



Hospitality and the Power of Divine Attraction: A Jewish Commentary on the Anglican Setting of Scriptural Reasoning

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of Scriptural Reasoning (SR) as a movement and a society of scholars was made possible by the hospitality, influence and cohort of two Anglican theologians, the late Revd Daniel Hardy and Professor David Ford. In this essay, I offer a Jewish commentary on several Anglican theological dispositions that might contribute to this hospitality: among them are 'found theology' (as I label it), responsiveness to the powers of divine attraction, concern to repair obstructions to the healing work of the Spirit, and attentiveness to Scripture as host and source of reparative reasoning. While the primary subject of the essay is a species of Christian theology, the method of the essay emerges from a recent approach to Jewish philosophy we call 'textual reasoning' (TR), one of the antecedents of SR. In the style of TR, I encounter theology as a 'disposition', or mode of practice, displayed in particular in practices of reading and interpreting Scripture and of responding to the call of Scripture in societal action. The essay is structured as a series of brief accounts of Anglican theological dispositions, each one followed by a Jewish 'commentary', culminating in a sample of Anglican-Jewish dialogue as it might be overheard within a session of scriptural reasoning.

KEYWORDS: Scriptural Reasoning, postliberalism, Anglican theology, Jewish philosophy, textual reasoning, divine attraction, hospitality, supersessionism, Abrahamic dialogue

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Attraction

A *leitmotif* of this essay – the power of divine attraction – is suggested by the themes of Daniel Hardy's last two years of writing: the divine light that attracts creatures to turn their attention back to the God who created them. What may attract Christian believers to turn their attention to theological engagement with other Abrahamic religions? Is this an attraction away from their redeemer or is it an attraction, by way of these others, to the very body of the God who loves them? As a theological practice, SR prompts believers to devote a modest amount of their attention to intimate theological dialogue with members of other faiths as a means of more profound entry into the intimacy with God that is opened by the community and tradition in which they worship.

Commentary

For the great rabbinic sage Rabbi Akiva, the biblical *Song of Songs* narrates the erotics of attraction that bind God to human (the people Israel) and human to God. We shall return to the *Song of Songs* on the last pages of this essay.

'Found Theology'

Georges Rouault's 'Christ and disciples' adorns the cover of Daniel Hardy's posthumous book, *Wording a Radiance*.² In harmony with this image of Jesus and disciples walking, face to face, on the road to Emmaus, Hardy writes:

How does light happen within the world? It irradiates from within. It's like seeing people 'light up' within; it's a huge privilege, and we have to recognize and discern it in one another and to embrace and delight in it ... That's what Jesus did. He didn't say, 'Here I am: this is what to do ...' He *met* with people, and the meeting has to show itself as deeply as possible, to reveal who he is for – and in relationship with – each person. Read the gospels: suspend your judgment and let him come alive afresh. I've learnt a lot in the last month about how Jesus happens for people. I've moved from understanding Jesus as a given who presents himself to you – and you can either take him or leave him – to realizing that it's much more about Jesus walking alongside people and interacting with them/us. It opens up a much bigger space with Jews and Muslims: walking with Jesus allows you to walk with other traditions ... Just imagine the Emmaus

2. Daniel W. Hardy, with Deborah Hardy Ford, Peter Ochs and David F. Ford, *Wording a Radiance: Parting Conversations on God and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

Road story as a story of Jesus coming and walking amongst his disciples: Christian, Jew and Muslim. Simply look at all the things that Jesus did: his 'love statements' opening out the light in things and people, just being there in the flesh with them.³

In his early writings, Hardy takes note of the Bible's witness to Israel's covenant, and his work in both church and academy was marked by hospitality to persons from all faith communities. As far as I am aware, however, Hardy's deep experiences of inter-Abrahamic, theological dialogue took place independently of an *a priori* plan. A few of us Jewish philosophers happened to meet Hardy and Ford and happened to share in conversations that disclosed overlapping approaches to religious study and practice in the modern world. Conversations led to friendships, and friendships led to projects of shared study across scriptural borders, resulting in what we later called the Society for Scriptural Reasoning (SSR). Around the same time, I happened to have an observant Muslim graduate student (Basit Koshul) with whom I entered into lively discussions of Kant and of Scripture. He invited me to visit his community of young Sunni professionals who met regularly to study the philosophy, poetry and theology of the great Pakistani intellectual Mohammad Iqbal. We collectively observed several analogies between their Muslim and my Jewish approaches to religious study and practice in the modern world. Hardy and Ford expressed great interest in this emerging discussion and, soon, other Jewish and Christian members of our previous dialogue group joined this new dialogue. It is then that we named our group SSR – an inter-Abrahamic group for the study of Scripture and philosophy. In this sense, Hardy 'found' himself in a theological dialogue with Muslims and Jews who happened to meet him and to display unexpectedly analogous approaches to the place of Scripture in the modern world.

I label Hardy's account of the Spirit 'found theology', since the Spirit is encountered in its contingency, knowable only through its effects, which are as visible in the world as the world itself. Certain patterns of inquiry enable humans to search from effect to cause and offer what Coleridge called *abductions* – probable, non-necessary but testable observations – about the characteristics of Spirit as cause or ground of these effects.⁴ Such abductions enable us to 'see' the Spirit,

3. Hardy, *Wording a Radiance*, p. 36.

4. Hardy writes, 'The movement of attraction is identified by Coleridge by using a term known in some philosophical circles, chiefly those of modern

not face to face, but through the 'shadow' or 'back' of our visible behaviors, analogous to the way we acquire a sense of our individual personalities and assumptions: not seen, but inferred per hypothesis and then re-conceived in response to new experiences. We may therefore have probable, abductive knowledge of the Spirit as it is displayed, as well, in actions other than our own. The way the Psalmist exclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God", the work of the Spirit appears through all the patterns of relation we may observe among the elements of God's creation. How do these abductions first appear in the imagination? Following Coleridge, Hardy saw them as fruits of divine attraction. As scriptural reasoners, in other words, Hardy and Ford 'found' Jews and Muslims at the door way of their house of study, and they invited them in.

Commentary

'Ye shall know them by their fruits' (Mt. 7.16) is a saying of Jesus, but it is no less characteristic of rabbinic wisdom: paraphrasing a classic rabbinic commentary on Exodus 3: God is known by his acts.⁵ For rabbinic Judaism, as we shall see in the essay's concluding dialogue,

(Footnote continued)

pragmatism, as "abduction." Logically, this is often seen as the postulating of a possible explanation, a "third" form of reasoning beyond – but Resourcing – induction and deduction. Here, in Coleridge, an ancestor of modern pragmatism, however, we find that abduction is "the being drawn toward the true center" of all, the Logos and the Spirit.' Cited in Daniel W. Hardy, 'Harmony and Mutual Implication in the *Opus Maximus*', in Jeffrey W. Barbeau (ed.), *Coleridge's Assertion of Religion: Essays on the Opus Maximus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 33–52 (52). This account of Hardy's is cited in David Ford, 'Daniel Hardy and Scriptural Reasoning: Reflections on his Understanding of Coleridge's *Opus Maximus*', paper delivered for the Cambridge University Inter-faith Programme as part of the conference, 'The Fruitfulness of Dan Hardy's Thought for Scriptural Reasoning' (5–6 June 2008).

5. 'When I come and say the God of your fathers has sent me (Exod. 3.13) Moses thereupon desired to be enlightened with regard to his future course, afraid that they might ask him, "What is His name?" ... R Abba b. Mammel said: God said to Moses, "You want to know My name? Well, I am called according to My work ... When I am judging created beings, I am called *elohim* (God) ... When I suspend judgment for someone's sins, I am called *el shaddai* (Almighty God) ... and when I am merciful towards my world, I am called *yod-he-vov-he*, which refers to the Attribute of Mercy, as it is said in Exod. 34.6: The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious. Thus, *ehyeh asher ehyeh* in virtue of my deeds.'" *Exodus Rabbah*, Exod. 3.13, in *Midrash Rabbah* Vol. 3 (trans. S.M. Lehrman; London: The Soncino Press, 1961).

the glory of God is in his acts among us as they attract and are reflected in our own actions in the world.

Attracted to Praise

The first book Hardy and Ford co-authored, *Living in Praise*,⁶ taught me how Dante must have understood Paradiso when he wrote, 'What I saw was like a universe in smiles.'⁷ However much Hardy and Ford devoted their theological work to worldly service, they recognized that praise precedes healing: that we have eyes to see the suffering around us only to the degree that we are opened to God's presence and that we have gifts of healing to offer only to the degree that God has drawn us to his service. The Holy Spirit, not the human reasoner, is the one who discerns the place of suffering and the source of healing, and our word of welcome to the Spirit is praise.⁸

In Hardy's words, theology begins in praise, and blessing:

'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk. 1.41-42). 'The utterly vital thing to be learnt is the incomparable desirability of God ... and how to follow Jesus in his realization of it.'⁹ ... To live in the Spirit of wisdom is to inhabit God where one finds him - where one finds God in Scripture and where one finds him in the world and in history.¹⁰ 'By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established' (Prov. 24.3).¹¹

The beginning of knowledge is thus to be inhabited by God and to live in God's light. This is to know God contingently as one finds him

6. David F. Ford and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2nd rev. edn, 2005).

7. *Paradiso Canto 27*. Or in another translation:

What I saw seemed to me to be a smile
the universe had smiled; my rapture had
entered by way of hearing and of sight. (27.006)

Dante Alligheri, *Paradiso Canto 27* (trans. Mandelbaum and Longfellow; New York: Classic Books, 2009).

8. See Deborah Ford, 'A Portrait of my Father', in Hardy, *Wording a Radiance*, pp. 1-23 (19).

9. David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 160.

10. Paraphrasing Ben Quash, 'Theology on the Road to Damascus', in 'Spreading Rumours of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of David Ford,' special issue of *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 7.1 (2008), http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/ssr/issues/volume7/number1/ssr07_01_e01.html

11. Comment from Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2011), p. 260.

in the words of Scripture, the things of the world, and the persons and events of history. The sacraments are pathways to this finding, and the central pathway is the Eucharist. The Eucharist 'is an historically particular, theoretically infused practice that is also normative for the social performance of meaning as referred to God through Jesus Christ, and thus an anticipation of God's eschatological purpose ... for human existence in the world'.¹² The template for life in the church and, more generally, for all forms of social existence, the Eucharist is thereby the source of guidance for the ecclesial work of repair.¹³

For Ford, 'the cry of blessing is fundamental to wise discernment'.¹⁴ A 'cry' marks each movement of wisdom from one body or event to another: cries of blessing, joy, affliction, wonder, discovery and renewal. Each one is a sign that some significant change has happened. We do not, however, know clearly what it signifies; we know only that we are called to attention. The cry, says Ford, is a mark of the movement of Spirit, which calls to attention without saying why. This is the call of wisdom, because it calls us to discern what it is and, thus, name it. The meaning of a cry is not intrinsic to it but appears through the cry's relation to the one who uttered it; meaning lies in-between the speaker and the spoken. Since what lies in-between cannot be directly seen, this meaning cannot be seen by a third party but must be heard. But who hears? 'These things are not likely to be learnt through normal methods of education or investigation. This is ... deeply personal understanding that is dependent on trust and other qualities of relationship ... It is about ... a handing over of all things that, when worked out in history, leads to unprecedented things being seen and heard.'¹⁵ As it calls humanity to attention, this Spirit carries the name 'Wisdom':

There is a primary theology that can be distilled from reading and rereading the Bible ... It might be termed a 'theology of desire and discernment' in its attempt to unite in a God-centered discourse the

12. Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM Press, 2000), pp. 243–44.

13. Paraphrasing Hardy, *Finding the Church*, p. 244. Cited in Ochs, *Another Reformation*, p. 260.

14. Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, p. 16.

15. Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, p. 22. Ford's account of discernment, from the cry to a kind of un-knowing to a knowing in relationship, corresponds to Charles Peirce's account of *abduction*, as the initial, conjectural yet really possible stage of perceptual, scientific and also theological or religious knowing. It also corresponds to a dimension of Hardy's account. (But, as noted above in n. 4, Hardy also identifies ways in which his Coleridgean account of abduction differs from Peirce's account).

love of wisdom and wise loving. It is also a 'theology of learning in the Spirit' ... [which] learning is dialogical and collegial, located in the theological communities, understood as 'schools of desire and wisdom.' ... The schooling is in loving God for God's sake.¹⁶

'Wisdom calls' the readers of Scripture to discern their responsibilities and to allow their discernment to be shaped by the scriptural word. This shaping is God's love. For Ford, discernment is cousin to desire, since God shapes our discernment by shaping what and how we desire. The shaping is therefore limned by the fleshly economy of cause and effect but as complementing the economy of attraction and love. Ford's way of introducing his account of wisdom leads me to think of Jewish kabbalists' accounts of the relation between God's overflowing wisdom, *chokmah*, and divine discernment, *binah*. *Chokmah* connotes the divine overflow, received as a plenum of insight. *Binah* connotes the intellect's capacity to discern how wisdom works in this world. Ford introduces 'wisdom' as both superabundant (the object of desire) and discerning (reason shaped by the word).

Commentary

For the rabbinic sages, too, praise of God provides the condition for worldly service: thus rabbinic Morning Prayer situates the work of petitionary prayer within the 'Psalms of Praise' (*pesuke dezimra*) that initiate the prayer service.

Called to the Other's Cries

'Theology begins in praise, but its end is to respond to the cries of human affliction.'¹⁷ For Ford, each of these cries is the cry of Job, which is the cry of Christ on the cross.

In his death, Jesus handed over the balm for such cries: '*He is not here but has risen*' (Lk. 24.5), the transmission of God's Word as Christ to the Spirit. The Spirit heals. But humanity also raises up obstacles to this healing. The theologian's work of repair – Christian 'reparative reasoning'¹⁸ – is to respond to humanity's cries indirectly by attending

16. Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, p. 3.

17. Ochs, *Another Reformation*, p. 261.

18. For Nicholas Adams, this refers to the pragmatic or reparative thrust of scriptural or related kinds of reasoning. See Nicholas Adams, 'Reparative Reasoning', in *Modern Theology* 24.3 (2008), pp. 447–57. For a recent account, see Jacob Goodson, 'What Is Reparative Reasoning? Jürgen Habermas' *Philosophy, Practical Reasoning, and Theological Hermeneutics*', in *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*

to the obstructions that arise in each generation to the Spirit's reparative work.¹⁹

Anglican theologians in Hardy-Ford's cohort attend in particular to the obstructions caused by intra-Christian schisms, the Jewish-Christian schism, and intra-Abrahamic schisms.

Ecclesial Schism as Obstruction to the Spirit's Work

When I first met Hardy and Ford, both were actively seeking solutions to the Anglican Communion's seemingly irreconcilable debates about the status of homosexuals and of women among the clergy. Both were frustrated that a church that gives witness to Christ in scriptural study and worship appeared to enlist neither as a vehicle for resolving its internal debates. At two successive meetings of the Primates, they urged renewing the practices of group worship and scriptural study as means of sharing the Reconciler's Word. They enjoyed some success but also learned how the church imbibes the divisive tendencies of modern civilization, manifest now as sources of ecclesial disunity and ecumenical schism.²⁰ These sources of division constituted what Hardy labeled 'obstructions to the work of the Spirit'. For Ford, *schism* is a way of both overgeneralizing and relativizing a cry of anguish. In this case, the cry is uttered by a voice within some denomination of the church, but it is heard too loudly, as if it were the voice of every piece of that denomination, and too softly as if that denomination were constituted by some particular human group, alone, rather than by a community within the body of Christ.

Supersessionism as Obstruction to the Spirit's Work

For Ford, *supersessionism* names the belief that the cry of anguish signals the literal death of one tradition and its replacement by a new one, a new revelation of God's will that displays the migration of God's favor from one tradition to the beginning of another. Ford perceives in supersessionism a failure of the Church to be the Church,

(*F*'note continued)

10.1 (2011), http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/ssr/issues/volume10/number2/ssr10_02_e06.html

19. Ochs, *Another Reformation*, p. 261, paraphrasing Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, p. 35.

20. See 'Obstructions in the Anglican Communion', in Ochs, *Another Reformation*, p. 184.

not first in relation to the Jews but in relation to Christ. The primary failure is hermeneutical. For the supersessionist, all cries are signs of the end time since all are already answered by Christ. If so, not only Job's cry, but also the entire Old Testament represents a cry of affliction that is already answered in Christ. The Gospel therefore reads the words of the Old Testament as no longer words (to be read in different ways in different contexts), but as self-evident marks of a known cause: Christ has come in place of Israel. In effect, the Old Testament is therefore no longer Scripture, understood as the revelation of God's will; Christ alone is that Scripture. But what then of the Gospel narrative itself? It reveals God's will, but not in the manner of a script to be read and interpreted. The words of the Gospel also become self-evident marks of a known cause: the life of Christ and the end time it delivers.

But 'supersessionism' names a vast literature of commentaries and homilies that interpret the Gospel narrative: are these not the products of textual interpretation? One mark of the failure of supersessionism is its self-contradiction. Because the words of Scripture are in fact words, supersessionist readings are often readings but guided equivocally and unpredictably: sometimes by the unacknowledged hermeneutics of reading and sometimes by their explicit 'law of replacement'. By this law, reading is replaced by seeing, the text of Scripture by the facts of Christ's life. The defining mark of the whole process is that *these facts are facts as seen by the supersessionist author*. This is the mark of idolatry, since it identifies divine actions with a human representation of them. And this, finally, is why supersessionism leads first to schism. Because the Spirit is not in fact limited by such representations, different supersessionist authors will tend to see and represent the Spirit in different ways. Mistaking their representations for reality, they will tend to read such differences as marks of truth or falsity: most often the truth of 'what I see' and the falsity of 'what you claim to see'. But this is the rule of schism.

Inter-Abrahamic Schism as Obstruction to the Spirit's Work

To be open to dialogue is to be attentive to the absence of dialogue as a sign (or 'cry') of schism. In these terms, one may say that, initially, there has been a christological opening to Anglican-Jewish dialogue and a pneumatological opening to both Anglican-Jewish and Anglican-Muslim dialogue. I mean that, like 'postliberal' Christian theologians in North America – for example, George Lindbeck, Robert Jensen and Stanley Hauerwas – Ford and Hardy's cohort rediscovered

the people Israel as covenant partner when they reaffirmed the centrality of Christ in their academic as well as ecclesial projects of theology. They rediscovered that the Jewish people are inseparable from the flesh of Jesus Christ and that the people Israel are inseparable from the witness of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.²¹ Practicing Abrahamic scriptural reasoning for twenty years, members of this cohort are beginning to discover christological openings to Islam: for example, since Islam is a religion of the Abrahamic covenant and the book, Christians find that much of the Qur'an revisits familiar narratives and tropes. But it is too early in that process to say what it might mean doctrinally to read words of the Qur'an in or alongside words of the Gospel. Ahead of their North American postliberal peers, however, this Anglican cohort has already articulated the pneumatological basis for engaging Muslims as well as Jews in shared scriptural study. For one, the Spirit has brought both Muslims and Jews into the lands and communities served by the Anglican Church: for found theologians, this constitutes a call to hospitality. For two, the Spirit has, independently of christological expectation, opened inter-Abrahamic scriptural reasoning as a locus of wisdom's call: wisdom calls *by way of* the process of shared reading in Qur'an, Tanakh and New Testament. This means that members of Ford-Hardy's cohort now have ears that hear cries of a kind of schism when they enter environments that lack or exclude Jewish-Muslim-Christian theological and scriptural dialogue.

Commentary

If by way of the Spirit our actions are correlative to those of God, does God accompany us in our suffering? Citing Exodus 3, Hardy replies that *ehyeh imach*, 'I will be with you' belongs to God's very self-identity. I trust Hardy thereby affirms the reading of the Psalmist, 'I will be with you in [your] suffering'. Would he also affirm this addition by the rabbinic sages (in *Midrash Exodus Rabbah*): 'I will suffer with you?' I assume so, as a condition of humanity's relation to Christ (that, by way of Christ's suffering, God is present with humanity in its suffering), to the Spirit (that, by way of the Spirit, God appears as our

21. The main thesis of Ochs, *Another Reformation*, is that, in the process of refining Scripture as ground for theological reasoning, Christian postliberal theologians in both North America and the United Kingdom also refine the enduring covenant of Israel. With the people Israel, these theologians also refine rabbinic Judaism as dialogue partner.

Redeemer), and to the One God (whose unity is the unity of the body of Christ. If so, our suffering is a mark of dis-unity in our relations to the divine Unity; to be redeemed is to be brought from such dis-unity to Unity; and when this happens, it happens by way of the Spirit. In this way, the rabbinic midrash on Exodus 3 may speak to Hardy's Anglican soteriology as well as to the theological dispositions of several of the Jewish 'textual reasoners' who joined Hardy and Ford in the early years of the SSR. For these textual reasoners, Judaism remains rabbinic Judaism: a devotion to studying and restudying the word of God whose plain sense stands eternally as the language of God's covenant with Israel, while its interpreted sense (*midrash*), alone, discloses God's detailed instructions for Israel's life in each specific place it lives. For textual reasoners, Jewish life today includes lives lived alongside Christians and Muslims, and scriptural reasoning displays one part of the interpreted sense of God's word.

Scripture as Host of Inter-Abrahamic Dialogue

Wisdom's call is heard not only through the words of Scripture; it is also heard from wherever the Spirit has blown. Jewish textual reasoners may cite the rabbinic sage's dual sense of God's spoken word (*dibbur*): as the words spoken in creation (*maaseh b'reshit*), each word a created-thing (*davar*), as well as the words spoken at Sinai (*mattan torah*), each word a command. And Muslim participants in scriptural reasoning may cite Muhammad Iqbal's account of Qur'anic semiotics: that among the signs of God are not only the *ayat* ('verses') of Qur'an but also the *ayat* (signs of God) in the natural world and in the human self in human history. Of all these, Abrahamic scriptural reasoners hear Wisdom's call first and foremost in the words of Scripture that they study together.

In 2009, David Ford and I participated in a Durham University conference on 'Receptive Ecumenism'.²² Ford offered part of his paper

22. As stated in Paul Murray's introduction to the Joint Second International Receptive Ecumenism Conference at Durham University, 'Receptive Ecumenism takes equally seriously the reality of the contemporary ecumenical moment - wherein the hope for structural unification in the short-medium term now appears unrealistic - and the abiding need for the Christian churches to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity'. The two papers we delivered were David F. Ford, 'Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism' and Peter Ochs, 'Scriptural Reasoning "AS" Receptive Ecumenism'. For an anthology of writings from the First International Reception Ecumenism Conference, see Paul D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

as a commentary on the Gospel of John, so that my comments on his commentary would illustrate the style of SR-like dialogue. I shall present an excerpt from our exchange, here, to illustrate SR and to provide what I consider a scriptural signature to the leading theme of the essay: that the divine voice that calls us to His service also calls us to share some part of that service with one another. I present our exchange as if it were a dialogue.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Jn. 17.20-23)

David: All John's Gospel is especially appropriate to engagement with Jews and Muslims in relation to Receptive Ecumenism. It is simultaneously perhaps the strongest NT incentive for Christian ecumenism, above all in the passage we are studying, and also the most controversial text for Jews and Muslims. For example, for Jews there is the question about it being anti-Jewish; for both Jews and Muslims there is its explicit naming of Jesus as God.

John's language is often quite simple yet its plain sense almost infinitely rich, resonating with so much else in and beyond scriptures. How, for example, could one ever reach the end of exploring the meaning of *believing* (*pistis*) or *unity* (*henotēs*) or *glory* (*doxa*) or *love* (*agapē*), let alone their meaning when brought into relationship with each other? Let me raise issues that might arise especially for Christians reading this text in a SR setting, focusing on five words, each important for the whole Gospel.

'I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.' Some of the most profound differences Christians have had with Jews and Muslims have been about the concept of unity. Here in John is a unity of mutual indwelling of Father and Son in God and of believers with them, oriented towards the whole world believing. How do we understand this? And is there any way it can be read by Jews as anything but a contradiction of the *Shema* and radically exclusivist? Maybe there are more fruitful ways to approach this.

Peter: The words David cites are found in the Septuagint in many passages. To comment on the word 'unity' (*henotēs*), I think the best source is the *Shema*, Deut 6.4-9: *shema yisrael hashem eloheinu hashem*

echad: 'Hear O Israel, YHVH is our God, YHVH alone.' This is not the only translation recommended by the Hebrew, but I prefer it, as does the great medieval commentator Rashi. The dominant reading, preferred by Aristotelian philosophers like Maimonides, is 'Hear O Israel, YHVH our God, YHVH is One', where one means not many or that his parts are unified. In the reading I cite, *one* is read in the sense of *yechidi*: unique. In other words, it is a call to attention: Hear this, that the only God who will guide you in this land is *this* God whose intimate name is YHVH.

What does this reading offer to a conference on Ecumenical Unity? David says, 'Here in John is a unity of mutual indwelling of Father and Son in God and of believers with them.' In this case, John's 'unity' is not the same as *echad* in the *shema*. If, instead, we read John's term 'one' in the sense of uniqueness, then John's 'May they be brought to complete unity' would be 'May they be utterly unique'. If so, to what kind of repair does John's Gospel call us? According to the standard reading, we might say, 'to repair schism'. According to Rashi's reading of 'uniqueness' in the *Shema*, we might say, 'to repair being too much in the world, like everyone else'. Is this not a separatist kind of reading? We shall return to the notion in a moment.

David: 'Believing I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message'. What might be the relation today between Jewish, Christian and Muslim believing? That is obviously a vital question for the twenty-first century. John's terms are capacious enough to prompt the question, and his confidence that we will be led into all the truth encourages us to tackle it, but of course he gives no direct answer to it. What SR suggests is that there is no adequate way for Christians to answer this by themselves. We should not be constructing our understanding of what their believing is about without actually engaging with living Jews and Muslims. And if that engagement is to be in love then it needs to involve attentive listening to each other as we study our core texts. So what does our believing today have to do with, for example, Jewish believing today?

Peter: Belief/pistis/emunah. David leaves it to us – Jews or Muslims – to characterize belief as we will. So I will take this matter on as an internal one. If we followed Maimonides' reading of 'unity' as collective, then what kind of belief would the *Shema* deliver? I would label it 'cognitive belief': to believe God is unity is to think of many and then to think of God as bringing the many to one whole. But if unity is uniqueness, then to believe that God is uniquely *this* one

would not be to cognize something, but to turn in a single certain direction, toward that one. Which one? The name does not answer but is itself the pointing. Is this not the faith of Abraham to whom God says, 'Go forth to a land I will show you?' Go forth, that is, into the dark, seeing not but trusting your direction will make itself known?

What would Scripture repair by guiding us to believe cognitively that God is one? Is it to repair schism by learning to separate ourselves from our multiple attractions – to turn 'in' to the peace of unity? Or what would Scripture repair by guiding us to trust in the dark? Is it to release our reliance on the clear and visible, the cognitively known and turn instead to...?

David: Glory and Love: 'I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' Glory is one of the core Johannine words. Chapter 17 links the glory Jesus prays for, to be given through his crucifixion, with the glory he had with his Father before the world existed. The crucifixion fulfills his saying: 'I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to me' (12.32). Glory is inseparable from love, which in our passage is also seen as shared by Father and Son before the foundation of the world (17.24). The whole of John's Gospel could be seen as expounding the meaning of these terms, and, at the same, they resonate with hundreds of Septuagint passages. There is scope for a great deal of receptive inter-faith learning here between Jews and Christians, even though there is no consensus on such matters as the messiahship of Jesus or Jesus as the incarnation of God. Such texts act as invitations to study together for the sake of the God of glory and love.

Peter: Consider the next term in David's reading: 'Glory', *doxa*, which is the Septuagint's translation of *kavod*. I turn to the Prophets and the Psalms, where the term appears often. Isa. 5.5: 'The glory of God shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see as one, for the mouth of YHVH has spoken'. And later, Isa. 42.8: 'I am YHVH, that is my name; and I will not yield my Glory to another or my praise to idols'. And later, Isa. 42.12: 'Let them glorify YHVH and tell his praise in the coastlands'. I have for several years been perplexed by the precise meaning of this term, 'glory' (*kavod*). Previously, I assumed that there were two families of meanings for this term in the Tanakh and in the Second Temple literature. The first family concerns the relation of God to those who will know him: specifically, the 'reputation' of God or 'the name God makes for himself

among the nations', for example, Isaiah as edited into the rabbinic morning prayer service: 'Praise YHVH, call upon his name; praise his achievements among the nations ... Render honor (*kavod*) to God'. The second family of meanings concerns the capacity of God: typically an awesome power perceived in God. For example, Isa. 5.5: 'The glory of God shall be revealed/ and all flesh as one shall see, for YHVH himself has spoken'. Or, Isaiah as edited into the rabbinic prayer of sanctification, the *kedushah*: 'Holy, Holy, Holy is YHVH of Hosts; the Whole earth is full of his glory; Blessed be the Glory of YHVH from his Place'. In these cases, I read glory not as God's reputation, but as something named of God in himself.

I was troubled by these two families of meaning because I could not locate a meaning that included both of them as two dimensions of one term. This began to change only recently, when David, Deborah Ford and I sat together to study the last year's writings of Deborah's father, Daniel Hardy, may his name be for a blessing. He spent his last year intensely focused on the core of his ecclesiology: a vision of the Eucharist as the defining focus of what he called God's attractive energy. We are attracted to the Eucharist, he said, because the communion draws us to God, individually and communally: a prototype of that which draws all creatures into the relational bodies (or societies) that are appropriate to them. Much of Daniel's writing energy his last year focused on drawing diagrams of how God's attractive energy draws together all the elements of the communion and thereby of a flourishing society. He said, however, that his most comprehensive diagram remained the one he drew for his essay in the first volume of *Receptive Ecumenism*.²³ The defining feature of this diagram is the *arrow* he drew, typically from the names of God to humanity, specifically to each defining institution of human social life. Daniel took pains to teach his reader that, if God's arrow pointed toward us, then our direction of attraction is from the arrow's point toward its source in God,

A few days after we studied these aspects of Daniel's writing, David began to share with me his commentary on John. At some point in our conversation, the following suggestion arose: what if we characterized *glory* in terms of Daniel's diagram of attraction? The result was very exciting for me because it offered an account of *glory* that might finally integrate those two families of meaning. We might read Daniel's arrow of attraction as an icon of Glory: in one direction God's reputation among us, the consequence of His actions in the world; in

23. Daniel W. Hardy, 'Receptive Ecumenism: Learning by Engagement', in *Receptive Ecumenism*, pp. 428–41 (433–34).

another direction God's capacity to draw all to Him. In this way, one icon would capture both of the senses of *glory* in the Tanakh: as the power of God that draws us to him and make us glorify in him. We would read glory as a relational term.

There is a wonderful proof-text for this reading within Jewish tradition. It comes in *Yedid Nefesh*, 'Darling of My Soul', the medieval prayer that is traditionally chanted at the beginning of the Sabbath evening service, just after the sun has fallen. Here is the first verse: *yedid hefesh av ha-rachaman, m'shoch avdekha el ritsonekha*, 'Darling of my soul, Father of Lovingkindness, draw me to your service'. As David showed me, the Septuagint translates the word 'draw' as *halkemay*, to draw or attract, and that same usage appears in Jer. 31.13: 'YHVH appeared to me of old. I loved you with an everlasting love (*ahavat olam avticka*), Therefore I (continue to) draw you (to me) in mercy'. I have not found a proof-text that directly links the terms for Glory and for Attraction. Nevertheless, I find Attraction embedded within Glory, just the way Glory is embedded within the *Shema* (and God, we may say, in his Creation).

In the way David reads John, I hear words about God's glory revealed in the flesh (*sarche*) of this Jewish man from Nazareth. Read in its plain sense, this seems to say precisely what a Jewish reader does not want to say. Look at what happens, however, if we translate the notions of 'flesh' and of 'glory' this way: 'The words of the *Shema* are offered to draw me into God's service, to the extent of wrapping God's words around my arm, pressed into the flesh so that my very flesh, that is my every habit of action, is drawn to God's service. 'And these words shall be upon your heart and you shall teach them to your children ... Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead'. Read in this way, something even more scandalous emerges: the mystical Jewish notion that, in embodying God's word in our flesh, we seek to enflesh God. Were we to do so, then our flesh would be a face of his Glory; through our actions would others be drawn to his service. We sin, however, and the glory is veiled. And yet, there are times when it shines. Those in whom it most shines we call *tsadikkim*, righteous ones.

This reading brings us to love (*agapē*, or *ahavah*). We have met love already in the *Shema* and powerfully so: *v'ahavta et hashem elokekha*, 'You shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might'. As manifest in a Jewish reading of both Ford and Hardy's words, this is a love supreme: an intimate bond among supreme love, unity, belief, and divine glory. 'O Lord please direct my heart's attention to your unique name. Thereby open my eyes to your glory, so

that my heart enflamed will draw this flesh utterly to your service alone. Allow me to love you in this way as, without merit, I am loved by you'.

The language of our commentary has become the language of *The Song of Songs* (1.2-4): *yeshakeni minishikot pihu*, 'O kiss me with the kisses of your mouth, For your love is more delightful than wine.... Your name is like finest oil'; *al ken alumot ahavukha*, 'Thus do maidens love you'; *mashkheni acharekha narutsa*, 'Draw me after you, Let us Run!'

David: But there is a fifth key word I want to draw attention to besides believing, unity, glory and love. This is 'as', the Greek word *kathōs*, used three times in our passage. Verse 21: 'that they all may be one, as you Father, are in me and I in you'. What might that 'as' mean? It opens up a vast space for prayer (remember ch. 17 is a prayer), meditation, discussion, and relating to other texts. Verse 22: 'And the glory that you have given to me I have given to them the glory, that they may be one as we are one'. The same questions recur, this time intensified by the dynamics of mutual glorifying. Verse 23: 'you have loved them as you have loved me'. Here the dynamics of mutual loving are added. So this capacious 'as' can stimulate endless prayer, theological imagining and thinking in the mode of analogy.

I would just add that this little word, 'as', may be one of the most helpful terms for both inter-faith and intra-faith conversation around our texts and practices. It recognizes both affinity and difference and opens the space within which to discuss these fruitfully without requiring binary oppositions or complete identity. Christians who find in John's text the strongest affirmation of Receptive Ecumenism might also find there an encouragement to take part in SR as a practice that also attempts, for the sake of the glory of God, to reflect something of that love between Father and Son that overflows in love for the whole world.

Peter: The *Song of Songs* is a treasure trove of verses with the term translated *hōs* by the Septuagint, synonyms, says David, to *kathōs*: 'k-' in Hebrew or 'as' in English. Consider: Song 2.1-2: 'I am a rose of Sharon, A lily of the valleys'; 3: 'Like (*hōs*) a lily among thorns, So is my darling among the maidens 8:6 'Let me be as (*hōs*/'k-') a seal upon your heart, Like (*hōs*) the seal upon your hand. For love is fierce as death, Passion is mighty as sheol'. Yes love. But the *hōs* says something vital about *how* love comes as well. It comes 'k-', *as* ... I take the 'k-' or *hōs* to be a limitation, specifying how the otherwise generally available love arrives. Like a rose, like a lily, like a seal ... But what does this mean? Does 'like a rose' mean that we refer to God's love by way of simile, as if to say, 'You are not literally a rose and God doesn't literally love

you. You simply have certain human features that I liken to these finer things ... We are here; God is there and known only by analogies which means only through the mind that draws them?' No, *hōs* does not mean simile in this way. 'As' does not mean 'as if'. The love is really there. But *as* this.

This means we can translate the verse this way: '*Your love comes to me the way a lily sits among thorns*'. Meaning that your love is direct but specified. It does not come *as* a cucumber in the field, nor does it come *as itself*. It comes in *this* way. As a warning, I take this to mean: 'Do not imagine that this love with which God loves you is his only love and you his only lover ... He loves in ways we cannot count (though he can); and he loves his creatures in numbers we cannot count (but he can)'. As a welcome, I take it to mean: 'God's love comes *only as*'. It comes only *in relation to something in the world*, which means that God's love reaches us here in the flesh, because God's love is just that: his reaching us in the flesh and drawing us to *him*. If so, each drawing names two unique persons and not just one: The Unique God to whom our attention is drawn and the unique creature who is drawn here in this unique way. That is the double-voiced glory of the flesh: It is not just that God can inhabit this flesh, but that it is *this* flesh, not flesh in general.

Love is love *as* it is in some unique relationship: Love is *as* this love and that love, in the specific relationship of love that is secured in *this* unique God who loves us each uniquely in unique ways. This non-separatist unique love, whose '*Darts are darts of fire, A blazing flame. Vast floods cannot quench love, Nor rivers drown it*'.

So, that was my Jewish commentary on five words that drew me to them in David Ford's Anglican and ecumenical reading of John. *On Unity*: not to favor some kind of separatism in my reading of uniqueness, but to favor the utter attentiveness that draws one to another. *As* in the attentiveness of reader to scripture and reader to reader, Jewish reader to Muslim to Christian in SR. *On Belief*: my reading favored trusting the one who leads you in the dark, perhaps to repair an over-focus on the cognitive. *On Glory*: Daniel Hardy's two-way arrow, all about attraction. Perhaps to repair objectivist and/or subjectivist claims for God. And a thought that for Jews, too, the flesh may display God's glory. And the 'flesh' of Scriptures' who attract us to one another in SR. *On Love*: Attraction takes center stage again, but uniqueness also comes back into play: a face of the attentiveness that characterizes love. And perhaps to repair unintended obstructions to dialogic unity, such as efforts to generalize love rather than celebrating its singularity. Finally, *hōs*: that love appears only *as* because love may be only *as*. That God loves us *as* and you *as*. And *only* in Him is unity, love, and peace.

In Conclusion: An Anglican Route to Scriptural Reasoning

Postliberal Anglican theologians – in particular, Daniel Hardy, David Ford and their students and colleagues – have been among the most influential hosts of the inter-Abrahamic movement called scriptural reasoning. I have reported on some of the leading tendencies in Hardy and Ford’s theology, in order to discern the ‘powers of attraction’ that may also bring other Anglicans, today, to engage ‘for God’s sake’ in close scriptural study and theological exchange with members of other faiths, first of all Muslims and Jews. In conclusion, I shall review the powers of attraction that, I believe, display themselves most conspicuously in the theological writings of Hardy and Ford:

- *To act ‘for God’s sake’.* For both Ford and Hardy, religious life and theological discernment both begin with attraction to God for no reason, that is, for God’s sake alone. To be attracted to God is to act for God’s sake, because human be-ing is act-ing. This is to act in praise and in joy. This complements SR, because this kind of acting may be encountered in any Abrahamic faith and served by encounters with any one. To act this way is to be drawn to God’s love, for that love is for its own sake and *opens* a capacity to act for such an act itself. To be drawn to such love opens a shorter path to SR.
- *To be attracted to Jesus’ walking, meeting each one face to face.* Acting for God’s sake means receiving the Spirit’s presence in the face of each person one encounters, imitating Jesus walking the land. For Hardy, this is the light one sees emanating from the other; for Ford, it is the face of the other. For both, it is the contingency of the Spirit’s movement, which brings the other to one’s door. SR began for them contingently, as these Jews and these Muslims appeared at their door.
- *To follow Wisdom’s call.* For Ford, Spirit Wisdom calls one to pursue learning as a pathway of desire and discernment. Her call may be a cry of blessing or of suffering, of what is unprecedented or as yet unknown. For both Hardy and Ford, to respond to the call is to respond to the other, in the world and in society, it is to enter relationships, at once to read words and to read faces. It is to reason abductively, as the Spirit attracts one to new ways of imagining how to know and how to act knowingly. To follow Wisdom’s call is to find oneself, along the way, reading Scripture, learning in communities, learning in friendship with others, and in communities open to other

communities. All these ways of learning are, in detail, the ways of scriptural reasoning.

- *To be drawn to care for those who suffer and to God who suffers with the other.* This is to enter into reparative inquiries that search out the conditions that underlie suffering and that move from examination to possibly reparative action.²⁴ In SR, this is the way one community responds to sufferings in another and the way inter-Abrahamic communities respond to sufferings in the world. This is to be drawn, secondly, to the academic work of repair, whose subjects are the oppressive systems that breed affliction by muffling cries of suffering and obstructing the reparative work of the Spirit. This is the academic work of scriptural reasoning.
- *To be drawn by the Triune life into relational, dialogic, personal, and inter-personal religious life and theological inquiry.* To be drawn by Eucharistic practice into the inter-personal body of each church, into that body's service in the world and engagements with all peoples and all creatures in the world. For Hardy and Ford, this is to be drawn, by way of the Anglican settlements, directly into the work of scriptural reasoning and to its many complements.

This has been a Jewish philosopher's theological account of how the Anglican Church opened itself to host Abrahamic scriptural reasoning.

24. See above, n. 18, on 'reparative reasoning'.