# Ab astris ad castra:[1]
# An Ignatian-MacIntyrean Proposal for Overcoming Historical and Political-Theological Difficulties in Ecumenical Dialogue

JARED SCHUMACHER[2]

*Asst. Prof. of Theology and Catholic Studies,
University of Mary, Bismarck, ND*

Beginning from a footnote in Kant, this essay argues that the Orthodox and Catholic ecumenical dialogue must confront three preeminent difficulties to achieve practical unity: the recognition of plurality, the problem of synthesis or integration, and the problem of orientation implicit in any synthesis. An Ignatian 'star' will be posited by which future ecumenical dialogue—especially concerning primacy—might be steered, as well as a MacIntyrean proposal for the achievement of unity through the pragmatics of tradition in the face of epistemological crises caused by the historical conflict of traditions.

## Introduction

In a concluding footnote to his essay 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', Immanuel Kant makes a claim that, although dubious in its theological verity, is nevertheless perspicuous in its practical import, especially as it bears upon

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[1] 'From the stars to the camps'. Kant uses the motto in a genealogy of naming military and academic offices, recognizing their theological (or in his terms, 'astrological') source. Immanuel Kant, 'The Conflict of the Faculties', in *Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, transl. and ed. by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), note on p. 247. Its designation here is meant to recognize the political-theological problem inherent in ecumenical dialogue, and thus, the unavoidability of recognizing potential metaphysical disagreements lying behind remaining disputes 'between camps', so to speak: Whose stars do we steer by? By which constellation should we orient ourselves? Here, too, Ignatius provides an answer: 'A star shone forth in heaven brighter than all the stars; its light was indescribable, and its strangeness caused amazement. All the rest of the constellations, together with the sun and moon, formed a chorus around the star, yet the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity about the origin of this strange phenomenon, which was so unlike the others'. The One star lights the way. Ignatius of Antioch, 'Letter to the Ephesians', in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. by Michael William Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 199.

[2] The author would like to thank student research assistant Regina Zabinski for her invaluable aid accumulating resources for the project.

seeking knowledge of historical truth in a situation clouded by ignorance and the fog of warring narratives of history. He argues,

> Only an *educated public* which has existed uninterruptedly from its origin to our times can authenticate ancient history. Beyond that all is *terra incognita;* and the history of peoples who lived outside this public can begin only from the time at which they entered it. This occurred with the *Jewish* people at the time of the Ptolemies through the Greek translation of the Bible, without which their *isolated* reports would meet with little belief. From this point, once it had been properly ascertained, their narratives can be followed backwards. And it is the same with all other peoples. The first page of Thucydides, as Hume puts it, is the only beginning of all true history.[3]

What is remarkable about this passage in the first instance is that, for all of Kant's characteristic flights of abstraction—by which I mean, the purity of his reason is all-too-often the homogeny of an atomized and history-less modern subjectivity—what appears in this quotation is a patient recognition of the socio-existential difficulties posed by competing histories in pursuit of true understanding. A recognition of the difficulty such competition causes a plurality of subjects embedded in time and limited by the contingencies of their received history in addition to a suggestive methodology for overcoming such conflicting legacies in the unity of a shared story.

These three things, then, are all indicated, if not fully explicated, in this short excerpt: first, the recognition of historical plurality; second, the problem of synthesis, or how to give a unified account of 'history' in the condition of a recognized narrative plurality; and third, what I would call, following Kant in another essay, 'the problem of orientation', or how to choose a direction of integration in light of competing narrative proposals for how to remember the events of the past.[4] This essay will focus on these three more systematic considerations, transposing them into the idiom of ecumenical dialogue in hopes of contributing to the practical reunification of the Eastern and Western churches. Shortcomings of Kant's position will be recognized, and an Ignatian-MacIntyrean alternative will be proposed, compensating for these limitations.

## 1. Historical plurality

With regards to the first point, narrative plurality, I think there is little need to demonstrate or dwell upon what I take to be self-evident in the current *status quaestionis* of

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[3] Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in: *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. by H. S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52. Italics in the original.
[4] Kant, 'What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?' in *Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, 7–18.

Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, summarized so well by Ed Siecienski's recent book—specifically, his epilogue, concluding as it does on its chaste, even somber, note. Siencienski argues that although 'the potential for resolution is there' concerning the theological points of separation between the ecclesial East and West, 'a sober analysis of the history also demonstrates that optimism… is often unwarranted…'.[5]

Part, if not most, of the problem we have in understanding each other in our dialogue originates from the plurality of our historical narratives, or the 'prejudices' of our received traditions, to use Hans-Georg Gadamer's term.[6] Given the term's positive designation in Gadamer, the problem is not that we have such prejudices; rather, the issue is the seeming irreconcilability of our specific prejudices. Or, in the words of Charles Taylor, it seems to me that the prejudicial differences we see in each other have always been obvious (if not fully understood); what is more problematic is the fact that our differences threaten to redound to the level of constituting different 'social imaginaries'.[7] The danger of them doing so amounts to a mutual recognition that 'East' and 'West' are not simply historical designations recognizing contextual differences within one 'hermeneutical horizon'[8] (distinct Christian traditions within a larger shared Tradition), but different and irreconcilable life-worlds altogether (different religious Traditions).

So, if we are to move towards a practical as well as principled unity, we must face the difficulties posed by such competing metaphysical-historical narratives head on. This has been the primary task of the official ecumenical dialogue between the two hierarchies, and progress has indeed been made. My one suggestion here, given the radicalizing pessimism of the postmodern age in which we live, would be that we do well to remind ourselves that we do share belief in a God of mystery and miracle, capable not only of turning water into wine in the Eucharistic miracle, but also, through the example of Christ's patient suffering on the cross, capable paradoxically of the inverse: refusing the vinegar offered to us by our enemies—the

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[5] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 417. Ellipses in the original. In context, Siecienski is discussing both the filioque controversy and divergent accounts of the office of primacy, the two major remaining theological sticking points in this ecumenical dialogue.

[6] Gadamer argues that 'the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being', in as much as these prejudices constitute the necessary 'conditions of understanding', thus leading ineluctably to a 'rehabilitation of authority and tradition' in discourse concerning truth. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 278 ff. Briefly put, prejudices—pre-judgments or inclinations—are precisely what a 'tradition' exists to confer upon us, guiding our moral actions. A conflict in prejudices between distinct traditions only becomes problematic when such prejudgments are incapable of reform or development, or otherwise incapable of unification from a higher perspective.

[7] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Siencienski puts the point in terms of improvement over past polemics: 'Catholic and Orthodox authors still had differences in interpreting their common history, but they were at least [now] reading that history together' (*The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 380). This is an improvement indeed, but there still remains conflict in social imaginaries which push back against an easy hope for synthetic inevitability.

[8] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 300–5.

'sour grapes which set teeth set on edge' (c.f. Jer 31:29; Ez 18:2) to the third and fourth generation—and using his own body as an instrument of renewal, producing the purifying water of baptism and the sacrificial blood of his Eucharist. Which is to say, God is more than capable of rejecting the stale wine of our past historical conflicts, and instead offering himself as a sacrifice so that our sour grapes might be broken down and brought back to their essential elements, that more savory wine might in time be made to fructify in us. Let us not be given over to despair, despite our present suffering of historical estrangement. As in all things, it will be our Eucharist which saves us.[9]

## 2. A translational solution?

Turning now to the second point: should we choose to believe that the project of unity should be undertaken—and we must if we are to bring to fruition the work which Christ's high priestly prayer laid out for us: '…that they may be one as we are one' (Jn 17:11)—, then we are left with the problem of synthesis, how to form the many into one. At the practical level, in the context of historical plurality, this is ultimately the problem of which method we choose as best capable of achieving the unity we seek. Taking a cue from Kant, universal or objective history in the condition of conflict can only come through a process of 'translation', whereby the 'isolated reports' of one community are fact-checked (so to speak) in a process of translational synthesis, allowing the ancient stories of one community to be rendered in an idiom proper to the other. Translation thus becomes a *communicatio idiomatum*, a method of integration which both assures a communicative unity while preserving the integrity of each form of life actively living within it.

Having myself once been a very committed Protestant and having undergone a process of 'translation' to the Catholic faith, I can personally attest to the phenomenological accuracy and effectiveness of Kant's unifying methodology. Indeed, this is very much a description of how we converts undergo the therapy of a 'purification of memory' (to appropriate the papal term for it)[10], whereby one's received history—

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[9] It is not surprising that the first three publications of the renewed ecumenical dialogue post-Vatican II have been focused on the Eucharist as the life of the Church ['The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity' (1982), 'Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church' (1987), 'The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of the Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God' (1988)] The Catholic recognition of the validity of Eastern sacramental life is surely the greatest fruit of the official ecumenical dialogue. It remains a tragedy that this recognition is one-sided.

[10] The purification of memory is thus 'an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian.' International Theological Commission, 'Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past,' in *International Theological Commission, Texts and Documents*, Vol. 2. ed. by Rev. Michael Sharkey and Fr. Thomas Weinandy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 188. Ultimately from *The Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000: Incarnationis mysterium*, §11 (29 Nov 1998). All magisterial documents have been consulted at the Vatican's official website.

in my case a Protestant view of history, with all its flaws and defects, but its partial truths as well—is integrated into the truth of the Catholic narrative of history. But integral to this process was the mutual recognition of historical wrongdoing which gave birth to the need for Reformation in the first place, making sense of the partial truths and thus the 'prejudices' of my initial tradition.[11]

I wanted to begin with this quotation from Kant because, *mutatis mutandis*, the work of ecumenical dialogue is just such a joint process of translation, a healing of memory, a learning to tell a unified 'true history' from another point of view. Each of us brings the historical narratives of our various 'educated publics' and the metaphysical grammar we have learned from such stories to bear on this pressing matter of Orthodox-Catholic unity, as we learn to tell the truth of our collective experiences together in a 'dialogue of charity'.[12] Indeed, this process of translation can only take place through 'dialogue', which is why I can but echo Pope St. John Paul II's statement, sounding forth in the final chapter of Siecienski's book, that 'dialogue, guided by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit',[13] should be the translational *modus operandi*: dialogue in view of translation, translation as the practice of integration in the context of historical plurality.[14]

### 3. The problem of orientation

However, there is another, much more critical reason I began with the passage from Kant, which brings me to the third point, what I called the 'problem of orientation' in the overall process of any unification achieved through 'translation'. This is ultimately a metaphysical problem of knowing how to select our ends, not simply the methods appropriate to them. My critique of Kant's description is in a sense post-modern, for what Kant himself failed to see was the agonistic aspect of his account of history and the historical prejudices (in both its positive and negative senses) he himself brought to the table. This is most clearly manifest in his presumption of the political-theological *subjugation* of Jewish history *to* Greek history—pitting the 'isolated reports' of the Jews against the 'educated public' of the Greeks, straining the metaphysical substance of the former through the grammatical and political constructs of the latter. In so doing, Kant uncritically allowed what John Milbank has called (without prejudice to our Conference hosts here on the island of Syros) the 'Greek *mythos*'

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[11] Brad Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012) is an excellent historical account of Catholic failures necessitating the Protestant Reformation, while also recognizing the problems of specifically Protestant solutions to these problems. Of particular insight is his chapter, 'Excluding God' (25–73).

[12] 'Common Declaration of his Holiness Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I' (28 Oct 1967).

[13] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 411. C.f. *Ut Unam Sint*, §61, 72.

[14] It should of course be borne in mind that translation has two meanings: rendering in another idiom *and* a movement so as to achieve a new or higher state (of unity). Both are intended here.

and its metaphysical 'agonism'[15] to provide the limiting concepts to the process of translation; in so doing, Kant stacked the deck in favor of a merely political, rather than properly theological, narrative of history. Thus, Kant's more modestly termed 'translation' is in reality much more of a domineering imposition of Imperium: another kind of Babylonian captivity for salvation history.[16]

Therefore, Kant's 'translation' does turn out to be a totalizing rather than integrating methodology, one that merges the diversity of the many into a homogeny eclipsing all legitimate difference, replacing a theological anthropology with a merely political one. Or put in Christological terms, Kant's process of translation replaces a *communicatio idiomatum* in dialogue with a *distentio imperiorum*; the theological metaphysics of the Jewish people are lost in 'translation'.

But postmodern criticism, while great at unmasking power dynamics through its hermeneutic of suspicion, is a poor tool in itself for integration and synthesis. Its radicalization in times of crisis turns the Many into a One of absolute suspicion, or even worse, turns the recognizable Many-in-search-of-One, into Lyotard's mere 'islands of determinism'[17], temporary and solitary concrescences thrown into an ever-dissolving sea of relentless, meaningless, and subject-less change. If the Imperial One of the prejudiced modern is to be avoided, equally also the 'abject'[18] one, ever-dissolving in the astringent solution of a postmodern radical criticism.

As much as we would like to dismiss it, 'the problem of orientation'—how to direct ourselves in the realm of many stories to the One Truth each (hi)story aspires to achieve—remains, even after the critique of Kant's *Critiques*. The problem which metaphysics seeks to address cannot be eschewed or forgotten, nor the contest of metaphysical systems avoided. The Many ontologically presuppose the One. How then can it be achieved? What kind of 'One' are we Many seeking?

### 4. An Ignatian lodestar: theological unity through obedience

In conclusion I would like to offer a vision of the kind of One we need to become in contradistinction to either the totalizing One of modernity or the abject 'one' of postmodernity, and appeal to a methodology which I believe is more adequate to the existential recognition that this One must arise in a condition of conflicting traditions and their seemingly insuperable differences.

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[15] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), esp. Ch.11: 'Difference of Virtue, Virtue of Difference', 327–381.

[16] Exemplary is his claim that '[t]he first page of Thucydides, as Hume puts it, is the only beginning of all true history' (*supra*, n. 2). The implication is that all history prior to Greek history was simply mythology, inclusive of the Jewish biblical narrative. The theological anthropology and monotheism of the Jews is replaced with the political anthropology and polytheistic metaphysical agonism of the Greeks.

[17] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 59.

[18] C.f. Julia Krestiva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. By Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

First, the vision of unity. St Ignatius, writing in his *Letter to the Ephesians*—and writing, we should remember, in a context of political captivity himself—argued that the unity of the Church was secured in a singular, and singularly theological, way. He averred:

> It is proper, therefore, in every way to glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you, so that you, joined together in a united obedience and subject to the bishop and the council of presbyters, may be sanctified in every respect…. But since love does not allow me to be silent concerning you, I have therefore taken the initiative to encourage you, so that you may run together in harmony with the mind of God. For Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops appointed throughout the world are in the mind of Christ.[19]

In the following passages, Ignatius develops his Christocentric unity in the musical metaphor implicit in 'harmony' to depict the bishop as a lyre upon which the council is strung:

> Thus, it is proper for you to run together in harmony with the mind of the bishop, as you are in fact doing. For your council of presbyters, which is worthy of its name and worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as strings to a lyre. Therefore in your unanimity and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. You must join this chorus, every one of you, so that be being harmonious in unanimity and taking your pitch from God you may sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, in order that he may both hear you and, on the basis of what you do well, acknowledge that you are members of his Son. It is, therefore, advantageous for you to be in perfect unity, in order that you may always have a share in God.[20]

To allow a deeper kind of unity to flourish, a unity deeper than any known to the world, we are given the rather shocking injunction to practical 'obedience'. Unity looks like unanimous personal submission to another person, a theological person, Jesus Christ, whose Incarnation, death, and resurrection won for humanity a 'share in God'. But Ignatius does not imagine this personal submission simply as the private judgment of an individual to trust another private individual, so creating a kind of atomistic social contract; rather, it is a very public and practical kind of submission, that of a social person to a Being-in-Relation. For this reason, it is imagined as a

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[19] Ignatius of Antioch, 'Letter to the Ephesians,' in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. by Michael William Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 185.

[20] Ibid., 187. One should bear in mind the similarities to the 'chorus of stars' mentioned in n.1 above, from the same epistle.

socially embodied act. Hence, the relational anthropology of Ignatius is at one with his ecclesiology, leading him to insist upon unanimous submission to the bishop as manifest head of the social body of the church, going so far as to argue that '[i]t is obvious, therefore, that we must regard the bishop as the Lord himself'.[21]

'Unanimity' here should be taken to mean both unified intra-personally (being of one mind with one's self) and inter-personally (of one mind amidst a plurality of minds); and I should add the crucial caveat that this 'unanimity' is not simply a practical one, or rather is a practical one because it flows out of a shared understanding of truth, implicit in the image of mental unanimity and its harmony. A variant reading of these same passages of the longer version of Ignatius' epistle includes a reference 1 Cor 1:10 as the practical import of what submission to one bishop accomplishes: '…that by a unanimous obedience "ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing…"'.[22] Unanimous obedience to Christ through practical obedience to the bishop is the visible sign of a metaphysical agreement on a substantial understanding of truth, allowing us 'to speak the same thing concerning the same thing'. It is for this reason that Ignatius' example foreswears any attempt to put into agonistic relation 'top-down' vs. 'bottom-up' approaches to ecclesial rapprochement.[23]

An Ignatian metaphysical understanding presides over Hans Urs van Balthasar's *A Theology of History*, when he summarily states, after dismissing false understandings of history (Hegel's and others), a truly Catholic view of history:

> And so we come back to the question of what it is, theologically, that is adequate to act as subject for the whole of history. It is Christ and the Church, and through them, integrated in them, both the consciousness of mankind as a whole and at different epochs (with the cosmic 'powers' in the background) and the personal consciousness of the individual. In explicit or implicit faith this personal consciousness (which cannot be separated entirely from that of the epoch) can share in the consciousness of the Church, who through obedience remains always in sympathy with her Lord and Head.[24]

What we need to reassert in our historical unity is not simply a unity of speaking the same words, but meaning the same thing by those words, and, as St. Ignatius

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[21] Ibid.

[22] See ibid., 184 n. 2.2; and 'Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,' in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.1. ed by Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 50.

[23] In his conference paper delivered *in absentia*, Adam DeVille offered just such an unsatisfactory appeal 'from below' to begin mixed eucharistic participation in spite of ongoing magisterial disagreement. Such a suggestion would threaten the vision of harmonious unity underlying Ignatius' ecclesial vision and the theological axiom according to which all meaningful communion is manifest: *Lex orandi lex credendi.* See the Joint Commission's statement: 'Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church,' §14 (June 1987).

[24] Hans Urs van Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 147.

also anticipated, a practical means of testing or demonstrating whether we have accomplished this fact. Otherwise, claims-to-unity might be construed from the outside as idealistic or merely formal appeals rather than falsifiable claims about practicable realities. And his proposal has long been that tried and true method from the Catholic perspective: collective obedience harmonized under one bishop—at every ecclesial level and full integrated within each of the levels—is the *symbolum* of Trinitarian unity.

Inasmuch as Orthodoxy is organized under its patriarchs as bishops, I suspect general agreement on this practical proposal can be reached. However, the question of unity *between* bishops is left to be addressed. While in the West the issue has been articulated in terms of 'jurisdiction', it is important to remember that what is at stake is making visible the theological unity presupposed in Christ's high priestly prayer, a unity so crucial not only to the very life of the Church but to the earliest Christian apologists as demonstrative *intra et extra ecclesiam* of Christian truth.[25] Now that the Church has developed beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Judaism—indeed, in its universal dimension, beyond the world—the universality of the Church's life and mission cannot rest content with the ecclesiastical version of *cuius regio, eius religio*. Unity under one demands a coherent harmony at the level of ideas and in concrete praxis.

### 5. Conclusion: a MacIntyrean solution to the conflict in social imaginaries concerning primacy

Therefore, I concur with the judgment of John Zizioulas that primacy must be exercised at the universal level of the Church, while not being divorced artificially from synodality/collegiality, which serves to ensure the preservation of harmonious and legitimate difference.[26] Inasmuch as Orthodox ecclesiology recognizes three

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[25] On the argumentative centrality of unity, see Eph 4:11–13; Jn 17:23; 1 Clem, esp. 46:1–47:7; and Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to the Philadelphians*, §1–4.

[26] Siencienski's analysis of the intra-Orthodox debate on primacy is instructive (401–3). Ecclesiologically speaking, Zizioulas critiques some Orthodox historical myopia, with its focus on locality and synodality at the expense of the universality of the One Church assured through primacy. Moreover, the Orthodox fixation on synodal legitimacy in reaction to developments in the doctrine of primacy in the West has led to the neglect of the insight that there must be *some* form of meaningful primacy at the universal level of the church—at least, if the church is to avoid lapsing into an ecclesial idealism, where its claim to universality can never be embodied or exercised as a concrete fact. Nor can it be a mere 'primacy of honor' because, as Siencienski notes, 'primates [must] have power.' Yet what Zizioulas seems to give with one hand he takes with the other, as he attempts to deny this universal primacy any meaningful universal 'jurisdiction', which is of course the only way such primatial power could ever be meaningfully exercised or seen as performing any function beyond the *merely* symbolic. From the Catholic perspective, this debate reads as an Orthodox attempt to concede a Catholic universal ecclesiology at all three levels of the Church, while denying it any principle for concrete embodiment at the universal level: namely, the right to intervene in disputes between bishops (i.e., 'jurisdiction'). If it is not too presumptuous for a Catholic to suggest: the present-day mutual exclusions from joint recognition experienced between Constantinople and Moscow seem to evince a need for someone exercising jurisdictional oversight to mediate the irreconcilable claims

levels of the Church,[27] an operative primacy must exist at each level, meaning that primacy must have a legitimate form of practical expression *between* bishops as well.

But of course, the problem is that our potentially divergent social imaginaries might threaten, in a Kantian way, our own prejudicial understandings of both primacy and synodality. We have been taught by our age to be skeptical of the good will of those seeking unity with us, which has meant in practice that we are unwilling to unify with another if that means that we are at all bidden to a revision of our terms or our own understanding of them.

What then shall we do to unify, if submission is the key to oneness in the context of historic abuses? We are called to One and afraid of the method we have been given to be One. Are we stuck in an insoluble *aporia*?

I would like to suggest that Alasdair MacIntyre's solution to the problem of the competition of philosophical traditions be extended beyond the sphere of philosophy into ecumenism as a provisional solution to 'the problem of orientation' in ecumenical dialogue. Its great advantage is that it does not ask us to abandon our inheritances (our traditional 'prejudices'), but asks us to invest them—to risk them, in other words—in the conflict inherent in any dialogical exchange. I read this risk as a kind of kenotic gesture on behalf of healthy traditions, an act of trust in the health of their animating powers; or, if they are sickly, an act of faith in a God who raises from the dead. I think both of our traditions are not so proud as to think either of the 'sister churches'[28] are operating at full strength. Many in our communions fear what MacIntyre calls 'an epistemological crisis', the disorientation experienced when the strength of our traditional understandings might fail us, and we are brought to recognize the insufficiency of our own tradition's self-understanding of its received history. But such a risk is required to avoid an unhealthy fundamentalism of tradition. Here is MacIntyre's characterization of what we must do in the case of an arising epistemological crisis to vindicate tradition, which is but a MacIntyrean expansion of Newman's theory of the development of doctrine.[29] According to MacIntyre,

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to primatial power in disputed territories. This is why the 'crisis in Ukraine' is not simply practical but more exactly 'epistemological', in MacIntyre's sense.

[27] Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church, 'Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church' (13 Oct 2007), §10; §32–44.

[28] The term was first used in the 'Common Declaration of his Holiness Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I'. Siencienski documents the debate about the term's adequacy and potentially misleading implications from the Catholic perspective (391–4).

[29] Siencienski mentions the intra-Orthodox debate on doctrinal development, Andrew Louth arguing against the idea for the Orthodox mind, but Siencienski himself eschews pronouncing upon it (xi–xii, n.10). Daniel Lattier, to the contrary, finds the idea commensurate with the best of Orthodox philosophy and theology and argues for a greater reception of Newman in Orthodoxy as a result. In my estimation, this has become the greatest potential point of conflict in the ecumenical dialogue, as the Catholic understanding of development undergirds the social imaginary behind its articulation of papal primacy. Therefore, addressing this potential source of conflict seems to me crucial for the establishment of future unity. C.f. Daniel Lattier, 'The Orthodox Rejection of Doctrinal Development', *Pro Ecclesia* 20.4 (2011): 389–410; esp. 410, where Lattier quotes the similar judgment John Courtney Murray.

[A] dissolution of historically founded certitudes is the mark of an epistemological crisis. The solution to a genuine epistemological crisis requires the invention or discovery of new concepts and the framing of some new type or types of theory which meet three highly exacting requirements. First, this in some ways radically new and conceptually enriched scheme, if it is to put an end to epistemological crisis, must furnish a solution to the problems which had previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way. Second, it must also provide an explanation of just what it was which rendered the tradition, before it had acquired these new resources, sterile or incoherent or both. And third, these first two tasks must be carried out in a way which exhibits some fundamental continuity of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of enquiry had been defined up to this point.[30]

In the realm of ecumenism, these criteria constitute a practical test for ecclesiological claims and a nuanced methodology for seeking unity in the situation of the conflict of traditions, but from principles found *within* tradition itself. Without such a practical test, theological and ecclesiological claims threaten to be reduced to ideologically motivate prejudices, incapable of providing a compelling 'answer' (1 Pet 3:15) in a new situation to those we see as 'other'. MacIntyre's practical consideration, which he frames as 'knowing how to go on'[31] when conflict arises, offers evidence of a tradition's vivacity in cases of extreme epistemological crisis.

It is my theological opinion that, despite all of its manifest shortcomings, the Second Vatican Council and its subsequent magisterial reception can be seen, at least from within the Catholic perspective, to vindicate the Catholic tradition amidst the crisis of (post)modernity, which crisis is at once the recognition of pluralism of historical Christian traditions and internal and external challenges to the conception of traditional authority and primacy. Its authentic developments stand to vindicate its historical account in a way any Protestant Church of which I was a part has failed to (which, anecdotally, is of course why I converted to Catholicism). In facing this plurality and moving beyond it, I argue that the Catholic church has 'oriented' itself quite literally, by facing 'East' and gleaning from its wisdom. In the context of primacy, this has meant renewing its mutuality with collegiality and declaring the validity of Eastern sacraments, while insisting on the primatial powers of the Pope as symbol of ecclesial unity.[32] The very calling of the Council, not to mention its un-

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[30] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 362.

[31] Ibid., 383 ff. It is relevant that the idea comes from a chapter titled 'Tradition and Translation', as MacIntyre's practical insight is here offered as an alternative to Kantian 'translation'.

[32] *Lumen Gentium* §22–3.

contested continuance after the death of Pope John XXIII, are MacIntyrean 'proofs' of the papacy's integrative power, evidence of its 'knowing how to go on'.

From the Catholic perspective, it remains an open question whether the East has reciprocated. Moreover, the lack of an identifiable Ignatian unanimity *between* the patriarchates, the reactionary rejection of 'jurisdiction' and 'legalism', and the inability to call unchallenged ecumenical councils or demarcate a universal primacy beyond a merely consultative 'service'[33] held individually by the patriarchs raises the question of whether the Orthodox have proven capable of generating formulations that overcome the epistemological and political-theological crises of legitimacy raised against it in (post)modernity.

This article therefore stands as both a Catholic proposal for imagining unanimity in a way consistent with its tradition yet potentially open to Orthodoxy (Ignatius) and a suggestive methodology adequate to historical developments in philosophy and theology (MacIntyre). Whether the Orthodox can follow such a recommendation remains to be seen.[34] Yet the most catholic of hopes is that the God of grace will unify us in truth; it is in Christ, the Truth himself, that we must continue to place our faith amidst great differences in understanding our history.

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[33] Catholic primacy does not pit service against power, and thus its own rendering of 'service' is not devoid of power or jurisdiction, however unlike worldly power it is in other respects. Orthodox proposals for a primacy of service at the universal level, precisely to appear non-Catholic, tend to render such service as consultation, leaving concrete power of decision making at lower levels.

[34] Aristotle Papanikolaou has admirably attempted such an Orthodox appreciation of MacIntyre's challenging insights: 'Tradition as Reason and Practice: Amplifying contemporary Orthodox Theology in Conversation with Alasdair MacIntyre,' *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 59.1 (2015): 91–104. On my reading, Papanikolaou correctly anticipates the danger to Orthodoxy of failing to address MacIntyre's understanding of tradition-dependent rationality and the concrete manner in which Christian tradition both did and must continue to develop historically, so that Christian theology is not in the end rendered an otherworldly mystagogy but the offering of convincing proofs of its claims *in concreto*, principally because Christian tradition is also 'an extended history of moral enquiry into how one can appropriate the good that is inherent in the idea of what it means to be human' (98). In sum his paper shows that MacIntyre's understanding is compatible with patristic thinking, particularly the pre-Schism Eastern fathers; but this begs the question of whether explicitly 'Orthodox' theology is not constituted *essentially* in reaction to developments in the West, as these patristic figures are also claimed by Catholic tradition. Papanikolaou himself recognizes that *the* major challenge to an easy Orthodox application of MacIntyre is the fact that Orthodoxy itself has, since the Schism, developed according to a logic in reaction to Catholic and Protestant developments — i.e., as proceeding in a decidedly anti-rational mode (reason vs. mystery). But equally important, the tradition which Papanikolaou fears is becoming constitutive of 'Orthodoxy' today is a reactionary and fundamentalistic one, 'a static set of propositions, rules, and practices that are often identified as crucial to the tradition because the Other does not do it' (104). It is difficult to see how this appeal to a Catholic understanding of tradition-constituted reason (MacIntyre himself is Catholic, working from Thomistic and Newmanian presuppositions), coupled with the fact that Papanikolaou himself teaches at a Catholic University (Fordham), could possibly be received by a larger constituency of Orthodoxy *qua* Orthodox. I agree with Papanikolaou that incorporating a MacIntyrean critique is important for Orthodoxy today so as to avoid the trap of fundamentalism; but the question is, what would remain of Orthodox tradition *qua* Orthodoxy if it did?