

## Theological Plurality and the Art of Disagreement

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In ecumenical work, one can often get the impression that the ecclesiological strive for unity primarily is an inter-church challenge. In this paper, I am not concerned with theological plurality understood as an inter-church phenomenon, in which it is often explained as a result of difference in cultural context or tradition. Rather, I am interested in theological plurality understood as an intra-church phenomenon – an inevitable cultural condition *within* any church.

The underlying issue here concerns the more fundamental interpretation of theological plurality. The paper discusses how one can think of ecclesiological unity and common understanding in cultural contexts that emphasize plurality and diversity, fragmentation, instability, and conflicts of interests and power. By drawing on Kathryn Tanner's theological concept of "community of argument" and Chantal Mouffe's political concept of "agonistic pluralism", the paper asks: Are conflicting interpretations primarily a threat to ecclesial unity, or can they – on the contrary – be seen as a driving force for democratic development, clarification, engagement, and inclusion? And, how can theological openness and plurality best be nurtured in contexts of diverse interpretations? By means of procedural steps of listening, or by nurturing a culture of disagreement in which one allows for the articulation of multiple and rivalling interpretations?