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EDITORIAL

This last issue of 2021 leads us to rethink the relationship between unity and diversity. The myth that Christians in the beginning lived in perfect unity has been exploded by historical research, nevertheless the search for this ideal has often brought us to a rejection of diversity in favour of a uniformity which in no way resembles the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17). He who told his disciples that there were many rooms in his Father's house (John 14); he who lived at a particular time and in a particular place; he who sent us the Spirit who, by the diversity of his gifts, personalizes everyone. All of this invite us to ponder on whether the hospitality of Christ can be limited at the Eucharistic table.

Almost all the contributions of the current issue refer us to texts likely to shed new light on our thinking and practice as Christians—an urgent consideration given the present state of Christianity in Western Europe: Schmemmann's *Eucharist or Together at the Lord's Table* or *The Hiroshima Report...*

Some articles are reminders of the special contribution of monastic and religious life to the ecumenical dialogue with the evocation of such great figures of ecumenism as Dom A. Louf, Sr. Lorelei Fuchs, Fr. Bernard Sesboüé, Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis and Bishop Julian Garcia Hernando co-founders of the E.I.I.R.

I hope you will find much to interest you in all of this and perhaps be motivated to send in your own scripts or invite people who might have something to share to propose articles, reports, information.

A HEAVENLY MEAL? CHRIST'S EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AND ECCLESIAL INTERCOMMUNION

Peter Scherle*

The question of intercommunion is central to ecumenical relations. The article takes up the recent debate about reciprocal invitations to the Eucharist / the Lord's Supper during the Ecumenical Church Rallye in Frankfurt (Germany) in May 2020. Reactions by the Cardinals Ladaria and Koch to such invitations show that from the viewpoint of the Roman magisterium these invitations are not possible. Remaining differences in the understanding of church unity and the ordained ministry are still seen as church-dividing. The debate also shows, that the issue of Christ's 'real presence' in the meal has not been resolved. The article, following Michel de Certeau SJ, takes up the diagnosis of a 'crisis of representation' that has emerged since the eleventh century: God can no longer be reliably represented in the world. This challenge to the concept of 'real presence' leads up to reflections on the 'eucharistic crisis' by the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann, who proposes a fundamental shift of perspective from representation to ascension. He sees the Eucharist as a 'heavenly meal' of the new creation, an epiphany of the sacramentality of the cosmos. Christ's hospitality then is not limited in any way.

At the Ecumenical Church Rallye in Frankfurt am Main (in German called: Ökumenischer Kirchentag) in May 2020, reciprocal invitations—in ecumenical dialogues usually called 'intercommunion'—to celebrations of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper have been issued, making visible the growing common ground

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between Protestant and Catholic Christians. Though (individual) Eucharistic Hospitality was even announced and practised by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limburg who is the President of the German Conference of Bishops, Bishop Georg Bätzing, during the Church Rallye in Frankfurt Cathedral, he did not want this to be viewed as an open (collective) invitation to members of other churches.¹

Mgr Bätzing was underlining the fact that the move towards reciprocal invitations to the Lord's table in Frankfurt was not a spontaneous or careless action, but rather, the result of a long process of reflection and debate. Thus, in September 2019, the renowned Ecumenical Working Group (formerly known as the 'Jäger-Stählin-Kreis', founded in 1946) had presented the study *Together at the Lord's Table*, which theologically justifies this reciprocal invitation to celebrate the Eucharist and Holy Communion together:

The understanding reached in the meantime allows both denominations, Catholic and Protestant, to understand their different meal celebrations as an expression of communion with the present Christ. Among Protestant and Catholic Christians, confidence has grown that they can do this without reservation.²

The study reflects the insights of decades of formal ecumenical dialogues (with the milestone of the Faith and Order Study on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, from 1982) and of thorough research across all theological disciplines. It especially draws on the results of intra-Protestant agreements (especially the *Leuenberg Concord*)³, convergences with the Anglican Communion (as documented in the

¹ Fokke Wouda, 'Eucharistic Hospitality: From Pastoral Question to Ecumenical Quest. A Response to the German Kommuniondebatte', *Catholica. Vierteljahresschrift für Ökumenische Theologie* 4/72 (2018), 246-262 discusses the decision of the German Bishops' Conference to publish a pastoral guideline for offering Eucharistic hospitality to non-Catholic spouses, which preceded the Ecumenical Church Rally and triggered an international debate.

² 'Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn. Ein Votum des Theologischen Arbeitskreises evangelischer und katholischer Theologen', presented in Frankfurt am Main, 11 September 2019.

See: <https://oekumene.bistumlimburg.de/beitrag/gemeinsam-am-tisch-des-herrn-1>.

³ The *Leuenberg Concord* or *Leuenberg Agreement*—as well as additional material—is available on the website of the 'Communion of Protestant Churches' (CPCE) at www.leuenberg.net.

Declarations of Meissen, Reuilly and Porvoo), and recent milestones in Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue.⁴

The objections to the reciprocal invitations and the theological arguments given, such as those made by Cardinal Ladaria in a letter to Bishop Bätzing (18 September 2020) with doctrinal comments on the study of the Ecumenical Working Group and, in Spring 2021, by Cardinal Koch in an open letter, were not unexpected. Neither Cardinal accepted that the questions of ecclesiology and ministry, as claimed in the study, would no longer be church-dividing and therefore not allow for mutual invitations (beyond a personal and occasional Eucharistic hospitality).⁵

Though this was a major disappointment for those who had hoped for a step forward in relation to reciprocal invitations or intercommunion, those who are familiar with the doctrinal questions involved had expected such an intervention from the Vatican. Therefore, it may be helpful to explain what constitutes the conflicting views. On that basis we may be able to attain a possible new perspective, with significant warrants drawn from the Orthodox theological approach of Alexander Schmemmann.⁶

⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland / Catholic Church in Finland, *Communion in Growth: Declaration on Church, Eucharist, and Ministry. A Report from the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission for Finland* (Helsinki, 2007); Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops / Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, and Eucharist* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015).

⁵ This is not only a debate between churches in the West. Radu Bordeianu, 'Eucharistic Hospitality: An Experiential Approach to Recent Orthodox Theology', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1/54 (2019), 5-24 proposes—quite similar to the debates around interchurch marriages between Roman Catholics and Protestants—that Orthodox-Catholic marriages in the West should be the natural place to introduce and practise eucharistic hospitality.

⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987). See also: Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2018) for the ethical implications of his Eucharistic theology, to be understood as 'liturgy after the liturgy'. I draw upon these texts in what follows.

Different Visions of Church Unity and the Ordained Ministry

After decades of bi-lateral and multi-lateral ecumenical dialogues, one fundamental question of the understanding of church unity still prevents a reciprocal invitation to the Lord's table. The Roman Catholic magisterium holds a theologically crystal-clear position: a shared understanding of the doctrinal teaching of the church is a precondition for church unity. For Cardinal Ladaria the truth of the catholic faith is concentrated in the Eucharistic Prayer. In his understanding, to pray this together in Mass would mean to share the faith that sees Mary as *mater ecclesiae* and to accept the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. Since this would be, according to Cardinal Ladaria, impossible for Protestants to accept, the Roman Catholic Church should not force the issue!

Even if the tone of the Cardinal's letter may be irritating to some, he nevertheless highlights a fundamental theological difference that has not been overcome.⁷ The Eucharist, as 'source and summit' of the Christian life (*Lumen gentium* 11), presupposes the Catholic faith. In the Eucharist, the sacramental nature and the unity of the Church are enacted. It is not a meal in an ecumenical movement towards church unity, in the way Protestant Churches could understand the celebration of the Lord's Supper to be. It is the self-enactment of a communion that already 'subsists' in the Roman Catholic Church.

A reciprocal invitation therefore would presuppose that the respective other Church would share this ecclesial understanding of the Eucharist. Such is understood to be the case in Eastern Orthodox and some ancient oriental churches. The recognition of the ancient oriental tradition is especially remarkable because these churches do not use the 'words of institution' in their liturgy and practise a different form of 'anamnesis'. This, arguably indicates the fruitful possibility of different liturgical ways of 'remembering' the 'real presence' of Christ in the Mass.

⁷ 'They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion' (*Lumen Gentium* 14).

The fundamental difference in understanding the unity of the Church between the Roman Catholic and the different Protestant Churches is not under question. It is a condition of the possibility of ecumenical dialogue, acknowledged, e.g. by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the Toronto Statement from 1950, which made it possible for Orthodox Churches to become members of the WCC and participate in the work of Faith and Order.

The question is whether this fundamental difference must be seen as church-dividing. The above-mentioned study of the Ecumenical Working Group does deny that. Here it follows a model of church unity that is the basis of the *Leuenberg Concord* which Reformation and pre-Reformation Churches in Europe agreed on in 1973. The idea is, that not all doctrinal differences need to be resolved, before the churches recognise each other as belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church confessed in the Creed. On this basis the churches in the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) recognise their respective ordained ministries and declare their communion in the pulpit and at the table of the Lord. They do this without aiming for a uniform church organisation. Rather, they promise to enrich and deepen the existing unity in Christ in further theological reflections on doctrinal differences and in a shared commitment in society.

The *Leuenberg Concord* therefore is an implicit answer to the question whether the One Church always existed in diverse social forms or if a uniform Church existed in the beginning that later broke into different churches and ecclesial traditions. The study of the Ecumenical Working Group—based on its actual biblical and historical research—explicitly argues for the first: that the One Church, from its beginning, always existed in diversity, though grounded in *koinonia* (communion). The ecumenical strategy that results from this insight has been called ‘reconciled diversity’.

The Roman magisterium leaves no doubt that it does not share this understanding of unity. It considers the existing differences in the understanding of Church and the ordained ministry as church-dividing. The only way to change that would be to accept Protestant Churches as Church in the full sense and to recognise the ordination of protestant ministers. This would include the recognition that the apostolic tradition has been secured in the respective churches and their church government and *episcopé*. Only on this basis, the celebration of the

Lord's Supper could be seen to be analogous to the Roman Catholic Eucharist and a reciprocal invitation to be legitimate.

The proposal by Bishop Bätzing to interpret a participation in communion as a question of conscience of the individual believer, is pastorally useful and may reflect the liturgical practice in most open societies, where religious identity is not (or no longer) embedded in other social realities. Nowadays, priests and ministers know / and accept that eucharistic communion is not an ecclesial 'closed shop' reality. Indeed, explicit invitations to individual persons of other religious affiliations are extended on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, this idea is considered by the Roman magisterium to be a Protestant idea. The Eucharist in this perspective is not simply a form of worship on the part of individual Christians, but the liturgy of the sacramental Church, in which an ordained (male) priest embodies Christ as the head (*in persona Christi capitis*) of the Body of Christ which is the Church. From this point of view a Protestant minister (male or female) acts at the table of the Lord on the basis of a *defectus ordinis*. Even if there were to be doctrinal agreement on the understanding of the 'real presence' of Christ in the meal-event, this would still not be a Eucharist in the Roman sense.

Differences in Liturgy and the Problems of 'Real Presence'

While this side of the debate is well known, Protestant problems with the theology and liturgical practice of the Lord's Supper are not emphasised in the same way. In official ecumenical debates these often remain hidden, and it seems that Protestant church officials have no inclination to change that. Though it may be difficult to neglect the differences between Lutheran, Reformed, United and other Protestant Churches, it is rather obvious that the Lord's Supper does not have the same theological and liturgical importance that the Eucharist has for the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. In Protestant Churches, worship is centred on the Proclamation of the Word. The Lord's Supper is a possible, but not a necessary expansion of the Sunday Service. And even then, it is accentuated as another form of the Proclamation of the Word. It is the One Word of God (Christ) that needs to be heard, but it need not always be embodied and incorporated in bread and wine. The Lord's Supper, therefore, is not as widely and regularly celebrated as many Protestant theologians would like. And efforts to make it more central to Protestant worship—that

were motivated by the ecumenical movement since the 1960s—have been none too successful.

At the same time, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain the theological concept of sacramentality in relation to the two sacraments that Protestants hold on to: Baptism and Eucharist. It is noteworthy that Protestant theology has not managed to synthesise the different respective emphases of Lutheran and Reformed theologies in relation to the sacraments.⁸ On the one hand there is a Lutheran emphasis on the Incarnation, on the other a Reformed emphasis on the Sovereignty of God. Lutheran theology emphasises that it is impossible to speak of the 'real presence' in the Eucharist if Christ is not present 'in, with, and under' the elements of bread and wine in the way God was present in the human being Jesus of Nazareth (the 'incarnate God'). Reformed theology emphasises that it is only possible to speak of a 'real presence' in the Eucharist if this is a sovereign event of the Risen Christ (while enthroned in heaven, 'sitting at the right hand of the Father'). Both hold an essential truth that cannot be captured in a concept of representation in the elements or by the words spoken in liturgy.

Underlying the Protestant dilemma—which is mirrored in the Roman Catholic debates about the term 'transubstantiation'—is the problem that any theology of representation faces in the Christian West. With the Jesuit Michel de Certeau, I assume that the churches are struggling with a 'crisis of representation' that can be traced back to the twelfth century and which de Certeau has reconstrued particularly within the mysticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹ What emerges here is an epistemological rupture caused by nominalism, according to which 'signs' (*signa*) no longer reliably represent the 'thing' (*res*) signified by them. This in effect removes the ground for the belief that the Church could reliably represent God in the world. The subsequent attempts of the Roman Church to 'fix' God in the sacraments are just as

⁸ This is also true for recent ecumenical advances as posited, for example, by George Hunsinger: thus, in, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), his proposal to speak of 'transelementation', remains, likewise, in the traditional theological framework of ecumenical debates.

⁹ For this see his major work: Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume 1 and 2: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, edited by Luce Giard and translated by Michael B. Smith (Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

fragile as the attempts of the Reformation Churches to 'fix' God in the biblical text. Neither the (Tridentine) doctrine of 'transubstantiation' of the elements in the Eucharist,¹⁰ nor the (sixteenth century Reformed) doctrine of the 'inerrancy of Scripture' have brought back the lost certainty. The attempt in the 19th century—facing the challenges of the transformations of societies—to secure certainty by a doctrine of infallibility has also proved ineffectual. Neither the doctrine of the 'infallibility of the Pope' nor the doctrine of the 'infallibility of Scripture' was able to mend the breach in religious certainty and certitude.

This, then, is the crisis. At stake here is that, God can no longer be reliably 'represented' in the world by the *media salutis* (Word and Sacrament), nor, from a Roman Catholic perspective, by the sacramentality of the priesthood and the Church itself.¹¹ As a result, theology loses its role as a fully empowered reader of the world as 'Book of God', with the outcome that the natural and human sciences took over the function of theology in order to generate meaning, even though they addressed themselves solely to the 'Book of Nature'.

Michel de Certeau drives home still more strongly a further theological implication of his reading and invites theology to accept that we are actually suffering from a loss of God as well as a loss of language concerning the divine 'real presence'. We need a theology of crisis—not unlike the one intended by Karl Barth or Henri de Lubac—a theology that, in the face of the fragility of human knowledge and of human civilisation, lets us recognise (and speak about) how we accept our lack of God in order to be faithful to God. This, however, requires a movement against the *Zeitgeist* that locates 'certainty' solely in the thinking (Descartes) and experience (Schleiermacher) of the modern subject: 'I think, therefore I am' and 'I feel something, therefore something is' have become axiomatic sentences of our existence. De Certeau, however, invites us to doubt the truth-claim of these propositions, and to hold their inversion to be true: 'I am, therefore I

¹⁰ For a more detailed reflection in relation to the theology of Thomas Aquinas see: Brett Salkeld, *Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* (Baker Academic, 2019).

¹¹ For the way in which de Certeau takes up the reflections of his teacher de Lubac see: Johannes Hoff, 'Mysticism, Ecclesiology and the Body of Christ: Certeau's (Mis-)Reading of Corpus Mysticum and the Legacy of Henri de Lubac', in: Inigo Bocken (ed.), *Spiritual Spaces: History and Mysticism in Michel de Certeau* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013).

think' and, 'Because the world is, I sense something'. These very sentences point to the origin of the Christian faith. The world and the 'I' exist because they owe themselves to the One whom faith avows as God.

A Heavenly Meal - From Representation to Ascension

The orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann is another who offers such a perspective. Though coming from a very different theological background, he observes what can be called a 'loss of transcendence' in the understanding and the liturgy of the Eucharist in the West and—important to stress—also in the East.¹² The loss of transcendence in the West is for him the result of the fixation on the 'real presence' of Christ, which had come to frame all debates, including ecumenical—right up to most recent ones. The Orthodox Churches from his point of view have also been drawn into this theological disorientation, by trying to represent Christ in the meal of the Church.

Schmemmann understands the meal not as a descent of the Risen Christ, but as the ascent of the gathered Church into the heavenly Jerusalem, taking with the Church all humanity and all creation.¹³ The Church is thus lifted up to the heavenly Garden-City (which is—according to Revelation 21ff.—definitively not the restoration of Eden, but the consummation of God's creation, symbolised in the 'Garden', and of human history, symbolised in the 'City') to dine with Christ at his table and savour the divine fullness of life. In the Epiphany of the healed and transformed creation, the sacramentality of the cosmos as divine creation is revealed.¹⁴

¹² Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, Preface speaks of a 'eucharistic crisis'.

¹³ See: Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, Chapter III, No. 1, 5 and especially 6, where he emphasises that the 'Eucharist is always an exodus from "This World", an ascent to heaven'. Therefore 'in "this world" there can be no altar, because the kingdom of God is "not from this world"'. Douglas Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (London / New York: T&T Clark, 2011), not only helps us to recover the perspective that the Ascension is not a movement in space, 'but [a movement] from the old creation to the new' (p.46). He furthermore reminds us that Thomas Aquinas based his understanding of 'real presence' and 'transubstantiation' on such an ascension theology. In other words, 'the Eucharistic mode of Christ's presence is itself eschatological, and transubstantiation, rightly understood, is an eschatological concept' (p. 72ff.).

¹⁴ See: Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, Chapter II, No. 4 and repeatedly in the book.

This understanding of the Eucharist as an entry into the new—Schmemmann is convinced—can liberate theology and the churches from the desperate attempt to represent Christ in the elements and the celebration of the meal. The ordained ministry and the Church itself could thereby be freed from that burden which the paradigm of representation entails. Sacramentality must not be confined to the Church and the priesthood. It is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit who blows where he wills—and who is present in no other concrete way. Similarly, and paradoxically, Christ is present only in his coming.

From this point of view, the essence of the celebration of the meal is the petition for the coming of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), which overarches the whole celebration (as, by the way, does that liturgical event called ordination or consecration).¹⁵ And this celebration of the meal has its densest or most intense moment in the petition spoken by all participants in the Eucharist, ‘Speak only the word, and my soul shall be healed’.¹⁶

Christ’s Eucharistic Hospitality and the Churches’ Reciprocal Invitation

Those who have dared to go this far theologically, will also be allowed to go further than the churches have done so far¹⁷ – and further even than Schmemmann intended to go. It can be ventured that guests at the table of the Lord can also be those people who do not belong to any church at all and are perhaps not even baptised.¹⁸ For how should we

¹⁵ The epicletic dimension is emphasised in Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, Chapter 11 ‘The Sacrament of the Holy Spirit’.

¹⁶ This emphasis can also be found in Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, Chapter 4 ‘The Sacrament of the Word’.

¹⁷ The way this could be incorporated in worship and church order is indicated in my own church, the Evangelische Kirche in Hesse and Nassau. Since 2013, not only all those who are baptised are invited to the table of the Lord—as is the rule in Lutheran, Reformed and United Protestant Churches—but all present in worship are called to consider, if they perceive Christ’s invitation to partake in the Lord’s Supper and are willing to join the gathered community. (See: www.kirchenrecht-ekhn.de/lebensordnung, No. 127 and 130).

¹⁸ James W. Farwell, ‘Baptism, Eucharist, and the Hospitality of Jesus: On the practice of open communion’, *Anglican Theological Review*, April 2004, discusses the issue of such an ‘open communion’ (that nowadays is widely practised in congregations and parishes) and identifies the theological challenges to the Anglican Communion. L. E. Phillips, ‘Risky Food and

exclude that the Holy Spirit has led such people into our Eucharistic meal? How could we exclude the possibility that for them too heaven opens up ‘in, with and under bread and wine’, and that they hear the word of Christ, so that their souls shall be healed?

Seen in this light, the reciprocal invitation to the Catholic Eucharist and the Protestant Lord's Supper would not yet have arrived at the realisation that Christ himself is the host of a heavenly banquet to which *all* people are invited and the *whole* creation included.

At the table of the Lord we celebrate the new creation.¹⁹ Therefore, the realisation that slowly dawns on us—in the face of the pandemic, and of climate change and the extinction of species—that our old life is over, need not frighten us. It would be a bleak consolation to claim that everything will be all right again. The fiction of humanity controlling the world is about to crumble. We have to learn to situate ourselves in the highly fragile ecological niche that the current ‘Earth Age’ affords us. We Europeans, too, must learn to live with the devastation that has already been wrought, for this is ‘the new normal’.

On this fragile planet and in the midst of ravaged life, people can gather as community at the table of the Lord who is drawing all creatures into Eternal Life. God does not abandon his creation but heals and transforms it. That is what the Eucharist / the Lord's Supper is all about: it is an eternal heavenly meal.

Surely, there is no greater hope ‘for the life of the world’.

Eucharistic Hospitality: A Methodist Approach to Open Table’, *Liturgy* (2021), Vol 36, No 3, 40-48 does the same within the Methodist framework.

¹⁹ This goes beyond reflections that focus on specific issues like globalisation or ecology, e.g., Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Pickwick Publications, 2013); A. F. Elvey, ‘Living one for the other: Eucharistic hospitality as ecological hospitality’, in: A. Elvey, C. Hogan, K. Power, C. Renkin (eds.), *Reinterpreting the Eucharist: Explorations in Feminist Theology and Ethics* (Sheffield UK: Equinox Publishing, 2013), 186–205.

INTERCOMMUNION SHOULD BE DELAYED NO LONGER: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A NEW STATEMENT FROM GERMANY

Thomas O'Loughlin*

A group of German theologians has published a summary of ecumenical progress to date on the reconciliation of Reformed/Protestant and Catholic positions on the Eucharist. It is entitled: Together at the Lord's Table. Surveying progress since World War II, it concludes that there is now sufficient agreement and mutual understanding such that theological issues can no longer justify not practicing eucharistic hospitality. The issue is now one that calls for action by churches rather than for ever prolonged discussions of how the churches present their explanations.

In 2020 the Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians (*Ökumenische Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen*) published a document on intercommunion between the western churches entitled *Together at the Lord's Table*.¹ Unusually, it presented its statement in *both* German and English in the hope that it would not only foster ecumenical activity in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland, but more widely conscious that there is today far more interface between the Churches of the Reformation and Roman Catholicism within the English-speaking world than in the German

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¹ Volker Leppin and Dorothea Sattler eds, *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn – Ein Votum des ökumenischen Arbeitskreises evangelischer und katholischer Theologen / Together at the Lord's Table – A statement of the Ecumenical Study Group for Protestant and Catholic Theologians* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau / Göttingen: Herder / Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2020, ISBN: 978-3-451-38647-3).

lands where most of the Protestant Reformers originated. Two years on, almost no attention has been given to this document either by theologians (I have mentioned it to several and they have told me that they have not heard of it) or by church leaders including those who have formal responsibilities for ecumenical issues.

Therefore my task here is a simple one: I am acting as a news reporter informing you of the existence of this statement! And I make this announcement with two pleas: first, that you seek to obtain the document and study it; and, second, since it makes a very clear case, that you draw it to the attention of those who, such as bishops and parish clergy, might act on it.

The Background

The *Ökumenische Arbeitskreis* began its work after the Second World War. Over the decades it has produced a whole series of studies—usually a mix of historical investigation of the origins of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, combined with a concern to address disputed issues within systematic theology, with the whole grounded in a scholarly exegesis of the texts of the canonical New Testament which can be viewed as a common bedrock of texts—that have examined virtually every area of disagreement between the churches in Germany. It is made up of a very wide range of professional theologians, and they have collectively very close contacts with the leadership of the various churches. This has the result that their documents have an academic rigour coupled with pastoral appreciation to an extent that is not found in ecumenical dialogues conducted elsewhere. It is their work that stands behind many of the agreements on various doctrinal issues, e.g. justification, that have been formally accepted by the various Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This longer history means that any statement issued by this group is far more than just a ‘joint statement of some theologians’—which, as is the way with such statements, can be dismissed as the work of liberal intellectuals who are then parodied as living in ivory towers—but should be seen as the *status quaestionis* of some of the finest minds working for the unity of which the Christ prayed (John 17:21). They know *both* the theological *and* pastoral situations in which we find ourselves.

The immediate background is the belief of the *Ökumenische Arbeitskreis* that already sufficient common ground has been

established between their several churches that there can no longer be any justifiable delay: enough theology has been done. Now we must act! This is put in a pithy way on the book's back cover:

The ... Group ... has dealt with this topic [of intercommunion yet] again. Based on [its] own researches and on other internationally recognised studies, it submits a theological vote: the consensus reached in the teaching of the Lord's Supper / Eucharist and ministry between the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Churches is sufficient to mutually invite each other to celebrate the Lord's Supper / Eucharist.

Scope/Panorama of this Document

This blurb is probably the most tightly packed back-cover statement that any theological book has ever had. This blurb when spelled out in detail amounts to a statement that not only are the difficulties of the Reformation Churches with the Catholic Church now resolved, but, indeed, that many internal issues with Roman Catholic theology can now be seen as resolved. First of all, note that the thrust of the statement is that the churches can *mutually invite* each other to celebrations. This goes far beyond what most Roman Catholics in the English-speaking world are prepared to even discuss. While those Catholics know that most other western churches have an 'open table' policy—i.e. if you 'communicate' in your own church, then you can do so here—they do not even consider it in terms of Catholics. Then Catholic debate sees itself 'straying into dangerous waters' when it talks about allowing 'others' to their table. Put bluntly: may a Catholic presider welcome non-Catholics at an ordinary celebration of the Eucharist? Even a Roman cleric who practiced such eucharistic hospitality might take a very different position if asked, 'Would you communicate if you were at a Protestant celebration of the Eucharist presided over, for example, by a woman?' For many Catholics—who see themselves as liberal on this issue—the idea of mutuality is a step they have not even considered. For them, it is enough to be hospitable. After all Catholics have the 'real thing' and mutuality would raise all sorts of spectres about whether the Eucharist was 'valid'—or perhaps they would use the word 'real' and question whether the ordination of the minister was 'real'. Would she/he have 'the power to do it?' It was not so long ago that Cardinal, then Archbishop, Desmond Connell of Dublin described the action of the then President of Ireland in receiving

communion in an Anglican cathedral as a 'sham'.² Yet, this document asks Roman Catholics to face up to a situation where each recognises the other as a real church with a real ministry and engaging in the fundamental activity they refer to as 'Holy Communion / Eucharist.'

Furthermore, not only does it transcend the 'give it to "them"' / 'take it from "them"' debate that embitters western inter-church relationships by presenting, in conscious reminiscence of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, a common view of the fundamentals of Eucharist and ministry, but it enters the intra-Catholic debate on women and ministry. Rather than enter the lists on the issue of 'the ordination of women', it observes that there is not sufficient evidence in New Testament / early sources to form exact prescriptions as to who can and cannot preside at a eucharistic celebration.

While the *Ökumenische Arbeitskreis* entered the issue of women and ministry obliquely, as a function of mutual recognition, it may become the issue that will attract most attention in this document. It is a simple fact that it is ever more difficult to find any mainstream theologian within the Roman Catholic fold who considers it impossible to ordain women to the presbyterate and there are groups in almost every corner of the Catholic Church who are pressing for a change. The issue is now the theological 'hot potato' with which those employed in Catholic-owned institutions do not wish to engage, nor will bishops discuss the matter as an open one. The document on several occasions calls on every church to 'avoid everything that might hurt [the others'] feelings',³ but it is doubtful that this will extend to the implicit rejection of the presiding ministry of women at the Eucharist that is present in the papal repetition that the issue of the presbyteral ordination of women is a closed issue on which there can be no doubt. This is a position that is repeated by Pope Francis, citing his two predecessors, presumably on the canonical ground that repetition is a demonstration of constant teaching. In the face of this formal position—which some Roman Catholic canonist/theologians are wont to declare to be 'infallible teaching' (using one out-dated notion of knowledge) or '*de*

² This was his reaction to Prof. Mary McAleese, then the President of Ireland, after she attended a Eucharist in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on 7 December 1997. See: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/dr-connell-s-comments-marked-by-an-unusual-lack-of-sensitivity-1.139323>.

³ See, for example, at 5,7,3.

fide definita' (using an obsolete model of doctrine), the work of the *Ökumenische Arbeitskreis* strikes a note of realism that should be respected as re-framing the debate.

Strengths

This is not the place to either attempt a summary of the document—with a length of sixty-four pages in English, it hardly needs a synopsis—or to engage in a dialogue with it because this text will become part of the weave of discussions in ecumenics for many years to come. My purpose here is simply to note some features of the document that deserve notice and might encourage you, my reader, to pursue in the text itself.

The first strength is that it openly announces that our knowledge is incomplete both historically and systematically. We have already referred to this with regard to the issue of who presides, but the actual statement is worth reading in the light of the assumption of full knowledge that is inherent in any appeal to 'infallibility' (on the Catholic side) or 'the sufficiency of Scripture' (on the Protestant side).

The New Testament texts open up various possibilities for conducting Holy Communion / the Eucharist. Even regarding the question of who presides, it is not possible to derive a rule directly from the texts of the New Testament.⁴

This is not presented simply as due to the obscurity of the texts—which since Newman's time has been exploited through an appeal to 'inchoateness' or a *disciplina arcani* that might contain anything one wants particularly to find—but due to the explicit nature of the historical situation. While older studies (e.g. Dix in English) started from the assumption of an original unity and had diversity as a later phenomenon which could be interpreted as a decline, modern scholarship—and this document—start from a position of original variation with uniformity as a later phenomenon.⁵ This sets a strict limit

⁴ See: 3,11,3; and it makes explicit the lack of knowledge that underlies 3,8,5.

⁵ For a systematic application of this to early eucharistic texts, see my 'Rethinking the *Didache*'s evidence for eucharistic practices in the light of the diversity of practice witnessed in Luke 22:17-20', *Studia Patristica*, forthcoming; and for a demonstration on how this assumption can be used to solve the eucharistic conundrum in the received text of Luke's gospel, see my: 'One or two cups? The Text of Luke 22:17-20 Again' in Hugh A.G. Houghton ed., *The Liturgy and the Living Text of the New Testament: Papers from the Tenth*

on any notion of complete Christian uniformity as a goal to be achieved in historical time: diversity is part of our Christian 'DNA' and we have to learn not only to live with it but to value it. The Spirit brings diversity.⁶ However, as a working assumption this approach will come as a surprise to many for whom the idea that there was not *one* ritual form, *one* code of practice, or *one* 'authentic' form of the biblical text, seems just too messy as well as an affront to logical sequence. But history is a far more surprising reality than logic.

A second strength is that it fully acknowledges the danger of reading history backwards, and assuming that the later normative state of celebrating the Eucharist has either always been there or that it must necessarily be there. Or, because we say *now* it is necessary, so it always was so and is, therefore, absolutely necessary. This danger is addressed both theoretically and in a series of instances. It is faced theoretically when it warns of the danger of thinking that:

[t]he draft of a unified liturgy corresponds to a thinking which regards a certain tradition, namely one's own, as the ultimate and uniquely true ecclesial expression of the Christian faith.⁷

It also notes that the diversities in practice, which often coincide with cultural and political borders, are such that no document or set of documents (e.g. Justin's account) can be read as providing a fixed pattern which somehow is normative.⁸ In effect, this sets a much needed question-mark over the discussions of some scholars who pursue a *norma normans* or an *ordo* (in the manner of Gregory Dix) or wonder what should constitute an *ordo*. *Together at the Lord's Table* presents these issues as irrelevant to the quest for unity, and this irrelevance arises from the historical situation in 'the apostolic / New Testament period' to which the churches have in the past looked for an alternative to their diversity. In recent years many scholars have devoted themselves to the questions of 'what would an *ordo* look like' and 'how could we discover such an *ordo*'. *Together at the Lord's Table*

Birmingham Colloquium on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament [Studies in Honour of David C. Parker] (Piscataway, N.J., 2018), 51-69.

⁶ See: Thomas O'Loughlin, *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis's Call to Theologians* (Collegeville, M.N., 2019), 47-57; and my 'The Diversifying Spirit: The Gift of Pentecost', *The Pastoral Review* 11/3(2015), 4-7.

⁷ See: 4,2.

⁸ See: 4,5; and see also Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Reading, and re-reading Justin's account of "the Eucharist"', *Anaphora* 12(2018/9), 67-110.

does not reject such work, but by-passes it in the sense that it does not see such an *ordo* as a pre-requisite for ecumenical progress either theologically or practically. It gives several examples of this,⁹ but its key example is the Catholic Church's acceptance that the Anaphora of Addai and Mari—which does not contain an institution narrative—is now considered both an ancient and a genuine eucharistic prayer.¹⁰ The document's vision of an ecumenical future is one with unity and with much diversity.

Weaknesses

I have already commented on the scope of this document in its taking the position that issues over ordination/ministry should no longer prevent mutual sharing, and, thus, incidentally its position that while each church's particularities (e.g. Catholicism's refusal to ordain women) should be respected, these particularities should not be seen as fundamental. However, the document does not itself point out just how radical this position is vis-à-vis one of the churches to which it is addressed. It is a matter of deep concern that the official Catholic position and that of a main-stream group of academic theologians are now so distinct: this is a gulf that all Catholics should reflect upon and particularly Catholic bishops who claim to be the teachers in the church.¹¹ However, the gulf is also a key weakness: this so challenges—in both senses of the word—the Roman Catholic position that it will be simply ignored. While in the simplistic world of newspapers, Pope Francis is juxtaposed to his predecessors; in actual fact he takes just as unswerving a position on many of these sacramental issues as they. His position is that he engages with many Catholic movements far more

⁹ See: 4,6.

¹⁰ See: 4,5. And for a fuller exploration of this issue, see: Robert F. Taft, 'Mass Without a Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001', *Worship* 77(2003), 482-509.

¹¹ The ability to teach claimed by the bishops—what Catholics often refer to as 'the Magisterium'—is not an infused virtue, but the result of learning; and that is a process which needs professional theologians. When theologians can no longer accept the *rationale* offered for a particular position, the bishops, in virtue of their claim to be teachers need to listen seriously to the position of the theologians. Failure to do so would result in a form of voluntaristic fundamentalism.

closely than they did, but there is far more distance from groups (e.g. 'We Are Church') which call for change on such matters as the ordination of women.¹² If this document is dismissed from official Catholic debate because of this issue, all of us will be the poorer.

The document itself states that how the Eucharist is approached is 'a seismograph of the state of the ecumenical movement'.¹³ In terms of theology this is true—and has been true since the first rumblings of a schism between east and west in the tenth century—but in the actual world of Catholicism today the issue of the ordination of women to the presbyterate is, to change the metaphor, the weather-vane issue. The document should have addressed this problem far more directly.

There are also some internal weaknesses within the document where its own assumptions limit it. Throughout, the document uses the complex term 'Holy Communion / Eucharist' to give parity of esteem to both traditions, but in doing so fails to note that 'Holy Communion' focuses in the main on the medieval emphasis on the encounter with the Christ in the eucharistic meal—and, of course, it is upon the controversies that arose from that perspective that propelled the sixteenth-century divide and, consequently, modern ecumenical debates. Reading through it, the clear core of the work is on how the community of faith and the Christ encounter one another in this sacrament—it is Christocentric from start to finish.¹⁴ It might have been better to start with the core dynamism of the liturgy itself, and of the anaphora in particular, and focus on the eucharistic activity *qua tale*. The Eucharist is the sacrifice of praise of the whole Christ, Head and members, offered to the Father in the Spirit. Such an approach, our sacrifice of praise *per, cum et in Christo ad Patrem*, would not only be truer to the core of our theology, but would have established a basis for a wider discussion with the Orthodox, and it would have relativised all the discussions of the nature of the presence of the Christ along with the attempt to by-pass the historical divisions of sacrifice and the meaning of priesthood.

¹² See Massimo Faggioli, 'Francis and the New Ecclesial Movements', *La Croix International*, 19 December 2021
<https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/francis-and-the-new-ecclesial-movements/15418>.

¹³ See: 5,5,1.

¹⁴ This is most explicitly seen in 5,4,2 and 5,4,3.

One further weakness needs to be noticed. While it takes careful note of the Jewish background to the Eucharist,¹⁵ it would have been better if it had made its starting point for the whole document that Jewish meal practices are eucharistic both theologically and in form rather than treating it as background and context for reading the early documents of the Jesus movement. This would then have set the scene for an examination of the whole meal practice of Jesus—the document focuses too explicitly on the Last Supper—and the various traditions of remembering and eating that various communities brought to the Eucharist as they became followers of Jesus and then eventually Christians. This emphasis on the Last Supper—at Passover time—has a curious, anachronistic effect within *Together at the Lord's Table* in that it addresses again the questions raised by the Calvinists in the sixteenth century as to the frequency of celebrating a Eucharist (and a quest for a 'New Testament [period]' *norma normans*). Its approach is to show that whatever the frequency, the Eucharist is focused in the Last Supper / Passover / Easter event.¹⁶ However, if it had followed its own espoused methodology more closely it would have seen that the weekly meal gatherings of the followers of Jesus for their specific meal was patterned on the Jewish hebdomadal liturgical cycle, hence its later continuance on Sunday as the day of the Eucharist as we see witnessed in Pliny the Younger. Its significance in terms of the Easter-event was then recalled at the Passover which belonged to the annual cycle. This would not only have allowed the document a richer common theology of Christian eating, but have finally laid to rest a sixteenth-century problem which arose due to the limited historical tools available to the Reformers.

Following on from this theme, *Together at the Lord's Table* falls into an old historical trap that is both unnecessary, given our state of knowledge today, and a source of contention between churches. Under the section 'Basic biblical considerations' it makes clear that

Since its beginnings as testified in the New Testament, the Church has seen the celebration of the sacred meal as a portrayal of its unity ... [And] even if the diversity of testimonies ... does not permit a definite reconstruction of the historical origins and forms of an early Christian Lord's Supper, there is no doubt that meals with a specific reference to

¹⁵ See: 3 and 3,2.

¹⁶ See: 3,9,1 – 3,9,4.

the story of Jesus Christ, clearly differentiates from ordinary filling meals, were essentially characteristic of those congregations ...¹⁷

The location of the Eucharist in any discussion of Christian meal practice is a most welcome development,¹⁸ along with the already noted acceptance of historically incomplete evidence, but from where did the evidence come for such an explicit statement as: ‘clearly differentiates from ordinary filling meals’? This notion that there is an ‘essential’—or as it is often formulated ‘ontological’—difference between an ordinary and a sacral meal is a commonplace in some Roman Catholic scholarship whereby the meal was seen as simply ‘a matrix’ from which the Eucharist emerged. The use of the phrase ‘filling meal’ echoes the *Didache* (10:1) and has been a bone of ecumenical contention since the discovery of the *Didache*.¹⁹ However, not only is this now a dated approach,²⁰ and inhibits a fully incarnational approach to ritual and community activity, but it fails to take into account that the inherited highly ritualised form with only a token eating and (sometimes) drinking is not a case of being freed from the meal, as Cardinal Ratzinger often argued, but a case of a corruption of the Christian vision. People of differing social status would not dine with one another. Thus the ritualised form became accepted and is now normative.²¹

This distinction is not a simple slip because it forms the basis of a ‘basic theological question’ later on: ‘What distinguishes a ritual meal from an ordinary meal?’²² There follows a standard attempt to answer the question—even citing the *Didache* in support!—which simply

¹⁷ See: 3.

¹⁸ See the approach in my *The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understandings* (London, 2015).

¹⁹ See my ‘Reactions to the *Didache* in Early Twentieth-century Britain: A Dispute over the Relationship of History and Doctrine?’ in S.J. Brown, F. Knight, and J. Morgan-Guy eds, *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century. Essays in Honour of Keith Robbins* (Farnham, 2013), 177–194.

²⁰ See Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in the Early Christian Ritual Meal* (Oxford, 1999).

²¹ See Clemens Leonhard, ‘Morning *salutationes* and the Decline of Sympotic Eucharists in the Third Century’, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 18 (2014), 420–442.

²² *Together at the Lord's Table*, 3.

argues in a circle. If they had approached the question head on, using their espoused historical hermeneutic, they not only would have avoided one more aspect of the old problems around change / *potestas consecrandi* / what is the ontological status of what is received (for it is in the light of those issues that this supposed distinction has generated such a literature in Roman Catholic scholarship), but could have formed a very ecumenical—in the sense of all humanity—basis for a discussion of intercommunion.²³ So, an old wound has been unproductively aggravated, and a wonderful opportunity to send the debate in a new direction missed. At the beginning of this paper, I noted with regret how little notice is being taken of German scholarship in the Anglophone world, but here we have an example in the opposite direction because this matter of the eucharistic dimension of meals—note the shift in emphasis from ‘Eucharistic meals’—is work that has mainly been conducted in English by America-based scholars.²⁴

‘The Bottom Line’

We are all too aware of the problems that lie in the path to a more real unity of discipleship and witness as Christians. We have explored these problems for centuries, in both bellicose and eirenic modes, and we know that we could keep up this process of analysis and discussion for centuries to come. We are also aware, that it is very easy to exacerbate

²³ See, for example, L.E. Phillips, ‘Open Tables and Closed Minds’, *Liturgy* 20/4 (2005), 27–35; J.B. Bates, ‘Giving What is Sacred to the Dogs? Welcoming All to the Eucharistic Feast’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 3/1(2005), 53–74; James Farwell, ‘Baptism, Eucharist, and the Hospitality of Jesus: On the Practice of “Open Communion”’, *Anglican Theological Review* 86(2004), 215–238, and the response by Kathryn Tanner, ‘In praise of Open Communion: A Rejoinder to James Farwell’, *Anglican Theological Review* 86(2004), 473–485, and then Farwell’s reply: ‘Brief Reflection on Kathryn Tanner’s Response to “Baptism, Eucharist, and the Hospitality of Jesus”’, *Anglican Theological Review* 87(2005), 303–310. The debate continues: R.A. Meyers, ‘Who May Be Invited to the Table?’, *Anglican Theological Review* 94 (2012), 233–244, and D. Schell, ‘Discerning the Open Table in Community and Mission,’ *Anglican Theological Review* 94 (2012), 245–255. I have drawn attention to it in my *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis’s Call to Theologians* (Liturgical Press, 2019), 81–83.

²⁴ An example of this, directly relevant to the matter in hand, is Andrew McGowan, ‘The Myth of the “Lord’s Supper”: Paul’s Eucharistic Meal Terminology and Its Ancient Reception’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77(2015), 502–520.

a problem raking over old coals—the current wave of populist politicians reviving the old nationalist hatreds and myths of isolated perfection should be a sobering warning to the churches that ecumenism could come to an end and be replaced with sectarian triumphalism. Likewise, we can have such a notional view of what ‘church unity’ is, should be, or was in some mythic past, that it is *de facto* unattainable within human historical time. This approach—until we have complete unity in doctrine we cannot have *communio in sacris*—has become a knee-jerk reaction in many Roman Catholic circles since the 1980s. Starting at that point means that one will never reach a satisfactory moment for action within human time: so we have half a century of theological discussion, but no changes that move actual Christian living forward for disciples.²⁵ Naming this problem, and saying that *we now have done enough* to demonstrate that we can accept each other’s theological approaches and explanations as sufficient in historical time (completeness is the dream of every group of theologians but we should be aware that such completeness will only be achieved eschatologically) is the ‘bottom line’ of the document. Consequently, we must now let our words about action—being eucharistic—become action. The time of intercommunion has come.

This has two ‘knock on’ effects. First, since the problem of objections to formal intercommunion comes from mainly the Catholic side: can Catholics *admit* ‘the other’ and, distinctly, can Catholics *accept* from ‘the other’; if the time of mutuality has come, then this asymmetry has to be addressed from the Roman Catholic side. We might be affronted by Desmond Connell’s remarks in 1997 that a Catholic participating in an Anglican celebration of the Eucharist was a ‘sham’ but it did express honestly part of the core of his church’s position with regard to the churches of the Reformation. Indeed, this position is possibly clearer in the case of Anglican/Catholic situation than it is in the German-speaking lands because of the history of High Church Anglicanism. If (a) valid ordination is a necessity for a Eucharist, and (b) ordination imparts a *character indelebilis* on the recipient,²⁶ and (c) these churches do not have valid orders then the position of *Apostolicae curae* is reaffirmed each time that an Anglican in priest’s orders who seeks to

²⁵ See the concluding chapters of my *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis’s Call to Theologians* for fuller exploration of this.

²⁶ This is discussed in detail in 6,2,6.

become a presbyter in the Catholic Church is ordained 'absolutely' as, if (c) were the case, it would contradict (b). Therefore these churches have not celebrated a Eucharist but have merely had 'Eucharist-like' assemblies for centuries a situation apparently accepted in some official Roman usage which denies the designation 'church' to Protestants preferring the term 'ecclesial communities'. These old chestnuts—relics of an age of internecine warfare that was destructive of evangelical witness—need to be sorted out: until they are the hurt that further divides us is inevitable. This document draws us back to this need.

Second, the document leads us to ask who is to act? It is addressed to the churches concerned, and so, since most humans tend to think in terms of corporate entities, we think first of whole groups deciding to do something different. The image comes to mind of some summit with an assortment of leaders like the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury issuing a communiqué declaring that as from the following Sunday there would be a mutual invitation to the members of their churches to share—i.e. by eating and drinking together which is the only real way of sharing a meal—at the Lord's Table in their eucharistic assemblies. One could even imagine a situation of two parallel liturgies of reconciliation: one church's leaders welcoming a delegation from the other and then offering them a place at the table; while at the same time, similar hospitality was being reciprocally extended and accepted. But this is not only a dream, it is theologically flawed for it identifies each church with its structures, imagining those who are its minister-leaders as if they were its rulers in a political sense (Mark 10:42 and parallels) where decisions about discipleship emanate like edicts from a single source. Actual eucharistic communities are the concrete, substantial reality of what a church is. Whatever its far-flung links or its doctrinal assertions, we deal with a real church when we find actual Christians gathered in eucharistic activity. It is at this small scale that existential decision occurs: there we come 'together at the Lord's table' or not.

So the call to act now that is embedded in *Together at the Lord's Table* is a challenge to each church at its table, and each to each of the baptised as they walk towards any table at which sisters and brothers in baptism are about to break a loaf and share a cup, remembering Jesus, as they bless the Father. But this supposes several decisions already being taken individually and collectively.

Individually, I have to own that we—all who will be at this table—share a common faith, not in terms of theological explanations but as fellow disciples moving forward here and now at this celebration. For a Protestant coming into a Catholic assembly this means that she/he asserts common faith and is therefore willing to eat and drink with the gathering—despite the fact that the presider might have earlier announced that ‘this Mass is offered for the repose of the soul of’ in the best tradition of ‘having Masses offered’ that can be traced back to Pope Gregory I and the core notions of indulgences which were the trigger of division five centuries ago.²⁷ A Catholic might have to decide on coming into a Protestant assembly that this means that she/he asserts common faith, and is therefore willing to eat and drink with the gathering—despite the fact that the presider is a woman—and that this assembly really is ‘the whole Christ’ (*totus Christus*) that is offering our Christian thanksgiving sacrifice of praise to the Father.²⁸ These individual decisions, in effect, reverse those individual decisions that (whatever about the corporate choices resulting from *cuius regio eius religio*) created the distinct churches between the sixteenth century and today.

The collective decision is that each local community has to be happy to declare itself in favour of offering hospitality to the other group. This is more than having an ‘open table’ when an individual arrives and is assured that he will not be turned away: it means that this group is happy to be associated with the other group to the extent that they will not keep each other—as a group with an identity—apart at the table. Here we find something far more humanly difficult to achieve than removing historical road blocks such as *Apostolicae curae*. Many actual churches have ‘we are not like them down the road’ as part of their identity and then this manifests itself in separate tables. Reading *Together at the Lord’s table* is a challenge to confront this approach and

²⁷ See my ‘Treating the “Private Mass” as Normal: Some Unnoticed Evidence from Adomnán’s *De locis sanctis*’, *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 51(2009), 334–344.

²⁸ It must also be a real commitment with one’s whole mind and heart. Some months ago a Catholic presbyter told me that he would join in a fraternal agape but would not consider it a Eucharist—‘I would share their bread and wine [note the commodities approach], but I would not genuflect’—such ‘mental reservations’ are not only a sham, destructive of the unity of the *Una Sancta*, but blasphemous.

overcome it by issuing that welcome to the table. It is a declaration that must take a form something like this:

Yes, we are very different from you and some of the ways you, as a church, express discipleship we abhor,²⁹ but we recognise a deeper unity in baptism and destination, and so welcome you as a church to our table today as a foreshadowing of when we shall all be guests at the eschatological banquet.

Regrettably, I can think of many pastors and communities who would happily engage as individuals—both in offering and receiving eucharistic hospitality—and who would welcome ‘high level’ agreements, but who would find this ecumenism ‘in the field’ just too painful.

In conclusion, get *Together at the Lord's Table* and study it—it is well worth the time! Then, if you accept its case, seek ways to act.

²⁹ This abhorrence could be theological, cultural or aesthetic—or a combination of all three that makes one want to shout out: ‘why do they not see that that action misses the point!’ I am appalled when I go into a Reformed church and see a tray of little glasses of fruit juice and wonder do they not realize that it is the challenge of one cup that is a key to the Jesus-form of the Eucharist. I am equally appalled when in a Catholic church I see the presider consume both halves of his large altar-bread and the cup's entire contents, and then proceed to ‘distribute Holy Communion’ from a ciborium of reserved pre-cut round wafers; and I wonder if he has understood the words ‘he broke and gave it to them’ and ‘drink this all of you’ when he uttered them just moment earlier? Those communities—in any tradition—that do not need to reform their basic eucharistic practices are few and far between.

ECUMENISM AND THE 'BALLOON THEORY' OF CHRISTENDOM

Matthew R. Anderson*

This brief reflection uses the analogy of Christendom, or cultural Christianity, as a leaking balloon, to illustrate how it may be in part the spirit's prophetic work of deflation that brings Christians closer together. The piece urges that we learn from Indigenous emphases on being from a specific Land, and honouring one's relations, to inform our ecumenical efforts.

Full disclosure: I am an ecumenist. For nearly a decade I was an active participant in the national Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. Although I am a Lutheran pastor and biblical scholar and was raised solidly within that heritage, I count among my dear friends several Anglican bishops and a Roman Catholic archbishop. I feel fortunate to be chummy with United Church of Canada folks, Reformed Church, Pentecostals, Baptists and a whole host of believers and semi-believers of various sorts in between. Once, a gentle and generous Catholic priest offered to remember my recently deceased father in his mass, an act which touched this Lutheran deeply (no matter what Luther himself might have said). In addition, I am a biblical scholar, a movement that has enjoyed a kind of practical ecumenism for decades, and now benefits more and more from a flowering of interfaith scholarship as well, particularly from Jewish scholars turning their attention to the New Testament.

Ecumenism is a beautiful movement that has flowered in our day. At least in the western world, and specifically in my context in Canada, it is a richness that is helping us weather the storm that is upon us. But

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after years engaged in ecumenical dialogue, it's that storm about which I feel we should be more honest.

The reasons for ecumenism are many and varied. They are historically complex, go deep in our various church histories, and mark the fruit of a whole host of witnesses, dedicated women and men all. But it seems to me that a pressing and practical reason for the flowering of ecumenical efforts in our own day is rarely mentioned by many of us, and that is desperation. Perhaps not outright desperation. But the world is changing, and our various institutions have been hit hard. Particularly the so-called 'mainline' churches are finding themselves in institutional shock, with drastically declining attendance and outdated structures built for the baby-boom and immigrant expansions post-World-War II. It is not news to any of us that our institutions are trying to recover from massive contractions of budget, volunteer base, and finances. The pandemic, with its demands on clergy, musicians, and other church leaders, and its drop in physical engagement with buildings, has only exacerbated these problems (and kept offering plates empty). We are in crisis-mode, looking for lifelines. And one of those lifelines, whether or not we call it that, is ecumenism.

After all, the church must be seen to be doing something! And ecumenism is not only good for photos (I recently posed with two Catholic priests, an Anglican priest, and a United Church minister for a magazine photo, and did a zoom interview with Anglican Church of Canada Archbishop Mark MacDonald about our Full Communion). Unity is also something that, according to the Gospel of John, was specifically prayed for by Christ (John 17:20-23).¹ When Christians of different denominations work together, we can say with pride that we are doing the work of Jesus. However, it's no coincidence that ecumenism, in our post-modern world, is a much more comfortable and acceptable church activity than outright evangelism. The abuses of the past (where more culture than faith, more power than prophecy, were being spread) and the mood of the present have made it uncomfortable or downright distasteful for many of us to engage in evangelism uncritically. Past evangelism has too often been linked to a cultural imperialism that many of us now find deplorable and know to

¹ See Julien Hammond, 'Jesus' Prayer for Unity', *One Body* (Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation, 2020); <https://slmedia.org/blog/one-body-jesus-prayer-for-unity>.

have been harmful.² Ecumenism strengthens the extra-church values of pluralism, tolerance, and cooperation that are now part of our wider cultural milieu. To me, this alignment with multiculturalism is not a weakness of ecumenism, but a strength, and a fact we should acknowledge.

I refer to the marriage of ecumenism and desperation using something I call 'balloon theory'. We Christians are ants, all living on a big balloon, which is Christendom, or cultural Christianity. Historically, we rarely got along, but there was enough space on the balloon for us to separate ourselves and stay far apart. But along comes history and pokes a tiny, seeping hole in that balloon. As the air slowly exits the balloon, it starts to shrink. Wow, we ants think: we're really forced to be much closer to each other than we imagined possible! Is it truly a work of cooperation that we find ourselves so close, or is it the simple necessity caused by the deflation of the triumphalist cultural ground under our feet?

Maybe the difference isn't important. Perhaps what is important is that we are finally talking, and finding our commonalities, and celebrating them, as this publication attests. But there is still this nagging feeling that when we celebrate ecumenism too grandly, or especially when we pat ourselves on the back too proudly for our efforts, we are forgetting how long our churches have resisted, how proud and insular we have been, and what it has taken to bring us together.

The point of this brief reflection is to ask whether it isn't just postmodernism and secularism, or the myriad evils of globalized capitalism, that have poked that hole in Christendom. Maybe it was the Spirit of God, doing the *first* ecumenical work, the destructive, prophetic work that is now making us realize what we should have long recognized. Perhaps, in that sense, the present desperation is a spiritual gift.

Indigenous scholars, such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, point out again and again that what is important in traditional Indigenous understandings of community is being from a specific Land (or place)

² See Tamara Starblanket, *Suffer the Little Children: Genocide, Indigenous Nations, and the Canadian State* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2018) and Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools* (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2010).

and paying attention to one's relations.³ When we Christians engage in acts of constructive ecumenism, we are recognizing our differences, our specific 'Lands' and heritages. At the same time, we are paying attention to our relations, much in the way Betasamosake Simpson describes. For many of us, in many of our churches, it's a drastically smaller world than it used to be. The balloon has lost air. Perhaps in the end, our contemporary ecumenism is nudged along by a Spirit-led desperation that will help us recognize the commonalities and responsibilities we should have seen all along.

³ See, e.g. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* (University of Minnesota, 2017); *Dancing on our Turtle's Back* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011); *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2008).

KOINONIA: GOD'S GIFT AND CALLING. A REPORT FOR THE WHOLE OIKOUMENE

David Carter*

This article outlines the structure and content of the Second International Anglican-Reformed Dialogue (IRAD) Report, whilst also urging that its content on the nature and practice of koinonia is worthy of wider reception in the oikoumene beyond the two immediately concerned partner traditions. It has particular relevance to some of the tensions on contemporary issues that threaten the cohesion of both communions and, indeed, others. It also points to some continuing ecclesiological issues mentioned in the First IRAD report, God's Reign and our Unity (1984) which need to be revisited.

Early in November 2020, the report of the Second International Dialogue between the respective member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion was released. It was entitled *Koinonia, God's Gift and Calling* and also named the *Hiroshima Report*, after the Japanese city where it held its concluding session in 2019.

The first report of the dialogue had been issued thirty-six years earlier under the title of *God's Reign and our Unity* in 1984. That report had been one of the best generated within the first twenty years of international inter-confessional dialogue, as largely inspired by the Vatican II opening up of the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenism, and the resultant call in its *Decree on Ecumenism* for such encounter with the other Christian communions.

God's Reign and our Unity was a long, thorough and impressive document, which dealt with the relevant key issues of ecumenical debate as they had been seen at that time by the two confessional bodies.

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Thus, a lot was said about Christian unity in the wider perspective of human unity, about the need to look at evangelism, social justice and church unity not as conflicting and competing issues, but as all related to the one mission of God, and about orthodoxy and orthopraxy as necessarily linked. Much of the second part of the report was devoted to long debated issues, particularly as between Reformed and Anglicans, over the two major sacraments and the ordained ministry. A thorough account was given of the alternative forms of threefold ministry operating within the two communions, the Anglican emphasis on bishops, priests and deacons, the Reformed stress on deacons, elders and ministers of oversight over the local congregations. Lacunae were to be noted within both systems. For almost all Anglicans, the diaconate was simply a transitional ministry. Some, but far from all Reformed Churches, had no diaconate and it could be noted that in some, particularly Congregationalist Churches, deacons often fulfilled what was an eldership role amongst Presbyterians. The Anglican system had its ultimate roots in the three-fold ministry as first clearly spelt out by Ignatius of Antioch. The Reformed saw their threefold ministry as the pre-Ignatian apostolic practice, with a collective presbytery normally performing the highest role of oversight. The contrast was a point often made in American conversations between the two traditions.¹

Some practical suggestions were made as to how the two systems might become reconciled. Could moderators become bishops in presbytery, sharing aspects of their role with the other members of the presbytery? Could the Anglicans contemplate restoring a more permanent diaconate and consider the possibility that elders in the reformed style might be very useful leaders, locally selected from amongst the laity within each Anglican parish? These matters have continued to be debated, especially in the US context, where it is still hoped they might be successfully resolved. However, that has yet to happen.

Two particular achievements of this first report should never be forgotten. The first, of relevance to the entire *oikoumene*, was the very deft ecclesiological summary, enshrined in the words of paragraph 29 that 'the Church is sent into the world as sign, instrument and first fruits of his [God's] purpose to reconcile all things in heaven and earth through

¹ See, for example, *The Agreement between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA, 2008)*, available on line.

Christ'. 'The Church is a provisional embodiment of God's final purpose for all human beings and for all creation'.² That clarifies the role of the Church, placing it firmly in the context of God's overall gracious plan for his world.³ It is in this light that all the issues of truth and its varying modes of presentation, unity, evangelism and social justice, must be seen.

The other key stress is on the necessity of baptismal unity. 'If we are as realistic as the apostolic writers are, we are already by our baptism one body, and the continued separation of our two communions is a public denial of what we are already in Christ'. Quite rightly, the present dialogue report reiterates this point⁴. Vatican II had already spoken of unity in baptism, but the Roman Catholic Church was increasingly to do so as two developments took place between the late eighties and the present day. On the one hand, a widespread tendency to a slight weariness with the Ecumenical Movement; on the other, an increasing understanding of how much differences were centred more on things which were seen, even in Roman Catholic eyes, as secondary or tertiary within the hierarchy of truths; by contrast, how great the agreement was on the core of trinitarian and christological truth⁵.

The Need for a Second Round of Dialogue and a New Report

God's Reign and our Unity was thus a valuable gift to the whole *oikoumene*. But, as a preliminary meeting in 2011 to discuss the value of a second round of dialogue between Anglicans and Reformed was to agree, much had since moved on. In the life of both communions, there had been 'fierce internal struggles and threats of division within our respective Communions, as well as in Society at large', highlighting the fact that 'the fullness of *koinonia* is not always what is experienced *within* (my italics) and between churches'.⁶

² *God's Reign and Our Unity*, para. 30.

³ Cf. Ephesians 1: 3-10.

⁴ *God's Reign and our Unity*, para. 61; Report *Koinonia as Gift and Calling*, para. 7, also section B of Summary, paras. 60-61, followed by Section C which specifies it as 'Gift and Calling' for the two Communions, Anglican and Reformed.

⁵ Particularly recognised by Cardinal Walter Kasper in his *Harvesting the Fruits* (2010), where he recorded and assessed the gains of the dialogues of Rome with four major western traditions, including both the Reformed and Anglicans.

⁶ *Introduction*, 7.

I may add the sad continuing testimony to this from within my own tradition. It seems as though the United Methodist Church in America is moving, as a result of deep internal divisions over the legitimacy, or otherwise, of same sex unions, towards a sort of managed separation, taken in the interests of avoiding too much bitterness. The Anglican Communion has certainly suffered a partial breakdown of relations between the two North American Churches and the rest of the Communion; there are also, of course, provinces that ordain women priests and others that don't, thus again creating a sort of partially impaired communion.⁷

On a more positive note, both Communions recognised how much work had been done, especially since and under the influence of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in 1993.⁸ Pretty well every ecumenical report since then has made reference to the concept of Church as Communion/*Koinonia* as have many statements by individual particular churches.⁹ A vast scholarly literature has also been generated.

One may also mention that, during the interval between 1984 and 2011, renewed stress has been placed on spiritual ecumenism and the more recently related concept of receptive ecumenism, advanced particularly by Professor Paul Murray of Durham. These things are not specifically mentioned in the *Hiroshima Report*, but they most certainly will have had some influence on all the members of the joint commission, which most certainly wishes Reformed and Anglicans to learn from each other and to harvest the fruits of such closer communion.

Particular Merits of the *Hiroshima Report*

It is clear that the Commission has produced a rather different sort of report to the very detailed one of 1984. However, it has specific merits that were perhaps lacking in its predecessor.

First, it is much shorter and more succinct. This makes one hopeful that it may be more widely read, especially by clergy in the parishes and by lay leaders, who often play key roles within local ecumenical parishes

⁷ Most recently, as noted in *The Guardian* on November 28, 2020, there are threats of Anglican Communion disciplinary action against the Episcopal Church in Scotland, consequent upon its decision to approve same-sex marriages.

⁸ Best T. and Gassmann G. (eds.) *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, (1994).

⁹ Thus, see e.g. the ecclesiological statement of British Methodism, *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), section 3.1. where the concept of *koinonia* is discussed.

and local 'churches together' groups. Moreover, it contains much to deepen reflection on what the search for greater Christian unity means at any level and between any two or more traditions, much for meditation on what it demands in terms of empathy, mutual respect and trust, willingness to learn and receive, and, above all perhaps, the willingness to prefer others in honour and make space for them.

If I were to pick out one paragraph from the sixty-five in the main text, I would select paragraph 31 on *Dialogue*. It seems to me to express as well as anything I have ever read to epitomise the spirit and hope in which this should take place.

'Dialogue is a vital reality within and between Christian communities that creates a beautiful space in which we both give and receive, opening us to one another and enlarging our understanding of the way God works. Dialogue thus deepens our *koinonia*. None of us holds complete knowledge of God or truth, and we find reassurance and courage in the opportunity to partner with others in our seeking. Here are the fruits of *koinonia*: we are free to engage with each other's traditions because our posture is already one of responsiveness to the other. We seek to learn of the work of the Spirit in the other's experiences and traditions.

I am prompted at this point to add a striking complementary additional sentence from the declaration of the English Conference of 1987 which was held as part of the *Not Strangers But Pilgrims Process* which later resulted in the reconfiguring of the central ecumenical instruments for the four countries of the British Isles.

Unity comes alive as we learn to live in each others' traditions.¹⁰

I also greatly esteem the whole of section C 'Healing and Wholeness', which enlarges on paragraph 31, manifesting faith in the power of *koinonia*, faithfully lived out, to 'transform conflict'.

Even extremely demanding difference and conflict have the potential to teach us more fully about *koinonia* precisely because they demand empathy, deep listening, patience and humility, which are also necessary for relationships to deepen and grow rather than fracture. [...] In the redemptive work of Christ, *koinonia* disarms destructive conflict. The fullness of *koinonia* amidst diversity moves us beyond our fear so as to approach others with curiosity, openness and compassion.¹¹

¹⁰ See my article in 'Together in Christ' (1987), *Journal of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark*.

¹¹ Report, para. 32.

Some may wonder at the confidence thus shown in the above paragraph, particularly when they consider the poisonous legacy of the sixteenth century Reformation conflicts that lasted for so long. However, the development of the Ecumenical Movement and, in particular, developments since the Roman Catholic entry into it as a result of the Second Vatican Council, have shown that progress, unthinkable to earlier generations, can be made when there is 'the empathy, deep listening, patience and humility that are the gifts of *koinonia*.'¹²

Centrality of *Koinonia*

At this point it is important to explain why the term *koinonia* is adopted as central to this report. The dialogue team assert this right at the beginning, with reference to its multi-faceted meaning. It means 'communion, fellowship, sharing, participation and partnership', above all it 'refers to sharing in a reality that is greater than ourselves and our own individual needs', that reality being further defined in a list of eight key characteristics, all of which have their roots in the dynamic life and love of the triune God, alike the supreme source and the supreme pattern for those 'created in his image'.¹³

In short, it is a polyvalent word. It is, as a commonplace of the Ecumenical Movement states, both Gift (of God's grace) and Calling to the Church, which is summoned, in the power of the work of the paschal mystery within it and all its members and the subsequent gift of the Spirit, to respond by growing into that unity which is God's will and goal for it. The Report amplifies this by stressing that, in addition to gift and calling, there is added the expectation of eschatological fulfilment when, as Vatican II put it, 'all the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her'.¹⁴

The main text of the Report is divided into three chapters, dealing, respectively, with 'the Foundations of *Koinonia*', '*Koinonia* in the Church' and '*Koinonia* and Mission'. The foundations are found in the creative and redeeming work of God to which both creation and Holy Scripture

¹² Ibid, para. 33.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 6, 7-8, para. 1, p.12. '*Koinonia* has its origin in the dynamism of the life of the triune God. It overflows to us from the beautiful and holy truth of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit-love and grace in relationship.'

¹⁴ Report, paras. 2-3, p.7. The reference to Vatican II is my addition, as comment-it has always seemed appropriate to me to add a reference to *Dei Verbum* 8 in this sort of connection.

testify, God being presented as engaging with the world both 'in the act of creation and throughout the story of covenant and election'. The teaching of *God's Reign and Our Unity* on the Church as 'sign, instrument and first fruits of a reality that comes from beyond history-The Kingdom or reign of God' and as a 'people in pilgrimage' is reiterated. The Church is called upon to live out that reality. All creation speaks of God's glory but Scripture is also fundamental in showing how, from the very beginning, 'God is establishing a dynamic relationship with that creation, rich in its intended variety, declared to be very good and commanded to be fruitful'.¹⁵ The Bible reveals this pattern...in the act of creation and throughout the story of covenant and election, God's ultimate desire being 'to widen this covenant to bring all nations towards eternal communion'.¹⁶ The multi-dimensional character of *koinonia* in the New Testament is expressed in many Pauline texts. God calls believers to *koinonia* with his Son, Christ, and the Holy Spirit; the *koinonia* thus founded and expressed 'flows from the dynamic vibrancy of the divine *koinonia* into the self-giving of the Church for all creation. As the three persons of the Trinity are distinct and yet exist in perfect unity, the Church is many, yet one Body'.¹⁷

Paragraph 11 stresses God's gift of *koinonia* as irreversible and unbreakable at the extremes of both divine self-emptying and human suffering, stressing that 'at the very moment it appears broken, in Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross, a new richness is unveiled', revealed in both resurrection and subsequent gift of the Spirit. 'The incarnation is the renewal of God's covenant in creation and the election of Israel, and the healing of Adam's fall'.¹⁸

Paragraph 14 rightly underlines the fact that 'the resurrection is a forward-looking eschatological event that inaugurates the new creation and in which all future believers will ultimately be renewed and transfigured as a result of being 'in Christ'. This paragraph has ongoing relevance for the debate on the sacramentality of the Church, traditionally a key issue in dialogue between Roman Catholics and the major Reformation and post-Reformation traditions, and one certainly

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 5.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 8.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 12, a point particularly stressed in late nineteenth-early twentieth century Anglican theology.

raised in the debate recorded in the WCC document, *The Church Towards a Common Vision*.¹⁹ The paragraph clearly shows the two partner traditions as having a very strong view, shown in its conclusion. 'As sign and servant of the coming Kingdom that Body become sacramental, as Christ is the ultimate Sacrament through whom the full riches of God's promises for the whole of creation are known and realised.'

The Report then stresses the value of another dialogue report, that of the Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue on the Church of the Triune God, which stresses that 'the communion manifested in the life of the Church has the Trinitarian fellowship as its basis, model and ultimate goal'.²⁰ Stress is then placed on the common indebtedness of both Anglicans and Reformed to the patristic era. It stresses its avoidance of any setting of creation and redemption against each other, citing, in particular Calvin's testimony to God's glory as seen so comprehensively throughout creation. It records the deep respect in which Calvin was held by both continental reformers and members of the Church of England in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.²¹

The concluding paragraph of this chapter shows both traditions as recognising 'the call in communion to engage with the whole of Scripture in its diverse patterns'. It stresses that 'drawing on Scripture, tradition and theological understanding, the Anglican and Reformed Churches have much in common and share clear family likenesses'. Shortly before beginning this article, I read the collected papers of the most recent Meissen Conversations where some Anglican participants called upon their fellows to recognise how close Elizabethan and Jacobean Anglicans had been to the continental Reformed Churches of the time, so much so that Anglicans had been invited to and had played an important part in the reformed Synod of Dort.²² This early closeness had, however, been largely lost as a result of later seventeenth century

¹⁹ See, e.g. *The Church. Towards a Common Vision*, (2012), para. 44.

²⁰ Report, para. 15, citing *The Church of the Triune God* (2006).

²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 17, where I have slightly supplemented what is said, as a result of recent reading in the context of relationships between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church of Germany-I shall return to the point of this in discussing future prospects at the end of this article.

²² See Stephen Hampton's essay on the 1618 Reformed Synod of Dort and Church of England participation in it in *Revisiting Meissen* (details below in ref. 23).

developments and had been further intensified by the spread of Anglo-Catholicism in the nineteenth century. Now, however, as a result of the growing strength of evangelical Anglicanism in the late twentieth century and the developing relationship with the Evangelical Church of Germany, which has a considerable reformed component, there has been a tendency to reaffirm a reformed element in the complex modern Anglican identity.²³ I suspect that element may be further affirmed as a result of *Koinonia*, *God's Gift and Calling*.

Baptismal Unity as the Key Foundation of *Koinonia*

The second chapter is, in my opinion, the best of what is, overall, a very high quality three. It deals with *koinonia* in the Church and immediately emphasises baptism as 'the foundation of our *koinonia* in the Church, which embodies *koinonia* and points to a fuller *koinonia* in the Kingdom of God'. Baptism inaugurates an 'eschatological and mystical relationship with Christ through the Spirit, which is a corporate form of sanctification, through which the baptised participate in the Lord's glory'. It involves liberation from the power of sin' and is 'the visible and effective sign and seal of that gracious work of the Spirit by which the Church is constituted'.²⁴

It continues, 'thus we live in the dynamic embrace of God's eternal movement towards reconciliation'. The teaching of *God's Reign and our Unity* is reiterated: 'if we are as realistic about baptism as the apostolic writers are, then we are already by our baptism one body and the continued separation of our two communions is a public denial of what we are already in Christ'.²⁵

It cannot be put more strongly than that. The baptism of each individual Christian sets as it were a compass for his or her life, orientating his or her life towards growing conformity to Christ in his death, in the sure and certain hope of eventual resurrection to eternal life in the eschatological fullness of the completed new creation. Moreover, that fulfilment can only come in the company of Christ and all who belong to him. It can only be fulfilled in completeness of *koinonia* with the entire Body of Christ in which no one can be disregarded or marginalised and in which no one can say he or she has

²³ The book of the conversations has been published as Chapman, M. Nussel, F. and Grebe, M. (eds.), *Revisiting the Meissen Declaration after 30 Years* (2020).

²⁴ Report, paras. 20, 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 22.

no need of any other or others. It orientates every Christian, every local congregation, every particular church or tradition towards a common search for a catholicity and fullness which will only be complete when all are in uninterrupted *koinonia* and communion with the whole Christ, Head and members. We are already necessarily dedicated to that common pilgrimage; and indifference towards it, let alone denial of its possibility is seriously sinful, simply indicating that we are yet, as the Authorised Version puts it in translation of Pauline teaching, 'carnally minded'.

Paragraph 23 insists that 'the depth of this *koinonia* is revealed in mutual sharing, mutual recognition, mutual respect and mutual belonging, in which unique gifts of individuals and groups are to be recognised and honoured as part of a greater whole (1 Cor. 12).

It continues '*Koinonia* is not merely a form of Christian behaviour, but a relational way of being together in Christ', as deeply relational, one might add, as belonging to a family as the most basic form of necessary human association. In Christ, 'we are being shaped evermore fully from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18)'.

Fundamental to true *koinonia* is worship, particularly as focussed in the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. The liturgies of the Church express the joys, suffering and mutual support of the members of the community for each other.

Koinonia is also expressed in the apostolicity of the Church, expressed in Scripture and the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. The Commission rejoice in the fact that already, in many local relationships across the world, Reformed and Anglicans have been able to affirm their common belonging to the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church and their common participation in the apostolic mission.²⁶ Furthermore, they rejoice in the fact that, in the united churches of the Indian sub-continent, they are already united, moreover in company with Christians from some other communions.²⁷ In several other countries, they are still searching for ways of moving from common recognition of full apostolicity to fuller interchange of ministry.²⁸ The Commission record

²⁶ As in the *Meissen Statement*, the *Reilly* one and the *Agreement* between the Presbyterian Church of USA and the Episcopal Church.

²⁷ With Methodists in the churches of North and South and India, also with some Baptists in the North.

²⁸ The position in France, Germany and the USA, where there are ongoing discussions.

their gratitude for being able to have their first meeting in the context of the already united Church of South India.

Nurturing *Koinonia*

Nurturing the life of *koinonia* remains a constant necessity. A key role is played by the ministry of episcopate, organised differently as between the two traditions except in the fully united churches in India. The differences are held to signify the Church's catholicity, though it has to be noted that the two traditions still stress differing forms. It is commonly accepted that the structures of both churches need common attention to ensure that they are porous to the gift of *koinonia*.²⁹ Working towards ever closer unity demands 'deep humility and self-giving that is constantly open to conversion and change'.³⁰

Important guidance is given that churches should not 'rush to close down complex discussions or resolve every disagreement artificially'. Instead, 'they need to renew their trust in the *koinonia* which is the irreversible achievement of the Paschal Mystery in the power of the Spirit'.³¹

An important point about unity in diversity is made here. 'In listening well to each other, we trust that seeing from a different perspective can be a way in which God speaks to us and builds up the community of the Church.' One may add that this has proved very important in dialogues looking at differences previously held to be church dividing, such as those on Christology, reaching back to the fifth century and those on justification stemming from the Reformation. There is now widespread agreement that the formula of Chalcedon is not the only way of asserting the unity of the two natures in Christ nor are the rival definitions of the Reformation and Trent the only approaches to the doctrine of justification; the original schisms need not have happened. The very next paragraph, number 30, stresses Jesus' own reaching out to those considered separate. The section then concludes with the magnificent paragraph discussed earlier.³²

²⁹ Report, para. 29.

³⁰ Ibid., para. 29.

³¹ Ibid., para. 30.

³² Viz., no. 31.

Healing and Wholeness

The final section is one which I commended earlier, on 'Healing and Wholeness'. It begins by arguing that *koinonia* as a radical and primary gift of God has the power to transform conflict and teach us a vital truth, that difference and disagreement are not in opposition to the unity of the Church. We have just mentioned how that has come to apply to two notoriously formerly divisive issues. One may hope that it may come to apply to some of the divisive issues which seem irreconcilable today, especially those relating to same-sex unions, which may eventually become settled as a result of further developments in the understanding of sexuality, or through a concomitant understanding that the term marriage may be confined to the lifelong partnership of a man and a woman, whilst seeing a same sex partnership as one of covenanted partnership between people of the same sex.³³ Paragraph 32 argues that 'even extremely demanding difference and conflict have the potential to teach us more fully about *koinonia* because they demand empathy, deep listening, patience and humility, which are also necessary for relationships that grow rather than fracture. Aligning with God's reconciling ministry often requires us to ask for perspective from others and repent of the limitations of our own vision.' I think the alignment of three other communions with the original Lutheran-Catholic Declaration on Justification shows this very clearly.³⁴

God's reconciliatory mission means we must never close the door to the possibility of healing; 'likewise, *koinonia* does not allow us to be satisfied with division or be comforted by a sense of self-righteousness if division comes.'³⁵

Paragraph 35 asserts the uncomfortable fact that 'division is present within and between our ecclesial bodies. Much ink has certainly been spilt discussing 'impaired communion' between churches of the same overall tradition. The IRAD prefers to talk of how *koinonia* has been 'variously received', also of how 'too often, we limit God's family to those

³³ I owe this last suggestion to a Roman Catholic deacon who is a close friend.

³⁴ Viz. the signing of the Joint Declaration by the World Methodist Council in 2006, followed by more recent Anglican and Reformed affirmations of it; moreover, the Methodists, in their recent dialogue with the Baptists, agreed the Joint Declaration should be commended to the Baptist World Alliance for possible recognition.

³⁵ Report, para. 34.

who look like us, or agree with us'. I will say that all too often I have experienced this within my own British Methodist Church where changes are being suggested that some try to allege are 'just not Methodism', i.e. Methodism as they want to see it and as they want it to remain rather than Methodism, as, perhaps, it ought now to develop.³⁶

The final two paragraphs argue that 'before they become causes of separation, conflicts can become opportunities for even deeper engagement and relationship... as we await further clarity and wisdom. The gift of *koinonia* eternally and radically reaches out, always seeking to keep people in rather than keeping them out'. Paragraph 39 concludes the section on *koinonia* in the Church thus,

The maiming of the Body of Christ is sinful. A festering injury to the Body of Christ can only be healed with restoration, repentance, reconciliation and the return of self-giving love, the ministry of Christ himself... We pray and work for the day when *koinonia* will be fully received as God desires, when the Church has grown into the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:13), and Christ will be all in all (Eph. 1:23).

Paragraph 60, in the 'Summary of Conclusions,' makes the point that 'thanks to the abundance of God's gift, it is inappropriate and inaccurate to speak of having been 'in' or 'out of communion with one another'. It is interesting to note that since Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church has spoken increasingly of 'degrees of communion' with the still separated churches, even of 'almost full communion', with the Orthodox in particular.³⁷

Missional *Koinonia*

The final chapter deals with *koinonia* in mission and throws out challenges which will be found challenging to congregations of all churches, particularly in contemporary Europe and North America. It begins by reiterating the teaching of *God's Reign and our Unity* to the effect that 'the Church is a pilgrim people... whose goal is nothing less

³⁶ I witnessed this in a discussion in the Faith and Order Committee of the (British) Methodist Church in 1984 when we discussed the *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* report of the Faith and Order division of the WCC and our response thereto. One member said that to call for a weekly celebration of the Eucharist was 'just not Methodist', ignoring, of course, the challenge.

³⁷ An important, but perhaps little noted advance, was made by the Roman Catholic International Theological Commission in 2014, when it accepted that the *sensus fidelium* is operative in the other churches.

than to reach God's Kingdom, embracing all nations and all creation... a foretaste of God's purpose "to sum up all things with Christ as Head (Eph. 1:10)".

Christians are called to lives shaped by the invitation to and challenge of mission. The implications of *koinonia* are life changing because in it, 'it is impossible to ignore responsibility to and for one other, a responsible communion that points to the interconnection and interrelatedness of God's creation, in which all have a part to play'.³⁸

The gift of *koinonia* is for the sake of the whole world. The Church is sign and servant of the missional life of God in the power of the Holy Spirit to celebrate life and resist and transform all life-destroying forces³⁹. This statement leads naturally on to three key emphases: first, on openness to radical hospitality; then to embodying justice and finally to affirming life. Radical hospitality is particularly characterised by 'openness to receiving those who are most frequently excluded by church and wider society'. It is stressed God's hospitality also extends to all of creation, God being 'the author of this web of *koinonia* between and among humanity, the natural world and the whole creation'.⁴⁰

Embodying justice involves seeing and embracing those most in need; however, it is not an expression of charity from the powerful to the powerless, rather it involves 'lifting up and valuing' those on the margins so that they may become 'witnessing agents of life transforming *koinonia*'.⁴¹

The Church has to affirm life despite its own 'frailty, woundedness, brokenness, fear and pain'. 'Life denying socio-economic and religious-political forces challenge the Church to engage in cathartic processes of repentance, remoulding and transformation.' It is called particularly to 'transcend the walls we build around ourselves'. The concluding sentence of this second section sums up. 'Missional *koinonia* transcends false and life restricting barriers and emphasises the oneness of God's gift, which is a foretaste of the abundant life promised for creation'.⁴²

In the concluding section of this chapter, we encounter the nub of the huge challenge. 'Missional communities are challenged to move beyond

³⁸ Report, para. 40.

³⁹ Ibid., para. 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 44.

⁴¹ Ibid., para. 48.

⁴² Ibid., paras. 49-53.

mere maintenance of their structures and institutions and to engage together in life-giving ministry and mission that the world may believe.⁴³ One may comment that this comes at a particular time when many congregations, of all traditions, particularly in Britain and northwest Europe, not just Anglican and Reformed, are struggling to maintain buildings (sometimes over-large), congregations (often elderly and dwindling) and are finding both these about as much as they can cope with. There are, of course, points and places of hope, growth and even ardent mission to the neediest. Can these places set an inspiring example and inspire imitation elsewhere—that is perhaps the key question not just to ask, but to act upon?

Deserving of Wider Reception, but with a Previous Agenda still to Be Fulfilled

In sum, this is a particularly challenging section of the dialogue report and it deserves not just to be studied in Anglican and Reformed Churches, but in the other traditions as well since the challenge to mission is one to all Christ's faithful. Indeed I would hope that the entire report will be studied across the entire *oikoumene* so rich it is in ecumenical wisdom and comprehensiveness of vision. It is a gem both of spiritual ecumenism and practical ecumenical co-operation in service and mission.

Lest anyone think that I have read this Report uncritically, I would add one caveat. While I accept that the challenges presented in this Report are acutely and desperately relevant in our present 2020 context, the two partners should not forget that there is still an unfinished agenda from the 1984 Report. Though the two communions have taken considerable steps towards mutual recognition in many places, including America, Britain, France and Germany, there is still no full inter-changeability of ordained ministry except in the Indian sub-continent.⁴⁴ In a sense, it has been a matter of so near and yet so far. The Meissen and Reuilly agreements of the Church of England with the Evangelical Church of Germany and the French Protestant Churches (now a united church), affirm mutual eucharistic hospitality and apostolic churchly reality, but still stop short of full mutual ministerial inter-changeability.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., para. 54.

⁴⁴ These agreements are cited. Report, p.17, ref 21.

⁴⁵ It is the same in the 2008 *Agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, which can be accessed by googling the title on line.

In the light of the challenges that still remain, I think the effort to see whether the two systems of ministry can be reconciled should be resumed. Is it possible that there could be an exchange of gifts, Anglicans receiving the local eldership as a ministry of assistance to the ordained pastorate/priesthood, Reformed receiving 'bishops in presbytery' working collegially with and amongst the other ordained ministers? Above all, in the light of the challenges to mission in this report, could there be an agreed structure for a common diaconate, in which, in Britain as an example, United Reformed Church community workers and permanent Anglican deacons could work together in needy communities where both are available. The renewal of a true diaconate in which deacons lead the rest of the congregational/parish community in work at the margins could be a particular gift and inspiration to others.⁴⁶

I gently commend this further step whilst remembering that developments in Anglicanism from the 1620's have modified its originally reformed ethos. Reformed Churches now have to deal with an Anglicanism that, in general, wants to reassert what it has in common with Roman Catholics and Orthodox as well as with Reformed Churches.⁴⁷ However, it may well be that disciplined and mutually sympathetic and empathetic listening to each other in serious dialogue may well find a solution guided by the Holy Spirit. Careful reflection on Section C of '*Koinonia* in the Church', 'Healing and Wholeness', may help with its call for 'empathy, deep listening, patience and humility', for attending to 'who has not been included' and renunciation, and as

This sets out very clearly the remaining difficulty of agreement on the exact importance of and possible mutual reception of the historic episcopal succession.

⁴⁶ As very strongly stressed in the International Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue, *To Love and Serve the Lord* (Jerusalem Report, 2013). For brief summary and comment, see my article in *One in Christ* (2013), 155-162.

⁴⁷ See the essays by Mark Chapman, Stephen Hampton and Jonathan Gibbs (pp. 7-20, 62-77 and 145-155) in Chapman, M, Nussel, F. and Grebe, M. (eds.) *Revisiting the Meissen Declaration after 30 Years* (2020), the first two of which deal with the historical aspects of the transition of Anglicanism from a very close relationship to the Reformed to one stressing a more 'catholic' identity. Gibbs suggests a need to 'go back to our roots in the Reformation' and accept that there are differing patterns of episcopate and that the New Testament *as such*, witnesses to that.

anathematising of any temptation to say 'I have no need of you' may be of great help in reaching the desired solution in a manner that respects the sensitivities in both Communions.⁴⁸

I pray so, particularly in the light of the advances recorded in this remarkable report and in the hope that it would constitute a remarkable bridgehead between two traditions that would now face both ways, towards the more ancient Catholic and Orthodox Churches and also towards the more radically Protestant Churches, thus contributing much to the *oikoumene* beyond their own particular reconciliation.

⁴⁸ Report, paras. 33, 38.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA ECUMENISM

David Carter*

This article seeks to present the very impressive and effective outreach of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) showing how it is soundly based both in the central Lutheran Reformation principles, as particularly reflected in the Augsburg Confession, and in the wider advances in the modern Ecumenical Movement. It particularly looks at the strong theological underpinning of the six full communion agreements made with churches of four other confessional traditions in America. I am grateful to Pastor Jonathan Linmann for his kindness in reading this paper and supplying me with some extra information beyond that on the ELCA website.

Amongst the many churches of the Lutheran World Federation, one, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, stands out as having been particularly energetic in forging ecumenical links with the result that, over the last twenty-five years, it has been able to make full communion agreements with six separate churches, beginning with three Reformed Churches in 1997 and ending, at least to date, with the United Methodist Church in 2009. Not, of course, that that is necessarily the end of the search for wider unity. Lutherans are in talks with two of the 'black led' Methodist Churches that are separate from the United Methodist Church. There continues a lengthy and very fruitful dialogue between the US Catholic Bishops Conference and the ELCA, a dialogue which has also contributed much to the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. Many regard it as the finest of the plethora of national bilateral dialogues across the globe.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is also the result of an earlier internal union within US Lutheranism in 1988.¹ Lutheran

* See above: *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*. A report for the whole *oikoumene*.

¹ The three churches involved being the American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in the USA.

immigrants from Europe had originated largely from Scandinavia and Germany and had brought different patterns of church government and liturgical practice with them. With the development both of internal population mobility within the Union and of the world-wide Ecumenical Movement, which had brought with it also a deeper sense of Church as communion, several separate bodies sought closer internal unity. The result in ELCA was a broad range of liturgical and theological styles, exemplified in two current pastors, Pastor Jonathan Linman, who identifies with a more high church liturgical style, and his brother, who preserves a more strongly Protestant style.²

There remain, however, some separate Lutheran churches which insist on a particular, usually very conservative, interpretation of Luther and his heritage. The most important of these is the Missouri Synod Church, which has also, independently, sought a dialogue with Rome. It is a church that has had an enviable reputation in providing secondary education in Lutheran schools, from which many passed on to Lutheran universities and seminaries to train as pastors. Today, it is about half the size of ELCA.

Those wishing to study the ELCA's ecumenical heritage and commitment are favoured with a particularly thorough and well-organised website which sets out both how ELCA sees its ecumenical heritage and commitment and the nature of the agreements with the six churches referred to earlier. Pastor Jonathan, mentioned above, argues that the experience of negotiating for intra-Lutheran unity gave the new church more confidence in its ability to negotiate effectively but irenically with other Christian traditions.

The Vision of ELCA

In a section entitled 'The Vision of ELCA', the church sets forth its understanding of both Scripture and the classic Lutheran confessions. In the former, it highlights the divine wish for the unity of all peoples as implied in Scripture in the creation narratives, the promise to Abraham that 'in him all the nations of the world would be blessed', the witness of the servant songs in Isaiah and the call of prophets and

² Cimino, R. (ed.), *Lutherans Today: American Lutheranism in the 21st Century* (2003) gives a very good account of the differing emphases within such movements as the Evangelical Catholic Movement and the Word Alone movement within the ELCA. It also deals with the influence of charismatics and the mega-church movement on sections of the ELCA.

psalmists alike to the universal praise of God. In the New Testament, unity is mentioned in many passages, particularly note-worthily in Ephesians 4 and Philippians 2: 5-11. Finally, it highlights the possibility for human unity, despite prevailing human dis-functionality.

The Scriptures present a realistic picture both of the human proclivity to disagreement and of the unity that is possible through Christ.

Next, the vision enshrined in the classic Lutheran confessions of the Reformation era is underlined. The joint aim of these confessions is stressed as being for the oneness of Christ's Church, the preservation of its catholic heritage and the renewal of the Church as a whole. The Lutherans claimed that they always pointed to Scripture and the three classical Creeds of the early Church.³ They also claimed that they drew on the reflections of previous leaders of the Church, from both East and West. One may add to this that Luther certainly did not desire a breach with traditional order, even with the papacy. Indeed he asserted that he 'would gladly embrace the pope if only he would embrace the Gospel'.⁴

Absolutely central for Lutherans is the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession of 1530, with its stress that it is sufficient for the unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel is purely preached and that the two gospel sacraments are duly administered. In practice this should have enabled, as early as 1530, not simply a road to unity with Rome but also with the emerging reformed churches. However, the refusal of Rome to accept any such basis for reunion and the antagonism of the Reformed Churches, with their differing approaches to the presence of Christ in the eucharist, made this impossible. Luther, in particular, repudiated the reformed approaches to the eucharistic presence of Christ even more strongly than he repudiated the Catholic understanding of mass and transubstantiation.

However, the different atmosphere generated by the twentieth century Ecumenical Movement, particularly since its Roman Catholic reception at Vatican II, has allowed a retrieval and re-pristination of Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. Indeed, one may add that it has allowed churches not just to agree on a certain basic minimum but also to agree that churches can find their understanding of the depth of their common faith enriched by examining the insights of other traditions as

³ The latter being the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.

⁴ Indeed, Luther admired many of the early popes up to and including Pope Gregory the Great (590-604).

they have arisen in other situations and cultures. We see this well illustrated in twentieth century agreements across the traditions, where large numbers of alternative approaches to the mystery of Christ have come to be seen as complementary. We shall see this both in the accounts of ELCA's full communion agreements and in dialogues between other sets of partners from varying traditions. Thus, for example, the (British) Anglican-Methodist Covenant of 2003, speaks of 'jointly harvesting each others' traditions'.⁵

Adiaphora, Pluriformity and Communion in the Church

Lutherans did, indeed, from the beginning, advance the concept of *adiaphora*, whereby the different traditions and customs of worship in other traditions and countries did not affect the essential unity that ought to obtain, provided they did not contradict the preaching of the essential gospel of justification by grace through faith or the regular and proper celebration of baptism and eucharist. Nevertheless, as a result of the early controversies with Rome, the Reformed and Anabaptist and similar groups, it was to take a long time for the implicitly generous approach of men like Melancthon to bear fruit.

ELCA accepts fully that Article 7 is ecumenically liberating. 'Only those things that convey salvation, justification by faith and the two sacraments are allowed as constitutive elements of the Church'. Certainly, it is so for all churches that can accord with Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession; some, however, continue to insist on some other fundamentals.⁶

'There is room for recognising, living and experiencing fellowship within the context of seeking larger theological agreement'. Moreover, it is a Christian duty to be 'constantly searching for the theological truth

⁵ This agreement commits the Church of England and the British Methodist Church to closer co-operation in mission and service but does not yet involve full inter-changeability of ministry.

⁶ These clearly include Roman Catholics and Orthodox; also, Anglicans, to the extent that they still insist on historic episcopacy as necessary for full inter-changeability of ministry despite their increasing stress in recent years on the churchly authenticity of Presbyterian and Methodist Churches that still lack such a succession.

of the Gospel to be proclaimed *together* (my italics) in the present critical time of our world'.⁷

One may perhaps add that it is significant that so many of the ELCA dialogues in preparation for full communion have taken place within the context of a world faced with multiple problems of inequality, injustice, poverty and environmental crises. ELCA has also been helped by the witness of the Lutheran World Federation as a whole. At its 1977 meeting in Dar es Salaam, it endorsed the approach of seeking unity in reconciled diversity. In its later, 1984 declaration, it underlined this further. It proclaimed itself to be 'a communion where diversities contribute to the fullness and are no longer barriers to unity. It is a committed fellowship, able to make common decisions and act in common.'

Diversity is accepted as arising out of the 'different cultural and ethnic contexts within which the one Church of Christ lives out its mission'. 'In recognising these diversities as expressions of the one apostolic faith and church, traditions are changed and antagonisms overcome. Diversities are received and transformed into a legitimate and indispensable multi-formity in the one body of Christ'.

In this, the Lutheran World Federation echoes the stress placed at Vatican II and subsequently within the Roman Catholic communion on the pluriformity of Christian traditions, on the respect in which it held the eastern Christian traditions of apostolic order, and even the more effective cultivation within Reformation and post-Reformation Churches of particular aspects of Christian tradition that genuinely belong to the catholic fullness of the Church.⁸ It is true, of course, that Rome still requires full unity to include acceptance of the petrine office, which it has alone maintained, and its particular understanding of the three-fold ministry in lineal succession. There is thus an imbalance, an asymmetry in relationships between Lutherans, satisfied that the question of justification by grace through faith has been settled and Catholics, who require settlement of questions of order. Nevertheless,

⁷ A duty increasingly recognised in the Catholic Church from Vatican II onwards, first with its stress of 'searching together with the separated brethren into the divine mysteries' (*Decree on Ecumenism* 11), through to Pope Francis' clear wish that all Christians should be 'missionary disciples'.

⁸ *Decree on Ecumenism* 4 note especially the stress on such emphases as capable of resulting in 'a more ample realisation of the very mystery of Christ and the Church'.

great strides towards rapprochement have been made within the LWF Churches, some of which have entered into the three fold ministry and theologians of which have joined in the debate on the future evolution of a more widely acceptable petrine ministry, first launched by John Paul II but within which Lutheran theologians have played a key part in drawing attention to the affirmation of episcopacy in the Augsburg Confession and Luther's views on reconciliation with the Pope if only he would proclaim the Gospel. The LWF in its big study, *The Church as Communion* entered wholeheartedly into the process through which the ecumenically engaged Christian churches have sought to recover in common an ecclesiology based on the eternal plan of the Father to sum up all things in Christ and to enfold creation in the love of the triune God, a common fundamental vision within which, in due course, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit all our differing visions, all our varying experiences of God's providential ways with us, might be reconciled in a comprehensive whole, leading to full communion between all local and particular churches.⁹

The search for internal communion within our particular traditions contributes to the greater whole. The combined academic and spiritual depth of perception of a Baptist, Paul Fiddes, and a Roman Catholic, Yves Congar, both men characterised by the linkage of historical study and theological perceptiveness, point in the same direction to the whole Church as communion at every level.¹⁰

In its current Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment, ELCA sums up crisply and effectively, so much that is common to the ecumenically engaged churches:

The unity of the Church, as proclaimed in the Scriptures, is a gift and goal of Jesus Christ. Ecumenism is the joyous experience of the unity of God's people and the serious task of expressing that unity visibly to advance the Gospel for the blessing of humankind. The ELCA, in relation to other churches, stresses itself as evangelical, that is catholic, and that is ecumenical.

Finally, it expresses the eschatological perspective, one long preserved, in relation to the whole created order, better in the East than the West.

⁹ LWF Documentation, *The Church as Communion*, 42/1997.

¹⁰ See e.g. Fiddes P, *Tracks and Traces; Baptist identity in Church and Theology*, (2003). For Congar, see e.g. his massive *Tradition and Traditions* (1966).

This Gospel is unconditional, and is eschatological, as it announces the destruction of the last enemy, when Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28).

Unity is thus perceived as a sign of ultimate hope for a fallen humanity, that one day it will be fully redeemed, in accordance with the plan and promises of the Father, the work of Christ in redemption and the grace of the Spirit, present in His Church.

Unity in Communion and Mutual Learning

The statement next examines what it means to ELCA to be ecumenical. First comes the commitment to seek unity; next the search to understand and value the past gracious gifts of God in its own history whilst at the same time balancing this with an understanding that those gifts are *incomplete themselves* (my italics) as ELCA moves towards fuller unity. As the journey is made, ELCA both contributes to and learns from others. One may note the compatibility of this emphasis both with the stress in the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* on the Church's constantly moving forward towards the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her.¹¹ It also resonates with the initial paragraph of the British Methodist ecclesiological statement of 1937, *Nature of the Christian Church*, which speaks of the Church as being 'the home of the Holy Spirit... a family with a unique and developing life... as new nations and races are added to it, and new apprehension of divine truth is given'.¹²

Finally, there is practical advice for all members. They are to repent of any ways in which they may have contributed to discord or disunity amongst Christ's people. They are to pray and be ready to sacrifice non-essentials in the cause of unity. This last is a valuable reminder that sometimes the cause of unity can be well served by accepting that some cherished traditions, not essential to faith and proper practice, may need to be sacrificed in the interest of wider unity.

The wide range that ought to characterise ELCA ecumenism is enshrined in the statement that 'this church is bold to reach out in several directions at once and gives no priority to any particular denominational group'. ELCA has reached out, successfully, in six directions, and continues to reach out in others.

¹¹ *Dei Verbum* 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

Even more boldly, the Declaration takes the view that 'God's word of justification excludes patterns of ecclesiological self-justification, which may have arisen from the polemical heritage of the sixteenth century. The first word that the Church speaks may be a word against itself because we are all called to be seekers of a truth that is larger than ourselves and that condemns our parochialism, imperialism and self-preoccupation... In this way, the ecumenical vision of ELCA will not be dominated by attention to past controversies. It will focus rather on the present and future theological reflection and missiological action. One may complement this with an insight from an ecumenical conference held in England in 1987, to the effect that 'unity comes alive, as we learn to live in one another's traditions'.¹³

The very fact that ELCA can make such a pronouncement makes me understand the great debt that other traditions owe to Lutheranism as a tradition that summons us to be penitently aware both of our fallen nature and of our constant need for God's daily renewed word of forgiveness, whilst being fully aware of the extent to which we must continue to be stirred by his grace to hand on his forgiveness and acceptance as good news to the rest of the Church. We are all, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, members of churches of gratefully repentant sinners, 'poor nothings for his boundless grace'.¹⁴ We must not be ungracious to those who have received the same Gospel, however peculiar their process of reception of the Gospel may appear to some.

The Declaration ends with a summary of the processes that should normally precede and prepare for full communion agreements. There are four stages. First, the churches involved should agree that proposals don't compromise truths they hold to be essential; secondly, that they recognise the validity of the other church's central truths; thirdly, that they will emphasise the differences clearly, whilst, finally, allowing their articulations to enable mutual growth in the relationship. Here, one may instance a parallel in the contemporary negotiations leading to the English Anglican-Methodist Covenant, which talked of 'harvesting each other's traditions'.¹⁵

¹³ The English conference in the Not Strangers but Pilgrims process that led to the current English and British-Irish ecumenical structures, set up in 1990.

¹⁴ Quotation from a pietist German hymn, translated by John Wesley into English and remaining popular ever since in British Methodism.

¹⁵ This Covenant called for greater co-operation in mission and ministry while falling short of full inter-changeability of ministries, a topic still under

The Full Communion Agreements

The principles discussed above seem to have been faithfully maintained in the agreements made with Presbyterians, Anglicans, Moravians and Methodists, which we will now explore. In practice, there are only four agreements since the one with the Presbyterian Churches was concluded with three separate churches broadly in that tradition.

The preliminary conversations with Presbyterians and Anglicans were carried out almost simultaneously, though the final agreement with the Presbyterians was tied up first, there having, on the first attempt at an agreement with the Episcopal Church, been a hitch when the first draft of the agreement did not gain quite the required majority in the ELCA national synod, resulting in the need for a lightly revised version of the agreement to be brought a second time before the Lutheran synod, at which point it did win the necessary majority vote.

The agreement with the three Reformed Churches included one, the United Church of Christ, which was *already* a union of some reformed and Lutheran immigrants into the United States in the early nineteenth century. They had been influenced by the example of a sort of federal united church established in Prussia, partly by the initiative of the king, Frederick William IV, who was keen to create such a united Protestant church in his realm.¹⁶ The immigrants saw no reason why they should not try to emulate this in the States, the result being the creation of the United Church of Christ, which acknowledged a dual confessional heritage.

Indeed, the process of setting Lutheran-Reformed full communion in America must be set in an even wider context, going both back to the early Reformation era and then receiving a degree of influence in late twentieth century developments in Europe. As early as 1530, Lutheran and Reformed theologians met at Marburg to try and settle doctrinal

consideration. For an overview, see my article in *Ecumenical Trends*, Oct 2004, 10-15.

¹⁶ Indeed, Frederick William favoured even wider union. He considered the possibility of adopting Anglican episcopacy and agreed to a joint Anglican-Lutheran bishop to oversee missions from both traditions in Jerusalem. The pattern of the new Evangelical Church in Prussia was that of a bundle of largely autonomous regional churches, some Lutheran, some Reformed, some a local union of the two traditions. Its traditions carried over into the united Germany of 1871 and its modern descendent is the Evangelical Church of Germany.

and sacramental issues over which there was disagreement. These failed, largely as a result of the depth of disagreement between Luther and Zwingli on the exact nature of Christ's presence in the eucharist, Calvin, whose views were more acceptable to Luther, not being present. Later, scholastic theology in both communions deepened the differences till the time of new German union.

In the changed post-World War II era of the developing Ecumenical Movement, a group of modern European exegetes from both Lutheran and Reformed Churches took the line that the New Testament did not call for the issues over eucharistic theology to be seen as church dividing. A prolonged resultant process of consultation led to the Leuenberg Agreement between most of the European churches of both traditions, establishing pulpit and altar fellowship on the basis of Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. Though there was far from immediate acceptance of this accord in America, it did, in co-operation with the increasing search for overall unity, lead to a reassessment, though not without hesitation on the part of some Lutherans who feared an agreement with the Reformed might imperil the then rapidly developing relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, this feeling being significant amongst some of the churches that were in the process of unity to form ELCA.¹⁷

The complexity of this development is well reflected in the document, *A Common Calling*. It directly cites the Leuenberg statements on the eucharist:

In the Lord's Supper, the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood through his word of promise with bread and wine.

Significantly, it also states, 'we affirm that both our communions also need to keep on growing into an ever deeper realisation of the fullness of the eucharistic mystery', a clear acceptance that the Church as a whole is on a pilgrimage, guided by the Holy Spirit in accordance with Christ's promise that he will lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

By 1997, the four churches were able to identify themselves as 'sharing in three essential facets of relationship': first in 'authentic grounding in New Testament traditions'; secondly as seeing these as 'belonging together within the One Holy Catholic Church'; and thirdly, as involving a responsibility to accept that the mutual criticisms of the

¹⁷ The article on Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (1991) spells this out particularly well.

past are not to be 'glossed over', but need henceforth to be seen as 'diverse witnesses to the one Gospel that we confess in common'. Finally, the four churches all agreed that their decision to enter into full communion did not compromise their own churches but allowed each to recognise the validity of the others. They intended to let the differences be articulated honestly, allowing such articulations to contribute to mutual growth in relationship. In all of which, these four churches were effectively committing themselves to what has, only a few years later, become called and commended as *receptive ecumenism*.

In 1999, a full communion agreement was concluded with the Moravians, the document establishing this being called 'Following our Shepherd to Full Communion'. Certain unique features in the relationship between Moravians and Lutherans were acknowledged. The first was that, despite the lack of any formal agreement, Lutheran Churches and Moravian provinces had long been in a state of virtual full communion. For the first time, ELCA was entering into a formal full communion agreement with a pre-Reformation church, the Moravians having developed from the Hussite movement of the fifteenth century in Moravia.¹⁸ Persecution by the Catholic Habsburg regime after 1620 had led to emigration into Protestant territories in Germany where, in the eighteenth century, they came under the protection of a Lutheran pietist noble, Count Zinzendorff, who became a bishop amongst them. They became deeply influenced by Lutheran pietism, on which, in turn, they also had an influence, as indeed they had, a little later, on John Wesley and early Methodism. Much in the agreement is very similar to the near contemporary ones made with Anglicans and Presbyterians. It is good that this small, but widely admired communion with its strong missionary history, has been able to achieve full communion with another communion with which it has such a long, if informal, relationship.

The agreement with the Episcopal Church was especially significant, particularly in a north American context where the Episcopal Church, not a numerically strong church, had been unable, previously, to achieve any mutually acceptable full communion agreement except

¹⁸ The Moravians, along with the Italian Waldensians, who predate them from the twelfth century, identified strongly with the key emphasis of the magisterial Reformation on justification by grace through faith.

with small Old Catholic communities.¹⁹ In many respects, ELCA was the church closest in style to the Episcopal Church. It had preserved a richer liturgical tradition than the other Protestant Churches and in some parishes, particularly in New York, displayed a liturgical splendour rivalling that of the more anglo-catholic section of the Episcopal Church. At a recent conference of the Anglican-Lutheran Society in Durham, England, an ELCA member told me that he saw the Anglican and Lutheran communions as representing the *Conservative* Reformation, a reformation determined to preserve as much of the old liturgy and spirituality as could be retained without contradicting and obscuring the gospel of free grace.

Much of the full communion agreement was thus concerned with resolving the problem of orders, with concessions being made by both sides in order to achieve a union in which, after a period of time, all the bishops would be in the same historic succession. All presbyteral clergy would be acceptable and interchangeable within both churches, the Episcopal Church suspending the regulation about episcopal ordination in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.²⁰ The Episcopal Church also assured Lutherans that they accepted that the historic catholic episcopate, under the word of God, must always serve the Gospel.

The Lutherans accepted that Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession indicated the desire of the early Reformers to preserve episcopacy, where possible.²¹ ELCA promised in return that, at future Lutheran episcopal ordinations, three bishops in the succession (not necessarily Anglican, though a bishop from the Episcopal Church would usually be one of them) would be involved. It was also agreed that, at *all* subsequent episcopal consecrations in both churches, *one* bishop from the partner church would be involved. It was also agreed all clergy of both churches, when serving in the partner tradition, would be careful to observe all relevant regulations. It was also agreed that there would be joint consultation over any controversial issues that might arise in either church.

¹⁹ One of these, with the Polish Old Catholics, had, in fact, been broken off as a result of the Episcopalians admitting women to the presbyterate.

²⁰ There had been a precedent for this in the 1947 formation of the Church of South India where Reformed and Methodist ministers had been accepted as presbyters in the United Church of South India.

²¹ Which, however, was not possible in Germany. By contrast, in Sweden, the episcopal succession had been maintained.

Some impetus was no doubt given to this agreement by the earlier trans-Atlantic Porvoo Agreement, by which the British and Irish Anglican Churches and most Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran Churches constituted themselves as a joint communion.²² An episcopal succession was recognised as existing through retention of the historic sees in three churches, where a presbyter had ordained the first Reformation bishops for Norway and Denmark. The other churches involved had retained bishops throughout the Reformation.

The ELCA-Episcopal Church agreement was important in crossing an important ecumenical divide and was followed later by the similar Waterloo Agreement in Canada, later taken further in the 2018 accord that provided for a close relation between all four Anglican and Lutheran Churches in the two countries. This was seen as an important stepping stone for the preparation of even wider internationally based full communion accords.

The Agreement with the United Methodist Church

The final agreement to note is the full communion agreement with the United Methodist Church of 2010, one of particular interest to me as a British Methodist, but also because of the addition of some helpful general advice on particular aspects of worship both relating to commonalities and to differences.

The key document is entitled 'Confessing our Faith together'. It specifically notes that this is the first instance of ELCA making a full communion agreement with a church with a *larger* membership than its own. It is perhaps wise that this is stated right at the beginning since smaller churches can fear being swallowed up in a larger one and losing some of their cherished distinctiveness. It was a fear of some in the two smaller Methodist Churches that united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church to form the present British Methodist Church in 1932, the Wesleyans then having a larger membership than the two other churches combined. It has since been a fear of some Methodists that they would be 'swallowed up' in any union with the Church of England. Of course, a full communion agreement is not the same as a corporate

²² At first, minus the Danish and Latvian Churches. More recently the Church of Denmark has joined, as has the Latvian Church in exile, but not the Church of Latvia. Later, they were joined by the Lusitanian and Spanish Reformed Episcopal Churches, two small churches now associated with the Anglican Communion. The Lutheran Church of England is now also a member.

union at every level of being church. Full communion agreements do have the advantage that they provide particularly well for the maintenance of distinctive traditions whilst also commending learning from partner churches. From a particularly Lutheran point of view, they provide for that unity in diversity that the LWF has commended since 1977 and which is claimed to be authorised in Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession.

‘Confessing our Faith Together’ was long in gestation. US Lutherans and Methodists began a dialogue in 1977, the first positive result of which was mutual recognition of baptism in 1981. During this period an international dialogue began between Lutherans and Methodists which dealt fruitfully with some of the earlier causes of theological agreement, most particularly over the tensions between the Lutheran insistence on *simul iustus et peccator* and the Methodist insistence on ‘pressing on to full salvation’, i.e. entire sanctification as vocation and very real possibility. The international dialogue also recommended that ‘our churches take steps to declare and establish full fellowship of word and sacrament’, recommending mutual eucharistic hospitality and pulpit exchanges as a starting point for the process.²³ This recommendation soon bore fruit, especially in terms of full communion agreements between some European Lutheran churches and the (mainly small), European conferences of the United Methodist Church. The recommendation was also a fillip to further advance in the ELCA-UMC relationship.

Progress was, however, relatively slow and it was only in 2004 that interim eucharistic sharing was endorsed and in 2010 the guidelines for the celebration of full communion. It stated that, ‘we now recognise in one another the one holy, catholic and apostolic faith as it is expressed in the Church’s historic Creeds and attested to in the Lutheran confessions and in the doctrinal standards of the UMC’. It recognised the catholicity of each other’s baptism and eucharist, the validity of each other’s ordinations and resultant ministry of word and sacrament. It recognised ‘the authentic diaconal service of UMC ordained deacons

²³ *The Church: Community of Grace* (1984), para 91. It should be noted that the UMC is a global church unlike the Methodist Church of Great Britain that has long since devolved independence to its former missionary districts. The overseas UM Conferences have a degree of autonomy but are still represented in the four yearly General Conference.

and of ELCA rostered lay ministers'. It allowed ministers of word and sacrament to serve in both churches, 'subject to constitutionally approved invitation.'

Very helpfully, the document recommended key sources of information about each other's understanding, theology and practice of such ministry. Thus, Methodists were recommended to read the *Means of Grace* (ELCA, 1997) and Lutherans to study *This Holy Mystery* (UMC, 2004) and *By Water and Spirit* (UMC, 1996, 2004). The centrality of preaching and proclamation of the Word was stated to be common to both churches with the rider that 'ample opportunity to read, sing, preach and hear the Gospel should be in every service'. Certainly, hymn singing has been at the heart of both traditions from their very beginning. Indeed, hymn singing as such was only made a common feature in English worship by others adopting the custom from early Methodism.

On sacramental practice, it was recommended that, wherever possible, the presence of ministers and laity from partner churches was a valuable testimony to the 'ecumenical character of all baptisms'. On holy communion, both churches recognised the need for an ordained pastor leader to preside, the presidency of a sole minister was preferred to concelebration, specifically as a witness to the mutual acceptance of orders. Differences over the use of the wine employed in the two churches were noted with the addition of the comment that reception of only one element made the crucified and risen Christ fully present.²⁴ It is remarked that the wearing of alb, stole and chasuble is characteristic of eucharistic dress of Lutheran pastor and, though much less widespread, is also becoming truer of Methodist elders.²⁵

On top of all this, 'Confessing our Faith Together' provided an admirably detailed theological commentary, both on basic theological commonalities between the two churches and on contrasting, though

²⁴ Viz. UMC use of grape juice vs. ELCA use of wine. The UMC practice arose through the very strong support it gave to the Temperance Movement (a parallel development occurred in British Methodism). Presumably the statement about the sufficiency of one element relates to the concern of some Lutherans that a Methodist eucharist might not fulfil all the requirement of rightful administration.

²⁵ 'Elder' is the term used for presbyter/pastor/priest in the UMC and derives from Wesley's preference for the term to priest in the revised prayer book which he produced for the US Methodists in 1784.

reconcilable emphases, most notably on salvation by grace through faith. The Lutheran stress on the depth of persisting sinfulness is counterbalanced by the Methodist stress on the power of prevenient grace. Significantly, paragraph 27 establishes the balance:

No limit can be set to God's activity and power in this life...this is always in tension with a deep theological suspicion of a human being's best efforts and an awareness of the depths of human sin.

Paragraphs 30 and 31 then establish what each tradition can offer the other in seeking a balance that affirms the key points in the two contrasts:

The UMC offers ELCA a dynamic vision of redeemed human existence as faith working by love, leading to holiness of life...ELCA offers the UMC a vision of Christian life by baptism as well as God's decisive action for us in the work of Christ. The regenerate life is freedom from the accusation of the law but also as led by the Holy Spirit, as being engrafted in Christ, conformed to the will of God in a free and joyful spirit.

A final point needs to be made. Neither ELCA nor the UMC represent the sum total of Lutherans/Methodists in the USA. ELCA and UMC are the key mainstream churches of their respective traditions, but there are also some very conservative churches in both traditions that would claim to preserve the Lutheran and Methodist traditions more fully and faithfully. Such are the Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Wesleyan Holiness Church and the Church of the Nazarene in Methodism. There are also black-led Methodist Churches such as African Methodist Episcopal Church, which split early from the former Methodist Episcopal Church over race issues. It is interesting to note from the ecumenical section of the ELCA website that ELCA is in talks with some of these churches, a testimony to ELCA's ecumenical energy and commitment and also its desire, as the 'whitest' of the major denominations, to show clearly that there was no question of tolerating any racism.

A Final Tribute from a Methodist to the Work of ELCA

As a British Methodist, I have come, late in life, to a deep appreciation of Lutheran ecumenical commitment in general.²⁶ Through contacts

²⁶ Part of the reason for this is that there are very few Lutheran congregations in Britain. I live in Bristol and the nearest Lutheran Churches are in Cardiff, about forty miles away, and Oxford, about sixty. However, for nearly twenty

with ELCA members in the Anglican-Lutheran Society, I have come particularly to esteem ELCA. I admire the thoroughness and rigour with which ELCA has pursued the search for unity in reconciled diversity and for the way in which it has insisted that there should be means for settling any future disputes that may threaten to disrupt the fellowships so carefully created. I would be very interested to know more about these means and how far they have been needed to be used and over what sort of problems. Sadly, the Universal Church is still disrupted by new issues, particularly those related to the ministry of women and the attitude to be taken towards same sex partnerships and marriage. These have been particularly disruptive within the Anglican Communion and, in Britain, could disrupt both Methodism and the Church of England unless dealt with prayerfully and irenically patiently.

years, I have enjoyed the friendship of Rev. Tom Bruch, and American Lutheran minister, who has for well over thirty years lived in England, was for a long time at the Lutheran International Centre in London and is now Lutheran Dean for the UK. I owe a great debt to Tom for increasing my appreciation of the gifts of Lutheranism to the *oikoumene*.

THE BIBLE AND BIBLE SOCIETY IN MIZORAM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FROM AN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE

Laldingluaia*

The praxis of ecumenical dialogue is beneficial to the renewal of theology as a discipline of faith seeking understanding. Spiritual ecumenism invites theology to question its own spiritual practices, while the praxis of bilateral dialogue encourages greater attention to doctrinal language. The ministry of reconciliation fostered through the ecumenical movement is instructive for a revitalized theology of truth. The ongoing renewal of theology is thus crucial to overcoming satisfaction with the status quo of polite ecumenism and striving for ever-greater visible unity of the one Church.

Ecclesial communion is essential to Christian life, and the desire for ever-greater unity of Christians and of the Churches should inform and inspire all fields of theology. Theologians should take more responsibility for the quest for unity through their praxis and service in reflection, research, writing and teaching. At the same time, the processes and progress of the ecumenical movement should enrich theology. Why and how is the praxis of ecumenical dialogue beneficial to the renewal of theology? After examining what the praxis of theology means and involves, we will consider how the gifts and fruits of the ecumenical movement may enhance the discipline of theology. We will focus on spiritual ecumenism, bilateral doctrinal dialogues, the ministry of reconciliation and the ultimate horizon of the quest for Christian unity.

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The Praxis of Theology: Faith Seeking Understanding

Fides quaerens intellectum, Anselm of Canterbury's (c. 1033–1109) description of the theological task, flows from the ascetic and contemplative practices of Benedictine life. This axiom has traversed the centuries and continues to provide inspiration. At the source and the core of the theological quest, faith, a gift offered and accepted freely by the grace of God, is an existential choice, an expression of trust, a vital relationship with God and our brothers and sisters in humanity. The act of believing enhances life and unites believers who receive the Word of God through the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Just as the academic discipline and praxis of medicine attends to the health of mind and body, so too Christian theology, as an academic discipline and praxis, serves the vigor of faith and life in God, in and through the Body of Christ.

Quaerens, the present participle of the verb *quaero*, signifies to search for, to seek, to strive for. *Quaero* translates the active nature of theological reflection, research, and praxis as an ongoing humble quest, open to surprise and disruption, as the mystery of God has no bounds. This quest is not a solitary walk, but rather a prayerful pilgrimage, both personal and communal, attentive to the struggles and joys of the times, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a shared search for truth in service and devotion to the one Triune God.

Intellectum, most often translated into English as 'understanding', designates the broad horizon of the theological quest that encompasses not only the exercise of human reason, but also discernment and wisdom which flourish over time. The hermeneutical perspective of understanding relies first on the interpretation of Scripture in dialogue with ecclesial, theological, religious, and cultural traditions and resources of other disciplines. In the Roman Catholic tradition, this dialogical process develops in communion with the spiritual care and authority of the magisterium of the Church. More recently, Pope Francis has emphasized the need for a hermeneutic of compassion and mercy in theological praxis, in accordance with the themes of his papacy.

It is important that theologians be men and women of compassion— inwardly touched by the oppressed life many live, by the forms of slavery present today, by the social wounds, the violence, the wars and the enormous injustices suffered by so many poor people who live on the shores of this 'common sea'. Without communion and without

compassion constantly nourished by prayer [...] theology not only loses its soul, but also its intelligence and ability to interpret reality in a Christian way. Without compassion, drawn from the Heart of Christ, theologians risk being swallowed up in the condition of privilege of those who prudently place themselves outside the world and share nothing risky with the majority of humanity.¹

Pope Francis holds that following a path of mercy prevents theology and theologians from ‘domesticating’ the mystery of God and helps keep their interpretive work grounded in prayer and awareness of suffering and injustice.

With this vision of theology in mind, let us now turn to the praxis of ecumenism. What are some of the positive consequences of the ecumenical movement and how may they contribute to theology as an academic discipline and praxis? We will examine four interrelated fields: spiritual ecumenism, doctrinal ecumenical dialogue, the ministry of reconciliation and the ultimate meaning and horizon of seeking the visible unity of the Church.

The Spiritual Roots and Soul of the Ecumenical Movement

The transformative spiritual dimension of the ecumenical movement is fundamental to its nature and mission. Indeed, the call for conversion of heart and renewal of life has driven the ecumenical movement from its inception and has been most fully expressed through what is known as ‘spiritual ecumenism’². Prayer, long recognized as the ‘soul’ of the ecumenical movement, is the most common medium of spiritual ecumenism, as participation in the prayer of Christ who desires that we be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:21).³ Common prayer in

¹ Pope Francis, ‘Theology after *Veritatis gaudium* in the Context of the Mediterranean’, June 21, 2019. See: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/june/documents/papa-francesco_20190621_tologia-napoli.html.

² Paul Couturier (1881-1953), a French Roman Catholic priest who initiated the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and was one of the founding members of the Groupe des Dombes, is a key figure for spiritual ecumenism. Paul Couturier, *Prière et unité chrétienne. Testament œcuménique*, (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2003).

³ During his ecumenical pilgrimage to Geneva for the seventieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches in June 2018, Pope Francis stated: ‘Prayer is the oxygen of ecumenism. Without prayer, communion becomes stifling and

ecumenical settings is a tangible manifestation of the progress towards visible unity that Christians and Churches have made, but it is also the space where the divisions that persist may be painfully experienced: sharing in the One Body and Blood of Christ is not yet possible for all Christians. Common prayer is thus also a sign of the ultimate horizon of ecumenism, of the path that lies ahead.⁴

The praxis of spiritual ecumenism that highlights both the flourishing, yet incomplete, unity of Christians and the promised unity that remains to be grown, invites theology and theologians to consider anew the role of prayer in their discipline. As the driving force of theology, faith must be nourished through prayer. Have theological educators sufficiently encouraged a praxis of prayer that both strengthens spiritual trust and reveals areas needing further attention? How are students of theology taught to pray, by themselves and with others? How are they taught to reflect on different forms and practices of prayer? Greater consideration of spiritual practices and prayer as a *locus theologicus* invites more thorough analysis of how these realities have transformed our ecclesial landscapes and missions. For example, the ever-growing number of large gatherings for prayers of healing, across Christian confessions, merits more interest. As a holistic and integrative praxis, spiritual ecumenism echoes the monastic origins of Anselm's dictum and summons theology to scrutinize its own sustaining spiritual practices.

The Praxis, Methodology and Reception of Doctrinal Ecumenical Dialogue

Our second area concerns the praxis of doctrinal ecumenical dialogue, its methodology and reception. The progression of doctrinal dialogue

makes no progress, because we prevent the wind of the Spirit from driving us forward.'

See: <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo/altri-documenti-ed-eventi/pellegrinaggio-del-santo-padre-a-ginevra-21-giugno-2018-/incontro-ecumenico.html>.

⁴ The Ninth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ* (2007–2012) addresses this aspect spiritual ecumenism in Annex B, paragraph 45. See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/ninth-report-of-the-joint-working-group>.

encourages the discipline of theology to examine its different languages and means of communicating with different publics. The linguistic metaphor may be used to trace the methodological developments of doctrinal dialogue.

At the outset of the ecumenical movement, dialogue partners began by listening to each other's dialects, the speech of praise through prayer, as well as doctrinal formulations. After this phase of linguistic initiation and exchange, ecumenical conversation first advanced through a comparative method of juxtaposing both ecclesial practices and doctrinal formulations. Multilateral dialogue, especially as practiced by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, brought about a method of convergence, where dialogue partners seek to forge together a common way of expressing the nature and the mission of the Church.

Bilateral doctrinal dialogue, in particular the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, has implemented the method of differentiated consensus that explicitly recognizes the legitimacy and worth of the dialogue partner's specific accent.⁵ Speaking a common language of 'consensus in fundamental truths', the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran World Federation recognize

The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paragraphs 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore, the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths.⁶

The conclusion of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* declares that this consensus must have a perceptible impact. 'Our

⁵ The term 'differentiating consensus' is also used to highlight the ongoing and dynamic nature of this method.

⁶ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*, n° 40. The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church issued a twentieth Anniversary Edition of the *JDDJ* in 2019. See:

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-joint-declaration-doctrine-justification-20th-anniversary-edition>

consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself.⁷ Yet, the ecumenical dialect of differentiating consensus has struggled to become a *lingua franca* at the heart of Christian life.⁸

Theology, with its hermeneutical responsibility to interpret Scripture, can help elucidate the dissonance of different dialects and accents in Christian ethics. Could the dialects of Christian ethics be taken up and their legitimacy justified by a method of differentiating consensus? Doctrinal ecumenical dialogue has shown the necessity and benefits of learning languages and appreciating accents. This type of learning requires time, endurance, and patience. In a similar way, theology and theologians are enriched when immersed in learning the language of another academic discipline, of popular cultures and social media, of religious cultures, of poetry. Fluency in other languages serves the theological and apostolic duty of sharing the Word of God through reasoned and communicable discourse with diverse audiences. This commitment presupposes knowing how to identify and become familiar with an audience and being able to adjust one's speech accordingly. A major challenge for the ecumenical movement is communicating the deeper meaning and translating the language of doctrinal dialogue for the public of younger generations in different cultural contexts across the world.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Our third area of reflection concerns the ministry of reconciliation as conveyed by the apostle Paul: 'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us' (2 Cor. 5:18-19). The ongoing praxis of bilateral ecumenism, especially between Lutherans and Mennonites, has brought about significant steps towards forgiveness, thanks in part to a methodology of revisiting history together in order to tell and to

⁷ *JDDJ*, n° 43.

⁸ The World Methodist Council (2006) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2017) have also endorsed the *JDDJ*, while the Anglican Communion welcomed and affirmed its substance (2017). This is an encouraging sign whose comprehensive significance has yet to be apprehended.

continue to build upon a common shared story of their past that opens onto the future.⁹

The ecumenical quest for ecclesial communion and the visible unity of the Church has highlighted that repentance and conversion stem from and are nourished by revisiting the history and violence of divisions with an aim to seeking truth. The ministry of reconciliation the ecumenical movement has supported and encouraged could be helpful in the current crisis of clergy sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church and other Churches. A victim and survivor-centered, compassionate and transparent process of justice and reparation will involve empowering and listening to their voices and ensuring their full participation and co-production of a common story from which truth and the force for change may emerge. Without visible acts of cleansing and repentance, along with systemic transformation of clerical and abusive ecclesial cultures, the wounded Body of Christ cannot begin to heal.

Indeed, the clergy sex abuse crisis has harmed the whole Body. If one member suffers, all the members suffer together (1 Cor. 12:26). Both the insights of the ecumenical movement and theology should be marshaled. As a discipline in search of truth, with the consequent exigencies, theology could further develop the Christological and ecclesiological signification of the truth-telling and truth-honoring processes involved for all. Treating the scourge of abuse in an ecumenical framework, listening together to victims, and centering their input would lead to more mutual accountability and could help survivors join their forces. The Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops of the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) have reflected on this type of exchange in the perspective of a theology of the Cross.

At the foot of the Cross we, as bishops, have reflected on an 'ecumenism of humiliation'. We lament our failures and share the brokenness of our church communities. We failed to protect vulnerable people: children

⁹ The Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference, *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ. Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission.* (2010). See: <https://mwc-cmm.org/resources/healing-memories-reconciling-christ>. This bilateral dialogue led to a service of repentance and reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites at the Eleventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Stuttgart in 2010.

from sexual abuse, women from violence, and indigenous peoples from exploitation. In this communion of shame, we confess that our own feeble witness to God's call to life in community has contributed to the isolation of individuals and families, and even to that secularization which removes God from the public space. We, as bishops, are called to lead the Church in repentance and to seek justice for the abused.¹⁰

An ecumenical 'communion of shame' could be a catalyst for swifter justice for those who have suffered.

The Horizon of Ecumenical Dialogue

Our fourth and final point concerns the missionary mandate and ultimate eschatological horizon of ecumenical dialogue. This horizon reminds theology to focus on sustaining life in God. The 'Message to All Christian People from the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches' in Amsterdam in 1948 recognizes the unity of the Church will come from the power of God. The ecumenical movement working towards greater unity witnesses God's love to the world—this missionary mandate is essential.

It is not in man's power to banish sin and death from the earth, to create the unity of the Holy Catholic Church, to conquer the hosts of Satan. But it is within the power of God. He has given us at Easter the certainty that His purpose will be accomplished. But, by our acts of obedience and faith, we can on earth set up signs which point to the coming victory. Till the day of that victory our lives are hid with Christ in God, and no earthly disillusion or distress or power of hell can separate us from Him. And those who wait in confidence and joy for their deliverance, let us give ourselves to those tasks which lie to our hands, and so set up signs that men may see.¹¹

As a discipline of discernment, theology has an indispensable role in determining through dialogue with other disciplines such as sociology how and which 'acts of faith' are visible, and in what ways, to men and women of today? How may our different ways of communicating be ever more coherent with the Gospel?

The praxis of spiritual ecumenism and doctrinal ecumenical dialogue have much to contribute to the ongoing renewal of theology as faith

¹⁰ *Walking Together: Common Service to the World and Witness to the Gospel*. See: <https://iarccum.org/doc/>.

¹¹ 'The Message from the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches.' See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-message-of-the-1st-assembly-of-the-world-council-of-churches>.

seeking understanding. In conclusion, how may we all better prioritize the quest for visible unity of the Churches? In 1983, a year before his death, Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner and his colleague Henrich Fries published *Einigung der Kirchen—reale Möglichkeit*, translated into English as *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*¹². Rahner's prophetic call to grant the highest priority to the quest for Christian unity in the theological and pastoral practices of the Churches, resounds with as much force as it did thirty-five years ago. He maintains that the separation of the Churches is a serious scandal which harms the credibility of the Churches and threatens the very existence of Christianity in some regions. He is concerned that Church leaders underestimate the urgency of the unity of the Church and continue to find excellent reasons to invest their energies elsewhere. As he states in the introduction: 'The unity of the Church is the commandment of the Lord of the Church, who will demand from the leaders of the Churches an accounting as to whether or not they have really done everything possible in this matter.'¹³ In the face of easy satisfaction with the status quo of friendly relations between the Churches, Rahner evokes the ecumenical *kairos* that is here and now. 'What is the time which one claims is not yet ripe? Are we not ourselves the time, as Augustine says? And how much time will be allowed for the "not yet"? Can we think in terms of centuries, as we did earlier?'¹⁴ Indeed, how long may we live the 'not yet' which stains our lives with the realities of our failures, but also increases our desire to receive the forgiveness and unity that comes only from God. Rahner also reminds us of what is most important: we must never cease to find cause for joy and gratitude for the path of unity our Churches have already begun to travel together.

¹² *Einigung der Kirchen—reale Möglichkeit* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1983). *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, trans. Eric Gritsch and Ruth Gritsch (Fortress Press, 1983; and Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008).

¹³ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches*, 1.

¹⁴ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches*, 2.

ANDRÉ LOUF AND INTERIOR ECUMENISM

Charles Wright*

André Louf (1929-2010) was one of the great spiritual figures of the twentieth century. Translated worldwide, the books of the abbot of the Trappist Abbey of Mont des Cats are considered to be classics of the interior life. This article seeks to shed light on an overlooked aspect of the life and works of this spiritual master: his ecumenical engagement. In the course of several meetings with Orthodox monks, Dom Louf became convinced that monasticism provides a privileged opportunity for ecumenical encounter. On several occasions, particularly by engaging in spiritual accompaniment with Orthodox brothers, Louf experienced what he called 'intercommunion', that is to say, penetrating to the depths of the heart where separations between Christian denominations no longer make any sense. This article presents this interior ecumenism, through which Dom André had direct experience, beyond the surface divisions, of a Church, truly undivided and doubtless never separated.

Even if his name no longer means anything to younger generations, Dom Louf was a giant, rather like the ones which enlivened the carnivals of his childhood in French Flanders, where he was born in 1929. At 17, finding himself drawn to contemplation and interiority, he entered the Trappist Abbey of Mont des Cats. In 1963, having shown a rare charism for spiritual fatherhood, his brothers elected him as head of their community. Dom André was 33 years old. His commitment to this ministry soon marked him out as one of the major spiritual figures of the twentieth century. During his time as abbot, his presence lit up

* A writer and journalist, Charles Wright lives in the Ardèche, near a monastery where he engages in a spiritual quest which he shares through his books. He is passionate about monastic life having written notably *A quoi servent les moines?* (with Dom Michel Pascal [Paris: ed. Bourin, 2011]) as well as the biography of the Trappist Dom André Louf (*Le chemin du cœur. L'expérience spirituelle d'André Louf* [Paris: Salvator, 2017]), many of whose posthumous texts he has edited. His latest book, *Le chemin des estives*, recounts a penniless journey across a de-christianised central France and was published by Flammarion in 2021.

the Abbey of Mont des Cats which became one of the beacons of Western contemplative life.

Elected abbot during Vatican II, Louf played a leading role in the *ressourcement* of monastic life, reinterpreting the tradition of the Fathers in the light of contemporary anthropology. For more than twenty years he was one of the spokespersons of the Trappist order, renowned for the clarity of his thinking, his breadth of view, and his contemplative sensibility. His authority was unchallenged and people listened to him, including popes who recognised his intellectual and spiritual stature. Several of them appealed to him, either for his gift of discernment to manage sensitive missions, such as patching up relations with traditionalists or saving wayward communities, or for the quality of his interior life.¹ But his influence extended far beyond the monastic world and the Church. His writings, which became classics translated throughout the world, marked him out as one of the spiritual masters of contemporary Christianity. In aiming to acclimatise Christian mysticism within contemporary language and categories, his books sensitised a large number of people to the spiritual life—as his friend Thomas Merton’s books were doing on the other side of the Atlantic.

A truly universal spirit, Louf was at once theologian, polyglot, writer, poet, translator, musician and art lover. One only meets with a man of this calibre once or twice in a lifetime, especially since he became this giant while bearing in his heart the hidden wound of having failed to live up to his fundamental vocation. For more than thirty years, spending himself in a life devoted to teaching, apostolate and travelling, he was tormented by a rival vocation: to seek refuge in the seclusion of a hermitage. While devoting himself to speaking and writing, he never lost sight of his yearning to seek God in solitude and silence. This desire, the hidden side of this active and radiant abbot, his deepest identity, was fulfilled at the end of his life when he became a hermit close to the Abbey of Simiane in Provence, from 1998 to his death in 2010.²

¹ For example, in 2004 John Paul II invited him to compose meditations on the Way of the Cross at the Coliseum in Rome: André Louf, *Chemin de croix du Colisée* (Namur: Fidélité, 2005).

² Regarding André Louf’s spiritual journey I may be allowed to refer to my book: Charles Wright, *Le chemin du cœur. L’expérience spirituelle d’André Louf (1929-2010)* (Paris: Salvator, 2017).

Among the multiple facets of this diamond, it is often not recognised that his ecumenical engagement was by no means the least. In fact, Louf was seen as a craftsman of the dialogue between Christian confessions, and as the respected spokesperson of Latin monasticism, especially by the Orthodox. He knew, by virtue of an inner conviction borne of prayer, that our seemingly separated Churches form but one. To those who see beyond the surface divisions, the Church of Jesus appeared, like the Republic, one and undivided ...

The Shock of Unity

This intuition took shape in July, 1961. Staying at the Mont des Cats guesthouse was a young Rumanian Orthodox monk by the name of André Scrima. Close to Athenagoras I, the Patriarch of Constantinople, he was at once a man of prayer, and a brilliant intellectual. With a view to fostering ecumenical collaboration, he frequently stayed at Western Catholic monasteries, introducing these communities to the practice of the Jesus Prayer, by means of lectures on Rumanian monasticism, which was seeing a renewal of the Philocalia. Discrete and relatively unknown, André Scrima has nonetheless been a very considerable influence in French contemplative circles.³

So here is this young Orthodox monk, in his hesitant French, addressing the monastic chapter meeting of Mont des Cats. His chosen theme, 'Monastic Life', is not startlingly original ... And yet, as André Louf remembers:

from his very first words, it happened. We were one. There was no more him and us, he the Orthodox, and us the Catholics. There was only monks sharing the same experience, who recognised each other, in the fullest sense of the word, in a grace absolutely identical on both sides, a grace which had seized them, leading them by very similar paths towards a fulfilment for which they bore the same heartfelt longing: transfiguration in the glory of the beloved Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing or nobody could have changed or compromised the intense feeling of communion which had so suddenly taken hold of this Latin monastic community.⁴

³ On Father Scrima, see Olivier Clément, 'Note biographique', *Contacts*, n°23, July-September 2003 (number entitled 'André Scrima, 1925-2000. Un moine hésychaste de notre temps'), 243; and Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *André Scrima. Un gentleman crestin* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2021).

⁴ André Louf, 'En marge d'un pèlerinage', *Collectanea cisterciensia*, 1 (1970), 122.

The next day, as Louf took their Rumanian guest round the monastery, numerous elderly monks knelt as he passed and asked for a blessing. The door of his cell was likewise besieged by crowds of the brothers, seeking a word. In the days before this shock of unity occurred, such attitudes would have been inconceivable. 'The event I have just described was for me the first of a whole series of shocks. Many times since then, the same thing has happened in the course of various meetings with monks of the East. The sense of wonder has always been the same',⁵ wrote Louf, in whom the conviction was growing that monasticism was a privileged ground for ecumenical exchange.

In 1966, Dom Louf asked Fr. Scrima to become his spiritual father. One can only marvel at this gesture: for the Catholic abbot of a jewel in the crown of Latin monasticism to be parented in the life of the Spirit by a monk of another confession, must in those days constitute a transgression! Monks of the East and of the West were then separated by a wall of wounds, rumours and prejudice which meant they inhabited two strictly cloistered worlds. For André, this paternal relationship was a way of transcending these barriers and experiencing the undivided Church at first hand. From then on, he became the tireless promoter of a kind of ecumenism of accompaniment: 'There is room for a true intercommunion of a spiritual nature between brothers, still separated by the structures of the Churches to which they belong, but between whom the spark of the Spirit can suddenly light up.'⁶ Spiritual direction becomes 'an area of ecumenical possibility, allowing the fostering, from one denomination to another, of that divine life, in which the mystery of spiritual parenthood operates, which is at the heart of the Church'.⁷

⁵ Ibid., 124.

⁶ André Louf, 'Moines et œcuménisme', *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, 3 (1982), 179. He continues: 'Where else could you find a stronger, more vital communion than in this mystery of spiritual parenthood where life springs up from person to person in a shared and total obedience to the Lord and his Spirit?'

⁷ André Louf, 'La paternità spirituale nel monachesimo d'occidente oggi', dans Evlogij di Vladimir *et al.*, *Optina Pustyn' e la paternità spirituale. Atti del X Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa. Sezione russa. Bose, 19-21 settembre 2002* (Edizioni Qiqajon, 2003), 184.

Retracing the Unbroken Thread

In 1969, in the course of a journey to Mount Athos, where Fr. André met the most notable figures of the Holy Mountain,⁸ he had a similar experience, in this case with Fr. Théoklitos, a theologian noted for his conservatism and criticism of Catholicism, but considered as one of the oracles of Athos. Louf wanted to lay before him a personal problem regarding the eremitic vocation which never ceased to torment him. Here again, it needed considerable bravery for the abbot of Mont des Cats to present himself as a disciple coming to beg a word from a spiritual father, while they each belonged to churches which were officially separated. The Orthodox hesitated at considerable length, the motive for which Louf was well aware: 'Does he have the right to enter into a more intimate communion with someone whom he doubtless considers to be a "heretic"?'⁹ 'I could see that my question overwhelmed him', remembers Louf. 'He felt that he was being taken seriously by a Latin monk in his role as spiritual father, as if it were nothing, as if we really lived from the same Spirit ... He hesitated for a long time, and then suddenly, I could see he was inclined to agree, and he in his turn, taking my spiritual request seriously, endorsed this movement of the Holy Spirit in me. A wall of prejudice had just collapsed. Once again, we each received the gift of communion. I will never forget the word of light that he then vouchsafed me, fully conscious of the responsibility to which I had appealed, conscious also of the consent which he had given me—not me personally, but to the Lord and to the Spirit, and finally to the Mystery of the Church in which we both participated.'¹⁰ As if by chance, Louf is touched at the most intimate part of his personal vocation by the word of a brother from another denomination. This intercommunion taking place 'at the very source of life, where separations between Christian denominations have not yet begun, or have been mysteriously overcome, so as to be no longer pertinent',¹¹

⁸ Visits described in André Louf, 'Les moines d'Occident et le Mont Athos', dans Mihai Frătilă Dir., *Vivere il Regno di Dio al servizio degli altri: miscellanea in onore del P. Olivier Raquez osb* (Rome: Galaxia Gutenberg/Lipa edizioni, 2008), 113-133.

⁹ André Louf, *À la grâce de Dieu. Entretiens avec Stéphane Delberghe* (Namur: Fidélité, 2002), 166.

¹⁰ André Louf, 'Moines et œcuménisme', art. cit., 173.

¹¹ André Louf, 'Les moines d'Occident et le Mont Athos', art. cit., 133.

further validates what he had already discerned with Fr. Scrima, that at a deep level, the Churches meet, and communion is given. This word of life, received from a 'separated' brother, enabled him to perceive at first hand 'the persistence, beyond or underlying the separations visible on the surface, of the one Church, still truly undivided and doubtless never separated'.¹²

Dom André returned from this journey convinced that the monk, when truly inhabiting his heart, is in touch with the undivided Church. In the depths of his heart, there is as it were 'a fulness untouched by external schisms, where the undivided Church remains intact'.¹³ So it is by being fully present in their hearts, where God dwells in them, that monks will become pioneers of what he called the 'intercommunion of hearts',¹⁴ this interior ecumenism which, beyond the surface divisions, knits up the thread of indivisibility. 'The way of spiritual ecumenism is privileged in taking as its starting point a communion which is, as it were, antecedent, already clearly experienced, though possessing consequences yet to be explored. By taking this experience as his starting point, the ecumenical worker has, right from the start, a criterion of discernment which enables him to progress audaciously, yet in perfect obedience to the Holy Spirit. It has never been obvious that ecumenical dialogue is bound to progress first and foremost by way of successive and ever more convincing rational insights. Experience rather suggests the opposite. Dialogue follows life, and follows it closely. It progresses by means of gradual shifts on the ground, unforeseeable and irresistible, which suddenly change the theological or ecclesiastical landscape. These shifts on the surface of the ecclesiastical crust are brought about, without any doubt, by some new subterranean readjustment, that is, in every case by a growth in holiness and love. It is thus that monks remain open and available to ecumenical grace. Their contribution is not spectacular, but is committed to holding fast to the Church's sources, in the depths of their heart.'¹⁵

A Worker for Unity

It pained Dom André that Christians did not match up to this grace of unity, and failed to produce a theological language to express this

¹² André Louf, 'Moines et œcumenisme', art. cit., 180.

¹³ Ibid., 175.

¹⁴ André Louf, 'En marge...', art. cit., 149.

¹⁵ André Louf, 'Les moines d'Occident et le Mont Athos', art. Cit., 132.

communion given for all eternity. In addition to works of translation destined to make the West aware of the spiritual richness of Orthodoxy, he also used his research to build bridges, revealing the family traits linking Catholic and Orthodox spirituality.¹⁶ In his abundant bibliography one finds a whole series of articles in which he establishes a dialogue between Western and Eastern writers, highlighting their lineage, demonstrating their common outlook on certain themes, for example: mercy in Saint Bernard and Isaac the Syrian; the relation between action and contemplation in Ruusbroec and St Silouan; and the relation between interior prayer in St Nil Sorsky, the Russian hermit, and the Blessed Paul Giustiniani, the Italian Camaldolese reformer. Moreover, in researching these analogies, little by little he rediscovered his own tradition. In reading the spiritual masters of Orthodoxy in order to relate them to those of Latin Christianity, he becomes aware of all those, within his own Church, who have manifested a similar quality of interior life. As he says, 'It was definitely my interest in hesychasm which led me to discover Ruusbroec'.¹⁷

Dom André hankered after the age, before the doctrinal quarrels of the Middle Ages, when there were no ecclesiastical barriers separating those who lived spiritual lives. He wrote, 'From East to West, passing through Jerusalem, these men of God knew and recognised each other. They knew themselves to be the sons of one and the same spiritual Tradition, they trod the same path, and provided the same ministry within the Church.'¹⁸ But he is insistent that—in spite of the separations

¹⁶ The brothers issuing from the Reform are not forgotten. Lived to the fullest, monastic life is for Louf a way of encountering them beyond the theological quarrels of centuries past. Protestants played a major role in his own personal journey. Reading Karl Barth opened to him the way of *lectio divina*, and the figure of Luther helped him to live an ascesis according to the Gospel. His dialogue with Protestants often turned on this question of ascesis, which should be based on fragility, in line with Luther's intuition on the respective roles of the works of man and of grace.

¹⁷ André Louf, *À la grâce de Dieu...*, *op. cit.*, 170. 'It can be salutary to make a detour via the East to rediscover the West and its own, equally incomparable legacy. Indeed, turning to the East has often been really helpful to the sons of the West in becoming aware of their own tradition, which they had left lying fallow.' André Louf, 'L'évolution de la vie monastique en France depuis le Concile', *Documents Épiscopats*, n°12, June 1981, 2.

¹⁸ André Louf, 'Quelques constantes spirituelles dans les traditions hésychastes en Orient et en Occident', *Irénikon*, 74 (2001), 483.

which have since obliged them to keep to their own side of the path, travelling on parallel lines and often in complete ignorance of each other—Latin and Byzantine monks have in truth never ceased to be close to each other for they draw on the same springs of wisdom, which lead them to the same experience: the Fathers of the Desert and their sayings, the writings of John Climacus, of John Cassian and many more, all from the first centuries of our epoch. He concludes:

‘This is the Wonder of the Church of Christ Jesus, which has stayed undivided at a certain, profound level, in spite of appearances, and which certainly remains so today. It for us to see it!’¹⁹

Translated from French by John Bolger

¹⁹ Ibid., 486.

THE AEOF. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRUCTURING OF FRENCH ORTHODOXY: FROM THE PRESENCE OF ORTHODOXY IN FRANCE TO THE PLACE OF FRANCE IN ORTHODOXY

Nathalie Depraz*

This article describes the origins, structure and organisation of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops in France and their hopes for unity among the Orthodox faithful in all their diversity. It also traces the presence of Orthodoxy in France since the nineteenth century as well as in the first millenium. It raises a question about the meaning of the word 'local' in the case of local Orthodox churches in France and examines the inspiring process of inculturation into the ancient liturgical tradition of the original Gallican Orthodox church.¹

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¹ This text was originally presented on Thursday 10 December 2020 in the framework of the Master Seminar of Father Jivko Panev of the Saint Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology, dedicated to Church History and consecrated this year to 'The Great Council of Crete'.

AEOF is an acronym standing for the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of France. It was founded in 1997 and has legal status as a non-profit making organisation under the law of cultural associations of 1901. Its office is at 7 rue Georges Bizet in the sixteenth arrondissement of Paris. It has an official website on which I found the information which I am going to synthesise in this article. It will allow me to formulate some questions.

To start with, one can say that the AEOF is the co-ordinating body of the French Orthodox episcopate, its aim being to keep Orthodox Christians united. However, as a small video, dating from 2011 shows,² AEOF is also affiliated to the Council of Christian Churches in France, an ecumenical body which brings churches of different confessions and traditions together. Beyond the immediate aim of keeping the Orthodox together, AEOF also has an ecumenical one, seeking to promote dialogue on a reciprocal basis.

So, why should we be interested in the AEOF today? On 27 November 2018 the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople revoked the patriarchal charter linking it to the Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe which provoked a crisis resulting in a *Memorandum of Understanding* between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and that of Moscow. This is a reminder that tension still exists between patriarchal primacy and the demands for independence of local Churches as well as demonstrating the deep spiritual longing for unity and harmony within the human heart.

As a result of this event, a new look at the reasons for the setting up of the AEOF, its history and its objectives, seems even more justified. In effect, the AEOF, by its very existence, poses questions about the independence of the local church in France, a crucial question and one recurring over the many decades in which the different preparatory commissions have been working for the Council in Crete. In this respect, it offers an original, innovative response to the question of the ecclesiology of the local church and its independence. How?

It is in the setting up of a local episcopal assembly, respecting, on the one hand, the Pauline principle of a church necessarily organised around the one bishop who orchestrates it and, on the other hand, reconciling this with the simultaneous linkage of different dioceses to

² <https://www.ktotv.com/video/GPo56012/lassemblee-des-eveques-orthodoxes-de-france>.

their respective churches of origin. It establishes a complex balance between ecclesiological territorial unity and ethic and ritual diversity. This results in what Mgr Jeremy, speaking at Unesco in 2018, called a complexity of authority, or, more positively put, a jurisdictional pluralism.

Further, AEOF raises the question of the meaning of relocation in recent Orthodoxy into territories it has neglected since the schism of 1054. The Russian Revolution, in 1917, and the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922, following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, gave rise to a Russian and Greek diaspora leading to a re-circulation of Orthodoxy and a situation of greater Christian unity between Catholic and Orthodox.

In this contribution, I will begin by describing the origins, structure and organisation of the Assembly of Orthodox bishops in France as well as their hopes for unity among the Orthodox in their diversity. Then, I will take a diachronic approach in tracing the presence of Orthodoxy in France since the nineteenth century but also in the first millennium. I will come back via the AEOF to present day Orthodoxy in France, to ask: What is the meaning of local to be attached to the concept of local church? Is it in the links to the mother church, be it Russian, Serb, Greek... involving a recreation of the original local culture of the church or origin in France? Or is it a matter of inculturation in the ancient western liturgical tradition of the original Gallican Orthodox church which was the experience of the Kovalesky brothers on their arrival in France after the Russian revolution? What is a just balance between the two cultures? In fact, there is nothing to choose between them, since the richness of France hold rightly to their historical co-existence which, for the benefit of Orthodoxy overall, forges links of unity between them.

Another question follows. How can a local church become autocephalous? In other words, not only francophone and *in* France, but also *of* France? Is it possible canonically, as foreshadowed in the 1930's by the actions of Patriarch Serge of Moscow, who provided for an autocephalous Church of France (alias ECOF)? In other words: how to establish an autocephalous patriarchate in France? This poses the question of the relationship of such a church with one already long established in territories deserted by the Orthodox since the eleventh century and administered by the papacy. On the horizon also is the question of whether a local autocephalous church, by returning to the

liturgical sources of the undivided Church, could make possible a healing of the schism by weaving together the aspirations for Christian unity with respect to the diversity of rites and canonical jurisdictions, as advocated by Patriarch Sergius: ‘A Western Orthodox Church’ (in Russian, there is no article, which allowed some to interpret *the* Church), in order to (as Nicolas Lossky noted in his article entitled ‘The Presence of Orthodoxy in France’) re-establish a western rite on the basis of the ancient liturgies- a job to be done in co-operation with all the Orthodox in France.’³ Could not the AEOF, which has played a crucial role in uniting Christians in a way that is ritually and canonically consistent, play the role again? Could it contribute anything further?

The AEOF. Birth, Structure, Organisation, Future

In 2007, a thirty-minute documentary film was produced by Fr. Jivko Panev and Christos Levalois, setting out the key ideas up to 2017. It is available on ‘orthodoxie.com’ and has symbolic status. It reconstructs, through interviews with Olivier Clément (+2009), Nicolas Lossky (+2017) and Boris Bobrinskoy (+2020), the various milestones in the constitution of the Association, from its inception until 2007.⁴ In drawing on this document, I would like to set out what I see as the three key stages in its development.

A. Act I. Pre-history of the AEOF from the Fellowship of Saint Photius to the revue Contacts

In France, the linking of different dioceses to differing mother churches does not fit in with Orthodox ecclesiology, which requires only one bishop in any particular place. Nevertheless, as Lossky insists in his 2003 article,⁵ ‘this “abnormal” state has been developing over many decades’.

From the late 1920’s, at the time of the first Russian emigration, an Orthodoxy open to the West began to develop in Paris. Eight young Orthodox were involved: among them, Nicolas Sakharov, Alexis Stavrowsky, Vsevolod Palachkowsky, the three brothers Kovalevsky—Eugraph Kovalevsky, Maxime Kovalevsky, Pierre Kovalevsky—, and

³ N. Lossky, ‘L’orthodoxie en France’, *Etudes* (2003), t. 399, 507-517, quotation pp. 516-517. See: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-2003-11-page-507.htm>.

⁴ N. Lossky, *ibid.*, 514.

⁵ N. Lossky, *ibid.*, 514.

Vladimir Lossky.⁶ They met from the 1925 in the Fellowship of Saint Photius, then from 1928 with Fr. Lev Gillet, Elizabeth Behr-Sigel and later, Fr. Irenaeus Winnaert, with the idea of setting canonical and liturgical norms for an autocephalous Orthodox Church, which was, in 1936, to receive the blessing of Patriarch Sergei of Moscow, and later lead to the creation of the Institute of Saint Denys for Orthodox Theology which still exists today. From the beginning, it gave its courses in French and was intended to be the French annex of the Institute Saint Sergius,⁷ created simultaneously in 1925, which gave its courses in Russian.

After World War II, when the descendants of the original immigrants were well settled, the Fellowship of Saint Photius developed in the parish of Saint Irenaeus in link with the Orthodox Church of France and the review *Contacts* was established as a French Orthodox journal by Eugraph Kovalevsky as its spiritual director and Jean Balzon as its administrator.⁸ From 1959, it was further developed by O. Clement, E. Behr-Sigel and B. Bobrinskoy, the object being to bring closer the Orthodox living in France in a 'lived' witness of Orthodoxy in the West.⁹

B. Act II. The Prehistory of AEOF. The Orthodox Brotherhood of France, later of Western Europe

In the 1950's a network of friendship developed between A. Bloom, B. Bobrinskoy, C. Argenti, E. Behr-Sigel and L. Gillet. It led to the foundation of an Orthodox Brotherhood across jurisdictions (thus N. Lossky). It produced its first Constitution in 1960.¹⁰ As a result, the first congress of the Brotherhood took place at Annecy in 1971. It assembled three hundred Orthodox from across the different jurisdictions, all concerned for a united expression of Orthodoxy in western Europe.

⁶ <https://fraternite-orthodoxe.eu/bis/les-origines-de-la-fraternite/>.

⁷ M. Kovalevsky, 'L'Église orthodoxe en France', *Présence orthodoxe* n°77 (1988), 3-29. To go further, see M. Kovalevsky, *Orthodoxie et Occident. Renaissance d'une Église locale*, (Paris: Carbonnel éditions, coll. Bibliothèque du Christianisme, 1990).

⁸ *Contacts, Bulletin mensuel des Orthodoxes français*, Editions Saint Irénée, n°1, avril 1949. Rector of Saint-Irénée parish, Archipriest Eugraph Kovalevsky. J. Balzon is appointed 'Director-Manager'. Father Eugraph writes almost entirely the first issue and wrote at least two articles in this first series of ten issues from 1949 to 1950.

⁹ <https://revue-contacts.com/qui-sommes-nous/>.

¹⁰ <https://fraternite-orthodoxe.eu/bis/les-origines-de-la-fraternite/>.

To continue its mission, it became a legally registered association under the French law of 1901. Its aim was to develop relationships between the faithful at the grass roots and to be sensitive to the consciences of young francophone Orthodox, who were looking for a cross-fertilisation between the local churches and seeking to live and celebrate the Liturgy together rather than in separate jurisdictions.

C. Act III. The AEOF before the AEOF. The 'Inter-Episcopal Orthodox Committee' in France

Throughout the 1960's a parallel informal structure emerged, calling itself from 1967, the Inter-Episcopal Orthodox Committee. Moreover, the documentary 'Orthodoxy.com' was created in 2007 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of this committee. It gave rise to a very informative day of Conferences available on the internet.¹¹

Thus, in parallel with the faithful, the bishops organised themselves under the pressure of the faithful and intellectual theologians. Olivier Clement underlined the key role of Metropolitan Meletios in all this. Meletios was President until he handed over to Mgr Jeremy. The initial work of the committee was to respond, with 'one voice', to the non-Orthodox in France given the division of Christians at the time.¹²

Metropolitan Meletios, by his charismatic and humble personality, took the lead as an exarch of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in assembling the bishops of all the jurisdictions to confront the problem of the complex relationship between the Church as one and indivisible and the division of autocephalous churches. He energetically, but very patiently, put forward the idea of uniting the Orthodox Church as a sole local church with one single episcopal committee.

¹¹ <http://www.aeof.fr/site/405/4oeme-anniversaire-du-comite-inter-episcopal-orthodoxe.htm>.

¹² It is indeed in the immediate post-Vatican II context: the gap between Catholics and Orthodox is widening, but also between Catholics who supported the Council and Catholics who put their hope in a return to liturgical sources, as was the case of Cardinal Ratzinger and his mentor Klaus Gamber. See on this subject K. Gamber, *La réforme liturgique en question (1974-1989)* (Le Barroux: Monastère Sainte-Madeleine, 1992). Not to mention the divisions between Orthodox and those who then implemented the restoration of the rite of Gauls initiated by Eugraph Kovlevsky at Saint-Irénée parish in the framework of the Orthodox Church of France, and those who have distanced themselves to join the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Institute Saint-Serge, as was the case with Olivier Clément.

In fact, this non-canonical committee played, for the next thirty years until 1997, an informal co-ordinating role, including communication with other Christian communities in France.

D. AEOF an initial and continuingly contemporary hope for a synod of French Orthodox bishops?

In preparation for the 'Great and Holy Pan-Orthodox Council' (which finally took place in Crete in 2016), the still informal inter-episcopal committee transformed itself into an assembly of Orthodox bishops from France. It was a matter of responding to the need, formulated by the preparatory committees of the Council, for creating more formal bodies called episcopal assemblies.

From then onwards, as N. Lossky noted, the AEOF 'represented a step towards something like 'synodality', a step in the direction of a local church in the ecclesiological sense of the term. Should it be just for France or for Western Europe? That remains debatable.' Still, this new dimension was more official, recognised by the French State. It was the 'embryonic form for a future synod of bishops', according to the expression of Boris Bobrinskoy in his 2007 presentation, even if, as he added guardedly, 'it was still quite a way from it'.

In the context of preparation for the Great Council, the commissions set up by AEOF concentrated on inter-Orthodox questions, fasting, the calendar, marriage, ordination, autocephaly, relations with other Christians, questions that concerned all Orthodox churches. The task was to find a consensus, if not unanimity, a bishop being thought of as never acting without the agreement of all.

More broadly, looking beyond preparation of the Great Council, the AEOF reflected on the need for a common Orthodox consciousness that could work in tandem with the existence of deep rooted links with mother churches and their theological traditions. Was there a tension there? In any case, there was the rash hope for a unified local church. However, after the eighties and following the fall of the wall separating ideologically East and West, there was a huge influx of emigres and refugees, whose need to be together, as Boris Bobrinskoy attested, was given priority over openness to the local French culture. From that came the question to be put to all the churches: how to deal with the diaspora? Evidently, the best response seemed to be to found a local church with the Orthodox all together.

However, as Fr. Bobrinsky pointed out, any hasty plans to bring about unity would be counter-productive. The faithful, the parishes, dioceses, bishops and mother churches were not ready for it. The AEOF realised that they should not yet set up a canonical form of synod. It would be better simply to better represent the Orthodox Church in France. At this difficult time, as O. Clement pointed out, the AEOF lacked a strong personality like Meletios, and a resurgence of inter-Orthodox rivalry followed. From the perspective outlined by Bobrinsky in 2007, came a more moderate judgment as to what might foster hopes for unity. It would be necessary to avoid conflicts between jurisdictions, to encourage the Fraternity of Orthodox Students and to make the AEOF a place for dialogue with other Christian churches and, indeed, with non-Christians.

One question which certainly remains, amidst the hope for a united local church, is 'the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Church'. A problem 'not yet overcome', as pointed out by N. Lossky, concerns the presence of Orthodox jurisdictions on what is 'the canonical territory' of the Catholic Church.

So what about the AEOF in 2020? The website gives indications about its history and its current status under five headings: 1. 'The Orthodox of France, a rich heritage for the future!'; 2. 'A Church "One" in faith, "plural" in the expression'; 3. 'From the Orthodox Inter-Episcopal Committee to the Assembly of Bishops, a dynamic of convergence that continues'; 4. 'The Assembly of the Orthodox Bishops of France, a significant step forward in Organization of the Orthodox Church in France'; 5. 'AEOF, official interlocutor at the inter-Christian level, in relations with other religions, and authorities in France.'

These various sections emphasise that the AEOF is 'a significant reference at the pan-Orthodox level, in the long process of organising the Orthodox Diaspora' and that 'the inter-episcopal progress represented by the constitution of the Assembly of the Orthodox Bishops of France in 1997, is confirmed by the decisions of the Fourth Preconciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy from 6 to 12 June 2009'. The AEOF 'is today recognised as the official body for cooperation and representation of the canonical Orthodox episcopate in France. On the inter-Christian level, it co-presides with the French Bishops' Conference (Catholic Church) and the Protestant Federation of France (Protestant Churches) the Council of Christian Churches (CECEF), created in 1987. It also works alongside other religious leaders

in France on all matters concerning society and maintains close relations with public authorities.'

In the light of this information, one can ask whether the AEOF continues in its role of providing hope for the French Orthodox, as it did between 1967 and 1997, in their efforts to make a local Church a reality through their search for inter-juridical and ecclesiological unity. Nothing is less certain. One gets the impression that its role is now limited to the organization of ecumenical dialogue, the 'diaspora', and the stabilization of relationships with the French State, thus making the AEOF a 'manager' more than a 'visionary', as in its infancy.

The Local Church of France. Its Place in Orthodoxy

In this second phase, I would like to focus on the local church in France. The key to unravelling this complex question lies, in my opinion, in the use of the prepositions *in* and *of* (France). That distinction highlights fully the ambiguity of the expression 'local church'.

It is interesting, in this respect, that the first document on the AEOF site identifies precisely the two prepositional statements. The AEOF simultaneously links the first generation of immigrants and their descendants, the latter now perfectly integrated into France, and other people of purely French stock who have discovered Orthodoxy and have now joined the Orthodox Church. These two movements (temporal and spatial), one resulting from the rediscovery of Orthodoxy by French people from sources originating in the first millennium, and the other from differing waves of immigration into France by Orthodox Slavs, form the basis of the present complex structure of French Orthodoxy, which is at once both the product of reactivated French sources—*of* France—and the result of more recent immigration—*in* France.

It would be interesting to discern in this an inclusive enrichment rather than a source of division, based on a clash of components. Today, Rumanian Orthodoxy in France is the result of a new wave of immigration, as yet little integrated, which wants to impose the Rumanian language on some of the parishes under the jurisdiction of the Rumanian patriarch. This has resulted in native French Orthodox deserting many such parishes, thus denying, or at least obscuring, the ancient Orthodox tradition of France.

Extraordinarily, the AEOF document gives the late date of 1727 for the existence of Orthodoxy in France.¹³ This date corresponding to the presence of an Orthodox priest seconded to the Russian embassy. Did Orthodoxy really only arrive in France then? What about the arrival in France of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (+202), disciple of Saint Polycarp of Smyrne, in 175?¹⁴ He who maintained a relationship by correspondence with the churches of Asia Minor and, in a famous letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons written in Greek, informed them of the martyrdom of the Christians of Lyons in 177.¹⁵ Furthermore, in 200, the Bishop of Lyons well illustrates in his *Adversus Haereses* the common bond between East and West, present in the profound relationship between the earthly liturgy and the heavenly liturgy, which engages the celebration of the community of the faithful in a transfigured *Ecclesia*, at the moment of the *epiclesis*, the invocation of God over the offerings.¹⁶

What about Saint Hilary of Poitiers (+376), who, after his five years of exile in Phrygia, resulting from his active opposition to Arianism in Gaul, returned to Poitiers, bringing with him liturgical songs and texts, including, the *Gloria* and the *Trisagion*, and introduced the use of hymns into the Liturgy? One could also mention the *Liber Hymnorum* and the *Liber Mysteriorum*, which he composed in Asia Minor and which provided precious elements in the development of the Gallican liturgy.¹⁷ I simply give here a few examples which attest to the ancient implementation of the universal and undivided liturgy in Gaul, which continued to be used, up to and before 1054 and after, even in spite of the prohibition of the Gallican liturgy by King Pip the Brief in 754 whose

¹³ AEOF : 'Quelques repères chronologiques de la présence orthodoxe en France', 4 novembre 2016 [archive].

¹⁴ P. HADOT, 'Irénee de Lyon (130-202)', *Encyclopædia Universalis*.

¹⁵ Eusèbe de Césarée, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, texte grec et traduction par É. Grapin, 1905-1913, Gallica [PDF], V, 2.

¹⁶ Irénée, *Adversus Haereses*, 1 13, 2, PG 7, 579 A.

¹⁷ Hilaire de Poitiers, *Traité des Mystères* (364-367), Paris Cerf, 1947, collection 'Sources chrétiennes' n°19bis; J. Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil. Recherches sur la naissance, l'enseignement et l'épreuve d'une foi épiscopale en Gaule au milieu du IV^e siècle* (Paris: Études augustinienes, 1972).

political motivation was to strengthen his alliance with the Pope of Rome at the time.¹⁸

In short, if Orthodoxy was present in Gaul from the first centuries, drawing inspiration from the Byzantine rite, but also inculturated in the form of a western Gallican rite, then this is a good example of ecclesiological unity at work, simultaneously expressed in and by the diversity of local adaptation. From that example, could not the AEOF gain by re-founding itself with the specific project of developing a new reflection on the local Church *in* and *of* France? Such reflection would hold together two strands. One would be that of Greek Orthodoxy and Slav Orthodoxy that came to France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the other would be that of the Gallican Orthodoxy, recently rediscovered in France by the work of returning to the sources of the undivided Church. The aim would be to give coherent shape to a truly French Orthodoxy that would give life to a truly local church.

With this ecclesiological challenge in mind, which allows us to situate ourselves in the unified 'pre-ecumenical' plan of undivided Christianity, (to use the beautiful expression of Michel Stavrou), questions of differences over Orthodox jurisdictions, rivalries between patriarchates, or disputes over primacy—even the problem of the separation of Orthodox and Catholics since the schism of 1054—all could appear as secondary and less important and be examined again in the light of a more profound ecclesiological vision—more profound because more matrix-like.

However, would this combination of migratory Slav Orthodox and Gallican Orthodox traditions which has contributed so much originality and richness to French Orthodoxy be really sufficient? One would think that, in order to make the network united, a *third* strand is required, in the image of the braid, which requires three strands. What role could the French Catholic population play, for instance, in a new vision of church—one sociologically balanced as indicated above—if ever the Catholic Church aspired equally with Orthodoxy, both French and Slav, to work towards a celebration of undivided Christianity?

¹⁸ N. Depraz, Klaus Gamber, *L'antique Liturgie du rite des Gaules, icône de la Liturgie céleste* (Paris: Cerf, Patrimoines, 2019).

Conclusion

We are today in a situation of division, and from this results the redoubling and multiplication of episcopal authorities on the same territory. We have a provisional structure, 'pragmatic by default', according to the interesting expression of O. Clément. Nicholas Lossky indicates in his article 'Orthodoxy in France'¹⁹ that 'France is part of the territory of the Catholic Church in the view of Orthodox ecclesiology'. It is in this context that all canonical Orthodox bishops in France take titles that do not reproduce those of the seats of Catholic bishops.

The reaction of the Orthodox to the recent nomination of Catholic bishops in Russia with the titles containing the names of the cities of established episcopal sees, is explained by the fact that, for the Orthodox Church in Russia, the Catholic Church is 'fully' church. The nomination of bishops for places like Moscow reminds them of the 'doubling up' of patriarchates at the time of the Crusades, a point that Catholic historians and theologians now regret. It is the titles and places that are at stake. In practice, 'enlightened members' of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy recognise fully that we live in a pluralistic society, in which liberty of conscience for everyone should be accepted.

It is in the perspective of 'waiting' that we should envisage today the co-existence of parishes worshipping legitimately in western or in oriental rites, while being under the same jurisdiction, recognising that the specific needs and rights of Orthodox of Slav culture and Orthodox of Gallican culture are different.

Certainly, of course, it is important to call for unity as Christos Yannaras did on the fortieth anniversary of inter-episcopal conferences at Unesco: '[...]We honour the pioneers of this movement in order that the unity of the Church, as Gospel incarnate, must not be forgotten. This anniversary would become a real feast day, a source of joy, if it were to mark the beginning of a real commitment of all Orthodox and their bishops in France to the objective that the Assembly of Bishops which succeeded the Inter-Episcopal Committee should take on its true ecclesial name, that of a local synod with the function of a synod and a synod president.'

Translated from French by David Carter

¹⁹ N. Lossky, *ibid.*, 9.

MIXED RELIGION MARRIAGE IN CANADA: A GIFT UNOPENED

Ray Temmerman^{*}

In this paper, I will demonstrate that the number of Mixed Religion marriages recorded in the Catholic Church in Canada is significantly smaller than the number of such marriages actually taking place. I will then argue that these Mixed Religion marriages, known and unknown, constitute not a problem, but a gift to the Church for the healing of ecclesial estrangement.¹ Finally, I will propose a way forward in opening that gift.

I will preface my remarks by stating that what follows is a call to the laity to embrace their mission of reaching out to their brothers and sisters in Christ, both within the worshipping body and outside it, recognizing, valuing and nurturing the experience of faithful couples, and wrapping them in the Church's pastoral embrace.

Reality

In Canada, approximately 10% of all marriages recorded in the Catholic Church are *Mixed Religion* marriages.²

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¹ It is helpful to bear in mind the words of George Tavad, one of the drafters of the *Decree on Ecumenism*: 'First, the Latin term used to designate other Christians with whom Catholics ought to be in ecumenical dialogue was not *fratres separati*, but *fratres seiuncti*. This was done deliberately at the request of Cardinal Baggio, well known for his mastery of the Latin language: *separati*, he argued, would imply that there are and can be no relationships between the two sides; *seiuncti*, on the contrary, would assert that something has been cut between them, yet that separation is not complete and need not be definitive. The nuance does not come through easily in translation, but I would suggest 'estranged brothers', rather than 'separated'. See G.H. Tavad, 'Reassessing the Reformation', in *One in Christ*, vol. 19 (1983), 360-361.

² Such marriages are known as *Mixed Religion* marriages. See Ray Temmerman, *A Gift Unopened: A Statistical Analysis of Mixed Religion Marriage in Canada*,

In Canada, approximately 43% of all marriages involving a Catholic are *Mixed Religion* marriages.³

These two statements appear contradictory, yet each is supported by extensive data from within their respective realms, the Catholic Church and Statistics Canada. Together they present both challenge and opportunity for the Catholic Church in Canada, and perhaps for other countries as well. To understand how these statements can be made, and how they form both challenge and opportunity, we need to look behind the scenes, beginning with a definition.

Definition

There are two specific terms used when speaking of marriages between a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic. There is a significant difference, theologically and ecclesiologicaly, between them.

*Disparity of Cult*⁴ involves a Catholic in relationship with a person who, while also a child of God (e.g. a faithful Jew, Muslim, Hindu, etc., even a person of no faith at all), is not baptized. As such, this person is not an adopted sibling of Christ Jesus, nor a member of the Body of Christ, the *ecclesia*. Where the spouse who is not Catholic is a person of faith, it is accurately referred to as an interfaith marriage.

*Mixed Religion*⁵ marriage (commonly known as ‘mixed marriage’) involves a Catholic in relationship with a baptized person who is thereby fully a sibling in the Body of Christ, though the parts of the *ecclesia* through which they are incarnated into that Body are, for various reasons, more or less estranged from each other. It is accurately known as an inter-church, or perhaps intra-church marriage.

http://interchurchfamilies.org/articles/A_Gift_Unopened.pdf, accessed 20 September 2020, 10.

³ See Ray Temmerman, *A Gift Unopened: A Statistical Analysis of Mixed Religion Marriage in Canada*,

http://interchurchfamilies.org/articles/A_Gift_Unopened.pdf, accessed 20 September 2020, 13.

⁴ Cf. Canon 1086.1, Code of Canon Law,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann998-1165_en.html#CHAPTER%20I, accessed 10 September 2020.

⁵ Cf. Canon 1124, Code of Canon Law,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P41.HTM, accessed 10 September 2020.

It's important to note that the term 'interfaith' is often applied to both forms. This inaccurate use of terminology presents a challenge to differentiating, and thus calling forth, the gift of *Mixed Religion* marriages within the relevant churches and the Church.

Research Process

In 2018, a letter was sent to all Catholic Bishops in Canada, requesting data on marriages in their dioceses for the years 2015-2016-2017. The letter requested that all recorded marriages be included, differentiating between three different categories: Catholic-Catholic; Catholic-Other Christian (i.e. *Mixed Religion*) and Catholic-Other/no faith (i.e. *Disparity of Cult*). The Catholic Bishops of Canada responded with great generosity. Some 58% of all dioceses provided data. While that was itself a substantial response, it was even greater than that percentage indicates, as those dioceses represented some 85% of all Catholics in Canada. As a result of this generosity by our bishops, the data received can be considered to be truly representative of the Canadian ecclesial reality.

After the data was received from the various dioceses, further exploration was carried out, to see if there might be other sources of data covering the same issue. This was found in the body of data collected by Statistics Canada, the official repository of data for the Government of Canada. The data from Statistics Canada was older, namely for 2001-2003. There are several reasons why there is no more recent data available. For one, 2003 was the last year in which only heterosexual marriages were allowed in Canada, the law in Canada changing thereafter to include same-sex relationships under the definition of 'marriage'. As a result, any data beyond that year could not be differentiated in a way which could link clearly with the Catholic definition of *Mixed Religion*. For another, several provinces stopped recording religion as one of the identifiers in applications for Marriage Licenses. It therefore became impossible to identify the faith or tradition of the spouses. Together, these changes made any secular data beyond 2003 completely unreliable for the purpose of the study.

The Data

While some 80% of reporting dioceses provided data according to the requested criteria, approximately 20% were unable to do so, as their records did not differentiate *Disparity of Cult* marriages from those of

Mixed Religion. Instead, they simply amalgamated the statistics into one group.

Without certainty as to the reasons for such amalgamation, one cannot help but wonder if it indicates an understanding, however unintentional, that the only person of concern here is the Catholic spouse; not the Christian of another tradition, not the unbaptized person, not even the couple made one by God in marriage. If true, albeit completely unintentional, this would be a most unfortunate situation, one which simply bringing the reality to the dioceses' attention may be sufficient to have rectified.

Amalgamation may make for easier recording. Sadly, it also means that no differentiation can be made between types of need or gift. How can our Church establish pastoral programs in response to particular pastoral need, much less call forth the particular gift such couples bring to the Church as the Body of Christ, if it does not know what the various pastoral realities are, and to what extent they are present?

The research also showed that pastoral needs vary across the country. This must be taken into account when considering where to invest limited pastoral resources. Again, however, we need to know the pastoral realities 'on the ground' in order to make that determination.

Discussion on the matter with staff in several dioceses led to a decision on the part of at least some to begin differentiating as they collected the marriage data. Hopefully the rest will begin to do the same. The result will be not only the possibility of pastoral support for the specific type of marriage involved, but also a capacity to welcome and call forth the specific gift of unity these couples bring to their churches and faith communities, and hence to the Church.

As already indicated, marriages which were classified as *Mixed Religion* accounted for slightly over 10% of all marriages recorded within the Catholic Church. In short, these are marriages where either the marriage was celebrated in a Catholic church, or the marriage was celebrated under the auspices of another church, with the record sent back to the parish of the Catholic spouse. The question must be asked whether there may have been marriages involving a Catholic spouse, where the record of marriage was not sent back to the spouse's parish. It was to check this that data was sought from other sources.

Statistics Canada

The last years for which data is available are those of 2001-2003. That data can be extrapolated to later years and compared to other readily available data to determine that it can be seen as reliable.

It is possible to search that marriage data according to the religion, voluntarily self-identified, of either spouse.⁶ So, for example, one could look at the numbers of marriages, not only where a Catholic married a Catholic, but also where an Anglican man married a Catholic woman, a Baptist woman married a Lutheran man, etc. The result was quite surprising.

The data quickly showed two facts: as a percentage of marriages, there were many more marriages involving a Catholic and a person of another Christian tradition than indicated in Catholic Church records; in addition, more Catholics married people of other Christian traditions (baptized or not) than married Catholics.

It also quickly became clear that what was absolutely forbidden in the 1917 Code of Canon Law is now a normal (though not normative) part of Catholic life in Canada.

Interim Conclusions

From the evidence available, we can safely conclude that a significant majority of marriages in which at least one spouse is Catholic do not take place within the Catholic Church. Whether they take place in other Christian churches, with the record of marriage not sent back to the Catholic parish, or in the context of another faith, or in a secular context, we do not know.

On the one hand, this is a great sadness, as these couples are unable to avail themselves of the full graces that come with the sacramental life and liturgy of the Church. Both they and the Church are the poorer for it.

On the other hand, they represent a very large portion of the population who may at some point be invited to reflect on their marriages within a spiritual and ecclesial perspective, may be able to be

⁶ Statistics Canada. Table 39-10-0015-01 *Marriages, by religion of groom and religion of bride, opposite-sex marriages*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tv.action?pid=3910001501>, accessed 16 May 2018.

nurtured, through the Good News, in their lives of faith and in their marriages.

The Presence of Gift

According to Catholic theology, by virtue of their baptism and marriage, Christian couples live a sacramental gift of unity within their marriages. This gift makes their marriage possible in itself, as well as a sign to the world. As such, they can be said, *de facto* if not in all cases *de jure*, to be considered churches in miniature, *domestic churches*. Such *domestic churches* are not islands unto themselves. They form part of, and contribute to, the life of the larger ecclesial community, in this case their parish, diocese, and indeed the whole Church. As such, the gift of unity which they live is a gift not only for them but for the whole Church, and indeed for the world, that it may believe (cf. John 17:21).

This is so not only when the marriage is between two Catholics, but also when it is between a Catholic and a person of another Christian tradition. As Pope John Paul II said in speaking to interchurch families in York, UK, in 1982: 'You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian unity.'⁷ He also spoke of them as being 'a specific revelation and realisation of ecclesial communion'.⁸ Here we find what Cardinal Walter Kasper calls an 'ecumenism of life'.⁹ Kasper says: 'Mixed marriage families are an ever present reality in many parts of the world. While not turning a blind eye to the challenges faced by mixed marriage couples, the Catholic Church looks to them also in terms of their intrinsic value and invites reflection on the contributions they can make to their respective communities, as they live out their

⁷ John Paul II, *The Pope in Britain: Collected Homilies and Speeches* (Slough: St Paul, 1982), 30.

⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), 21, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html, accessed 12 January 2021.

⁹ In his 2003 report to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) Plenary, Cardinal Kasper spoke of reaching 'an intermediate phase of *good relations* and *ecclesial communio* that is much deeper if not yet complete. We are now dealing with an ecumenism of life; it is a matter of giving shape to this intermediate situation and imbuing it with life.' In Walter Kasper, *PCPCU Information Service* 1-2 (2004), 29.

Christian discipleship faithfully and creatively. Mixed marriage families have indeed something to offer in terms of an ecumenical exchange of gifts.¹⁰

That ‘something to offer’ is bound up in the gift of faith which each has received and nurtured within their respective tradition, a ‘pearl of great price’ (cf. Matt. 13:45-46), as it were. And it may be present in several ways. Some *Mixed Religion* couples may choose to worship together, and raise their children, as much as possible in both their churches (a group who refer to themselves as *interchurch* families).

In such a case, the gift of unity may be quite recognizable (even if not necessarily understood), because it is evident that the spouses take the sharing of their respective gifts so seriously that they put great effort into worshipping together and supporting each other in both their churches.

In some cases, the spouses may both worship, but separately in their respective churches. They still live the unity within their *domestic* church, but the gift is not given full expression, and hence more difficult to recognize.

In still other cases, one or both spouses may seldom or never worship in the ecclesial community. In this case, the gift lived within their marriage is given no external expression at all, and is highly unlikely to be recognized. The couple, and their churches, are the poorer for it.

We must remember, however, that lack of recognition, and even lack of expression, does not constitute lack of presence of the gift. Even if dormant, it is still there, given by God in baptism and marriage, ready to be recognized, drawn out, nurtured and bear fruit for the good of the *domestic church*, their churches, the Church, and the world. It is to this task that we will now turn.

Reaching the Gift

It is clear that the Catholic Church in Canada, as institution, has little connection to the majority of marriages taking place in which only one spouse is Catholic. Therefore, any program inviting such couples to tell

¹⁰ Ruth Reardon, ‘Spiritual Ecumenism: a *vademecum* from Cardinal Kasper’ in *Interchurch Families International Reflections*, 2007, <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/ifir/2007/ifiro6-200704kasper.pdf>, accessed 12 January 2021.

their story, be listened to, and nurtured in the realization of their gift of unity cannot be focused on the institutional Church. It can, however, play a vital role in the work, in several ways.

It can begin to recognize and record marriages in a way which indicates their diversity, i.e. Catholic with Catholic, Catholic with baptized Christian, Catholic with a non-baptized child of God. Without that differentiation, it is and will be impossible to establish different pastoral processes appropriate to the reality of the couple.

Aware of its incapacity at this stage, due to the sinful estrangement that has occurred within the Body of Christ, to welcome all Christians to the Eucharist, it can explicitly recognize 'the real pain, the profound embarrassment, the wrenching experience of exclusion'¹¹ this estrangement may inflict on *Mixed Religion* families in its midst, especially at events such as baptisms, first communions, marriages, and funerals. Such a recognition of inflicted pain can serve as a soothing balm on the journey to the healing of estrangement.

The Catholic Church in Canada can also recognize its incapacity to meet the needs of these couples directly, due to the simple fact that the majority of *Mixed Marriage* couples are unknown to Catholic clergy, and hence beyond the capacity of Catholic clergy to reach out to them.

This does not mean that such couples should be beyond the loving pastoral embrace of the Church. It means, rather, that we must look to different ways to wrap them in that embrace. We must look to ways of calling and empowering the laity to their own mission in the world, of which *Mixed Religion* couples form a significant part.

These couples, unknown to the Church, are known to couples within the Christian churches, through their workplaces, the schools to which they send their children, the communities in which they live and conduct their social lives. As such, it becomes clear that any outreach vehicle, process or program must focus on the laity, in any Christian church, whereby they invite their brothers and sisters in Christ, whether active in a church or not, to come together in their homes, there to recognize each other, listen to and learn from each other, and

¹¹ Cf. Susan K. Wood, 'We've lost the ecclesial meaning of the Eucharist.' *Compass: A Jesuit Journal*, March-April 1997, 30. *Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly*, hereinafter referred to as 'Wood'. go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=CPI&sw=w&u=winn62981&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA30523199&it=r. Accessed 5 July 2017.

in the process call each other forth in realizing and celebrating the gift of unity they live in their marriages, a gift that is also there for the healing of ecclesial estrangement.

This should not be intended to increase ecclesial participation, though that may be a result. It should, rather, seek to help *Mixed Religion* couples discover their own experience of living within their respective traditions and with each other's, reflect on that experience, and through that reflection come to know their own value as gift to each other and to the Body of Christ, the Church.

Their experience must be recognized, welcomed, included and nurtured, first and foremost for the wellbeing of the couple in their realization and revelation of unity. We can leave the rest to God, trusting that His power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

In short, the laity must be empowered and equipped to take up their work of sharing and enhancing the gift of faith and unity which has been given them, and which they are called to share, as gift, with each other. In so doing, they will become living signs of the unity of their marriage. Equally, however, and of great importance, they will participate in 'the formation of a practical laboratory of unity'.¹² the pathway to ecclesial unity as they share their gift with their churches and the Church for the healing of ecclesial estrangement. How might this come about?

The Way Forward

The envisaged way forward is that of receptive ecumenism, or 'RE'. For this, I am most indebted to the work of Dr Paul D. Murray of Durham University UK, who says: "The essential principle behind receptive ecumenism is that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not "What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?" but "What do we need to learn from them?" The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it then all would be

¹² Address of Benedict XVI, Warsaw, Poland, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006).

https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060525_incontro-ecumenico.html accessed 2 March 2018.

moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship.¹³

This calls for receptive learning. In receptive learning, we not only value the other, important though that is. We equally recognize our own difficulty and need; a need and difficulty, moreover, which cannot easily be addressed from within our own existing resources, and so prompts us to look with a sense of lack and longing as well as appreciative desire at the gifts and strengths the other brings.

While the self-critical and ecclesially reforming dimension to receptive ecumenism can be lost from view, (as Dr Murray says, ‘become sanitised down into encouraging us just to be a bit more appreciative of each other’), receptive ecumenism invites us to something more challenging and transformative than that; something which seeks to take our unitive realities, in all their imperfection, seriously. Dr Murray sees interchurch marriages as wonderful RE sacraments because the fundamental movement at the heart of receptive ecumenism—which is the movement of the Spirit—is the movement of love. Deeper than the repentant recognition of our own difficulty and dysfunction, deeper than any hard-nosed reasoning about the causes of this and possible ways forward, deeper than strategizing, is the movement of loving attraction and desire. Receptive ecumenism is indeed all of these other things, and needs so to be, but at its core it is a matter of falling in love; the kind of love that moves us, drives us, enables us to become more than we have been.¹⁴

In this, people in *Mixed Religion* marriages, and especially those in that subset known as interchurch marriages, can be called to Mission—‘very humble, of course, but prophetic to serve the unity of the Church. Mission to encourage meetings between the local churches; Mission to remind the members of these churches of the practical points which unite us; Mission to go beyond the rules, for example in the field of eucharistic hospitality; Mission to help our churches forward on the road to unity.’¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/constructivetheology/receptiveecumensim/>, accessed 13 January 2021.

¹⁴ Private email conversation between Dr Murray and the writer.

¹⁵ Eric Lombard, ‘From Problem to Mission’, *The Journal*, Vol 2, No. 1, January 1994,

Through such mission by way of receptive dialogue and learning, we expect to find ourselves developing deeper understandings and richer relationships which will help us deal with the difficult questions. In this, I want to stress that receptive ecumenism, like marriage, does not make the difficult questions go away! What it does is establish a relationship, one of respect and love, within which we become capable of dealing with the hard questions.

In the words of Beda Müller OSB and Peter Hompa, 'Our experience has been that those couples and families who have faced up to the challenge themselves have often become ecumenical pioneers and have built bridges between their communities. In the process their own faith has deepened. Here we truly can speak of interchurch families.'¹⁶

It will not be possible for *Mixed Religion* couples, even fully interchurch families, to resolve everything. That is not possible in the context of estranged churches. But a process of receptive ecumenism, led by lay people who are supported and encouraged by clergy, relating to their peers both inside and outside of the Church and the churches, with their church leaders participating by listening and learning more than telling and teaching, may help resolve some questions. More importantly, it will enable *Mixed Religion* couples, and their churches, to more easily live peacefully with the questions that remain, knowing they are being recognized and valued, until the unity that Christ prayed for is brought to fruition by the Spirit at a time and in a form that God alone knows, and in a manner which God alone can do.

Conclusion

We have seen that the prevalence of *Mixed Religion* marriages in Canada is significantly greater than recorded in Catholic Church records. We have seen that such marriages can be a gift to the churches of which the spouses are part, for the healing of ecclesial estrangement. We have also recognized that many of such couples are unknown to Catholic leaders, and are better reached by the laity exercising their

<http://interchurchfamilies.org/index.php/the-journal/1990-1995/january-1994-2-1/255-from-problem-to-mission.html> accessed 9 July 2019.

¹⁶ Beda Müller OSB and Peter Hompa, '30 Years of Seminars for Interchurch Couples and Families' in *Issues and Reflections* (Neresheim, and Leonberg-Gebersheim, Germany, 1999, <http://interchurchfamilies.org/index.php/issues-and-reflections/9-uncategorised/275-30-years-of-seminars.html>, accessed 15 July 2020.

own call to ministry. And we have seen that receptive ecumenism is a way forward in recognizing and nurturing these gifts for the good of the whole world.

If someone you know is in a *Mixed Religion* marriage, and would like to participate in a series of events based on receptive ecumenism, using Zoom as the facilitation vehicle, please have them contact the writer at ray.temmerman@gmail.com.

INTERCONFESSIONAL MEETINGS OF RELIGIOUS (E.I.I.R.): FIFTY YEARS MAKING PATHWAYS OF UNITY

Petar Gramatikov*

The restoration of Christian unity is a responsibility of the entire people of God, to which consecrated persons contribute in a special way with prayer and witness to the evangelical life. Doctrinal ecumenism, based on truth, is inseparable from ecumenism of life, based on love. And both require a personal encounter, which allows us to recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. The interfaith meetings of religious in Europe, in their fifty years of history, have been a privileged space for that exchange of gifts that makes us forestate and anticipate full communion.

I have been honored to become a member of the association in 2008 and to be elected and to serve as a member of the E.I.I.R. Board of Directors in the period 2010-2014, that's why I am pleased by the invitation to prepare this overview of E.I.I.R. based on the materials accessible also on the web-page of the association. concerning the

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meeting of the fiftieth anniversary of the E.I.I.R. and the postponement of our session—scheduled for July 2020—to July 2022. The Board of Directors of the E.I.I.R., which also forms the organizing team of the Jubilee Meeting of our association, has been able to prepare the publication of a book composed of a selection of various interventions that have been made throughout these fifty years of our association, in order to honor our founders as well as a certain number of speakers by giving thanks for their persevering prayer for the unity of Christians. This book will be available at our rescheduled meeting the first week of July 2022.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, E.I.I.R. has been monitoring the situation and following the advice of public health authorities. To respond to the health crisis, the Swiss Public Health and Safety Service has canceled all major events. Following this situation, the organizing office of the E.I.I.R. has taken the important and difficult decision to postpone the Jubilee Meeting to the summer of 2022. We recognize the significant disappointment for all those who were registered. However, the health and safety of our event attendees were our top priority. Additionally, global travel restrictions and quarantine implications were increasingly presented many people with tremendous challenges in their travel plans.

Consecrated Life and Christian Unity

Consecrated life represents in the Church, in a visible and concrete way, the option for God as the only absolute and the following of Jesus as a way of life, through the practice of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, as well as dedication to community prayer and sharing. To the extent that this project of religious life, in its multiform variety, is inspired and nourished by the sources of the Gospel, it becomes a call and encouragement for all Christians who seek to realize in the concrete circumstances of their lives the fullness of their baptism.

This evangelical root of consecrated life means that the religious community can also be a point of reference and a meeting place for all those who, in communion with Jesus' desire that 'all may be one' (John 17:21), pray and work for reconciliation and full communion among all the churches. In this sense, the ecumenical vocation is inherent and connatural to all forms of consecrated life.

Starting from this fundamental conviction, fruit of the action of the Spirit, a multitude of initiatives have arisen in our time that mark out

and invigorate the path of the Churches towards that unity for which Christ prayed and gave his life. One of these initiatives, with a long and fruitful history, is the Interconfessional and International Meetings of Religious (E.I.I.R.), which the readers of *Pastoral Ecuménica* surely already know and appreciate. Not in vain the Misioneras de la Unidad and the E.I.I.R. have been promoted in their origin and a good part of their development by the same person: the beloved and unforgettable Don Julián García Hernando, whom, for these and so many other achievements, we can consider as the greatest pioneer and promoter of ecumenism in Spain.

For many years, in addition to founder and animator, Don Julián himself was a privileged witness and punctual chronicler of the E.I.I.R. in the pages of our magazine. In order not to multiply the references, we can refer here to the extensive article that he published on the occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting, held in Grandchamp (Switzerland) in the month of August 1996. It details the founding objectives and the peculiar characteristics of these Encounters, their first steps and the main milestones in their development up to that year.

Now that it is fifty years old, without trying to repeat the data already known and even less to make a complete history of this association, it is worth evoking its beautiful and fruitful trajectory, with the hope that it continues to open paths and build bridges, not only among the religious communities of the different churches in Europe, but among all of us who, faithful to the testament of Jesus, share the passion for unity among all the sons and daughters of God.

The Association

The E.I.I.R. (International and Interconfessional Meetings of Religious Men and Women) is an International and Interconfessional Association with the legal status of a private, non-profit making organisation of unlimited duration.

Aims

The main purpose of this Association is the promotion, animation and sensitization to ecumenism of the religious of the different Christian churches. Respecting the traditions, rules and doctrines of different forms of life, the Association has specific aims:

- a) to procure and promote ecumenical formation, knowledge, brotherhood and collaboration among the members of the various churches;
- b) make known to the people of God the Ecumenical Movement and its constant updating, in accordance with its own ecclesial belonging;
- c) show solidarity with the needs of different communities when appropriate.

Means

In order to achieve its goals, the E.I.I.R. promotes and organizes spiritual, liturgical and cultural formation activities; organizes meetings; produces publications or do anything that might help the good and development of ecumenism in religious life.

Members

The E.I.I.R., whose President is the Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, is made up of nuns from the Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, who have freely chosen to join this body. To be part of the Association, a religious must make a formal request to the Board of Directors who are alone empowered to decide on the admission of corporate members. Members can be natural persons (joining in a personal capacity with the agreement of their respective superiors) or legal persons (the institutes themselves).

The E.I.I.R. Ecumenical Meetings were founded by the late Bishop Emilianos Timiadis, Metropolitan of Silyvria (permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva) and Bishop Julian Garcia Hernando (responsible for Ecumenism as a member of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Spain). Beginning with their meeting at the WCC they formed a deep and faithful friendship and the formation of the E.I.I.R. was the result of their great desire to promote the unity of Christians. The first of these meetings took place in 1970, hosted by the Community of the Sisters of Grandchamp (Reformed Church) in Switzerland. Bishop Emilianos and Bishop Hernando invited religious of various nationalities and confessions to meet for a week each year to live together the hope of reconciliation and ecclesial unity. These few days of meetings and sharing had the essential purpose of spiritual dialogue between the churches. The common liturgical prayer, the teaching of the conferences, the exchanges, the visits to the local church, the

deepening of an essential theme of the Christian faith, allowed the participants to get to know each other better and to learn to respect and appreciate the diversity of each church. In 2000 the group adopted the acronym E.I.I.R. (Encuentro Internacional Interconfesional de Religiosas y de Religiosos) and elaborated statutes. An Organizing Committee of six people was voted in by the Members of the E.I.I.R., a Committee reflecting the diversity of the churches. The decision was made to organize the Meetings every two years, in a different country, and alternately in a different church (Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant). Invitations would now also be extended to all baptized persons wishing to engage more spiritually in the process of reconciliation between our churches (young theologians, lay leaders of ecumenical groups, catechesis, seminarians...). Since 2001, a Liaison Bulletin—E.I.I.R.-NEWS—has been drafted quarterly and sent to each participant. The faithful presence of the founders at the Meetings and their participation, so rich in spiritual sharing and deep communion with all, contributed a lot to the cohesion of the E.I.I.R. Bishop Emilianos was present at the Meeting of Thebes (Greece) in 2000 and Bishop Hernando at the Meeting of New-Valamo (Finland) in 2004.

The Co-Founders of E.I.I.R.

The late Metropolitan Emilianos (Timiadis) of Silyvria, hierarch of the Ecumenical Throne and co-founder of E.I.I.R., was born in Athens on March 10, 1916. He studied theology at Halki Theological Institute, and at Oxford University. He obtained a doctorate in theology at the University of Thessaloniki. In 1942 he was ordained deacon and priest. He began his pastoral ministry in Constantinople, then was appointed vicar-general of the Orthodox Archdiocese in London and dean of the Greek parishes in Belgium and the Netherlands, residing in Antwerp. He is undoubtedly the Orthodox pioneer of ecumenism in Belgium. In 1959 he became the permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Ecumenical Council of Churches (Geneva, 1959-1984). In 1960 he was elected Bishop of Méloa, auxiliary to the Ecumenical Patriarch. His episcopal consecration took place at Saint Stéphane Cathedral in Paris on December 6, 1960. In 1965 he was elected Metropolitan of Calabria and in 1977 Metropolitan of Silyvria. The late Metropolitan Emilianos of Silyvria was one of the Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council and the first co-chairman of the Commission for Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the

Lutheran World Federation. He taught in various faculties of theology and is the author of a large number of books and articles. He was a great friend of various Catholic monasteries, in particular of the Monastery of Bose in Italy, where he spent much time. With the Spanish Catholic priest, Mgr Julian Hernando Garcia, he organized for several decades the Interconfessional Meetings of Sisters and Religious, which have now become our E.I.I.R. Association. Bishop Emilianos died on Friday, February 22, 2008, in Aigion (Greece) in his ninety-second year. His funeral was celebrated on Saturday February 23, 2008 in Aigion, Greece, at which the President of the E.I.I.R., Bishop Athenagoras of Sinope, represented our Association.

The late Bishop Julian Garcia Hernando, co-founder, was born in Campaspero (Valladolid), Spain, on March 16, 1920. After studying humanities, philosophy and theology at the Segovia Seminary (1929-1943), he was ordained a priest on March 20, 1943. The same year he entered the *Hermanidad de Sacerdotes Operarios Diocesanos* (Brotherhood of Diocesan Operative Priests). In 1945 he became Chancellor of the Seminary of Valladolid. In 1950 he was elected chancellor of the Segovia Seminary and remained so until 1965. During all this time he was professor of ecclesiastical history. Don Julian was a member of the Academy of History and Art of San Quirce and, in 1962, founded the *Institute Misioneras de la Unidad*, the first Spanish Catholic institution for the promotion of Christian unity. After the close of the Second Vatican Council, he founded the National Secretariat for Ecumenism under the patronage of the Spanish Episcopal Conference. He was its director until 1999. Since 1966 his pastoral work has mainly focused on promoting the cause of Christian unity from the platform of the National Secretariat and the Ecumenical Center *Misioneras de la Unidad*, a center that was established in Madrid in 1967. The Interconfessional Christian Committee was structured in 1968. Since then Don Julian has been co-secretary of this body, whose aim was to ensure good relations between Christians of different churches and confessions, and try to resolve issues that might have caused friction between them. The great concern for Don Julian was to bring together the different religious confessions, a goal which led him to organize International and Interconfessional Meetings, in close collaboration with the late Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, hierarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. They met at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva. As a Christian sensitive to contemporary ecumenism, Bishop

Julian Garcia Hernando participated in almost all the major assemblies of the Ecumenical Council of Churches. He died on June 30, 2008, in Madrid, at the age of eighty-eight.

Foundation and First Steps

The Interconfessional and International Meetings of Religious were born from a very concrete experience that took place in 1969, when Don Julián García Hernando organized with the Missionaries of the Unit (an Institute that he had founded in 1962) an ecumenical tour to the Protestant communities of Grandchamp (Switzerland), Darmstadt (Germany) and Pomeyrol (France). The meeting with these communities which had emerged within the Reformation allowed them to discover mutual agreement on the project of life inspired by the Gospel, as well as the same yearning and ardent prayer for the unity of the churches. From this beautiful experience came the idea of repeating these meetings, expanding them to the religious communities of other Christian churches that share the consecration to the Lord with a similar style of life.

This fundamental coincidence, wrote Don Julián evoking this moment, largely broke down confessional barriers, flying over them in an effort to reach peaks and heights where there is no favorable climate for merely human factors, which have so strongly influenced the made of separations. For this reason, the life of consecration, shared in the different Churches, can be considered as one of the safest paths in the march towards Unity.¹

To further this inspiration, Don Julian and the Missionaries visited the headquarters of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva, where they found the enthusiastic support of Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, permanent representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, who had already been an Orthodox observer at Vatican II who would also co-chair the first Dialogue Commission between the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation. The collaboration between these two great pioneers of ecumenism will also have the support of Pastor Bengt-Thure Molander, Head of the Diakonia Department at the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva.

¹ J. García Hernando, "Twenty-Fifth Interconfessional Meeting of Religious (Grandchamp Community, August 19-25, 1996)", *Ecumenical Pastoral* XIII (1996), 249.

The First Interconfessional Meeting of Religious began on August 15, 1970 and was proposed as a theme for reflection 'The significance of consecrated life today'. The Reformed community of Grandchamp acted as hostess, animated by its charismatic Prioress, Sister Minke de Vries. Among the participants were consecrated women representing the Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic Churches. The speakers were figures of the highest order and included two Anglican pastors. At the end of the meeting, an Orthodox chronicler expressed his thanks to God 'for the love that He has made us feel here in Grandchamp' and expressed his conviction that 'the royal path to reach Unity in the Lord is the path of prayer'. The deep and joyful experience lived throughout these days will be like a fire that spreads and spreads in the successive encounters.

During its first years, the geographical itinerary of the E.I.I.R. covered some Western European countries from which most of the participants came: Italy (Grottaferrata, 1971), Spain (Ávila, 1972), England (Bristol, 1975), Switzerland (again Grandchamp, 1978) and, above all, France (Pomeyrol, 1973; Versailles, 1974; La Rochette, 1976, Les Montsvoirons, 1979). In each of the meetings, a religious community representative of the various ecclesial traditions, which initially were Catholic, Reformed and Anglican, acted as host. We would have to wait for the following decade for the meetings to overcome the iron curtain and be held in an Eastern European country under the communist regime (Zagreb/Yugoslavia, 1985) and so that an Orthodox monastery could also host the meeting (Agapia/Romania, 1987).

As it was to be expected, the topics initially addressed were directly related to ecumenism in the life of religious communities, with particular attention to monastic communities, flourishing in Orthodoxy. This is how we pray and reflect and share on consecrated life: as a service (1971), prayer for Unity (1972), or consecrated women and ecumenism (1973). In some meetings, the important events that were happening in the ecumenical sphere and in the life of the churches were also kept in mind. Thus, in tune with the Holy Year of Renewal and Reconciliation promulgated by Paul VI in 1975, the meetings of 1974 and 1975 focussed respectively on the theme of reconciliation and on the relationship between religious life and renewal in the Spirit. Along these same lines, the celebration in Nairobi at the end of 1975 of the V General Assembly of the Ecumenical Council of Churches around the theme 'Jesus Christ liberates and unites' inspired the reflection of the

1976 meeting around the theme of 'religious life and release'. It must be taken into account that in these years both the charismatic movement and liberation theology experienced a great explosion across the different churches and religious communities, although they preferentially dedicate themselves to contemplation, and also share- and with greater depth- the struggles and hopes of the entire people of God.

To describe the atmosphere and the spirit that is breathed in these meetings we can quote here some paragraphs from the beautiful presentation made by Sister Bénédicté Girard, Deaconess of Reuilly, at the Ecumenical Colloquium organized by the Vatican in the Year of Consecrated Life:

These meetings of a scant week in which fifty or sixty men and women religious, monks and nuns participate, as well as some lay friends happy to join them, are of great wealth. Everyone feels called to 'make community', to discover each other, to try to understand their respective histories, with their political background and their noises of war, their spiritualities, their ascetic practices, their theologies, their *diakonia*, their ethics, their sense of Church... to get going in a certain way. Throughout the days each one shares what he carries inside, the strength of his ecumenical commitments, his joys, his sufferings, his battles [...]

Being from different Christian denominations and European countries, we pray together: Catholics, Greek Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans [...] The shared liturgy is generally lived with great fervour: the Catholic Eucharist, the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, the Protestant Holy Supper, Greek-Catholic celebrations, monastic services with the participation of all. Often, the moment of the Eucharist is painful because intercommunion is not yet possible among us out of respect for the norms of each of the churches. During these intense hours we can listen to testimonies and contributions that are always of great quality, lessons that make each one mature in a more concrete ecumenical conscience. The heart can be shocked. The mind enriched, challenged, displaced...²

In addition to the prayer, reflection and sense of togetherness that takes place at each meeting, the participants have the opportunity to

² B. Girard, 'Présentation de l'Association Interconfessionnelle et Internationale des Religieux/ses (E.I.I.R.)', *Sequela Christi* XLI (2015), 111-125. See p. 115s.

learn about other nearby realities of special religious or civil interest, especially when they have particular ecumenical relevance. In this way, in addition to contacting the ecclesial authorities of each place, inviting them to be present at some point in the meeting and, in any case, to give their support and blessing, the program of activities includes an outing or excursion, which usually leaves an indelible mark on the participants. Thus, already in the second meeting, held in the house-novitiate of the Franciscan Missionaries of Grottaferrata, the proximity of Rome made it possible to celebrate an exciting interdenominational prayer in the Catacombs of Santa Priscilla, meet Pope Paul VI in the audience held in Castel Gandolfo and, going a little further, dedicate an entire day to visiting the Franciscan places and imbuing oneself with the spirit of the Universal Brother. Even more eventful was the meeting of 1972, because with the help of the Santa Andariega, in addition to Ávila, the participants toured Alba de Tormes, Salamanca, Segovia and Toledo, discovering the stories, the beauties and the religious significance of each one of these Teresian places. In addition to the prayerful pilgrimage, there could also be talk of a 'walking chair' along the wide roads of Castile.

Sharing the sufferings and hardships experienced by others is one of the most fruitful paths of ecumenism, especially when at the origin of that suffering we discover the sins of the Church itself. The painful recognition of the evil caused is already a decisive step to overcome it, healing the wounds of memory and opening us to a common horizon. This experience had a privileged setting in the first meeting of Pomeyrol (1973) with the visit to the Museum of the Desert that recalls the accumulation of persecutions suffered by the Christian Huguenots - reformed- in the France of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. Similar experiences would be repeated in successive meetings, e.g., discovering first-hand the reality and history of the Waldensian communities in Italy.

Throughout this first decade, the Meetings were growing in number, representativeness and commitment of the participants to the common cause of unity. But, despite this joyful reality, which made it possible to experience and celebrate the 'refund fraternity',³ the difficulty of communication in various languages (French, Spanish, English, German, Greek...) would lead to a split. On the initiative of Don Martín

³ St John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 41f.

Zabala, a priest and Head of ecumenism in the Diocese of Bilbao, from 1979 the anglophone religious would hold their own meetings in their own language, following a path parallel to that of the original group. The parallelism between both associations also extends to the respective acronyms: E.I.I.R. and C.I.I.R./C.I.R., with the sole exception that the word 'meeting', is here replaced by 'congress'.⁴ Although this separation has meant a certain loss for the E.I.I.R., especially due to the smaller presence of Anglican representatives, the birth of this sister entity, which shares the same spirit and pursues the same objectives, should also be seen as a sign of vigor and fertility.

Last Decade

The last decade of the E.I.I.R. begins with the meeting held next to the Orthodox monastery of St John of Rila (a monastery of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church), in the middle of a leafy valley located about one hundred kilometers south of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. In this environment as beautiful as it is wild, the approximately fifty participants set ourselves the theme of reflection 'Life in Christ: challenges and hopes'. The hopes could very well be associated with the celebration of the one hundred years of the Ecumenical Movement, whose birth dates back to the missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

We were able to appreciate it once again at the 2012 meeting, in which we were welcomed by the Sisters of Pomeyrol with their usual simplicity and cordiality. We also listened together to the call to holiness; a call to live the presence of God within us and to manifest it; to 'be a heaven' for our neighbors, as we saw in the Assisi meeting (2014), following in the luminous footsteps of Francis and Clara. Then, within the framework of the Holy Year of Mercy, the meeting in Tallinn (2016) helped us to see how this participation in the holiness of God is translated and concretized in the works of mercy. Finally, at the Selbitz meeting (2018), echoing the five hundred years of the Protestant Reformation and the recent agreements on the theme of justification, we were able to proclaim together 'Jesus Christ, our justice' and present 'The life consecrated as an experience of grace', leaving behind

⁴ For a first information, see M. De Zabala, 'International and Interconfessional Congress of Religious', *Pastoral Ecu  nica* II (1985) 213-215; also B. Girard, *op. cit.*, 120-122. Further news will be found on the website <https://ciirblog.wordpress.com/english/>.

centuries of controversies and confrontations. The visit to the little border town of Mödlareuth, which the communist regime had split in two with the construction of the Wall, became a plastic illustration of that reconciled unity that we can already glimpse.

In the middle of the last decade, in January 2015, an interdenominational and international meeting of religious men and women took place in Rome, which we did not organize, nor did our brothers in the C.I.R. We were celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life and for this reason the Vatican had convened an Ecumenical Colloquium on 'Consecrated life in Christian traditions'. Among the many interesting interventions included in the program, there was a space for the presentation of our respective associations, which in the case of the E.I.I.R. was given by Sister Bénédicte Girard, Deaconess of Reuilly, member of the Organizing Committee. Another member of this Committee-the one who writes these lines-was also invited to give his personal testimony at the opening session. In these gestures of deference could be seen the recognition and official confirmation of the inspiring project and the path travelled by our Association. But do not think that this was a novelty, because in all the meetings held we have already been able to count on the approval and signs of appreciation on the part of the authorities of our respective churches. In particular, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the Cardinal Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity have not failed to send a warm message of encouragement and blessing at each meeting.

This ecclesial support does not mean a guarantee of the future for our Association. The Jubilee Meeting for the fifty years of the E.I.I.R., which should have been held in the Swiss city of Fribourg in July 2020, had to be suspended due to the pandemic. We hope to be able to do it this year, maintaining the program of events, which includes a festive visit to the Community of Grandchamp, site of the first meeting, and the presentation of a commemorative volume of this half century of ecumenical journey. But the uncertainty to which we refer is not motivated by the threat of the coronavirus. Rather, it refers to the need for a generational change that ensures the continuity of this association, adapting it to the new times. Here it is a case of 'renew or die'. Although we are convinced that the ecumenical movement, responding to an inspiration of the Spirit, can only disappear when it has reached its goal. And consecrated persons, in tune with the will of their Lord, will not stop praying, working and suffering until this

objective is fulfilled: 'That they may all be one, so that the world may believe' (John 17:21).

Annex: The Stages of a Journey

We present here a synoptic table of all the Meetings of the E.I.I.R., indicating in the first column the year and the number of order, and in the second the place, the host Church and the chosen theme. We add at the end the meeting of the Fiftieth Anniversary, which will take place—God willing—in July 2022.

1970	Grandchamp (Switzerland) - Reformed Church
I	'The meaning of consecrated life today'
1971	Grottaferrata (Italy) - Catholic Church
II	'Consecrated life as a service'
1972	Ávila (Spain) - Catholic Church
III	'Prayer for Unity'
1973	Pomeyrol (France) - Reformed Church
IV	'Consecrated women and Ecumenism'
1974	Versailles (France) - Reformed Church
V	'The reconciliation'
1975	Bristol (England) - Anglican Church
VI	'Religious life and renewal in the Spirit'
1976	La Rochette (France) - Anglican Church
VII	'Religious life and liberation'
1978	Grandchamp (Switzerland) - Reformed Church
VIII	'Consecrated Life and Unity'
1979	Les Montsvoirons (France) - Catholic Church
IX	'The spirituality of violence'
1980	Assisi (Italy) - Catholic Church
X	'The beatitudes'
1982	Ávila (Spain) - Catholic Church
XI	'A common path: prayer for Unity'
1983	Chevetogne (Belgium) - Catholic Church (bi-ritual)
XII	'The liturgy, the path to Unity'
1984	Bose (Italy) - Catholic Church
XIII	'The unifying force of faith»'
1985	Zagreb (Yugoslavia/Croatia) - Catholic Church
XIV	'In Christ, be light of the world'
1986	Montefano (Italy) - Catholic Church

XV 1987	'Consecrated women: witnesses of the Kingdom' Agapia (Romania) - Orthodox Church
XVI 1988	'The religious consecration' Albi (France) - Catholic Church
XVII 1989	'The consecrated life today' Maele/Bruges (Belgium) - Catholic Church
XVIII 1990	'The psalms in the consecrated life' Strasbourg (France) - Protestant Church
XIX 1991	'Prayer for Unity' Agapia (Romania) - Orthodox Church
XX 1992	'The desire for permanent renewal as a fruit of the Spirit' Valladolid (Spain) - Catholic Church
XXI 1993	'Consecrated life and the new evangelization of Europe' Toulouse (France) - Catholic Church
XXII 1995	'Sisters, witnesses of peace in today's world' Auschwitz (Poland) - Catholic Church
XXIII 1996	'In a divided world, what koinonia between our Churches?' Grandchamp (Switzerland) - Reformed Church
XXIV 1997	'The contribution of consecrated life to the new Europe' Durau (Romania) - Orthodox Church
XXV 1998	'The consecrated life, a sign of reconciliation' Chevetogne (Belgium) - Catholic Church (bi-ritual)
XXVI 1999	'The Holy Spirit, bond of Unity' Bad-Liebenzell (Germany) - Protestant Church
XXVII 2000	'Daughters of the same Father' Aliartos/Thebes (Greece) - Orthodox Church
XXVIII	'Christianity has only just begun'

2002 XXIX	Maguzzano (Italy) - Catholic Church 'The consecrated life, a sign of renewal'
2004 XXX	New Valamo (Finland) - Orthodox Church 'Religious life and the safeguarding of creation'
2006 XXXI	Neuendettelsau (Germany) - Lutheran Church 'The light of Mount Tabor, transfiguration of the world'
2008 XXXII	Sobrado de los Monjes (Spain) - Catholic Church 'The strength of the name of Christ, heart of the world'
2010 XXXIII	Saint John of Rila (Bulgaria) - Orthodox Church 'Life in Christ: challenge and hope'
2012 XXXIV	Pomeyrol (France) - Reformed Church 'Listen, God speaks to us – The Word of God for the life of the world'
2014 XXXV	Assisi (Italy) – Catholic Church 'Called to holiness – Heaven is within you. Be the sky for your contemporaries'
2016 XXXVI	Tallinn (Estonia) - Orthodox Church 'Blessed are the merciful'
2018 XXXVII	Selbitz (Germany) - Evangelical Church 'Jesus Christ, our justice. The consecrated life as an experience of grace»'
2022 XXXVIII	Freiburg (Switzerland) - Catholic Church 'The consecrated life at the service of Christian Unity. Fifty years of E.I.I.R. testimony'

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SAINT IRENAEUS JOINT ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC WORKING GROUP

Communiqué – Rome 2021^{*}

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group gathered for its seventeenth annual meeting from 6 to 10 October 2021 at the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). The 2021 meeting was chaired by the Orthodox co-president Metropolitan Serafim (Joantă) of Germany, Central and Northern Europe (Romanian Orthodox Church) and by the Catholic co-president Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg.

The meeting was preceded by a pre-conference at the Angelicum discussing the group's common study *Serving Communion: Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality* (2018). A new development at this meeting was the invitation of two external experts (on biblical studies) and of three young student observers.

At the opening plenary on Wednesday 6 October, the co-presidents reported on the group's work over the last two years, notably the translation of the common study into twelve languages, most recently Arabic.

On the morning of Thursday 7 October, the group was received by Cardinal Kurt Koch at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Cardinal Koch welcomed the group's work as a valuable support of the International Roman Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. The group was then received in a private audience by Pope Francis who spoke warmly of the group's work and of the common study. In his statement, he observed that 'we have come to understand that primacy and synodality are not two competing principles but two realities that establish and sustain one another in the service of communion'. Pope Francis also underlined the aptness of the patronage of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons and announced at the meeting that he would shortly declare Saint Irenaeus a Doctor of the Catholic Church with the title *Doctor Unitatis* ('Doctor of Unity').

^{*} Orthodox Co-secretary: Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan. Catholic Co-secretary: Dr. Johannes Oeldemann.

During the meeting, the participants attended morning services of both Churches. On the morning of Saturday 9 October the group visited the Catacombs of Domitilla and attended mass presided over by Bishop Feige.

Following the publication of *Serving Communion*, the group has moved on to a new focus on the theme of unity and schism. The group began its work with two biblical papers presented by external experts on the theme of unity and schism in the Old and New Testaments, respectively. The group proceeded to examine two case studies from the Early Church: the Quartodeciman Controversy and the *Letters* of Saint Ignatius of Antioch. This was followed by a presentation and discussion of the recent document produced by the Oriental Orthodox-Catholic dialogue. A third main topic was the search for unity in the twentieth-twenty-first centuries. Here the focus was on the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR) with the Moscow Patriarchate (2007) and the methodology underpinning recent dialogues between the Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and the Assyrian Church of the East.

The reflections of this year's meeting were summarized by the participants in the following theses:

Theses on unity and schism in Scripture

- 1) In the Old Testament the unity of the human race is grounded in a common origin. That said, the chosen people, Israel, acquired their identity due to a series of separations vis-à-vis surrounding peoples. This process is indirectly described in the numerous accounts of separation between brothers in the same family in which the younger supplants the elder: election remains dependent on a single lineage while the separated brothers become the originators of neighbouring peoples.
- 2) The Christian community is formed through the unity brought by Christ who came to gather together the scattered children of God (John 11:52). It is he who 'has broken down the middle wall of separation' (Eph. 2:14) between Israel and other nations. In the New Testament unity and diversity are not opposite but complementary realities. The salvation brought by Christ bestows on us the Spirit who, without abolishing diversity of culture, brings all peoples together at Pentecost and gives the Christian community a vocation to understanding amid diversity.

3) Even if the New Testament writings issue from variously situated witnesses, and even if they reflect different theological emphases and indeed conflicts within the community, it remains true that Christ is their unifying principle. The diversity of the gospels is underpinned by the unity of the single Gospel that consists in the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Theses on unity and schism in the Early Church

4) The Letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch represent a very early and significant testimony for the development and foundation of the structure of Church ministry and its meaning for the unity of the Church. Ignatius' understanding of the central importance of *one* bishop in a given place is to be understood as a collegial and not a monarchical ministry since the bishop always functions in harmony with the deacons and the presbyters.

5) The Quartodeciman Controversy serves as an example of unity being (just) maintained amid the strains of liturgical diversity. Two principal traditions existed in the Early Church: celebrating Easter on the 14th Nisan (the Jewish Passover), as in much of Asia Minor, or on a given Sunday, as in Rome and much of the East. This divergence also had significant implications for fasting practices. Although Polycarp of Smyrna and Anicetus of Rome had disagreed on this dispute as early as the mid-second century, Anicetus invited Polycarp to preside over the common celebration of the Eucharist. Despite continuing tensions on this issue, culminating in Pope Victor's excommunication of Christians from Asia Minor resident in Rome, eucharistic communion was, in the end, preserved. A particularly important role was played here by Saint Irenaeus of Lyons who successfully intervened with Pope Victor to lift the excommunication and thus avert a schism. As Irenaeus put it: 'Our disagreement over the fast confirms our agreement in the faith'. Diversity in practice does not imply disunity of faith.

Theses on unity and schism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

6) A good example of a process of reunification between two Churches, which separated from each other mainly on political grounds, is the healing of the schism between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, which lasted eighty years (1927-2007). This process entailed: the healing of memories by means

of a joint reading of history and a rejection on both sides of those judgments and actions of the past that had created division; the recognition of a degree of autonomy within the frame of a canonical communion; and the establishment of an ecclesial framework and a shared method of dialogue in which all the questions that remained still open could be resolved in a fraternal way.

7) We discussed the document 'The Exercise of Communion in the Life of the Early Church and its Implications for our Search for Communion Today', published by the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in 2015. That dialogue has examined in detail the nature of the relationships among the Churches in the period leading up to the divisions of the fifth century. It shows that the full communion that existed among the Churches was expressed in a vast web of relationships founded on the common conviction that all of the Churches shared the same faith. Among these expressions of communion were the exchange of letters and visits, both formal and informal; synods and their reception in all parts of the Church; prayer, veneration of common saints, pilgrimages, and other forms of spirituality. This makes it all the more important to reflect upon the reasons why, nevertheless, these schisms that arose in the fifth century still persist to this day.

8) Since the end of the twentieth century, some encouraging developments have occurred in the dialogue between the Chalcedonian Churches (Catholic and Orthodox), the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and the Assyrian Church of the East. Notable achievements include the agreed statements between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches although these have met with stiff opposition in some Orthodox contexts. The Catholic dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches and with the Assyrian Church of the East has perhaps been more successful: these Churches have come to believe that they are divided today by schisms, not heresies. The question remains how these still separate Churches come to recognise each other as true Churches. It must, however, be observed that some of these developments are unlikely to find acceptance in the Orthodox Church.

9) The change in relations between the Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and the Assyrian Church of the East has become possible thanks to the re-establishment of communication among the faithful and the leaders of all partner Churches, as well as to the

theological work that has accompanied this dynamic. The re-establishment of communication made possible renewed contacts, including invitations of observers to Vatican II, numerous visits among Church leaders and monastics, exchange of theological students, a new attitude towards inter-Church marriages in some places, and above all the renunciation of attitudes perceived as hostile, such as of proselytism and uniatism (this last point being a particularly welcome development for the Orthodox). In-depth theological and historical studies have accompanied this rapprochement, revealing the diversity of linguistic, cultural, and political factors that have negatively affected mutual understanding in the past. This has enabled the learning of the other's language and built solidarity, mutual trust, and friendship.

10) The work of reconciliation requires the collaboration of all the faithful, of Church leaders, and of theologians. In particular, the scholarly theological work underpinning these developments was productive principally because it was driven by a kerygmatic concern to express to contemporary men and women in understandable terms the saving mystery of Christ.

At the end of their meeting the members of the Irenaeus Group expressed warm thanks to the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Angelicum, the Italian Bishops' Conference, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group is composed of twenty-six theologians, thirteen Orthodox and thirteen Catholics, from a number of European countries, the Middle East, and the Americas. It was established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), and has met since then in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), Thessaloniki (Greece), Rabat (Malta), on Halki near Istanbul (Turkey), Taizé (France), Caraiman (Romania), Graz (Austria), and Trebinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina). There was no meeting in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. It was decided in Rome to hold the next meeting of the Irenaeus Group in October 2022 in Romania.

In memoriam of Dr Sr. Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA (1950-2021)

Teresa Francesca Rossi^{1*}

'I am an ecumenical optimist!'

An 'ecumenical optimist': this is how Dr Sr. Lorelei Fuchs defined herself and those of us who have known her can certainly confirm that this is the way she was, and for this reason we want to pay a tribute to Sr. Lorelei (as she preferred to be called). A long life Franciscan vocation focused on the Atonement of Christ, a passion for the unity of His Church, a bright intellectual contribution to theology, a vivid, serene, contagious commitment to dialogue, an always-welcoming friendship: these are the gifts that Sr. Lorelei has given to me, and, I believe, to many of us in the Ecumenical Movement. A life spent for the unity of the Church which has been rewarded with Eternal Life.

An Atonement Missionary

Lorelei Fuchs, born in Long Island (NY) in 1950, entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement in 1975, becoming definitively professed in 1984. She obtained her academic degrees in Theology first at Notre Dame University, then at the KUL

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¹ L. Fuchs, 'Lutherans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics Look to 1997 and Beyond', in *Ecumenical Trends* 23 (1994) 11, 172.

(Katholieke Universitet Leuven) in Louvain (Belgium) where she also received, in 2003, a Ph.D. in Theology. Much of her work was carried out within the Society of the Atonement where she was a liturgical coordinator and involved in formation. She also took part in the ministries of hospitality and music. She worked, not only in the United States, but also in Canada and Italy. Sr. Lorelei is remembered by her sisters as an 'Atonement missionary'² a vocation she carried out until her death on June 17, 2021, in Graymoor (NY, USA).

The choice to enter the Society of the Atonement was the highlight of what was already her programme for life. The Friars and Sisters of the Atonement, have, in fact, from their foundation lived out an ecumenical ministry of profound inclusiveness worldwide. Founded by Father Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White in 1898 in Graymoor (NY), the Society of the Atonement (Friars and Sisters) was the fruit of an inspiration of Fr. Watson to create a Franciscan Congregation centered on the *Atonement* of Christ (Rom. 5:11) from which flows the call to unity ('At-one-ment') of his disciples. The search for unity was immediately channelled into the incessant prayer for unity. Fr. Paul Wattson is called the Father of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity because of its first celebration in Graymoor in 1908. It then developed into ecumenical research and formation, as well as, broadening its horizons into a search for interior reconciliation among people and with creation, which is the core of the *Atonement's* ministries of reconciliation, spiritual direction and hospitality.³

Sr. Lorelei had an ecumenical soul that she expressed in her many years of work as Associate Director (1990-2006) at the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute in New York (*GEII*), a ministry of the Friars of the Atonement, where she had particular responsibilities for the LARC Desk (Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic-Relations), the preparation of the Week of Prayer material, and where she was Co-editor of *Ecumenical Trends*, the monthly journal of the GEII. For many years she also taught at the Summer Course organized by the Centro Pro Unione,⁴ another ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the

² Cf. <https://www.dorseycarlonefuneralhome.com/obituaries/Dr-Lorelei-Fuchs/#!/Obituary>.

³ Cf.: <https://graymoor.org/> and <https://www.atonementfriars.org/>.

⁴ Annual Summer Course: Ecumenical and Interreligious Movements from a Catholic Perspective, cf. <https://www.prounione.it/en/>.

Atonement, in Rome. In her teaching, she communicated all her 'kaleidoscopic' enthusiasm, love and wealth of knowledge. Her lectures were highly appreciated and thought-provoking, as was her relational style. She was able to create an informal, communal atmosphere among people who had just met. She was involved in Anglican-Roman Catholic and Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues and was for years a member of the National Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission. She was also a member of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission for theological dialogue (for three mandates),⁵ and a Roman Catholic representative to the Lutheran-Episcopal dialogue in New York. These were the ecumenical areas in which Sr. Lorelei loved to practice, and in which her contribution has left its mark both from the theological and relational points of view. She was also a member of the North American Academy of Ecumenists and of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers.

I think it is true to say that, for Sr. Lorelei, the Ecumenical Movement was the embodiment of Christ's presence in which 'we live, and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

In her engaging vitality, Sr. Lorelei loved the versatility and energy of the Ecumenical Movement, which she often described as a 'kaleidoscope' to play with, where one could observe the different colours and the thousand ways in which they mix, an analogy that in her mouth sounded really truthful and convincing. Sr. Lorelei, in fact, was fascinated by the interaction of the personal stories of the actors of the Movement and their testimonial power. I would say that even the ecumenical documents were presented and interpreted by her almost as a *paradosis* of experiences, stories, interactions, first handed down as narratives and then codified in documents that had to be assimilated to become many other stories and experiences.⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that Sr. Lorelei co-edited—together with some of her colleagues—precious volumes presenting the stories of renowned ecumenists to highlight the 'narrative' aspect of the Movement and

⁵ She has been involved in the mandates producing the *Seoul Report* (2006), the *Durban Report* (2011) and the *Houston Report* (2016).

⁶ Interesting is her presentation on the reading of ecumenical texts: L. Fuchs, 'The Reading of Ecumenical Texts', in *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 45 (1994) Spring Issue, 3-5.

rekindle the enthusiasm and legacy of its pioneers.⁷ She also co-edited that indispensable source that is the collection of texts of the international bilateral theological dialogues,⁸ a work to which she had certainly dedicated herself, I believe, to foster their reception at all levels. She was very much concerned with the dynamics of the reception, not only of the texts, but also of the *koinonia* lived among the faithful. When she affirmed: 'The reading of ecumenical writing is ultimately the continuance of *lectio divina*',⁹ she was opening up the horizon of spirituality and liturgy as the proper dimension to live out and celebrate the growing communion among churches. In fact, every ecumenical event and document, every relationship and dialogue, every concept and theology is, ultimately, oriented to the encounter with God, and in Him with our brothers and sisters. When Sr. Lorelei focuses on the most intimate relationship possible between Christians—the one rooted and celebrated in the intimate relationship with God—her theological vision fades into the liturgical one.

Sr. Lorelei's 'Ecu-Theology'?

To trace, among the numerous articles, books, lectures of which she was the author, the 'pillars' of Sr. Lorelei's theological reflection, is to enter into the inner dynamics of ecumenism. Sr. Lorelei's language and literary style are flowing and pleasant, at times enriched by a delicate sense of humour, which reflect her colloquial style of speaking in the conferences she held. She employs clear and direct language, but with a frequent use of powerful expressions created *ad hoc*, or neologisms

⁷ Cf.: L. Fuchs, 'A Brief History of Faith and Order: Times, Places, People and Issues behind an Ecumenical Theological Movement', in *Ecumenical Trends* 33 (2004) 10, 147-153; G.R. Evans – L. Fuchs – D. Kessler, *Encounters for Unity*, (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1995); A. Denaux – P. De Mey, in collaboration with M. Ter Steeg and L. Fuchs, *The Ecumenical Legacy of Johannes Cardinal Willebrands (1909-2006)*, (Leuven – Paris – Walpole MA: Peeters, 2012).

⁸ J. Gros – T. Best – L. Fuchs, *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, (Geneva – Grand Rapids MI: WCC Publications – W. Eerdmans, 2007); T. Best – L. Fuchs – J. Gibaut – J. Gros – D. Prassas, *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004-2014*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017).

⁹ Fuchs, 'The Reading of Ecumenical Texts...', *op.cit.*, 5; cf. also 'Dialogue statements are as much *lectio divina* as they are theological treatises'; L. Fuchs, 'Dialogue and the Future of Christian Unity: A Response to the Rev. Dr. Scott Jones and the Rev. Dr. Paul McPartlan', in *Ecumenical Trends* 35 (2006) 2, 19.

(often around the etymological-semantic root 'ecu'), a sign of the original and creative traits of her theology. So, following on her line of neologisms of what she called 'ecu-speak', I will create my own, presenting what I would call her 'Ecu-theology'—which is deeply rooted in the synergy between *koinonia*, ecclesiology and pneumatology, followed by what I would call her 'Ecu-Franciscan theology' which is that fundamental Franciscan thread in her vision of ecumenism.

Koinonia ecclesiology

The reality of *koinonia* plays the central role in Sr. Lorelei's reflection. She dedicated most of her life to its study, including a more than four hundred page *opus magnum*, which I think can rightly be considered one of the most exhaustive and creative contributions on *koinonia*, and worthy of being re-examined and re-received by contemporary ecumenical theologians.¹⁰ It contains over one hundred-and-ten pages of bibliography and synoptic tables that testify to the meticulousness of Sr. Lorelei's research which tracks the recurrences of the term *koinonia* and its linguistic derivatives from *koinon* in the New Testament and also in ecumenical documents (mainly international LARC, bilateral and theological dialogues and WCC Faith and Order documents). She highlights the etymological root, the recurrence and the context, the translation and interpretation in Greek, Latin, English, French and German. It is also a creative work which researches and proposes a diachronic and synchronic theology of *koinonia* that could be incisive and decisive in the journey of the Churches towards visible unity, a goal that also requires the formulation of a new '*koinon-vocabulary*',¹¹ a meta-language for *koinonia*.

The New Testament analysis provides the foundation of *koinonia* in its multidimensionality and relationality, and Sr. Lorelei applies this understanding to the reception that each confessional tradition has operated out of in its particular concept of *koinonia*, showing how different traditions have come to privilege different aspects: Trinitarian-pneumatological, soteriological, eschatological, sacramental, missional, and so on. More than a century of ecumenical

¹⁰ L. Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations through Dialogue to Symbolic Competence for Communionality*, (Grand Rapids – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008); cf. also: L. Fuchs, 'Koinonia: Text and Context for the Church', in *Ecumenical Trends* 22 (1993) 2, 17-18.23-31.

¹¹ *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology...*, op.cit., 3.

dialogue, according to Sr. Lorelei, has allowed these differing perspectives to be articulated in a dialogical and no longer oppositional way: 'the dialogues are re-writing the doctrine of the church ecumenically in terms of *koinonia*, in its fullest trajectory of *koinon-language*,'¹² making the concept of *koinonia* unleash its potential as a founding concept, acquiring 'a life of its own' and becoming the criterion of the '*ethos* of being church',¹³ which opens the way to *koinonia* as a reality that enables Christians and their churches to live in communion, integrating the various dimensions of *kerigma*, *leitourgia*, *diakonia* and *metanoia*.

The core of Sr Lorelei research on *koinonia* is the perspective of a '*double entendre* [...] *koinonia* has foundations and *koinonia* is foundational for understanding the Church, its faith and its unity.'¹⁴ In fact, she affirms that establishing the 'foundations of *koinonia* in language, in relationality, and in church(es) [...] reveals the foundational character of the *koinonia* concept *per se* [...] as foundational to language, relationality and church(es)',¹⁵ a movement that Sr. Lorelei elaborates in a hermeneutic reciprocity and circularity.

Parallel to its understanding as a reality that *is* foundational and *has* foundations, *koinonia*, in Sr. Lorelei's theology, is the 'competence' of the churches (but also of the concept *per se*) 'to ecume', namely to foster communion, or, more precisely 'communionality', a word that, according to her, in its suffix '-ality' better expresses the whole of the 'acts as ongoing and holistic'¹⁶ to foster unity. It's a competence that is defined as 'symbolic', where symbolic draws from the semantic area of participation, communication, gathering, relationality. 'Traversing the symbolic bridge of communionality is an ecumenical rite of passage [...] from division to unity',¹⁷ and ultimately to responsibility, accountability and common action: 'the ultimate symbolic competence of dialogue is its "vision" to go "beyond" itself so Christians may live as one.'¹⁸ It's a deep and vital reality, which Sr. Lorelei powerfully expresses also in spiritual language: 'the convergence on *koinonia* is the Christian "sacred

¹² Ibid., 367.

¹³ Ibid., 367.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵ Ibid., 246.

¹⁶ Ibid., 408.

¹⁷ Ibid., 412.

¹⁸ 'Dialogue and the Future of Christian Unity...', 19.

thread" enveloping the Christian *oikoumene*, the ecumenical holding and upholding us together—come what may.¹⁹

In defining *koinonia* as such a 'symbolic competence of communiality', Sr. Lorelei enters into a meta-level that qualifies *koinonia* in all its articulations. Furthermore, in her thought, 'symbolic competence for communiality' becomes itself a paradigm on the path to reconciliation, a category that, carrying within itself the seed of *koinonia*, can be articulated at various levels, and that can not only transcend the current state of division, thus becoming the measure 'to implement the Lund Principle',²⁰ but that can also transcend churches' boundaries, thus making them witnesses of God's Kingdom in this world.²¹ In Sr Lorelei's vision the concept of *koinonia* as 'symbolic competence of communiality' enables the soteriological, confessional, historical and ecclesiological trajectories to be integrated on the path to full visible unity.

Pneumatology

Sr. Lorelei constantly refers to pneumatology as underpinning *koinonia* ecclesiology: 'Development of *communio/koinonia* ecclesiology as a fundamental paradigm for ecumenical engagement brings to light the potential of pneumatology as foundational to an ecumenical understanding of the Church and the nature of the unity we seek.'²² In her pneumatological articulation she builds up a *climax* from the Trinitarian foundations to the grassroot level of reception.²³

To say that ecclesial fellowship is rooted in Trinitarian fellowship means to affirm that the Holy Spirit is breathing Divine life into

¹⁹ L. Fuchs, 'Communion terminology in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue in light of the *koinonia* language of the Canberra Statement', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 39 (2002) 3-4, 251.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 269.

²¹ The world as the ultimate receiver of the communal witness of the Churches is an element not often mentioned, but always present in Sr. Lorelei's horizon.

²² L. Fuchs, 'The Holy Spirit and the Development of *Communio/Koinonia* Ecclesiology as a Fundamental Paradigm for Ecumenical Engagement', in D. Donnelly – A. Denaux – J. Famerée, *The Holy Spirit, the Church and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy, (14-20 October 2002)*, (Leuven – Paris – Dudley MA: Leuven University Press – Peeters, 2005), 160.

²³ *Ibid.*, 159-175.

Christians and making them capable of relationality and communion: 'Ecclesial community is not only created by the Holy Spirit; it is very participation in the Holy Spirit.'²⁴ She refers then to the Holy Spirit as the 'agent of unity'—because He 'is the dialogue between the Father and Son' and therefore He 'is the dialogue among Christians'—and the 'actualiser of diversity in Church—*communio*'—because 'only in the Holy Spirit can the churches discern their unity and set the parameters limiting their diversity'.²⁵

What is striking is that Sr. Lorelei is so convinced that without the Holy Spirit the Ecumenical Movement would be 'neither ecumenical nor movement'²⁶ that when she points out the 'absence' of the Holy Spirit from theology and ecclesiology—confessional and ecumenical²⁷—her words sound almost like a rebuke to Christians. It is in fact in docility to the Spirit that Christians and churches not only can find the source of the renewal and conversion so necessary to progress towards unity and to further address the great questions affecting the world—from eco-theology to wellbeing and the unity of human community—but can also recover the affective and doxological dimension in ecumenical relations. To express it in the same words of Sr. Lorelei: 'Retrieving the Spirit restores to the ecumenical movement its fundamental affective and doxological character without which the cognitive and dialogical cannot be received as having made a difference in the lived reality of ecclesial *koinonia*'.²⁸ It should be noted that, in other contexts, Sr. Lorelei affirmed that 'to be received, the dialogical must be doxological',²⁹ thus reconnecting the possibility of reception to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The ecumenical endeavor—Sr. Lorelei constantly recalls—is not only a work to be done, but a faith to be celebrated and a life to be lived, and all this can be realized only if we are indwelt by the Spirit: 'With the "will to ecume" comes the capacity

²⁴ Ibid., 163.

²⁵ Ibid., 167.

²⁶ L. Fuchs, 'Retrieving the Ecumenical Spirit', in *Ecumenical Trends* 31 (2002) 2, 23: 'If were not for the Spirit, the ecumenical movement is neither ecumenical, nor movement!'

²⁷ Cf. Ibid., 23-27. On the Holy Spirit cf also: L. Fuchs – L. Brennan, 'The Spirit in the Worship and Liturgy of the Church', in W.R. Barr – R.M. Yocom, *The Church in the Movement of the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 51-73.

²⁸ 'Retrieving the Ecumenical Spirit...', 26.

²⁹ 'Dialogue and the Future of Christian Unity...', 19.

to ecumenate' and that is definitively, according to Sr. Lorelei, a 'movement of the Spirit'.³⁰

The interweaving of the affective element with the doxological one seems to me a very happy and original emphasis. Also, in the light of what Sr. Lorelei frequently maintains, namely that, clumsily, 'we tend to *think* ecumenism and not to *feel* ecumenism',³¹ which may sound like a possible reason for a lack of reception of ecumenical achievements.

An 'Ecu-Franciscan theology'

In an original contribution, Sr. Lorelei structures an articulated parallelism between the Franciscan and the ecumenical ideal, comparing some traits of Franciscanism with ecumenism.³² The basic theme on which she builds the parallelism is the convergence of content between the Franciscan *fraternitas* and the ecumenical *koinonia* that is substantiated in the common reference to conversion as a fundamental evangelical act, to the *metanoia* of the heart as a response to the initiative of God who intervenes in the relationships of human beings among themselves, with creation and with Himself. Parallelism matures as Sr. Lorelei takes into consideration the specific aspects through which *fraternitas* and *koinonia* direct towards conversion: in the first case they are contemplation, poverty and 'minority', while in the second they are faith, life and witness. The binomial contemplation/faith focuses on the interior life, in which praying and believing as expressions of conversion make *fraternitas* and *koinonia* alive and accessible both in the hermitage and in the square, 'in each place'. The binomial poverty/life holds its own parallelism starting from the common reference to the evangelical radicalism that finds natural expression in the ecclesial community enlivened by the sacraments: in Franciscanism the *kenosis* of poverty is lived as '*ecclesiola in ecclesia*' just as *koinonia* expresses the preaching of the Gospel and the common life in the sacrament of Baptism which incorporates the Christian into Christ and which finds its full expression around the Eucharistic table. Finally, the combination of 'minority'/witness finds a common rootedness in the awareness of

³⁰ 'The Holy Spirit and the Development...', 169.

³¹ 'Retrieving the Ecumenical Spirit...', 26.

³² L. Fuchs, 'Franciscana and *Oikoumene*: Dwelling in the same House?', in *Propositum. A Periodical of the Third Order Regular Franciscan History and Spirituality*, 5 (2000) 1, 16-29.

Christians being ‘servants’ in the pursuit of peace and in the fulfilment of *diakonia*, that is, in the assumption of that ‘integrative character’ proper to the Christian mission in promoting the values of God’s kingdom.

Sr. Lorelei’s Ecu-Franciscan theology—as I call it—opens up further scenarios: the fact of being movements and therefore of operating both inside and outside the ecclesiastical structures; the interconfessional component that characterizes them;³³ the diversity within them and, finally, the search for ‘reconciled diversity’ both between the Churches and between the three different Franciscan families are all aspects recalled by Sr Lorelei, which she believed would deserve further development.

A Personal Highlight

Let me conclude by sharing two aspects, in my personal reading of Sr. Lorelei’s theology, which I consider specific traits of her theology.

The first is her constant search for a heuristic meta-reading of ecumenical concepts. She never limited her theological-ecumenical reflection only to the content, although this was focal and presented systematically and with meticulous care; she always went one step further, towards a meta-reflection and, especially, a meta-language—often created by her *ad hoc*—so that from the content one could deduce a paradigmatic formulation applicable as a meta-category to other fields of investigation. This formal conceptualization, however, does not remain on the theoretical level, but, on the contrary becomes an operative tool. The clearest example is the idea of *koinonia* as ‘symbolic competence for dialogue’. The passage that allows Sr. Lorelei to weld *koinonia* as a founding theological concept to *koinonia* as an operating principle capable of allowing churches to live communion and, progressively, achieve full visible unity, is the shift from the conceptual-content level to the formal-hermeneutic level. That is a shift from *koinonia* as the ‘organizing principle’ of dialogue and unity, to *koinonia* as the ‘organizing principle of a proper ecumenical methodology and hermeneutics of unity’³⁴ and the consequent identification of *koinonia* as ‘symbolic competence for dialogue’ which is part of the ‘meta-

³³ Within the Franciscan Family there are Lutherans, Anglicans, Catholics.

³⁴ ‘Retrieving the Ecumenical Spirit...’, 26.

language' she proposes which has a heuristic potential to effectively build *koinonia*, as well as to foster reception.

The second aspect is that in her thought—explicitly or implicitly—Sr. Lorelei drew synapses between the two planes: *idealiter* and *realiter*. It is an extremely significant binomial, which highlights the peculiar trait of her theology, namely, that of maintaining, almost paradoxically, the two antithetical planes, in constant dialectical-dialogical relationship. She holds them in communication and discovers the interactions of the two planes: the vision of reality—of dialogue, of communion, of unity—if read in the light of the principles that give life to it—the incorporation into Christ, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—approaches the protological and eschatological vision. If we really perceive and draw the ultimate consequences of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, we will realize that 'our "real though imperfect communion" is more real and somewhat more perfect than we had thought',³⁵ that is to say that the *realiter* is more *idealiter* and the *realiter* is more *idealiter* than it can appear.

It's a theological vision that, in my opinion, relies on a theology of the Incarnation deeply and fully perceived and lived, articulated and celebrated, rooted in and nurtured by the reality of the *Atonement* of Jesus Christ, which was Sr. Lorelei's everyday charism.

It is precisely her Franciscan vision that I want to return to, as deserving the last word in this brief *memento* of her life and work. Sr. Lorelei recalled a word of wisdom from the foundress of her Congregation, Graymoor's Mother Foundress Lurana Mary White, who affirmed: 'only in the context of a "life to be lived" is a "work to be done"'³⁶ and those of us who had the joy and privilege to be friends and colleagues of Sr. Lorelei, will agree that *koinonia* was undoubtedly the 'organizing principle' of her life as a Christian, a Franciscan religious and an ecumenist. She was able to accept, firsthand, the challenge to live communion with other Christians in the most intense and lively way possible; to live this communion in a 'more real' and 'more perfect' way, with the depth of her spirituality, expressed in the way she obediently and peacefully accepted walking through the 'dark valleys' of her life, with the joyful vitality of her personality expressed in her

³⁵ Ibid., 25.

³⁶ 'Franciscana and *Oikoumene...*', 29.

energetic activity, which included waking up at 4.30 am to start writing for the sake of ecumenical studies...

As a Franciscan she wrote: 'There is only one Francis; the rest of us are Franciscans! But the 'minority' by which we too fall in love with God and his creation remains the same. As joyful beggar, itinerant wanderer, dreamer, minstrel, fool, we each make our pilgrimage in the footsteps of Francis who journeyed in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ.'³⁷ I think Sr. Lorelei was also a joyful beggar, itinerant wanderer, dreamer, minstrel, fool –and optimist–in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ.

³⁷ Ibid., 23.

In memoriam of Father Bernard Sesboüé, SJ (1929-2021)¹

Michel Fédou *

Teaching, conferences, publications, participation in ecumenical dialogue and in the work of the International Theological Commission, the work of Fr. Bernard Sesboüé is impressive both in its width and fruitfulness, and earned him a reputation extending far beyond France.

His work was, at first, that of a teacher, who, for fifty years, taught patristic and dogmatic theology, initially at the Faculty of Lyon-Fourvière, then at the Centre Sévres, the Jesuit faculty in Paris. An heir of the patristic revival, already marked out by Fr. de Lubac, his heart was set on communicating the riches of Tradition to his students as well as opening it up to the new questions of our own time. It was also this painstaking work of teaching that, in large measure, allowed him to make progress in his own research. Several of his books are the very fruit of the teaching he gave across the years.

His publications amounted to at least forty books and a huge number of articles. We will look first at those dealing with patristics. Having devoted his doctoral thesis to St Basil of Caesarea's *Against Eunomius*, he revised the work for publication in the collection Sources Chrétiennes. He also wrote a good book on one of the earliest fathers of the Church, Irenaeus of Lyon.

His patristic knowledge naturally predisposed him to work in the field of christology. Many of his books dealt with it, particularly *Jésus Christ dans la tradition de l'Eglise*. In it, he both explained traditional christology and opened up the continuing importance of the Chalcedonian dogma. However, there is no doubt that his two volumes,

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¹ Text published on the website of the Jesuit Province of France and published in OIC with the permission of Father Michel Fédou.

Jésus-Christ, l'unique Médiateur (1988, 1991), can be considered his most important contribution to dogmatic theology. He sets out in them a diagnostic conception of salvation that followed from ancient times to the twentieth century. He then set out a review of biblical theology to show how Christ offers his salvation to all humanity and which terms allow us to give a contemporary account of it.

His work on dogmatics was not confined to christology; he treated many other subjects. For example, his works on the Holy Spirit; on Mary; on the saying 'outside the Church there is no salvation' and on the problems raised in addressing that adage. In 1999, he produced a work of synthesis on the Christian faith: *Croire. Invitation à la foi catholique pour les hommes et les femmes du XXI^e siècle*. He also directed a *Histoire des dogmes* in four volumes, himself writing a considerable amount of it. It served as a reference work for anyone wanting to understand the origin and meaning of the doctrines professed by the Church.

Finally, his contribution to ecclesiology deserves special mention. Apart from basic works, such as that entitled *Histoire et théologie de l'infaillibilité de l'Église*, it is important to recall his courageous engagement with hotly debated questions, in particular the ministries confided to laypeople with mission responsibilities, as is shown in his book *N'ayez pas peur: regards sur l'Église et les ministères aujourd'hui*. Above all, Sesboüé was a key participant in ecumenical dialogue. He was at one time a member of the international Catholic-Reformed Dialogue Committee. He participated in the Groupe des Dombes for nearly forty years. He was named as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. His experience in this sphere was reflected in several publications, including *Pour une théologie oecuménique* (1990), *La patience et l'utopie* (2006). It deeply influenced the whole of his theological reflection.

Until very recently, he produced books on various subjects: *L'homme, merveille de Dieu: essai d'anthropologie* (2015); *Jésus. Voici l'homme* (2016); *Introduction à la théologie. Histoire et intelligence du dogme* (2017); *L'Église et la liberté* (2019) and *Comprendre l'Eucharistie* (early 2020).

Sesboüé was aware of his debt to many twentieth century Jesuits, not only Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner, but also Yves de Montcheuil, to whom he dedicated a very good book. His work was not unrelated to that of a great German theologian whom he greatly appreciated, Walter

Kasper. Both made a weighty contribution to christology and ecclesiology and were intensely involved in ecumenism. Both balanced loyalty to Tradition with openness to new questions.

In his book about Fr. Leonce de Grandmaison, Fr. Bernard Sesboüé quoted him as saying, 'All the work of specialists is only worthwhile in that it gives access to the source: once there let the thirsty kneel down and drink'. Bernard Sesboüé deserves to be thanked for the help he has given, through his own work, towards a better understanding of this source and of quenching one's thirst there.

Translated from French by David Carter²

² I will add my own brief tribute to Fr. Sesboüé, who once generously entertained me at the Jesuit house in Paris when I was there on a research trip. *Pour une théologie oecuménique* contains a most valuable set of reviews of the then current state of Protestant-Catholic Dialogue. *La patience et l'utopie* counsels a wise balance between expecting too much too quickly in ecumenical progress and losing patience and abandoning hope-it is a very wise book (D. C.).

BOOK REVIEW

Wainwright, G. and McPartlan, P. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* Oxford University Press, 2021.

This book, edited by two British scholars, a Methodist presbyter (who sadly died last year) and a Roman Catholic priest, who have both long held prestigious academic posts in America, gives an excellent account of the current state of activity in pursuit of Christian unity amongst those churches that are ecumenically engaged. They draw on the work of forty-nine other contributors from a variety of Christian traditions, though largely from Europe and North America, as well as their own, in exploring the historic development of the Ecumenical Movement and its current prospects.

The *Handbook* is divided into six major sections, entitled respectively, 'History', 'Traditions', 'Achievements and Issues', 'Instruments', 'Global Scene' and 'Debate and Prospects', the last being the best of all and most creative in its approach. That is not, in any way, to belittle the others which will undoubtedly serve well scholars and graduate students contemplating a career in ecumenical studies.

The very first section gives a broad overview of the development of the Ecumenical Movement, remembering that it did not just start from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, but that it already had partial precursors in the Evangelical Alliance, dating from 1846, the Student Christian Movement, one of whose key executives, J.R. Mott, became a prominent figure in developments after 1910, and in the enthusiasm of some Anglo-Catholics, plus even a few English and French Roman Catholics, for wider reunion. Indeed, one could point to even earlier predecessors, such as the Moravian leader, Count Zizendorff and the Lutheran pietist, Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) though Ola Tjorholm confines his attention to the mid to late nineteenth century. The concluding chapter in this section, by Thomas Best, is entitled 'Consolidation and Challenge, 1990-present', an apt title in view of some very signal achievements, such as the Joint Declaration on Justification, agreed by the two original partners in 1999, and since accepted by three other major world communions. At the same time, many challenges face the global ecumenical network, increasing division over certain matters such as marital discipline and same sex relationships and challenges from the global South over whether Faith

and Order issues should have less prominence whilst more is given to social justice for the global South. There also remain long-standing divisions over the necessary nature and shape of any final unity of the churches.

The second section, 'Traditions', reviews the stances of the major communions on the nature and shape of the pilgrimage towards full communion in faith, life and mission desired by them. Amongst these, some are particularly well dealt with. Steven Harmon, a US Baptist who is author of a book *Baptist Catholicity*, advocating Baptist learning from the theological and creedal work of the patristic era, records the complexity both of fissiparous and more ecumenical features that have varyingly influenced Baptists since their English beginnings at the dawn of the seventeenth century. He notes that some very early Baptists were quick to condemn established churches, particularly the Church of England, as false churches. By and large, many Baptists still fear the loss of some of their traditional witness against any form of state establishment, any necessity for formal creeds and any high sacramental theology-one may add they are perhaps the communion that most widely talks of ordinances rather than sacraments. Stress on the independence of the local church as congregation has made many quick to form rival associations, Harmon counting thirty-one Baptist denominations in the States. One may add that, in Britain, some individual Baptist congregations will not belong to the mainstream Baptist Union but keep aloof from it, fearing its possible liability to liberalising and/or catholicising tendencies and contacts.

The Baptist World Alliance, formed in 1905 certainly does not represent all Baptists but, from the beginning, it has commended unity among Baptists and others as a key purpose of its existence. Baptists have entered into some unions with other traditions. For example, in Sweden, with Methodists and the Swedish Covenant Mission Church and in North India with Anglicans, Methodists and Reformed, the result there involving belonging to a church with an episcopal ministry in the traditional historic succession. Particularly interesting is the Baptist Church of Georgia, which has been much influenced by the native Orthodox tradition liturgically and which, moreover, has a traditional threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, bishops being seen as spiritual and prophetic guides to the various congregations. Paul Fiddes, the leading contemporary British Baptist theologian, a key contributor to dialogue with Roman Catholics and Anglicans alike, has

suggested that Baptists might be open to accepting Trinitarian theology and possibly even to the value of the episcopal succession in the light of the British Baptist principle of appointing regional ministers as 'a focus of unity and continuity in the Church'. Harmon also touches on the work Fiddes and others have done with English Anglicans in seeing Baptist and Anglican practices in Christian initiation as complementary alternatives, each seeing later discipleship as a working through of a life-long commitment to the implications of baptism into Christ. It is a pity Harmon does not say a little more about that. Finally, I would say that he might also have mentioned one very relevant achievement of the recent initial international Baptist-Methodist dialogue, the production of a user friendly guide adapted to the needs of ordinary congregations.

Telford Work is also excellent on Pentecostal and Charismatic ecumenism. He begins by stressing that some charismatics saw their experience of the Spirit, reviving the fullness of the apostolic age experience, as something to influence and revive the churches, others as an experience that might overwhelm and replace them. He rightly stresses Lesslie Newbigin's identification of Pentecostalism as a third major component in the ecumenical Christian tradition, alongside the traditional Catholic and Protestant traditions, a component that witnessed to aspects of Christian life that had been largely overlooked in both the earlier traditions as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century. He also touches on and could say far more about the work of one of the great pioneers of practical exploration and appropriation of Pentecostal experience in the Roman Catholic Church, Fr. Peter Hocken, a quiet and unassuming priest of the diocese of Northampton, who was to sum up what he saw as the reconciling appreciation of the work of the Spirit, both in the traditional churches and in Pentecostal tradition, in terms of the *challenging* and *confirming* work of the Spirit, the Spirit simultaneously, as it were, confirming the work that had given rise both to the traditional churches of Catholic order and the newer ones of Protestant witness and yet also pointing to things that still needed to be re-received in both from the fullness of apostolic Christianity, now mediated to it both through exterior witness

by Pentecostals and through dialogue.¹ Work might, in particular, stress more fully the very live ongoing Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue and above all the importance of charismatic renewal since the 1960's, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. He also misses out on the mutual influence of Pentecostals and charismatics on Pope Francis, typified by the latter's close friendship with Pastor Traettino in Italy.² Quite rightly, Work stresses the fact that Pentecostalism is now the second largest global Christian tradition. It has been particularly influential in the more recent development of the African Church.

William Henn, OFM, is a Catholic priest who has been very widely used to give a Catholic commentary on many of the reports issued by international dialogue teams. His article on Catholic principles of ecumenism stresses the increasing enrichment of the approach under the influence of *ressourcement*, a return to the principles of the patristic era, in conjunction with increasing discovery of the riches of the spiritual life of the other ecumenical partners, both sources contributing to the statements of the second Vatican Council, acknowledging the very real role played in the salvation of their members by the separated churches. Moreover this was an evolution/transformation that did not end with Vatican II, but which has continued and been further endorsed, particularly strongly by Pope John Paul II as well as Pope Francis. One may add that, though at the time, some of John Paul II's rulings appeared to stall the Ecumenical Movement, others opened up new perspectives, particularly on a possible global role in the *oikoumene* for the Bishop of Rome. One would perhaps expect somewhat more on the significance of the present pontificate. Pope Francis' moves on such matters as protection of the environment, greater involvement of all the faithful, through growing synodality in the total discerning ministry of the Church, and his hearty commendation of the Joy of the Gospel and holistic mission, appeal widely across the denominations, not least to my fellow Methodists, who can see Francis as trying to do for the world what Wesley wanted to do for England in the spread of scriptural

¹ Hocken, P., *The Glory and the Shame, Reflections in the 20th century outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (1984), esp. pp.151-166, and *One Lord, One Spirit, One Body* (1987), chapter 9 'The Holy Spirit confirms and Challenges', 79-85.

² See, for example, the *PCPCU Bulletin* (2014) account of Pope Francis' attendance at a Pentecostal rally at Caserta in Italy.

Christianity. Nevertheless, Henn sets out clearly the journey on which the Roman Catholic Church embarked as it began to come seriously to terms with the gifts and graces of others whilst simultaneously maintaining its own particular witness.

David Chapman, current Methodist co-chair of the international dialogue with Roman Catholics, stresses that Methodism has always been open to learning from the riches of other traditions. Additionally, it has been guided by a resolution of the British Conference of 1820, calling on Methodists 'ever to maintain the catholic spirit of primitive Methodism towards all denominations of Christians holding the Head' and 'to be the friends of all and the enemies of none', though Chapman adds that this really only applied in practice to other Protestants rather than Catholics at the time. He also concedes that there are still situations in which minority Methodist Churches in strongly Catholic or Orthodox countries experience difficulties in relationships with the majority tradition. At the same time, however, it is increasingly recognised that ecumenism involves 'a holistic encounter in which all must be open to interior change'.

One considerable problem is to reconcile a traditional Methodist acceptance that there is no one standard practice of ministerial order recorded in Scripture or, indeed, seen by Methodists as essential, with a willingness to receive the sign of the episcopal succession but to do so without conceding its theological necessity per se. Methodism has been deeply influenced by the modern liturgical movement but a strong stress on this can, for many Methodists, be in tension with traditional Methodist use of extempore prayer in worship. Perhaps, and this is my suggestion rather than Chapman's, Methodists should remember the dictum of a pre-ecumenist, William Shrewsbury, that it was one of the glories of Methodism that it could use both Anglican liturgical and free church extempore prayer in its services.

Chapman ends his excellent contribution with recognition that, though Methodism's ecumenical relationships have markedly improved over the last fifty years, results in terms of actual advances towards full communion have slowed down. He suggests that more work needs to be done on the way in which official Methodist standards function in the actual transmission of faith in contemporary Methodism, also on the way in which the various components on which Methodism draws, Scripture, Creeds, Reformation principles and the

corpus of Wesleyan writings all interact with each other. As he rightly says, dialogue partners need to know this.

Bill Rusch's article on Lutheranism is historically thorough but he could, with advantage, point to a variety of approaches in the ecumenical stance of the national churches, particularly where ministry is concerned. One could instance three distinct stances taken. The Swedish and Finnish Churches have preserved and value the historic episcopal succession and have concentrated on their relationship with Anglicans whilst refusing to join the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to which other European Lutherans belong, in company with Reformed and Methodist Churches. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has pursued and effected six finely honed full communion agreements with other churches including both Anglicans and others that do not claim an unbroken episcopal succession. The EKD in Germany has signed the Meissen Agreement with the Church of England but regards the canonical rule of the latter on the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination as an Anglican peculiarity which it sees no necessity to accept.

The third section, 'Achievements and Issues', goes to the very heart of the matters in dialogue between the various communions. Appropriately, the section begins with Ralph del Colle's article on christology, a very early issue in church history, and concludes with Kevin Irwin on ecology, the most recent burning issue, burning because of the increasing fears of imminent global disaster rather than any ecumenical discord per se. Del Colle mentions the great progress made over Christology, with increasingly wide acceptance that the formula of Chalcedon is not incompatible with the teaching of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, though this does not seem to hasten any formal reunion between Chalcedonian Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox. Serious ecumenical work on ecological issues began in the 1970's, developed greater momentum in the 1990's under the title of 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation'. Two successive ecumenical Patriarchs gave it an enhanced profile in their encyclicals, receiving affirmation from Pope John Paul II and Orthodoxy's greatest contemporary theologian, John Zizioulas. Finally, Pope Francis began his pontificate by making human care for the creation a key priority, soon to be followed up in a full scale encyclical *Laudato si'*. Kevin Irwin, author of the article on ecology, thinks an increased stress on the sacramentality of all creation, embodying the view that 'all who dwell

in it and on it are bearers of God's presence and action amongst us', could reinforce the case even more fully.

In between are articles on Church, the two gospel sacraments, ministry, liturgy, justification, morals and mission and evangelism. Adam Deville deals with Church largely from Roman Catholic and Orthodox positions though he rightly begins by noting the great transformation from an exclusivist pre-Vatican II position to a much more nuanced understanding of Church and gradations of church, as it were, in other Christian bodies, all aided by the consideration of a much wider range of models of Church as shown particularly in *Lumen Gentium*. He quite rightly says that the abandonment of previously triumphalistic and apologetic approaches is 'no small thing'. He also deals with the development of the concept of Church as communion, linking it with Zizioulas' stress that 'the Church is not simply an institution. She is 'a mode of existence', a 'way of being'. Deville mentions, briefly, the ecclesiological work carried out under the WCC from 1948 to the recent report 'The Church Towards a Common Vision'.

Susan Wood and Paul McPartlan deal, respectively, with Baptism and Eucharist. Wood outlines the clear differences existing between paedobaptists and those who insist on believers' baptism but ignores the recent very interesting dialogue between English Anglicans and Baptists, which looks at the possibility that the alternative patterns of infant baptism, leading to lifelong learning and practice of the life in Christ, and dedication of children, followed by instruction and personal decision as to baptism on public confession of Christ, followed of course, by yet further growth in the way of Christ, could *both* be seen as acceptable patterns of developing Christian growth in discipleship. What Wood does emphasise clearly is that Baptism has transformational, eucharistic, eschatological and ecclesial implications. It orients the Christian towards fullness of sanctified life in Christ, leading to the consummation in glory at the end. The English dialogue just mentioned also stresses that the whole of the Christian life is a living out of the implications and promises of Baptism.

Paul McPartlan registers the very considerable convergence on the understanding of the Eucharist amongst the ecumenically engaged churches, as revealed both in the statements of the Montreal Faith and Order Conference of 1963 and the Vatican II decrees. He then examines very carefully the degree of convergence recorded in the three dialogues that have since been undertaken with Anglicans, Lutherans and

Methodists, noting particularly the points raised by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on ARCIC's work. It is good to see the Methodist-Catholic dialogue, much less well known to continental scholars, cited in this context. In one particular passage it sounds a depth in the link between the eternal counsel of the triune God and the Eucharist. I quote:

The sacrificial self-giving of Christ is something 'made flesh' once for all in human history on the Cross, but the innermost reality of Christ's 'Grand Oblation' is an eternal mystery at the very heart of the Holy Trinity. God the Father eternally begets the Son—who is true God from true God—and the Son eternally responds to the Father in total self-giving. Jesus' death on Calvary can be understood as the 'sacrament'—the making tangibly, visibly available to all humanity for our salvation—of this eternal self-giving of God the Son to God the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit, and of the Father's ready welcome and acceptance of that self-giving.³

Jim Puglisi of the Atonement fathers' Centro Pro Union in Rome, deals with ministry, noting the advances that have been made in the context of a more holistic view of apostolicity whilst not really addressing the issue of how far the evolution of the traditional three-fold ministry should be seen as necessarily providential and needful in all circumstances. He rightly notes that the concept of vestigial *ecclesiae* existing in other churches does have implications for the mutual recognition of orders and certainly for the reconsideration of the concept of defectus in the ordination rites of Anglican and Protestant Churches. One must add that such reconsideration would be greatly welcomed by Anglicans, Lutherans and Methodists in particular.

Section four deals with key ecumenical instruments, starting with the co-editor, Wainwright's, assessment of the record of the Faith and Order Movement, which has since Vatican II involved Roman Catholic participation even though the Roman Catholic Church is not a formal member of the World Council of Churches. Next comes a description of that body by Dagmar Heller, who crisply sums up its significance in this nutshell.

The foundation of the WCC constituted a pioneering step in that it allowed churches to meet on an equal footing, without making prior

³ Report of the International Commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, *Encountering Christ the Saviour, Church and Sacraments* (2011), 35.

claims that unity required the accession of one side to the other. Thereby, a mutual trust grew, which makes ecumenical togetherness irreversible.

John Rodano rightly celebrates the work of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, by far the largest organisation for the promotion of relationships with other churches of any of the great communions. He stresses its role in promoting and servicing dialogue and other co-operative relationships, such as the Joint Working Group with the WCC. It has also constantly been seeking to meet new partners in dialogue, such as the African Independent Churches. The PCPCU is also an important instrument of ecumenical formation in education. Its 1993 Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism includes a chapter on ecumenical formation at various levels.

It is good in this section to have an article, by Joseph Famerée, on three great ecumenical institutions of the francophone world, all of which have had a profound influence on the wider world. They are: the Taizé community, the first monastic community with a specifically ecumenical vocation and also to include brothers from a whole variety of Christian traditions; the informal, but highly creative and influential dialogue group, the Groupe des Dombes; and the monastery of Chevetogne, originally founded to foster relationships and understanding between the Latin and Eastern Churches, but now with a much wider general ecumenical vocation.

It is also good to have an article on the *Global Christian Forum*, which, being aware of the suspicion and even hostility entertained towards the 'traditional' Ecumenical Movement by many Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches, aims to be a place where all Christians can testify to their experience of God's grace in Christ and act as a bridge builder between the ecumenically engaged churches and others. The aim is defined as 'involving the provision of an open space for the widest possible range of Christians to meet, discover their common faith, and act together as the spirit moves them'. There is no doubt that this institution has got off to a good start but patience will be greatly needed on the part of the ecumenically engaged churches as they seek to gain the interest of movements that have been historically deeply suspicious of ecumenism.

A fifth section looks at ecumenical activity across the continents. In comparison with the excellence of so much of the material in the other

sections of the book, it reads in a rather pedestrian way whilst still being informative as to the regional particularities that have affected ecumenical developments across the world.

In a very real sense, to adopt a metaphor culled from Scripture, the best wine has been left till last. Part six, 'Debate and Prospects' contains six articles of very high calibre, the first three being on models of unity, the final three being on methodology. The two articles by Orthodox scholars and the exposition of the key significance of receptive ecumenism by the man who has so signally promoted it, Paul Murray, are especially noteworthy.

Harding Meyer expounds the understanding of unity in reconciled diversity, doing so appropriately as a member of the communion that has so strongly stressed its value since 1977, the Lutheran World Federation. He begins by stating that the maxim 'unity not uniformity' was recognised from the very beginning of the Ecumenical Movement, but that, up to the 1960s, there was a tendency to accept that though there would be culturally determined differences between churches related to their social and national contexts, differences in terms of confessionality were widely regarded as inconsistent with true unity. One may add that this was a constant theme of the thinking of Lesslie Newbigin, a key architect of the Church of South India, which he saw as the product of three denominations being prepared to die to the old confessionality whilst rising to a new common life in Christ. Meyer then explains how this perspective was challenged by new thinking stemming from the experience of bilateral dialogue at a world confessional level, the teaching of Cardinal Willebrands on the nature of legitimate types of churches, each having their own characteristic approaches to theology, liturgy, canon law and spiritual life but all accepting the central truths of the faith as enshrined in the Creeds, and, finally, subsequently validated by the progress being made towards the reconciliation of previously contrasting, and even earlier anathematised, teachings. A process that delivered successfully in the Joint Declaration on Justification of 1999. As previously stated, Meyer's own communion was to take the forefront in advocating unity in reconciled diversity. One may add that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has also made six finely honed agreements with churches of three other communions, showing that unity in reconciled diversity can be achieved with more than just a single partner. In a text on 'Queries and Critique', Meyer faces the challenges that can

legitimately be made to the concept: Can it result in fellowship without commitment? Is it a purely western concept, inappropriate elsewhere in the world? Is it only a Protestant concept?

Radu Bordeianu points out that there is no one clear view of the ecclesial status of other churches among the Orthodox. They are all agreed that the Orthodox Church *alone* has preserved the fullness of the Christian tradition as they understand it. They certainly also believe that other Christians, validly baptised and believing in the truths of the Nicene Creed, do, in some sense, belong to the Church—indeed they even speak of their churches *as churches*. Bordeianu argues that, ‘here is where the language of fullness is helpful: the Orthodox Church is the fullness of church, but others partake of this fullness in various degrees’. He helpfully illustrates, by citing Florovsky, Afanasiev and Staniloae, the variety of views that can be held by different Orthodox theologians whilst asserting the normal view of all Orthodox that eucharistic communion can only come when with full unity under a common episcopate.

Cardinal Koch presents an excellent view of full unity from the Roman Catholic perspective. In my opinion, it is slightly marred by an unfortunate prejudice against the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, formerly the Leuenberg Fellowship. I think he fails to balance their current view of what suffices for full communion and inter-changeable ministry amongst their fellowship, as it currently is, with their continuing willingness, exemplified in their discussions with the Orthodox and the Porvoo Communion, to explore *further* with other partners, which certainly implies that, while rejoicing in what they can agree as to their current mutual recognition, they realise that they are far from the end of the ecumenical pilgrimage—indeed two of the three communions involved, Methodism and Lutheranism take with utmost seriousness the consideration of the value of the episcopal succession and the Petrine ministry. These are not issues that will disappear from their global agendas.

The Cardinal calls the diverse conceptions of the Church and unity a ‘crucial cause of failure’. It seems to me it would be more accurate to say that it is more the lack of agreement on the *necessary* bonds of unity as such (to use a phrase Mary Tanner popularised) that is the key stumbling block to further progress for the time being. In fact, the major ecumenical players are all agreed on the communion nature of the Church, on its missionary service in evangelism and diakonia and

on the absolute need for leaving room for the work of the Spirit-this last a key point in Pope Francis' teaching.

With so much else that Cardinal Koch teaches in his essay, the rest of us would agree heartily: his point that unity in baptism is 'wholly directed towards fullness of life in Christ'; his stress, following Pope Francis, that 'it is the Holy Spirit alone who, by contrast, grants unity in reconciled diversity... true love does not eliminate legitimate diversities'.

In the last few pages of his essay the Cardinal reflects on perspectives that need to be kept prayerfully in view as we (in Francis' phrase) 'journey together', the Trinitarian, martyrological and eschatological contexts being in this reviewer's view perspectives worthy of closer attention in all meetings and dialogues.

I move next to Paul Murray's excellent article on receptive ecumenism, which he commends as 'focussed on self-critical receptivity' within all traditions. He stresses 'it is more than simple acknowledgement of each other's giftedness, it involves making oneself vulnerable, recognising one's inadequacies and being open to change'. One might say that it is the application on a wider level between communions of the dictum laid down by Paul to the Corinthians that they should 'prefer each other in honour', such preferring including an understanding of the need, of individual disciples, congregations, national denominational churches and global communions alike, to be humble in identifying what it is that the Spirit is offering them through the practice and testimony of others, in order to meet the need of each community, to deepen its own catholicity through learning and receiving from others. This is something all churches recognise, including even the largest communion which, at Vatican II, acknowledged the real gifts of the Spirit in the many communities of 'separated' brethren. Murray concludes, receptive ecumenism comes down to asking themselves how, in a given context, the Spirit may be inviting their tradition to learn from another for the sake of their own 'flourishing in the Gospel'.

Billy Abraham, who sadly died while I was in the middle of working on this review, was one of the most original and interesting thinkers in world Methodism. He writes on 'Method in Ecumenism', stressing, alongside Koch and Murray, the importance of recognising ecumenism and Pentecostalism as the two great movements of renewal in the twentieth century Church. He argues that both the eighteenth century

Wesleyan revival and the twentieth century Pentecostal-charismatic one, have to be much more widely considered and received in their stress on recovering the sheer vibrancy of Christian life, experience and practice in the first century. He feels that they draw attention to things that complement both the great insights of the hierarchical, sacramental emphases of Catholicism and Orthodoxy and the biblical theology of the magisterial Reformation. In this he self-confessedly follows Newbigin's initiative in the 'Household of God', and, one may add, also the insights of a great Wesleyan predecessor, James Rigg, and a contemporary Catholic, Peter Hocken.⁴ He argues that both Methodism and Pentecostalism are 'expressions of an ecclesiological option that looks to the third article of the Creed, concerning the Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of life, as the originating, sustaining, directing and authenticating source of true Christianity'.

The final essay, by an Orthodox, John Jillions, on kenotic ecumenism well matches the contributions of Murray and Abraham. He acknowledges the antipathy of many modern Orthodox towards ecumenism, but points out the Orthodox Church has never denounced it officially and that the teaching of some Orthodox in denunciation of ecumenism is of recent origin and in contrast to the attitude of St Basil at the time of disputes over the doctrine of the Spirit. Jillions makes use of the testimony of three of Orthodoxy's greatest modern theologians, Bulgakov, Afanasiev and Zernov, to point to attitudes which, while remaining loyal to the essential claim of the Orthodox to be the true church in its fullness, nevertheless point to positive approaches to ecumenism. Bulgakov hoped that the other churches might keep much of their historic character whilst gradually becoming more Orthodox. He also believed that 'the Spirit breathes unfettered by the limits of ecclesial organisation'. Zernov's experience of non-Orthodox led him to recognise many of them as 'deeply thoughtful people with sacramental hearts and holiness of life' and that it was no accident that the search for reunion was 'a difficult but necessary schooling to lead us all to a fuller understanding of the truth'. Jillions argues that 'there is nothing that should prevent churches from being generous and self-emptying, following the pattern of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-7)'. He argues that kenotic

⁴ See Rigg, J. A., *Comparative View of Church Organisations, Primitive and Protestant* (Hansebooks, 1897), 207-220. See also reference no. 1 to Hocken's works.

ecumenism begins with conscientious reading of the Gospels, seeing Jesus in contact with the wrong people. 'Sheep unknown to the common flock must be joined to it. The kenotic way of Jesus Christ points the Church to a refreshing but ancient way of looking at others'. Finally, he quotes St Dorotheus of Gaza, 'the more we are united to our neighbour, the more we are united to God.'

In conclusion, this is a timely and excellent book of guidance to the many developments within the current state of the Ecumenical Movement. I have, however, to record a few aspects of contemporary ecumenism that should have received more thorough attention. Vatican II stated that concern for unity pertains to the whole Church, laity as well as clergy, and more should have been said about local ecumenism and the problems of reception at that level. The English Local Ecumenical Partnerships should have received more attention than the brief reference in Paul Avis' article. They are, perhaps, a unique feature but I do remember that in the 1980's they did arouse a degree of interest in Germany and may have done so elsewhere. Tom Ryan, from the North American context, wrote an excellent book entitled *Christian Unity. How you can make a difference* in 2015? Perhaps he, or someone like Walter Kasper with his short *Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (2006), should have been invited to contribute an article specifically on commending Christian Unity at the grassroots level. There are all too many in every denomination who find it difficult to understand why it is so important for both world and Universal Church.

It is, of course, all too true in any subject, secular or religious, that books of the high calibre of *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* begin to become out of date on some matters almost as soon as they appear. With the impending synodality process soon to be rolled out in the Roman Catholic Church, there may well be important advances in ecclesiology in the near future that will lead to more overall ecumenical convergence on authority and governance. Some indication of the possible importance of the impending process should have been registered somewhere in this book.

However, there is no doubt of the great overall value of this collection as a contribution to ecumenical mutual learning and scholarship. We should be very grateful to the contributors and, particularly the editors.

David Carter

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Christian Churches Together (CCT) is one of the broadest fellowship's of Christian communions in the United States, which includes Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Historic Black (African-American) and Historic Protestant Christian Communion & Organizations that witness together to the reconciling power of the Gospel of Jesus. CCT is currently seeking applicants with a passion for ecumenism for the half-time position of Executive Director. Qualified interested candidates are encouraged to email a letter of interest accompanied by a detailed CV or resume to CCT at CCTExecDirectorSearch@gmail.com. Previous experience in the ecumenical movement is preferred. More information about CCT can be found on our website, <https://www.christianchurchestogether.org/>, including a detailed job description. Application deadline is April 15, 2022.

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