

## What Can We Do About the Unity We Envision? Engaging *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Part 2

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What can we do about the unity we envision? Yesterday we saw that *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* portrays the church as “an eschatological reality, already anticipating the kingdom, *but not yet its full realization.*” The church is not yet the church that is fully under the rule of Christ; it’s not yet the community fully participating in God’s reign. For the church to participate fully in the reign of God includes fully embodying the unity that is God’s goal for the world. For the body of Christ to be fully under the rule of Christ includes the members of the body being fully united with one another as well as with their head. The church is not yet visibly one. Therefore the church must be a “pilgrim community” on a “journey towards the full realization of God’s gift of communion.”<sup>1</sup>

When *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* envisions the visible unity that we haven’t yet fully realized, it does so in continuity with the “New Delhi Definition” of the unity we seek, which I quoted yesterday. By way of reminder, here’s how the ecumenical movement imagines what it might look like to have a unity the world can see:

We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully-committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages, in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.<sup>2</sup>

According to the New Delhi definition, if all churches don’t recognize baptisms performed by other churches as expressions of the one baptism that belongs to the one body of Christ, we don’t have a unity the world can see. If all Christians can’t celebrate the Eucharist together in one another’s churches, we don’t have a unity the world can see. If all churches can’t confess together the essence of the apostolic faith, we don’t have a unity the world can see. If our churches don’t accept the ministers and members of one another’s churches as their own, we don’t have a unity the world can see. If we can’t share the Gospel and serve the needy and work to liberate the oppressed together, we don’t have a unity the world can see. If we can’t speak prophetic words to the world with a unified voice whenever God calls us to do so, we don’t have a unity the world can see. But we’re painfully aware that we don’t currently have that kind of unity. We don’t have that kind of unity even with other members of our own denominations, much less with other Christians beyond our own churches.

The ecumenical movement is at a critical impasse right now. There are many reasons for this, but I’ll name four. First, the denominations that historically led the ecumenical movement have now had to turn their energies to their worsening internal divisions. Second, there’s what Presbyterian ecumenist Joseph Small has called “the scandal of a division that ceases to offend.” It just doesn’t bother us anymore that we don’t have visible unity with other Christians. We already have spiritual unity, and that’s good enough for us. Third, in this world of worsening religiously-motivated violence, interreligious dialogue seems the more urgent endeavor. Working to increase mutual understanding among the religions is desperately needed if we’re to help the world toward God’s goal of community, but our own Christian disunity makes that much more difficult. And

fourth, ecumenism has long been perceived as something that concerned only theologians and those at the highest levels of church and denominational leadership. Unfortunately we haven't always done a good job of helping the lay membership of the churches understand that they, too, have a stake in the ecumenical movement and are in fact its most important participants.

The ecumenical movement doesn't seem to be moving much these days. If it's going to move again toward God's goal of unity, we must do something beyond what we're currently doing about the unity we envision. I propose to you that we can do something about the unity *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* helps us envision by taking up more intentionally three major sorts of ecumenical practices.

We can do something to bring about the unity we envision by attending to the practices of "receptive ecumenism." Some older approaches to ecumenism resulted in resistance to institutional expressions of the quest for Christian unity, like the World Council of Churches, because some folk had the impression that the price of visible unity would be the surrender of some of the things held most dear by each church. But there's a newer approach to ecumenical engagement that's gaining traction in the international ecumenical community. "Receptive ecumenism" is an approach to ecumenical dialogue in which the communions in conversation with one another seek to identify the distinctive gifts that each tradition has to offer the other and which each could receive from the other with integrity.<sup>3</sup> It's reflected in Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical on ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint* ("that they may be one"), which said, "Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some ways it is always an 'exchange of gifts'."<sup>4</sup> Some ecumenical dialogues, like the one between the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, have worked toward concrete proposals for the exchange of ecclesial gifts.<sup>5</sup> Yet as an international conference on receptive ecumenism held at Durham University in the UK in 2006 defined this approach, "the primary emphasis is on learning rather than teaching...each tradition takes responsibility for its own potential learning from others and is, in turn, willing to facilitate the learning of others as requested but without dictating terms and without making others' learning a precondition to attending to ones' own."<sup>6</sup>

Receptive ecumenism is in many respects a more user-friendly approach to ecumenism for churches that haven't heretofore been active participants in the ecumenical movement. Receptive ecumenism assumes that because each tradition has been entrusted with a unique historical journey as a people of God, it possesses distinctive gifts to be offered to the rest of the body of Christ. It also suggests the possibility that any tradition can incorporate the gifts of others into its own distinctive pattern of faith and practice without abandoning or distorting the gifts that already define its identity. Receptive ecumenism may also reveal many traditions that haven't been self-consciously ecumenical as being much more receptive ecumenically than one might assume. Throughout the histories of our separated traditions and in our ecclesial life today, we've all received from other churches much that forms the core of our identity as Christians while also enriching our distinctive denominational identities.

As an intentional approach to ecumenical convergence, receptive ecumenism is a new thing. But it's something that's been going on a long time in the church. Have a good look at your hymnal or book of worship sometime. I've never sung from a Baptist hymnal in which all the hymns were composed by Baptists. Most Baptist hymnals include multiple hymn texts of patristic composition. Beyond these hymns from the ancient church, Baptists receive through their hymnals the liturgical gifts of hymn texts by Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Jesus from the pre-Reformation medieval church; the fifteenth-century Jewish hymn "The God of Abraham Praise" by Daniel ben Judah Dayyan; the hymns and chorales of Martin Luther; the post-Reformation Catholic hymn "Fairest Lord Jesus" from the *Münster Gesangbuch*; the hymnody of Methodist Charles Wesley; and more recently songs with origins in the Pentecostal movement. These ecclesial gifts from other traditions Baptists have gladly received with their voices and hearts, and that's a well-established form of

receptive ecumenism. Other churches have been doing that for a long time, too. My Baptist tradition has also benefited from the trans-denominational liturgical renewal of the late twentieth century, and today a growing number of Baptist congregations have incorporated other liturgical gifts from beyond the Baptist tradition into their worship: the full Christian year and the liturgical colors that accompany its seasons, the lectionary, the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday and processions with palm fronds at the start of Holy Week, and even incense and icons here and there. The same kind of thing has been happening in other churches, from non-denominational and Pentecostal fellowships to the more self-consciously liturgical churches whose liturgies have been mutually enriched by this trans-denominational liturgical renewal.

There's also a receptive ecumenism that belongs to the sphere of personal piety. Many younger Christians across the denominational spectrum have a keen interest in spirituality, and they're drawn to the practice of spiritual disciplines that originated in churches other than their own. These same younger Christians, along with some more mature ones, are taking up practices that are new to them and their churches such as meditating on Scripture according to the pattern of *lectio divina*, walking labyrinths, using the sign of the cross as an embodied act of personal devotion, and experimenting with praying the Rosary and using Orthodox choctkis to pray the Jesus Prayer.

In various ways all our churches have received the gifts of other traditions through an ecumenism of the confession of faith, an ecumenism of the sanctuary and especially of the hymnal taken in hand therein, an ecumenism of the seminary classroom and pastor's study, and an ecumenism of personal devotion. We've received these gifts from the church in its catholicity *along with* other Christians and more directly *from* other Christians in a contemporary convergence toward our common catholicity. The more we receive these gifts from each other, the more we become more fully like each other and the less church-dividing our differences become. When we do this over a long period of time, led by the Spirit, visible unity naturally begins to happen.

We can do something to bring about the unity we envision by attending to the practices of "receptive ecumenism," and we can do something to bring about the unity we envision by attending to the practices of "ecumenical reception." This isn't the same thing as the "receptive ecumenism" I just mentioned. Receptive ecumenism is receiving from one another the gifts we need to be more fully church and to move closer to one another. Ecumenical reception has to do with receiving the results of ecumenical dialogue. Ecumenical reception is the process by which worldwide Christian communions, denominations at the national level, local churches, and individual Christians become informed about, consider, and act upon the proposals and agreements that result from bilateral and multilateral ecumenical dialogue.<sup>7</sup> Without attention to ecumenical reception, ecumenical convergences exist only in documents. One of the biggest challenges today for getting the ecumenical movement moving again is moving from papers to practices of ecumenical engagement.

Ecumenical reception presents different challenges to different denominational traditions, because we each have differing ecclesiological structures for taking action on matters that affect the life of the church. In my own Baptist tradition, for example, whenever Baptists participate in ecumenical dialogues with other Christian communions beyond sister Free Church denominations like the Mennonites, there's an inherent asymmetry between the respective delegations to a joint commission. The Baptist members don't officially speak for our churches or national unions, nor is there a singular expression of Baptist confessional commitments for us to articulate to our dialogue partners. Furthermore, any convergences or agreements reached in the dialogue have no official ecclesial force for the churches associated with the Baptist communions involved in the dialogue, even if they might in theory for churches of the other communion with whom we're in conversation. This means that a report or agreed text from an ecumenical dialogue with Baptist participation can function as a study text commended to Baptists and their churches, but its agreements don't directly alter the status of relationships between the involved communities.

Attention to reception is necessary if any Christian tradition is to incorporate the fruit of ecumenical dialogue into its embodied ecclesial life. For congregationally governed churches, intentionality about ecumenical reception is the only way the convergences identified in dialogue will have any impact or significance other than as historical texts documenting what particular communions discussed with one another on specific occasions. But that's also true for more connectional or hierarchical churches: unless there's reception at the grassroots, convergences further up the chain have little impact.

It's possible to root the ecumenical practice of reception in what's now an ecumenically shared opposition to the coercion of conscience by either civil or ecclesiastical powers. In turn, this can be connected to the eschatological end-picture of the final *shalom* of the reign of God, which is sought in the present order by shunning violence and making peace. Not all Christians have adopted the pacifist witness of the Mennonites and other historic peace churches—though in this world in which violence reigns, and in which so many Christians uncritically embrace the myth of redemptive violence, we all should be asking if the ecclesial gifts of the peace churches are among the gifts the rest of us need to receive to become more fully the church under the rule of Christ. But inasmuch as the coercion of conscience is a form of violence, we are shunning violence and making peace, seeking the *shalom* of the reign of God, when we work to safeguard the consciences of people without and within the church from coercion. My own Baptist tradition has expressed this respect for conscience in terms of religious liberty, liberty of conscience, “soul competency” and “soul liberty,” and sometimes as a dimension of the priesthood of believers. It has parallels, we should note, in the Catholic concept of the primacy of the conscience.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in Catholic understanding religious liberty, as a safeguard against the coercion of conscience, is a precondition of ecumenism.<sup>9</sup> All of us can connect our opposition to the coercion of conscience to the practice of ecumenical reception, which for much of the church depends on persuasion rather than mandate. Especially in the free church traditions in which no union, congregation, minister, or church member is bound by any agreement reached in ecumenical dialogue, ecumenical convergences can “stick” only to the degree that they're freely received and freely embraced. But that's true in other traditions as well. We must all make a persuasive case for ecumenical reception.

How might we persuasively encourage such reception? There are two principal locations for attention to ecumenical reception: first, institutions of theological education, and second, the life of local congregations. Theological educators, especially theologians and church historians, can introduce seminarians to the documents of multilateral and bilateral dialogue. When reports or agreed statements from such dialogues are issued, seminaries, divinity schools, and church-related universities can sponsor symposia on the documents and invite members of the communions that have been in conversation with one another as program personalities and guests. Unless the institutions of theological education responsible for the educational preparation of ministers and their post-graduate continuing education take the lead in encouraging ecumenical reception, it's unlikely to happen in the local churches.<sup>10</sup>

But I'm preaching to myself on this point. The role of theological education in ecumenical reception is partly my responsibility. It's in the local churches, the places where you all serve, that ecumenical reception has to happen if it's to make a difference at the grassroots. In local churches, pastors can study reports of ecumenical dialogues as part of their ongoing ecumenical formation. They can share them with ministers from the churches of their denomination's ecumenical dialogue partners, and perhaps form local clergy discussion groups to work through the texts together. Ministers can share these dialogue texts also with church members, who have day-to-day relationships with members of other churches in which they live out visible Christian unity—and who may already be doing so in the context of their marriages and other family relationships.<sup>11</sup> Reports and agreed statements from ecumenical dialogues can easily serve as the basis of local

church study groups, which ideally might also involve members of a neighboring church affiliated with a dialogue partner communion. Reception of ecumenical convergences may involve recognition that a concretely altered relationship is possible between neighboring churches. On the basis of that recognition, it may be possible to formalize a local ecumenical covenant between neighboring churches, with members and ministers pledging to abide by it in their local relations and in the calling of future ministers, who will pledge to continue the pattern of ecumenical relationships specified by the covenant as a condition of accepting their calling to serve in these churches.<sup>12</sup> All of these are opportunities for making persuasive cases for why ecumenical convergence should matter to the life of the church and the Christian life of its members and for persuading them to live into the ecumenical convictions they embrace as a matter of conscience.

We can do something to bring about the unity we envision by attending to practices of receptive ecumenism as well as practices of ecumenical reception. We can also do something to bring about the unity we envision by attending to the practices of “spiritual ecumenism.” Spiritual ecumenism begins with the already-present spiritual realities shared by all Christians, such as those named in Ephesians 4:4-6: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. It’s embodied in practices of shared worship and devotion involving Christians whose present church-dividing differences preclude eucharistic fellowship and other manifestations of full visible communion.<sup>13</sup> Spiritual ecumenism has been called “the soul of the ecumenical movement,” and the practice of praying with other Christians for the unity of the church is a core practice of spiritual ecumenism.

Whenever we observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity<sup>14</sup> or engage in other forms of corporate and individual prayer in which we join our Lord and his body in praying for the visible unity of his church, we embody the vision *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* commends to us. Prayer in general and prayer for the church’s unity in particular is an act of imagining something that’s not yet fully realized. It’s an inherently eschatological practice: it participates in the refrain of the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer—“on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Reflection on the practice of praying for Christian unity suggests the following four observations regarding the significance of such acts.

First, praying for Christian unity moves us to confess as sin our own contributions to division in the body of Christ. To ask God to grant unity to the church is to admit that the church doesn’t yet have the unity God intends, and the appropriate first response to this admission for any church and any Christian is to ask, “Is it I, Lord?” All churches have their own particular sins against the unity of the church to confess. Prayer for Christian unity exposes the sinfulness of the energies we’ve devoted to our own internal divisions, the sinfulness of our preoccupation with preserving denominational distinctives while neglecting to form the faithful in Christian essentials, the sinfulness of failing to recognize the one who is the Truth in the faith and practice of other churches with which we disagree, and the sinfulness of all manner of other transgressions against the unity of the body of Christ known only by the Spirit in whom we offer prayer for Christian unity. It is the penitential season of Lent. The sin of division is an appropriate thing to try to give up for Lent, and prayer for unity is an appropriate Lenten discipline to take on in its place.

Second, praying for Christian unity helps us have a proper attitude of humility toward the distinctive gifts our own churches have to offer to the larger body of Christ through participating in the quest for visible unity. If asking God to grant unity to the church involves an admission that the church is not yet unified, this admission may also lead to the humble identification of the legitimate points of dissent that are involved in the present divisions and that may be maintained for a time until mutual ecclesial conversion to the church’s Lord makes possible closer convergences of faith and practice. These points of dissent are intertwined with denominational distinctiveness, and they therefore function as both challenges to and gifts for the rest of the church. Praying for unity can

help each of our traditions contribute to the quest for visible unity by steering us toward humbly reclaiming our denominational heritage as a gift that can help the whole church toward unity, prayerful expressing our gratitude for the particularities of our historical pilgrimage as a community of faith that have shaped the distinctive convictions and practices we offer as gifts to the rest of Christ's body.<sup>15</sup>

Third, praying for Christian unity embodies the ecumenically-shared concept of the priesthood of all believers by inviting all members of the church to participate actively in this foundational ecumenical practice upon which all other forms of ecumenical engagement depend. The concept of the priesthood of all believers isn't unique to any particular tradition. It's after all a biblical concept (1 Pet. 2:9), and though the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century emphasized it, the universal priestly ministry of believers is taught also in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>16</sup> Applied to the quest for the visible unity of the church, the priesthood of all believers means that heeding the ecumenical imperative is the task not only of theologians and ecumenists, and not only of the pastors, priests, and bishops whose office entails maintaining the unity of the church, but also of the laity. We need to speak not only of the priesthood of all believers, but also of the "ecumenist-hood of all believers," for every Christian is simultaneously baptized into the one church of Jesus Christ and into its divisions. Seeing to their reconciliation belongs to the priestly ministry to which we're all commissioned in baptism. Laypersons are the ones who truly embody the quest for Christian unity in their relationships with other Christians who belong to other communions, and it's most appropriate that they constitute the majority of those who are called to prayer during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and at other times when the church follows the lead of her Lord in praying "that they may all be one."<sup>17</sup> The practice of praying for unity may be the most appropriate way for all Christians to begin participating in the ecumenical movement—and it's the ecumenical practice that's most crucial for the success of the movement, if indeed we believe, in the words of the New Delhi definition, that "unity is God's gift to God's church."<sup>18</sup>

Fourth, praying for Christian unity provides us with a proper eschatological perspective on our participation in the quest for visible Christian unity. Praying for unity reminds the church that unity is God's gift: it comes about as the divided churches are converted to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst, not through the human efforts of the church to bring about its own unity. Furthermore, if such prayer is oriented toward the fulfillment of God's vision of unity for the church and the world, then what we seek when we pray for unity may not be granted during our earthly lives. Our prayer for unity presupposes the already-inaugurated-but-not-fully-realized character of the reign of God. That's a proper motivation for the rigorous but patient contributions of theologians, ecumenists, and all members of our churches to the ecumenical goal of "one eucharistic fellowship," a goal that in all likelihood won't be realized in our lifetimes and indeed may require centuries of ecclesial commitment to the contestation of faith and order—apart from unforeseen actions of the Spirit that may yet initiate long-awaited ecumenical convergences in surprising ways. Praying for unity keeps the church from losing heart in what increasingly seems from a human point of view to be a losing struggle.<sup>19</sup>

Two profound experience of hope-renewing prayer for the realization of the ecumenical future served as bookends for the year I published a book titled *Towards Baptist Catholicity*.<sup>20</sup> In January 2006 I was a member of a consultation convened by the Foundation for a Second Conference on Faith and Order in North America. That foundation had been planning what was intended to be a fiftieth-anniversary sequel to the 1957 Oberlin Conference on Faith and Order. But that event wasn't to be, for reasons that were symptomatic of the troubled state of the ecumenical movement. Our consultation met for three days at the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in Garrison, New York. Our task was to offer post-mortem analyses of the failure of the envisioned Second Conference on Faith and Order in North America,

but we also contemplated the possibilities for such a conference in the future. While some of the presentations and discussions evidenced a remarkable degree of ecumenical energy among the constituencies represented at the consultation, the gathering seemed like a funeral for the death of an ecumenical dream. And yet when we joined in common worship each morning and evening, singing Taizé chants and praying together for the unity of the church, we experienced the rekindling of a hope that didn't seem warranted by the circumstances. In December 2006 I began serving as a member of the Baptist World Alliance delegation to a series of conversations with the Catholic Church. We launched that dialogue with a week of conversations at Samford University in Birmingham. In contrast to the Graymoor consultation, the mood of these conversations was far from somber, yet we all were acutely aware of the inevitable ecclesiological impasses that lay ahead. Even so, when we gathered for morning and evening prayer each day in Hodges Chapel, where Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther significantly stand side-by-side facing worshipers among the sixteen representatives of the communion of saints whose frescoes encircle the chapel's dome, we who weren't yet able to be united at the Lord's table were nevertheless able to be united in praying together along with our Lord that we might one day be made one.

While we remain separated in the not-yet-realized aspect of the church's eschatology, we can join those from whom we're otherwise separated in the common labor of praying for unity. The eschatological vision that helps us strive to be a pilgrim community, relentlessly seeking the visibly united church that's fully under the rule of Christ, is embodied in prayer that the church might realize its ecumenical future.

A recent book of worship published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain includes a service of reconciliation for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. After a prayer of confession acknowledging and asking forgiveness for complicity in the church's divisions and a prayer of intercession for a divided world that asks also that God might grant the church a renewed vision of its unity, a concluding prayer of commitment asks the Spirit to guide and strengthen the whole church in its mission, "strangers no longer but pilgrims together on the way to your kingdom."<sup>21</sup> May it be so, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper no. 214; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013), §§ 33, 35, 37 (pp. 21-22), available online: [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision/@@download/file/The\\_Church\\_Towards\\_a\\_common\\_vision.pdf](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision/@@download/file/The_Church_Towards_a_common_vision.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> "Report of the Section on Unity," in *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 116.

<sup>3</sup> See Paul D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* ("On Commitment to Ecumenism"), May 25, 1995. Online: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html).

<sup>5</sup> Catholic Church and World Methodist Council, *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church. Report of the International Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council* (Lake Junaluska, N.C.: World Methodist Council, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Quotation from a briefing document distributed to conference participants in Walter Cardinal Kasper's "Foreword" to *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, ed. Murray, vii.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Steven R. Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2010), 116 ("Appendix B: Glossary of Key Ecumenical Terms," s.v. "reception"). For a book-length treatment of ecumenical reception, see William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2007); cf. also Rusch's earlier, shorter book *Reception: An Ecumenical Opportunity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> E.g., Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)*, December 7, 1965, § 3, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev. ed., ed. Austin Flannery (Vatican Collection, vol. 1; Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992), 801-02 (799-812): “It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.”

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II’s encyclical on ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint* § 8 insisted that the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* “takes into account everything affirmed in the Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*” (John Paul II, *On Commitment to Ecumenism [Ut Unum Sint]*, May 25, 1995), accessed October 21, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html)). Significantly, in the preliminary schemas drafted for the Second Vatican Council, a statement on religious liberty was originally conceived not as a separate decree but as a chapter of the decree on ecumenism.

<sup>10</sup> On the responsibility of institutions of theological education for fostering reception of the fruits of ecumenical dialogue, see World Council of Churches, “International Dialogues in Dialogue: Context and Reception,” Tenth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 8-14 March 2012, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/folder/documents-pdf/TheDarEsSalaamReportMay2012.pdf>. Baptist World Alliance

General Secretary Neville Callam was among the 24 forum participants who issued this report, which urged in § 11: We encourage all churches to find ways of integrating the results of dialogues with theological institutions training clergy and lay people. The training and formation of church leaders, who are likely to have a significant influence on relationships between local congregations, appears to be a particularly valuable locus for promoting reception. We would welcome deeper engagement by such institutions, for example through in depth case studies of particular dialogues in the light of changes in global Christianity (p. 3).

The concluding section of the report (§ 23, p. 6) included this as the seventh of eight recommendations regarding “Communicating and Evaluating the Results of the Bilateral Dialogues”:

7. Communions are encouraged to find ways to communicate the results of the dialogues with theological institutions training clergy and lay leaders, and to have their content and methods integrated into the curriculum. Such institutions can also be appropriate places for consultation as the work develops.

Two previous documents, one Catholic and one representing conciliar ecumenism, have broadly attended to the role of institutions of theological education in ecumenical formation: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (March 25, 1993), accessed November 29, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19930325\\_directory\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930325_directory_en.html); Dietrich Werner, “Magna Charta on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—10 Key Convictions,” *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 1 (2009): 161-70.

<sup>11</sup> See Association of Interchurch Families, *Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: A Paper Adopted by the Second World Gathering of Interchurch Families from Eleven Countries Held in Rome in July 2003* (London: British Association of Interchurch Families, 2003); published also online as “Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: Rome 2003,” accessed December 13, 2014, [http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/rome2003/documents/roma2003\\_en.pdf](http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/rome2003/documents/roma2003_en.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> A practice commended in Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement Be Renewed? Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 15-16, 83-84.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too*, 117 (“Appendix B: Glossary of Key Ecumenical Terms,” s.v. “spiritual ecumenism”).

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of the genesis and historical development of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and explorations of its significance from the perspectives of various traditions, see Catherine E. Clifford and James F. Puglisi, eds., *A Century of Prayer for Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> On the possibility that the dissent of the Free Churches has in fact made positive contributions to the quest for unity, see James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and John Howard Yoder, “Christian Unity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 561-80 (see especially the subsection “How Free Churches Have Made for Unity,” 576-78), republished in *Collected Works of James Wm. McClendon, Jr.*, 1:245-67.

<sup>16</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publications, 1994), § 2.2.3.6.2.1546 (p. 386): “Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church ‘a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.’ The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet, and king.”

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, following the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle during prayers of intercession in weekly corporate worship provides congregations with a regular opportunity to participate in the unifying practice of prayer for sisters and brothers in Christ who are members of other churches.

<sup>18</sup> Visser’t Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report*, p. 116.

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<sup>19</sup> The beginning of chapter 2 surveys the factors that have contributed to the current ecumenical malaise and retrenchment.

<sup>20</sup> Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol. 27; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples*, ed. Christopher J. Ellis and Myra Blyth (Norwich, U.K.: Canterbury Press, 2005), 369-70.