

Chrisanthony Ndikani

**RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM IN THE THIRD
ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION: RELEVANCE FOR ECUMENICAL
DIALOGUE**

By

Chrisanthony Ndikani, DMMM
Dominican University, Ibadan, Nigeria
ndikanichrisanthony@gmail.com

Abstract

Considering the apparent unrealistic nature of full visible Christian unity, Ecumenical Theology recently focuses on communion. Despite emerging differences, it demonstrates communion by embracing concepts like unity in diversity, differentiated consensus, reconciled diversity, and legitimate diversity. These [means of affirming diversity and plurality without destroying communion], are fruits of ecumenical dialogue. A difficulty of actualizing visible unity resulted in frustration and disappointment, partly due to what some attribute to approach/attitude to dialogue. Receptive Ecumenism emerges as an alternative approach with open possibilities for ecumenical progress. It emphasizes ‘receptive learning’ in a process of ‘explicit ecclesial self-critique’ to dispose churches to self-critical openness and conversion for growth and reform on which current ecumenical progress depends. Considering fundamental questions regarding ‘Church as Communion’, the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III) applied this approach in a recent bilateral dialogue. ARCIC III identified common grounds, points of differences and tensions, and potentials for mutual receptive learning between the Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This article critically discussed Receptive Ecumenism, its application in the first agreed statement: *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be the Church – Local, Regional and Universal*, and relevance for ecumenical relations. We evaluated the document, critically

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analyzed RE as a new approach, considered possible challenges, and prospects for other ecumenical engagements. The discussion showcased Receptive Ecumenism as an ecumenical disposition and attitude.

Keywords: Reception, Ecumenism, ARCIC, Conversion, Communion, Self-Critique, Walking Together, Ecclesial Learning.

Introduction

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has engaged in several bilateral and multilateral dialogues with other Christians of the Eastern and the Western traditions, always eager to explore options that may lead to the goal of visible unity.

The initial enthusiasm of ecumenists, after the foundation of the World Council of Churches and Vatican II, faced disillusionment as more church dividing issues persisted. These challenges are present not just in ‘dialogue’, but also in the daily life of Christian communities. Michael Root and Antonia Pizzey have described the current situation as “ecumenical winter,”¹ Gerard Kelly called it “road block,”² while Jon Nilson used “a dead end”³ to describe the disappointment of the ecumenical winter. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has a different perspective of this metaphor. Although he agrees with the challenges of ecumenical winter, he was optimistic with Walter Kasper that “it was a winter in which much fruit was harvested.” So, for him the situation is an “ecumenical spring.”⁴ However, this optimism does not completely remove the frustration but places the ecumenical movement at a crucial discerning edge. This leads to discouragement and lack of interest in ecumenism, and raises questions about the future of ecumenical movement. Alternative approaches have emerged as potentials for success amidst the ecumenical disillusionment.

This work examines a new approach, Receptive Ecumenism

(hereafter RE), implemented in a 2018 Agreed Statement of a recent bilateral dialogue of the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III), *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be the Church - Local, Regional, Universal*,⁵ and how this approach could enrich ecumenical dialogue.

Receptive Ecumenism: Meaning and Development

Receptive Ecumenism is a fresh ecumenical approach which is being explored by the churches to see what potentials it could bring that can promote ecumenical relations. With emphasis on receptivity, learning, and listening, Refocuses more on *learning or receiving from*, rather than *teaching or convincing* the other. It is about learning from other Christians in order to learn about ourselves. It highlights conversion and openness to the Holy Spirit.

This new strategy emerged recently in the ecumenical field to address the disposition of the churches engaged in dialogue in such a way that they are open to respectively enriching each other. One of the most prominent authors who had propagated the method in 2006 is Paul Murray.⁶ In his article “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for our Needs,” Murray observes that although previous ecumenical dialogues has increased mutual ecclesial understanding, their strategies were “incapable of delivering the self-critical openness to practical conversion, growth and development upon which real ecumenical progress depends.”⁷ Murray’s core concern is that too often churches approach dialogue with a predisposition to teach, expecting others to *learn from* them. Hence, Murray maintains that the fundamental principle in RE is that churches make a clear pragmatic shift by highlighting a rather self-critical question which would prioritize *learning from* others to facilitate ecclesial growth and ecumenical progress. ARCIC III identified this concept more in terms of “self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other.”⁸

In this new ecumenical ethic, the purpose of the shift is for

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churches to address their own internal tensions in a receptive learning process called ‘explicit ecclesial self-critique’. Here, they see a possibility that what is weak or undeveloped in us, may be stronger or better developed in the other, and that taking a posture of ‘teacher’ instead of ‘receiver’ or ‘learner’ makes less progress in dialogue.

Roots and Development

Receptive Ecumenisms traced to John Paul II’s ecumenical encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, which humbly reaffirmed the importance of ecumenism, emphasized ecumenism as “an exchange of gifts,”⁹ and places conversion as a central value that could help the churches in dialogue. This affirms the key assertion of Vatican II that “there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion.”¹⁰ John Paul II sees conversion as “a change of heart,”¹¹ which is synonymous with a change of mind, repentance, atonement, reformation, transformation, and renewal. When churches approach dialogue with these values, they view those still-dividing theological issues from different perspectives.

Five key relevant factors influenced the development of RE. First, Paul Murray was aware that the ecumenical movement requires a fresh ecumenical approach. He developed RE to respond to current ecumenical indolence by proposing a self-critical but simple method as a way forward. Second, Murray drew from an American idealist-pragmatist tradition, especially Nicholas Rescher’s positive approach to plurality and diversity, which believes that one does not compromise identity by recognizing the validity of another’s. Here, since no one has the whole truth, diversity becomes legitimate in a positive approach to difference. Third, RE develops from Spiritual Ecumenism, which articulates receptive ecumenical hospitality and fruitfulness, and extends emphasis from personal to structural, and further to ecclesial conversion.

The fourth is Daniel Hardy’s description of Scriptural

Reasoning as “one way of going deeper simultaneously into one’s own faith and into the faith of others through study and mutual mentoring.”¹² This involves “reading and reasoning scriptures together, where there is a high degree of mutually responsible hospitality and the possibility of achieving a complex harmony.”¹³ This process is analogous to what RE seeks to do in the intra-Christian context and deepens Murray’s approach to plurality. Finally, the Ignatian Spirituality influences receptive ecumenism’s ethical emphasis on “continuing conversion as a principle of life, on humility as a key virtue..., creative imagination, critical testing and scrutinizing” as discernment processes.

As an on-going project, four International conferences had taken place between 2006-2017, with related themes and at different parts of the world. These conferences offer renewed disposition for churches to make a shift from former ‘*self-defending*’ and ‘*convincing-the-other*’ positions to an open-minded readiness and *less argumentative stances*. Here, differences become mutually recognized, respected, admired and received as gifts to enrich, rather than diminish ecclesial identity. Therefore, RE encourages the spirit of learning, and affirms that it is more dignifying to *learn or receive* than to give.

Bases, values and Criteria for Receptive Learning

As an ethical strategy of ecclesial conversion, RE is “both remarkably *simple in vision* and...*far-reaching in potential*.” Again, its essence is “change in churches, not just other churches, but my own church changing.”¹⁶ Embarking on a project with such unique and delicate character may not be easy. Therefore, some crucial values and criteria could go along with RE’s fundamental pedestals to curb ecclesial mindset and dispose churches towards learning and reception. Churches need to understand that Christian unity is not a human project but God’s; that change, as a long-term, slow and steady process needs time and patience; openness to challenges at the personal and ecclesial

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levels are vital steps to growth; and that reception and learning enhance and dignify, rather than diminish ecclesial fullness and identity.

Adopting these principles needs yet other values such as courage, hope, humility, patience, openness, honesty, deep listening, “walking in the other’s shoes, suspending judgment, appreciating others’ beliefs and values, being self-critical of one’s own beliefs and...transparency.”¹⁷ RE resonate these values, which in turn portray its ethical characteristics. If churches apply the above principles and values, then the result could be a transformed ecumenical dialogue. Certain criteria for authentic receptive learning are considered concerning “ecclesial identity and its preservation...truth and falsity...and prudent judgement.”¹⁸ This simply underlies proper discernment before considering any new learning from a dialogue partner. Consequently, these criteria (especially the question of ecclesial identity and dignity, and the preservation of truth and faith) pose the greatest challenges to RE as would be discussed later below. Meanwhile, we shall look at a practical application of RE in a bilateral dialogue.

Receptive Ecumenism in the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is a theological commission representing the two traditions, as they journey together towards ecclesial renewal and conversion, for the fullness of growth in communion. ARCIC sprang from the meeting between Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in 1966. Its official dialogue started in 1970 and has completed two phases (1970-1981 and 1983-2005). ARCIC has been “exploring the deeper meaning of communion arising from their engagement with one another.”²⁰ Since inception, ARCIC’s three phases have been reflecting on themes around the “question of authority and the ecclesiology of

communion.”²⁰

Examining emerging prevailing issues, previous ARCIC phases have fruitfully increased mutual understanding in “series of Agreed Statements on dividing issues that still exist today?”²¹ ARCIC I applied the approach of “learning to recognize and receive the ecclesial presence of Christ”²² in each tradition. ARCIC II deepened this approach in a concept of “re-reception,”²³ using an eschatological method, which approaches the issues “afresh by considering them from God’s future ‘backwards.’”²⁴

However, issues of authority and lay participation make the ecclesial communion journey more difficult. So, a third phase of ARCIC dialogue began in 2011. This phase built on the methods ARCIC I and II, and sought for their continuity and further development by adopting RE as the approach. The document, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church Local, Regional, Universal*, is the first Agreed Statement of the third dialogue phase, whose task is “to consider fundamental questions regarding the ‘Church as Communion – Local and Universal’, and ‘how in communion the Local and Universal Church comes to discern right ethical teaching.’”²⁵

The commission reflected on issues around Anglican-Roman Catholic Instruments of Communion, lay participation (which reveals deliberative versus consultative authority), episcopal collegiality and the primacy/authority of the Bishop of Rome. They recognized their respective internal problems and the need for renewal and reform. So, to move forward towards communion, they suggested that each tradition is to look humbly at what is not working effectively within them, to ask whether they could develop and strengthen it through receptive learning from the understanding, structures, practices, and judgements of the other.²⁶ This is a receptive learning process through “explicit ecclesial self-critique,” which involves readiness

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...to discern what appears to be overlooked or underdeveloped in one's own tradition, to ask whether such things are better developed in the other tradition, and to inquire how such perceived strengths in the other tradition might be able, through receptive learning, to help with the development and enrichment of this aspect of ecclesial life within one's own tradition.²⁷

They used three practical steps to identify and analyze a) common grounds and points of agreement; b) points of internal tension and difficulties; and c) in relation to "what is weak or less developed in one tradition," to consider possibilities for fruitful, transformative, receptive learning from the other's strengths.²⁸ Although this research focuses more on the tensions, difficulties and possible receptive learning areas for the two traditions, *Walking Together* recorded several commonalities. Instances include shared sacramental views²⁹ and common awareness of global historical challenges, which led to including the regional level in the dialogue.³⁰ In summary, ARCIC identified certain potentials for receptive learning for both traditions, hoping that this learning, rather than diminish, could enhance ecclesial identity and dignity.

Mutual Receptive Learning Potentials

The RCC can learn from Anglicans, a) "the culture of open and frank debate at all levels,"³¹ as evidenced by the indaba process of 2008 Lambeth Conference. b) the "practice of granting a deliberative role"³² to synod of bishops, investing authority to regional structures for clearer articulation of episcopal conferences' authority; and c) "inclusion of laity in decision-making structures at every level," for a stronger development of *Lumen Gentium*.¹⁰ concerning "the participation in the threefold office of Christ of both laity and ordained."³³

Anglican Communion learning from the RCC could begin with a) appreciation of the depth of commitment to ecclesial universality. They could strengthen "commitment to this ethos

of unity through the use of common” liturgical documents, catechism, and Canon Law. b) the “practice of pilgrimage visits by bishops to meet with the Archbishop of Canterbury for prayer and consultation; c) the Roman Catholic expressions of episcopal leadership ”which include reflections on: i) various regional “communities in full communion with one another;” ii) “models of episcopal consultation and deliberation as seen in episcopal conferences and the Synod of Bishops as recently developed;” iii) “the normative presence of a voice from outside the province, representing the wider Church in the deliberations and life of a regional church; and clarity of recognized processes for discernment, communication, and reception of authoritative teachings and decisions.”³⁴

Evaluating the Document

The document: *Walking together on the Way: Learning to be the Church- Local, Regional, Universal*, is unique in content and character, and different as an approach. It also has some theological relevance and limitations as well. With the title: *walking together on the way*, the commission set out as *ecclesiae in via* (churches on the way) towards communion. According to the document, “this image of ‘walking together’ on the path of communion describes the ecumenical relations³⁵ between the two traditions. This sets them on a pilgrimage journey implying togetherness, responsibility, mutuality, interdependence, readiness and openness to change and growth. This “pastoral and dynamic”³⁶ title, which presents them as fellow pilgrims on the way to communion, implies an open-ended nature of ARCIC III’s approach, process and outcome. Pilgrimage is also a major focus of the World Council of Churches in her mission and vision.³⁷ In fact, “Walking Together”³⁸ is a current WCC ecumenical imperative and paradigm which Ioan Sauca described as “a journey with spiritual meaning and profound theological connotations and implications.”³⁹

Embarking on this pilgrim journey with “explicit ecclesial

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self-critique,”⁴⁰ they discovered areas of receptive learning within each tradition. This approach shows the second character of the document: the movement inside out, suggesting an inward journey, which Paul Murray calls “open-ended.”⁴¹ It relates to the pragmatic shift that changes the “default instinctive question to prioritizing a rather self-critical question...”⁴² For Paul Murray, this move is a “necessary key for unlocking the potentials for transformation *within* traditions.”⁴³ It enhances honest acceptance of challenges, and the readiness to learn portrays an example of frank openness and objectivity. Ecclesial growth and renewal need this inward journey.

The document is different in content and character, shown in three kinds of layout and typographical arrangement. It represents discussions about the common heritage in the ecclesial understanding and practice of the two traditions with *whole-width normal* typing style; those areas where they are similar but with distinct ways of practice appear in *parallel columns placed side by side*; finally, the *sequential paragraphs* represent areas where they differ from one another.⁴⁴ This arrangement is helpful for easy reading and understanding their commonalities and differences.

The document’s theological relevance shows participants from a variety of theological disciplines, enriching the dialogue from different cultural and contextual settings.⁴⁵ This guarantees treatment of major theological questions on communion. The “interrelated notions of ‘Church as pilgrim People of God’ and ‘the Church as communion (*koinonia*),’”⁴⁶ portrays an ecclesiological framework. The dialogue paved way for deeper, mutual ecclesial understanding, and clarified ecclesial misunderstandings and prejudices. Another important relevance is its critical exposure of weak and undeveloped aspects of ecclesial life, faith and practice underpinning internal and external difficulties.

Several values could dispose each tradition for the “self-critical openness to practical conversion, growth and development

upon which real ecumenical progress depends.”⁴⁷ Aside openness, self-criticism and discernment required for renewal and reform, other values include hope and humility,⁴⁸ frank assessment,⁴⁹ mutual and deep listening, repentance.⁵⁰ These values concur with Paul Murray’s basic argument for proposing RE; that “the contemporary context requires a fresh ecumenical ethic and strategy...”⁵¹ They are ethical because they suggest behavioral principles of conducts that dispose partners for fruitful/peaceful learning. Considering these values, this research agrees with Paul Murray that RE is an ecumenical ethic and strategy.

Of these values, the commission emphasizes listening, which underlies “Pope Francis’s call for a fully synodal Church in accord with the vision of the Second Vatican Council.”⁵² Ormond Rush relates three levels of communion with Pope Francis’s vision of synodality, which prioritizes listening in those levels.⁵³ For the Pope, “a synodal Church is a Church which listens,” first to ‘what the Spirit says to the churches’ as in Rev.2:7, and then to the people of God at all the levels who share in the triamunera Christi (three offices of Christ). So, for Rush, three levels of church life entail three levels of ecclesial listening.⁵⁵ This listening could enhance fuller participation of all the faithful.

There are some gaps in the document. The commission raised some questions within the document for both traditions but left them unaddressed. One example is the question of the extent at which the “instruments of communion need to be both affective and effective”⁵⁶ in the service of mission and unity. Another is the question for Catholics concerning the priority of the universal or local church.⁵⁷ We expect that the commission could have suggested some practical steps for renewing and reforming collegiality, episcopacy and primacy, since their exercise has often been the subject of controversy and debate.”⁵⁸

References to the help of the Holy Spirit are clear in some parts of the document, but missing in others, especially in the last three sections. Paragraph 3 spelt out *ressourcement*(returning to

the great sources of the tradition) and *aggiornamento* (engaging the issues of our age) as twin streams for ecclesial renewal, and paragraph 19 stressed receptive learning as a source for that renewal. Going back to our roots while at the same time considering the ‘signs of the time’ is not a simple task, especially for some Roman Catholic conservatives. Therefore, the role and aid of the Holy Spirit, who alone could help the churches as they confront their self-critical and discernment challenges, could have received stronger emphasis there. It is to this same Spirit that the churches listen in their inward self-criticism journey. We observe only three mentions of the Holy Spirit in section IV, none in section V, and only one in section VI. These challenging sections could receive stronger pneumatological emphasis.

There was no reference to a pertinent document of John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Inuente*. This could have given solid grounds for communion ecclesiology and the approach of RE.⁵⁹ Paragraph 43 of this millennium document has a “spirituality of communion” that is a solid background for RE’s dynamism of exchange, sharing and receiving of gifts. Going further, the Pope stressed the need to develop, maintain and support communion at all levels of the RCC, because they are consultative rather than deliberative. Here, too, he noted that “the theology and spirituality of communion should encourage dialogue between pastors and the faithful.” Concluding, he emphasized listening between the pastor and the faithful and encouraged churches not to take this for granted.⁶⁰

ARCIC is a dialogue of learning. However, instances for learning from what is weak or unclear leaves a question for the commission. One instance is a suggestion for the RCC to consider possibilities of learning from the relationship between the Bishop of Canterbury and other AC structures. This contradicts paragraph 141 which stated that this relationship is unclear.⁶¹

‘Learning’ is a keyword for RE and ARCIC III. However, I disagree with the phrase, ‘learning to be the Church’ in the

document title. Christ, the Head of his Body, the Church, is perfect. By virtue of the paschal mystery, the Church is, *de facto*, a perfect entity. Both traditions believe that all faithful share in this mystery, and participate in the *triamunera Christi* through baptism, which incorporates them into this Body of Christ,⁶² making them *ab initio* the Church. Hence, we don't learn to be what we already are; rather we grow in our understanding of the mysteries through learning, discovering the deeper meaning of what we are, and develop our knowledge and understanding of being the Church. 'Learning to be the Church,' as ARCIC puts it, suggests imperfection for the Church, whose Perfect Head is Christ.⁶³ It also changes the task and aim of their walking together. In ecumenical dialogue churches aim at growing closer in communion with each other towards a perfect communion with the Trinity. It is rather the "imperfect communion that already exist between churches"⁶⁴ that develop through receptive learning. However, reflections around the perfect Church by virtue of Christ as the Head, the nature of members' identity as 'Church,' and how they grow to discover that identity, are issues of varying ecclesiological understandings.

Newness, Hopes and Challenges

RE claims 'newness'. Paul Murray introduced it both as 'third-phase strategy'⁶⁵ for the ecumenical movement generally, and particularly as a fresh strategy for ARCIC III. For him, both the ecumenical movement and ARCIC needed a new strategy to address the 'inertia' and 'hardwood' issues hindering progress. Its application in ARCIC III suggests hopes for other ecumenical engagements. The newness of RE is seen in the pragmatic and programmatic shift which it emphasizes: from theory to practice and from doctrinal histories to lived experience; from looking at other churches' wounds and weaknesses to seeking to discover the gifts in them; from applauding our own strengths and glories to discovering our vulnerability and the possibility of healing

them with others' strengths; from trying to resolve differences between churches to learning from them. It searches for realistic ways for ecumenical progress, moving away from producing similar agreed statements that "churches would keep at arm's length"⁶⁶ to one whose contents could affect their real-life situations practically and positively.

However, this newness is questionable as "learning... reception,"⁶⁷ and "re-reception"⁶⁸ were strategies of former phases. In his work, "The Reception of ARCIC I and II in Europe and Discerning the Strategy and Agenda for ARCIC III," Paul Murray agreed that these methods "have been highly influential in shaping the work of other bilateral ecumenical dialogues."⁶⁹ But he argued that ARCIC III requires a fresh strategic approach to "ecumenical, contextual challenges"⁷⁰ different from those of former ARCIC phases. In another work, "ARCIC III: Recognizing the Need for an Ecumenical Gear Change," he articulated four strategies of the theological methods: clarifying misunderstandings; acknowledging shortcomings; exploring conceptual understandings; and commitment to change of language and emphasis."⁷¹ These methods paved the way for overcoming differences, regarding them as "more apparent than real...as legitimately diverse ways of articulating same areas of Christian truth."⁷² Through clear and effective teaching, Churches now understand and express themselves clearly.

Although the usefulness and key roles of former methods continue to re-echo, Murray argued that they were rather limited as they remained theological clarifications, conviction, and explication strategies, lacking the necessary deeper conversion attainable through "self-criticism and attentive hospitality to the truth of the other tradition..."⁷³ So, Murray contended for "something more, a third way, and the only route possible"⁷⁴ to move forward. For Murray, this way is "that of prayer...grace-filled learning of how each is called to grow to a new place where new things become possible."⁷⁵ This way of learning, which possibly leads to continual growth, renewal and conversion,

is accessible through “explicit ecclesial self-critique,”⁷⁶ an exceptional and unique tool for cracking the hard nut.⁷⁷

Granted its possibility of paving the way forward, I disagree with Paul Murray’s usage of “only route possible” for RE as a method. Here he overstated the importance of RE. This usage portrays some kind of personal conceptual and contextual superiority. It also suggests finality, tending to block further possibilities for new discoveries and the dynamism of time. It suffices to have potential possibilities, but may not be the only way. Being the only way possible contradicts the pilgrimage dynamics of ARCIC, and the new possibilities which pilgrimages offer to pilgrims. Furthermore, considering the nature of the more difficult issues at hand between the RCC and AC, there may be chances of contextual irrelevance despite its seeming possibility.

Challenges

Because of its self-critical and inward nature, involving change and learning, RE faces some challenges which must be considered. One major challenge is the difficulty in embracing the openness to change for fear that this might involve change of cherished beliefs, doctrines, liturgical and sacramental practices. For most churches, these form the theological basis for ecclesial life and practice and must remain untouched.

Another challenge is the fear of losing ecclesial identity. Churches may feel that receptive learning would mean a gradual emptying of who they are and what they have. In fact, receptive learning keeps dialogue partners “at a crossroads.”⁷⁸ Incidentally, different stages of crossroads are evident for consideration. In the case of ARCIC III, reception of *Walking Together* at the local context of dialogue partners is the first concern. Others range from devising adequate language of presentation to the reality of addressing the challenges of explicit ecclesial self-critique. These include frankness in identifying ecclesial weakness and courage to ask for learning. Churches also need to grapple with criticisms from liberalists and conservatives among them.

Gerard Kelly recorded four key challenges to expect in adopting RE project. It is counter-intuitive, resistant to change, reluctant to approach other churches and ask for learning, and has a wide range and scope. This counter-intuitive nature challenges RE as moving against the current, out of the ordinary, and reversing the normal ecumenical bearings.⁷⁹ However, the positive side of this reversal lies in RE's relation to the Gospel 'Beatitudes' of Matthew 5:3-11 and Luke 6: 17-26. The Beatitudes embody 'attitudes of being,' rather than 'doing' in difficult daily experiences. Therefore, far from counter-intuition, RE portrays an attitude of 'being with Christ,' deep within and 'listening to what the spirit is saying to the churches'⁸⁰ (Rev. 2:29; 3:6, 13; 4:22).

Resistance to change, both from church leaders to the local people is another challenge that could hinder ecclesial learning. Reasons for resistance could be intolerance and indifference (owing to the difficult nature of RE's inverted focus), ignorance and identity issues.

Possibilities of Receptive Ecumenism in other Ecumenical Engagements

The possibility of RE in other ecumenical engagements is evident in the level of love and friendship which had existed between churches. Improved ecumenical relations and ecclesial understanding is a 'greenlight,' and could have prepared the way for the development of RE. The ecumenical movement and RE are dependent on each other. Aside ARCIC III, other bilateral, trilateral and multilateral dialogues within the ecumenical movement have initiatives and models for receptive ecumenical learning. These are inherent both in their methods and related terms that constitute major foci for RE. Prior to the development of RE project, tenets of mutual ecclesial learning are already implicit in the ecumenical movement. This offers hope for RE's flourishing within the ecumenical movement and vice versa.

Some instances are necessary.

The ‘differentiated consensus,’ approach of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue produced the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Also, their common Reformation commemoration report offered some ecumenical imperatives related to the qualities of RE viz positivity, openness, mutual renewal and transformation, perseverance-enhanced learning, commitment to unity through ethical values, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ The final report of the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue, focused recognizing elements of ‘the Church’ in the other which could be offered and received in the exchange of gifts.⁸² Donald Bolen explained further that the Seoul Report went beyond mutual recognition by adding three steps which served as models for ecumenical receptive learning.⁸³ First, they reached considerable agreement regarding ecclesial nature and mission. Second, they acknowledged authentic elements of Christ, and third, recognized other spiritual gifts that are more prominent in each other’s endowments that could be received in a mutual exchange.”⁸⁴ It is evident that these forty years’ dialogue paved the way for the tenets of RE.

The possibility of RE in multilateral dialogue concerns its relationship with the WCC Faith and Order Commission (FOC). The third World Conference of Faith and Order Commission, Lund, 1952 recorded significant changes as member churches moved from comparing each other to going back to study the scriptures together. The conference recorded the “degree of mutual understanding now reached...and calls on all Christians to throw off their apathy...and to be ready to receive what God is waiting to give us.”⁸⁵

Nonetheless, RE’s approach could be easier for bilateral and trilateral dialogues where each church receives and learns from one or two churches. A multilateral context faces challenges of sifting between complicated receptive learning options, takes much longer time than the far-reaching RE strategy, and makes discernment difficult.

However, the positive and objective stances of RE, its spiritual and affective dimensions, and the theological background of FOC are potentials for a balanced relationship between them. Sharing the same theological platform of communion ecclesiology, the FOC takes the path of theological study while RE takes that of practical dialogue. This combination of theory and practice shows how compatible they could be as they complement each other en route to full communion. The FOC, being a long-standing ecumenical instrument, could help RE as a reference point and platform for ecumenical orientation and inspiration.

RE has great potentials for ecclesial renewal and ecumenical vitality. Its interior drive and focus places the churches on an on-going pedestal of Spiritual ecumenism. As an ecumenism of hope and humility, it promises values that could overcome its likely challenges. Reflections around its dynamism show that RE offers renewed optimism that the ecumenical movement is gaining a fresh vitality to continue forward. With this self-critical tool, church could live in the face of differences and navigate through the roadblock to visible ecclesial unity.

Added to the practical dimension, RE emphasizes the spiritual side of ecumenical practice by taking the ecumenical movement along the path of ecclesial conversion for the purpose of renewal. Thus, it releases new potentials and offers an ecumenical strategy for managing some critical ecumenical challenges. By proposing this new way forward, RE calls the ecumenical movement to return to its spiritual roots.

Hence, this work argues that RE is an ecumenical disposition and attitude. It disposes churches to develop positive attitudes towards their differences, and to cultivate values for their basic ecclesial needs. RE's journey inside out re-motivates, re-energizes and re-directs ecclesial ecumenical enthusiasm. It is a disposition, with patience and courage, to take the rough path and the road less traveled. It is a disposition of stooping low in humility to address ecclesial tensions in the face of the other.

RE's conversion process disposes churches to take the Gospel imperatives seriously, to cultivate the positive 'attitudes' of the Beatitudes, and emulate Christ in his humble *kenosis*. In this self-emptying, they die to ecclesial superiority, self-sufficiency and criticism of the other, and rise up to ecclesial dignity, growth, development and renewal.

Conclusion

This article has examined RE's application in the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission Agreed Statement, *Walking Together*, and its possibilities to ecumenical dialogue. RE emerged as an alternative ecumenical strategy with virtual, spiritual and practical potentials to address ecumenical disappointments. With explicit self-critique, RE takes the humble but hopeful path of ecclesial receptive learning, to discover areas of internal weakness and tension, and considers the prospects of helping them with the strengths of the other. The Holy Spirit assists the churches in this difficult inward journey. This is what ARCIC III did in *Walking Together*. We evaluated this document, criticized RE as a new approach, considered its possible challenges, and explored its prospects for other ecumenical dialogues. Findings reveal its relevance to the ecumenical movement, and an interdependent relationship between them as each complements the other.

Endnotes

¹Root, Michael, "Ecumenical Winter? The Ecumenical Movement has stopped Moving," in *First Things*(2018), available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2018/ecumenical-winter>, See also Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion* (Boston: Print force, 2019),180-1.

²Kelly, Gerard, "What is Receptive Ecumenism," in *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians*, ed. Gideon Goosen (Sidney: The New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013), 5-7.

³Nilson, Jon, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary: Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Future* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 2.

⁴Archbishop Justin Welby, "Ecumenical Spring," A Speech at the World Council of Churches' 70th Anniversary, (2018), 2, <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/ecumenical-spring-archbishop-justins-speech-world-council-churches>. See also Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue*, (New York: Continuum, 2009).

⁵ARCIC III, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be Church-Local, Regional, Universal*; An Agreed Statement of the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III), (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2018).

⁶RCC lay theologian; Professor of Systematic Theology, Dept. of Theology and Religion, Durham University, U.K; Dean and Director of Centre for Catholic Studies; President of Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain; Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; and Member of ARCIC III.

⁷Murray, Paul, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving gifts for our Needs," in *Louvain Studies*, 33 (2008), 33. Doi:10.2143/LS.33.1.2034334. Available at: https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=article&id=2034334&journal_code=LS&download=yes. Accessed 20 May 2020.

⁸Pizzey, Antonia, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion* (Boston: Print force, 2019), 208.

⁹Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 97.

¹⁰Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism, 7.

¹¹John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (Committed to Ecumenism), Encyclical, 1995, no.21.

¹²Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 29. Cf. Paul Murray and Andrea Murray's "The Roots, Range and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism," in *Unity in Process: Reflections on Ecumenism*, ed. Clive Barrett (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 2012), 82.

¹³Daniel Hardy, "The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning," in *Modern Theology*, 22/3, (2006), Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2006.00333.x>. See also: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230152504_The_promise_of_scriptural_reasoning Last accessed 30 April, 2020.

¹⁴Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 30.

¹⁵Paul Murray, cited by University of Stockholm, in "About Receptive Ecumenism: The Basic Idea," last accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.ehs.se/receptive-ecumenism/about-receptive-ecumenism>.

¹⁶Gerard Kelly, "A New Ecumenical Wave," A Public Lecture at the National Council of Churches Forum, Canberra (2010), 6.

¹⁷Ariane Hentsch Cisneros & Shanta Premawardhana, "Globethics.net Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions," in *Sharing Values: A Hermeneutics for Global Ethics*, edited by Ariane Hentsch Cisneros & Shanta Premawardhana (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2011), 34-36.

¹⁸Ladislav Orsy, "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 Murray (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 39-44

¹⁹ARCIC III, *Walking Together on the Way*, no. 3.

²⁰*Ibid.*, preface, xi.

²¹*Ibid.*, no. 2.

²²ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 16.

²³*Ibid.*, no. 16. cf., ARCIC II, Gift of Authority, no. 24-25.

²⁴ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 16, cf., ARCIC II, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, no. 52-53.

²⁵Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission III (ARCIC-III)

²⁶ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no.78.

²⁷*Ibid.*, no.18.

²⁸ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no.79.

²⁹*Ibid.*, no. 46-54.

³⁰*Ibid.*, no.11.

³¹ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 157.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no.158.

³⁵ARCIC III, no. 3, 21. Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby used this image to describe Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical relations as “fellow pilgrims journeying at the summons of God’s Word, through the difficult terrain of a rapidly changing world...” See also Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 244, the Pope urges that “...we must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another.

³⁶James Hawkey, *An Anglican Commentary on, Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be the Church—Local, Regional, Universal of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission* (London: Centre for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2018), v-vi.

³⁷World Council of Churches, *Come and See*, 9-10. The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) chose the “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” as the theme to guide the council’s efforts to foster greater unity among Christians and to respond...to the challenges facing the human family in our time.

³⁸Susan Durber and Fernando Enns, eds., *Walking Together: Theological Reflections on the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice*

and Peace (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018).

³⁹IoanSaucu, “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace-An Ecumenical Paradigm for Our Times: An Orthodox Viewpoint,” in *Walking Together: Theological Reflections on the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, eds. Susan Durber and Fernando Enns, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018), 19-21.

⁴⁰ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no.17.

⁴¹ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no.7.

⁴²Paul Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 280.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 283.

⁴⁴ARCIC III., *Walking Together*, xii.

⁴⁵Grounded in ecclesiology of communion, *Walking Together* draws form several aspect of theology namely Trinity, Christology, Scripture, Sacraments, Ministry, Liturgy/Doctrine, Eschatology, etc.

⁴⁶ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 3. The document regarded these two theological concepts as ‘twin streams of renewal.’ See also Ormond Rush, *A Catholic Commentary*, 3.

⁴⁷Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning,” 33.

⁴⁸Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 155-173. Pizzey devoted chapter 7 of her RE volume in developing the virtues of “hope and humility as essential tools for the receptive learning” path.

⁴⁹ARCIC III, *Walking Together*,iv.

⁵⁰ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 152; 155. See also John Pal II, *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 34, where the Pope emphasizes humility as the vehicle for examination of conscience on the road to conversion, which could enable ecumenical dialogues to become ‘dialogue of consciences.’

⁵¹Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning,” 279. of ARCIC dialogue so far.

⁵²ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, iv. Cf. Pope Francis, “Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops” (17 October 2015).

⁵³Ormond Rush, *A Roman Catholic Commentary*, 16-17. See also Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 171.

⁵⁴Pope Francis, "Address"

⁵⁵Rush, *A Roman Catholic Commentary*, 17.

⁵⁶ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 71.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, no. 67.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, no. 72.

⁵⁹John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Apostolic Letter (2001), no. 43-45. For the Pope, "a spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me.'"

⁶⁰John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 45.

⁶¹ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 141, 145.

⁶²*Ibid.*, no. 50-54.

⁶³Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 7.

⁶⁴ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, xii.

⁶⁵Paul Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," in *Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, Transforming Society: A Compendium for Ecumenical Education*, Uta Andrée, Benjamin Simon, and Lars Röser-Israel (eds), (Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 2017), 52-60.

⁶⁶Jon Nilson, *Nothing Beyond the Necessary: Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Future* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 5.

⁶⁷ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, no. 16.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, no. 16, cf. ARCIC II, *Gift of Authority*, no. 24-25.

⁶⁹Paul Murray, "The Reception of ARCIC I and II in Europe and Discerning the Strategy and Agenda for ARCIC III," in *Ecclesiology*, 11/2, (2015), 199. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/17455316-01102005>. Accessed 26 April, 2020.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 199.

⁷¹Paul Murray, "ARCIC III: Recognizing the Need for an Ecumenical Gear Change," in *One in Christ*, 45/2 (2011), 202.

Available at: <http://www.oneinchrist.org.uk/>. Last accessed 27 April, 2020.

⁷²Ibid., 205.

⁷³Paul Murray, "ARCIC III: Recognizing the Need," 205. See also Paul Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism", in *The Ecumenist*, 51/2 (2014), 3.

Available at: https://www.ehs.se/sites/default/files/general/Introducing-Receptive-Ecumenism-Murray_Ecumenist_Spring2014.pdf.

⁷⁴ Paul Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism", in *The Ecumenist*, 51/2, (2014), 4.

⁷⁵Ibid., 4.

⁷⁶ARCIC III., *Walking Together*, no. 18.

⁷⁷Paul Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism," 3. 'Hard nuts' is similar to Murray's metaphor, "hardwood," refers to lasting substantive differences: local and universal church relations, decision making, and nature of eligibility of ordained ministry, women ordination, and human sexuality.

⁷⁸Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 179-225.

⁷⁹Kelly, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" in *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians*, ed. Gideon Goosen (Sidney: The New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013), 6-7.

⁸⁰Fifth International Conference of Receptive Ecumenism theme, *Transforming Ecumenism, Listening to What the Spirit is saying to the Churches* (Sweden: June 2022).

⁸¹Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 238-241.

⁸²Geoffrey Wainwright, "Methodists and Roman Catholics: Bilateral Dialogue in a Multilateral Context," in *Ecclesiology* 2/3 (London: Thousand Oaks CA and New Delhi, 2006), 285.

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⁸³Donald Bolen, "Receptive Ecumenism and Recent Initiatives in the Catholic Church's Dialogue with Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council," in ed. Paul Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, 277.

⁸⁴Donald Bolen, "*Receptive Ecumenism and Recent Initiatives*," 278

⁸⁵The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, *Summary of Report*, (Lund 1952). Available at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2071/fo-statement-the-third-world-conference-of-faith-and-order-lund-1952.pdf>. Accessed 17 May, 2020.