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The Trauma of the Broken Church: Healing through Ecumenism

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This presentation deals with the suppressed trauma of the brokenness of the Christian church which is now "taken for granted" and largely untreated. Divisions between God's people can be traced to Adam and Eve and Israel's history, but they persist through Christians' rejection of Judaism, in the Orthodox/Catholic schism, and in the Protestant Reformation and consequent splintering of the church. This article presents a short history of this fragmentation (into some 38,000 Christian denominations today), and the scandal it presents in face of Jesus' prayer "that they all may be one ... that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). It concludes with a prayer of repentance for our sins and those of our forebears and a prayer that all may cooperate with Jesus' prayer for unity.

The theme of this conference, "Healing the Shattered Soul: Restoring Hope to those Impacted by Trauma," is my perspective for this talk on ecumenism. Trauma shatters the soul and leads to suppressed pain and dissociation.¹ **As we look at the present divided state of the Christian church, trauma is the word that comes to mind. As one Christian counselor termed it, we are living "the dissociative disorder of the Christian church."** According to one estimate there are about 38,000 Christian denominations today!² We are baptized into the one Spirit of Christ, but live as though we were multiple personalities and have by and large come to accept that this is the way things are and will be. Through a sort of denial, we have lost touch with the trauma.

In the Catholic Church, this day (September 15) is the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. At our Catholic Mass this morning, we were invited to consider the pain of our separation in ACT at Holy Communion, of wanting to share communion with all, but as Catholics having to be obedient to our regulations as Catholic Christians, and wanting at the same time to respect the views of other Christians who see things differently. All of us in ACT - Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, etc. - are being invited to stand in this trauma and not to try to solve it by our immediate solutions, because it is not solvable by us. We know in marriage that coming together sexually does not resolve deep differences. In fact, it might actually increase the pain of those differences until they are worked out. It is only through God's grace that the differences will be resolved. We need to be strengthened to stand in the pain of separation as well as in our union to get in touch with the depths of this pain as Mary stood beneath the cross to experience the brokenness of her son. To do this requires grace, because one of the characteristics of trauma is that it is so painful that we want to run away from it, and often do, and therefore frequently don't even know it is there.

A Childhood Experience of Disconnection

In that light I thought of my own childhood experience. It was only about 4 years ago that I became aware of the wound I suffered from disconnecting from my mother in the womb. Up to the moment of that realization, the wound didn't seem to be that severe. My mother never abused me and never really disconnected from me consciously. She was very attentive to me and her scruples, her excessive worry about offending God, was the primary reason I went to a Catholic school and eventually became a Jesuit. My older brother and sister went to a public school and my mother didn't seem to mind. Yet when some ACT members were praying for me, someone received the word

“burden” and I spontaneously realized that I had decided while still in the womb, “I won’t be a burden.” My parents had two children ahead of me and I don’t think my conception was anticipated. I have come to understand that my mother felt overburdened (as her mother had felt). I responsively was saying, “I will take care of myself.” I have often related this formative experience in teaching healing retreats, but it was only recently, in the last three years, that I realized that the disconnection from my mother was a “shock,” a situation beyond trauma that suppressed my inner life so much that I didn’t know I had numbed my feelings. I had to get in touch with that inner wounded part (my “exiled” self, he might be called) and let him be in charge of how fast I could proceed in my healing and what needed to be done. Needless to say, my conscious self was not always ready to hear my exiled self and to do what he suggested. In fact, I couldn’t hear him when there was any significant stress in my life. I had to feel safe and at peace in order to hear him. I had successfully covered over this hurt for seventy years, and I was very cautious about letting go of that defense system.

The Trauma of the Broken Church

It is good that we are considering this topic, the trauma of the broken church, on the last day of the conference, when we have experienced healing ourselves and have faced the need to face the pain of trauma in order to heal it. I don’t think we have even scratched the surface of the trauma of the broken church. **This trauma is not just in us individually; it is in our ancestry and in our faithfulness to our denominations which have been split because of the trauma.** What I experienced individually is a small indication of what trauma does by causing us to disconnect from the full awareness of the hurt and what might heal it. I had no idea that a simple emotional disconnection from my mother had such a devastating effect, mainly because I had numbed all awareness of it - I was in denial.

If an emotional disconnection from family belonging is so devastating, I thought, how much more hurtful would be a spiritual disconnection from the church community where we have found saving grace? We may think that we have come to terms with the separation, have considered it the way things are, but I suspect that we are in denial about the hurt involved. This separation was so severe that many lost their lives because of it, as we will see from a brief look into the history. We now live in the aftermath of division and have, by appearances, come to terms with the separation (as I had come to terms with my disconnection from my mother), but it seems that the hurt has simply been repressed out of awareness. How else can we explain the depth of hurt when in ACT it seemed, at times, that only the Catholic position was fully accepted, and those of other denominations and traditions felt “invisible” as their point of view was not acknowledged.

I counsel Protestants as well as Catholics. One of my Protestant counselees mentioned that it would be very helpful if I could talk at her school, but it would be totally unacceptable to have a Catholic come there. We Roman Catholics are considered of the anti-Christ by those of her denomination. One member of our ecumenical relations committee in ACT mentioned that in his ordination rite there was a remnant of the past where he had to make a vow to accept his denominations’ confession of faith which rejected the Roman Catholic Church as the Antichrist. ACT itself has till recently been divided by struggle over the issue of intercommunion and the struggle for equal recognition of denominational differences and services. **The hurt is beyond mere theological**

differences. It is rooted in history and loyalty to our denominations and ancestors, like saying, “If *you* are right, then my spiritual ground is inadequate and my ancestors were wrong in what they did.” Reexamining our denominational histories means opening up wounds that have been concealed.

And yet, such wounds must be there. We are one spiritual body, baptized in the one baptism, schooled in the same faith. Such a deep unity can only be wrenched apart with great pain, and even though we are offspring of that disconnection and not immediately responsible for it, somewhere in our deep selves, individually and corporately, we must be harboring the hurt. Recognition of the hurt will actually become a grace, just as Jesus’ agonized cry on the cross “My God why have you abandoned me?” was a grace that revealed the deep hurt in Adam and Eve’s disconnection from God’s intimacy. My recognition of the “shock” of my disconnection from my mother was such a grace. Experiencing the deep hurt of my disconnection from my mother and the disconnections in the Body of Christ opens me to see how important is the love that is meant to be our foundation. Jesus beheld that vision of unity “that was meant from the beginning” when he prayed that it be restored, “that all may be one as you Father are in me and I in you” (Jn 17:20-21). His prayer shows us our sin of division by revealing our deepest dream of communion. In order to see clearly the depth of our hurt, we need to restore our vision of what God wanted and still wants and how that vision lies buried in our own hearts. Only by recovering the vision of unity God wanted and still wants for us will we glimpse the trauma of our separation. **I think God has brought us in ACT into a**

situation where we love one another and sense a unity deeper than that in our own denominations in order to encourage us to stand in the pain of

separation. God allows us to share one baptism, to be one in God's Spirit, but not yet fully to share the Holy Communion - so as to experience deeply our dividedness.

What God wants is not just a spiritual unity. We feel "one" in our faith in Jesus and as an Association we help each other grow in that faith. But the unity God wants is more than spiritual. Ephesians 5:21-32 actually compares the church to the marital union where the two become one flesh, "For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church" (v.29). We are to become "one family." God "hates divorce" (see Malachi 2:14-16), and as Jesus said, divorce was allowed only because of the hardness of our hearts (Mt 19:8). Is it not that "hardness" that makes us tolerant of the many divorces present in the church? It is certainly true that people have been hurt by the church, even as they have been hurt in their families, and that separations have resulted from such hurts. However, is such hurt a reason for separation or is it a reason for turning to God for healing in order to forgive? We know from family systems therapy that we cannot make substitutions or replacements for our family. We are to "honor our father and mother that we might have a long life." When we don't do that, we end up repeating what we have disavowed in our parents. The very multiplication of Christian denominations (est. 38,000 as we noted) is evidence that that same dynamic is at work in the Church. It would seem that Jesus' prayer for unity is going unheard, but perhaps God is simply revealing to us what happens when we tolerate disunity. It multiplies. Just as we cannot disconnect from our family because of its sin but must stay united as Jesus did, even if it costs us great pain, so, it seems, we cannot disconnect from Christ's body, the Church, without starting and continuing a history of schisms.

How then can we help restore the unity God wanted and continues to want? As in intergenerational healing, we need first to become aware of the history of our divisions, to repent of our sins and the sins of our ancestors and to ask God to restore us in God's love. The history of divisions in the church is *our* history for we are one in Christ.

The History of the Broken Church

Old Testament Conflicts

We might think our divisions began after Christ, but really the divisions began with Adam and Eve's sin. Their choice to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, against God's command, made them aware of their vulnerability and nakedness, of their fear and shame. Then instead of owning up to their personal responsibility, they blamed each other and were cut off from each other, from the land, and from trust in God's love. That trauma drove a deep sense of abandonment by God into the depths of their psyches. Their doubt of God's love was passed on to their offspring. Jealousy entered as Cain believed God loved Abel more than him and so he killed Abel. His offspring did even greater destruction to prove they were the powerful ones. Lamech said, "If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold" (Gn 4:24). Evil increased till the scattering of the Tower of Babel.

The same pattern persisted in Israel's history. Even when God called Abraham out to found a great people we see the split between his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, which persists today between Muslims and Jews, Muslim and Christian now. Sin had gotten a grip on humans. Joseph's brothers were envious of him and exiled him. Saul was jealous of David's successes and attempted to kill him, setting off a history of enmity between David and Saul's followers. Nathan then predicted that the sword would not leave David's rule because of his sin with Bathsheba. Solomon's endless ambition went to his head bringing oppression on his people through his heavy taxes and with his son eventual rebellion and separation of the northern tribes from Judah. Judah's disobeying God led to its exile and its restoration only led to a greater sense of self-righteousness and exclusion of sinners and non-Jews, alienation from everyone else but Jews.

New Testament Conflicts

This was the divided culture Jesus entered, and his life was an effort to undo the divisions. He sought out, taught and ate with the poor, the sick and sinners (those who were shunned as unrighteous). Those in power opposed him, yet Jesus did not back down. He continued, as he saw God did, to love both the just and the unjust and to desire the repentance and growth of all the people. He was killed for that all-embracing love yet did not retaliate but prayed that God would not hold that sin against them "for they did not know what they were doing" (Lk 23:34).

One might think that Jesus' way would take hold, at least for his followers. For a time it did. When St. Stephen was being stoned to death for his universalist views - like those of Jesus - he prayed as Jesus did, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). And Paul could speak of his great sorrow and anguish because of the separation of his people. "I could wish," he writes, "that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my

brothers, my kin according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3). At that time Christianity was a renewal movement within Judaism.

Jewish/Christian Conflicts

But after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the Pharisaic leadership wrote into the daily prayer a curse directed against Jewish heretics including Judeo-Christians. Its purpose was to force such sects out of the synagogues.³ **Instead of forgiving, Christians began to see Judaism as their enemy, an enemy to oppose and not to forgive (as Jesus did).** Despite some instances of fruitful collaboration, this gradually, across the centuries, led to persecutions and even massacres of Jews, as during the crusades, and to forced conversions and the expulsion of Jews from England (1290), France (1394), Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), the vile anti-Jewish speeches of old Luther and the holocaust in our times. All this sprang from that enmity because Christians did not stay in unity with Jesus’ way.

Early Christian Heretical Conflicts

This pattern of rejection entered the Christian Church itself. Real concern about heresies led to the excommunication of several sects - the Montanists and Gnostics - and other “heretical” churches - the Nestorians, Monophysites, and Donatists - some of which persist as churches till today. But the more traumatic split was between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, and later with the Protestant Reformation. Mutual recrimination followed each, as with Adam and Eve after their sin.

The Great Schism Between the Eastern and Western Church

The schism between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Roman Catholic Church was a gradual process, intertwined with differences of language, culture, politics and theology. Some minor differences - the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist rather than leavened, differences in fasting regulations, and the date of Easter - did not break communion. However, the unilateral insertion by the Roman Church into the Creed, that was common to all Christians that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son rather than just from the Father was seen as heretical by the Eastern Church.⁴ Further, the Papal claim to universal juridical authority over all churches was seen as an illegitimate extension of power by the Roman Church and against the Eastern Church view of the Pope as “first among equals.” These issues caused both sides to excommunicate the other, and a later attempt by crusaders to reconcile differences in Constantinople did not go well and the crusaders, “disgusted by what they regarded as Greek duplicity, lost patience and sacked the city.”⁵ As Ware says, “Christians in the west still do not realize how deep is the disgust and how lasting the horror with which Orthodox regard actions such as the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders.”⁶ Efforts were made later, in the Council of Lyons (1274) and still later in the Council of Florence (1438-9) to reconcile the differences, but in both cases the agreement fell apart when the Byzantine clergy and people refused to accept what was agreed upon. Even today, Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics each see themselves as the one true church, faithful to the Church of the Apostles. As Ware comments, “Each side, while claiming to be the one true Church, must admit that on the human level it has been grievously impoverished by the separation.”⁷

The Protestant Reformation

The other major separation came with the Protestant Reformation. The extension of Papal authority had contributed to the schism with the Eastern Church, and as the self-awareness of nations increased it gave rise to political and religious resistance. John Wycliffe was a precursor of the Reformation. He served as a theological consultant to the English government and composed a polemical tract opposing paying tribute to the Pope (c. 1365-66), and began to publish these ideas in other tracts and a more extended *Summa Theologiae*. From the NT he argued that Jesus and the apostles did not meddle in temporal affairs. He argued that the state could secularize ecclesiastical properties. Wycliffe defended his position “from the only norm for Christian faith,” Scripture. He translated the Gospels and worked with others to translate the OT into the vernacular. The Papacy was at that time in disarray (The Western Schism of three popes occurred toward the end of his life) and Wycliffe held that only those predestined to blessedness belonged to the church and its head was Christ. Wycliffe insisted the no Pope is head for he cannot say he is elect or even a member of the church, and in his later works Pope and Antichrist seem almost equivalent.⁸ In 1378 Pope Gregory XI returned from Avignon to Rome and issued a Bull denouncing Wycliffe’s theses, however Wycliffe’s assertions gave rise to lay preachers, called “Lollards,” who were dispersed throughout England, armed only with the Bible. In Czechoslovakia his ideas influenced Jan Hus of Charles University in

Prague. Hus was eventually condemned by the Council of Constance (1414) and burned at the stake, yet posthumously became a national hero.⁹

Up to the time of Luther, the latent resistance to the authoritarianism of church and state continued. Like Wycliffe, Luther opposed the Catholic Church's fundraising, this time through encouraging the "good work" of buying indulgences to remit punishment for sin.¹⁰ The posting of his renowned 95 theses on the Wittenberg Cathedral door October 31, 1517, is now celebrated by Protestants as "Reformation Day." His theses were widely disseminated through the newly developed printing press while Pope Leo X was very slow to respond. When the controversy didn't die down, in 1520 Leo called for an explanation, which was eventually arranged in Augsburg with the Dominican Thomas Cajetan. Very little was settled, though Cajetan was led to change the focus of his own writing from that time on to Scripture rather than scholastic theology.

That same year, 1520, Luther wrote three of his most important tracts. In the *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility*¹¹ Luther overthrew what he called the three walls behind which Rome sat entrenched in her spiritual-temporal power: 1) that the temporal powers have no jurisdiction over their "spiritual estate," 2) that Scripture has no authority unless so interpreted by the Pope, and 3) that even a Council must be called by the Pope. Here also he proclaimed the "priesthood of all the faithful." In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*¹² he attacked the sacramental system by his interpretation of Scripture (removing confirmation, marriage, ordination and last anointing from being sacraments and reinterpreting the others). And then, in *The Liberty of a Christian*, he developed his view of justification by faith alone with human action to assure that faith continues to increase till death. In each of these writings, Luther had effectively reduced the Papacy to a par with other laity, with no divinely conferred authority, and the church itself was subsumed under his moral condemnation.

Realizing the impasse, Leo warned Luther in a Bull, *Exsurge Domine* (1520), but Luther publicly burned the Bull and was excommunicated Jan 3, 1521. He was declared an outlaw by the Diet of Worms and went into hiding for eleven months. During that time, he translated the NT into German, and oversaw a translation of the OT. The separation was now complete and Luther began to write liturgies (without the sacrificial aspect of the Catholic Mass) and catechisms (large and small) and hymns for his followers. Many of his contributions have stimulated similar developments in the Catholic Church, but the separation that then began remains.

This division was followed by several divisions within the Reformation itself. Violence broke out as the peasant class applied Luther's message of freedom also against the oppressive ruling class, which led Luther to return in March 1522 to preach love and peace. He banished the Zwickau prophets who were more radical than he, and was embraced as a peace maker. Violence again broke out in 1524 with the Peasants War against the upper classes. Luther sympathized with their grievances but not with their tactics and urged force against them. "They were outside the law of God and Empire and thus merited death."

As Luther grew older he became more strident. He argued that the Jews were no longer the chosen people¹³ but "the devil's people" and a "defiled bride." He advocated setting their synagogues on fire, and even wrote "we are at fault in not slaying them."¹⁴ Luther's rage against the papacy also increased. By 1539 he had moved from being against the Catholic Church to being anti-Catholic, denying that Catholics were even Christian. A year before his death, in 1545, he wrote, "Against the Papacy at Rome Founded by the Devil," which has been described as "one of Luther's most coarse and vehement works."¹⁵ The persisting view of the Catholic Church as the "Anti-Christ" finds its roots in Luther as well as Wycliffe.

We must admit that Luther's violent response to non-believers was not unique to him. Reformer Thomas Muntzer advocated the sword to further the Word and establish a communistic theocracy. The Catholic Church itself was similarly intolerant of the Anabaptists, not just the militant ones. Those that opposed violence of any kind were also persecuted. The Anabaptists opposed infant baptism as unbiblical and held that the Eucharist was only a symbol of Christ's presence since Christ had ascended to God's right hand. They also held to the need for a personal experience of God against the suspicion of such personal experience by the Catholic Church of that time, as a danger to faithfulness to church tradition. St. Ignatius of Loyola was imprisoned several times being suspected of being an "illuminati," illumined by personal experience.

Roman Catholics viewed the Anabaptists as more radical than Luther and the other Reformers and together with Protestants persecuted them and resorted to torture and other kinds of physical abuse in an attempt to curb the movement and bring them "salvation." The Protestants, under Zwingli, made the Anabaptist Felix Manz the first martyr in 1527.¹⁶ In writing to his followers Manz spoke of his joy in suffering for the Word, but he was sad seeing "how many are found at the present who boast of the Gospel and speak, teach, and preach much about it, but are full of hatred and envy, and who have not the love of God in them ... who curse and pray with the same mouth, and whose life is disorderly. They call upon the authorities to kill us, by which they destroy the very essence of Christianity."¹⁷

Roman Catholic authorities executed the Anabaptist Michael Sattler later that same year, 1527. Sattler was tried for heresy for holding that infant baptism is invalid (for infants can't repent of sin), that Christ is not really present in the bread and wine (being in heaven with God), that vows are forbidden, that Mary is not Mother of God (but of Christ), that the saints are not to be specially honored (since we are the saints according to the NT) and for leaving the monastery and marrying and thus breaking his vow. He was cut in two and burned at the stake. He died, accepting his suffering from God for the sake of God's Word as he understood it from reading the NT in the vernacular.¹⁸

Weynken, a committed Anabaptist woman, was burned to death in Holland for refusing to reverence the cross which she considered "a dead object," for her Lord was above. She was hanged for heresy.¹⁹ Such measures were condoned by the ancient laws of Theodosius I (347-395) and Justinian I (527-565) against the Donatists, laws which decreed the death penalty for any who practiced rebaptism. The martyrdom of many thousands throughout Europe in the 16th century led many to migrate to America during that time. The pattern, begun in the OT, of destroying pagan nations was now being perpetrated against fellow Christians who interpreted the Scriptures differently.

The religious divisions (especially between Lutherans, Calvinists and Roman Catholics), coupled with political aspirations of the rulers of their various territories led to the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) which devastated Europe and was only finally brought to an end with the Treaty of Westphalia. Divisions increased mistrust and the desire to repossess land lost to the other faiths. This devastation was an important influence in the decision of our founding fathers not to have any established religion in the United States, though an anti-Catholic bias has continued in the US to recent times.

How Are We to Respond to this Historical Trauma?

I mention these historical events, all too briefly for want of time and space, to illustrate that disunity is not just intellectual but a deep interpersonal wound, leaving rejection, misunderstanding and profound distrust in its wake. This wound of disunity manifests all the earmarks of trauma, e.g. dissociation and mutual hostility. These wounds, not unlike the vehemence of domestic violence, have turned the hearts of Christians at first against one another, then simply to indifference to one another, "Let them be, they are incorrigible in their blindness," and then to a kind of complacency and resignation that the separation will never change, "We will have to get used to it."

But God never lets go of God's vision. It takes outsiders, like Ghandi, to show us the scandal of our self-complacent separation. "I like your Christ," He said. "I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."²⁰ Or it takes the Jewish "No" to Jesus as Messiah, because they do not see the redemption promised with the Messiah present in the world, to make us aware of our failure to embody the peace and love of the Kingdom in our bodily lives.²¹ The fulfillment of God's Kingdom has been inaugurated in Jesus and has been given to Christians as a call, but unless we live this call, unless we live the love, peace and reconciliation that Jesus promised, God's Kingdom is not a reality that can be seen in our world today. Jesus said, "By this will all know that you are my disciples, your love for one another" (Jn 13:35). Our divisions are a counter sign, a confirmation that the kingdom of God has not come, that we are not really redeemed.

That is the seriousness of the trauma of the brokenness of the Church - it makes us a *counter*-witness to Jesus' work. How are we to respond? How are we as ACT members to bring healing to this deep wound within our own bodies? A first step is to move from our defensiveness and hostility to love and respect for one another - even in our disagreements. Nancy Heche, in *The Truth Comes Out*, tells about her deep hurt when she learned that her husband of 23 years was dying of Aids from his secret homosexual involvement. She tells how she was brought from a deep resentment and rejection of that lifestyle to realize God's call to see with God's eyes. After she had worked through the trauma for some 20 years, she expressed her new hopes this way. "I want the gay and lesbian communities to see and hear at least one voice of love and respect - not agreement, not compromise, but love and respect." She also wants all who have been hurt by those relationships to experience from her the same love and respect - "not agreement, not compromise, but love and respect."²²

Her challenge was not unlike God's ecumenical call, to move beyond rejection to "love and respect" - not agreement, not compromise. It is the same insight that the early Jesuit, Blessed Peter Faber, conferred to one who was going to dialogue with the Reformers. "If we would help the heretics of this age," he writes, "we must be careful to regard them with love, to love them in deed and in truth, and to banish from our own souls any thought that might lessen our love and esteem for them."²³ Or as St. Ignatius advised three Jesuits going to the Council of Trent in dealing with controversies, "They were to be friendly to all, to listen quietly and try to understand every speaker's viewpoint. When speaking themselves they were to give reasons for and against so as not to appear prejudiced or give offence to others."²⁴ **Only in that context of love and respect can the needed safety be found that would free us from having to be defensive. It is**

love that heals, that ultimately disarms defensiveness, whether it is in counseling or in community relations.

In that context of love and respect we need to see one another with the eyes of God who already sees us as one, as each given a gift of the Spirit for the building up of the Body. I was blessed in preparing this presentation to see the love of God's word behind the different arguments of the Reformers even though I disagreed with many of their interpretations. The Dominican Thomas Cajetan appreciated this with Luther, and spent the last part of his life writing about Scripture, not scholastic theology. The Catholic Church has seen this and has come of age in producing world renowned Scripture Scholars. I was also blessed in seeing the openness to the experience of the Spirit in the Anabaptists, and their willingness to lay down their lives for that faith, even though I often had a different understanding of the world of the Spirit. I was blessed to experience the importance that the Eastern Orthodox Church gave to collegiality and their sense of continuity with the Apostolic Church even though it clashed with the Western emphasis on Papal universal authority. **To be cut off from the complementarity of all these gifts is to be "grievously impoverished" as Calistus Ware put it. Each is a blessing God has given to the Church, but each needs to know that they will be "loved and respected" if they are to open to the gifts of the others.**

Our awareness of giftedness cannot stop simply with Christian ecumenism. We need to open in gratitude to the gift of Judaism, even to their present "No" to accepting Jesus as Messiah. And beyond Judaism we need to be open to the whole world of unbelievers for Jesus prayed that "all might be one" (Jn 17:20-21).

The Christian church's treatment of Jews as "those who rejected Jesus" must be changed to Paul's view that God's providence is at the root of their inability to believe. Paul wrote in Romans 11:11-15, "Through their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make them jealous If their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" In 1933 Martin Buber explained that the Jewish "No" to Jesus as Messiah was not a question of unwillingness or hard-hearted defiance. It was an "inability to accept." He wrote, "We know more deeply, more truly, that world history has not been turned upside down to its very foundations - that the world is not yet redeemed. We sense its unredeemedness. ... The redemption of the world is for us indivisibly one with the perfecting of creation, with the establishment of the unity which nothing more prevents, the unity which is no longer controverted, and which is realized in all the protean variety of the world. Redemption is one with the kingdom of God in its fulfillment."²⁵ Jurgen Moltmann explains, "Israel will be delivered because it sees glory ... His [Paul's] practical answer to the Jewish "No" is not anti-Judaism but the evangelization of the nations. For him, this brings the day of redemption closer for Israel also."²⁶ The Jewish "No," as Ghandi's, is a challenge to all Christians to live what we proclaim. We need to embody our faith in deeds (Jms 2:14-17), for the sign that we are Jesus' disciples is our love for one another. This is a call also to evangelization to all the world for the Jewish "No" will last, as Romans 11:25 says, "until the full number of Gentiles comes in."

Openness to the God-given gifts of one another is an important beginning of our call, but only a beginning. Our dissociation is not healed by a polite acknowledgement of our mutual giftedness. We must recover our lost unity, yet this seems to be the impasse that our ecumenical efforts face at the present. Theological dialogues are taking place. We are more open to listening and respecting one another. The mutual excommunications between the Orthodox and Catholics have been removed by a joint statement between Pope Paul VI and the ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople (Dec 7, 1965). A Joint Declaration on Justification was agreed upon by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church in 1999, and was accepted by the Methodists in 2006. And yet it seems the movement toward unity has now reached an impasse.

In a recent conference on the state of ecumenism 40 years after the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican Council II, Bishop Kurt Koch of Basel, Switzerland made this observation: "The real crux of the current ecumenical situation consists precisely in the fact that we have so far been unable to reach any really workable consensus on the goal of ecumenism, which has instead become increasingly unclear."²⁷ Each church has its own view of the unity of the church and projects this onto the whole. The Orthodox see church unity as a eucharistic communion of local churches under one's patriarch. In their view there is no visible principle of unity of the universal church such as the Catholic Church perceives in the Papacy. The Lutherans see church as a community of those who believe in the Word, concretely present in those gathered around the word and the sacraments. How these local congregations are universally united is not developed theologically. Hence each church communion remains content with its own viewpoint. This impasse will only change if there is a deep conversion of all and prayer that we can surrender our views for God's overarching view.

Our gifts spring from the one Spirit and are for the building up of the one body of Christ. We must become again the “one body” that Jesus has come to establish, the “New Israel.” How God will bring this about we do not know. That it will happen must be our constant desire and expectation. We cannot be satisfied with the status quo if we are to become the light to the world that Jesus envisioned, for *our present divisions are a counter sign of God’s kingdom of peace and justice*. What is needed on the part of each of us is a deep conversion so that Jesus’ prayer for unity becomes our prayer, and Jesus’ willingness to lay down his present life to make it happen becomes our willingness. God already sees the unity. God will show us the way when our desire for God’s kingdom becomes that treasure that we are willing to sell everything for.

I had mentioned Nancy Heche’s book about learning to love and respect homosexuals as not unlike our ecumenical call. It was a long, 20 year, process for her. She was deeply hurt anew when her daughter Anne announced that she had fallen in love with a woman, Ellen DeGeneris of TV fame and their widely publicized relationship challenged her anew. She could hardly communicate with her daughter who also felt very hurt by her attitude. God opened her eyes to her rejection through 2 Cor 5:19: “God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them, and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” When would she learn to “stand in the gap” like Moses (Ps 106:23)? God looked for such in Ezekiel (Ez 22:30) but could not find anyone. She saw that for her it meant not living her life with an “us versus them” worldview, but to join them on the other side of the abyss. If others, in her view, were in ignorance and sin, she was not to judge them. Acts 3:26 says of Jesus, “God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.” She, like Jesus, was called to bless not judge. She saw that God had given her that challenge to go beyond her judgment in order to form Jesus in her. She had to die to herself, to her judgment of her husband and now her daughter. With her Bible in her lap, she confessed her hard heart and blessed her daughter and her friends. As she writes, “As God would have it, that was the weekend she ended her lesbian relationship.”²⁸ **When she learned to be like Jesus, to die to her judgments, God’s kingdom could come in a new and powerful way. Are we not confronted with divisions at present precisely so we also can learn to love as Jesus loved? When we do, will not God release the kingdom in full measure?**

In the 1977 Kansas City Ecumenical Charismatic Conference, a powerful prophecy was given at the end that moved the participants to fall to their knees with repentance and prayer. The prophecy was:

Mourn and weep, for the Body of My Son is broken! Mourn and weep for the Body of my Son is broken! Come before me with broken hearts and contrite spirits, for the Body of My Son is broken! Come before Me with sackcloth and ashes, come before Me with tears and mourning, for the Body of My Son is broken! I would have made you one new man, but the Body of My Son is broken! I would have made you a light on a mountaintop, a city glorious and splendid that all the world would have seen, but the Body of My Son is broken! The light is dim. My people are scattered. The Body of My Son is Broken! Turn from the sins of your fathers. Walk in the ways of My Son. Return to the plan of your Father; return to the plan of your God.

The Body of My Son is broken!

There is no room for complacency. We belong to each other and God’s dream cannot be fulfilled until we live that unity fully. We also belong to our ancestors and need to confess our collective sin and ask God to renew the vision of unity among us. Let us pray God to renew that painful desire for unity in each of our hearts that we might confess our sin and the sin of our fathers and ask God’s forgiveness and healing for our divisions.

Jeremy Ashton, a Presbyterian minister and member of ACT, wrote the following prayer which I would like us to pray together now:

We, the broken Body of Christ, hunted heretics instead of seeking You.
 We, the broken Body of Christ, barricaded ourselves off with doctrines of words,
 instead allowing You to be our Way.
 We, the broken Body of Christ, feared the freedom of others, and silenced them,
 including women, strangers, Jews, pagans or those we judged heretical or schismatic.
 We, the broken Body of Christ, forgot how to live in the power of the Holy Spirit,

relying instead on the sword, the tongue and the letter.

We, the broken Body of Christ, feared to entrust one another to God's love, and instead used control.
We, the broken Body of Christ, could not admit the magnificence, graciousness, outpouring, and profound
mystery of Your nature, and so tried to contain you in rules and suspicion.

We, the broken Body of Christ, feared to be religiously wrong, seeking to grasp signs instead of You.

Therefore, Father, drench us in Your Spirit, help us to mourn and weep for the broken Body of your Son that we and our ancestors have caused and tolerated. Forgive our sin and renew us in a new Pentecost.

Wash away what was, rise up within and among us, empowering us to leave behind all our inadequate containers for You; utterly change our vision; break the limits we have put on You. Help us to surrender everything for that pearl of great price, Your kingdom of love and unity that Jesus prayed for; and give us the wisdom to intercede for and cooperate with your leaders as we move toward this vision. Amen

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Footnotes

1. See *The life model: living from the heart Jesus gave you*, by J.G. Friesen, E. J. Wilder, A. M. Bierling, Rick Koeppke and Maribeth Poole (Pasadena, CA: Shepherd's House Inc., 2004), pp. 15-27, for a description of the permanent effects of unresolved trauma until it is dealt with in a safe environment.
2. Source: International Bulletin of Missionary Research, January 2008, David B. Barrett & Todd M. Johnson. <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity/IBMR2008.pdf>.
3. See Joseph Heinemann, "The structure and contents of Jewish liturgy," in *Christians and Jews*, ed. By Hans Kung and Walter Kasper (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1974/5).
4. Two issues in particular stood in the way. The first concerned language since the Greek term for principle (*arche*) as well as *ek* (from) referred to an ultimate source and only the Father was the ultimate source of the Spirit. In Latin, a principle (*principium*) and *ex* (from) could be primary or secondary, and the Holy Spirit did spring from the Father through the Son. This is agreed on today but was not known then. (See Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Y Matthew J. O'Connell (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1986) pp. 217-222. Secondly, only an ecumenical council could change the Creed according to the Orthodox, and the councils after the split did not include the Eastern churches and hence were illicit in the view of the Orthodox. On the other hand, the Roman Church saw itself with the Pope as the legitimate apostolic church with the authority to make such faith decisions.
5. See Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 69.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
8. See "Wycliffe and the Papacy," in Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JohnWycliffe>.
9. See "Hus' Scholarship and Teaching" in Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Hus.
10. A helpful overview of Luther's life and writing can be found on Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia at the following website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther.
11. This work of Luther and *The liberty of a Christian* are available at the following website: <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-luther.html>
12. *On the Babylonian captivity of the church* is available on the following website: www.ctsfw.edu/etext/luther/babylonian/
13. See his, *On the Jews and their lies* (1543). Luther's statement that the Jews were no longer God's chosen people goes against Paul's statement to the contrary in Rom 11:1, 11-12.
14. See Robert Michael, "Luther, Other Scholars and the Jews," *Encounter* 46 (Autumn 1985), No 4:343-4). Quoted in "Luther and Antisemitism," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther.
15. See *The literature network*, Martin Luther, biography written by C.D.Merriman for Jalic, Inc. Cited in <http://www.online-literature.com/martin-luther/>
16. See Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, "Anabaptists/ persecutions and migrations."

17. See *Martyrs mirror* "old book" which is a collection of testimonies and letters of 16th century Anabaptist martyrs, was enlarged by Thieleman van Braght around 1659 based on earlier works published in Holland more than a century before. Text is available from <http://www.homecomers.org/mirror>., pp. 415f.
18. Ibid., p. 416.
19. Ibid., pp. 422f.
20. Quoted in: <http://www.quotedb.com/quotes/1905>.
21. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The way of Jesus Christ* (Harper & Row, 1990), pp. 28-37.
22. Nancy Heche, *The truth comes out*, (Ventura CA: Regal, 2006), p. 104.
23. Mary Purcel, *The quiet companion*, (Chicago, IL: Loyola U Press, 1970) p. 163.
24. Ibid., p. 165.
25. Quoted in Moltmann, *The way of Jesus Christ*, p. 28.
26. Ibid. , pp. 35-36.
27. See *Searching for Christian unity* ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (N.Y.: New City Press, 2007), p. 95ff.
28. See Heche, *The truth comes out*, p. 138.

