

## Ecumenical Dialogue and the Development of Doctrine

There are two ways of looking at Ecumenical Dialogue: one is to regard it as a way of discovering whether, despite apparent differences in the formulation of doctrinal or ecclesiological positions, there exists an underlying common view, such that the two partners may be said to agree; the other is to see it as a process of mutual discovery in the course of which the positions of either or both partners may be revised. The first is almost inherently backward-looking, since the tendency is to look for common roots which have produced rather different plants. If, however, Newman's comment - 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often' - is taken with full seriousness, then dialogue itself might be one form of the development of doctrine. Such an approach encourages the partners to look forward. But it requires a readiness not to halt dialogue on the grounds that something new is proposed and therefore a readiness to learn from one another.