



Sunesis Society for Theological Understanding

Reading Group

Engaging with Tom Greggs Dogmatic Ecclesiology:

Volume 1 - The Priestly Catholicity of the Church

*“We grant, indeed, that so long as we are pilgrims in the world faith is implicit, not only because as yet many things are hidden from us, but because, involved in the mists of error, we attain not to all. The highest wisdom, even of him who has attained the greatest perfection, is to go forward, and endeavor in a calm and teachable spirit to make further progress.”*¹

*“Yet in the study of the faith the discussion has never been acknowledged as an ecclesiastical means of grace. . . . Nevertheless, it is a common fact of experience that many owe their faith and its growth much more to conversations and religious discussion groups than to the officially recognized ecclesiastical means of grace. The fact is that the Spirit uses this means, and that he does so increasingly in our modern times.”*²

*“There is a radical need for Christians today to rethink the church, or even in the first instance just to think about why the church might be important. All too often, the response to the current situation has been one of considering what the church does, but these questions will only be meaningful in relation to the question of what the church is and what its significance within the divine economy in creation is. . . . Only in understanding what the church is, and what God seeks to do with and through the creation of the church, can we begin to add any content to the questions posed prophetically by Dietrich Bonhoeffer the best part of a century ago: “What does a church, a congregation, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life, mean in a religionless world?” It is for this reason that ecclesiological study of the church within systematic and dogmatic theology as an object of faith proves vital to an age in which we have engaged symptomatically in ecclesial atheism—seeing the church as little more than a human enterprise and thinking how best to engage in that enterprise independent of the divine economy.”*³

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.2.4.

² Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 359.

³ Tom Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), xxix-xxx.

Sunesis Weekly Reading Group

General Rationale

Theology matters for the life of the church and the life of the church matters for theology. While teaching the faith to people in the church is important the benefits of regular theological discussion amongst colleagues ought not be overlooked. Ongoing peer-to-peer discipleship is important. Outside of the seminary and university context, making time for this to happen often requires intentional effort. This group aims to make that effort and provide a space for colleagues to gather and discuss how we ought to understand ourselves and our callings, the churches we serve in, the world we witness to, and the God who wants to be known and acknowledged in gratitude.

Commitment Expectation

If you are pressed for time, there is no need to feel obligated to read everything. Come to the discussion with one or two observations/questions that arose from the text that you think are worth discussing further with the group. This is a discussion among colleagues, it is not a class or seminar, the reading is meant simply to be a catalyst for conversation in our shared pursuit to grow in our theological understanding.

Session Specific Rationale

For this session we are going to engage with Tom Greggs' plea that we Protestants do a better job of understanding and appreciating the theological nature of the church. One of the main points of Greggs' book is that understanding what the church *is* within the reality of the divine economy of creation and salvation is of fundamental importance—and it is something that many of us have failed to do adequately. Is this truly of vital importance and relevance to our lived reality of faith in the church(es)? What difference might a more mature theological understanding of the nature of the church make to our ministry? Have we unwittingly fallen into a stance of “ecclesial atheism” as Greggs mentions in the above quote? We will think about these types of questions together as we read, discuss, and debate the points that Tom Greggs makes in his first volume of *Dogmatic Ecclesiology*.

Reading Plan / Schedule 2025-2026

Reflecting on the Theological Nature of the Church in Our Contemporary Setting(s) Engaging with Dogmatic Ecclesiology: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church by Tom Greggs

Page numbers below for each weekly meeting/discussion

Reading Plan and Schedule: Tuesdays 3-4pm PST

June

- June 3 – “How to Read this Book,” “Chart of Prospective Chapter Topics,” and “Abbreviated Chapter Thesis for Volume 1” (xix-xxv, lxi-lxii, and lxiii-lxviii)
June 10 – “Preface” (xxvi-lx)
June 17 – Chapter 1A The Spirit: The Lord of and the Giver of Life to the Church (1-10)
June 24 – Chapter 1B The Spirit: The Lord of and the Giver of Life to the Church (10-21)

July

- July 1 – Ch. 1C The Spirit: The Lord of and the Giver of Life to the Church (21-31)
July 8 – Ch. 1D The Spirit: The Lord of and the Giver of Life to the Church (31-47)
July 15 – Ch. 2A The High Priesthood of Christ: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 1 (48-58)
July 22 – Ch. 2B The High Priesthood of Christ: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 1 (58-67)
July 29 – Ch. 2C The High Priesthood of Christ: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 1 (68-81)

August

- August 5 – Ch. 3A Participative Ontology and the Church’s Internal Priesthood: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 2 (82-92)
August 12 – Ch. 3B Participative Ontology and the Church’s Internal Priesthood: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 2 (92-102)
August 19 – Ch. 3C Participative Ontology and the Church’s Internal Priesthood: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 2 (103-112)
August 26 – Ch. 4A The Priestly Ontology and the Church’s Life for the World: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 3 (113-123)

September

- September 2 – Ch. 4B The Priestly Ontology and the Church’s Life for the World: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 3 (123-134)
September 9 – Ch. 4C The Priestly Ontology and the Church’s Life for the World: The Essential Hierarchy of the Church 3 (134-147)
September 16 – Ch. 5A Baptism: Entry into the Priesthood of the Church (148-159)
September 23 – Ch. 5B Baptism: Entry into the Priesthood of the Church (159-174)
September 30 – Ch. 5C Baptism: Entry into the Priesthood of the Church (174-188)

October

October 7 – Ch. 5D Baptism: Entry into the Priesthood of the Church (188-201)
 October 13 – Ch. 6A Holy Communion (202-212)
 October 20 – Ch. 6B Holy Communion (212-225)
 October 27 – Ch. 6C Holy Communion (225-236)

November

November 4 – Ch. 6D Holy Communion (236-245)
 November 11 – Ch. 7A The Communion of Saints (246-257)
 November 18 – Ch. 7B The Communion of Saints (257-266)
 November 25 – Ch. 7C The Communion of Saints (267-275)

December

December 2 – Ch. 8A Intercessory Prayer (276-290)
 December 9 – Ch. 8B Intercessory Prayer (290-302)
 December 16 – Ch. 9A Thanksgiving and Praise: Participating Graciously in Grace (303-316)
 December 23 – Ch. 9B Thanksgiving and Praise: Participating Graciously in Grace (316-330)
 December 30 – Ch. 10A Congregation: Priestly Polity (331-343)

January

January 6 – Ch. 10B Congregation: Priestly Polity (343-356)
 January 13 – Ch. 10C Congregation: Priestly Polity (356-367)
 January 20 – Ch. 11A Sanctification (368-378)
 January 27 – Ch. 11B Sanctification (379-390)

February

February 3 – *ECO National Gathering*
 February 10 – Ch. 11C Sanctification (390-401)
 February 17 – Ch. 12A Love (402-415)
 February 24 – Ch. 12B Love (415-425)

March

March 3 – Ch. 13A Priestly Catholicity (426-435)
 March 10 – Ch. 13B Priestly Catholicity (435-450)
 March 17 – Ch. 14 Coda: The Church as One (451-459)
 March 24 – Recap, Key Takeaways, Constructive Criticism
 April 28 – Conversation with Tom Greggs