

# Explorations in Reconciliation

New Directions in Theology

*Edited by*

DAVID TOMBS

*Trinity College Dublin, Ireland*

and

JOSEPH LIECHTY

*Goshen College, USA*

ASHGATE

© The Contributors 2006

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

The Editors have asserted their moral right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the Editors of this work.

Published by  
Ashgate Publishing Limited  
Gower House  
Croft Road  
Aldershot  
Hants GU11 3HR  
England

Ashgate Publishing Company  
Suite 420  
101 Cherry Street  
Burlington, VT 05401-4405  
USA

Ashgate website: <http://www.ashgate.com>

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in  
Theology

1. Reconciliation – Religious aspects – Christianity
  2. Reconciliation – Religious aspects – Islam
- I. Tombs, David, 1965– II. Liechty, Joseph  
201.7

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Explorations in reconciliation : new directions in theology / edited by David Tombs  
and Joseph Liechty.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-7546-5184-3 (alk. paper)

1. Reconciliation–Religious aspects–Christianity. 2. Reconciliation–Religious aspects–Islam. I. Tombs, David, 1965– II. Liechty, Joseph.

BT738.27. E97 2005  
201.7–dc22

2004030289

ISBN 0 7546 5184 3

Typeset by IML Typographers, Birkenhead, Merseyside  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Athenæum Press Ltd, Gateshead,  
Tyne & Weir

This book is dedicated to our colleagues at the Irish School of  
Ecumenics, and especially to the former Directors, Geraldine  
Smyth OP and Kenneth Kearon, who initiated the Belfast programme  
in Reconciliation Studies.

## Putting Forgiveness in its Place: The Dynamics of Reconciliation

Joseph Liechty

In Northern Ireland, work towards reconciliation long preceded careful reflection on the meaning and dynamics of reconciliation. As reflection began to emerge, it revealed shared themes and understandings, but considerable confusion as well. As I explore the broader international literature on reconciliation, I find much the same. Even work of real value can betray less than careful understandings of the elements of reconciliation and the relationship between them, if not outright confusion.

Wherever reconciliation is addressed, a jumble of terms is likely to emerge, with forgiveness, repentance, apology, justice, truth, peace and, of course, reconciliation itself being among the most common ingredients of the reconciliation stew. Unfortunately, these and related terms are too often undefined, ill-defined, or idiosyncratically defined, and they are linked in varied and sometimes bewildering fashion. I take as a typical example a recent book, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*. I choose this book not because it is weak but because it is excellent and therefore suggests how pervasive is the problem. That title, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*: why have these two concepts alone been plucked from the reconciliation stew? Are they the same thing? Complementary qualities? What is the relation between them? Is one part of the other? Are they sufficient to account for the whole of the reconciliation process? Apparently not, because early in their introduction, the authors announce that this book is 'a study in political penitence'.<sup>1</sup> Then why is 'penitence' not included in the title? Is this another synonym and therefore needless? Is it part of reconciliation or part of forgiveness? In this book as in many others, I do not find clear answers to such questions.

Neither good understanding of reconciliation nor still less good practice will be entirely stymied by weak conceptualisation, of course. But sometimes confusion does distort practice, and both understanding and

---

<sup>1</sup> Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney L. Petersen (eds), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation* (Philadelphia, PA and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), xvii.

practice would be enhanced by a better grasp of the whole network of actions and qualities that make up reconciliation. Towards that end, I focus here on sketching a brief account of reconciliation as a set of interlocking dynamics, with a particular emphasis on placing forgiveness within that framework.<sup>2</sup>

### Repenting and Forgiving

At its most basic, reconciling involves the complementary dynamics of repenting and forgiving, the first a way of dealing with having done wrong, the second with having suffered wrong. Thus reconciliation is achieved when perpetrators have repented and victims have forgiven. While the picture is much complicated in a situation of long-term conflict like Northern Ireland, where determining which parties are perpetrators and which victims, and in what proportion and combinations, becomes itself a cause of contention, repentance and forgiveness remain underlying requirements for reconciliation.

Given the necessity of both repenting and forgiving for reconciliation and their complementarity, it is worth noting that the Christian tradition, and with it the broader Western tradition, is heavily weighted towards forgiving rather than repenting. That these traditions are weighted towards forgiving I base on impressions to which I can recall just one significant counter, the recent and remarkable attention to apology in Australia. A useful measure of the bias towards forgiveness at the expense of repentance comes from the online bookseller, Amazon. In preparing a lecture, I had occasion to search the Amazon.com website for books on forgiveness and repentance. 'Forgiveness' turned up 387 titles, a mixture of pop psychology, pop religion and serious scholarship, with only a tiny minority written from perspectives other than Christian or secular. 'Repentance', on the other hand, yielded just 72 titles, and what had been a tiny minority of Jewish authors under 'forgiveness' became a large minority under 'repentance'. Furthermore, the 22nd best-selling book on repentance was already designated 'out of print/limited availability', while the 93rd best-selling book on forgiveness was the first to be out of print.<sup>3</sup> Virtually every reading of mainstream Western culture I can think of points towards the same conclusion: that the Western imagination is captivated by forgiveness in a way that repentance cannot match.

<sup>2</sup> What I cannot develop within the confines of this essay is how the dynamics of reconciliation differ depending on the level of social or political organisation to which they are applied. My contention in such an account would be that the understanding of the dynamics of reconciliation that I develop here has significant applications to all kinds of human relationships and conflicts, whether those be interpersonal, intercommunal, or interstate.

<sup>3</sup> These figures were taken from the Amazon.com website on 29 September 2004.

Whatever the reason for the imbalance, it is unhealthy. However difficult, forgiving involves dealing with how we have been wronged, while repenting involves what most of us find more difficult, dealing with what we have done wrong. Moral maturity requires both. Healing of relationships, that is, reconciliation, whether personal or political, requires both.

While the dynamics of repenting can be named in various ways, five stages typically emerge when working with groups in Northern Ireland: acknowledging a wrong done, accepting responsibility, expressing remorse, changing attitudes and behaviour, and making restitution. These stages are in a logical order, with the exception of 'expressing remorse' and 'changing attitudes and behaviour', either of which might come before the other. Minimally, we might label a process as repenting if it yields changed behaviour, especially if that change is willing, the three previous stages can be taken as implicitly accomplished or the change would not have occurred. Restitution, though, is the capstone, too rarely applied, that completes and fulfils the repenting process; restitution is also the element most likely to persuade the party wronged that repentance has been genuine.

The idea of apology, with its overtones of verbal expression of regret, corresponds closely to 'expressing remorse'. As such, apology occupies an ambiguous position in repentance and therefore in reconciliation. On the one hand, it is not strictly necessary, since effective change may itself function as a non-verbal but powerful expression of remorse. On the other hand, apology can play a critical role in repentance. The right words of apology at the right time can be as decisive as restitution in persuading the other party that repentance has been authentic. In fact, where complete and literal restitution is not possible (and in situations of endemic conflict, full restitution rarely is possible), then apology – verbal expressions of regret – may also become part of symbolic restitution. Furthermore, apologising marks a crucial development in the repenting process. Apologising is the first of these five stages that requires the repenting party to turn what could have been up to that point a private and internal process into one that recognises that this is about restoring a relationship and therefore takes the difficult step of turning outward to address the offended party.

Forgiving, like repenting, might be defined in terms of stages in a process. Because I want to identify some problems around the way the concept of forgiveness is used, however, I will instead work with two main strands of meaning. Forgiveness is a broad and rich concept. Ironically, in that very breadth lies the possibility, too often realised, of intellectual confusion that can limit the potency of forgiving in practice.

The first strand is forgiving as 'letting-go'. This feels familiar, because letting-go has become the conventional meaning of forgiveness in modern therapeutic terms. But the roots run much deeper. However one assesses Hannah Arendt's claim that '[t]he discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the

realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth',<sup>4</sup> it was clearly a central theme of his teaching and of the New Testament, and thus hugely influential in the Western tradition. Forgiving as letting-go may well derive from this source, as this is the apparent root meaning of the New Testament Greek word, *aphiemi*, which is usually the word translated as 'forgive'. If 'forgive' is almost always a translation of *aphiemi*, the reverse is certainly not the case. In fact, *aphiemi* is translated as 'forgive' in less than half of its 146 occurrences. It is more often translated as 'leave' and beyond that in an apparently bewildering variety of ways, including 'consent', 'divorce', 'give', 'neglect', 'yield', 'abandon' and 'desert'. 'To let go' is one way of naming the common meaning behind all the translations.

That variety of translations suggests one of the key conceptual and practical problems around forgiveness: in letting go, exactly what are we letting go of? The answer will vary from case to case, but if it is to fit under the heading of forgiveness it will always involve letting go of at least three things: vengeance, punishment of the wrongdoer in exact proportion to the wrong done,<sup>5</sup> and, in so far as possible, those feelings, especially hatred, that will damage, immediately or eventually, the wronged party. Whatever else may need to be let go of in particular circumstances, nothing else need be let go of in all circumstances. And if the practice and pursuit of forgiveness is to be meaningful, one thing may not be let go of: that is, the justice claim that occasioned the need for forgiveness. As suggested by the ideas of 'letting go of vengeance' and 'exactly proportionate punishment', forgiving is a way of dealing with a justice claim. True, it is sometimes radically different than other ways of dealing with justice, but it is not the abandonment of a justice claim. In fact forgiving has little meaning other than as a way of dealing with a justice claim.

A second strand of the meaning of forgiveness is 'love given before',<sup>6</sup> 'love' being understood in this case in the entirely unsentimental sense of willing, seeking and extending oneself for the good of another. As such it is the perfect complement to forgiving as letting-go, indicating what is embraced in place of what has been let go of. It is worth noting that love-

given-before, although a major New Testament theme, is not described there as 'forgiving', which is largely confined to the letting-go function. Incorporating love-given-before into forgiveness seems to be an addition in the English language, and perhaps others. Thus in a Christian context, stories like Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector or the parable of the prodigal son are commonly understood to be about forgiveness, because they exemplify love given before and apart from whether the other person has in any way earned or deserved it, although the Bible never uses the word 'forgive' about these situations.

The letting-go strand of forgiveness is in fact a continuum, running from a minimalist end that might be described as forbearance of vengeance to a full and final letting-go that can be called absolution.<sup>7</sup> If both forgiving as letting-go generally and as love-given-before generate some problems, they are as nothing compared with the confusion arising from forgiveness as absolution. In some ways, absolution fits poorly with the meanings of forgiveness that we have been discussing. Forgiving as letting-go and as love-given-before are initiating, risk-taking, pre-emptive strategies for change. Forgiveness as absolution follows rather than initiates, it is a response to change more than a strategy for change. After conflicting parties engaged in repenting and forgiving as letting-go and love-given-before have done all the hard work of being reconciled, absolution is little more than the recognition that reconciliation has occurred.

Two examples will suggest the confusion that can arise because of the radical difference between forgiveness as absolution and forgiveness in its other functions. Theologian Rodney Petersen's account of the terminology and rhetoric surrounding forgiveness shows the kind of conceptual confusion that can arise when discussions of forgiveness slip without acknowledgement between forgiveness as absolution and forgiving in its other capacities. I cite three references from a single page: 'This [self-justification] blocks the process of forgiveness and, consequently, the possibility of restored relationships or reconciliation'.<sup>8</sup> Here forgiveness is part of reconciliation and precedes the possibility of reconciliation. A couple of paragraphs later, however, Petersen writes:

Reconciliation, a restoration or even a transformation toward an intended wholeness that comes with transcendent or human grace, expresses the result of a restored relation in behavior. Forgiveness expresses the acknowledgment and practice of this result. In this sense, *forgiveness* is not so much a middle term as one that includes both justification and reconciliation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to my co-editor, David Tombs, for the long conversations that have helped me to clarify the relationship between love-given-before, letting-go, and absolution.

<sup>8</sup> Rodney L. Petersen, 'A Theology of Forgiveness: Terminology, Rhetoric, and the Dialectic of Interfaith Relationships', *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Peterson, 'A Theology of Forgiveness', 13, original emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn 1998 [1958]), 238.

<sup>5</sup> Here and elsewhere through this section, I am closely following the work of Donald Shriver, especially *Forgiveness and Politics: The Case of the American Black Civil Rights Movement* (London: New World Publications, 1987), 20. See also his later work: Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> I had been labouring for some years under the impression that the prefix 'for' in forgiven was equivalent to 'fore' and thus 'before'. However, my Goshen College colleague Paul Keim, a linguist, has pointed out to me that in this case the meaning of the prefix 'for' has nothing to do with 'fore' or 'before', so it is simply an interesting and unlikely linguistic accident that the strand of forgiveness being discussed here can be described as 'love given before'.

These words only make sense if he is talking about forgiveness as absolution, and he correctly points out that in this absolving sense, forgiveness is not so much part of reconciliation, it is a broader term that includes reconciliation. Just three sentences later, however, he goes on to say, 'Reconciliation not only draws upon forgiveness, but also elicits the qualities of truth and justice in the recovery of harmony or peace.'<sup>10</sup> And again he has returned to talking about forgiveness as part of reconciliation. This sliding back and forth, unacknowledged, between forgiveness as absolution and forgiving in its other functions makes a coherent account impossible.

When the legal scholar Martha Minow seeks a way *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* in the aftermath of mass violence, it is primarily forgiveness as premature or unwarranted absolution that she wishes to avoid.<sup>11</sup> Forgiving in its other senses is not without problems, but it can contribute significantly to seeking a way forward in the aftermath of violence. Although in most ways sophisticated and generally satisfying, Minow's argument would be stronger if it explicitly recognised the different meanings of forgiveness – specifically the stark difference between absolution and the initiative-taking forms of forgiveness. Should it become a commonplace that recovery from mass violence requires a way between vengeance and forgiveness, it would be most damaging if all strands of forgiving were carelessly conflated into one, and this one reduced to absolution.

Confusion between forgiveness as absolution and in its other meanings also lies behind the frequent but rarely fruitful debate about whether repentance must precede forgiveness. Once the differences between these aspects of forgiving are recognised, the issue all but resolves itself. Forgiving as letting-go and love-given-before generally precede repentance. They are in their essence initiatives and would be deprived of their possibilities as a form of power for change in the hands of wounded parties were they confined to responding to repentance. Absolution generally follows repentance. It can, of course, precede repentance, and this may in some instances be necessary or wise. But absolution is most naturally a response to repentance. If it easily or frequently precedes repentance, it will soon require the kind of critique represented by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's stinging attack on cheap grace, including 'the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance'.<sup>12</sup> Of course Bonhoeffer's target here was forgiveness as absolution, not as risk-taking initiative.

In Northern Ireland, this issue of the relationship of forgiveness and repentance causes real existential pain, as wounded parties cry out, 'I would

<sup>10</sup> Peterson, 'A Theology of Forgiveness', 13.

<sup>11</sup> Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), 14–24.

<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, rev. edn 1963 [ET 1948]), 36.

like to forgive him, but I can't, because he hasn't repented.' As with Bonhoeffer, it is forgiveness as absolution they have in mind, but the conflation of all forms of forgiving into one is likely to deprive them of the opportunities for change offered by other forms of forgiveness. Thus in Northern Ireland it is vital to affirm on the basis of empirical observation (that is, listening to a lot of stories) that forgiving and repenting do not relate to each other in any particular order. Either can come first and inspire the other. Forgiving as letting-go and as love-given-before can be undertaken before the other party has repented, if the forgiving party is able, wants to do so, and is willing to risk getting no response in hopes that forgiveness might inspire a response. What cannot be accomplished until the other party has repented is reconciliation; what is likely to be inappropriate until the end of the process is absolution. I suspect that the confusion around this topic is directly related to the tendency to use inflated definitions of forgiveness that make it a synonym for reconciliation and to give too much prominence to forgiveness as absolution.

Conceptual clarity would certainly be served by regarding absolution not as part of forgiveness but as a separate action. That is not going to happen. First, absolution is well entrenched as one of the popular meanings of forgiveness. Second, and conclusively, in one fundamental sense absolution does belong as an integral part of forgiveness, because it is nothing if not a form of letting-go.

Since absolution will remain part of forgiveness, two things are necessary to avoid the kind of confusion that limits the power of forgiveness. One, as suggested, is to distinguish clearly between the various forms of forgiveness. The other is to be quite clear about what absolution should and should not mean in terms of human relations. In a Christian context, this would begin by recognising at least four levels of absolution: God's absolution, the church's absolution as a representative of God, the state's absolution of wrongdoers, and the absolution offered by wronged individuals or groups to other individuals or groups. One implication of absolution shared by all levels is the determination that past wrongdoing will be in some way set aside so that the relationship between the offended party and the perpetrator may be restored. In terms of the last level, human relations, that is the only legitimate meaning of absolution. The absolution offered by God and the church, however, is also a kind of metaphysical transaction that alters the ultimate standing of the sin committed by the sinning party; the state, as a quasi-transcendent entity, might also be seen to offer a parallel quasi-metaphysical absolution. This is absolution offered by the sinless to the sinning, and thus irrelevant to and inappropriate in the realm of ordinary human relationships. The kind of absolution offered here has nothing to do with the ultimate standing of the sinner's sin; its only appropriate concern is the relationship between estranged parties. None the less, in some reluctance to offer forgiveness as

absolution, I see traces or even clear evidence of an arrogant assumption of a God-like status: being parsimonious with forgiveness lest ultimate standards be offended. At least in this one sense, some Jews are right to recoil, I believe, at the Christian assumption of the power to forgive, because in terms of this kind of absolution, truly only God can forgive sins.

### Justice and Truth

In practice, repenting and forgiving need justice-seeking and truth-seeking to keep them honest. Were repenting and forgiving practised with full integrity, we might need to add nothing more to this account of the dynamics of reconciliation, because justice and truth are already built in to these concepts. For repenting, this is obvious: it involves acknowledging and dealing with an injustice; repenting has no meaning outside the concept of justice. But forgiving too is integrally, necessarily connected to justice. Forgiving is always a way of responding to an injustice, and it can also be a stance from which to pursue justice without being overcome by bitterness when that justice is long delayed. This relationship should be a given. In reality, however, when forgiving and repenting go wrong, it is often because justice-seeking and truth-seeking have been neglected or distorted in some way, so these things need to be named. Without justice and truth, forgiveness and repentance will be insipid, partial and cheap.

But neither are justice and truth independent sentinels that stand alone. 'Any justice which is only justice', wrote Reinhold Niebuhr, 'soon degenerates into something that is less than justice. It must be saved by something which is more than justice.'<sup>13</sup> What a justice which is only justice can degenerate into is a polite pseudonym for mere retribution or revenge. What justice requires for its salvation, I propose, is that it be pursued in the larger context of seeking reconciliation. As for truth-seeking, one need not accept all of Michel Foucault's critique of 'regimes of truth'<sup>14</sup> to recognise that truth can be debased to serve as a means of domination, so its health too requires that it be understood in the context of seeking reconciliation.

What I have suggested thus far about the relationship of these four actions – forgiving, repenting, justice-seeking and truth-seeking – might be caught up in the metaphor of a web. To function at its greatest strength, each action must be connected to every other, and the resulting criss-crossing strands have collective strength and possibilities that none would have on its own. It may

<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner, 1960 [1932]), 258.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.

be possible to move towards reconciliation with one or more of these actions weak or absent (the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was predicated on such a gamble, repenting and even more so justice being the comparatively weak elements) but they work best and most powerfully when working together.

### Trust, Hope and Confidence

What follows requires a shift from the organic metaphor of a web to a mechanical one, in which each of these four actions is a meshing cog in a machine. If this reconciliation machine is to run smoothly, it will require a lubricant and fuel. The lubrication comes in the form of certain personal and social virtues, certain characteristics of disposition. In the first instance, these will include at least trust, hope and confidence. People simply cannot choose meaningful, uncoerced change without a certain level of confidence, and they will not change without trust and hope. Thus no reconciling process, whether personal or political, can go anywhere without these qualities, although a well-constructed process might make do with less confidence, trust and hope, or even inspire them. The protracted endgame in the Northern Ireland peace process might fruitfully be analysed in terms of these three categories: why they are so weak, and what is required to nurture them.

A fourth characteristic of inner disposition is harder to name, but still more crucial, and functions as the fuel for reconciliation. In terms of the dynamics of personal reconciliation it is easily named: it is love, in the entirely unsentimental sense of concern and care for another and a willingness to extend oneself for that other. The same applies to social and political reconciliation, but love is not a usable term for such purposes, so I borrow a phrase from Byron Bland, director of the Stanford Center for Conflict and Negotiation. Bland describes reconciliation as driven by the sense that somehow 'we belong together': 'reconciliation', he says, 'involves a profound rediscovery that those who have been deeply divided in the past do indeed belong together in the future'.<sup>15</sup> This profound sense may be the result of high idealism or of a kind of revelation or of social analysis or even of grudging realism – that is, unless we have a future together, however distasteful and distressing that notion, we have no future. But whatever the reasons for it, without this sense that 'we belong together', reconciliation will not happen.

This simple sketch of the place of forgiveness in the reconciliation process has only opened up some of the main areas that need to be addressed. None

<sup>15</sup> Byron Bland, unpublished and untitled essay on reconciliation, from the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation Working Papers, 1999.

the less, I hope that it can serve as a pointer towards the kind of account of the dynamics of reconciliation that scholars might develop in order to undergird both sound thinking and sound practice in the pursuit of reconciliation.

## Reconciliation: An Intrinsic Element of Justice

Ada María Isasi-Díaz

'That they all may be one so that the world may believe' are words placed on the lips of Jesus by John the evangelist (John 17:21). The context of these words is important: Jesus wants the world to believe that he is one with God and that God has sent him. Jesus knows that his mission, to reveal and begin to establish the kin-dom<sup>1</sup> of God, will be fruitful only if the world believes in him. Furthermore, Jesus knows that whether the world does or does not believe in him and his mission depends on his followers living according to what he has taught them. The world will not believe unless his followers live according to the truths Jesus has taught: unless Christians are indeed one in body and soul, in mind and heart. Matthew 25:31–46 has the clearest explanation of what Jesus meant by being 'one'. In this parable one finds a stark picture of reality: some are hungry, some have food; some are homeless while others have shelter; some are naked, some have clothing; some are prisoners while others are free; some are sick and others are healthy. There is a rift between different groups in the community. The teaching of the parable is that the rift has to be healed and that only those who work to heal it will belong to the family of God. The healing of what splits humanity, of what separates one from the other, is the true meaning of reconciliation. If what separates us is not bridged, justice will not be able to triumph and the kin-dom of God will not become a reality in our midst.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the many divisions that exist in our world make it obvious that a central element of the Christian understanding of justice and of work on behalf of justice is reconciliation. Justice is not only 'a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel',<sup>2</sup> but it is essential to the meaning and mission of the church today. The Bible, as well as a great variety of documents produced by different Christian

<sup>1</sup> The use of 'kin-dom' instead 'kingdom' or 'reign' stems from the desire to use a metaphor that is much more relevant to our world today. From my perspective as a *mujerista* theologian, the point of reference for kin-dom of God is the concept of family and community that is so central to my Latina culture. There is also the need to move away from 'kingdom' and 'reign' that are sexist and hierarchical metaphors.

<sup>2</sup> 1971 Synod of Bishops, 'Justice in the World,' in Joseph Gremillion, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 514.



# Explorations in Reconciliation

New Directions in Theology

*Edited by*

DAVID TOMBS

*Trinity College Dublin, Ireland*

and

JOSEPH LIECHTY

*Goshen College, USA*

ASHGATE