

ABSTRACT

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Christian doctrine often stands in the way of our being open to learn from other traditions. Our traditional confession of Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation, “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6), casts other traditions into the shadow. In contrast to the light of Christ, they are at best superseded, or at worst, repudiated as “rubbish” (cf Phil 3:8).

Where mission has traditionally been modelled on the two processions of the Word and the Spirit in the Trinity, I propose that the four relations in the Trinity provide a theological motivation to seek the fullness of truth and goodness that includes the church’s teaching but goes beyond them to draw from the truth and goodness in other traditions. Just as the Son receives everything from the Father eternally in the interior life of the Trinity, does not the body of Christ similarly receive everything from the Father over time and so grow into fullness? Similarly, just as Father is Father precisely through the eternal procession of the Son, does not the revelation of the Father grow in time as the body of Christ grows in knowledge of the Father? Similarly with the active and passive spiration of the Spirit.

The four relations of mutuality in the Trinity thus provide a more open and receptive approach to truth and goodness in other religions. I make so bold as to suggest that they are the ultimate basis for “receptive ecumenism” and also for “receptive interfaith relations”.