were endowed with different gifts and we are on different spiritual levels. However, at the same time, we are all members of the other because we are members of Christ’s body” (39).

Offering theological and biblical approaches against the background of understanding the signs of the times, the title of one of her books (Discerner les signes du temps [Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002]), Behr-Sigel offers not only an interesting and valuable book that can be useful to understand Eastern Orthodox spirituality, its complexity and some of the challenges it poses, but a contribution to ecumenism seen from the perspective of love and humility, from the perspective of Jesus who wanted “all to become one,” loving one another, understanding one’s neighbours and offering help where it is needed. This book can thus be read, discussed, and understood as the fruit of a life committed to ecumenism. Translation of these writings into English would bring this spiritual aspect of Behr-Sigel’s life to a wider audience within the ecumenical movement.


A member of the French ecumenical Groupe des Dombes and a professor at the faculty of theology at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium, Joseph Famerée is a specialist in the theology of Yves Congar and of the history and hermeneutics of Vatican II, and a member of the International Academy of Religious Sciences. His teaching and research are centred in particular on ecclesiology, ecumenism, and the theology of the Eastern churches, with a focus on Orthodox theologians of the 20th century.

This volume – more than 600 pages – brings together a set of 36 thematically curated articles around the broad themes of ecumenism and ecclesiology, written between 1992 and 2015, organized thematically in six sections: ecclesiology, Mary, ecumenism, Catholic–Protestant dialogue, Catholic–Orthodox dialogue, and Vatican II.

Most of the articles in this pinacothèque of Famerée’s articles from recent decades are in French, and one is in Italian. There are also three essays in English: one focusing on “true or false reform” in the theology of Yves Congar; a reflection on local churches, the universal church, and “other” churches in Lumen Gentium; and a study on the contribution of the Groupe des Dombes to ecumenical dialogue.

Famerée is a good teacher and writes well; he is also keen in the conclusions to his article to try to encourage discussion and further ecumenical development. The influence of the Groupe des Dombes is clear in the conclusions to a number of the articles, where the call for ecclesial conversion is taken up as a key to moving ecumenical dialogue forward.

It is always stimulating when an author publishes selections from their “back catalogue” in this way, allowing a window into long-term developments only now coming into clearer definition in the Catholic Church. This is perhaps especially so given that many of these articles necessarily pre-date not only the election of Pope Francis in 2013 but also that of Pope Benedict in 2005.

In a short introduction, the author attempts to draw out some of the themes that run through the various articles: ecclesiology, focusing mainly on the Catholic Church, even if the positions of other churches are taken into account; Mary, where the two essays in this section, “Has Mary Taken the Place of the Holy Spirit in Catholicism?” and “Mary in the Dialogue between Churches,” offer an interlude or bridge between the first section
on ecclesiology and the sections that follow on ecumenism; methods in the study of ecumenism, especially the theology of reconciliation, baptism, the eucharist, and the hierarchy of truths; Catholic dialogue with Protestants and Orthodox, and the issues these dialogues raise; and finally on the reception of Vatican II, on issues such as the reception in Vatican II of non-Catholic churches, legitimate diversity, ministry and priesthood, and Vatican II as an “ecclesiological style.”

Underlying these contributions is Famerée’s belief that “ecclesiology and ecumenism” belong together. Throughout the book, essays dealing with ecumenical themes touch on issues concerning the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church, and how the changing self-understanding of the Catholic Church affects its perspectives on ecumenism since Vatican II, “from anathema to dialogue” (chapter 14, 253–80). In the concluding section of this chapter, Famerée returns to the issue of whether the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue should take priority over the dialogue with the churches of the Reformation, which since the 16th century “have maintained an independent and even highly conflictual existence within the same sociological space” (279). He opts for a “dialectical” approach, “an interactive tension of unity,” in which union between the Catholic and Orthodox churches has to be held together with union between the Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation: “Christian communion is indivisible de iure and in spe: what sort of (partial) Christian communion would it be that is only between some churches and ignores the others? Such an attitude would be unacceptable. The ecumenical task and the desire for unity will remain unfinished if one community of the baptized remains outside the church” (280).

In a sense, the articles that make up this volume are both timeless and products of their time. Famerée’s chapter dealing with the “ministry of the Bishop of Rome” (99–121) dates from 1996, well before Pope Francis introduced himself with this title immediately after his election as pope in 2013, and is very helpful and concise. The final essay in the volume, written in 2012 when Benedict XVI was still pope, poses the question whether the style of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s texts *Communionis notio* (1992) and *Dominus Iesus* (2000) marks a definite break with the ecclesiological style of Vatican II. Taking up work on style analysis of Vatican II documents by Laurent Villemin, Christophe Theobold, and Alberto Melloni, Famerée proposes a comparative stylistic study of the ecclesial rhetoric of *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* with the two texts from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As with much philological analysis, some of the writing can seem quite technical; however, he very ably and persuasively takes up the two most difficult passages of *Dominus Iesus* from an ecumenical perspective and makes the case for the text being a break with the style of interpreting Vatican II, concluding: “the language of the two texts by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is frequently that of the rejection of error or warning against dangers. These texts are also . . . the result of putting together a number of quotes from Vatican II while not respecting

Looking at the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) of 1999 between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, Famerée highlights its methodology of “differentiated consensus” (352–56), which in the introduction to his book he describes as “opening great perspectives for the possible communion between churches” (xvii). However, looking at the reception of the declaration in the Catholic Church, Famerée regrets that it “hardly seems to have found a place in the teaching and decisions of the magisterium in the 10 years following the signing of the agreement” (170).
their context and using them to support the theses of their authors in the curia” (649).

Looking back at the Catholic Church in the period since Vatican II, Famerée underlines the efforts of Catholic theologians to keep discussion open on a series of issues that Vatican II placed on the church’s agenda: collegiality, the role of the episcopal conferences, the reform of the church, the ministry of the pope, “democracy” in the church, the ecclesial status of the laity, and legitimate diversity within ecclesial communion (xvi). Yet it is precisely these issues that are central to the debates currently taking place in the Catholic Church under the pontificate of Francis, and which demonstrate just how relevant the articles in this volume remain for the future of the Catholic Church. On the evidence of this volume, it is Famerée’s conviction that they also open new possibilities for the ecumenical reconciliation of the churches.

The only regret, reading these essays against the background of today’s ecumenical landscape, is the lack of engagement with Evangelical and Pentecostal ecumenical dialogue at bilateral or multilateral levels; the author concentrates on his particular areas of expertise: relationships between Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants. It is to be hoped that in the next phase of his research, Famerée is also able to address ecclesiological and ecumenical challenges, possibilities, and insights which are brought to the table by Evangelical and Pentecostal theologians and churches. The ecumenical movement as a whole would benefit from being guided into these territories by an ecclesiologist of Famerée’s calibre.

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