. As *Ad gentes* states unequivocally:

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 9.

³⁵ Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*, 7 December 1965," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, par. 2, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999).

³⁶ John Paul II, John Paul II. *Redemptoris missio: Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, 7 December 1990, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1990), par. 1.

the Lord Jesus, before freely giving His life for the world, did so arrange the Apostles' ministry and promise to send the Holy Spirit that both they and the Spirit might be associated in effecting the work of salvation always and everywhere.³⁷

Missionary activity entails the notion of the life-giving gift of the Church of Christ ready to be shared with others:

It is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvellous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself.³⁸

Where it has arisen without any earthly interest, one may conclude that the Roman Church has truly kept to Christ's promise to proclaim the Good News to the end of the world. As such, it lives up to its catholic and apostolic character. It is such a wonderful thing to see Catholicism traversing geographical, cultural and political boundaries. The Orthodox Church has only gradually started to emerge into the greater world beyond her traditional boundaries. Things look very promising indeed. By looking and emulating a charism which is truly catholic, the Orthodox Church is able to venture in such places such as Africa, where only recently an Orthodox Church was set up.

To conclude, in allaying any fears that each Church could lose her own specific identity, as has been said countless times, admiring and receiving the other Church's achievements, does not mean a watering down of one's identity, or a relativism which is very destructive to the core of the Christian Church. This point is also made clear by O'Gara.³⁹

Finally, as McPartlan notes

Orthodoxy has challenged and continues to challenge Catholicism to acknowledge a complementary 'Other,' to realise, therefore, that it has no monopoly on understanding and

³⁷ *AG*, 4.

³⁸ *RM*, 2.

³⁹ See O'Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 37.

explaining the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and thereby to grow in wisdom and holiness.⁴⁰

It can be safely said that the reverse is also true, as long as each Church is ready to admit that she has a lot to learn from the other Church.

5.04 Humility and Repentance

If the church and its particular doctrinal formulations are placed at the centre, rather than Christ and his reconciling mission, as is often the case, then that church can probably expect to be centre stage and the pivotal point of reference in interchurch exchange. A great humility is called for if the grandiose idealisation of our church is to be modified in favour of openness to the other.⁴¹ This is a central linchpin in Receptive Ecumenism. One of the strengths of Receptive Ecumenism, as highlighted earlier, is its attempt to reconcile the doctrinal with the spiritual and affective domains. The positive outlook at the other churches stems out of love, not irenicism. As Pizzey states:

Receptive Ecumenism asks us to think first about what we can learn from others rather than what they need to learn from us; it asks us first to love, as Christ loved. We learn from the other so that we can love the other better, and in so doing, love Christ better. Receptive Ecumenism requires a fundamentally positive approach to other Christians, a turning towards them with eyes open to their goodness.⁴²

Of course, love carries with it risks. Orthodox theologians speak of the great risk undertaken by God in creating the human being out of love. The process of Receptive Ecumenism, which takes as point of departure the deficiencies inherent within each Church and tradition, exposes the vulnerability of that tradition. As a result, as Patrick Connolly states about the Catholic Church (which applies to all other Churches and traditions), participation in the “exchange of gifts” in the ecumenical dialogue “is not a

⁴⁰ Paul McPartlan, “Catholic Learning and Orthodoxy – The Promise and Challenge of Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 167.

⁴¹ 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), 290.

⁴² Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, vol. 7, *Brill’s Series in Catholic Theology* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 151.

pain-free exercise, because of the need for an acknowledgement of current Roman Catholic inadequacies, and of the consequent need for ecclesiastical adaptation.”⁴³ This has great ramifications for the notion of ecclesial identity. Throughout the whole process, “love opens us to vulnerability towards the other. Yet, we are impelled to love by Christ’s command.”⁴⁴ That love is a call to tear down the façade of confessionality which is often a barrier to the encounter with the other.

Since the premise of Receptive Ecumenism is grounded on the realisation of imperfection, even in light of *Lumen gentium* which speaks of the pilgrim Church in constant need of conversion and renewal, “humility is, therefore, to be considered the foundation from which desire for Christian unity originates, as its necessary disposition.”⁴⁵ Humility is seldom mentioned in the contemporary world, partly the result of humility being called in question by the great “masters of suspicion.”⁴⁶ It can even appear in a negative light within Christianity itself. Pizzey argues that “humility is often described in the negative, as the ‘absence’ of pride, rather than in any positive sense.”⁴⁷ However, contrary to what one might think, only the central attitude of humility can free the Christian from the bondage of individualism. Humility is challenging as it makes persons realise that they do not have all the answers; there is no perfect person. As a corollary, there is no perfect church. Humility opens the Christian up to a wider world, placed in front of God, realising in the process that, akin to the small child which Jesus refers to in Gospel, the path of every Christian can only succeed in total dependence on God. Every Christian depends on God for mercy in the first place.⁴⁸ Humility grounds the individual in reality. As such, it “grounds all virtues.”⁴⁹ Abba Pastor’s words about

⁴³ 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), 250.

⁴⁴ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 152.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁶ See André Louf, *The Way of Humility*. Translated and introduced by Lawrence S. Cunningham (Kalamazoo/MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007), 4.

⁴⁷ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 156.

⁴⁸ See Alexis Torrance, “Pentimento e misericordia di Dio nella comunità monastica: i padri di Gaza,” in *Misericordia e Perdono. Atti del XXIII Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa. Bose, 9-12 September 2015*, ed. Luigi d’Ayala Valva et al. (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2016), 166.

⁴⁹ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 165.

humility are so poignant and so legitimate at the same time: “A man must breathe humility and the fear of God just as ceaselessly as he inhales and exhales the air.”⁵⁰

Care must be taken not to confuse humility with false irenicism (strongly criticised *in Unitatis redintegratio*) or a false sense of humility. That is not the aim of Receptive Ecumenism, and such an attitude, not in faithfulness to one’s Tradition can only bring harm. Murray is adamant that:

It is important for us to get right what kind of ethic of receptive hospitality and self-effacing humility is properly assumed in and encouraged by Receptive Ecumenism as getting this wrong can lead to diminishment rather than enrichment. The fact that Receptive Ecumenism believes that we should not and must not push our own particular gifts on others does not mean that we should in any way diminish or deny these gifts. Nor does it mean that we should cease to work out of them. On the contrary, Receptive Ecumenism values deep inhabitation of traditions. It is what enables us to be confident performers of and witness to our respective traditions in ways that in turn enable others to learn from us, as their needs and contexts might suggest.⁵¹

Humility is a stepping stone in the path of conversion. This is why it is so crucial within the mechanism of Receptive Ecumenism. Humility, anchored in the present, is the portal to hope, one of the theological virtues, grounded in an eschatological vision.⁵² It entails “being open ‘to the possibility’ that we could be in the wrong.”⁵³ Yet, this is no small feat and it requires training. It sits well within the spiritual aspect of Receptive Ecumenism and this is also an important reason for the harmony between the spiritual and the academic as part of the way forward in the Ecumenical Movement. There needs to be more than awareness of the spiritual ecumenism within Receptive Ecumenism and the whole Ecumenical Movement; there needs to be an appropriation and training in the spirituality process. Humility needs to be rediscovered and understood anew in order for the proper dialogue and enrichment among all the churches and traditions.

This is the answer in the ecumenical field. It is humility which drives towards a repentance of sins, especially the sin of presumptuousness. The journey of humility and

⁵⁰ Thomas Merton, *Wisdom of the Desert* (London: Burns & Oates, 1997), 51.

⁵¹ Paul D. Murray, “Afterward - Receiving of Christ in the Spirit: The Pneumatic-Christic Depths of Receptive Ecumenism,” in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2018), 168.

⁵² See Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 176.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 177.

the transformation in the process is expounded upon in detail by André Louf.⁵⁴ It is this experience, an experience that passes through the hades of brokenness and compunction which is transformative. What Iperechios states of the monk is applicable to every person and to the whole Church: “A monk who speaks kindly and with humility brings forth tears from a heart of stone.”⁵⁵ This transformation has also been the hallmark of the experience of, amongst others, the apostles Peter and Paul who are divested from their sense of self-sufficiency to become persons ready to lay down their lives for Christ. It is little wonder that in the wake of such an experience Paul returns to that experience time and again as in humility he acknowledges that what he has received has only come through grace. In Eph 4, 1-3, he says unequivocally:

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Clément is correct in stating that the sin in the person striving for humility is better than virtue accompanied by pride.⁵⁶ Yet, the supreme epitome of humility lies in Christ himself and his whole life. The words uttered in Jn 14, 12 are an epitome of this: “very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” A vivid example of the spirit of humility which will be marked in history in the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church was the mutual uplifting of the 1054 anathemas by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, or the plea for forgiveness by Pope John Paul II during his 2001 trip to Greece, where he asked for forgiveness for the many trespasses perpetrated by the Catholic Church against the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It should be remembered that God himself is humble because God is love. God has humbled himself out of love.⁵⁷ As Clément continues, “hence, humility not only opens us to God, but clothes us in Christ, the humbled God.”⁵⁸ God’s humility in Christ has enabled him to leave his mission into the hands of the disciples. And all too often,

⁵⁴ See Louf, *The Way of Humility*, 10-24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁶ See Olivier Clément, *Alle Fonte con I Padri: I Mistici Cristiani delle origini – Testo e commento*, trans. Ornella M. Nobile Ventura (Rome: Città Nuova, 2004), 151.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 152.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* The original text, in Italian, runs thus: “Perciò l’umiltà non solo ci apre a Dio, ma ci fa rivestire di Cristo, il Dio umiliato.”

humility and mercy towards each other are lacking. This is especially true in such trivialities such as the readiness to condemn the others who do not pertain to one's own tradition. And yet, as already argued, there is an unanimous agreement among traditions that no one Church and tradition is perfect. As Pope Francis stated in a homily: "The Gospel must be announced in humility, because the Son of God humbled himself, annihilated himself."⁵⁹ Above all, humility beckons to the need to venture out of one's niche and be ready to respond to Christ, in the face of the other. For in the other, God also invites the believer to repentance and sanctification. That is also the beauty of the Ecumenical Movement, whereby in the other Church, each Church also sees a mirror of herself. The Ecumenical Movement is an enduring lesson in humility.

Finally, humility is the anchor to Christian hope. While humility underpins the reconfiguration of a reality beset by sinfulness, it is the springboard to a future wherein unity is achieved. In other words, "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."⁶⁰ As always, it must be remembered that this is the joint activity of the Spirit and the commitment and endeavour of the believers in the mission of the unity of the Church of Christ. The challenge of Christian hope takes a new dimension when it is borne in mind that "Christian hope urges us to work to bring the Kingdom in some measure into the present."⁶¹ Murray convincingly states that:

The Christian task is not so much to assert and to construct the Kingdom as to lean into its coming; to be shaped and formed in accordance with it so as to become channels for its anticipatory realisation and showing in the world.⁶²

The relationship between humility and hope has important ramifications for the whole Ecumenical Movement, not only Receptive Ecumenism. Indeed,

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"

⁵⁹ Francis, "Gospel must be proclaimed with humility," Homily of Pope Francis from his daily mass, *Radio Vaticana*, 25 May, 2017. http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/04/25/pope_francois_gospel_must_be_proclaimed_with_humility/1307875.

⁶⁰ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 155.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 168.

⁶² Murray, "Establishing the Agenda," 11.

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 only *inaugurated* in the present, while the fullness is yet to come.⁶³

The self-analysis of each Church and the humble realisation that each carries the burden of sin in all its aspects exposes its vulnerability and, at the same time, the openness to a decision to conversion in openness to the other tradition, especially the realisation that no Church and tradition is completely right. Only imperfection and its humble acknowledgement can lead to hope in the transformation. Reception is an ongoing transformative process fuelled by hope. This is why, Pizzey is correct in stating that “the contribution of hopeful humility to ecumenical activity is therefore positive and liberating.”⁶⁴ The critical engagement for each Church espoused by Receptive Ecumenism is a step forward in doing away with competitiveness, towards “prioritizing the need to attend to and to act upon their specific responsibilities revealed in the face of the other.”⁶⁵ The fluid movement from the attempt at reconciliation at the doctrinal level, towards the mystery of conversion is one of the strengths of Receptive Ecumenism, in that it acknowledges the relationship between the doctrinal and the mystery.

5.05 Conversion and Forgiveness

Conversion is inextricably bound with, and is the result of humility which opens up to transparency in order to see oneself in the fullness of goodness and sinfulness. As Pizzey states: “Conversion, or metanoia, speaks directly to a hopeful humility which allows mystery to remain what it is, as God acts, and all involved remain receptive to the gifts of the Spirit.”⁶⁶ The Second Vatican Council has meditated deeply on the importance of conversion and what it constitutes. It is no wonder that as Rossi rightly states, this perspective offered by *Unitatis redintegratio* has become the cornerstone of the reflection on conversion.⁶⁷

⁶³ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 174.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Murray, “Establishing the Agenda,” 15.

⁶⁶ Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement*, 177.

⁶⁷ Teresa Francesca Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo* (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 2012), 140.

There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should therefore 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 brotherly generosity towards them. St. Paul says: “I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” This exhortation is directed especially to those raised to sacred Orders precisely that the work of Christ may be continued. He came among us “not to be served but to serve.”⁶⁸

Conversion, which stems from the Latin *con-versio* – is similar its Greek counterpart *metá-noia*, in that both mean a change in direction, understood as “the undertaking of a new path in a relationship with God and with fellow humans.”⁶⁹ According to Ware, conversion entails “the re-centering of our whole life upon the Trinity.”⁷⁰ Conversion is understood to be happening all the time in a Christian’s life. This has important implications within the ecumenical realm. Indeed, as *Unitatis redintegratio* states:

All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better will they further Christian unity and put it into practice. 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 brotherly love.⁷¹

When an inner conversion takes place, it also involves changing one’s perspectives on the other party. Hence, it becomes a conversion at a deeper level because it involves the acknowledgement that all are limited and in need of mercy.⁷² Conversion encompasses the totality of the human being; “it is at an interior and moral level as well as the intellectual and affective dimensions.”⁷³

The alienation of humanity from God as a result of sin impinges upon the Churches at a macrocosmic level. No Church is complete or perfect. Each Church is made up of sinful individuals. All individuals are sinful and in need of redemption. As the *Groupe des Dombes* rightly asserts, “we must acknowledge that the church is the place of an

⁶⁸ UR, 7.

⁶⁹ Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 141. The original text in Italian is as follows: “... inteso come un nuovo corso dato all relazione con Dio a con i fratelli ...”

⁷⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 113.

⁷¹ UR, 7.

⁷² See Rossi, *Manuale di Ecumenismo*, 141.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, The Italian text runs thus: “La conversione coinvolge la dimensione interiore e morale quanto quella intellettuale e affettiva.”

encounter where God's faithfulness and human unfaithfulness cannot be disentangled."⁷⁴ As both Orthodox and Catholics concur, God has saved humanity by his incarnation. The important Jesus Prayer, so cherished within the Orthodox tradition, acknowledges the sinful condition of humanity, and the need for mercy. This extends to both Churches at all levels. As a matter of fact, both traditions affirm the incompleteness of each of the Churches, as seen in earlier chapters. However, on the practical level, Christians from both traditions need to be reminded all the time that no Church is complete in itself. Acknowledging that one's Church is the true Church while denigrating the other tradition, as is sometimes, lamentably the case, even labelling them "heretics" or "schismatics," is presumptuousness, a legacy of that great sin of pride. This applies to both Churches. While bluntness can be hurtful, the stark reality of the situation needs to be addressed on the way to conversion. It must also be remembered that no one Church made of humans, can grasp the whole truth which is God. To do so is also presumptuous.

Hence, conversion also entails transcending the immobility which besets Christians when they are paralysed by the past; a past with hurtful memories of pain. In this sense, conversion would be the firm belief that the "power to break the cycle, the impotence, is proclaimed to be the work of Jesus Christ, above all in making new and in freeing humankind from the burden of the past and giving hope for the future."⁷⁵ In a world beset by fragmentation and loss of real identity, there needs to be a reception of the "power" in the positive sense of the word: we need to become empowered by Christ in order "to be freed from the predicament of irreversibility, from the constriction of past history and action, while the category of 'promise' frees human beings to be able to act in the future."⁷⁶

Ecumenical conversion occurs within each Church and therefore, its members, but also between the two Churches – and consequently – their members, on the way to the eschatological consummation, where there would cease to be two Churches but only one Church. Both the Orthodox and the Catholic Church are true Churches, yet there are no

⁷⁴ Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches*, trans. James Greig (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 21.

⁷⁵ Alan D. Falconer, "The Reconciling Power of Forgiveness," in *Reconciling Memories*, ed. Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998), 178.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* This aspect is also explored in Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958).

two Churches. Vghenopoulos rightly affirms, “the same mystery of Christ is present in both the local Roman Catholic Churches and the Eastern Orthodox local Churches. The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is present in these Sister Churches.”⁷⁷ They are together one Church, imperfections of the one Church of Christ, where God, in all humility, has chosen to dwell and work through his Spirit to reach out to the whole human race. The truth, that conversion occurs all the time, needs to be reinforced on a daily basis. Conversion goes hand in hand with prayer. Standing before God is the realisation that one and consequently, each Church, is in need of God’s mercy all the time.⁷⁸

This, in turn, leads to the acknowledgement that mercy must be a virtue which exudes from each Christian who has freely received God’s mercy, without any feeling of superiority. Pope Francis recalls Christ’s immense and gratuitous mercy, leading him to take the initiative and to encounter the sinful humanity.⁷⁹ As he states: “God is not closed in himself, but he opens up and he communicates with humanity. In his immense mercy, he overcomes the abyss of infinite difference between him and us, and he comes to meet us.”⁸⁰

The plea for mercy occurs at “the individual level, but also as members of the Church, united in the same communion of faith in the Trinity, in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁸¹ The Lord’s Prayer asks for forgiveness using the plural “we,” which

⁷⁷ Maximos Vghenopoulos, “Il perdono tra le chiese: Il ‘Tomos Agapis,’ in *Misericordia e perdono. Atti del XXIII convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa*. Bose, 9-12 September 2015, ed. Luigi d’Ayala Valva et al., (Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2016), 312. The following is the original Italian text: “Lo stesso mistero di Cristo è presente sia nelle chiese locali cattolico-romane, sia nelle chiese locali ortodosse. La chiesa, una, santa, cattolica e apostolica è presente in queste chiese sorelle.”

⁷⁸ See Antonio Mennini et al., “Misericordia e perdono tra le chiese,” in *misericordia e perdono. Atti del XXIII convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa*. Bose, 9-12 September 2015, ed. Luigi d’Ayala Valva et al. (Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2016), 372.

⁷⁹ See Francis, “Dio ci viene incontro,” in *Dio ci viene incontro: Le parole di Papa Francesco* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), 66.

⁸⁰ Ibid. The original Italian text is the following: “Dio non è chiuso in se stesso, ma *si apre e si mette in comunicazione* con l’umanità. Nella sua immensa misericordia, supera l’abisso dell’infinita differenza tra Lui e noi, e ci viene incontro.”

⁸¹ Mennini, “Misericordia e perdono tra le chiese,” 372. The original Italian text runs thus: “La richiesta di perdono riguarda ciascuno di noi individualmente, ma ci riguarda anche in quanto membri della chiesa uniti nella stessa comunione di fede nella Trinità, in Dio Padre, Figlio e Spirito Santo.”

serves to project the community dimension.⁸² Ware's reflection on the community aspect is so poignant:

We believe in God-Trinity who is not only one-in-three, not only a unity, but is union; not only personal, but interpersonal. We believe in a God who is a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This means that, as human beings created in the image of One and Trinitarian God, we are saved not as single individuals, but as members of the family which is the Church and, therefore, we cannot be forgiven by God if we do not forgive each other.⁸³

If, as is the case for the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the discourse revolves around the notion of Sister Churches, then the superiority of one Church over the other, and the notion that one Church is in the right and the other is on the erring side, is dissipated. In humility, all believers come together and claim, echoing Pope John Paul II's passionate plea in his apostolic journey to Greece in 2001, that all are sinners and are in need of mercy.

5.06 Readdressing History and a Purification from Past Memories

It has often been stated that the Orthodox Christians can never forgive the Catholics for what happened during the Fourth Crusade which took place in the 13th century, a lamentable episode which led to the destruction of Constantinople and the imposition of the Latin practices. This is corroborated by Demacopoulos who points out that in the USA it is relatively common to find Orthodox Christians who refer to the events of the Fourth Crusade as if "they were acts of religious violence perpetuated against them personally."⁸⁴ On the other hand, Catholics may often state that the Orthodox Christians'

⁸² See Kallistos Ware, "La dinamica del perdono nei padri," in *Misericordia e perdono. Atti del XXIII convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa. Bose, 9-12 September 2015*, ed. Luigi d'Ayala Valva et al. (Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2016), 78-79.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁴ George E. Demacopoulos, "Crociate, memoria e perdono nella costruzione dell'identità cristiana," in *Misericordia e perdono. Atti del XXIII Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa. Bose, 9-12 September 2015*, ed. Luigi d'Ayala Valva et al., (Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2016), 338. The Italian text is the following: "... che hanno riferimento agli eventi della quarta crociata come se fossero atti di violenza religiosa perpetrati contro di loro personalmente." This article previously appeared in *Istina* 60, no. 4 (2015): 369-381.

mind is still entangled in the remote past, and they need to look forward. One safely concludes that the reality of the situation lies in between the two extreme views.

Nevertheless, Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou are right in stating that:

It was the centuries-long experience of Western crusades in the East, however, that likely marked a permanent turning point in Eastern attitudes toward the West. Historians have argued for generations that the pillaging of Byzantium's financial and religious treasures between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries did far more than weaken the political viability of the Byzantine empire – it embedded a heretofore unprecedented animosity within the Eastern Christian consciousness against a collective “West.”⁸⁵

First of all, why are the views so different? It cannot be denied, as Davies' analysis has shown in chapter 4, that the two traditions harbour two worldviews which are totally different. The danger lies in the imposition of one worldview over the other as the correct view. It may also be an inherent form of Western imperialism over different worldviews. Dialogue between traditions entails an understanding and acceptance of different thought frameworks, not the effacement of one worldview in order to reach a compromise. Understanding each other's differences is a step forwards towards trust and communication.

Western culture is addressed first. Western thought might be characterised by a certain fluidity which, though stemming from historical circumstances, has gone beyond historical roots to a certain sense of disconnectedness. Western Europe, though plagued by wars, has never been seriously threatened by invaders of a different faith, and as a result there has never been any particular threat to the inhabiting Christians' faith. This might be why Catholics and Protestants have so much in common in terms of culture despite substantial differences regarding matters of faith and apostolic succession. On the other hand, the Orthodox, though sharing so much in common with the Roman Catholics in the religious and dogmatic makeup, appear so far away. Culture and history have created a seemingly inseparable gulf between the two traditions. For centuries, Orthodoxy has been subjugated to various hostile regimes which sought to suppress it. Hence, clinging to history and tradition was a coping strategy to assert Eastern Christians'

⁸⁵ George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Orthodox Naming of the Other: A Postcolonial Approach,” in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 6.

identity in the face of looming threats. Of course, these are only some factors which explain the difference in the outlook of the two churches.

Rather than having the usual Western attitude of brushing things off as mere episodes, these important factors need to be faced and addressed. However, “first memories need to be reconciled. Hurt memories cry out for healing.”⁸⁶ A certain appraisal of history is called for. The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in Montreal serves to remind that

A study of history which is ecumenical in scope has appeared ... if such a line of study is pursued it can be of great relevance to the present life and problems of the Church ... We believe, too, that it would have great value in offering possibilities of a new understanding of some of the most contested areas of our common past.⁸⁷

This is corroborated by Pope John Paul II who states that:

With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today.⁸⁸

Moreover, one is continuously reminded that differences in outlook serve to constitute a richness in the way one embraces life. It is also a gift to be shared and cherished. Of course, extremist views can become a danger and keep a tradition fossilised in its thoughts.

One often-quoted example is that referred to at the beginning of this section. It seems that the events of the Fourth Crusade are very much alive for a number of Orthodox Christians, and they serve to rekindle a certain kind of grudge in their dealings with Catholics. Little or no reference is made to the particular circumstances surrounding the event, or the fact that most Catholics have little to do with the crusaders' deplorable

⁸⁶ Margaret Mac Curtain, “Reconciliation of Histories,” in *Reconciling Memories*, ed. Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998), 105.

⁸⁷ P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer (ed.), “Section Report II: Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions,” in *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 55.

⁸⁸ *UUS*, 2.

actions in that tragic episode. Not much mention is made of the positive influences Western Christendom had over the Christian East, even after the events of the fourth crusade. The question arises. Why is this episode, which occurred around eight hundred years ago, so fresh in many of the Orthodox minds, as if this event happened yesterday?

It can be quite unsettling that some Orthodox Christians assert their victimisation at the hands of the Latins as one distinguishing feature of Orthodoxy,⁸⁹ as if they themselves suffered the effects of an inherited action going back about eight hundred years. Another disturbing factor, according to Demacopoulos, is an attitude of superiority brought about by this victimisation inflicted by the “Western heretics.”⁹⁰ Sometimes there might be an inherent danger in the wish to languish in this victimisation:

Indeed, the attachment that modern Orthodox Christians feel (or at least describe) with respect to the victimisation by the Latins during the Fourth Crusade is fascinating due to the degree in which this attachment has become a marker for self-identity in the belief that they possess the true faith.⁹¹

Going further, Demacopoulos rightly asks, “why do some Orthodox authors, from the time of the fourth crusade, have placed the emphasis on this condition of the victim, rather than on mercy and forgiveness?”⁹² This is especially poignant in the light of the fact that the two traditions officially rescinded the mutual anathemas imposed on each other.⁹³ The fact that monks from both the Orthodox and the Catholic tradition lived side by side on Mount Athos is all too easily forgotten. This seems to be especially true of the monks of Mount Athos themselves, some of whom are especially vociferous against any form of communion with Catholics.

Or does the memory attached to the Fourth Crusade go deeper than the events themselves? Demacopoulos advances the theory that the Orthodox opinion of the Catholics must be understood in the terms of a cultural conflict, more than a theological one.⁹⁴ An analysis of canonical decisions against Catholics, taken by Demetrios Chomatenos of Ohrid

⁸⁹ See Demacopoulos, “Crociate, memoria e perdono,” 338.

⁹⁰ See *ibid.*

⁹¹ Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, “Orthodox Naming of the Other,” 6.

⁹² Demacopoulos, “Crociate, memoria e perdono,” 338.

⁹³ See also Vatican – Ecumenical Patriarchate. *Tomos Agapis. Vatican-Phanar, 1958-1970.* (Vatican City: Impr. Polyglotte Vaticaine, 1971).

⁹⁴ See Demacopoulos, “Crociate, memoria e perdono,” 339.

during the 13th century, serves to affirm the safeguarding of a way of life amidst the looming threat of Western colonialism.⁹⁵ The theory advanced by Demacopoulos underscores the real reasons behind decisions taken against the Catholics. At the time, many areas in Western Christendom, still Roman Catholic, had at their disposal military forces to be reckoned with. The intrusion of an alien culture with a stronger military might certainly pose great danger to an existing cultural identity. Various measures may be taken to preserve that identity, and the “canonical” decisions of Chomatenos, amongst others, as analysed in great honesty by Demacopoulos, have been assimilated and fossilised into a religious feud between the two traditions.

Within this light, it is worth commenting on the situation on Mt Athos regarding the Roman Christians. The main reasons for the monks’ antagonism to Catholic presence may very well be the fear of an imperialism from the Roman side which might lay some form of claim, or even intrude, into the bulwark of Eastern Orthodoxy. Otherwise, where is the real meaning of forgiveness in all of this? Why does one still need to cling to the memories of over eight hundred years ago in order to provide a reason to denigrate and mistrust the other tradition? Perhaps, there is still the need for purification and liberation from the shackles of past hurts. While human beings work towards the promotion of love amongst tradition, it is especially true that only God’s grace can truly make all believers transcend the bonds and slavery of history. It must be remembered that forgiveness has a liberating power about it. In speaking about Jesus’ forgiveness of sins, Falconer is so correct in reminding that

In this activity of liberating and empowering, the forgiveness of sins was a crucial factor. It was above all through forgiveness that Jesus of Nazareth seems to have liberated men and women from the burden of their pasts. I do not suggest that the past becomes unimportant, but that the past is no longer a burden. ... It is through this forgiveness that Jesus stands alongside men and women empowering them to be. Forgiveness is an act of “integrative power” enabling the other to be, enabling the other to take responsibility for himself and herself.⁹⁶

While the past must be acknowledged, on the other hand, the saving grace of God can be an occasion to look at the past as an opportunity for healing, in order to take action and

⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 340-350.

⁹⁶ Falconer, “The Reconciling Power of Forgiveness,” 185.

creatively shape the future. Both Churches must be prepared and work together in order to ensure that only honesty and love can pave the way for God's work to be accomplished.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic tradition may do well to delve honestly into the historical events alongside the Orthodox Church, analysing their real causes and string of events. As Taft so rightly asserts:

This healing of memories will require us to put aside our myths and confront our common past with historical objectivity and truth, own up to our responsibilities, seek forgiveness, and turn the page to move on to a hopefully better future.⁹⁷

This is especially true if the notion that "history is not the past, but a vision of the past"⁹⁸ is kept in mind. The aspects which are shrouded in myth must be shed off in order to ensure a more correct interpretation of historical events. This task has to be carried out by the two Churches side by side. It is a task which will generate a more genuine dialogue and also allow for conversion in a rethinking of the past. An image from the New Testament which is especially pertinent to describe this process is Simeon the Cyrene helping Jesus to carry his cross. Although the Synoptic Gospels are lacking details, one may safely assume that Simeon the Cyrene was somehow moved to conversion in the unique experience he underwent on that fateful Passover.

The proper unbiased evaluation of events is especially achieved through inter-disciplinary research, including history, archaeology, and so on. It might be interesting if the two traditions participated in Crusade studies, among other episodes of history. A step forward towards the purification of historical memory from the Orthodox side would be to "learn the uses of history in a modern, academic climate that seeks to be fair and objective insofar as that is possible."⁹⁹ One example of Crusade studies was the Sixth International Conference held in August 2004, in Turkey, by the Society of the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East on the eighth centenary of the Fourth Crusade.¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁷ Robert Taft, "Perceptions and Realities in Orthodox-Catholic Relations Today: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future," in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 30.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰⁰ For more details, see Thomas F. Madden, ed., *The Fourth Crusade: Event, Aftermath, and Perceptions: Papers from the Sixth Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Istanbul, Turkey, 25–29 August 2004* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

real aim behind this is to ensure that certain mistakes will not be repeated. Of course, the way of perpetrating certain mistakes would be surely different. Long gone are the days of the use of military prowess in order to subjugate different traditions. Apart from this, inter-disciplinary studies might come especially useful in shedding off “our own limited, often hagiographical vision of our common past” and “try to see ourselves as others see us.”¹⁰¹

It is important to acknowledge the whole historical picture and not just part of it. History must be approached from a two-sided perspective. As McPartlan states, “healing ... can happen when both sides in a conflict face up to the realities of history together.”¹⁰² Orthodoxy must also acknowledge responsibility for various injustices committed against the Catholic West, even to the times of the undivided Church, when in the 8th century, the Byzantine empire placed a number of dioceses in Catholic Southern Italy under its rule, imposing Byzantine ecclesiastical authority.¹⁰³ This is one of a series of episodes for which the Orthodox might wish to ask forgiveness.

The mistakes committed by the Holy See in post-communist Russia in 2002, and referred to in chapter 3 may very well remind both Churches that it is very easy to commit the same mistakes, albeit employing different methods. It must be stressed that all this might be done to the best of intentions, but the consequences unleashed are hardly palatable for the Churches involved. It only serves to ingrain the sense of mistrust already present within some Orthodox Churches. A pilgrim Church, in constant need of conversion, can hardly ever see herself as any better than any other tradition. It must first look inwards and repent, in order to reach out to and embrace, in brotherly love, other traditions. The Catholic Church, similarly to the Orthodox Church, might well remember that:

The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to his own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received. They are warned by the Apostle to live “as becomes saints,” and to put on “as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience,” and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness. Since truly we all offend

¹⁰¹ Taft, “Orthodox – Catholic Relations Today,” 30.

¹⁰² Paul McPartlan, “Chieti and the Trajectory of Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue,” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin*, no. 94 (2018): 4.

¹⁰³ See Taft, “Orthodox-Catholic Relations Today,” 33.

in many things we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: "Forgive us our debts."¹⁰⁴

Acknowledgement, appreciation, and reception of the gifts of both Churches serve to achieve greater respect and maturity between the Churches. Taft is so right when he states that the real problem in the ecumenical dialogue between the Catholics and the Orthodox is behaviour, rather than doctrine.¹⁰⁵ To conclude, the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches is, in this respect, an opportunity for the great dynamism of empowerment and liberation brought forth from forgiveness. It can, then, really be affirmed that "forgiveness is therefore eschatological in that it is a mark of the in-breaking kingdom of God. When true forgiveness occurs, there is God."¹⁰⁶

5.07 Beyond "schismatics" and "heretics:" Monasticism and Ecumenism

As already highlighted earlier in this chapter, in section 5.03, one of the topics in the dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics often involves Eastern monasticism. Monasticism in the East marks the foundation of this charism which developed later in the West in its various forms. Moreover, in the East, monasticism is an important religious influence on the general populace. At this point, one can hardly fail to mention the development, in the West, of monastic communities which are deeply nourished by spiritual ecumenism. These include places such as Bose and Chevtogne. As Kasper states, such monastic communities "have unique opportunities for encounter and mutual enrichment among Christians of different traditions sharing a common spiritual journey."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Second Vatican Council, "'Lumen Gentium:' Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 40.

¹⁰⁵ See Taft, "Orthodox-Catholic Relations Today," 37.

¹⁰⁶ Gabriel Daly, "Forgiveness and Community," in *Reconciling Memories*, ed. Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998), 208.

¹⁰⁷ Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (New York: New City Press, 2008), 81.

Ecumenism has unfortunately often found hostility especially among Orthodox monks. The reason might not be hard to fathom. The monastic life, especially that on Mount Athos, is considered the bulwark of Orthodoxy, and communication with people of other Churches and denominations can be seen as tantamount to mixing with heretics. As stated earlier in this chapter (section 5.06), it seems to be forgotten that monks of the Latin rite lived on Mount Athos side by side for hundreds of years with little or no conflict. The remains of the monastery of the Amalfitan Benedictines, contemporary to the foundation of the Grand Lavra by St Athanasius the Athonite, attest to this often-ignored truth.¹⁰⁸ This monastery was in function till the end of the 13th century, well beyond the West-East Schism and the Fourth Crusade.¹⁰⁹ As Demacopoulos suggested earlier, the real reason goes deeper. The reticence of these monks might reflect the fear of a form of a cultural invasion, which might again jeopardise their identity. After many centuries of suppression by the Ottoman empire, communion with the Roman Catholic Church might instil a fear of a new form of imperialism and domination, this time by the Holy See. On the other hand, calling the other side “heretic” may serve to veil a kind of superiority of belonging to the Orthodox Church in relation to other traditions.

The concerns of members of the Athonite monasteries are especially evident in an open letter sent to the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the eve of the Pan-Orthodox Synod held in 2016. While this letter does not solely address ecumenism, nevertheless, it sheds a light on the Athonite perspective in relation to the other Christians. In the paragraph which addresses the Pan-Orthodox document dealing with ecumenism, one sentence reads thus:

At the same time, the Holy and Great Council, as a higher authority than the preceded meetings, should be complemented by the wording of the relevant text and avoid the use of the term “Church” with regard to the non-Orthodox, and instead use the term “Christian confessions and faiths.”¹¹⁰

The same hostile tone also permeates the paragraph which deals with the bilateral dialogues between the Orthodox and other Christians:

¹⁰⁸ See Demacopoulos, “Crociate, memoria e perdono,” 337-354; also, André Louf, “Les moines d’occident et le Mont Athos au XXe siècle,” *Istina* 50 (2005): 199-213, 205.

¹⁰⁹ See Louf, “Les moines d’occident et le Mont Athos,” 205.

¹¹⁰ Holy Kinot of Mount Athos, “Open Letter of the Kinot of Holy Mount Athos to the Patriarch of Constantinople, *Orthodox Christianity* 3 June, 2016, , <http://orthochristian.com/93943.html>.

The way and the very course of theological discussions do not inspire calm for the whole fullness of the Church, and our sacred community at different times due to different circumstances expressed its opinion in the official documents against the theological agreements with non-Orthodox, protesting against joint prayers and other liturgical actions (in particular, kissing at the Liturgy), thereby creating the false impression of unity with them, as referred to in the document of our meeting priors ...¹¹¹

There is no denying that the Athonite community, the higher echelon of Eastern monasticism, is quite vociferous against ecumenism, and against the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for that matter. In their framework, the other Christians must return to the “One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, or, in our opinion, the Holy Orthodox Church.”¹¹² Within the theological framework of these monks, interaction with the other non-Orthodox can only be accepted for the sake of the latter to join the Orthodox Church. Such a notion is a great stumbling block for ecumenism. It is also one of the reasons why ecumenism is not unequivocally accepted in the Orthodox world, especially among the general populace. The notion of ecumenism may appear totally dangerous to these people who see themselves entrusted with the task of safeguarding the faith against any threats, both from within and from without. People who are deeply steeped in the traditions of Orthodoxy “view ecumenical contacts and conversations as dangerous because they could lead to erosion of the Orthodox faith.”¹¹³

One of the great strengths of monasticism is that of hospitality. Mt Athos and other Eastern Orthodox monasteries are no exception. One of Kasper’s suggestions of exchange visits between members of different monastic communities can assist to the respective members to “become acquainted with the particularities and riches of different traditions.”¹¹⁴ Many other Christian priests and laymen have travelled to Mt Athos and other places with the aim of spending a few days in prayer and meditation. André Louf describes his and other monks’ tremendous experience in Mt Athos in 1969.¹¹⁵ Basil Pennington, a Trappist monk, spent a number of months on Mt Athos in the 1970s. The result of his stay is his extraordinary journal, *The Monks of Mount Athos*.¹¹⁶ Both Louf

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ John A. Jillions, “Orthodox Christianity in the West: the ecumenical challenge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 282.

¹¹⁴ Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, 82.

¹¹⁵ See Louf, “Les moines d’Occident et le Mont Athos,” 199-213.

¹¹⁶ See M. Basil Pennington, *The Monks of Mount Athos: A Western Monk’s Extraordinary Spiritual Journey on Eastern Holy Ground* (Woodstock/VT: SkyLight Path Publishing, 2003). Originally

and Pennington attest to the great and sincere hospitality of the hosts that transcends the theological divisions. Such fraternal welcome by the hosts is to be received with love and, especially humility, which is so often forgotten. Pennington is so true in his vision:

I accept to be the last here. I have left my own community, services, works, spiritual sons, everything, and come as one seeking to learn and not trying to teach. If the Catholic Church approached Orthodoxy in this way, it would be received with the same good will, respect, and love.¹¹⁷

If, for example, the Orthodox are convinced that the Catholic monks come to pray to Mount Athos in good faith, there can be the acknowledgement that the sincere love for Christ is a unifying factor, along with prayer in order to be constantly converted from one's assumptions that the other side is heretic or schismatic. The quote from Pennington's journal reflects the proper attitude that should be present in the encounter between Catholic and Orthodox monks:

The ecumenical path is surely, by human vision, a long, difficult one, stretching far into the future. But with God, all things are possible. We all can agree on that. And the most important thing is prayer, with fasting and humbling ourselves before God and men. God will only hear prayer from a sincere heart, one that really shares the concern of Christ's heart for all his flock. Without this concern our prayer for union is only words. We must first take all into our own heart and suffer over the hurts and wounds and limitations and weaknesses and sins, even as we rejoice and thank God for the good will that is present. The monk who wanted me to be baptised spoke out of a faith-filled love, according to the ardour of his own faith conviction and the vision he had. A Westerner might be tempted to label it as prejudice or narrowness, but if he did, he would be missing the reality that was present, a beautiful reality, even if partial.¹¹⁸

Andrè Louf highlights the tremendous benefits of such pilgrimages to Mount Athos and elsewhere. Such pilgrimages to places of a different Christian tradition enable the pilgrims:

to rekindle that nostalgia for a unity which is in the throes of obscurity, though not lost. It is especially acute in the few monasteries where even the access to the church is forbidden to them, because of their "schismatic" identity."¹¹⁹

published as *O Holy Mountain! Journal of a Retreat on Mount Athos* (New York City: Doubleday, 1978).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 199.

¹¹⁹ Louf, "Les moines d'occident et le Mont Athos," 205. The following is the original text in French: "Le premier fruit en est sans doute de rallumer chez le pèlerins une nostalgie de l'unité aujourd'hui obscurcie, sinon perdue. Elle se fait plus lancinante dans les quelques monastères où même l'accès à l'église leur est interdit, à cause de leur identité censée être 'schismatique.'"

One of the most important gifts which Mount Athos, among other Eastern Orthodox monastic centres, has continuously been offering to pilgrims, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, is a life immersed in prayer. Prayer is the centripetal force on Mount Athos.¹²⁰ It permeates every single act. Prayer is a transformative force. Does it not surely affect the monks in their dealings with the other Christians? Real prayer requires a complete openness, a total letting go of one's thoughts and prejudices and a total dependence on God. Monks, both Orthodox and Catholics, who are hostile to ecumenism are still clinging to the idea that dialogue with the other side constitutes a threat to one's identity. The clinging to perceptions of what constitutes reality blinds one to the living truth. On the contrary, the Resurrected Christ invites all committed Christians to a freedom bestowed by his Spirit who liberates his disciples from the fears of their lives and enlightens them with the sublime truth in a way which frees them from that inner fear in order to reach out to the whole world. Unless this freedom in the Spirit is still present, the inroad in ecumenism is painstakingly slow. On the other hand, Pennington states that one must keep in mind the invitation to re-baptise him, mentioned above, is seen as anti-ecumenical but was engendered in good faith. Both Pennington and Louf speak of their encounters with wonderful monks and hegumens of great spirituality and also openness to other Christians.

However, the pilgrims can also inherently help the monks in overcoming their fears by their sincere attitude and genuine love of God. Attitudes take ages in order to change, but the fact that many young people, with professional credentials and, hopefully, more openness to the world, are joining Orthodox monasteries is an encouraging sign in itself towards the reality that ecumenism need not be seen as a threat to an identity. Dialogue entails a recognition of differences where these are exposed and dealt with, and although not necessarily resolved, can be certainly transcended. This situation applies to both Catholics and Orthodox. The important aspect is that a culture of love is fostered which enables all to see Christ in each other. Archimandrite Dionysios' comment in his foreword to Pennington's work speaks of Pennington as follows:

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*, 207.

From the depths of his profoundly monastic innermost personality, Father Basil sought to see Christ in the face of every Hagiorite monk – or even just one monk, as he did see him in the eyes of my Elder. And as the bride in the Song of Songs (2, 5) laments spiritually, “I am wounded by love,” so also his heart was and still is wounded by love for the monks of the Holy Mountain.¹²¹

One concludes that this attitude should be proper to both Catholic and Orthodox Christians (and other Christians of other traditions, for that matter) when they are in the company of each other. This attitude goes beyond the fear of losing one’s identity; rather, aside from the artificialities of confessionalism, one’s Christian identity, as Murray says, is affirmed. One’s faith can only be affirmed in dialogue with Christians of other traditions. At this point, it is worth looking at monasteries where ecumenism has been a success story. These include places such as Chevtogne in Belgium, and Bose in Italy, where monks from different traditions have come to work and pray together, not to mention their excellent research articles and books. A visit to Bose monastery can only confirm the success of ecumenism in the core of the Christian life, monasticism. One can feel an aura of particular richness exuding from a harmony of the different traditions could be felt throughout. Indeed, one can concur with Louf who states that “the monastic institution can thus become a place where the Undivided Church can be seen as already visible.”¹²² Such places are witnesses to an ecumenism which does not entail the submission of one tradition to another, or the eclectic blending of traditions but, rather the synergy of traditions which echoes the profound depth of the contemplation of that ineffable mystery which is God.

Louf also credits the Athonite monasticism with the emphasis on the obedience to the Spiritual Elder, an obedience which is certainly more demanding than that shown by the Western monk or nun in their submission to their common rules and institutions.¹²³ Apart from a humility which needs to be rediscovered, it recalls also the spiritual accompaniment at the communal level. The Church, as *Lumen gentium* has pointed out time and again, is a community of believers who journey together towards the eschatological consummation. This spiritual accompaniment is of paramount importance and one feels that this applies also to the lay people outside of the monasteries. The ecclesiological nature of the community of Christians transcends any one particular way

¹²¹ Dionysios, “Foreword,” in M. Basil Pennington, *The Monks of Mount Athos*, xiv.

¹²² Louf, “Les moines d’occident et le Mont Athos,” 212.

¹²³ See *Ibid.*, 207.

of life or charism. This spiritual obedience entails a common obedience to the Lord and His Spirit.¹²⁴ As Louf correctly points out, “this testimony seems to consecrate the spiritual pilgrimage, and the dialogue which can ensue between a father and his son, as one of the privileged places of the ecumenical exchange.”¹²⁵

There might be less cases of Orthodox monks going on pilgrimage to Catholic monasteries, though Louf highlights a few singular examples.¹²⁶ However, it is certainly the case that thanks to the sincere encounter on monastic grounds “we recognize each other in the same evangelical experience of renunciation, of praying, of a humble life of love for Christ in this mutual recognition, prejudices fall and misunderstandings become clearer.”¹²⁷ It can be hoped that time proves this right in the sincere and humble endeavour on the part of the holy Orthodox and Catholic Christians who assemble on monastic holy ground.

5.08 Encounter with the Other – the Art of the Restructuring of an Identity: A Psychosocial Perspective

In several instances in this thesis, it has been concluded that the emphasis on the anti-ecumenical stance adopted by various Christian groups has to do with a preservation of identity. This has been especially proven through an itinerary undertaken back in time in order to sift the blurring of history and fiction, with the intention of extrapolating the main historical factors.

It has been seen how belonging to a tradition is an essential aspect of one’s identity. Echoing Gadamer and Heidegger, Bond argues correctly that “the concept of belonging

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*, 209.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

¹²⁶ See *ibid.*, 211.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 212. The text runs thus: “au-delà des formules théologiques encore difficiles à harmoniser, on se *reconnait* mutuellement dans la même expérience évangélique de renoncement, de prière, d’une humble vie d’amour à cause du Christ. Dans cette mutuelle reconnaissance, les préjugés tombent et les malentendus s’éclaircissent.”

to tradition is central to recognizing our place within being. ... this belonging is pluralist – we do not all belong to the same tradition. The Christian tradition is represented in different traditions.”¹²⁸ Fear of the other implies a fear of being influenced and, ultimately, going over to the other side. It is the fear of losing one’s identity or, even worse, assuming an eclectic or syncretic visage.

It cannot be eschewed that:

Every community encountering differences loses some control over the boundaries of its own identity. Listening to the other, we are brought not just to compare his or her answers to ours, but much more deeply to discern his or her questions and the whole process which brought an individual or a community from a common origin to a different theological construct.¹²⁹

This might be one of the factors behind the resistance to ecclesial change. Pizzey is correct in stating that “resistance to ecclesial change is complex, involving many factors. However, one of the most significant challenges facing ecclesial learning and church renewal today is that of ecclesial identity.”¹³⁰

Geraldine Smyth’s psychoanalytic contribution to the receptive ecumenism endeavour is an original, if unusual and highly practical input to the ecumenical field. Smyth hails from Northern Ireland and her exposition is deeply influenced by the recent turbulent political and religious conflicts in her own country. In contrast, the present work is about a dialogue between two traditions mainly based in different geographical areas. So, one might ask how much of Smyth’s contribution is really relevant to the Orthodox – Catholic dialogue.

This perspective, teamed with the social aspect needs to be further explored because, one gathers, it has great potential to further yield learned contributions. The title of her excellent paper is “Jerusalem, Athens and Zurich – Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Factors Inhibiting Receptive Ecumenism.” However, one may feel it would be more

¹²⁸ Maurice Bond, “An Ecumenical Paradigm,” in *Reconciling Memories*, ed. Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998), 88.

¹²⁹ 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), 94.

¹³⁰ Pizzey, “Receptive Ecumenical Learning,” 65-66.

accurate to speak of psychosocial perspectives underlying inhibitions and promoting dialogue at the same time within ecumenism. This acquires great significance especially in this thesis' previous insistence that ecumenism be explored within various perspectives. Moreover, this inter-disciplinary approach will have great benefits to theology in general. It is further proof how theology itself can dialogue with the other disciplines in order to dialogue with the outside world. At any rate, Smyth's perspective provokes questions which need to be taken into consideration if one is to venture forward in ecumenism. Ecumenism, as does all theology, needs to take into consideration the whole human being if it is to progress further afield.

To return to the Catholic – Orthodox dialogue, it has been agreed that differences in doctrine do not pose an obstacle to an eventual reunion between the two Churches. However, further study is to be carried out on the way one's identity is envisaged, and the mechanisms behind the struggle to maintain this identity at all costs.

Various factors revolve around identity discourse within the two Churches. Most of them are universal in nature. The impact on notions of identity can also be applied to the Church structures. Pizzey states that, "globalisation, pluralism, secularism, and postmodern fluidity are some of the factors behind this trend, making identity at once both more important and also more fragmented and elusive."¹³¹ Yet, given the globalisation and pluralism which characterise the contemporary world, affirming one's identity and ecclesial identity during these times, is even stronger. The need to retreat into what is felt as constituting the Church is felt even stronger than before. This explains the phenomenon of an increasing anti-ecumenical stance especially entrenched among monastics, as previously pointed out. The West-East discourse, though relatively obfuscated, also comes into play with regard to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Both Churches share the main theological tenets, and yet the social and cultural milieux which shape their frameworks are different. This must be kept in mind, especially when addressing certain factors such as the impact of history. These are the aspects which must be dealt with, along with the theological aspects, in the Ecumenical Movement. Ecumenism is not simply about theology but about the whole concept behind the ecclesial structures and identity. In the whole process, "a static, or 'hardened identity,'

¹³¹ Pizzey, "Receptive Ecumenical Learning," 66.

is therefore a challenge for ecclesial learning. For both ecumenism and renewal, ecclesial identity can be a barrier to learning if there is a perception that the aim is to diminish identity.”¹³²

Having mentioned ecclesial identity, here, it is therefore appropriate to recall the *Groupe des Dombes*’ seminal work *On the Conversion of the Churches*, mentioned earlier in the thesis. As Smyth states of the latter work, it “has pressed the notion of conversion in relation to ecumenical ecclesiology, calling the churches to assume responsibility for their histories of mutual hostility, historical exclusions, *anathemata*, and diverse moral and theological failures.”¹³³ It invites the Churches to shed off the layer of confessionalism which makes them cling to a false sense of identity. The fossilisation of what is perceived as ecclesial identity can pose a danger, obstructing the fullness of each Church. As Pizzey remarks, “the problem is that ecclesial identity can become too dependent on one or two critical issues, making it both rigid and resistant to change, and actually diminishing the fullness of a tradition’s identity.”¹³⁴

In alluding to philosophical and developmental psychology, Smyth underscores the importance of looking at the psychosocial mechanisms at work in ecumenism, especially those in identity-formation and how this is built on a harmonious antinomy of “security and change; attachment and loss; distance and intimacy; independence and reciprocity.”¹³⁵ This is highly useful and the Churches in dialogue really need to consider the contribution of these disciplines and how these can help them promote a healthy identity which can only be enhanced with the proper dialogue with other Churches and traditions. This would be a classic example of the relational aspect between the human sciences and spirituality. Moreover, Smyth does a good job in integrating this aspect with the divine mystery of Christ. This is highly important, considering the danger of reducing the ecumenical and spiritual to the psychological, and vice-versa. It must be remembered

¹³² Ibid., 67.

¹³³ Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens,” 289.

¹³⁴ Pizzey, “Receptive Ecumenical Learning,” 67.

¹³⁵ Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens,” 286. John Bowlby’s seminal work on attachment, separation, and loss from a psychoanalytic perspective is helpful in trying to come to terms with the processes underlying hostility, and can prove extremely helpful in the ecumenical field in addressing situations like fear from identity loss, and so on. See *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); *Separation: Anxiety and Anger* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), and *Loss: Sadness and Depression* (London: Pimlico Press, 1998).

that the strength of Receptive Ecumenism hinges on the integration between the application of the theological notions, together with the spiritual aspect. It is the integration of these aspects which can really spur the way forward.

Smyth states that terms associated with psychology, especially psychoanalytic psychology, are also present in the ecumenical endeavour, terms such as: “fight, flight, repression, fear, resistance, denial, chaos, apathy, vision, identity, community, leadership, limits, breakdown, loss, and increasingly, even in secular contexts, spirituality and transformation.”¹³⁶ Distortions within traditions can even be spoken of, especially the way these have been appropriated.¹³⁷ For example, one speaks of the fear of a loss in identity in dialogue with the other tradition, which is often masked by hostility. Can this fear be overcome? One needs to revert to the notion of what constitutes a true identity. Smyth refers to the psychological idea of the “secure base” as the platform from which a child can gradually achieve confidence in his/her dealings with the world. “Thus, as the capacity for interdependent relationship grows, there evolves also a facility in being less anxiety-ridden in the face of doubt, in learning from mistakes, negotiating ambiguity, and taking into account the needs of others.”¹³⁸ In the ecumenical arena, one can speak of the platform of the “secure base” of each Church, from which each Church can reach out to the other without a fear of being herself compromised even in her identity in the process:

Included in a healthy sense of identity, as intimated already, is the ability to keep the other in view and to form relationships. There is also the expectation that one will develop a sense of meaning through the exercise of self-knowledge, critical reflection, fidelity, and openness towards one’s tradition, and the ability to make prudent judgements when facing moral complexity and limit-situations. In such ways, humans mature into the realisation that they live in relationship and according to narratives larger than themselves.¹³⁹

Other, similar language can be used to explain this paradigm of venturing outside the limitations of the self. Hence, “we must recognise identity as a dialectical rather than a static or conflictual reality and that its preservation demands a mutual learning process between ‘our’ and ‘other’ traditions.”¹⁴⁰ This perspective recognises the transformative process of Receptive Ecumenism. Dialogue with and reception of the other tradition

¹³⁶ Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens,” 288.

¹³⁷ See Bond, “An Ecumenical Paradigm,” 96.

¹³⁸ Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens,” 291.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁴⁰ Bond, “An Ecumenical Paradigm,” 97.

entails a dynamic change that in turn can only lead to a genuine meaning of what Murray states earlier on in his assertion that dialogue with the other enables a person to be more Catholic, more Orthodox, and so on. Bond reiterates that “it is not the forsaking of one place in order to be something else but an expansion of selfhood by way of being identified with and challenged by the ‘other.’”¹⁴¹ One is invited to comprehend that:

Identity does not mean being identical. Selfhood which does not see itself as the whole demands recognition by and of otherness. Self-consciousness is a reflective reality which establishes identity in encounter with and appropriation of what is ‘other’ or different.¹⁴²

This would be a very sound invitation for Orthodox scholars to consider ecumenism also from the perspectives of various disciplines, without leading these efforts to dissipate into reductionism. Smyth is very adamant in stating that

in seeking for ways in which psychology and theology can cooperate creatively, one must bear in mind the two orders given with creation (nature and grace), together with the different modes of knowing and of knowledge-inquire adequate to them. It is necessary to avoid confusion of levels, whether by way of reductionism, repression, or sublimation.¹⁴³

However, as has been repeated countless times, in other matters such as anthropology and sciences, the Orthodox Church can well learn a lot from the Western inter-disciplinary approach which, one feels, is very relevant in dealing with theological matters. The Roman Catholic Church’s way of dialogue with the contemporary world, with being a part of the world, reflecting the true witness to the Gospel in the Church’s communication, and not confrontation with the world, can be an inspiration to the Orthodox Church in showing that while dangers are always present, the Church need not fear to engage with the world. A tradition which has a very profound belief in the Holy Spirit and his works need to remember that the Church’s very task is that to be a witness to the kingdom of Christ and a beacon of true joy in the current world. It is a blessing indeed that the Orthodox Church is gradually hearkening to this call and is spreading its wings.

Freud states that in conflict situations, distinctions which might not be dramatic acquire a potency which reverberates to the group’s central identity in its decision to uphold these

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴² Ibid., 93.

¹⁴³ Smyth, “Jerusalem, Athens,” 288.

differences.¹⁴⁴ This is reminiscent of Demacopoulos's argument in an earlier section, in his analysis of the historical events which have been fossilised in the minds (and hearts!) of so many Orthodox to the point that their identity is sometimes affirmed as a result of their distant forefathers' suffering at the hands of the Roman Catholic crusaders in the thirteenth century.

It is apt to refer to Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity"¹⁴⁵ in the quest for one's identity, namely the "melting of boundaries and bonds and tension between the desire to relinquish commitments which may lack meaning tomorrow, and a yearning to belong,"¹⁴⁶ It revolves around "the reality in which life considers highly what is transitory rather than permanent, the immediate rather than the long term; and regards utility as prior to any other value."¹⁴⁷ Smyth correctly argues that against the backdrop of violent histories, the issue of "Identity" in ecumenical relations often riddles the encounter between Churches and traditions with anxiety. Conversion permeates all layers of the ecumenical encounter. The call to conversion is an invitation to the Churches to see and realign their identity along the dimensions of belonging and that of freedom; and so, along what constitutes genuine identity and the letting go of confessionalism, which generates negativity. "It is important that churches perceive the theological and moral challenge to transcend the role of guardians of cultural or confessionalist boundaries."¹⁴⁸

Dialogue entails the ability to listen to the other who narrates his own history and identity in complete honesty and without compromise.¹⁴⁹ Identity is inextricably bound to narrative and tradition.¹⁵⁰ The ecumenical arena has the potential to be the place where through the process of dialogue, a community narrates its collective experiences as

¹⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 292.

¹⁴⁵ The concept of "liquid modernity" is described and developed by Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁶ Smyth, "Psychoanalytic Perspectives," 292.

¹⁴⁷ Palese Emma, "Zygmunt Bauman. Individual and society in the liquid modernity," *Springer Plus* 191, no.2, (2013): 1.

¹⁴⁸ Smyth, "Psychoanalytic Perspectives," 294.

¹⁴⁹ See Rossi, *Manuale di ecumenismo*, 61.

¹⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, 61.

pertaining to its own identity, to its tradition.¹⁵¹ Zizioulas goes a step further in stating that:

Dialogue is a step further than tolerance. It involves the recognition that the other, the different, exists not simply in order to exist—that is what tolerance means—but exists as someone who has something to say to me, which I have to listen to seriously, relate to my own convictions, and judge under and in light of those convictions.¹⁵²

As Smyth does, Christians are reminded to listen to Christ's invitation and challenge, together with the grace, to a genuine conversion, in a transformative process from a self-centred identity as the criterion for self-assuredness and superiority, in a bid to reach out to the world. Smyth makes use of the episode of the conversation of Christ with Mary Magdalene after his Resurrection (Jn 20, 11-18). It is an invitation to let go of her clinging to a "master-disciple relationship" in order "to go out and preach – to announce the vision not yet spoken."¹⁵³ A proper conversion entails the harmony between the individual and the communal or ecclesial aspect.

Jesus' invitation involves a shedding of a Christian identity which is not conducive to a genuine development of ourselves vis-à-vis the others. Too often believers are lulled by a false sense of security in belonging to a Christian tradition to be open to his invitation, which involves a constant conversion. This conversion achieves its authenticity in dialogue with the others. The encounter with the other is the encounter with Christ himself. As Pope Francis states, Christ accompanies us throughout the journey.¹⁵⁴ The continuous gift of grace which is always present together with this challenge comes as part and parcel with the Lord's promise to make all things new. The encounter and genuine dialogue with the other is the opportunity, through the grace bestowed upon by the Lord, for one's transfiguration and that of the partner in dialogue. Transfiguration does not mean the loss of one's identity; it is, rather, its glorification in communion. In

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*; see also Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame/IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

¹⁵² John D. Zizioulas, "The Orthodox Church and the Third Millennium," *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed. Fr. Gregory Edwards (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2010), 398.

¹⁵³ Smyth, "Psychoanalytic Perspectives," 294.

¹⁵⁴ Francis, *Dio ci viene incontro: Le parole di Papa Francesco* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), 158.

the process, the encounter with the other becomes a foretaste of the solemn encounter with the Other.

5.09 Transcending loss and fear: Education in Ecumenism

One of the perennial challenges to Christianity is its response to the contemporary world. However, a disconcerting question comes up: How is Christianity to communicate the one truth effectively to the world if it is itself divided? Ecumenism acquires a prominent role in this respect. A Church in unity can be more relevant in promoting God's unchanging truth to the world. How are Catholics and Orthodox to respond to this challenge?

The earlier chapter of this thesis have dealt with different aspect in relation to reception and dialogue, however there can be no real inroad except for conversion and education. The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches is unequivocal in its affirmation:

The multiplex process of reception requires a process of education and formation which embraces both the intellectual and theological dimensions of being trained in ecumenical dialogue and the existential and spiritual dimensions of receiving and recognizing one another in the name of Christ. Ecumenical formation and reception, therefore, are intrinsically intertwined.¹⁵⁵

Education is the key in order to foster a healthy attitude and let go of unnecessary and unfounded fears, even in dialogue with the other Christian traditions. Too often the focus has been on the other tradition as the enemy, as the heretic or the schismatic. As this thesis has sought to show thus far, the energy needs to be channelled elsewhere. This is where education in ecumenism comes in. The aims of ecumenical formation are:

¹⁵⁵ Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Ninth Report of the Joint Working Group: Receiving One Another in Christ. Appendix A: A Key to Ecumenical Progress*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013, PDF file, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013, file:///C:/Users/dbuttigieg532/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/JWG_9th_Report%20(1).pdf 93-94.

to awaken the hearts and souls of Christians to the ecumenical imperative; to acknowledge the results of the ecumenical movement in all its levels and expressions; and to form persons of dialogue now, especially in order to pave the way for the education of future generations who are committed to the quest for unity.¹⁵⁶

Unfortunately, the reality can be somewhat different. Antony Vrame states that

Orthodox education is still content with demonstrating religious difference, antiquity and peculiarity as a community. By focusing almost to an absurd extreme on confessional concerns, we leave little time for the deep concerns of the world today. This makes us appear increasingly irrelevant to the important conversations of the world and thus ill-prepared for dialogue with the other.¹⁵⁷

The Church needs to work in unison if it is to properly respond to the concerns of the world. It must set by example. Consequently, one task which the Church of Christ must work upon is to present to its faithful a sincere appraisal of the different traditions in complete honesty. As Vrame argues, hand on heart,

One task of theological education is to present both one's own faith tradition and also the faith tradition of another accurately, in as non-judgmental attitude as one can, because no matter what our position is towards the religious other, our appropriate stance is to respect the faith commitments of the religious other.¹⁵⁸

This echoes *Unitatis redintegratio*, which states that: "sacred theology and other branches of knowledge, especially of a historical nature, must be taught with due regard for the ecumenical point of view, so that they may correspond more exactly with the facts."¹⁵⁹ As has been noted on previous occasions, faithfulness to one's tradition implies a thorough knowledge and awareness of one's own tradition first, in order to be able reach out to another tradition. Hence, the danger of a "syncretism" of traditions would be avoided.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 94.

¹⁵⁷ Antony C. Vrame, "Toward an Ecumenical Ethos in Orthodox Theology and Education," in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education* ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International – in cooperation with WCC Publications], 2014),94.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ UR, 10.

Vrame speaks of a dialogical approach to theological education, which “requires an openness and a willingness to engage the “religious other” whether in face-to-face dialogue or in dialogue with the sources of the other’s faith tradition.”¹⁶⁰ A proper dialogical approach stems from dialogue and, hence, is no submission or reduction of one tradition to another. It is an education which leaves no room for polemic:

It is most important that future shepherds and priests should have mastered a theology that has been carefully worked out in this way and not polemically, especially with regard to those aspects which concern the relations of separated brethren with the Catholic Church. This importance is the greater because the instruction and spiritual formation of the faithful and of religious depends so largely on the formation which their priests have received.¹⁶¹

It involves an honest appraisal of both traditions, and a realignment of a way of thinking which befits each tradition.¹⁶² Within this perspective, it would be most helpful to make use of various disciplines such as psychology and sociology, along the more obvious grounding in the theology of both traditions. This can be especially important in order to engender critical thought within this approach, where along with the transmission of tradition, “learners can be taught to challenge the information they encounter and think critically about it, if for no other reason than that some information they receive is reliable and some far less so.”¹⁶³ This leads back to Örsy’s words earlier on in relation to genuine reception, namely in critically discerning what is pertinent to one’s tradition in the process of embracing a new insight, in such a way that “the new can be rightly judged as the unfolding of a hidden potential in the old.”¹⁶⁴

5.10 A Reception of the Gift of Sainthood

Westminster Abbey bears a perpetual witness to an ecumenism of martyrdom. Ten statues to modern martyrs stand above the Abbey’s Great West Door. These saints hail from different Christian traditions. These include Dietrich Bonhoeffer, St Maximilian

¹⁶⁰ Vrame, “Towards an Ecumenical Ethos in Orthodox Theology and Education,” 94.

¹⁶¹ *UR*, 10.

¹⁶² See also *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Vrame, “Towards an Ecumenical Ethos in Orthodox Theology and Education,” 95.

¹⁶⁴ 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), 43.

Kolbe, St Oscar Romero and The Grand Duchess Elizabeth. This testifies to the reception of the meaningful life led by these saints from the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. What do these people have in common? Their lives are a ray of testimony which radiates into the world and, in turn, leads back to God. It is a testimony which, in some cases, has led to the ultimate sacrifice of one's life in violent upheavals. The holy witness of such people even in contemporary times serves to show the permanence of the Church. As John Paul II states in *Ut unum sint*:

The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of Churches and Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigour to the Council's call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the Kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, the martyrdom of such people puts the majority of Christians who are entangled in their differences, to shame. Pope John Paul II's voice speaks to any era of the existence of the holy Church of Christ:

We know that during her earthly pilgrimage the Church has suffered and will continue to suffer opposition and persecution. But the hope which sustains her is unshakable, just as the joy which flows from this hope is indestructible. In effect, the firm and enduring rock upon which she is founded is Jesus Christ, her Lord.¹⁶⁶

The role martyrdom played at the emergence of the Church and still plays in the contemporary Christian world, especially in accelerating the call towards the unity of the One Church of Christ, has already been discussed. Within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox dialogue, this seemingly gargantuan task of achieving unity can be first thrust forth through the first step of the reception of the saints hailing from the two traditions. It enables each tradition to come closer towards appreciating and understanding further the treasures of the other tradition. This would strengthen the voice of the Church in responding to the urgency of the times amidst the cacophony of shrill cries. Enzo Bianchi reminds every Christian that "the millennium which has just commenced needs, more

¹⁶⁵ See John Paul II, *Ut unum Sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), 1.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

than apologetics, witnesses of Christianity,”¹⁶⁷ echoing Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*.¹⁶⁸

In a message of the Orthodox Primate on 26th September 1995, the primates affirm unequivocally that:

in various lands, Orthodox Christians have suffered cruel and prolonged persecutions. Their martyrdom encouraged the Orthodox to an ethos of evangelical humility and of “the endurance and faith of the saints” (Rev 13, 10), to trust in him who “went out conquering and to conquer” (Rev 6, 2) – to trust in him with the assurance that, along with the life of the Cross of Christ, comes the experience of the Resurrection. The blood of these known and unknown martyrs connects our Church in a special way with the apostolic age.¹⁶⁹

The recognition of the saints and martyrs is not a new find. Bianchi states that in the beginning, martyrologies documenting the lives and death of various martyrs from different communities became an instrument of unity among the churches.¹⁷⁰ It would also be a message of universal perseverance in the midst of the adversities assailing the Church. The mutual reception of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic saints only serves to make the voice of the Church even more convincing and truthful in the midst of the relativism of truth which has morally decimated contemporary society.

A section in chapter 3 has dwelt at length on the role of the martyrs as testimonies to a common faith. John Paul II’s words in *Tertio millennio adveniente* are a reminder that:

*In our own century the martyrs have returned, many of them nameless, “unknown soldiers” as it were of God's great cause. As far as possible, their witness should not be lost to the Church. As was recommended in the Consistory, the local Churches should do everything possible to ensure that the memory of those who have suffered martyrdom should be safeguarded, gathering the necessary documentation. This gesture cannot fail to have an ecumenical character and expression. Perhaps the most convincing form of ecumenism is the ecumenism of the saints and of the martyrs. The *communio sanctorum* speaks louder than the things which divide us.*¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Bose Community, *Il libro dei testimoni: martirologio ecumenico*, (Milan: St Paul, 2002), 9. The original, in Italian, runs thus: “Ma il millennio che è appena iniziato ha bisogno, più che di apologeti, di testimoni del cristianesimo; come ricordava papa Paolo VI nella *Evangelii nuntiandi* ...”

¹⁶⁸ Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975 (Frederick/MD: The Word Among Us Press, 1975), par.76.

¹⁶⁹ Bartholomew, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 389-390.

¹⁷⁰ Bose Community, *Il libro dei testimoni*, 8.

¹⁷¹ John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente. Apostolic Letter on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000*, 10 November 1994 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1994), par. 37.

The Catholic reception of Orthodox saints is an act of humility which will greatly enrich the Catholic tradition and will also elevate and glorify the One Church of Christ. The same holds true for the Orthodox reception of Catholic saints. There are various Catholic and Orthodox saints who have testified, or continue to do so, to the enduring meaning of Christianity, and also its dialogue with the world. While the names of such men and women as St Francis of Assisi, St Teresa of Ávila, St Thomas Aquinas, St Catherine of Siena, St Thérèse of Lisieux, St Óscar Romero, Pope St John Paul II are readily familiar within the Christian world, Catholics (and other Christians) can also readily embrace the spiritual marks left by such holy people as St Nil Sorskij, St John Kronstadt, Mother Maria Skobtsova, St Siluon of Athos, Agios Paisios of the Holy Mountain, and so on. The process of reception in this case also entails a mutual recognition of the processes in the canonisations of various holy people. It is a sign of the reception of the gifts bestowed by God upon humanity. It is a sign of trust which extends to the process of sanctification followed within the respective traditions. The Orthodox list of saints should be made available to the Roman Catholics and vice-versa. Hagiographies should be representative of both traditions. This reception should extend also the formation of people involved in catechesis and working within the parishes. This calls for a transcendence of the visible boundaries to a glimpse of the grandeur that is God. A mutual reception of the saints should foster growth in the path of sainthood in the realisation that God's grace which transcends all human boundaries and barriers. One can then truly speak of an unhindered communion of saints gathered together in an angelic choir to celebrate the great divine love of God. This reception, which touches at the grassroot level of Christianhood, necessitates further studies, especially when it comes to formal reception following proper canonical directives.

5.11 Conclusion

Although Receptive Ecumenism puts reception at the forefront, it can be seen that a genuine process of receptive hermeneutics entails quite an exhaustive task which impinges on all aspects of humanity. However, it is believed that a genuine process

presupposes a radical change. *Metanoia* is indeed a radical change which entails a transformation. It also involves a movement from the simple reconfiguration of doctrinal principles, to the much-desired multi-faceted transformation within each of the Churches. In a way, Receptive Ecumenism serves to equip genuine Christian with the tools in order to effect a transformation of their life in dialogue with Christians of other traditions. It is an empowering process which enables the Church to unlearn and shed the fossilisations of confessionalism in humility, in order to bring about true change in the ecumenical encounter, in the juxtaposition of present and future.

It is important to remember that the mentioned transformation is dynamic and, in line with the idea behind Receptive Ecumenism, enables the Christian to take control of the situation in order to effect the required change. Transformation does not mean betraying one's identity but transcending it in order to acquire a larger identity which is made up of the interaction of various factors. In proclaiming the Good News, Jesus does not eschew his tradition. As he states in Matt 5, 17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil." Tradition has never been a fossilised concept since the foundation of the Early Church but, rather, the creative dialogue of the Gospels with the world. Clinging unbendingly to a tradition does not do justice to the tradition, since tradition is alive. It emanates from God, transmitted through the breath of the Holy Spirit.

The dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox provides ample opportunities for this enriching of identities, provided that the criteria are met. While most often, it can be tempting to cling to what readily constitutes one's identity, it is ironic that at times some Christians might not be really familiar with their tradition. Education and spiritual discernment within this process are key elements. As already noted, ecumenical enrichment touches upon all aspects of the human person. However, it aims to provide a challenge to the wounds inflicted by past actions. It is a reality that human existence is tainted with structures of sin. This accounts for all actions of hatred against the other tradition, but above all, for the fear of dialogue with the unknown other and fear of losing one's identity, one of the main culprits for the halt in the dialogue between different traditions, not least between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. A formal acknowledgement of the saints in both traditions is a great step forward in

promoting trust at the grassroots, provided that this reception follows the proper canonical procedures in both Churches.

Ecumenism is an opportunity for redemption from past wounds and sins. This is not to mean that new challenges would not arise. The main reasons which caused the rupture between the two traditions have receded into the background, but new challenges arise to take their place. This will continue until the end of times. However, as Jesus encouraged his disciples by reminding them “Do not be afraid” (Mt 14, 27), the faithful need to remember that God’s grace is ever present while, in an atmosphere of trust, Christians can unwrap the gifts God has bestowed in each of the traditions.

**Chapter 6: The Employment of
Receptive Hermeneutics at the practical
level: Towards a Reception of Orthodox
and Catholic Contributions**

6.01 Introduction

The praxis which underpins receptive ecumenism is that the theory should lead to concrete actions. It is to be hoped that this analysis helps towards a better understanding of the relationship between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches as they accompany each other on the path to eventual reunion. This is the aim of this chapter where the most significant issues which provide a stumbling point between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches are explored. Following these issues, pertinent ideas stemming from the two traditions will be put forward. This is not an attempt at a mere compromise or a pious irenicism, but rather a reflection on how receptive ecumenism can be crucial in coming to terms with persistent problems. A hermeneutic of reception as outlined in chapter one, with the contributing factors as explored in chapter five, will be applied to the existing problems in order to understand how they can be solved by delving into the riches of the two traditions in an objective way. The process involves focusing on the essentiality of faith and tradition present in each tradition in a unique and beautiful way.

Challenges remain. There is no guarantee that in the acceptance of the method of Receptive Ecumenism by one Church, the other partner in dialogue will follow suit. Paul Murray is already aware of this situation, as delineated elsewhere. He is adamant that, “for this process of overcoming stasis to begin, it requires some to take responsibility, to take the initiative, and this regardless of whether others are ready to reciprocate.”¹ Also, dialogue does necessarily presuppose starting from an equal and fixed point. This is especially true because of the different understandings and interpretations of each Church and tradition. Yet, the fact that one Church is ready to put its steps forward along the path of encounter entails a step forward first and foremost in the adventure of love, which presupposes risks and leaps in the darkness of faith. It is this love, the basis for all the other virtues explored in the preceding chapter, which pivots Receptive Ecumenism against the dryness of sole dependence on doctrinal agreement in ecumenism. It is this

¹ Paul D. Murray, “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), 15.

spiritual aspect (itself presupposing vivification) which gives a fresh impetus to the ecumenical venture.

Time and again, it has been argued that the solution requires time in order to finally happen. Time and patience are crucial; however, this does not mean stepping aside and not doing anything. While waiting for the ripe time, ideas should still be put forward and tested in accordance with the level of trust achieved between the two Churches. This is then coupled with the creative force of the Holy Spirit who breathes his abounding life in human actions.

6.02 A Reconfiguration of the Petrine Ministry of Service and the Synodal Structures of the Church

A re-examination of the Petrine Ministry – already referred to in previous chapters – is the fulcrum of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. It is the situation which, apart from the situation of the Eastern Catholics, puts to test the relationship between the two sister Churches. The call for a re-evaluation of the Petrine Ministry of service has already been made by Pope John Paul II in *Ut unum sint*. In the context of this invitation, upheld by Pope John Paul's successors, lies the crucial fact of Rome's acceptance that the present structure of the Petrine Ministry needs to change. This, in itself, is no small feat.

It is certainly the case that with regard to the Petrine Ministry of Service, conciliarity, or synodality, is the way forward. Synodality finds its expression in the structures of the autocephalous Churches comprising the Orthodox Church. This is affirmed by the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group:

Together, we affirm that we have much to learn from one another concerning issues of primacy and synodality. The Catholic Church has been able to sustain a strongly functioning primacy, even if some of its manifestations are viewed as problematic by the Orthodox. The Orthodox, on the other hand, have mostly been able to preserve strong synodal structures at local, regional, and more recently, global levels, even if these at times result in difficult

situations that give Catholics pause. Thus, each side exhibits both strengths and weaknesses, which we can all acknowledge.²

However, a deeper analysis of these structures betrays the fact that, unfortunately, these Churches are in themselves riddled with problems which sometimes limit a complete and sincere dialogue even within the Orthodox Church itself. The Pan-Orthodox Synod of 2016, discussed in chapter 4, was, unfortunately, an example of this.³

The Orthodox themselves are conscious of this problem. The clear and incisive affirmations by Kallistos Ware, reported in chapter 4, are a reminder of this.⁴ The Primate of the Orthodox autocephalic Churches stated the following on the 12th October, 2008:

The Orthodox Church, having the understanding of the authentic interpretation of the teaching of the Apostle to the Nations, in both peaceful and difficult periods of its two-thousand-year history, can and must promote to the contemporary world the teaching regarding not only the restoration in Christ of the unity of the entire human race but also the universality of his work of redemption, through which all divisions of the world are overcome and the common nature of all human beings affirmed.

Nevertheless, the faithful promotion of this message of redemption also presupposes that internal conflicts in the Orthodox Church will be overcome through the surrendering of nationalistic, ethnic, and ideological extremisms of the past. Only in this way will the word of Orthodoxy have on the contemporary world the impact that it should.⁵

On an additional note, it can be safely stated that the extremist tendencies bear nothing but tragic consequences, and the contemporary world is overflowing with the catastrophes wielded by fanaticism. Consequently, it is the case that the Holy See needs to re-evaluate the structure of the Roman Catholic Church in order to make room for more collegiality and synodality within its domains. It is equally the case that the Orthodox Church needs

² St Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, "Serving Communion: Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality." A Study by the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, accessed 10 March, 2019, http://moehlerinstitut.de/pdf/texte/kommunikues/2018_graz_serving_communion.pdf.

³ See Chapter 4, section 4.04.01.

⁴ See Kallistos Ware, "Receptive Ecumenism: An Orthodox Perspective," *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 50-53.

⁵ Patriarch Bartholomew et al., "Messages and Declarations," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 406-407.

to revise its existing structures in order to remain faithful to the conciliarity and synodality espoused by the early and undivided Church.

This need for synodal structures within the Roman Catholic Church has been acknowledged by a previously reticent centralised Roman Curia. Pope Francis affirmed that synodality is the way forward in the third millennium: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”⁶ It is the *kairós* in the structure and life of the Church.⁷ There have been some steps forward, most importantly with regard to the evolving role played by Synods and the episcopal conferences.⁸ The latter, a relatively recent institution, exist on several levels and some of them, such as C.E.L.A.M. and C.C.E.E., have played decisive roles. These are discussed in a later section in this chapter. This is especially true in the development of the role accorded to the Episcopal Conferences and also to the Synod of Bishops, together with the acknowledgement that more needs to be done. This is especially evident in Francis’ words:

The hope expressed by the Council that such bodies would help increase the spirit of episcopal *collegiality* has not been fully realised. We are still on the way, part-way there. In a synodal Church, as I have said, “it is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote *decentralisation*.”⁹

In speaking of these structures, one must be aware of one caveat. The mentioned cases are a number of examples of synodality of bishops. They *do not constitute a norm*. The argument is, rather, for a movement towards a structure where synodality and collegiality become *the norm expressed in different but complementary ways* at the various levels which constitute the Roman Catholic Church, in synergy with the role of the Petrine ministry. This would have a twofold effect. First, the decentralisation with regard to the

⁶ Francis, “Address by His Holiness on the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops,” *Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican Website, 17 October, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html (2015).

⁷ See International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, Vatican Website, 2 March 2018, par. 1, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html#_edn1, par. 1.

⁸ For more details regarding the role and trajectory of the episcopal conferences, see Hector Scerri’s work, *The Gentle Breeze from the Peripheries: The Evolving Role of Episcopal Conferences* (Malta: Horizons, 2018).

⁹ Francis, “Address by His Holiness on the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops.”

preservation of matters of faith would make more sense in a world dominated by globalisation and pluralism at the same time. As Catherine Clifford unequivocally asserts, the bishops “come to appreciate the need, in the diversity of today’s Church, for a differentiated pastoral response and to see the inadequacy of uniform solutions.”¹⁰ The bishops would, therefore, be able to come up with solutions when particular needs arise within their particular regions, in turn, lessening the perceived burden from Rome while providing a myriad of creative solutions. To this end, “the exchange of dialogue is essential to fostering the bonds of communion within the diversity of the global Catholic Church.”¹¹ Secondly, this would cement the ties between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches in their move towards an eventual reunion.

Retrieving synodality entails an appropriation of the Second Vatican Council hermeneutics, especially with regard to the understanding of the Church as the People of God and the notion of shared responsibility in the transmission of the Gospels. There are many such promising signs in the pontificate of Pope Francis. The authority invested upon the whole People of God with regard to infallibility is a case in point, as illustrated by Thomas Rausch. *Lumen gentium*, 12 makes the point clearly, namely that the People of God, being anointed by the Holy Spirit, “cannot err in matters of belief.”¹² This calls for a proper application of a pneumatological hermeneutic, and realigning the importance of the Spiritual experiential dimension. As Denis Edwards argues, a reception of synodality at the structural Church level entails “the idea of the reception of synodality to the deepest place of my personal experience of the Spirit, and testing it with this experience of the Spirit.”¹³

¹⁰ Catherine E. Clifford, “A Dialogic Church,” in *Go into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, ed. T.P. Rausch, R.R. Gaillardetz (Mahwah/NJ, Paulist Press, 2016), 97.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1999), par. 12.

¹³ Denis Edwards, “Ecclesial Decision-Making: Exploring an Insight from Karl Rahner,” in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2018), 33.

Therefore, “all the faithful, considered as a whole, display this infallibility, in believing through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together.”¹⁴ As Edwards continues:

What is offered by a partner church, in this case the commitment to increased synodality, can be tested not only against the personal sense of the Spirit, but also against the ecclesial experience of the Spirit of God in and through the Second Vatican Council. This testing would need to occur at every part of church life, including the *sensus fidelium* of the whole people of God, the theological community, and the teaching office of the church.¹⁵

This Second Vatican Council understanding of the people of God is also affirmed in continually reiterated statements and affirmed clearly by Pope Francis, especially in *Evangelii gaudium*. Indeed, he asserts unequivocally of the need of “decentralisation,” which is the thread in the ecclesiology of Pope Francis. In par. 16, for example, he states that:

Nor do I believe that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the Church and the world. It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound “decentralization.”¹⁶

The last two sentences in this quote have already been highlighted above in the excerpt from Pope Francis’ speech on the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Bishops in 2015. Collegiality exists as a continuum along the lines of synodality. As argued elsewhere, and as stated in the document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*:

In the Catholic and apostolic vision of synodality there is a reciprocal relationship between the *communio fidelium*, the *communio episcoporum* and the *communio ecclesiarum*. The concept of synodality is broader than that of collegiality because it includes the participation of all in the Church and that of all the Churches.¹⁷

¹⁴ Thomas P. Rausch, “A Listening Church,” in *Go into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch and Richard R. Gaillardetz (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), 80.

¹⁵ Edwards, “Ecclesial Decision-Making,” 34.

¹⁶ Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii gaudium” on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*, 24 November 2013 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), par. 16.

¹⁷ International Theological Commission, “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,” *Vatican Website*, 2 March, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html., par. 66.

On the other hand,

collegiality in the strict sense denotes the assertion and expression of the communion of the People of God in the ranks of Bishops, in other words in the college of Bishops *cum Petro et sub Petro*, and - through that - communion between all Churches.¹⁸

Yet, as a corollary to the relationship between the local and the universal church, both synodality and collegiality are inextricably bound and essential in order to cement the foundations of the Church of Christ and, at the same time, guarantee renewal. To this effect:

The notion of synodality implies collegiality and vice versa, inasmuch as they both, being different, support and authenticate each other. Vatican II's teaching on the sacramentality of the episcopate and on collegiality is a basic theological premise for a correct and complete theology of synodality.¹⁹

As a result, the need for decentralisation and a reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry along the lines of synodality and collegiality are called for. It is useful within this perspective to remember Tillard's wise words in his work on *communio ecclesiology*: "papacy is not a sacrament, not even a degree within the sacrament of orders. It is a particular way of putting into operation the episcopal, sacramental, common grace."²⁰ Sacramental grace pours forth from God and is the glue that binds the Church together. Indeed, "the Church, born of the Holy Spirit, and growing through him, gets its life from baptism, which seals the reception of the Word of Salvation, and of the Eucharist around which radiate other rites."²¹ He continues by stating that "the papacy would not be in harmony with the economy of God if it would insert itself in this sacramental circle."²²

The perennial problem would be how to accomplish this reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry along the lines of synodality and collegiality. It was the genuine plea of Pope John Paul II in *Ut unum sint*, and it needs to be addressed if Catholics are intent on recovering a veritable *communio ecclesiology* within the Roman Catholic Church, and if

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ J. M. R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 257.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

they embrace their commitment to a sincere ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox Church by a reception of the helpful ecclesial structures within that Church. The time has come to look at the structures of the autocephalous Churches which together make up the Orthodox Church. However, before moving on, it would be helpful to examine a recent dialogue of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which looks at the structure of the early and undivided Church during the first millennium. This is the Chieti document, promulgated on 21st September 2016 as the result of the fourteenth plenary session of the Joint International Commission.

6.03 The Chieti Document: *Synodality and Primacy during the first Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church* (2016)

This short Chieti document – already referred to in section 4.02 – can be considered one of the hallmarks of the positive works in the realm of theological dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches, ever since the Ravenna document. A very wise step on the part of the Joint International Commission was to look at the significance and the complementarity of the roles of primacy and synodality in the first millennium. Although one might have expected a longer document in the light of the importance of the subject being treated, nevertheless, credence must be given for the first step (or second since Ravenna!) in jointly and in good trust dealing with the roles of primacy and synodality at the time of the undivided Church, centuries before the two roles became polarised and, at times, sadly distorted in the events preceding and following the rupture between the two Churches. These roles of primacy and synodality co-existed at a time before these two roles became the subject of misinterpretation, bad practice and outright opposition, themselves a reflection of the grave wound inflicted upon the Church of Christ.

The fact that the document is titled *Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church* says a lot regarding the bearings of the document. Although the Chieti document deals with the three levels of the Church as a testament and a continuation with the Ravenna document, the thrust of the document is on analysing the realm of synodality as it functioned during the times of the early and undivided Church. Ware correctly points out that certain terms such as “jurisdiction” and “power” are absent from the text.²³ Rather, “Chieti prefers to employ such words as “communion” (*koinonia*), “service” (*diakonia*), and interdependence.”²⁴

The Chieti document builds upon the earlier texts, especially the Ravenna document²⁵ and, again, looks at the diversity of the experiences of the Church in the East and the West with the common elements as the common denominator between the two Churches. In its Communiqué to the document, the Joint International Commission states the following:

While recognising diversity present in the Church’s experience, the Commission acknowledged the continuity of theological, canonical and liturgical principles, which constituted the bond of communion between East and West. This common understanding is the point of reference and a powerful source of inspiration for Catholics and Orthodox as they seek to restore full communion today.²⁶

In paragraph 2, the document affirms the practice of the ideal of unity in diversity in the early and undivided Church:

from earliest times, the one Church existed as many local churches. The communion (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 13:13) was experienced both within each local church and in the relations between them as a unity in diversity. Under the guidance of the Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13), the Church developed patterns of order and various practices in accordance with

²³ See Kallistos Ware, “Catholic-Orthodox Relations following the Holy and Great Council in Crete (2016),” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin*, no. 93 (2018): 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See Paul Mc Partlan, “Chieti and the Trajectory of Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue,” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 94 (2018), 7.

²⁶ Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman and Orthodox Churches, “Communiqué to the 14th Plenary Session: Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church,” *Vatican Website*, 16-21 September 2016, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20160921_documento-chieti_en.html.

its nature as ‘a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’²⁷

Nevertheless, the document gives only a summary of how this diversity was practised. It seems to the author of this thesis that this lack of important detail seems to betray a sense of reticence on the part of the Commission in delving beyond the obvious! To be fair, the document describes the local, regional, and universal churches but only in a maximum of five paragraphs dedicated to each section. Ecumenists and theologians would have expected such a document to present examples of how the unity in diversity was practised which, in turn, could help scholars look forward in applying this maxim to the contemporary situation. On the other hand, in fairness to the precious contribution of the Joint International Commission, the document seems to proceed cautiously on the main issues of contention between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church, in order to mitigate any points of misunderstanding and to cement the gradual trust that is present between the two Churches. Hopefully, the document provides a springboard from which developments will be welcomed in the near future.

The document describes briefly the concepts of *koinonia*, *synodos*, and *protos*, in the second, third, and fourth paragraph respectively, as they were actualised during the times of the undivided Church.²⁸ Each of the three concepts of communion, synodality, and primacy, are unique, yet interrelated. Hence, communion entails the harmonious juxtaposition of primacy and synodality, at a time when “the active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church”²⁹ was a prerogative. The various local churches which existed at that time did not conform to a one-size-fits-all-pattern but, rather, “under the guidance of the Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13), the Church developed patterns of order and various practices in accordance with its nature as ‘a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’.³⁰ It remains to be seen how these different patterns functioned locally while, at the same time, subscribing to the apostolic tradition.

²⁷ Ibid., 2.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 2, 3, 4.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ Ibid., 2. This is a well-known affirmation by Cyprian of Carthage.

On the other hand, as the document makes explicitly clear, only Christ is the *Protos* par excellence: “In the Church, primacy belongs to her Head – Jesus Christ, ‘who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence [*protevon*].”³¹ Moreover, this role, bestowed by the grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit upon a specific bishop, is inextricably linked to service, not power, as it slowly and gradually came to be conceived, especially in the Middle Ages:

Christian Tradition makes it clear that, within the synodal life of the Church at various levels, a bishop has been acknowledged as the ‘first’. Jesus Christ associates this being ‘first’ with service (*diakonia*): ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all’ (Mk 9:35).³²

The document then speaks briefly about each church of the local-regional-universal Church triadic structure. The document reiterates the important concept that the notion of synodality works in a twofold manner. It

primarily denotes a gathering of bishops, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for common deliberation and action in caring for the Church. Broadly, it refers to the active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church.³³

For some reason, this document (as the case of the previous documents) omits a description of the church at the parish level, a point brought forth by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Association. As it asserts,

In this and previous statements, there is little mention made of the reality of the parish. In the perception of many, this is the true local church. The Eucharist is rarely celebrated by a ‘diocese’; it is normally celebrated in a parish.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, “A Response to the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church Document “Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church” (2016), *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 28 October, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical-orthodox/upload/Chieti-Response.pdf>.

This brings the text to the Eucharist, the fulcrum which holds the Church together. Clément's words in this respect are so poignant and bring out the sublimity of the Eucharist:

The Church is thus the sacrament, or "mystery" as the East says, of the Risen One who raises us. At the heart of this all-embracing sacramentality, which fulfils and manifests the sacramental character of creation, is the eucharist.... It is the eucharist that makes of the Church the body of Christ, for it is through the eucharist that the faithful, as Paul says, are "incorporated" in Christ; hence, through the eucharist, the Church is "in Christ."³⁵

The Chieti document also emphasises the role of the Eucharist at the heart of communion. In paragraph 17, it states that:

The taxis of the patriarchal sees had its highest expression in the celebration of the holy Eucharist. Whenever two or more patriarchs gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, they would stand according to the taxis. This practice manifested the eucharistic character of their communion.³⁶

Ever since the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue began, "its trajectory has been eucharistic."³⁷ This is important since a eucharistic approach, especially with regard to the role of the bishop of Rome, "opens new doors to dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox on this highly contentious issue."³⁸

On the other hand, the sacrament of baptism is hardly dealt with.³⁹ Yet, it is through baptism that Christians become members of the One Church of Christ. As the North American Catholic-Orthodox Theological Consultation rightly affirms with respect to the Chieti document, "as in earlier statements, there is much emphasis on the Eucharist. However, it is through Baptism that persons are first incorporated into Christ and his body which is the Church."⁴⁰ While the Eucharist should rightly hold its lofty status, it would appear that the role of baptism also needs to be explored in the near future, for it is thanks

³⁵ Olivier Clément, *You are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy* (Hyde Park/NY: New City Press, 2003), 11-12; see also John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood in the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

³⁶ Joint International Commission, "Synodality and Primacy," 17.

³⁷ McPartlan, "Chieti," 9.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, "A Response to the Chieti Document."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to the initiation through Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) that Christians can partake of the glorious mystery that is the Eucharist.

McPartlan notes correctly that “Ravenna and Chieti both recognise that Rome has always been first in the listing or taxis of the major sees that took shape between the fourth and seventh centuries.”⁴¹ In speaking about the role of the universal level of the Church, the document speaks briefly about the primacy of honour (*presbeia tes times*) accorded to the bishop of Rome within the *taxis* of the five patriarchy sees, in what came to be known as the *Pentarchy*.⁴² Does ‘primacy of honour’ denote simply an honorific primacy?⁴³ As McPartlan points out: “it refers to the serious tasks and responsibilities that have to be carried out by the one who holds the first place, the primacy.”⁴⁴

However, the document does not say how this primacy of honour was exercised, except that it indicates that synodality was still exercised even within this primacy of honour.⁴⁵ The document does point out that there were different interpretations of the exercise of this primacy in the East and the West based on a different interpretation of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers;⁴⁶ however the document does not elaborate on the differing interpretations, although, aware of the high importance revolving around this issue, the document concedes that “our dialogue may return to this matter in the future.”⁴⁷ It is suggested that these differing interpretations be treated in detail in the near future as this warrants an in-depth analysis in order for the dialogue to move forward. The differing interpretations point out a myriad of riches encapsulated in the Scriptures and the Church Fathers; however, they should be exposed in order to confront and come to terms with the applications resulting from these interpretations.

The document highlights the historical notion of appeals over disciplinary matters. This was an attempt dealt with in the important Synod of Sardica (343), and affirmed at the

⁴¹ McPartlan, “Chieti,” 7-8; see also Ware, “Catholic-Orthodox Relations,” 25.

⁴² See Joint International Commission, “Synodality and Primacy,” 15.

⁴³ See Paul McPartlan, “Chieti,” 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, “A Response to the Chieti Document.”

⁴⁶ See Joint International Commission, “Synodality and Primacy,” 16.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*

Council of Trullo (692), whereby “a bishop who had been condemned could appeal to the bishop of Rome, and that the latter, if he deemed it appropriate, might order a retrial, to be conducted by the bishops in the provinces neighbouring the bishop’s own.”⁴⁸ The bishop of Rome and, eventually, the see of Constantinople received appeals, “but the bishop of Rome did not exercise canonical authority over the churches of the East.”⁴⁹ Ware notes that this “qualifying clause was adopted unanimously, not only by the Orthodox delegates but also by the Roman Catholics.”⁵⁰ This has important bearings on the dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox.

An important aspect which the Chieti document brings out is that the practice of unity in diversity did not entail a perfect harmony, lest the Churches be betrayed by a sense of romantic nostalgia in looking at the past. The early Church was also riddled with problems of its own. As the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation makes clear, during the early times of the Church, “there were breaches of communion and struggles from the earliest days (Acts, I Corinthians, I John, Jude). This is, in a way, a sign of a glimmer of hope because it means that ecclesial communion is possible even when there are difficulties.”⁵¹ However, the issues, when they arose, were normally resolved: “Despite certain temporary ruptures, Christians from East and West lived in communion during that time, and, within that context, the essential structures of the Church were constituted.”⁵² Of course, a deeper analysis of how issues were resolved should be forthcoming as this could shed light on dealing with the present stalemate.

On the other hand, it should also be stated that the situation since the West – East schism is completely different, in the sense that over a millennium of separation has ensued and the mechanisms which were in force during the disputes that arose at the time of the early and undivided Church might not be sufficient in dealing with the present situation. Nevertheless, on a note of hope, the Chieti document is very clear that “God reveals himself in history.”⁵³ As such, God’s presence is still felt even in the throes of the divisions between Churches; nevertheless, Christians are called to work in tandem with

⁴⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid..

⁵⁰ Ware, “Catholic-Orthodox Relations,” 26.

⁵¹ North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, “A Response to the Chieti Document.”

⁵² Joint International Commission, “Synodality and Primacy,” 7.

⁵³ Ibid., 6.

the creative force of the Holy Spirit in looking at the past in order to draw their inspiration for the way forward:

This common heritage of theological principles, canonical provisions and liturgical practices from the first millennium constitutes a necessary reference point and a powerful source of inspiration for both Catholics and Orthodox as they seek to heal the wound of their division at the beginning of the third millennium. On the basis of this common heritage, both must consider how primacy, synodality, and the interrelatedness between them can be conceived and exercised today and in the future.⁵⁴

To sum up, for all the valid contributions, the Chieti document can be seen as an interim work which should enable the theologian and the ecumenist to look forward to the resumption of the dialogue on these inextricably bound notions of primacy and synodality. It is certainly the case that this document can be regarded as a stepping stone between the past and the future. To use Ware's words, "our pilgrimage is by no means complete; yet Chieti does indeed constitute a significant step forward in the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue."⁵⁵ Looking at the roles of primacy as they existed then is an inspiration in order to progress to the future, in order to harness tradition in a creative way. It is imperative that future work by the Joint International Commission should build on this topic, meanwhile amassing the trust in collegial working which is so crucial in solving the most enduring barrier between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic sister churches.

6.04 Orthodox Positions on the Primacy

The topic about the position of the papacy is not restricted solely to ecumenical dialogue within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox spheres. The discourse about the papacy permeates the whole Ecumenical Movement. That is a sign of encouragement. Both Churches are ready to depart from their positions of self-defence (in the case of the Catholic Church) and accusation (on the part of the Orthodox Church) in order to come to a better understanding of the implications of the Petrine ministry.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁵ Ware, "Catholic-Orthodox Relations," 26.

An important clarification must be made before pursuing the matter of primacy any further. Here we are dealing with the primacy associated with the Petrine ministry, which is a main stumbling block in the dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox traditions. The importance of the theme is evident from the pages of this thesis. It has already been presented in sections 2.06.01 and 3.05. Primacy is not restricted solely to the Petrine ministry, in itself associated with universal primacy. This point is made especially clear by Alexander Schmemmann at the start of his essay, *The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology*, where he distinguishes between “regional primacy,” “primacy within the autocephalous churches” and “universal primacy.”⁵⁶

In his important work on the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches on the position of the papacy, Adam DeVille describes both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox contributions to the discourse on the role of the Petrine ministry.⁵⁷ His exhaustive list includes also interventions by Oriental Orthodox theologians, although that aspect will not be treated directly in this thesis. We believe that this is a great step forward in putting together all these contributions in order to arrive at a genuine reception of an Orthodox discourse on the role of the papacy, the premise being that Rome is willing to reconfigure and work upon a transfiguration of the Petrine ministry. DeVille analyses the ideas and contributions set forth by the most eminent Orthodox theologians to date, the likes of John Meyendorff, Nicholas Afanasiev, Alexander Schmemmann, Kallistos Ware, Paul Evdokimov, Emmanuel Clapsis, Vsevolod Majdansky, Antonios Kireopoulos, Dumitru Popescu, John Zizioulas, Nicholas Lossky, Olivier Clément, Thomas Hopko, John Erickson, and Hilarion Alfeyev, together with others.

However, this calls for caution. Despite what the theologians have to say, it should ultimately be received by the whole community, in other words by the Eastern Orthodox Christians (hence the title of the thesis) and not just by the higher echelons of their church. This is why the theologians should put the people’s minds at ease with regard to ecumenism, that ecumenism is not a dilution of one’s identity in submission to a

⁵⁶ See Alexander Schmemmann, “The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology,” in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (London: The Faith Press, 1963), 30-32.

⁵⁷ See Adam A.J. DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: Ut unum sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

jurisdictional authority but a communion which celebrates the riches of each particular tradition. The role of theologians and ecumenists is not to create a stratum or a vacuum in which to create and shelf ideas penned down in numerous documents and journals, but to enable those ideas, in tandem with other means of co-operation, to reach the faithful. Only in this way can the faithful really arrive at a more informed decision about what is exactly at stake in doing ecumenism, so that “all believers in Christ can, through this cooperation, be led to acquire a better knowledge and appreciation of one another, and so pave the way to Christian unity.”⁵⁸

What emerges is significant. Firstly, most of the Orthodox theologians and metropolitans argue that Orthodoxy is ready to accept a Roman papacy “as was enjoyed in the first millennium and is prepared to grant to Rome, in a reunited Church, at least that much authority again.”⁵⁹ John Zizioulas is in favour of the Petrine ministry of primacy, provided certain conditions are met, whereby “A universal *primus* exercising his primacy in such a way is not only ‘useful’ to the Church but an ecclesiological necessity in a unified Church.”⁶⁰ A very important point is to be underlined here. It is certainly the case *that there is no place* for a Petrine ministry plagued by the juridical system inherited from the past. A universal jurisdiction can be envisaged as a veneer for another kind of imperialism, something which in view of their history, the Orthodox have every reason to mistrust. This kind of jurisdiction is, rightfully, repudiated. Indeed, the jurisdictional aspect underlying the Roman primacy is the major point against which the majority of Orthodox scholars are vociferously unanimous. DeVille is correct in stating that:

there is not, and cannot be, any supreme juridical power or domination by one bishop over the other bishops, who are sacramental equals in their stewardship of the eucharistic mysteries. ... Such jurisdiction is regarded as both historically and canonically unsupported and theologically unjustifiable. It is unacceptable to the East not only because of its culture and historical practice of local autocephaly, but also because such a claim is irreconcilable with Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine in the light of which Orthodox ecclesiology is to be understood.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Second Vatican Council, “*Unitatis Redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New Delhi: St Pauls, 1975), par. 12.

⁵⁹ DeVille, *Orthodoxy and The Roman Papacy*, 44.

⁶⁰ John Zizioulas, “Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach,” in *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 125.

⁶¹ DeVille, *Orthodoxy and The Roman Papacy*, 45.

Secondly, the need for a primacy is necessary in the view of the current situation of some of the Orthodox churches, at times beset by strife over the notion of jurisdictional problems, especially in the case of the American continent.⁶² Indeed, especially in the United States of America, Orthodoxy has been plagued by chaotic jurisdictional disarray, where parallel Orthodox jurisdictions exist within the same country.⁶³ It is indeed ironic that at times the fossilisation of the understanding of canonical territory and jurisdiction are not as distant from the current Roman practice of Petrine ministry. These are situations which need to be overcome in order to ensure a synergy between the local churches, especially in the model of the Trinitarian structure.

The third point gleaned by DeVille from his analysis of the major Orthodox contributors is that “Orthodoxy embraces Roman primacy as having the character of a centre of appeal (following the Council of Sardica), of co-ordination, and, especially, of pastoral solicitude for all the Churches, particularly those in turmoil or undergoing persecution,”⁶⁴ although the centre of appeal was eventually also granted to Constantinople. This point is especially relevant in light of the current persecutions of various Christians. A central authority would help facilitate matters in all respects, especially in stepping up aid to Churches which are in need. DeVille continues by stating that the Pope would “have more authority than the Ecumenical Patriarch but much less of the *plenitudo potestatis* the pope of Rome currently possesses.”⁶⁵ This brings with it a question. What exactly is the golden mean by which to decide the position the Bishop of Rome would have? Would the Orthodox (and many Catholics, for that matter!) be able to receive a reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry? It would seem that most of the theologians are hesitant in offering an answer. However, before arriving at that destination scholars need to retrace their steps, reflect upon, and receive anew the possibilities put forth in the New Testament, testifying to the role and mission of Peter, together with that of the other disciples.

⁶² See *ibid.*, 44.

⁶³ See also Will Cohen, “Why Ecclesial Structures at the Regional Level Matter: Communion as Mutual Inclusion,” *Theological Studies* 75, no. 2 (2014): 308-330.

⁶⁴ DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 45.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

6.05 The Role of Peter and of the many “Peters”

Such an analysis warrants delving into the position of Peter and the Apostles in their mission bestowed upon them by Christ. The tool of receptive hermeneutics helps to better analyse the situation from both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic perspective, so that the understanding gauged from the other side can be reflected upon, evaluated and, if found enriching to the tradition, can be embraced within the tradition as a new gift to further enhance that tradition. It is certainly the case that an understanding of the Petrine ministry can be of invaluable importance in the cause for unity among the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches.

It is the case that while the Roman Catholic exegesis has sought to look at the Scripture in order to extrapolate proof for the Petrine ministry, the Orthodox exegesis, on the other hand, espouses a call made to *all the apostles*. Each tradition is equipped with its own exegetical baggage, however, this needs to be treated with caution. Objectivity is crucial in order to come to honest and genuine interpretations. Stylianopoulos’ remarks are very true and oblige scholars to use prudence in this respect:

Of course, honesty requires the acknowledgement that personal commitment to our respective traditions makes total objectivity virtually impossible. Yet the difficulty of achieving full objectivity is no argument for abandoning the ideal or for pursuing it with less vigour. On the contrary, sound critical study, whether of biblical or patristic sources, constitutes a test of integrity for theological scholarship and a source of hope for constructive work.⁶⁶

The preference for “interpretations,” rather than “interpretation” lies in the fact that the Scriptures are not a single-unit block, but a collection of different books which span many centuries, and are geared at different audiences. Thus, the very constitution of Scriptures allows for a diversity of interpretations which do not contradict or diminish each other, as also affirmed in *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*:

Ecumenical hermeneutics welcomes the diversity of insights that arise from biblical reflection of this broadly-based kind. A scriptural text may be considered as authoritative for

⁶⁶ Theodore Stylianopoulos, “Concerning the Biblical Foundation of Primacy,” in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Walter Kasper (Mahwah/NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 39-40.

a particular matter of faith or practice, even if this text is interpreted differently by the dialogue partners.⁶⁷

The same argumentation is true regarding the New Testament texts which are traditionally used to support the role of Peter. Hence, this is the way forward in dealing with the notion of primacy. It also sits well with the Receptive hermeneutic in looking and exploring the different without necessarily subsuming all possibilities into one solution. Ultimately, as Pablo R. Andiñach confirms, “diversity is not the enemy of unity, but provides us with a starting point from which we can begin to seek common perspectives.”⁶⁸ Thus, a variety of texts which point out to primacy are analysed, in order to derive an understanding their meanings within a hermeneutic of reception.

6.05.01 An Understanding of Mt 16, 18 within the Patristic Perspective

Dumitru Popescu provides an invaluable insight into the understanding of the papal primacy from the perspectives of the Eastern and Western Patristic theology.⁶⁹ Referring to the Church Fathers is a golden mean which is accepted by both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. This understanding revolves, undoubtedly, around Mt 16, 18. What emerges is that there is a myriad of interpretations of *pétra*. Some of the Church Fathers had various interpretations of the notion of *pétra*. The fact that some of the Church Fathers had various interpretations attests to the richness of the interpretations themselves, apart from the fact that all the interpretations are reconcilable. Again, this sits well within the framework of Receptive Ecumenism which allows space for harmony between Tradition and diversity, which can be seen as a corollary to the dynamism between unity and diversity. Ultimately, the common denominator is Christ himself,

⁶⁷ Faith and Order Commission, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Faith and Order Paper no.182 (Geneva: WCC/Faith and Order, 1998), 26.

⁶⁸ Pablo R. Andiñach, “Interpreting our Faith The ecumenical journey and its consequences.” A Presentation of Hermeneutics Study. Faith and Order Plenary Commission, *World Council of Churches*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 28 July – 6 August 2004, PDF file, file:///C:/Users/dbuttigieg532/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/kuala-docs16-andinach%20(4).pdf.

⁶⁹ See Dumitru Popescu, “Papal Primacy in Eastern and Western Patristic Theology: Its Interpretation in the Light of Contemporary Culture,” in *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 99-113.

since he is the initiator of the creation of the Church. It is beyond the aim of this thesis to provide an exhaustive list of each of the Church Fathers' interpretations, but Popescu pins down four interpretations which are presented.

The first, perhaps obvious interpretation at face value, is the association of *pétra* with Peter; that is, Peter is the *pétra* upon which the Church is built.⁷⁰ This is the view of St Epiphanius, one of the interpretations accorded by St Ephrem the Syrian, and the Cappadocian Fathers, amongst others. By highlighting the *pétra* of the confession of faith, the Cappadocian Fathers,

... are able to bring into relief the special role of Peter as the unshakable rock upon which God has built the Church, while at the same time seeing the other apostles also as stones in the foundation of the Church.⁷¹

This leads to the second interpretation, whereby the term *pétra* refers equally to all the apostles, pointing out that “the faith affirmed by Peter in presence of the Lord was the faith of all the apostles, who together hold the power of the keys.”⁷² This appears as the least common interpretation in the writings of the Church Fathers. Theodore of Mopsuestia argues that “this is not the property of Peter alone, but it came about on behalf of every human being.”⁷³

The third interpretation is that of *pétra* as referring to Christ himself. Cullmann argues that “rightly understood, Christ alone is *pétra*.”⁷⁴ What is certain is that Christ himself is the *pétra* par excellence, the cornerstone upon which the Church is built. This view is shared by Athanasius of Alexandria and Ambrose, among others. Mt 16, 18 attests to a connection between *pétra* and *Pétros*. As Cullmann states, “this shows how fully the apostolate, and in it to a special degree the position of Peter, belongs to and is essentially

⁷⁰ See Popescu, “Papal Primacy in Eastern and Western Patristic Theology,” 107.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷³ Manlio Simonetti, ed., in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Sacred Scripture: New Testament. 1b: Matthew 14-28*, ed. Manlio Simonetti. General editor Thomas Oden (Downers Grove/IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 45.

⁷⁴ Oscar Cullmann, “Πέτρα,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids/MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 99.

enclosed within, the revelation of Christ.”⁷⁵ As *pétra*, *Pétros* is the foundation on which the Church of Christ is built (Mt 16, 18).⁷⁶

The most frequent interpretation is the fourth one, namely, the interpretation of *pétra* as the “faith in Christ’s divinity confessed by Peter.”⁷⁷ This refers to the faith confessed by Peter to the question of Jesus “Who do you say I am,” to which Peter responds, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16, 15-16).⁷⁸ This interpretation is adopted by many of the Eastern and Western Church Fathers, such as John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, John Damascene, Ambrose, Augustine (among other interpretations), John Cassian, and even by Popes Gregory the Great and Nicholas I.⁷⁹ The faith in Christ’s divinity as the foundational aspect of the Church is also recognised by St. Jerome.⁸⁰ As Popescu states,

The Fathers recognize a primacy of Peter, but it is a primacy of faith, since, in their overwhelming majority, they see the Church as being built on the faith of Peter, a faith which – as St Ambrose of Milan affirms – the power of death will not prevail.⁸¹

The faith of Peter is built on the solid foundation that is Christ himself. It was the faith of Peter which prompted Christ to respond to him thus. Quoting Augustine, Clément elaborates on this notion:

That is how Peter came to be called the rock, and he represented the person of the Church who is built upon this rock and who has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, Christ did not say to Peter, ‘you are rock (*pétra*)’ but ‘you are Peter (*Pétrus*).’ For the rock (*pétra*) was Christ whom he confessed, as does the whole Church, and he, Simon, received the name of Peter (*Pétrus*).⁸²

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Popescu, “Papal Primacy in Eastern and Western Patristic Theology,” 107.

⁷⁸ See Clément, *You are Peter*, 25.

⁷⁹ Popescu, “Papal Primacy,” 106-107.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 105.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Clément, *You Are Peter*, 26.

Gnilka points out that most contemporary scholars favour an interpretation based on the person of Peter.⁸³ Cullman argues that it “it is evident that Jesus is referring to Peter, to whom he has given the name Rock.”⁸⁴ He goes on to say that:

The Church which is to be built is founded on the one rock. This is the person of Peter, but it is limited to a specific lifetime. In other words, the task which Peter is given to fulfil is unique, and this makes possible the building of the Church. The work of building belongs to a future which is not limited in time by Mt 16, 17f. The laying of the foundation, however, is connected with the person of Peter, whose ability to act is necessarily limited to the period of his own life, Jn 21, 18. If the power to bind and to loosen is given to Peter, this power does not relate to an unlimited future but to the life of Peter after the death of Jesus.⁸⁵

Does a different interpretation of the text pose a contradiction? The notion of foundation and the keystone are frequently used in the New Testament, where they may refer to Christ as the foundation (take 1 Cor 3, 10, for example) “which Paul had laid in founding the community of Corinth, upon which others build.”⁸⁶ In other verses, such as Eph 2, 20, “the Church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, whereas Christ is presented as the keystone.”⁸⁷ Yet, the plethora of interpretations by the Church Fathers and those in contemporary times can still be harmonised. It is true that Mt 16, 18 “reveals that the rock-foundation of the Church is an individual apostle.” Yet, it is Christ who “is the architect of the *ecclesia*, which he calls his Church.”⁸⁸ All acts trace their origin to the salvific act by Christ who, in turn, entrusts the disciples with his mission. In turn, it is the faith in Christ which unites the community. The mission entrusted to the disciples is a mission which “concerns the new messianic community, united in the faith in Jesus, the Christ and Son of God. This refers to the universal Church and not to any particular local or provincial community.”⁸⁹

The primacy of Peter is a primacy of honour and of love. That is why the role of Peter vis-à-vis the Church can never be understood in a monarchical manner, that is, in a

⁸³ See Joachim Gnilka, “The Ministry of Peter – New Testament Foundations,” in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholic and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Walter Kasper (New York City/Mahwah: The Newman Press, 2006), 29; also Cullmann, “Πέτρος,” 99.

⁸⁴ Cullmann, Oscar, “Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids/MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 108.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Gnilka, “The Ministry of Peter,” 29.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

juridical way. This is especially true in the light of the fact that immediately after Peter has received his mission from Christ, he is rebuked by Christ himself. This is especially made clear by John Paul II in *Ut unum sint*.⁹⁰ Ultimately, one is reminded that everything flows from Christ. As Popescu clarifies, the *pétra* par excellence of the Church “remains Christ; but, at the same time, they are in line with an ecclesiology of communion, which gives to Peter and his successors a primacy of faith.”⁹¹

6.05.02 The Peter and Peters and the Church: A Reception of Orthodox Readings of the Scriptures

It is the case that the calling of Peter is interpreted differently among Roman Catholics and Orthodox. The previous section has shown the plethora of interpretations among the Church Fathers, so this should not be surprising. The interpretations in themselves are not contradictory but attest to the richness and the depth of the Gospels as the Word of God. A dialogic rendition of Roman Catholic and Orthodox understanding of the call of the apostles plays an important role in the hermeneutics of ecumenical reception when it comes to a synthesis of an understanding of the Primacy.

However, in the text of Mt 16, 18, it is, nevertheless, the case that Christ has entrusted his mission in the hands of particular persons. Christ has called Peter but that does not mean a choice to exclusivity. It is indeed true that, as John Paul II states in *Ut unum sint*, “in the New Testament, the person of Peter has an eminent place.”⁹² This is seen in various episodes in the gospels and in the first part of Acts of the Apostles. It is also true that Peter, notwithstanding his sincere love for Christ, was a human being beset with moments of weakness and frailties. As the St Irenaeus Joint Working Group asserts, “the Evangelists in no way conceal Peter’s weaknesses, but even emphasise them.”⁹³ This is especially evident in Peter’s denial of Jesus, in Mt 26, 73-75; Mk 14, 69-72; Lk 22, 54-62 and Jn 18, 15-27.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism*, 25 May 1995 (London: CTS, 1995), par. 91.

⁹¹ Popescu, “Papal Primacy in Eastern and Western Patristic Theology,” 107.

⁹² *UUS*, 90.

⁹³ St Irenaeus Joint Working Group, *Serving Communion*, 32.

It is equally true that the weakness of Peter, together with that of all the other apostles, is set against the backdrop of grace: “It is just as though, against the backdrop of Peter's human weakness, it were made fully evident that his particular ministry in the Church derives altogether from grace.”⁹⁴ Indeed, as Joachim Gnilka asserts, “his denial of Jesus was so intensively portrayed as to mean that he might even lose his discipleship. He relied totally on being reaccepted by Jesus through his grace.”⁹⁵ The reason is that the source and aim of the mission point to Christ. Christ is the initiator and end of the pastoral activity in the Church. The weakness of the apostles attests to this fact.

However, Peter is not the only apostle whom Christ called. In the Gospel of John, Simon Peter was not the first apostle. He encounters Christ through his brother Andrew.⁹⁶ Then, there is the person described as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” (Jn 13, 23) Gnilka makes an interesting point regarding the beloved disciple who “leans on the breast of Jesus at the last supper, which means, he had a special place. He stands at the foot of the cross and the crucified Lord entrusted his mother to him.”⁹⁷ It comes as no surprise that “the beloved disciple is presented in more favourable light because of his loyalty to Jesus and his insight at crucial points.”⁹⁸

The Acts of the Apostles is an interesting book. It describes the birth and the development of the early Church. It describes in detail the works of the prominent apostles, Peter and Paul. To be more precise, the first half of the Acts focuses on Peter and the eleven apostles in Jerusalem, also attesting to the fact that James was, for a time, head of the Church of Jerusalem, while the second half focuses on Paul's mission among the Gentiles. Acts is followed by the various letters, most notably those by Paul and those attributed to him. The thrust behind this reasoning is that there is no exclusivity in the choice of an individual. The fact that Peter is chosen in the mission of the foundation of the Church does not make him the only individual to be chosen in the development of the Church. Clément describes the position of Paul so beautifully and poignantly: “If there is

⁹⁴ *UUS*, 91.

⁹⁵ Gnilka, “The Ministry of Peter,” 27.

⁹⁶ See also *ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁸ Stylianopoulos, “The Biblical Foundation of Primacy,” 57.

something of the institution in Peter's role, Paul appears as the charismatic apostle."⁹⁹ As in the case of *Ut unum sint*, the fulcrum is God's grace whereby Paul's "call is proof that grace can bypass institutions, since he, Paul – the 'child untimely born,' the erstwhile persecutor of the Church – was made an apostle alongside, as it were, the newly reconstituted structure of the Twelve."¹⁰⁰ However, one goes beyond *Ut unum sint*, in acknowledging that the Church is not founded solely on Peter, but on the commission bestowed by Jesus on the other apostles.

The choices made by God transcend any human – and limited, as it were, – conceptions of choice. The fact that Christ has chosen Peter does not exclude any other choices Christ himself makes. The choices made by Christ, often inexplicable and intelligible to human minds, serve as a reminder that it is grace which is the common factor. It was Paul's idea which prevailed among the apostles and elders at the Council of Jerusalem, narrated in Acts 15, 2-35, which absolved the Gentiles from adhering to the Mosaic law of circumcision. In his paper, entitled "The Ministry of Peter – New Testament Foundations," Joachim Gnilka starts by narrating a controversy incident between Peter and Paul at Antioch, in Gal 2, 11-14, over table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.¹⁰¹ Gnilka goes on to correctly argue that, "Paul respected Cephas's authority, but he understood himself as an apostle with rights equal to those of Peter. He saw this unity as based in the unity of the gospel."¹⁰² More importantly, Peter does not stand as the only leader among the apostles in Jerusalem.¹⁰³ Rather, this role is shared with James. James is the one who gives the final answer absolving the Gentiles of the Levitical ceremonial duties of the Jews, instead telling them "to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood." (Acts 15, 20) Koulomzine affirms that "Peter is 'first among the Twelve.'"¹⁰⁴

Theodore Stylianopoulos looks at the biblical foundations of primacy, and he points out to a diverse interpretation of primacy as exemplified in the Gospels and the other New

⁹⁹ Clément, *You Are Peter*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See Gnilka, "The Ministry of Peter," 24-36.

¹⁰² Ibid., 25.

¹⁰³ See Nicolas Koulomzine, "Peter's Place in the Early Church," in *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church* (London: Faith Press, 1963), 114.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Testament writings.¹⁰⁵ His analysis and discussion of Orthodox contributions to the exegesis of various New Testament texts are summed up in five points which are highlighted here. First, the function and the status of Peter cannot be separated from the person of Peter himself with regard to the Petrine ministry. Second, while Peter has an important role of leadership within the apostolic community, he is not the only one to exercise such a mission. This is the reason why “no single apostolic figure enjoys universal dominance or exclusive authority in the New Testament.”¹⁰⁶ Third, the New Testament is replete with examples attesting to various forms of ministries, apart from the Petrine ministry. It would seem that universality was not conceived of at the times of the early Church:

Indeed, within the New Testament period, one could speak of a Petrine ministry, a Pauline ministry, a Jacobian ministry, and a Johannine ministry, according to the several great apostolic leaders and their respective impacts in the traditions of particular early Christian communities.¹⁰⁷

Fourth, the New Testament writings attest to a varied ecclesiology of communion, but the numerous controversies that were rearing their heads necessitated “an immense urgency toward unity.”¹⁰⁸ Finally, it would seem to be the case that the New Testament points towards a Petrine ministry, “upon which to define a historically developed and universally acknowledged Petrine office as an option, but one fully based on the principles of shared authority, love and service, rather than on exclusive status, rights, and jurisdiction.”¹⁰⁹

All this is testament to the need to transcend the myopic views of the pre-eminence of some people over others. The fact that God himself has entrusted his mission into the hands of sinful and limited human beings with diverse charisms shows the proper example of humility as this should be lived out by all Christians, leaders and followers alike. Moreover, Peter himself has fully experienced God’s mercy in the wake of his earlier threefold denial of Christ. The same holds true for Paul. Such an awareness enables Peter to reflect that his mission arises out of God’s own mercy, and the notions of power or

¹⁰⁵ See Stylianopoulos, “The Biblical Foundation of Primacy,” 37-64.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

privilege recede within the saving light of God's infinite mercy. This is a point made clear in *Ut unum sint*:

Associating himself with Peter's threefold profession of love, which corresponds to the earlier threefold denial, his Successor knows that he must be a sign of mercy. His is a ministry of mercy, born of an act of Christ's own mercy.¹¹⁰

Readers of the New Testament are also reminded of this by Paul himself who, in the wake of his experience, can exclaim: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:9-10).¹¹¹ Indeed, those persons who have had a profound encounter with the Lord are able to look upon themselves and their weakness, with the awareness that the Lord is working despite their shortcomings. The spiritual aspect cannot be ignored in dealing with this issues. In the light of the first and fourth chapters of this thesis, one is reminded that Receptive Ecumenism cannot be dissociated from Spiritual Ecumenism. This means that one cannot help but look at the wider spiritual macrocosm which permeates the whole process. With the belief that the Holy Spirit is at work, spiritual reflection must be exercised in harmony with academic reflection. Refraining from harmonising the spiritual with the academic would only result in a solely academic work with little bearings on the practical life within which Receptive Ecumenism is to be lived out.

Christians at all levels within the Church, may engage in this exercise which can transform their way of looking at the workings of the Lord. This can really lead to an understanding of the challenges Christ laid down for the Pharisees, and the challenges he still makes to his disciples today, to overcome and transcend the logic of what the call entails, especially the notions of power or privilege attached to it. Only thus can Christ's followers become the tools of God's salvation for all humanity. Peter's profession of love comes before Christ's singling him out, so he, above all others, was able to reflect on God's tremendous love for him despite his apparent limitations. This reminder is set forth in *Ut unum sint*:

As the heir to the mission of Peter in the Church, which has been made fruitful by the blood of the Princes of the Apostles, the Bishop of Rome exercises a ministry originating in the manifold mercy of God. This mercy converts hearts and pours forth the power of grace where the disciple experiences the bitter taste of his personal weakness and helplessness. The

¹¹⁰ *UUS*, 93.

¹¹¹ See also *ibid.*, 92.

authority proper to this ministry is completely at the service of God's merciful plan and it must always be seen in this perspective. Its power is explained from this perspective.¹¹²

It also helps that the Orthodox leaders remember that everything stems from God's mercy. While Rome has been justifiably criticised for the notion of jurisdictional power, some examples from the autocephalous Churches do not really come so far behind Rome. Christians are invited to look with caution at the contentions between autocephalous Churches within the Orthodox world. What are the real reasons for the serious disagreements among patriarchs who profess love of Christ and who believe that the call made by Christ is not an exclusive right to dominion? If, both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches are ready to reflect on these questions, then one concludes that a step forward has been made in the right direction.

Ware warns against understanding the Church in terms of earthly power and jurisdiction.¹¹³ This is precisely Jesus' challenge of structures which betray a warped logic which results from sin. He speaks of the importance of authority (*exousia*), rather than power, being given by God the Father to the Son, and in turn given by the Son to the apostles.¹¹⁴ Matt 28, 18-20 is clear about this:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

It is especially important to remember Christ's eternal presence, as Ware also reminds about, "for a balanced doctrine of authority in the Church."¹¹⁵ This is a reminder that while all are called to collaborate in Christ's mission, yet it still remains *Christ's mission*. Again, the humility of Christ challenges and humbles the predisposed believer into transforming one's logic of power and monopoly, a result of a distorted logic caused as a result of the fall.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ See Kallistos Ware, "L'exercice de l'autorité dans l'Église Orthodoxe," *Irénikon* 54 no. 4, (1981), 451.

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 452.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 453. The original, in French, runs thus: "... pour toute doctrine équilibrée de l'autorité dans l'Église."

This leads to the next point. The proper scope of primacy is not that of privilege or power. It lies in serving. *Exousia*, understood in the perspective of Christ, entails *diakonia*.¹¹⁶ If Peter has been chosen in order to understand what is the primacy within the Church, one is to look at Jesus himself. The Gospels are replete with various examples which testify to this point. The prime example is Jesus washing the feet of the apostles, narrated in Jn 13, 3-17. It is especially significant that in Jn 13-14, the word “power” is followed by service in the same sentence:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

Likewise, the role of the Bishop of Rome, together with the bishops, is at the service and edification of the Church:

The mission of the Bishop of Rome within the College of all the Pastors consists precisely in “keeping watch” (*episkopein*), like a sentinel, so that, through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches. In this way, in each of the particular Churches entrusted to those Pastors, the *una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia* is made present. All the Churches are in full and visible communion, because all the Pastors are in communion with Peter and therefore united in Christ.¹¹⁷

Prior to *Ut unum sint*, Alexander Schmemmann affirms the importance of grace. His words are worth pondering over:

The ministry of power and government, as all other ministries within the Church, is a *charism*, a gift of grace. It is bestowed through the sacrament of order, for only sacramentally received power is possible in the Church whose very nature is grace and whose very *institution* is based on grace. And the Church has only three charismatic orders with no gift of power superior to that of a bishop. No sacramental order of primacy, no charism of primacy exists, therefore, in the Orthodox Church; if it existed it would have a nature different from grace and, consequently, its source would not be the Church.¹¹⁸

From the perspective of the local Church, Tillard confirms that “the grace of the Spirit from which every local Church holds her being is the grace concretely offered and given

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 453.

¹¹⁷ *UUS*, 94.

¹¹⁸ Schmemmann, “The Primacy of Peter,” 33.

to all baptised persons ... this grace is catholic.”¹¹⁹ Grace by its very nature entails catholicity.¹²⁰ It is the same grace which underlies the local-universal dynamic.

The institution of Peter can be traced to God’s initiative. In *Ecclesiam suam*, Pope Paul VI reminds the faithful that Christ, as “architect and builder,” “he founded this building on a man who was naturally weak and frail, Christ transformed him into solid rock, never to be without God's marvellous support: ‘Upon this rock I will build my Church.’”¹²¹ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that of the papacy, Paul VI states that:

this cardinal principle of holy Church is not a supremacy of spiritual pride and a desire to dominate mankind, but a primacy of service, ministration, and love. It is no vapid rhetoric which confers on Christ's vicar the title: “Servant of the servants of God.”¹²²

In the homily of his inaugural mass at the beginning of his Petrine ministry on 24th April 2005, Pope Benedict XVI speaks of the metaphors of the shepherd and the fisherman, in explaining the symbols of the Pallium and the Fisherman’s Ring.¹²³ Both the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10, 14), and the fisherman whose mission is “bring men and women out of the sea that is salted with so many forms of alienation and onto the land of life, into the light of God,” are images of service towards humanity. However, this is a service borne out of love, and which brings humanity back to God.¹²⁴ Within this perspective, Pope Benedict XVI is clear in that the role of the Pope entails service, a service which is fraught with obstacles. However, while “the task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome, but it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God’s joy which longs to break into the world.”¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Jean-Marie. R. Tillard, “L’Universel et le Local: Réflexion sur Église universelle et Églises locales,” *Irénikon* 61, no. 1 (1988), 31. The French text runs thus: “En effet, la grâce de l’Esprit d’où toute Église locale tient son être es la grâce concrètement offerte et donnée à tous les baptisés ... elle est grâce catholique ...”

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*

¹²¹ Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam: Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Paths of the Church*, 6 August, 1964 (Boston/MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1996), par. 37.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²³ See Benedict XVI, Mass, Imposition of the Pallium and Conferral of the Fisherman’s Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI. Sunday, *Vatican Website*, 24 April 2005, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html.

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

6.06 The Necessity of a Papal Primacy: A Reception of Orthodox Reflections

The itinerary undertaken in the arena of receptive hermeneutics can invariably lead to the central question posed many times before, and that concerns the necessity of the primacy. Some would put it bluntly, “Do we need a pope?” Roman Catholics would argue in the affirmative, as the papacy is what seems to hold the barque of Peter together amidst the stormy seas. The mistake is to envisage the role of the papacy on its own. The Orthodox reality would point at the necessity of a form of primacy, though the notion of universal primacy seems to be flatly rejected by many Orthodox and that this “is deeply rooted in Orthodox consciousness.”¹²⁶ In the light of chapter 5 and elsewhere in the thesis, it can be understood how “the Orthodox interpreted papal primacy as universal expansionism and as the attempt of Rome to put all Christians under the dominion of its power.”¹²⁷ Hence, it would seem a plausible reason why many Orthodox oppose the very notion of universal primacy. However, is this the only reason? As Nicholas Lossky states, “many will tend to overemphasise the notion of conciliarity (or synodality) as a characteristic of Orthodoxy to the detriment of any other approach to authority in the Church.”¹²⁸

As explained earlier in this chapter, in section 6.04, a number of Orthodox theologians would speak of the necessity of a form of primacy, especially with regard to the various frictions and fragmentations within the autocephalous churches, provided that certain conditions are met. However, for some Orthodox theologians, primacy is not a matter of dogma, unlike the episcopal and synodal structure of the Church.¹²⁹ Perhaps, it would be more apt to speak of reconfiguration of the papacy.

¹²⁶ Zizioulas, “Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology,” 242.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Nicholas Lossky, “Conciliarity-Primacy in a Russian Orthodox Perspective,” in *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 127.

¹²⁹ See John Zizioulas, “Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology,” 236. Here, he is analysing the reflections made by Professor Ioannis Karmiris.

6.06.01 Simultaneity of the One and the Many: The Local and the Universal

Orthodox reflections on the papacy draw to a mutual relationship and a balance between the local Church and the universal Church. This is especially important since the role of the papacy “has as its principal task to create such a balance.”¹³⁰ This is envisaged in the light of the Trinitarian relationship wherein each person of the Trinity is unique and each is God; yet they are one God. The identity of each hypostasis is not subsumed within the One essence. The mutuality between the essence and the hypostasis of the Trinitarian persons should serve as a model for the structure of the Church; this applies also to Church leadership. Zizioulas views the necessity of primacy in the Church from a dogmatic point of view, “namely through Triadology – the ‘one and the many’ in the life of the Trinity – which is reflected in the life of the Church.”¹³¹ He is correct in stating that in the model of the Trinity, the Church “cannot but be a unity of the One and the Many at the same time.”¹³² It is a simultaneous relationship, and not a question of who comes first, whether the One God or the Triune God. In speaking of theology, care must be exercised not to disassociate it from its spiritual soul. The latter offers a window upon the transcendent, and leads one to embrace theology not to come to a merely scientific reasoning but also to contemplate on the reality of God as it exists within the Christian community.

The same holds true for the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church. This will be reflected upon on the basis of the debate and writings of Roman Catholic theologians. The reception by Orthodox theologians will then be analysed. Tillard attests to the notion that the local church is inextricably bound to the universal Church of Christ. He states that:

As far as what concerns its proper identity, a local Church is first of all supposed to be seen so that the other local Churches – gathered together for a true Eucharist – can *recognise*

¹³⁰ Walter Kasper, “On the Church: A Friendly Reply to Cardinal Ratzinger,” *America* 184, no. 14 (2001): 14.

¹³¹ Maximos Vghenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective* (DeKalb/ILL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 156.

¹³² John Zizioulas, “Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach,” in *Petrine Ministry and The Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville/MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 118.

themselves in it. And that implies the bishop (and his *presbyterium*) as much as the community.¹³³

Indeed, “the local church finds its identity only in this totality: elsewhere, since the apostles, until the Coming.”¹³⁴ De Lubac states that “there has never been a universal Church without the particular [local] churches.”¹³⁵ Tillard argues that

within the Church of God, all things are inseparably singular and plural, that is, plural within the singular and singular within the plural, the plural of a singular and singular of a plural. This is because the Church of God is the Church of Churches with their specific differences, a Communion of communions.¹³⁶

The Document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* makes a similar point:

The intrinsic correlation of these two poles [local and universal] can be expressed as the way the universal and the local are present in each other in the Church of Christ. In the Church as Catholic, variety is not mere co-existence but bonding in mutual correlation and dependence: an ecclesiological *perichoresis* in which trinitarian communion sees its ecclesial reflection. The communion of Churches with each other in the one universal Church illuminates the ecclesiological meaning of the collegial “we” of the episcopate gathered in unity *cum Petro et sub Petro*.¹³⁷

Central to the relationship between the local and the universal churches is the Kasper – Ratzinger debate on the subject, which arose as a result of the 1992 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s letter titled *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*.¹³⁸ This debate sheds a light on the different perspectives on the reasoning behind the different argument for relationship between the local and the universal churches, also stemming from different points of departure. To put the debate in a nutshell, Kasper argues from a pastoral dimension while Ratzinger presents theoretical deductions.

¹³³ Tillard, *Church of Churches*, 224.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹³⁵ Henri de Lubac, *Églises particulières et église universelle*. Conférence au Centre d’Études Saint Louis de France. Rome 28 October 1971 (Rome: Edizione La Civiltà Cattolica, 1971), 5. The following is the text in French: “Il n’y a jamais eu d’Eglise universelle sans Eglises particulières.”

¹³⁶ Tillard, “L’universel et le Locale,” 30.

¹³⁷ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 59.

¹³⁸ For more detail see Paul McPartlan, “The Local Church and the Universal Church: Zizioulas and the Ratzinger – Kasper Debate,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 4, vol. 1 (2004): 21-33; see also Kilian McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and the Local Churches,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 227-250.

Departing from the Platonic method, Ratzinger presents his argument in favour of the “historical and ontological primacy of the universal church over the local churches, with arguments from historical sources and systematic reflections.”¹³⁹ For Ratzinger, “baptism, Eucharist, and apostolic ministry come from outside the local church.”¹⁴⁰ In the continued response to Kasper, Ratzinger dwells on the pre-existence of the universal Church, basing his argument on Scriptures and the Church Fathers, which points to “the inner priority of unity.”¹⁴¹ Yet, the term “universal Church” is ambiguous, since “it can mean the transcendent and pre-existent Church-mystery or the worldwide Church, and the distinction between these two meanings can be crucial, as in this debate.”¹⁴² In order to counter any claims for the identification of the universal Church with the pope and the curia, Ratzinger argues that, “the inner precedence of God’s idea of the one Church, the one bride, over all its empirical realizations in particular churches, has nothing whatsoever to do with the problem of centralism.”¹⁴³ While Kasper is not against the idea of a pre-existing Church, yet “he simply objects to this being taught in terms of the priority of the ‘universal Church’, which generally means the worldwide Church.”¹⁴⁴

Yet, there is agreement between the two theologians about the mutuality of the local and the universal Church: “Particular church and universal Church are in a relation of mutuality; they are perichoretically in one another.”¹⁴⁵ Yet, Kasper follows Aristotle’s approach “and sees the universal as existing in a concrete reality.”¹⁴⁶ For Kasper, “the pre-existing mystery must be of the whole Church (universal and local), not just one aspect of the Church (universal),” and as a result, he refutes the ontological priority of the universal Church.¹⁴⁷ Kasper argues that “the pre-existence of the church must be understood as the concrete church that consists ‘in and from’ particular churches.”¹⁴⁸

¹³⁹ See Kasper, “On the Church,” 13.

¹⁴⁰ McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate,” 238.

¹⁴¹ Joseph Ratzinger, “A Response to Walter Kasper,” 10, cited in Kilian McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and the Local Churches,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 243.

¹⁴² McPartlan, “The Local and the Universal Church,” 31.

¹⁴³ Ratzinger, “A Response to Walter Kasper,” 10, in McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate,” 242.

¹⁴⁴ McPartlan, “The Local and the Universal Church,” 31.

¹⁴⁵ McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate,” 230.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 247.

¹⁴⁸ Kasper, “On the Church,” 13.

The role of the pope is crucial in maintaining the balance between the universal and the local churches.¹⁴⁹ A balance between the local and the universal churches has far-reaching ecumenical implications. As Kasper asserts:

The goal of the ecumenical movement is not unity in uniformity but the existence of one church embracing peacefully a great diversity. The particular churches must remain churches, and yet more and more they must become one church.¹⁵⁰

The presentation of a diversity of approaches in order to reach a theological issue sheds light on a diversity of interpretation which should not be seen as a threat, as long as the foundational points of the interpretation are faithful to tradition. Rather, as McDonnell asserts, “to have two curial cardinals publicly discussing what may be the most important theological issue facing the coming conclave is a sign of great hope.”¹⁵¹

Pope Francis’ notion of the relationship between the local and universal church is one deeply rooted in mission which, of course, has a lot to do with his Latin American background. Christopher Ruddy speaks of two contexts behind Francis’ vision of the local and the universal church. First, there is the relationship between the center and the peripheries, together with the constant call for the church to go out to the peripheries (which exist on many levels, not simply the geographical ones).¹⁵² These peripheries are, in Francis’ view “the privileged places of encounter with Christ and with his people.”¹⁵³ The need to promote a decentralisation, expressed in paragraph 16 of *Evangelii gaudium* entails also a decentralisation not simply from the point of view of authority towards service but also from the a view of a church cocooned within stratifications which can be dangerously open to such traits as narcissism, towards a more humble and open church. This is another example of the spiritual vein which brings life to the Church structures themselves. Structures exist in order to promote service and mission.

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate,” 250.

¹⁵² Christopher Ruddy, “The Local and Universal Church,” in *Go into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch – Richard Gaillardetz (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2016), 110.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 111.

Second, the relationship between the local and the universal vision of the church as explored in *Evangelii gaudium*, is one of balance and avoidance of the dangers of excess.

Paragraph 234 states that:

An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes.¹⁵⁴

Achieving the harmony in the relationship between the local and the universal church “inevitably and inherently involves structural reforms.”¹⁵⁵ These reforms are inextricably bound to spiritual conversion, again affirming the spiritual journey as permeating the whole process. In his 18 September 1968 general audience, Pope Paul VI stated the following:

Today, every bishop, every diocese, every Episcopal Conference, every religious family is undergoing a phase of reform and intensification of an authentic catholic life. Today, every one of the faithful is called to perfection, every layperson to an apostolic industriousness, each ecclesial group to the responsibility of ecclesial activity, every conscience and every community is called to missionary expansion; and the whole Church is called to the sense of the authentic unity and catholicity.¹⁵⁶

Participation in the transmission of the Gospel is a journey which is both centripetal and centrifugal. It extends both outwards, but also inwards, in the interior journey and transformation of the person. In an extension of the healthy tension between the local and universal, the same argument can be applied to ecumenism. The conversion which is undertaken by the people in the ecumenical dialogue towards the union of the Church of Christ, is the same conversion which underlies the journey within each of the traditions.

Evangelii gaudium reiterates *Unitatis redintegratio*, paragraph 6:

Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling... Christ summons the Church as she goes her pilgrim way... to that continual

¹⁵⁴ *EG*, 234; see also Ruddy, “The Local and the Universal Church,” 111-112.

¹⁵⁵ Ruddy, “The Local and the Universal Church,” 120.

¹⁵⁶ Paul VI, “General Audience,” *Vatican Website*, 18 September 1968, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/audiences/1968/documents/hf_p-vi_aud_19680918.html. The original text, in Italian, is the following: “Oggi ogni Vescovo, ogni Diocesi, ogni Conferenza episcopale, ogni Famiglia religiosa è in fase di riforma e d’intensità d’autentica vita cattolica. Oggi ogni fedele è chiamato alla perfezione, ogni laico all’operosità apostolica, ogni gruppo ecclesiale alla responsabilità dell’attività ecclesiale, ogni coscienza ed ogni comunità all’espansione missionaria; e tutta la Chiesa al senso della propria unità e della propria cattolicità.”

reformation of which she always has need, in so far as she is a human institution here on earth.¹⁵⁷

This conversion also extends to the papacy, a conversion inextricably linked to service, echoing *Ut unum sint*. Paragraph 32 is clear about Francis' plea for reform of the papacy, which also shows his commitment to a synodal effort:

I too must think about a conversion of the papacy. It is my duty, as the Bishop of Rome, to be open to suggestions which can help make the exercise of my ministry more faithful to the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelization.¹⁵⁸

This is also another reason for the validity of Receptive Ecumenism because it presupposes a change in the most interior level before moving outwards at different levels. Conversion accompanies the transmission of the Good News to the world, and also the dialogue between different Christian traditions.

Zizioulas appeals to the Eucharist, which is the centripetal force in both the Orthodox and the Catholic traditions. "Every Eucharist is offered in the name and on behalf of the entire world. There is one Eucharist in the whole universal Church and yet this one Eucharist is at the same time many Eucharists."¹⁵⁹ Nicholas Lossky shares a similar view:

One might say that whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, the Church is in council because there is an affirmation of communion in the fullness of the Apostolic faith with all the local churches throughout the world and throughout time in the mention of the primate, of the bishops of the province,¹⁶⁰

Within the same argument, extremist views which harbour a tendency to move in one direction as preceding the other must be dismissed. Hence, while Roman Catholic ecclesiology tends to favour the universal over the local (though there are also different views even within the Catholic Church about this, as exemplified by the Ratzinger/Kasper debate), some Orthodox such as Afanasiev favour the local church over the universal

¹⁵⁷ *EG*, 26; *UR*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ *EG*, 32.

¹⁵⁹ Zizioulas, "Primacy in the Church," 118; also, de Lubac, *Églises particulières*, 5; Tillard, "L'universel et le locale," 30.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas Lossky, "Conciliarity-Primacy," 132.

church.¹⁶¹ The reality is that the local churches make up the universal church, and yet they do not lose their identity as local churches in all their uniqueness. Their identity and characteristics are not subsumed within the universal Church. Hence, “locality and universality are interdependent in ecclesiology, just as the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ are interdependent in Trinitarian theology and in christology.”¹⁶² On the other hand, this difference between the local Churches cannot serve to isolate the Churches from each other, to the detriment of this communion.¹⁶³ It is worth noting at this stage that discussions on the levels of the Church tend to be dyadic or triadic with little attention given to the diocesan level. Within the ecclesiological domain, the diocesan level merits a more thorough analysis. The lack of analysis at the diocesan level constitutes a lacuna in serious ecclesiological discourse.

The simultaneity between the one and the many extends even to the role of the bishop. While the bishop is at the head of his community, at the same time, his being as bishop cannot exist without the role of the community. So, it is a case of a simultaneity, not an order of precedence. Again, to quote Zizioulas:

The bishop is the head, but as such he is conditioned by the “body,” he cannot exercise authority without communion with his faithful. Just as he cannot perform the Eucharist without the *synaxis* of the people, his entire ministry requires the *consensus fidelium*, the “Amen” of the community. The reverse is equally true: there is no community without a head, the bishop; nothing can be done without him.¹⁶⁴

The same simultaneity applies to the relationship between primacy and synodality. The one cannot exist without the other. Hence, both the synodal system and the primacy are a “*sine qua non conditio*” for the catholicity of the Church.¹⁶⁵ In his criticism of theologians such as Karmiris (who try to assign the existence of synodality and primacy to different categories), Zizioulas argues that

¹⁶¹ See also Zizioulas, “Primacy in the Church,” 119; also idem., “Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology,” 239-240.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ See Tillard, “L’Universel et le locale,” 31.

¹⁶⁴ Zizioulas, “Primacy in the Church,” 119.

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 120-121.

Synodality cannot exist without primacy. There has never been and there can never be a synod of a council without a *protos*. If, therefore, synodality exists *iure divino*, as the above theologians would (rightly) maintain, primacy also must exist by the same right.¹⁶⁶

Of course, not all Orthodox theologians subscribe to Zizioulas' theory regarding the roles of primacy and synodality. This is corroborated by Cyril Hovorun who argues that apart from the sources of the interpretation of primacy as "intrinsic to the nature of the church," an alternative interpretation of primacy would stem from convenience, "conditioned by the imperial status of that city."¹⁶⁷ In describing the Orthodox perception of hierarchy, Hovorun looks at the dichotomy between hierarchy *among* the churches, and hierarchy *within* the churches.¹⁶⁸ He states that

hierarchy *among* the churches, according to the common eastern Christian understanding, *is useful, but not sacred*. It is not really hierarchy, but an order that the church has adopted for particular historical reasons. At the same time, hierarchy *within* the churches became sacred in the Orthodox tradition.¹⁶⁹

However, this is a contradiction, or an inconsistency at best. On what condition is one considered as useful but not sacred, while the second is envisaged as sacred? Would such a uniformity of thoughts run counter to some confessional attitudes among churches? It can be argued that as the divine does not necessarily disassociate itself from the human, thus it can be equally argued that the role of the papacy is as important in the role of the unity of the churches, as the same mechanism of synodality which ensures unity between the churches.

Both synodality and primacy are essential in order to avoid the trap of extremes, since:

The catholicity of the local church cannot be turned into self-sufficiency, while the condition of communion with the rest of the churches should not lead to a loss of its catholicity through subjection to an institution existing and acting above the local church.¹⁷⁰

Nicholas Lossky's argument is very similar:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., "Recent Discussions on Primacy," 237.

¹⁶⁷ Cyril Hovorun, *Scaffolds of the Church: Towards Poststructural Ecclesiology* (Eugene/OR: Cascade Books. An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 143.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 143-144.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Zizioulas, "Primacy in the Church," 120.

In a conciliarity of communion, the primate and conciliarity necessarily imply one another. The primate's duty, or special charism, is to serve the search for consensus, for unanimity that is unity in the Spirit, and thereby a constant reconstruction of true conciliarity, true communion. Conciliarity without primacy tends towards either a form of fusion or a form of democracy which amounts to individualism, no personhood. Primacy without conciliarity tends towards a kind of concentration of episcopacy in one super-bishop above the community, a form of domination to dictatorship which is a negation of communion.¹⁷¹

Zizioulas' arguments in favour of the primacy are very convincing, especially in his statements that primacy exists at each level of the church. These levels of primacy are explored at a triadic level, namely the local, the regional (metropolitan), and those of a more universal character (patriarchates). However, caution must be exercised not to overdo the analogy between the Trinity and the Church.

The way forward for a universal primacy is for it to be married to an ecclesiology of communion. Zizioulas sees a positive outlook within two possibilities. He suggests a return to an understanding of the Bishop of Rome from the perspective of the Byzantine pentarchy, whereby "the Bishop of Rome is *primus* only for the West; he is the patriarch of the West and should have no primacy whatsoever over the rest of the world."¹⁷² This brings researchers to the decision on the part of Pope Benedict XVI to remove the title "Patriarch of the West" among the many titles accorded to the Pope in the Pontifical Yearbook (*Annuario Pontificio*) of 2006, a title deemed "obsolete" by the Holy See in view of the jurisdictional relationship between the Bishop of Rome and the rest of the Roman Catholic world.¹⁷³ This decision sparked controversy among the Orthodox. In response to Pope Benedict XVI's perhaps ill-advised decision to drop the title while retaining titles such as "Vicar of Christ," and "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church," the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod outlined six observations and their implications for the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.¹⁷⁴ This move was seen as an obstacle to the ecumenical dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church,

¹⁷¹ Lossky, "Conciliarity-Primacy," 134.

¹⁷² Zizioulas, "Primacy in the Church," 123.

¹⁷³ See Gianfranco Ghirlanda, "Il documento di Ravenna della Commissione Mista Internazionale Cattolico-Ortodossi," *Periodica* 97 (2008), 581.

¹⁷⁴ Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Announcement of the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod regarding the denouncement by Pope Benedict XVI of Rome of the title "Patriarch of the West" The Ecumenical Patriarchate, Constantinople. June 8, 2006. *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (2006): 357-360.

especially since a rejection of the title seems to imply a claim to a universal church jurisdiction.¹⁷⁵

Does this mean a resurrection of the pentarchy? Of course, not. Historical and political circumstances have greatly changed Christianity in the world. What constitutes East and West cannot even be delineated, if these terms really matter at all! Moreover, as Zizioulas states,

There is nothing permanent about the number of *primi*; the only permanent thing is that of the *sees* which hold the primacy, because these were chosen on the basis of irrevocable historical facts relating to the establishing of churches and their faith.¹⁷⁶

The pentarchy as it existed in the undivided Church serves as a reminder that the role of the Bishop of Rome did not extend to a dominion over the other four sees outside of Rome, though he did have the right of appeal in exceptional circumstances.

A universal primacy would be acceptable to the Orthodox as long as it eschews its jurisdictional *raison d'être*.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps this is one of the most obvious facts pointed out by Zizioulas. However, this entails a change even in the attitudes held within the Holy See and the Roman Curia. In following with his predecessors, Pope Francis has done much in order to instil a sense of servitude within the role of the Bishop of Rome. However, the change needs to extend to the whole Curia itself. Second, the primacy of the pope refers to the primacy of a see. The role of the bishop is related to his see. Indeed, “in an ecclesiology of communion we have not a communion of individuals but of churches.”¹⁷⁸ Third, primacy should be exercised at the synodal level at all levels of the church.¹⁷⁹ In line with the 34th Apostolic Canon,

¹⁷⁵ See Ghirlanda, “*Il Documento di Ravenna*,” 582. See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*. In pages 47-52, the author provides an analysis on this controversial decision on the part of Pope Benedict XVI, also analysing the reasons provided by the Holy See for the removal of the title. DeVille, argues, in line with the announcement made by Constantinople, that this title “Patriarch of the West,” is the most valid and recognised by the Orthodox. See also Hilarion Alfeyev’s remarks, as explored by DeVille, in pages 49-50.

¹⁷⁶ Zizioulas, “Primacy in the Church,” 124.

¹⁷⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ See *ibid.*

the *primus* must always act together with the rest of the bishops on matters pertaining to or common with the other churches outside his own local church, while the bishops in similar cases should always act together with their *primus*.¹⁸⁰

Finally, a universal primacy would be envisaged as one whereby the primacy “would be exercised in communion, not in isolation or directly over the entire Church.”¹⁸¹ This entails a cooperation between the Bishop of Rome and the other bishops and patriarchs.

Two questions remain. Would the Orthodox accept the reconfiguration of the role of the universal primacy along these lines suggested by a prominent Orthodox theologian? This leads to another question. Would Catholics accept the renewed role of the Pope in communion with other bishops and patriarchs? The answers may not be readily available. Moreover, these changes might not take place as this thesis is being written, but one realises that Orthodox and Catholics are coming forward, in reply to *Ut unum sint*, to reflect and reconsider ways in tandem with receptive hermeneutics, in order to arrive at reunion. Added to these reflections must be the allowance of trust between the two Churches to deepen, so that Christians may reach the position when they can finally listen to and embrace the gifts each Church has to offer, as a sign of God’s enduring providence.

6.07 Towards a Reception of Collegiality: The Autocephalous Orthodox Churches

While looking at the autocephalous churches within the Orthodox Church is a way of drawing inspiration regarding the attempt of harnessing conciliarity within the collegial exercise of the Petrine ministry, it is an undeniable fact that there is constant friction between some of the autocephalous churches. This was clearly evident in the Pan-Orthodox Synod of 2016, and exacerbated by the events surrounding the granting of autocephaly to the Church in Ukraine late in 2018, to the chagrin of the Moscow Patriarchate.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 124-125.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 125.

As Alfeyev states, the bishop plays an integral part in Orthodox ecclesiology.¹⁸² Within the perspective of a Eucharistic ecclesiology, each local Church, having the fullness of catholicity, is always in communion with the other local Churches.¹⁸³ Primacy as exercised within the local Churches accords the status of *primus inter pares* to the primate of that particular church.¹⁸⁴ Supreme authority, then, lies with the council.¹⁸⁵

The theology behind the notion of autocephaly can be a prime example of receptive hermeneutics for the Catholic tradition. As Philip Walters asserts, “autocephaly – independence and self-government – is an attribute of the major Orthodox Churches. Theoretically it offers no scope for isolationism or exclusivism.”¹⁸⁶ The history of the emergence of autocephalous churches attests to the pluralism which existed in the early Church, which did not detract the churches from seeking to be part of the Universal Church at the same time. The local churches existed in communion with each other. This is reiterated by Walters, who states that “autocephaly, then, affirms the integrity of each ‘local’ church community while asserting that each such community achieves its validation only within the Universal Church.”¹⁸⁷ John Meyendorff embarks on an itinerary in retracing the history of the autocephalous churches in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*.¹⁸⁸

6.07.01 Problems of Nationalism within and among the Autocephalous Churches

It has to be said that the autocephalous churches as they currently function are not the perfect solution. Schmemmann is honest in stating that, “having rejected and still rejecting it in its Roman form, i.e. as universal power, the Orthodox conscience has easily accepted

¹⁸² See Hilarion Alfeyev, “La primauté et la conciliarité dans la tradition orthodoxe,” *Irénikon* 78, no. 1 (2005): 29.

¹⁸³ See *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, 30.

¹⁸⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Philip Walters, “Notes on Autocephaly and Phyletism,” *Religion, State & Society* 30, no. 4 (2002): 357.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ See John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood/NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982).

it in the so-called ‘auto-cephalies.’”¹⁸⁹ The autocephalous churches themselves need to acknowledge that they are riddled with problems regarding the canonical territory and the issue of jurisdiction. A prime example is the case in “Western territory,” so to speak, where “canonical order has totally broken down with the existence of multiple jurisdictions and multiple bishops in the same place.”¹⁹⁰ The already scandalous state of affairs is exacerbated by the justification and rationalisation of the existence of this *status quo*.

Lossky is entirely frank in stating that:

... together with the development of “autocephalist” ecclesiology which is often linked with a simplistic anti-romanism and therefore anti-papism, the notion of primacy, rejected in connection with the Roman Church, tends to reappear in the context of the local autocephalous church. Many are the members of the people of God (not excluding some church leaders at various levels) who in fact consider the patriarch to be something of a “super-bishop” who has more power than any of his brothers in the episcopate, practically a power over the other bishops of the territory of the autocephalous church.¹⁹¹

Another worrying situation is the fact that nationalism plays an important role within many of the autocephalous churches, with varying degrees, even though

As far as the Orthodox Church specifically is concerned, nationalism represents, as is widely known, a sort of absolute ecclesiological sin, which tends to compromise ecclesial unity and disturbs any effort to articulate a concise theological account of the ontological meaning of the Church as communion for the modern world.¹⁹²

As Clément states, tradition lies behind the autocephalous churches, as “defined by Nicaea in 325 with regard to the ‘metropolitan’ province.”¹⁹³ However, Clément is adamant that

it was always a question of *interdependence* within a flexible hierarchy of primacies. By contrast, the autocephalism of the national churches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influenced by a shift of feeling toward a secular nationalism, has tended toward an almost complete independence, a veritable religious nationalism, featuring often, within its own

¹⁸⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, “The Idea of Primacy,” 33.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Meyendorff, “Ethnophyletism, Autocephaly, and National Churches: A Theological Approach and Ecclesiological Implications,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 57, no. 3-4 (2013): 381.

¹⁹¹ Lossky, “Conciliarity-Primacy,” 129-130.

¹⁹² Nicholas Loudovikos, “Nations in the Church: Towards an Eschatological Political Anthropocentrism?” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 12, no. 2 (May 2012): 131.

¹⁹³ Olivier Clément, *You are Peter*, 72-73.

context, relations between the centre and the bishops which differ little from Roman practice.¹⁹⁴

This can be blamed on the tumultuous history of the oppression of the Orthodox Churches by various hostile powers (Mongols, Ottomans, communist regimes) in the regions at the point of encounter between East and West.¹⁹⁵ The already complicated turn of events has been “exacerbated” by the movement of the Orthodox faithful to such countries within Western Europe, North and South America, and Australia, “upheavals that led to anomalous church structures in these areas, with parallel jurisdictions and competing ecclesiological visions.”¹⁹⁶

Indeed, “these experiences have had their effect on the nature of Orthodox autocephaly: churches have emerged which are identified for better or worse with particular nation-states.”¹⁹⁷ Loudovikos’ argument is correct when he states that for all the association of the Church with nationalism, “the identification of the Church with various nations never did have any serious theological bedrock in the Orthodox Church.”¹⁹⁸ It comes as no surprise that

Relations among the “sister churches” tend to resemble more and more the relations between sovereign states, all the more so as a strong dose of nationalism (condemned in 1872 as “phyletism,” which paradoxically all unanimously denounce as a heresy and many, at the same time, profess it in practice) is mixed with this notion of “independence.”¹⁹⁹

In examining the problems of phyletism within the autocephalous churches, Cyril Hovorun distinguishes between what he calls “phyletism” which refers to “imperial-civilizational sort of nationalism,” and “ethnophyletism,” to describe “the ethnic kind of nationalism.”²⁰⁰ Both these kinds of nationalism have been condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 1872 and the Pan-Orthodox Synod of Crete in 2016.²⁰¹ Nationalism

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 73.

¹⁹⁵ See Walters, “Autocephaly and Phyletism,” 358.

¹⁹⁶ Meyendorff, “Ethnophyletism,” 381; see also Schmemmann, “The Primacy of Peter,” 32.

¹⁹⁷ Meyendorff, “Ethnophyletism,” 381.

¹⁹⁸ Loudovikos, “Nations in the Church,” 131.

¹⁹⁹ Lossky, “Conciliarity-Primacy,” 129.

²⁰⁰ See Cyril Hovorun, “Ethnophyletism, Phyletism, and the Pan-Orthodox Council,” *The Wheel* 12 (2018): 65.

²⁰¹ See *ibid.*

instils a feeling of superiority, whether it is ethnical or civilisational.²⁰² Whatever the case, this runs contrary to Christianity itself.

Nationalism became especially consolidated in the 19th century and remains entrenched in some of the autocephalous churches; it can temptingly become a veneer for ethnic identity, whereby “modern nationalism has effected a transformation of legitimate ecclesiastical regionalism into a cover for ethnic separatism.”²⁰³ Walters draws the interesting distinction between the four ancient Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, which bear the names of cities, while the more recent Patriarchates of Moscow and all Rus,’ Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia, together with the Churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, and Albania bear the names of nation-states, effectively rendering the particular Church synonymous with the state.²⁰⁴

It must be remembered, in line with the early Christians, that while the Church lives in the world, she does not belong to the world. Jesus in John 15, 19 is so clear: “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.” Meyendorff reminds his readers that Paul addresses his letters to the various churches existing in different places: he uses “in” or “at” instead of “of,” such as “To the Church of God ... at Corinth.”²⁰⁵ This implies the state of a sojourner, rather than a firm rootedness in a physical or national sphere. Indeed, the Greek term “*pároikos*” and its derivatives are employed in the New Testament to describe the previous state of the Christians (for example in Eph 2, 19) as sojourners, and also to describe the Church as a reality suspended between the already and not-yet; between the present and the future reality (for example in Heb 13, 14).²⁰⁶

The harm in the identification of the church with the state or civilization can be seen in terms of its effects: the isolation of that particular church from the rest of the community which results in the various squabbles within the Orthodox world, undermining the very

²⁰² See *ibid.*, 62.

²⁰³ Walters, “Autocephaly and Phyletism,” 361.

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, 362.

²⁰⁵ See Meyendorff, “Ethnophyletism,” 382.

²⁰⁶ See Karl Ludwig and M. A. Schmidt, “*πάροικος, παροικία, παροικέω*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids/MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 853.

notion of synodality within the Orthodox churches. The recurring tension between Constantinople and Moscow is a case in point. The absence of the four churches of Moscow, Antioch, Georgia and Bulgaria from the decades-long planned Pan-Orthodox Synod of Crete – one of its aims being to show that conciliarity does work, and to impart it to the world – betrays the lack of synergy which exists among the churches. This lack of agreement among the churches, itself stemming from various factors, not least the influence of some of the churches themselves over others – which greatly delayed preparations for the Synod – attests to rivalries which do not always provide a credible witness to a church structure based on the relational love between the three Persons of the Trinity. Meyendorff is adamant is stating that:

while it is clear that Orthodoxy is an incarnational religion, and therefore one that is able to insert itself and transform any culture, it is equally clear that Orthodoxy cannot be bound by any particular nationality or culture. This issue is as old as the Church itself and was faced by Peter and Paul, by the apologists in the 2nd-3rd centuries, and in every period since. The challenges of each age have differed, and so too the Church's responses. Whatever challenges the Church faces, however, the principle remains the same: in the Church, there can be no division between Jew and Greek, no division based on nationality, race, or gender. The warning that St Paul addressed to the Corinthians who are split into factions, "It is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (1 Cor 11:20), remains applicable to us today.²⁰⁷

The lack of unity within the conciliar structures really does point out to the need of a unifying mechanism which would greatly facilitate matters in reducing the insularity which can be an effect of isolated and disconnected churches. This is especially true when there is a lack of agreement among the churches over pertinent issues, which seem to have dogged various churches within the Orthodox world.²⁰⁸ This is a pity, especially when this disagreement presents a real danger of enduring animosity. The role of a central structure would serve to ensure harmony among the churches. While the quest for unity in the ecumenical field is crucial, this certainly cannot be achieved if there is serious conflict in the inner life of the churches.

²⁰⁷ Meyendorff, "Ethnophyletism," 387-388.

²⁰⁸ See Alfeyev, "La primauté et la conciliarité," 25.

6.08 Retrieving Synodality in the Empowerment of Diocesan and Regional Synods

The purpose in the exposition of synodal forms within the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of reception of the Orthodox practice of synodality serves as a reminder that reception does not mean the appropriation of a totally new concept. Since there are various existing synodal structures within the Roman Catholic Church, they need further maturation in order to exercise their full *raison-d'être vis-à-vis* the fullness of what constitutes synodality.

Hence, these structures are being discussed in order to create awareness not only about their existence but in order to point out that the way forward is to empower these synods with greater authority in a bid towards a form of decentralisation from Rome. Autonomy and subsidiarity within the universality of the Church need to be exercised more rigorously and with greater conviction within the Roman Catholic Church. The discussion with the Eastern Orthodox Church serves to bring forth this truth and empower it.

The role and function of the diocesan synods is unique. The role of the Diocesan Synod is defined by the 1983 Code of Canon Law as “a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community according to the norm of the following canons.”²⁰⁹ In the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum successores*, the Diocesan Synod is “the highest of all diocesan structures of participation in the Bishop’s pastoral governance.”²¹⁰ Diocesan synods are:

A grace-filled event in which the People of God living in a particular Church is called together and gathers in the name of Christ, under the presidency of the Bishop, in order to

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, *1983 Code of Canon Law*, Latin – English edition., translated under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America (Washington: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), canon 460.

²¹⁰ Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum successores*, 22 February 2004. *Vatican Website*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cbishops/documents/rc_con_cbishops_doc_20040222_apostolorum-successores_en.html, par. 166.; see also *Code of Canon Law*, 495.

discern pastoral challenges, to seek together the ways to go in mission and, listening to the Spirit, to co-operate actively in making appropriate decisions.²¹¹

They are “both an act of episcopal governance and an event of communion, and thus it expresses the character of hierarchical communion that belongs to the nature of the Church.”²¹² This is a hierarchy of service according to the different and complementary roles and the various charisms with which the individual members of the People of God are bestowed. Participating in the diocesan synod entails a renewal and also the awareness of co-responsibility on the part of the whole People of God.²¹³ As a result, “the synod is perceived as a very important way of penetrating more deeply, through experience, into the ecclesiology of communion stemming from the Council.”²¹⁴ This is the process guided by the Spirit in a creative continuation with Tradition, in the steps of the Second Vatican Council. As Edwards asserts: This is the Spirit who leads us back to the deepest aspects of the Christian tradition, the Spirit who invites us into a more faithful following of the way of Jesus, the Spirit who constantly leads the church into the new of God.”²¹⁵

A diocesan synod is the expression of the “particular” or local Church, with the Eucharist at its heart.²¹⁶ This is especially important since the Eucharist “is at the heart of the understanding of the particular Church.”²¹⁷ As such, within the context of the simultaneous complementarity of the local and universal Churches, it “embodies the essence of the Christ’s Church and is the entire Church. The person of bishop is one of the elements that constitute the particular Church.”²¹⁸ Moreover, the synod should reflect a representation of the diverse yet interdependent roles played by the members of the People of God, a representation which includes the laity. The 1983 Code of Canon Law is clear on this: “lay members of the Christian faithful, even members of institutes of consecrated life, chosen by the pastoral council in a manner and number to be determined

²¹¹ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 78.

²¹² Congregation for Bishops, *Apostolorum successores*, 166.

²¹³ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 79.

²¹⁴ Joseph Galea-Curmi, *The Diocesan Synod as a Pastoral Event: A Study of the Post-Conciliar Understanding of the Diocesan Synod* (Rome: Pontificia Università Lateranense, 2005), 256.

²¹⁵ Edwards, “Ecclesial Decision-Making,” 34.

²¹⁶ See Galea-Curmi, *The Diocesan Synod*, 302.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Robert Kantor, “The Importance of the Diocesan Synod to the Particular Church,” *The Person and the Challenges* 9, no. 2 (2019): 232.

by the diocesan bishop , where this council does not exist, in a manner determined by the diocesan bishop.”²¹⁹ This is reiterated by Galea-Curmi, who asserts that “the participants come from different backgrounds, from several areas of the diocese, movements, groups, associations – all are united in a concerted effort.”²²⁰ Such a representation “extended to all People of God in a diocese and a synod becomes the instrument of unity and communion within different diocesan Churches.”²²¹ Furthermore, while taking a synoptic panorama of these Churches, one concludes that: “In them and from them exists the one and only Catholic Church.”²²²

This is especially relevant in contemporary times, amidst the rediscovery of the vocation of the laity, especially important to the Second Vatican Council retrieval of an ecclesiology of *communion*.²²³ The laity’s characteristically secular nature enables them to “work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven.”²²⁴ *Lumen gentium* affirms that “the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy,” in the light of the activity in the Church, ever since the time of Paul the Apostle.²²⁵ The fact that most of the laity pursue tertiary education, even in theological studies, makes the Second Vatican’s rediscovery of the role of the laity even more relevant. This role, based on a common Baptism, is reiterated in the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, promulgated subsequently to the 1987 Synod of Bishops.²²⁶ This is of great benefit to the Church. To this end, the participants can bring forth “a meaningful and balanced image of the local Church, reflecting different vocations, ministries, charisms, competencies, social status and geographical origin” under the careful exercise of the Bishop as the one who convokes and presides over the synod, harnessing the authority and leadership bestowed upon him.²²⁷ An example of the important role of the laity is the acknowledgement of the need for increased roles for women within diocesan synods and other synodal structures. For

²¹⁹ *Code of Canon Law*, canon 463/5.

²²⁰ Galea-Curmi, *The Diocesan Synod as a Pastoral Event*, 252-253.

²²¹ Kantor, “The Importance of the Diocesan Synod,” 233.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ See John Paul II, *Christifideles laici: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness John Paul II on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*, 30 December 1988 (Stratfield: St Pauls Publications, 1989), par. 19.

²²⁴ *LG*, 31.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

²²⁶ See John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 16-17.

²²⁷ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 79.

example, *Christifideles laici* affirms the necessity, (which must not be reduced to a mere token of respect towards women) of this position, recognised by the Synod Fathers, namely that: “without discrimination women should be participants in the life of the Church, and also in consultation and the process of coming to decisions.”²²⁸ Within an effective synodal structure, lay participation, extending also to decision-making, should not be an addendum, but should lead to a “more radical questioning of the nature of ministry, its relation to orders, and the ‘essential’ distinction between ordained and baptismal priesthood.”²²⁹ More effectively, properly speaking a Synod should entail a rediscovery and empowerment of:

the idea of a priestly people in a faith community in which all are called to mission. It is because all the baptised are in some way intended to be missioned that they need to have a voice in the decision-making processes of the church.²³⁰

It is a fortuitous moment that, despite the various limitations that should be attended to (such as the understanding of the what constitutes a diocesan synod and its function, together with the relationship of the diocesan synod to other pastoral structures in the diocese),²³¹ yet synods are gathering momentum and they are of great pastoral value. Hence, it is imperative that they be more regular and exercise decision-making on two levels (admission of lay participation in decision-making, and more service within the universal Church) does not go unheeded.

Synods at the regional level have always been of a great contribution, even in the first centuries of the Church, examples of which have been already mentioned in this chapter. They served to overcome difficulties regarding particular matters faced by various local Churches at the regional, or provincial, level.

Shared historical origins, cultural homogeneity, the need to face up to similar challenges in mission gave them a new way of making the People of God present in various cultures and contexts. To live synodality at this level enhances the journey local Churches make together,

²²⁸ John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 51.

²²⁹ Paul Lakeland, “Potential Catholic Learning around Lay Participation in Decision-Making,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 237.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

²³¹ See Galea-Curmi, *The Diocesan Synod as a Pastoral Event*, 338-339.

strengthens their spiritual and institutional connections, contributes to the exchange of gifts and harmonises their pastoral choices.²³²

Such a synodality involves a journeying together on the part of the local churches and this “strengthens their spiritual and institutional connections, contributes to the exchange of gifts and harmonises their pastoral choices.”²³³ In turn, this serves to cement their connection towards a creative transmission of the Good News in a particular cultural and social milieu. While certain issues pertain to a particular diocese, other matters which involve both diocesan and provincial synods need to be tackled in a harmonious way in order to ensure efficiency.

There exist various regional synodal structures with different functions and also distinction, both within the Latin-rite Catholic Church and the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches. Within the former, these include the provincial and general councils, the episcopal conferences and various groupings of the episcopal conferences. Within the latter (i.e. Eastern-rite Catholic Churches), there are the patriarchal and provincial synods, the Assembly of Hierarchs of various eastern Churches *sui iuris*, and the Council of Eastern Catholic Patriarchs.²³⁴ A foremost example of regional synodality structure, the episcopal conferences, is to be taken up in this thesis, in the next section, and analysed in so much as a reception of Orthodox synodal structures can be of benefit to them.

Analysing the role of synodal structures does not consist of a mere description but this is an attempt to align them along the correct hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council of the understanding of the Church as a listening Church. Granted that there are various synodal structures within the Roman Catholic Church, the challenge is how to make the synods regular and effective, especially when it comes to consultation and transparency. Ruddy highlights the case of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops which, while admitting itself to a wide range of views, was still lacking in certain kind of transparency, such as including the texts of the interventions made by the participants, or the less than clear preparation of the *relatio post disceptationem*.²³⁵ Ultimately, such actions “raise

²³² International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 85.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 86.

²³⁴ See *ibid.*, 87.

²³⁵ For more detail, see Ruddy, “The Local and Universal Church,” 118-119.

questions about the integrity of the synodal process, and should have been avoided in the first place.”²³⁶ Certainly, these experiences contribute to an awareness to the depths to which reform should be exacted because ultimately, the synodal process entails a decentralisation reform not simply in the actions themselves but, first and foremost in the attitudes which harbour centralisation tendencies. It is well known that those who embrace such attitudes are much more resistant to change!

Reform in alignment of a listening church does require the institution, but the institution serves as the tool in order to honour the *sensus fidelium* and also the *infallibilitas* of all the faithful constituting the Church of God. This raises various questions, which need to be considered. The challenges are illustrated by Rausch:

How might we image those means of consultation? What kinds of institutional structures might be developed? This remains a challenge for the theological community and for the church. For example, could future synods be given a deliberative voice? Could they be expanded to include a more active participation of the laity, perhaps even giving them a vote? Could more members of the laity with pastoral experience or theological education be included on Vatican dicasteries? How can diocesan pastoral synods be made more effective?²³⁷

Here, Rausch is referring to synods of Bishops as well as to diocesan pastoral synods. Finally, how can synodal structures contribute to the dialogue within the Ecumenical Movement? Apart from the decentralisation process from Rome, efficient synodal structures can be important vehicles in harnessing an ecumenical dialogue within their boundaries and thus contributing to a more universal understanding of the Church as encompassing all believers.²³⁸ This interesting dimension will be debated in the next section.

²³⁶ Ibid., 119.

²³⁷ Rausch, “A Listening Church,” 89.

²³⁸ See *ibid.*

6.09 A Reception of Orthodox Patriarchal Structures: Autonomy to the Episcopal Conferences

In light of various sections of the thesis, particularly the previous section, the main thread is that synodality cannot be eschewed from the very structure of the Church. As Pope Francis reiterates:

Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself. If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that “Church and Synod are synonymous,” inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the “journeying together” of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be “raised up” higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person “lower” himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.²³⁹

In his work *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: Ut unum sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity*, DeVille analyses the various patriarchates within Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy.²⁴⁰ It is a work which merits a lot of attention as it analyses each patriarchate within the Eastern Orthodox (together with the Armenian Orthodox) churches, together with its functions. It is interesting that there is wide variation amongst each of the patriarchates. Some, such as the Patriarchate of Constantinople, are highly centralised, while others are less centralised. Thus, it is safe to state that no single patriarchate functions in the same manner, although there are the two common denominators. First, the patriarchate is generally based in a major city, or see. Second, the patriarch functions together with a “holy and sacred synod” (the *synodos endemousa*),²⁴¹ and a lesser synod, or council, which, depending on the patriarchate, includes also lay people. The fact that there is wide variation within the patriarchal structures is, in a way, a positive thing. Variation is indicative of a richness and diversity which exists within the Orthodox world. It is within this perspective that the Roman Catholic Church needs to look at the Orthodox patriarchates in order for a receptive hermeneutic in relation to a transformation of the primacy to take place within its framework.

²³⁹ Francis, “Address by his Holiness Pope Francis.”

²⁴⁰ See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*.

²⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 87.

DeVille proposes interesting alternatives which, he admits, are not the only solutions. This allows room for more discussion to take place, since this is not the endeavour of a single person. The ideas put forward need to be analysed, and discussed in order to be received as being in tandem with one's own tradition. Many theologians argue for the differentiation between the "patriarchal" and the papal roles of the bishop of Rome, whose boundaries have become obfuscated. Tillard is unequivocal in pointing out this problem and its implications in the relationship of the primacy to the rest of Christendom:

... relations between the Bishop of Rome and other bishops are complicated by the fact that the limits of the patriarchate of the West (whose patriarch is the Bishop of Rome) and those of the totality of Churches in communion with the Roman See are clouded over. One of the consequences of the break with the East has been this narrowing of the ecclesial space where bishops preside in communion with the Bishop of Rome, and the quasi-identification of this space with the patriarchate of the West. The exercise of primacy and that of the patriarchal authority have almost become one and the same.²⁴²

The realm of the bishop of Rome needs to be separated from the "patriarchal" aspect, in order to ensure a smooth tension between the two aspects.

DeVille suggests a threefold structure within the Roman Catholic, or Latin, world. One of the solutions proposed by DeVille is that of creating six patriarchates corresponding to the six continents within the Latin world, whose aim would be to alleviate Rome from some of the work.²⁴³ Second, within each patriarchate, "there needs to be a fully functioning synod not only governing each individual patriarchate, but also a synod for the life of the Latin Church as a whole."²⁴⁴ Third, apart from the main synod, within each patriarchate there would be "a functioning, smaller permanent synod to resume responsibilities for daily administration and so take over most of the functions of the Roman Curia."²⁴⁵ DeVille reminds that these three proposed changes

All pertain to how the Latin Church and the pope would function in a patriarchal manner. Only once the internal life of the Latin Church has been thus reconfigured in a patriarchal

²⁴² Tillard, *Church of Churches*, 269-270.

²⁴³ See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 126.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

manner can we see what “papal” tasks would remain to the bishop of Rome as universal pontiff with solicitude for all the Churches of Christ, East and West.²⁴⁶

There are many positive elements in DeVille’s suggestions, however two questions remain. Should there be the need to speak of “patriarchates” in order to speak of the decentralisation of the authority from Rome? Is the mentality of the patriarchate embedded in the Roman Catholic frame of mind, or is it simply a Byzantinization of Roman Catholic structures? While it is true that there needs to be a distinction between the patriarchal and papal roles, one asks whether it would be truly helpful to speak of “patriarchates” within the Roman Catholic Church. This is not simply to allay any fears of an abandonment or a restructuring of one’s tradition. While the ecumenical motive is commendable, one concludes that it is fundamental to go beyond a uniformity of structures in order to achieve unity. The variation within the patriarchates themselves attests to this fact. Second, why *create* these structures? The way forward is to look at potential synodal structures and harness them with the necessary tools so that they are empowered to act in conciliarity with Rome.

6.09.01 Harnessing Synodality by empowering the roles of the Episcopal Conferences

The conciliarity advocated within the Orthodox autocephalous churches enables scholars to find or propose a functioning conciliar structure within the Roman Catholic Church. Rather than creating structures anew, one can look at already existing bodies of synodal character. These would need consolidation so that they have a permanent synodal function. So, rather than creating patriarchates – one for each continent – one suggests the strengthening of the existing episcopal institutions which come from all the different parts of the Catholic world, especially those which are continent-based. As Dulles states, “Episcopal conferences, in the form in which we know them, have arisen in the context of a new vision of the church as a universal but internally diversified community of faith.”²⁴⁷ episcopal conferences are a recent institution, “which emerged in the context

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 127.

²⁴⁷ Avery Dulles, “Doctrinal Authority of Episcopal Conferences,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 223.

of the rise of nation states and as such were given a higher profile by Vatican II in the perspective of the ecclesiology of communion.”²⁴⁸ Hence, Vatican Council II has brought to the fore the role of episcopal conferences. “Vatican II spoke approvingly of the ancient patriarchates, with their synodal forms of government, and added that similar benefits might be expected from the episcopal conferences that had recently sprung into existence in various regions.”²⁴⁹ However, it is admittedly the case that for all their contribution, the role of episcopal conferences has not been sufficiently studied.

Zizioulas sees such an institution as “basically acceptable to the Orthodox.” He states that:

the very fact that this institution is episcopal in its nature points to one basic element which is common to all these three structures – local church, episcopal conferences, and universal church – namely the bishop. All of these are episcopal in nature and in canonical composition.²⁵⁰

Bishops’ gatherings existed in the early church and dealt with various aspects such as doctrine and discipline and other practical aspects, especially with regard to situations pertaining to their specific territories.²⁵¹ Indeed, “from the end of the fourth century, the bishops’ gatherings at what we might call – with some risk of anachronism – the national level were a recognised, if not an absolutely regular, part of the structure of the Western Church.”²⁵² De Lubac affirms that this college of bishops, in line with the college of the Twelve, does not exist on account of an intermediary role, but is “a permanent as well as indivisible reality.”²⁵³ Zizioulas states that “there is no bishop without a church, since no episcopal ordination can be made in an absolute manner.”²⁵⁴ This would be a great help to remember the intrinsic role of the episcopal conferences, even if to allay the two main fears which emerged from the Second Vatican Council onwards, namely that

²⁴⁸ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 89.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. See also *LG* 23.

²⁵⁰ John Zizioulas, “The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox Reflection,” *The Jurist* 48 (1988): 376.

²⁵¹ See Brian E. Daley, “Structures of Charity: Bishops’ Gatherings and the See of Rome in the Early Church,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 27-28; see also De Lubac, *Eglises Particulières*, 7.

²⁵² Daley, “Structures of Charity,” 30.

²⁵³ De Lubac, *Eglises Particulières*, 7. “C’est une réalité permanente aussi bien qu’indivisible.”

²⁵⁴ Zizioulas “An Orthodox Reflection,” 377.

“episcopal conferences have come to pose threats to the authority of both the individual bishop and the pope.”²⁵⁵ Certain fears expressed by theologians seem to be related to the undermining of papal authority on one hand and, on the other hand, the fear “that the conferences might cause a revival of nationalism in the church.”²⁵⁶

While episcopal conferences are not without valid criticisms, on the other hand, they can be envisaged as a genuine expression of synodality in the Church.²⁵⁷ It must be remembered that “episcopal conferences must be understood not as meetings of bishops but as meetings of churches through their bishops.”²⁵⁸ The argument here is about the local church and it is the case that “the local church, headed by its bishop, is not a part of the Church, but fully constitutes a catholic Church.”²⁵⁹ The role of episcopal conferences is expressive of the theology at the peripheries, a concept advocated by Pope Francis. In speaking of Pope Francis, Scerri is correct in speaking of “the importance that the present Bishop of Rome desires to give to the valid contribution coming from the local Churches, particularly those in the periphery.”²⁶⁰ One example highlighted by Scerri is Pope Francis’ decision on 13 April 2013 to create a “Council of Eight”/eventually of “Nine,” comprised of cardinals hailing from each of the continents in order to “assist him in the running of the Church.”²⁶¹ This augurs well for the role of the episcopal conferences, which have tended to be envisaged in terms of “affective collegiality,” as distinct from “effective collegiality.”²⁶² It does not help to transcend the “very reductionistic view of the nature and role of episcopal conferences”²⁶³ by acknowledging degrees of collegiality, some of which are even deemed to be “theologically improper.”²⁶⁴ In view of the long

²⁵⁵ Joseph Komonchak, “Introduction: Episcopal Conferences under Criticism,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 6.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁵⁷ For example, Tillard argues that it is indeed a pity that in many cases Episcopal Conferences have been accorded a certain air of bureaucracy. See Tillard, “L’universel et le local,” 36.

²⁵⁸ Zizioulas, “An Orthodox Reflection,” 377.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; see also Tillard, “L’universel et le local,” 30.

²⁶⁰ Scerri, *The Gentle Breeze from the Peripheries*, 65.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁶² There has been a distinction between “effective collegiality” and “affective collegiality.” The two aspects seem to be seen as dichotomous, especially in relation to the role of Episcopal Conferences. This is elaborated upon at length by Komonchak, in his chapter on “The Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington D.C./Georgetown University Press, 1989), 177-204.

²⁶³ Komonchak, “The Roman Working Paper,” 201.

²⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 194.

history of the existence of episcopal gatherings, as seen earlier, Komonchak is correct in stating that:

Whatever distinctions are employed, however, they must be such as they do not relegate to a secondary or exceptional role what the council regarded as historical and contemporary expressions of the “collegial character” of the episcopal office itself, of the “collegial union” among bishops, and of the “collegial spirit.”²⁶⁵

Dulles retraces the unique roles played by regional Councils in the early Church, such as the Third Council of Carthage, which proved instrumental in its contribution by drawing a list of the canonical books comprising the Scripture.²⁶⁶ Other examples mentioned by Dulles are the African Councils (411-418) which condemned Pelagianism, or the Second Council of Orange (529) which rejected semi-Pelagianism.²⁶⁷

Of course, these conferences are not of the same categories as the patriarchates. Perhaps, they do not need to be on the same level. It must be emphasised that the conciliar structures need not be the same throughout the world. In the Orthodox world, there exists a system of autocephalous churches, even though there needs to be a way of ensuring the synergy among them. Fahey explores the function of the permanent synods within the patriarchates, namely Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Russia.²⁶⁸ A careful analysis and reception of the function of permanent synods within the Orthodox Church can greatly benefit the Roman Catholic Church, especially with regard to a real collegiality across the world. The continental episcopal conferences have great potential with respect to the decentralisation of the Roman Catholic Church. As DeVille correctly points out, such structures do not bring to the fore such issues as nationalism, since they are not representative of countries, but of continents.²⁶⁹ Some of these episcopal groups have a strong presence, yet they can contribute more to the Church.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ See Dulles, “Doctrinal Authority,” 215.

²⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ See Michael Fahey, “Eastern Synodal Traditions: Pertinence for Western Collegial Institutions,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 258-264.

²⁶⁹ See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and The Roman Papacy*, 131.

A new approach towards the implementation of synodality in the Receptive Ecumenism exercise lies in the reinvigoration and renewal of episcopal conferences as a perfect example of synodality. However, it is a priority that episcopal conferences need to be taken seriously and appreciated by the Holy See, and therefore to “address them practically, as for example, by reforms in the statutes, to identify the basic ecclesiological issues, to clarify them historically and theologically, and to work towards a genuine ecclesial consensus.”²⁷⁰ This entails especially addressing the theological and juridical status of these episcopal conferences. It is certainly the case that the episcopal conferences, whether continental or national, need to be invested with a particular authority which is synodal in character and representative of the authority exercised by the Bishop of Rome. Jérôme Hamer’s argument in this respect is quite convincing:

In short, the episcopal conferences, demanded by the development of the world, do not constitute simply a practical arrangement, but are truly a possible expression and an appropriate manifestation of the solidarity of the episcopal body, which is a reality of divine right in the Church of Christ.²⁷¹

It is suggested, for example, that the documents produced by these groups be given greater weight within the Roman Catholic world, while they can be made more accessible via those channels used by the Holy See so as to ensure a harmonious and an efficient communication system between the various bodies. On a practical level, it is suggested that these documents be made accessible on the Vatican portal for the perusal of all the faithful, while at the same time acknowledging the stamp of approval by the Holy See itself.

The episcopal conferences from the various continents can be more directly involved in nomination of bishops and also cater to the liturgical, pastoral, and theological needs to their specific area, always in relation and in consultation with Rome. While they are probably the experts and know best how to meet the demands of the faithful in their respective cultures, at the same time, these episcopal groups can liaise with each other and with Rome. Since they are indeed cognisant of the situations arising in particular areas, they are to be given more clout within the Roman Catholic world. At the same

²⁷⁰ Komonchak, “Introduction,” 6.

²⁷¹ Jérôme Hamer, “Les conférences épiscopales, exercice de la collégialité,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 85 (1963): 966-69, quoted in Komonchak, “Introduction,” 13.

time, Rome will be eased of some of the gargantuan burden it has to carry. An example suggested by Patrick Connolly is including structures such as episcopal conferences in order to endorse a kind of “peer review” in relation to diocesan bishops.²⁷² As Connolly continues: “Such review might be more effective in promoting authentic episcopal accountability than the current system whereby Rome is responsible for the oversight of so many bishops.”²⁷³

However, with regard to the issue of the teaching authority of episcopal conferences, Örsy’s words, spoken in the late 80s, still hold true today: “To date, the issue of the teaching authority of the conferences has not benefited much from such discussions, since the problem has just begun to penetrate into the consciousness of canonists and theologians.”²⁷⁴ Within the perspective of Receptive Ecumenism, it is essential to look at similar structures within the Eastern Churches. It is especially important to remember that the Eastern Church

has remained faithful to its early tradition of synodal government, a most certainly catholic practice even if the Latin church has not embraced it to the same extent. If we say that the assemblies of bishops as such cannot have any authority to teach, are we not rejecting the authentic tradition of a sister church – part of the one Church of Christ? In doing so, are we not rejecting our own tradition; after all, what is theirs was also ours!²⁷⁵

Pope Francis indeed appears to be the catalyst in the quest for the episcopal conferences to achieve their due authority. In his various Apostolic Exhortations such as *Evangelii gaudium* and *Amoris laetitia*, as well as Encyclicals such as *Laudato si'*, he makes various references to documents produced by various Episcopal Conferences such as C.E.L.A.M. and the United States Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and other national Conferences of bishops.²⁷⁶ This reflects “a shift to a more centrifugal Church that values the theological and the orthopractical contribution of the peripheries.”²⁷⁷ Indeed,

²⁷² See 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), 248.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Örsy, “Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences,” 248.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 250.

²⁷⁶ See Scerri, *The Gentle Breeze from the Peripheries*, 58-60.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 64; see also Rausch, “A Listening Church,” 77-90; also Ruddy, “The Local and the Universal Church,” 109-124.

the application of the principle of subsidiarity – which is the result of an authentic spirit of decentralization – lies very much in Bergoglio’s frame of mind and ecclesial vision. While seeking to preserve their adherence to the Magisterium, Episcopal Conferences seek to apply the teaching of the Church to their local context. There is no grain of doubt that the members of a conference of bishop in a particular country are well-equipped to discern their specific context and to seek to propose practical tailor-made solutions, or at least, to be better-tuned to provide collegial answers to what those at the grass-roots are experiencing.²⁷⁸

For this reason, it is proposed that the supranational (i.e. continental) episcopal conferences be granted collegial status in the proper sense of the word. The understanding of the teaching authority of episcopal conferences must be grounded in the concept of *communio*.²⁷⁹ One is invited to recall that “episcopal collegiality is a specific manifestation of this *communio*.”²⁸⁰ One is also to remember that, as Provost insists, “it is not enough for episcopal conferences to express the communion of the particular churches represented in them. Conferences, by their nature and historical development, are designed to promote the church’s mission.”²⁸¹ As Provost correctly insists, mission is related to communion, and is not just an addendum to the church, relegated to “just some activity of the church”²⁸² Indeed, “mission is a dimension of what the church is, and thus participates in the mystery which we profess the church to be.”²⁸³

For this reason, in wholeheartedly accepting the gift of synodality from the Eastern Orthodox Church, it is suggested that the decentralization of Rome be encouraged and facilitated by the increasing presence of the continental episcopal conferences, apart from a Holy Synod which should also include laypeople. The former should be given more authority in the decision-making which especially affects their particular territories. Why the singling out of continental episcopal conferences? The reason is that each continent ought to have a representative authority. The episcopal conferences of each country can still contribute during meetings with the continental episcopal conferences. Although one may not expect to have a structure similar to patriarchates, the tool of receptive hermeneutics allows theologians and canonists to reflect on the gifts that can be received

²⁷⁸ Scerri, *The Gentle Breeze from the Peripheries*, 37-38.

²⁷⁹ See Örsy, “Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences,” 251.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ James Provost, “Episcopal Conferences as an Expression of the Communion of Churches,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 287.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 273.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

by the respective Churches and harnessed for their own potential. Creating patriarchates might not necessarily function in a world which is alien to such a perspective, though this proposal might be considered in the future.

The reconfiguration of the role of the episcopal conferences is only one approach which might bolster the conciliar roles as inspired by the Orthodox Church to function within the Roman Catholic Church. There might be other suggestions, which must not be eschewed. This is suggested as the best solution as *there is no need to create something anew, but rework on the existing potential* which already exists within the Catholic Church. The role of the episcopal conferences would be to alleviate Rome of most of the work especially related to territorial matters, while at the same time acknowledging that the bishops in the episcopal conferences are better equipped to deal with the matters emerging within their respective areas. In his address commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Synod of bishops, Pope Francis reminds his audience that “through the Synod Fathers, the bishops act as authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church, which they need to discern carefully from the changing currents of public opinion.”²⁸⁴ Indeed, in giving a universal voice to the role of the episcopal conferences,

The question at hand is not one of restricting the Petrine office or undermining it in any way, but rather of contributing to the enrichment of its exercise, namely, the synodal principle underlined by the complementarity of the centripetal and centrifugal dimensions of the relationship between Rome and the local Churches.²⁸⁵

It is suggested that while the episcopal conferences be made up of bishops, there should also be the presence of lay people in order to ratify the proposals and solutions being presented. This would be a veritable case of synodality, since:

Synodality, as a visible expression of the catholicity of the church, is not only related to the church hierarchy but also to the whole people of God. ... Lay people can enrich the synodal deliberations by their spirituality and expertise.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Francis, “Address by His Holiness Pope Francis.”

²⁸⁵ Scerri, *The Gentle Breeze from the Peripheries*, 50-51.

²⁸⁶ St Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, “Serving Communion: Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality.” A Study by the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group. October 2018, accessed 10 March 2019, http://moehlerinstitut.de/pdf/texte/kommunikues/2018_graz_serving_communion.pdf, 36.

Indeed, lay people have recently been invited as consultors both within the Roman Catholic Church, such as the synods on family issues held in 2015 and 2016, and to be members of the diocesan synods of the Catholic Church and also to the Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete in 2016.²⁸⁷

Viewed within this perspective, one acknowledges the importance of the documents produced by the various episcopal groups, as they seek expertise of other faithful. Of course, the episcopal conferences should not function independently of Rome, but together with Rome. What is Rome? Rome encompasses the Pope, together with the college of cardinals. It would imply great humility and faith in the continuous work of the Holy Spirit manifested through the many charisms and bodies existing within the Roman Catholic Church, not least of all the episcopal conferences.

This section is concluded by suggesting a more thorough study of the role and authority of the episcopal conferences. They can be seen as an expression of a real collegiality which goes beyond the mere recognition of pastoral work. Perhaps, one needs to see the word “pastoral” in its broader connotations that include the doctrinal aspect. If the episcopal conferences are seen as working together with the Holy See, there should be no fear if they are invested with the authority required in their service towards their Churches. A discussion concerning episcopal conferences would certainly “profit from a deepening of the pneumatological dimension in ecclesiology so as to allow for diversity and for the ‘many’ to condition the concept of unity effectively.”²⁸⁸ This, too, is another gift the Catholic Church has gladly received from the Christian East.

²⁸⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁸⁸ Zizioulas, “An Orthodox Reflection,” 383.

6.10 Towards a reworking of conciliarity within the autocephalous Churches: What can Orthodoxy learn from the Catholic concept of Primacy?

Time and again, various theologians have pointed out the lack of overall harmony existing among the autocephalous churches, when they are supposedly to be seen as an example par excellence of conciliarity. During one of the Centro Pro Unione Conferences, in analysing the Pan-Orthodox synod of Crete, Tamara Grdzeldze asked the pertinent question: “The main question for the Orthodox today, in my opinion, is what is the orthodox unity today? How does the Orthodox Church witness its unity to the world?”²⁸⁹ How can the Orthodox autocephalous Churches better enhance their relationship in a way which fosters real and genuine communion between the Churches? Certain questions need to be addressed with honesty. What are the real issues at stake behind the various altercations existing among some of the churches? It would be ideal if the Orthodox churches come together to discuss the real problems which plague the autocephalous churches. Would the persons concerned be ready to meet and discuss such matters in good faith? The answer is in the affirmative. Or is this only wishful thinking?

First, the autocephalous churches are governed by a patriarch, or *protos*. As such, he is the head of that particular Church. So, there is a regional primacy. Is the position of the patriarch simply one of honour? What does this status entail? Speaking of synods, Zizioulas argues that “it would be a mistake to regard the authority of let us say a patriarch in relation to a synod in the Orthodox Church as simply a primacy of honour, as it is often stated by Orthodox theologians.”²⁹⁰ If the primacy of the patriarchs is simply one of honour, how can there be a smooth dialogue among the Churches? In speaking of the need for a universal primacy, DeVille also explains that there needs to be an evaluation of what a primacy of honour really entails.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Tamara Grdzeldze, “The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches,” *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin*, no. 90 (2016): 15.

²⁹⁰ Zizioulas, “An Orthodox Reflection,” 380.

²⁹¹ See DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 45.

What is the role of the *primus inter pares*? Would the autocephalous Orthodox churches be ready to accept a greater role to be played by the *primus inter pares*? Paul Meyendorff argues that a rediscovery of the role of the primacy would serve to readily and summarily address contemporary challenges which assail the Orthodox (and the Christian!) world today:

One desirable step, which touches peripherally on the topic of the present conference, but which also raises profound theological issues, is a rediscovery of the proper function of primacy as bearing the responsibility for maintaining unity, not simply at the local, but also at the international, level.²⁹²

Certain issues during the Pan-Orthodox Council held in Crete in 2016 still remain unresolved.²⁹³ There were no delegations from four of the autocephalous churches. This thesis does not seek to address whether this Council, planned for many decades, achieved its intended aims. Even more pressing is the situation regarding the granting of autocephaly to a newly independent Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The emergence of three Orthodox Churches in Ukraine (two of them regarded as uncanonical) in the wake of communism attests to the complexity of the issue. Of course, the complexity of historical issues and related unresolved threads cannot be ignored, as Farrugia makes clear in his article in *The Tablet*, which analyses the current situation in Ukraine.²⁹⁴ However, even more problematic is the lack of co-ordination and unanimous agreement on the part of the other autocephalous churches in response to the decision taken by Patriarch Bartholomew.

The fact that “Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, under whose wing the UOC-MP [the only canonical Orthodox Church prior to the granting of autocephaly to the new Orthodox Church in Ukraine] retaliated furiously, going so far as to suppress the commemoration of Bartholomew during the Eucharistic liturgy,”²⁹⁵ shows a sad state of affairs within the Orthodox Church itself. It may threaten to develop into an enduring schism. As Farrugia correctly states, autocephaly for local churches is not

²⁹² Meyendorff, “Ethnophyletism,” 393.

²⁹³ For more detail, see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁹⁴ See Edward Farrugia, “For Whom Does the Great Bell of Kiev Toll?” *The Tablet* 19 January 2019, 6-7.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

something new; it goes back to the New Testament, as for example Rom 15, 20.²⁹⁶ However, the association of autocephaly with nationalism is, as expressed in earlier sections, an apple of discord. Hence, one is led to ask questions as to the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In the light of these affairs, one should also go further to ask: Should the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch as *primus inter pares* be one of honour, only? If not, how can this be achieved? How can a reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry be an asset to a reconfiguration of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch? These questions need to be addressed in a climate of love and solidarity if Churches and their members are seriously committed towards a reestablishment of love and fraternity between the autocephalous Churches. Spiritual Ecumenism remains fundamental and foundational to the relationship between the Churches in their quest for unity. How can the autocephalous Churches, and even the Roman Catholics and Orthodox engage in dialogue in a spirit of humility and trust? How can Christians stand up to the sinful structures of pride and the tearing asunder within the Churches? In the light of Christ's words in Mt 16, 18 that "on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it," Christians are to ask themselves about their part in the edification of the Church of Christ, a mission Christ himself entrusted all his disciples, namely all those who wholeheartedly embrace *sequela Christi*. Just as in section 6.09, this thesis proposes the reception of Orthodox patriarchal structures and a concrete spirit of synodal orthopraxis by the Roman Catholic church, this section seeks to suggest the reception of the Catholic concept of primacy by the Orthodox Churches in the role exercised by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Is this only wishful thinking? Can Andrew exercise a similar role to that of his brother Peter?

6.11 Conclusion

The exploration of the Petrine ministry and the conciliar structures in the two Churches are an example of the role played by Receptive Ecumenism. Research has been carried out about a reconfiguration of the Primacy along conciliar structures. Therefore, Receptive Ecumenism is not, strictly speaking, new. What is new is the awareness of the two traditions in pursuing a path of mutual encounter by offering gifts which would

²⁹⁶ See *ibid.*

greatly edify the one Church of Christ. Although these gifts are not perfect, the dialogue with the other tradition serves to enhance and enrich the gifts of primacy and conciliarity.

What is beautiful about Receptive Ecumenism is its embrace of Spiritual Ecumenism. All too often, lamentably, doing theology and spirituality have become disconnected. Theology itself has become fragmented in various areas. While specialised studies are required in the various areas and are indeed necessary, on the other hand, one is to bear in mind the link between spirituality and theology. Theology was first and foremost a spiritual experience of a people who entered a relationship with a God who revealed himself to them. As a result, baptised believers must be careful not to let the tenets of Christianity crystallise into remote speculations.

Great strides have been achieved since the commencement of dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox over fifty years ago. That is a witness to the good will of various persons who have striven hard to ensure the mutual trust that had been eroded throughout a millennium of separation and conflict. However, mistrust and hurts still remain. The surface of trust often seems to be too thin. This is a situation which still requires much dedicated commitment and faithful perseverance.

A reconfiguration of the Petrine ministry is called for. Thanks to the dialogue with the Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics will become aware that the role of the Bishop of Rome needs to be creatively transformed along authentic conciliarity and synodality. The same holds true for the Orthodox autocephalous churches which often attest to fragmented conciliar structures. Conciliarity, a characteristic of the Orthodox Church, needs to be strengthened by embracing aspects of a renewed primacy which is fundamentally at the service of the bonds of communion.

The once diluted role of episcopal conferences, especially on the continental level, requires further exploration as a potential example of conciliarity within the Catholic Church. More importantly, the theological and pastoral identity of episcopal conferences needs to be delved into, especially when it comes to their authority. If scholars are working towards veritable collegial structures, the role of episcopal conferences has to be redefined theologically, and authority granted to them in decision-making, together with

the college of cardinals and the Bishop of Rome. It is pointless to continue opposing the notions of “affective” and “effective” collegiality. Antinomies are to be ironed out and not endorsed.

The Ravenna and the Chieti documents, presented in detail in this thesis in sections 3.05 and 6.03, respectively, substantiate the progress achieved by the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church in their decision to continue analysing the existent structures of primacy and conciliarity within the two Churches. It is to be hoped that this journey would proceed and progress towards a hoped-for and exciting destination. A Church breathing with both lungs the life of the Holy Spirit is a living and creative Church which is continually in renewal while cherishing its ages-long Tradition.

Epilogue: The Grace of Reception

Retracing Receptive Ecumenism in the Dialogue between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians

The call for unity between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Christians is imperative today more than ever. At a time when Christianity has lost its grasp on many faithful, the Church is called to be more credible in a world of contradictions. People are rejecting the institutional hold of the Church and yet the search for the spiritual is strongly felt by many. One of the missions of the Church of Christ is to testify to the love of Christ through dialogue with the world. Dialogue with the world can only be convincing as long as the Church is unified. This is the reason why unity between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church is necessary. On the other hand, in the wake of a millennium of estrangement, one cannot expect unity to take place suddenly. This is a process which cannot be hastened, yet a balance must be struck between the present and the goal of future unity; this is a balance which can be reflected in the relationship between the present and the eschatological. So, the present situation between the Orthodox and Catholic Christians must be one of discernment between waiting and action towards the goal of future unity. It is a situation where Receptive Ecumenism can, as a relatively new approach, be greatly instrumental in healing divisions, because its hermeneutic is based on positive assessments, on the appreciation of the beauty of each tradition, and hence it can only look forward.

The frontiers within which Receptive Ecumenism in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches can operate, are endless. There are already examples where this has happened, or is happening implicitly with great success. A case in point is the encyclical *Laudato si'*. It is a laudable act that Pope Francis chose to refer to and follow in the footsteps of Patriarch Bartholomew, who was the first of the church leaders to raise the alarm on the ecological crisis of our planet. In introducing *Laudato si'*, John Zizioulas says the following:

the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem and the duty of the

Church to voice its concern and try to contribute with all the spiritual means at its disposal towards the protection of our natural environment.¹

The Orthodox have been voicing their concerns about the plight of the planet for quite some time. The various efforts of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, nicknamed “the Green Patriarch,” are well known.² It is in the very nature of Orthodox theology to envisage salvation as encompassing the whole cosmos; participation in the created order serves also to transfigure the whole cosmos. This is corroborated by Chryssavgis, who states that:

Concern for the environment is not an expression of superficial or sentimental love. It is a way of honouring and dignifying our creation by the hand and word of God. It is a way of listening to ‘the groaning of creation’ (Rom. 8.22).³

The act of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches coming together in order to speak about the future of the planet attests to the Church of Christ and its dialogue and relationship with the world, especially in addressing current situations impinging on daily life. The ecological crisis can hardly go unnoticed. Zizioulas reminds his readers that *Laudato si’* “comes at a critical moment in human history and will undoubtedly have a worldwide effect on people’s consciousness.”⁴ The fact that the Church has had recourse to various experts serves to bring forth the strength of the document. It speaks to everyone, “the scientist, the economist, the sociologist and above all the faithful of the Church.”⁵

Moreover, the two traditions joining forces in dialogue with the world about the future of the planet present a glimpse of the Church of Christ, of diverse but complementary traditions speaking and engaging with the world. *Laudato si’* has spurred various efforts by Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis, who vehemently denounce the greed that is

¹ John Zizioulas, “A Comment on Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato si’* by Elder Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon,” *Website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, 18 June, 2015, <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/a-comment-on-pope-francis-encyclical-laudato-si->.

² For a more detailed summary of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s initiatives with regard to the environment, see John Chryssavgis, “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: insights into an Orthodox Christian worldview,” *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 64, no. 1 (2007): 10-13.

³ Chryssavgis, “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,” 15.

⁴ Zizioulas, “A Comment on *Laudato si’*.”

⁵ *Ibid.*

resulting in the rape and plunder of our planet. A case in point is the joint declaration on 1 September 2017, marking the day dedicated to the Day of Prayer for Creation:

Our propensity to interrupt the world's delicate and balanced ecosystems, our insatiable desire to manipulate and control the planet's limited resources, and our greed for limitless profit in markets – all these have alienated us from the original purpose of creation.⁶

A united Church can address several other crises that are plaguing the planet. Zizioulas asserts that *Laudato si'* is not restricted solely to the subject of ecology, but:

I see in it an important ecumenical dimension in that it brings the divided Christians before a common task which they must face together. We live at a time when fundamental existential problems overwhelm our traditional divisions and relativize them almost to the point of extinction.⁷

Zizioulas is correct in his prophetic assertion. The problems which assail the current worldview transcend the problems which caused divisions within the one Church. For, “this risk is common to all of us regardless of our ecclesiastical or confessional identities.”⁸ For how can a Church speak about love and respect at all stages, if it is fraught with dissensions from within? It is not only desirable but also imperative that the Church speaks with one voice if it is to be truly credible and convincing in a world mired in contradictions. The role of the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox working together in the case of the ecological crisis reminds all the baptised about the possibility of a Church united by love. The eschatological unity of the Church of Christ depends on the present actions, for God has chosen the human beings to collaborate in his divine plan of salvation. Ecumenism is, undoubtedly, a witness to the proclamation of salvation.

With the look at a unified Church projected in eschatological times, the fruits of ecumenism start to be reaped now. The Christian faithful are collaborators in ensuring that Church unity indeed takes place. The role of ecumenism can be reflected in the way

⁶ Francis-Bartholomew, “Joint Message of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the World Day of Prayer for Creation,” *Vatican Website*, 1 September, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170901_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html; also Christopher Lamb, “Pope and Bartholomew issue joint appeal on Environment,” 1 September 2017, *The Tablet*, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/7693/pope-and-bartholomew-issue-joint-appeal-on-environment>.

⁷ Zizioulas, “A Comment on *Laudato si'*.”

⁸ *Ibid.*

Christ speaks of his kingdom. While the glorified Christ comes at the end of time, the kingdom of God is already at hand, notwithstanding the existing structures of sin.

Receptive Ecumenism shows the right direction towards the path of eventual unity. It does not pretend to provide every answer to the enduring questions and those that arise along the path to communion. It does not try to erase or substitute methods of dialogue which have yielded positive and praiseworthy results. Rather, it works alongside these results, while promoting what is positive about each tradition, as a call to receive God's gifts inherent in each of the traditions. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to assume that Receptive Ecumenism is not concerned with the academic dimension, given the background which gave rise to its development, and the contribution of a wide spectrum of theologians. It is the case that a proper exercise of Receptive Ecumenism offers an invitation to embrace the various aspects of ecumenical dialogue. The repeated emphasis on the part of Receptive Ecumenism on the creative, analytic, and pragmatic aspects in doing theology is a testimony to this. It is an approach which attempts to engage the various factors at play in dialogue. This is what makes Receptive Ecumenism convincing to the Ecumenical Movement. Before engaging in ecumenical dialogue, it embraces an exercise of dialogue between the various elements. In doing so, it brings to light and seeks to address, the complexity of the whole enterprise, a complexity which can be harmoniously resolved thanks to the various charisms inherent in the Church, which are the fruit of the creative force of the Spirit.

Zizioulas speaks of three kinds of ecumenism, which it is believed, should not be separated but envisaged as working in tandem. Firstly, "ecumenism in time" describes "the effort of the divided Christians to unite on the basis of their common Tradition, the teaching of the Bible and the Church Fathers."⁹ This is the aim behind the theological dialogues taking place between different traditions, in this case the dialogue taking place between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, as elaborated in great detail in this thesis. Secondly, there is "ecumenism in space" which embodies the various Christian institutions "so that the different cultural contexts in which they live may be taken into

⁹ Ibid. See also the inspiration of Georges Florovsky behind Zizioulas' first two kinds of ecumenism – "ecumenism in time" and "ecumenism in space," in Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 126.

consideration in the search for unity.”¹⁰ This would be an expression of the universal Church. Thirdly, Zizioulas adds an “existential ecumenism,” which serves to express “the effort to face together the most profound existential problems that preoccupy humanity in its entirety – not simply in particular places or classes of people.”¹¹ The ecological crisis is one example of this, and by no means the only one. The ecumenical endeavour towards a unified Church makes the Church more credible in consolidating the relevance of the unanimous voice of the Gospels. Deep divisions have only served to foment the mistrust and the disenchantment among the people, the same fact commented by the missionaries, spurring the 1910 Edinburgh Conference in the process. The Church is called to preach by – first and foremost – becoming an example of ecumenical dialogue, albeit a process, which is akin to the process of discipleship.

Where does Receptive Ecumenism stand in this? Can it be classified? Receptive Ecumenism is a kind of ecumenism which stands at the crossroads between the various levels of ecumenism. The role of Receptive Ecumenism within the whole process is central. Its role is to thrust forward the Ecumenical Movement, in all its facets, by empowering each tradition to harness and receive the various gifts offered by the other traditions. It does not reduce the dialogue simply to theological arguments, but it looks at the dynamics of the human person and of the Church. It espouses a hermeneutic which seeks to interpret and empower the ecumenical process *within* each respective tradition, before venturing in dialogue *among* traditions. This is crucial in a pluralist world where globalisation has contributed to the opening up of different kinds of frontiers. Most importantly, it is grounded by practice. That is what the faithful need. They need a Church that empowers them to be really Catholics and really Orthodox in the whole sense of the word. Receptive Ecumenism reminds all of the proactive role played by humanity. God, the Lord of creation, empowered the human being to participate in the transfiguration of creation (Gn 2, 19-20). Likewise, Christ entrusted the disciples with his mission of building his Church on love and service (Mt 28, 16-20). The Church is the microcosm and the soul of creation.

¹⁰ Zizioulas, “A Comment on *Laudato si*.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*

One of the situations whereby Receptive Ecumenism yields great potential is in the decentralisation of the juridical aspect of the Petrine ministry. The Orthodox concept of conciliarity and synodality can greatly aid the Roman Catholic Church in bringing to the fore the collegial nature of episcopal conferences and this is a new approach where it is believed that Receptive Ecumenism can be harnessed fruitfully. The episcopal conferences can greatly aid the Holy See in the various tasks of promulgating and, at the same time, safeguarding the faith, relying on the socio-pastoral expertise of the local bishops concerned. However, it must be admitted, there needs to be a reconfiguration of the role of episcopal conferences themselves. Hence, more research in that area is required, especially since the author of this thesis feels it necessary that their status be elevated on the grounds of their authority.

The complementary situation can be applied within the Orthodox Church, especially in its present structure of autocephalous Churches. It is a sad case indeed when these Churches are not always in agreement with each other, sometimes endangering their collegial status. It is the case that the Orthodox Church needs to revise the function of synodality and collegiality and apply a mechanism which would promote a truer and more faithful communion between the churches. It is here that the Holy See can humbly and fraternally offer great help.

And yet, are the traditions ready to acknowledge help from each other? Are they ready to reject the entrenchment of the impact of individualism in the process? Going further, is each Church ready to truly apply the strength of the other tradition to its own tradition? A realignment of one's own view with regard to the other tradition is a painstaking process which requires an honest conversion, aided by a conscientious discernment. Ecumenical reception challenges all Churches and traditions to both an inward and an outward exodus. Otherwise, each tradition would run the risk of competing for the greater role. The episodes in Mt 18, 1; Mk 9, 33-34 and Lk 9, 46 show the kind of danger the disciples could succumb to, which would distort the very real meaning of the role of the disciples in the building of the Church. The structures of sin which tempted the disciples have not changed much since then! That is why each tradition must be on the guard for the semblances that sin takes in order to act against them. The deep-seated

sense of competition permeates, admittedly, all the Christian traditions, since each tradition is composed of sinful humans.

Unity is the responsibility of all the faithful, not simply that of the Church leaders because change happens at all levels. Yves Congar argues that task of ecumenism, “by its very nature, is a movement towards accomplishment and plenitude. It envisages a unity of integration, not one of impoverishment; it seeks to reassemble and gather together.”¹² In the light of all this, Receptive Ecumenism is a strategy which focuses on the beauty of each tradition. It embraces the gifts of each tradition which are waiting to be received. It is a part within the greater mosaic of unity, thereby bearing an important stamp, without which the dialogue between the two traditions would immensely suffer.

Jesus’ saying of the eschatological times, in that “of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of [a]heaven, but My Father only” (Mt 24, 36) applies even to the ecumenical sphere. And yet, we can confidently state that new horizons, hitherto considered as taboo, are opening up. Both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics are able to willingly come together and discuss frankly the thorny issue of the primacy. This attests to the fact that the journey which started little more than fifty years ago is heading towards the right direction. Despite serious obstacles, Christians are called not to lose heart and remember that obstacles within the Church are not new. Various problems have beset the Church from its earliest times. Unfortunately, schisms developed throughout the ages. The major problems which caused the mutual estrangement might not be the same problems posing major difficulties today.

Nevertheless, these challenges need not dishearten the faithful along the path towards unity. Two important points must be kept in mind. First of all, is the need to be patient and discern the auspicious times when to act. On the other hand, this must not lull the believer into a false sense of security and inertia. St Paul’s warning to the Thessalonians not to remain in idleness and to “never tire of doing what is good” (2 Thess 3, 13) reminds all those involved that for all the difficulties Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians encounter along the way, believers need to strive towards the perfect communion in the

¹² Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (London/Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 104.

Church of Christ. Indeed, the pragmatic aspect is a main focus in Receptive Ecumenism. Ultimately, the Christian way is about action which is inextricably bound to the spiritual realm. It is the same action which compelled the disciples to proclaim the Good News in the face of various threats, and to take courageous action in the face of difficulties, such as the Council of Jerusalem in Acts. As Christ embraced the cross, the faithful are called to embrace the crosses of the obstacles and unwaveringly be creative in enhancing the dialogue between the two traditions, which has come such a long way from the Second Vatican Council. Ecumenical dialogue, at all levels, can indeed be a spacious panoramic arena for the development of each Church.

Areas for Further Research

While Receptive Ecumenism has already had some important positive response from various Orthodox theologians, such as Kallistos Ware and Andrew Louth, it needs to make more headway in the ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Understanding the process of reception jointly is an effective way forward in order to reinstate mutual trust. This does not come take place easily. It is painful at times. It is difficult to acknowledge that no one tradition is perfect and, ironically, cannot survive without interaction with the other. In the process, it is difficult to forego the trappings of one's tradition, after distinguishing what is indeed relevant from what is confessional to one's own tradition. It involves peeling off the layers of history and other factors which have contributed to seal off the respective traditions from each other. Most importantly, this calls for help both within the community and also from outside.

Yet, the fact that many of the bilateral dialogues have yielded encouraging results is a great sign to progress afield in the development of trust, even despite various setbacks in the history of the ecumenical dialogue between the two traditions. Hence, a thorough understanding and application of Receptive Ecumenism to the whole ecumenical endeavour between the Orthodox and the Catholic would be a great opportunity for the two churches to grow together, in addition to the mentioned bilateral dialogues. This would entail a transformation of the process of doing ecumenism, not an addendum. It

would be a transmutation which runs throughout the whole dialogue, even in the *raison d'être* underpinning the bilateral dialogues themselves. The beauty about Receptive Ecumenism is that it provides an empowerment for change across various levels: the personal, the ecclesial and, as a result, the structural. Ultimately,

The openness to growth, change, examination of conscience and continual grace-filled conversion that lies at the heart of Christian life pertains as much to the ecclesial as to the personal: to allowing, that is, one's own tradition to be challenged to expand and to re-think how it understands and does things in relation to specific issues.¹³

In Chapter 1, one of the criticisms highlighted in relation to Receptive Ecumenism was the dearth of analysis regarding the term “reception” itself. It is suggested that this become a focus of forthcoming research and the development of the Receptive Ecumenism strategy. While reception is the strongest aspect in this strategy, ironically, this notion itself needs further analysis and elucidation. This would become especially fruitful with the help of the various stakeholders in the ecumenical dialogue, in very much the same way as the preparation for the 2008 publication of *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*. Such opportunities for the foray of Receptive Ecumenism within the Orthodox – Catholic dialogue would take place in the form of conferences, academic research and also research attending to the lived-out ecumenical dialogue and education at the grassroots because, ultimately, that is central in regaining mutual trust and cementing relationships. Such a project would also help the stakeholders understand the application of Receptive Ecumenism and areas where it can be further strengthened.

Another area for future research is the importance and the relationship between Receptive Ecumenism and Open Sobornicity. It is believed that this area can yield great benefit for further ecumenical dialogue. It would also be immensely profitable for both traditions and the ecumenical dialogue itself if this were to be followed in the exposition of further research and conferences. Most importantly, this would serve to highlight the relevance of Receptive Ecumenism. It is also a foremost exercise in reception, if the two strategies were to engage in dialogue and mutually receive the respective contributions. This would

¹³ 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), 87.

not need stamp out any differences in order to scramble for the similarities, yet each strategy would benefit and be strengthened by learning from the other. It would be a practical exercise on the part of the two strategies which constantly propose the need for learning.

The prospect of synodality within the Roman Catholic Church is gathering momentum, especially thanks to the valid contributions of the Orthodox tradition. Yet, the Orthodox tradition itself needs to profit from the Catholic reconfiguration of primacy. It would be an important step forward if the exercise of the concepts as developed within each tradition are undertaken in dialogue with the other tradition. This would serve to align the two traditions along the same track on the path towards unity. Yet, while reception of the gift of synodality is crucial for the Roman Catholic to strengthen its already synodal structures, at the same time this does not entail the complete transposition of the concept into Roman Catholic ground, owing to the distinct mindsets. For example, the concept of patriarchate may be quite alien to the *forma mentis* of most Roman Catholic areas, but reception in this case entails the realigning of both the Petrine ministry and the existing synodal structures such as the episcopal conferences along a fuller understanding of synodality, as evident in Chapter 6. The real reception advocated by Receptive Ecumenism is a reception of a gift which greatly elevates the receiver. The gift does not become greater than the receiving community but in the receiving process, the community is transformed. There is the space for differences, but these differences are embraced because they do not pose a threat to Tradition; rather, they affirm it. Yet, there needs to be a thorough evaluation of the attitudes and the other factors at work in the process.

To conclude, Receptive Ecumenism promises great and exciting possibilities in the ecumenical forum. Most importantly, this process needs to develop further in order to actively engage with emerging challenges. Moreover, it is the conviction of many ecumenists that due to its multi-faceted foundational basis, it can become a contemporary springboard for reflection. It would indeed serve as a catalyst for the ongoing transformation in the ecumenical commitment of the Churches, and consequently, of Christians in the contemporary world. With all its difficulties along the way, ecumenism promises to be a prophetic journey of encounter, conversion, redemption, and

transformation. Paul Murray's reflection on the Catholic reception of the Second Vatican Council, which can refer to any reception between the different traditions, is so apt:

We need remember that Christ is the one who has gone ahead of us calling us forwards; and that the Spirit, whose truth is always richer than any one narrow perspective, is the one who is with us, working through each of us – popes, bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated, and lay – to lead us forwards and to lead us deeper into the total truth of God in Christ.¹⁴

¹⁴ Paul D. Murray, "Vatican II: On Celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and Ecumenical," *The Second Vatican Council: Celebrating its Achievements and the Future*, ed. Gavin D'Costa and Emma Jane Harris (London/NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 91.

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