

ECUMENICAL TRENDS

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A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

“Towards a More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision”: Report of the Antelias Consultation

This report is the product of a meeting of thirty veteran ecumenists, church leaders who have had long and deep commitment to the ecumenical cause, hosted in Antelias, Lebanon from January 31-February 2, 2020, by His Holiness Aram I [of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia]. Participants came from Burundi, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United States, and the Vatican. The discussions at the consultation were informed by participant presentations that assessed the challenges facing the ecumenical movement from regional and confessional perspectives.

I

... lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the

Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:1-6).

With all wisdom and insight, [God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:8b-10).

We, participants in the meeting, express our appreciation for the extraordinary hospitality of His Holiness and the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia. The venue included sacred memorials of the Armenian Genocide, reminders of how the Armenian church and people have been sustained, through nearly-unimaginable trauma, by God’s grace and

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the power of hope. It is also important to mention that the meeting was held against the backdrop of social unrest in Lebanon, a reminder that consideration of the future course of ecumenism can never be separated from issues troubling the world.

We begin, most importantly, by giving thanks to God, whose calling to the churches to make visible the unity they have in Jesus Christ is the foundation of the ecumenical movement. During the course of its more than 100-year history, this movement has faced several moments of significant transition, often connected with times of major societal upheaval. We believe that the ecumenical movement is again in such a moment. We may even say it is in a time of crisis, remembering that crisis need not be an indication of impending decline, but an opportunity for critical and realistic assessment and necessary transformation.

Since we believe that God is the One who guides and empowers this movement, any consideration of its future is a matter of spiritual discernment. We gathered in Antelias seeking to understand where the Holy Spirit is leading the churches in the present historical situation. We offer this report of our deliberations – fully aware that our group was, by no means, representative of the whole body of Christ – to all who care about the unity, service, and witness of the church, including planners for the World Council of Churches (WCC) Eleventh Assembly, which will be held September 8-16, 2021, in Karlsruhe, Germany.

II

Those of us participating in the Antelias meeting have devoted much of our lives to the ecumenical movement because we have found in it a compelling vision of the church as a global community characterized by inclusiveness and reconciliation, a community that shares in the dynamic communion of the Trinity, a community that knows itself to be an instrument of God's healing mission and a sign of the promised wholeness of God's entire creation. This vision has been expressed in numerous ways and places over the past century. One that we find still relevant and credible as a point of reference is the document, *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council*

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of Churches (CUV), which was received with gratitude by the WCC's Eighth Assembly (Harare, 1998). The following affirmations, based on the CUV document, come from a prayer litany, composed for the celebration in Harare of the WCC's fiftieth anniversary.

We are drawn by the vision of a church that brings all people into communion with God: a church that is visibly one, sharing one baptism, celebrating one eucharist, and enjoying the service of a reconciled common ministry.

We are compelled by the vision of a church whose unity is expressed in bonds of conciliar communion, which enables us to take decisions together and to interpret and teach the apostolic faith together, with mutual accountability and in love.

We are inspired by the vision of a church that engages in dialogue and cooperation in service with people of other faiths.

We are challenged by the vision of a church that is fully inclusive, mindful of the marginalized, overcoming divisions based on race, gender, age and culture, promoting justice and peace, and respecting the integrity of God's creation.

We aspire to the vision of a church that reaches out to everyone through a life of sharing, proclaiming the good news of God's redemption, being both sign and servant, drawing all ever more deeply into the fellowship of God's own life.

Such is the nature of God's church; it is a gift already given to us.¹

This passage makes clear the centrality of the church in any understanding of ecumenism. CUV also emphasizes, however, that "the object of God's reconciling purpose is not only the church but the whole of humanity – indeed, the

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Ecumenical Trends

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whole of creation.” The ecumenical movement has sought to “hold together an absolute commitment to the unity and renewal of the church and an absolute commitment to the reconciliation of God’s world.”²

CUV was written and affirmed during a time of monumental historical developments, including the end of the Cold War and the subsequent reordering of global systems of economic and political power. A generation later, we find ourselves again at a point of critical historical change that calls for a reassessment of the course of the ecumenical movement. We agree with the report on “Ecumenism in the Twenty-First Century,” prepared for the WCC’s Tenth Assembly (Busan, 2013), that “it would be misleading to call for a new vision for the ecumenical movement . . . the main emphasis of the vision of the unity of the church and the unity of humankind is firmly rooted in the Bible and is, indeed, a gospel imperative.”³ The vision, however, surely needs to be reformulated for this era, and, in the words of our conference theme, expanded to become more “inclusive” and “responsive” – words we will return to shortly. We agree with His Holiness Aram I and former WCC general secretary Konrad Raiser who, in their presentations at our meeting, underscored the weakness and fragility of ecumenical organizations – globally, regionally, and locally. The movement, they suggested, must broaden its agenda, expand its range of participants, rethink its methodologies, and reclaim its vision in terms that speak in a compelling way to a new generation.

In short, while we see signs of the Spirit’s reconciling work in our regions and confessions, we also acknowledge that, in many places, the ecumenical impulse is stagnating. In the words of His Holiness, we need a “wake-up call” if this movement is to continue to move.

III

A compelling ecumenical vision is needed now more than ever, given the environmental, social, and religious challenges of our era. Numerous issues were raised in the course of our discussions, with six receiving particular attention

- We live at a time when climate change, largely the result of human activity, is threatening creation itself. It is not overly dramatic to say that there will be catastrophic consequences for life on this planet if the assault on the natural environment is not quickly curtailed.
- We live in an era of globalization when the economic power of richer nations and their corporations is exacerbating the disparity of wealth and income, both within and between countries. Forced migration, driven by the effects of environmental degradation and economic deprivation, is a major and growing reality.
- We live at a time when xenophobic nationalism is increasing, when politicians in various countries are

feeding populist resentment against those who are “other.” (It is painful to acknowledge that this “politics of identity” is capturing the allegiance of some churches in our own regions.) In the name of security, nations are becoming more militarized at the expense of other priorities.

- We live in a digital age, which, paradoxically, both facilitates communication and runs the risk of undermining genuine community.
- We live in an age when it no longer makes sense to speak of a geographical and cultural “center” of Christianity. The Christian faith, manifest in a variety of ecclesial forms, is now – thanks be to God – rooted throughout the world and growing most rapidly outside of Europe and North America. This shift rightly poses significant challenges to the Euro-centric ecumenism of earlier generations, a narrowness that lingers even today.
- We live at a time when religious pluralism is the reality even in parts of the world previously dominated by Christianity. Along with this is a growing ecclesial and spiritual pluralism within Christianity itself that challenges and impacts traditional forms of Christian community.

Dr. Raiser succinctly named several of these challenges in his paper. The ecumenical movement, he noted, has in recent years “entered into a transformative learning process,” in large measure because it has been confronted with “the challenges of the process of globalization and its consequences, of climate change and the fundamental risks for the natural life-cycles, of the global encounter with religious traditions and their significance for social cohesion, and of the changing profile of World Christianity with the spread and impact of Pentecostal and charismatic communities world-wide.”

Such challenges cry out for an *ecumenical* response! In fact, the scope of the challenges facing humanity makes a mockery of the response of any single church. The world needs an ecumenical movement that offers an alternative vision of world order based on cooperation and solidarity, a

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The world needs an ecumenical movement that offers an alternative vision of world order based on cooperation and solidarity, a vision of God’s promised Reign marked by justice, peace, the dignity of all humanity, and the integrity of creation.

vision of God's promised Reign marked by justice, peace, the dignity of all humanity, and the integrity of creation. This makes it all the more tragic that churches in this era are so often focused on their own institutional survival or display a sense of self-sufficiency that undercuts their willingness and capacity to engage ecumenically. Instruments of communion are also weakening within church families, making it increasingly difficult to resolve internal divisions that frequently stem from social/ethical issues, including those pertaining to sexual orientation.

The ecumenical movement was once seen as a setting within which churches might be renewed through the sharing of spiritual gifts (what some call "receptive ecumenism"), in order that together they might be signs and agents of renewal in the wider society. Does this vision still have power? Is there a way of refreshing the vision that will capture the attention of persons in this era?

IV

It is not possible or appropriate for a short consultation of thirty "seasoned" ecumenists to propose *the* way forward ecumenically! We do want to suggest, however, several marks of a more responsive and inclusive movement.

Such a movement will seek to foster engagement, even more than in the past, with Christian communities not historically identified as ecumenical, many of which are among the fastest-growing parts of the body of Christ. Churches associated with the ecumenical movement do not want to back off hard-won commitments or weaken long-established relationships in an effort to accommodate new partners; but they surely must be willing to rethink old structures and explore new issues. A movement that does not include a large portion of those who claim the name of Christ hardly deserves to be called "ecumenical." A movement that says others are welcome to join what we have created, and on our terms, can hardly be called welcoming.

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A renewed focus on spiritual ecumenism – on praying with and for one another, on recognizing the Spirit's presence in and through all creation – may open us to truths too deep for words.

Such a movement will listen carefully to the stories of people often ignored or demeaned by our societies – and even our churches. Responsive, inclusive ecumenism will focus on the "margins" where the struggle for life is most intensely taking place and where the power of the gospel can inspire new forms of spirituality and witness.

Such a movement will value the contributions and leadership of youth. Ecumenical formation needs to be a priority in our churches, seminaries, and ecumenical bodies, because there is merit in learning from the past. But there is also merit in listening to the voices of those who are not constrained by the language of old documents or past methods.

Such a movement will develop deeper sensitivity to the spiritual wealth arising from the lived experience of the faithful in different cultures and confessions. We are grateful for the ecumenical gains achieved through common service and mission and through multilateral and bilateral theological dialogues. What we do and say together are surely important. Beneath them, however, is what we are together: a Spirit-led people that gives prayerful thanks for God's forgiving grace, made flesh in Jesus Christ, and does so in a wondrous variety of ways. A renewed focus on spiritual ecumenism – on praying with and for one another, on recognizing the Spirit's presence in and through all creation – may open us to truths too deep for words. It may help renew the movement from within and provide a common source of inspiration and hope. It may also strengthen the bonds we have with Christians who worship and pray in a manner unfamiliar to us.

Such a movement, while valuing inherited tradition, will also not be reluctant to take account of the rapidly-changing character of society, including what is for some a new experience of religious pluralism. Ecumenical leaders have long known that a movement concerned with the *oikoumenē* (the whole earth) must be attentive to the challenges facing neighbors of other faiths. But doesn't the reality of this era compel us to go further? If our participation in God's mission includes such global tasks as protecting the environ-

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ment, being in solidarity with the poor, and standing up to systems of exploitation, then aren't we compelled to collaborate with interfaith neighbors? Aren't they, in some sense, *essential* partners in our ecumenical work?

Such a movement will need to move beyond the centers of institutional power and authority, both in the churches and in the ecumenical movement itself. We give thanks that, at one time, ecumenism became a movement of the churches, not simply committed individuals. We give thanks for the work of councils of churches and for the way conciliar structures have sought to become "fellowships" marked by mutual accountability. We give thanks that such accountability is also evident in the many theological dialogues that are an indispensable part of the churches' efforts to resolve divergences underlying their separation. Today, however, it is necessary to think beyond institutional ecumenism, paying more attention than in the past to informal networks and more-temporary coalitions.

In the same way, we give thanks for the work of professional ecumenists (which some of us have been) who have organized dialogues and helped implement common service, advocacy, and mission. Today, however, ecumenism is widely regarded as another program or denominational office, rather than a way of understanding the faith and the church that must take deeper root in congregations and parishes. We agree with another seasoned ecumenist, Julio de Santa Ana, when he says that one of the challenges of our times is "to make ecumenism appealing once again for the educated and activist-minded laity."⁷⁴

His Holiness Aram spoke to us of the need for a "people's ecumenism" that can already be found primarily outside the historic structures of the movement, if we have eyes to see. Whenever Christians, to paraphrase CUV, are confronting divisions of race, gender, age or culture, are living beyond old ecclesial divisions in their efforts to realize justice and peace, then we glimpse the church to which we are called—and give thanks to God. Identifying and encouraging people's ecumenism – which may well entail a change in language, culture, and methodology – should be part of the future agenda and vision of the ecumenical movement.

We found that the WCC's recent emphasis on ecumenism as a "pilgrimage" of justice and peace, under the guidance of God's life-giving Spirit, is useful in summarizing our concerns and convictions. The idea of pilgrimage shifts the ecumenical focus away from structures toward life together on the way. It also shifts the focus away from static completion (Are we united yet? Have we achieved our social/ethical goals?) toward movement with one another in the direction God is leading. Emphasis is placed on the vision before us, but also on the transformation that may take place as we travel. Indeed, pilgrimage is, almost by defini-

tion, an outward journey that entails an inward change – and, thus, reinforces the claim of the Second Vatican Council that "there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion."⁷⁵

So much of life today, in church and society, is focused on the present. Pilgrimage demands that we think in terms of the past (the holy and unholy places from which we come) and the future (the place toward which we move). Pilgrimage implies, as well, careful attention to God's will, and, therefore, lifts up the importance of prayerful discernment. A pilgrimage *of justice and peace* does not diminish ecumenism's prophetic edge, but it does suggest that the movement can also speak on occasion with a more meditative voice, open to the fresh winds of the Spirit.

At its best, a pilgrimage is approached with humility, with a recognition of our need for others, no matter where they come from. Pilgrimage also invites acknowledgment that others may not be at the same stage on the journey as we are. We may walk closely together at times, less closely at others, but always moving in the same direction, propelled by a vision of God's inclusive, reconciling grace that is often at odds with human society.

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V

Our final word is one of hope, which may be ecumenism's distinctive trait. Those who are optimistic speak of what they can accomplish. Those who live in hope give thanks for what God can and will accomplish, regardless of how difficult the present may seem. The fact that ecumenically-minded Christians can no longer revel in institutional success might just drive us back to the revitalizing realization that if the movement moves it is because of the power of God.

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distinctive trait.*

Some Christians now speak of an ecumenical winter. We do not. We trust that the Holy Spirit is guiding this pilgrimage, even when (especially when) it undergoes needed transformation.

Some Christians, including some church leaders, have given up on the idea of Christian unity. We have not. We give thanks for the biblically-grounded vision and gift of oneness in Jesus Christ, even as we recognize the ongoing responsibility to clarify what this means and how it finds at least partial expression along the journey.

Some ecumenically-engaged Christians despair of ever integrating the concerns for the unity of the church and the unity of the human family. We do not, even as we recognize that greater integration is needed.

Some Christians fail to recognize other Christian communities as endowed by the Holy Spirit with a multitude of spiritual gifts and, therefore, as sources of wisdom and grace given for the renewal of all the churches and the whole Christian people. We do not. Rather, we commit ourselves to a humility that is always ready to recognize the need for reform in the life of our own church communities and always prepared to learn from others.

Some churches have downplayed Christian ecumenism in favor of a focus on interfaith relations. We have not. We give thanks for those places where relations among people of religious faith are improving, even as we affirm that Christian ecumenism has its own integrity and necessity – its own theological foundation and distinctive vision.

At the same time, some Christians involved in ecumenical ministry seem content to proceed with business as usual. We are not. While we have hope in God's future for the church and the world, we also recognize that the ecumenical boat is now in stormy seas.

Our final word is one of thanksgiving for new generations of Christian leaders. May they continue the struggle to express a more responsive, inclusive vision for the ecumenical movement. May they strive in their era to articulate a vision of a transformed church working with God for a transformed world, even as we have attempted to do so in ours. May God give us the strength and wisdom to support them in this effort.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONSULTATION

His Holiness Catholicos Aram I (Armenian Church), Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah (Methodist Church of Sri Lanka), Dr. Nora Bayrakdarian (Armenian Church), Dr. Souraya Bechealany (Middle East Council of Churches), Rev. Dr. Bridget Ben-Naimah (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana), Bishop Brian Farrell (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican), Rev. Serge Fornerod (The Reformed Church in Switzerland), Fr. Dr. K M George (Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, India), Dr. Mathews George (Mar Thoma Church, India), Rev. Wes Granberg-Michaelson (Reformed Church in America), Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian (Armenian Evangelical Church, Lebanon), Father Heikki Huttunen (Orthodox Church of Finland), Bishop Dr. Jonas Jonson (Church of Sweden), Rev. Najla Kassab (Reformed Church, Lebanon), Ms. Seta Khedeshian (Armenian Church), Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon (Disciples of Christ, USA), Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick (Presbyterian Church, USA), Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia (Methodist Church in Kenya), Archbishop Paul Matar (Maronite Church, Lebanon), Dr. Tarek Mitri (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch), Bishop Dr. Soritua Nababan (Protestant Christian Batak Church, Indonesia), Bishop Bernard Ntahoturi (Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi), Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega (Presbyterian-Reformed Church, Cuba), Ms. Teny Pirri-Simonian (Armenian Church), Dr. Audeh Butros Quawas (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem), Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser (Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Bishop Dr. Harald Rein (Old Catholic Church, Switzerland), Fr. Dr. Ioan Sauca (Romanian Orthodox Church), Archbishop Paul Sayah (Maronite Church, Lebanon), Father Hrant Tahanian (Armenian Church), Archimandrite Philippe Vassiltsev (Russian Orthodox Church), Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith (National Baptist Convention, USA), Dr. Kim Yong-Bock (Presbyterian Church, South Korea). 

Notes:

1. "Our Ecumenical Vision," in Diane Kessler, ed., *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of The World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1999), 113-14. This precise wording comes from *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*, A Working Draft for a Policy Statement (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 5-6.
2. *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*, a Policy Statement (Geneva: WCC, 1997), 10.
3. "Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the Twenty-First Century: Final Report," in *Resource Book: World Council of Churches 10th Assembly, Busan, 2013* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 178.
4. Julio de Santa Ana, "The Ecumenical Movement at the Crossroads," at <http://www.koed.hu/sw247/julio.pdf>.
5. *Decree on Ecumenism*, par. 7.

Getting on the Same Page: The Biblical Hermeneutic Operative in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

By Peter Folan, SJ

“We separated over the Bible and over the Bible must we reunite.”²¹ So declared Cardinal Walter Kasper in a 2009 speech commemorating the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Though Kasper’s observation is susceptible to the charge of reductionism, it is not without insight. The doctrine of justification, in addition to being the central theological flashpoint in the sixteenth century conflict between Luther and Rome, also boasts extensive biblical roots. Paul’s letters are undeniably the most prominent of these roots, but also noteworthy are the ways that *dikaiosynē* and its cognates operate in the Septuagint, and how *śdq* and other roots function in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, the doctrine of justification is unintelligible apart from its biblical foundation – both the biblical texts themselves and, more importantly, the manner in which one reads them.

This connection makes it all the more surprising that the JDDJ spends so little time talking about the role of Scripture in the understanding of justification articulated by its signatories. For instance, although the first of the JDDJ’s five main numbered parts describes the biblical message of justification, that section contains only five of the forty-four paragraphs that constitute the document as a whole. Yes, those five paragraphs do feature seventy-five biblical citations, but this abundance of references causes those paragraphs to read like strings of proof-texts. Perhaps the relative absence of biblical material owes to the national dialogues that had occurred in the USA from 1978-1983, and in Germany from 1981-1985, dialogues that produced documents that one scholar characterizes as “form[ing] the theological foundation of the JDDJ.”²² Regardless, there is a dearth of serious engagement with Scripture in the text.

Indeed, the doctrine of justification is unintelligible apart from its biblical foundation – both the biblical texts themselves and, more importantly, the manner in which one reads them.

As brief as the Declaration’s consideration of the biblical foundations of the doctrine is, it is far more extensive than the text’s presentation of the biblical hermeneutic undergirding its conclusions. That presentation, sadly, is non-existent. This lacuna can be explained somewhat by appealing once again to the preparatory work done in the USA and German dialogues. Similarly, one could point to the Official Common Statement, issued alongside the JDDJ, with its promise of “continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification,”²³ but this expresses a hope of what is still to come, rather than a statement of what already is.

The purpose of my article is to identify and interpret the new way of reading Scripture that the JDDJ manifests. So doing has historical value – it is helpful to see with clarity the methodology at play twenty years ago – but also, and even more importantly, theological value. If the JDDJ is the ecumenical achievement that so many believe it is, and if, as Kasper said, the Bible lies at the heart of the relationship between Lutherans and Catholics, then examining the biblical hermeneutic of the JDDJ holds out the promise of contributing significantly to greater ecumenical comity between these two groups and, perhaps, between others as well.

In a word, I call the JDDJ’s new biblical hermeneutic *elliptical*, a term that I will explain by, first, discussing the way that Luther and his Catholic respondents read Scripture in the sixteenth century, and by, second, contrasting this way of reading with how the national dialogues that preceded the JDDJ read it.

The Conflicting Hermeneutics of the Sixteenth Century

Within the sixteenth century justification debates, I have focused my research on three texts and one lecture series produced by Martin Luther, and on one decree promulgated by the Council of Trent.

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Peter Folan, SJ, is a Jesuit priest and an Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. He holds a doctorate in systematic theology from Boston College, and focuses his research primarily on ecumenical theology, where he pays special attention to the ways that the Bible and its interpretation function in ecumenical dialogues.

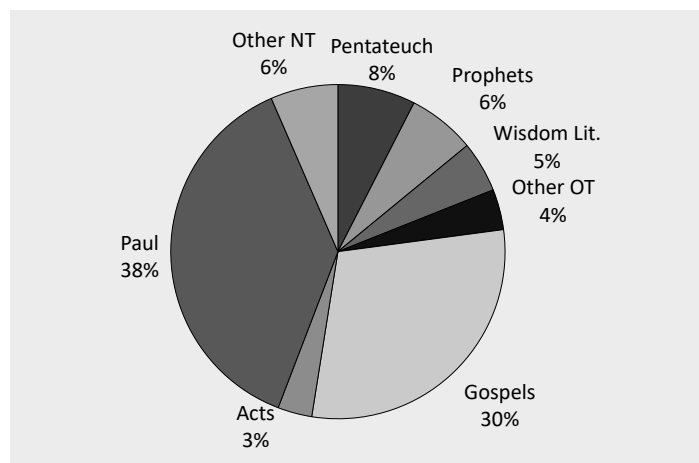
If the JDDJ is the ecumenical achievement that so many believe it is, and if, as Kasper said, the Bible lies at the heart of the relationship between Lutherans and Catholics, then examining the biblical hermeneutic of the JDDJ holds out the promise of contributing significantly to greater ecumenical comity between these two groups and, perhaps, between others as well.

The texts of Luther are the so-called “Reformation treatises” of 1520, namely, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*; and the lectures are those that Luther gave on Galatians in 1531. As for Trent, of course, I am looking at its *Decree on Justification*, issued in January of 1547. While, for the purposes of this article, my interest lies particularly in the biblical hermeneutics operative in these texts, the way to discover these interpretations begins with a clear understanding of the exact biblical texts the authors are using to make their arguments. In this forum, it will be unnecessary to drill down to the level of chapter and verse, but it is helpful to see the breakdown of citations in the Reformation Treatises and the 1531 Galatians Lectures, visible in Figures 1 and 2. The two charts track closely together: heavy reliance on the New Testament, in particular on Paul. The story remains the same when one turns to Figure 3 and Trent.

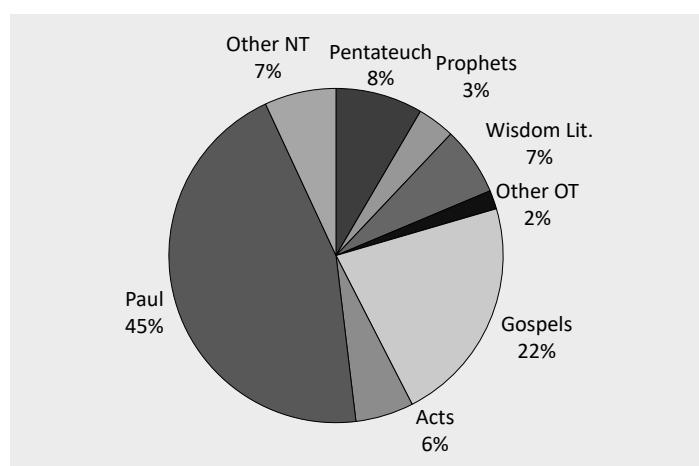
What is not clear in these charts, however, is the actual number of citations we are talking about. This is where things get interesting. Figures 1 and 2 account for nearly 1,800 biblical citations from Luther’s writing, yet when one examines the 120 citations in Trent’s *Decree on Justification*, something unexpected results: only 37% of the biblical texts Trent uses to make its argument get so much as a single mention from Luther in 1520 or 1531. The two parties were, quite literally, not on the same page more than half the time. When they *were* on the same page, however, is when their differing biblical hermeneutics become most evident.

The two place the sinful human being at the center of their reading of Scripture. This, after all, acknowledges the

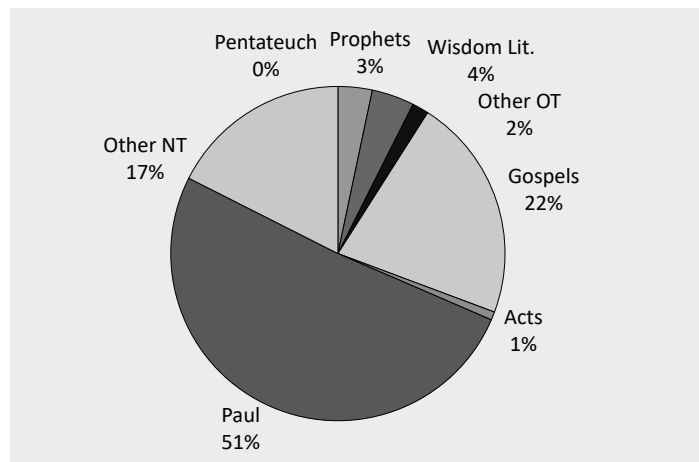
Biblical Citations in the 1520 Reformation Treatises (Figure 1)



Biblical Citations in the 1531 Galatians Lectures (Figure 2)



Biblical Citations in Trent’s Decree on Justification (Figure 3)



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basic dynamic of the doctrine of justification: God interacts with sinful human beings and renders them just. Where they part ways in their reading of Scripture is that Luther shows a clear preference for a *theological* reading of the text: that is, one that emphasizes that God, *ho theos*, is the only hope that the human being has. Trent adopts an *ecclesio-sacramental* reading, which is not to be thought of as *anti-theological*, any more than calling Luther's reading theological means that he has no regard for the church and the sacraments. For Trent, though, God's grace manifests itself in the church as a whole, and in the sacraments in particular.

My classification of Luther's and Trent's hermeneutics requires more extensive explanation than I can provide here, but one example of how each reads 2 Corinthians 12:9 ("But [the Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me") will be useful. Trent employs this verse to support its argument that grace, but not faith, is lost by every mortal sin. It draws this conclusion from the premise that people *can* refrain from committing serious sin, a position that it takes in light of Christ's promise, "My grace is sufficient for you." This grace builds upon the nature of the human being, whose ability to make free choices, though injured by original sin, is not destroyed. Luther reads the verse as emphasizing the utter powerlessness of the human being, and the boundless graciousness of God. God's power, after all, is made perfect in the thoroughgoing weakness of humans. The verse, then, becomes a locus not only where the two different theological anthropologies of Trent and Luther face off against one another, but one where their differing biblical hermeneutics do the same.

The Shared Hermeneutic of the USA and German Dialogues

One of the reasons that dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics in the late twentieth century was such a success was the adoption of a shared biblical hermeneutic among the interlocutors. Though much of the documentation from the USA and German dialogues illustrates the basic elements of this hermeneutic, none does so better than the volume *"Righteousness" in the New Testament*, the bulk of which was written by the Lutheran biblical scholar John Reumann. His treatment of Romans 3:21-31 demonstrates two of these elements.

First, the scholars called upon to support Reumann's exegesis of what Paul is doing in this part of the letter bridge confessional divides. The commitment to this sort of ecumenical inquiry is "pre-confessional," and consequently, the work of anyone appropriately trained in biblical studies could be a potential source to help construct an argument. Naturally, this does not mean that everyone reading the

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same text arrives at the same conclusions, but it does mean that differences do not issue from "being Catholic" or "being Lutheran."

Second, with the set of historical-critical tools that he has at his disposal, Reumann is able to conclude that vv. 21-31 are the "the heart of Paul's Gospel in Romans," identifying vv. 24-26a as "the core around which Paul constructs the passage."⁴ This conclusion is a clear furthering of what we saw in the sixteenth century, where Romans was the most cited book across the 1520 and 1531 writings of Luther, as well as in Trent, yet vv. 21-31 appear only fourteen times, and vv. 24-26a only seven times in those texts. The conviction that vv. 24-26a are the core of this passage, however, owes to the fact that the majority of Pauline scholars, at least since 1950, have held that it is a pre-Pauline fragment, a detection that could not have been made in the sixteenth century.⁵

These two elements – the freedom enjoyed by scholars from having their reading of Scripture be absolutely determined by their confession, as well as the enormous breadth of critical tools that became available to scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – were joined by a third in the USA and German dialogues: the people at the table of dialogue actually read Scripture together. Lutherans were reading 100% of the biblical texts Catholics were reading, and Catholics were reading 100% of the biblical texts Lutherans were reading. Why? Because they were reading them together.

An Elliptical Hermeneutic

But they were doing more than reading together: they were deploying a shared hermeneutic, one that I have called *elliptical*. This was the key difference, at least with respect to the Bible, that helped make the JDDJ, once thought impossible, a reality. To be sure, the key difference was not the type of biblical verses that the JDDJ cites, which, as

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Biblical Citations in the JDDJ (Figure 4)

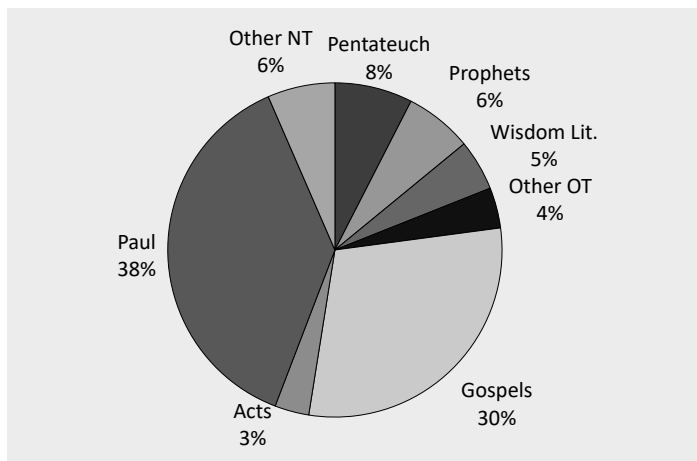


Figure 4 illustrates, tracks quite closely to what we discovered in 1520, 1531, and 1547. But what these charts do not show is that the readings of Scripture we saw in Luther and Trent – respectively, the *theological* and *ecclesio-sacramental* readings – have been replaced. Now, just as the geometrical shape of an ellipse orients itself around two foci, the elliptical reading of Scripture embraced by the JDDJ does likewise. Those two foci are, on the one hand, the confessional history and history of interpretation of the Lutherans *and* the Catholics, and the other is the broad sweep of outstanding extant historical-critical scholarship. Each requires further comment.

In the twenty-first century, the second of the two foci must be a facet of any attempt to have a serious engagement with Scripture. The power of the historical-critical method of interpreting texts, the fruit it has yielded for more than a century, and the nearly universal approbation of its usefulness, render outlandish any suggestion that it be discarded or relegated to a minor role. One must always remain vigilant in guarding against so privileging historical-criticism that no other voice whatsoever would have standing in interpreting the biblical text, but this is precisely why the model of biblical interpretation in play during the twentieth

Now, just as the geometrical shape of an ellipse orients itself around two foci, the elliptical reading of Scripture embraced by the JDDJ does likewise.

century’s Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on justification was so successful. It is elliptical: it has two foci, not one focus.

The first focus, the confessional history and history of interpretation of Lutherans and Catholics, must be neither swallowed by the second focus, nor divided into two separate orientations. It must remain one. This was the great achievement of the USA and German dialogues, as well as, ultimately, the JDDJ. The confessional histories and histories of biblical interpretation of the two churches did not fold into one another, with all differences swept aside and then forgotten. This would have ultimately dishonored both histories. On the level of biblical citations, it is clear that the JDDJ honors these histories: two-thirds of the biblical verses used in the JDDJ appear in the parts of Luther and Trent I examined, and that number goes up to nearly three-quarters if we look at New Testament verses alone. What a change from the sixteenth century, when, as we have seen, Luther and Trent failed, more often than not, even to be on the same page.

But what the national dialogues and the JDDJ accomplished was the bringing together of these histories in a way that underscored areas of agreement, in addition to areas where agreement was still elusive. Maintaining this tension, that is, neither collapsing the various histories into one, nor thinking those histories so incompatible that they must be treated separately rather than together, is imperative. And thus, the elliptical way of reading Scripture was not only a part of the JDDJ: without it, the JDDJ might simply never have come to be. [G](#)

Notes:

1. Walter Kasper, “Closing Speech of Cardinal Walter Kasper for the Tenth Anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” 31 October 2009, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, in *Information Service* 132 (2009/III-IV): 69.
2. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht, *Mapping the Differentiated Consensus of the Joint Declaration* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 13.
3. Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, “Official Common Statement” (OCS) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999), §3.
4. John Reumann, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Jerome D. Quinn, *“Righteousness” in the New Testament: “Justification” in the United States Lutheran—Roman Catholic Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), §§135, 136.
5. Cf., Reumann, §70. In n.49 to this paragraph, one can find an abundance of scholarly literature that supports this point.

Receiving the Joint Declaration: A Test-Case in Bilateral and Multilateral Engagement

By Jakob Karl Rinderknecht

Twenty years after the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) was signed, it remains the only officially-received, bilateral agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and a communion proceeding from the sixteenth-century Reformation. Its method and its development have been widely studied, as have its pattern of differentiated consensus.¹

In the intervening twenty years, it has continued to affect the internal lives of the Lutheran and Catholic communions,² and it has been received by other communions of Christians, including the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Each has officially affiliated themselves to the agreement.³ However, these affiliations are not easily explained in the terms of the Declaration itself. Because the heart of JDDJ is written in the form of a differentiated consensus, these affiliations are necessarily of a different kind than the original agreement. They do represent, however, a real reception of the JDDJ, from both the original signatories and by the new partners.

In this article, I will briefly describe the structure of the JDDJ and its associated documents, and then those of the three statements of affiliation. I will then examine how these statements function vis-à-vis the JDDJ's agreement, in light of both the ecumenical literature on differentiated consensus and that regarding reception. It will conclude by considering how such statements function as a kind of reception and what new questions about the relationship between bilateral and multilateral engagement they propose.

JDDJ History & Development

The Joint Declaration is unique, in both its history and its content. It is unlike the many bilateral dialogue documents because it is written not in the name of a group of theologians but rather in the churches' own names. In order to make it possible for the churches to do this, the process of accepting the final JDDJ led to a three-part document: the JDDJ itself, an explanatory Annex, and the Official Common Statement, the document actually signed in Augsburg in 1999. This "confirm[s] the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in its entirety" in light of the clarifications of the Annex.⁴

The two involved communions followed quite different processes of reception, which demonstrate the ecclesiological differences between them. The Lutheran World Federation requested feedback from all member-churches, while Roman Catholics produced a short response in col-

laboration between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.⁵ The positive response of the LWF came in a resolution from the LWF Council, while the Catholic response took the form of a Note from the CDF and the PCPCU.⁶ While Catholic officials consistently emphasized that the positive "Declaration" section of the Note bore greater weight in the document, the presence of the "Clarifications" made it clear that further work was needed to demonstrate that Lutherans and Catholics were affirming the same document in the same way.

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The CDF/PCPCU Note was met with some surprise and disappointment from Lutheran officials. It began a new phase of discussions, in both public and private forums about ways forward. Public considerations included the letter from the LWF General Secretary to the member churches (C.69 in GER-DER – see note 4), and that of the German Episcopal Conference (C.70). Private channels included the conversations between Bishop Hanselmann and Cardinal Ratzinger that lead to the Annex and the final signature of the JDDJ. In November of 1998, the beginnings of the statement that would become the "Annex" were drafted by Bishop Johannes Hanselmann, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Joachim Track, and Heinz Schutte.⁷ At this time, another public statement authored by Protestant university professors was published in German, this time with 243 signatories; this statement names the Joint Declaration a failure.⁸ Despite these difficulties, the Annex text was finalized, and Cardinal Cassidy and Dr. Noko announced on June 11, 1999 that the JDDJ would be signed by both churches the following October, in light of the clarifications reached in the Annex.⁹

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Jakob Karl Rinderknecht is the Director of the Pastoral Institute at the University of the Incarnate Word (San Antonio, TX). His research centers on the implications of embodiment for theology, especially relating to situations of ecumenical and cultural difference.

JDDJ Structural Description, Annex, and Common Statement

The Joint Declaration is composed in a format that commenters have called “Differentiated” or “Differentiating” consensus.¹⁰ The main body of the text, especially Section 4, is composed of consensus statements followed by paragraphs in which the authors explain how this consensus relates to Lutheran or Catholic theology, language, and ecclesial culture, followed by a partner paragraph doing the same for the other party.

The Annex leaves the text of the JDDJ unchanged, adding a few notes as to how particular parts are to be interpreted.¹¹ The Official Common Statement (which was what the parties signed in Augsburg) accepts the JDDJ in light of the clarifications of the Annex.

Looking to Expand the JDDJ: Columbus, OH 2001

Several years after the JDDJ’s signing, participants from the Lutheran World Federation, the Roman Catholic Church, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now WCRC), and the Methodist World Council met in Columbus, OH to discuss the possibility of expanding the agreement reached in the JDDJ.¹² There, Theodor Dieter of the Strasbourg Ecumenical Institute offered a paper considering how the JDDJ could be expanded.¹³

Beginning by noting the essentially “Lutheran-Catholic character of the” JDDJ, Dieter then proceeds to argue that – because the JDDJ acknowledges the central place of justification – recognizing the agreement on justification found in the JDDJ would be necessary for future ecumenical agreements.¹⁴ Such recognition also strengthens the Christian community across communions and serves as an important witness to the Christian faith to the world.¹⁵ Within this broad goal of Christian unity, however, the Methodist and Reformed world communions find themselves in a particular situation. Agreements within Europe (especially the Leuenberg Agreement) have led to church fellowship with LWF members on the basis of a shared understanding of justification. The question must then be asked: how do these bodies relate to the LWF’s agreement on justification with the Roman Catholic Church? This explains the particular focus in this conference on the place of the Methodists and Reformed vis-à-vis the JDDJ at the 2001 conference.

There are difficulties, however. With the move from bilateral to multilateral agreement, we multiply the levels of complexity. Instead of having two partners properly differentiating their consensus, we now have potentially five. Whereas two actors are connected by one relationship, a group of five has ten bilateral relationships among them.¹⁶ The single relation described in the JDDJ (Lutheran–Catholic) therefore becomes much more complex as it

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expanded. Moreover, the structure of world-wide communions further complexifies these processes, adding hundreds of actors to each agreement.

History presents further difficulties. Because the central effect of the document proceeds from its declaration that the condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply between Lutherans and Catholics today, one would have to examine the different condemnations made against the Reformed, and by the Reformed against others. In the case of the Methodists, there are no explicit condemnations regarding justification, as the Methodists did not emerge out of the polemical situation of the sixteenth century.¹⁷

Dieter suggests that there might be two paths forward through these problems, which he calls the unilateral and the mutual. In the first, a communion might itself declare “itself in agreement with the consensus explained in the common affirmations of the JDDJ without an official response from the Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches or the LWF.”¹⁸ Such a unilateral path would represent a kind of declaration of common cause, and might even be recognized by the original signers, but would not in itself expand the JDDJ – because it would not draw that new partner’s history and concerns into the consensus, leaving them as an observer (if an appreciative one) to the original differentiated consensus. Pursuing the mutual path would require the kind of opening-up of the dialogue to the complexities of the histories and concerns of the new partners – and the official reception of this by the original signers as well. On the Lutheran side, this would mean once again asking the member churches for input and response, as was done with the JDDJ. This is a major process – just the responses received take up hundreds of pages in the collection of documents related to the JDDJ. Therefore, the 2001 conference proposes a kind of hybrid approach. On the Methodist side, there is hope that a small commission might produce a text explaining the Methodist understanding of justification and stipulating the Methodist position vis-à-vis the JDDJ. This official text of the Methodist World Communion could

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be presented to the Roman Catholic Church and LWF for “for possible endorsement by these two parties.”¹⁹

At the conclusion of the 2001 meeting, the participants released a Report that was particularly hopeful about the possibility of a Methodist affiliation, and which called for more dialogue with the Reformed.²⁰ Eventually, both would affirm the JDDJ publicly, as would the Anglican Communion, albeit in a different way.

World Methodist Conference

In July 2006, the WMC issued a statement of affiliation with the JDDJ.²¹ It affirms the work of the JDDJ and then proceeds to highlight particularly Methodist concerns regarding justification.²² These make up the bulk of the document and roughly parallel the kind of language one finds in the JDDJ regarding particular Lutheran or Catholic concerns, although without the direct engagement to the teaching of the other party that structure the JDDJ.²³

The Official Common Affirmation, signed by Lutheran and Catholic officials, welcomes “the above Statement of the World Methodist Council and its member churches, which declares and demonstrates Methodist agreement with the consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.”²⁴

This is quite different than the language or effects of the JDDJ, although it is a statement made in the name of the churches themselves. There are no sixteenth-century anathemas to deal with, and the statement does not declare a basic agreement to exist between Methodists and the others (as the JDDJ does between its parties). The partners instead “welcome” the Methodists’ statement of affiliation. But it is the statement that declares agreement to exist. The churches see in it cause both to rejoice and reason to continue working towards full unity.²⁵

World Communion of Reformed Churches

In July of 2017, the World Communion of Reformed Churches issued an Association document very similar in form to that issued by the Methodists in 2006. Similarly, it was received by a “welcome” signed by Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist parties.

The WCRC statement, which has more direct history of debate to respond to than does the Methodist one, proceeds in four movements: 1) hearing the consensus and agreeing; 2) appreciation of aspects of the JDDJ; 3) adding insights from a Reformed point of view; and 4) particular attention to the relationship between justification and justice.

This last section is of particular interest to our present considerations, for in it the Reformed offer a whole new

This last section is of particular interest to our present considerations, for in it the Reformed offer a whole new area of engagement with justification that they consider important, and which is not an area of emphasis in the JDDJ.

area of engagement with justification that they consider important, and which is not an area of emphasis in the JDDJ. Here, the document considers the relationship between justice and justification, opening up new areas for consideration between the parties regarding their commitments – but it does so in a format which does not allow for dialogue or response because it is being offered unilaterally by the Reformed to the signers of the JDDJ and the previously-affiliated Methodists for their consideration.

The Official Common Affirmation signed by the four parties, which is nearly identical to that signed at the time of the Methodist affirmation, similarly “welcomes” the WCRC document without officially saying anything about its claims on behalf of the signers.

Anglican Consultative Council

The third statement to recognize the JDDJ is different. In April of 2016, the Anglican Consultative Council issued its Resolution 16.17.²⁶ It is issued *solely* in the name of the Anglican Consultative Council. The first of four sections “welcomes and affirms the substance” of the JDDJ. The second section “recognizes” that Anglicans have been in dialogue with both Lutherans and Catholics. The third section similarly “recognizes” that Anglicans and Lutherans share an understanding of justification (based on the Helsinki Report). The final section “recognizes” that Anglicans and Roman Catholics share an understanding of justification (based on ARCIC 1).

The Anglican Communion’s statement of affirmation did not receive the same kind of official welcome that the Methodist and Reformed statements did, presumably because the Anglican statement was prepared by the Consultative Council alone and did not seek such a reception. Nevertheless, the fact that it is collected with the other

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statements in the twentieth anniversary printing of the JDDJ demonstrates that it is seen as a kind of affiliation to the JDDJ.²⁷

Analysis: What Agreements Exist? With What Authority?

In analyzing these texts, two equally true claims need to be weighed. First, the affiliation statements (especially those with the participation of the original signers) do not duplicate the effort or mutual engagement that characterize the breakthrough of the JDDJ itself. While both Lutheran and Catholic officials were involved in the process of creating these documents, they remain one-sided affiliations. Structurally, neither can they deal with the specific historical questions that shaped the relationships between the communions (because the specificities of Lutheran-Catholic history have set the initial terms of the debate), nor do they have the effect of overcoming specific causes of disunion (like the declaration of the non-applicability of the sixteenth-century anathemas on justification that are contained in the JDDJ). Extending this aspect of the JDDJ would require a similarly rigorous process of juridical reception on behalf of all the members, presumably the CDF and PCPCU on the Catholic side, and some kind of engagement with member churches in the LWF, the WMC, and the WCRC, each structured according to that communion's polity.

On the other hand, there is a second truth to attend to. As important as juridical declarations and process are, they are not the entirety or even the most important aspect of the ecumenical project. Because ecumenism is a matter of relationship, declarations like these do have an effect; yet the primary effect takes place within the daily lives of the individual communions and in their interactions with each other, rather than in the juridical sphere. What the members and leadership of the various communions *believe to be the case* about the relationship between themselves, to a large extent, determines those relationships.

As one example, let us consider the responses to the JDDJ from Lutheran churches that did *not* accept the JDDJ. These (from a small minority of LWF churches) arose from three major constituencies: those that thought that the

JDDJ, while good, could not be taken on as a new Lutheran Confession; those that saw the JDDJ as de-centering important Lutheran commitments; and those like the Kinki Lutheran Church in Japan, which believed that the only way to overcome the sixteenth-century disputes was for one of the positions to be deemed true and the other false.²⁸ The latter two reactions depend on understandings about what ecclesial consensus means. Perhaps the achievement of ecclesial agreements like the affiliations to the JDDJ is that they in term form peoples' and organizations' beliefs about what consensus looks like. If the JDDJ is experienced as *not* decentering Lutheran commitments, then it is less likely that Lutherans will, in the future, read it as if it does so. Similarly, if the LWF churches live in a relationship with Catholics that is structured by their mutual reception of the JDDJ, then the situation that the JDDJ posits – that Lutheran and Catholic ways of describing justification are not contradictory – becomes the assumption by which future Lutheran and Catholic relationships are structured.

Similarly, if Reformed, Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, and Catholic thinkers believe their communions' statements that their different explanations of justification are compatible, although not identical, and if they believe that the communions have something to learn from each other, that in itself shifts the possibilities for the reception of this and future ecumenical agreements. As Catherine Clifford has argued, it becomes the basis on which the churches move forward together.²⁹


What does this mean 20 years into the JDDJ?

There have been any number of articles and conference talks over the last several decades about the supposed "Ecumenical Winter" in which we are supposedly living. I am more hopeful. The JDDJ is an ecumenical achievement that was 50 years in the making – and which remains as yet unmatched. Its real effect, however, will lie in its reception. Talking about reception is not unlike talking about the *sensus fidei*. Knowing where it lies is largely a matter of judgment – and of reading the signs of communities' common lives.

Affiliations to the JDDJ like those that are considered in this article, even if they do not rise to the juridical level of the original document, represent a real (albeit less official) reception of the JDDJ. They are outgrowths of the official, juridical moves that demonstrate the effects that the original statements have had. They are certainly receptions of the JDDJ by the partner communions, welcomed by the original signers. They are also both proof and means of the reception of the JDDJ among Lutherans and Catholics. Through them, this important agreement becomes more

As important as juridical declarations and process are, they are not the entirety or even the most important aspect of the ecumenical project.

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deeply rooted in the signers' common lives and the churches grow closer to one another and to Christ. 

Notes:

1. See, among others: Catherine Clifford, "The Joint Declaration, Method, and the Hermeneutics of Ecumenical Consensus," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38.1 (2001), 79-94; Minna Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010); John Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification: A Chronology of the Holy See's Contributions, 1961-1999, to a New Relationship between Lutherans and Catholics and to Steps Leading to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Jakob K. Rinderknecht, *Mapping the Differentiated Consensus of the Joint Declaration* (New York: Palgrave, 2016); William G. Rusch and George A. Lindbeck, eds., *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003); Pieter de Witte, *Doctrine, Dynamic and Difference: To the Heart of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic 'Differentiated Consensus' on Justification* (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

2. These changes have proven to be positive, and they have avoided some of the concerns voiced by early commenters. See Avery Dulles, "Justification: The Joint Declaration," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 9.1 (2002): 108-19.

3. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/meth-council-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20060723_text-association_en.html; <https://ecumenism.net/2017/10/canterbury-archbishop-presents-anglicans-affirmation-of-the-jddj-to-lutherans-and-catholics.htm>; <http://wcrch.ch/jddj>.

4. "Official Common Statement," in JDDJ, 41-42. See Friedrich Hauschild, Udo Hahn, and Andreas Siemens, eds., *Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre: Dokumentation des Entstehungs und Rezeptionsprozesses*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), D.1. This volume collects documents related to the JDDJ, and is hereafter cited as GER-DER. The text is also available in Peter Hünemann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, Anne Englund Nash, and Heinrich Denzinger, eds., *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 5081. Hereafter DH.

5 For more on this history, see De Witte, *Doctrine, Dynamic, etc.*, Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, and Rinderknecht, *Mapping the Differentiated Consensus of the Joint Declaration*.

6. LWF Council, "Response of the LWF," Lutheran World Information (hereafter LWI) (June 24, 1998), in GER-DER, C.54. CDF & PCPCU, "Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification," Information Service 98 (1998), 93-95, in GER-DER, C.55. See also Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 156-58, for a thorough description of this period and the responses of Roman Catholic leaders.

7. Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 162.

8. "Stellungnahme theologischer Hochschullehrer zur geplan-

ten Unterzeichnung der Gemeinsamen Offiziellen Feststellung zur Rechtfertigungslehre," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (September 25, 1999), 67. In GER-DER, D.7.a.

9. "Signing of 'Joint Declaration' Significant for Ecumenical Movement," LWI (June 14, 1999).

10. At least one of its promoters now prefers "differentiating consensus." See Theodor Dieter, "Luther Research and Ecumenism," *Dialog* 47.2 (2008): 157-66. Dieter's expression emphasizes that the consensus reached is not merely a differentiated understanding of the same thing but is an agreement which itself differentiates between the two acceptable positions. This is a helpful point and should be noted. However, as most of the literature, especially in English, continues to use "differentiated consensus," I follow this convention.

11. While it does not follow the strict "together — Lutherans — Catholics" structure of the meat of the JDDJ, it does contain all three parts within its paragraphs. Section 2A (*simul iustus et peccator*), for example, is a clarification of a common statement, while 2B (concupiscence), clarifies how the term functions differently within Lutheran and Catholic discourses. See "Annex to the Official Common Statement" in JDDJ §41-42 (GER-DER, D.1).

12. The papers from this conference were published as: PCPCU and LWF, *Unity in Faith: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in a Wider Ecumenical Context* (LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs, Geneva, February 2002). As pagination in *Unity in Faith* restarts with each document, I will be citing it by document number and then page number.

13. Theodor Dieter, "Joining in the Agreements Reached in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: Procedural Aspects," in *Unity in Faith*, 9.B.2-3.

14. The agreement of the JDDJ itself sees in justification a "measure and touchstone of the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion." JDDJ §2. It also calls justification "an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (JDDJ §8).

15. Dieter, "Joining in the Agreements Reached in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," in *Unity in Faith*, 9.B.2-3.

16. Consider how the simple children's game of rock-paper-scissors (which already has more one more node than the JDDJ) becomes something else entirely when morphed into "rock-paper-scissors-lizard-Spock," as imagined by the TV show *The Big Bang Theory*. For Rock Paper Scissors, see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock-paper-scissors#/media/File:Rock-paper-scissors.svg>. For Rock Paper Scissors Lizard Spock, see: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rock_Paper_Scissors_Lizard_Spock_en.svg and https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rock-paper-scissors-lizard-Spock#/media/File:Pierre_ciseaux_feuille_l%C3%A9zard_spock_align%C3%A9.svg

17. Dieter, "Joining in the Agreements Reached in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," in *Unity in Faith*, 9.B.5.

18. *Ibid.*, 9.B.7.

19. "Report" §1, in *Unity in Faith*, 4.

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The Contribution to JDDJ of the New Interpretation of Luther's Theology and Its Potential for an Ecumenical Advancement

By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

This article argues that a significant theological contribution to the preparation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) came from the innovative New Finnish Interpretation of Martin Luther's theology of justification by the so-called Mannermaa School at the University of Helsinki. Furthermore, I argue that this new interpretation, as debated as it might be among the global Lutheran family, has the potential capacity to facilitate further ecumenical advancements not only between the Catholics and various Protestants and Anglicans but also between the Christian East (Orthodox Churches) and the Christian West.¹

The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther's Theology

As is well-known, the standard Lutheran (and more widely, the Protestant) doctrine of justification makes a categorical distinction (often even a separation) between the initial "forensic" or declarative justification and the "effective" justification, called sanctification. Even though good works are acknowledged as the fruit of justification, there is also a fear of "works-righteousness" and, therefore, they are considered somewhat marginal.

Under the leadership of the late Prof. Tuomo Mannermaa, the Helsinki University Luther scholars began to revisit the established canons of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith in response to the ecumenical conversation with the (Russian) Orthodox Church beginning from the 1970s.² An important asset of the Mannermaa School is to make a programmatic distinction (although, of course not, a separation) between the theology of the Lutheran Confessions (penned to a large extent by P. Melancton and others) and that of the Reformer himself. The traditional account of justification is attributed by and large to the Confessional writings whereas Martin Luther's own account frames justification differently, as will be explained in what follows.

Justification in Luther himself can be described with the help of several closely related concepts such as participation in God, the presence of Christ in the believer through the Holy Spirit, union with God, *perichōrēsis*, and occasionally even deification. Regardless of the term used, Luther saw justification as the union between Christ and the believer, as Christ through faith abides in the Christian through the Spirit. In fact, Luther says, Christ is "one with us"³ and "Christ lives in us through faith."⁴ For the Reformer, Christ

Regardless of the term used, Luther saw justification as the union between Christ and the believer, as Christ through faith abides in the Christian through the Spirit.

"is the divine and inestimable gift that the Father has given to us to be our Justifier, Lifegiver, and Redeemer."⁵

For the reception of this wonderful Gift, Luther frequently uses an important scholastic term, namely "apprehension" (*apprehendere*) rendered in English as "taking hold": "[F]aith itself is a gift of God, a work of God in our hearts, which justifies us because it takes hold of [*apprehendit*] Christ the Savior."⁶ The Latin term *apprehendere* (which occurs in various forms in his mature commentary on Galatians [1535] about 300 times)⁷ carries here the basic meaning of the Gift (Christ) becoming the believer's "property." Briefly: Christ is the believer's righteousness. As a result of this "taking hold of" Christ by faith, union between Christ and the believer results. To use a programmatic statement of Luther concerning faith: "It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself [*in ipsa fide Christus adest*]."⁸

In this light it is understandable that the distinction between effective and forensic righteousness does not play an important role in Luther. At times, Luther expressed the integral view of justification with the help of two familiar scholastic terms, namely the above-mentioned "gift"

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Rev. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA) and Docent of Ecumenics at the University of Helsinki. An ordained Lutheran minister (ELCA) and native of Finland, he participates widely in ecumenical, theological, and interreligious work. Recently he has published a five-volume dogmatics: Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Eerdmans 2013-17).

(*donum*) which is Christ and “favor” (*favor*), the latter of which was usually understood as the forgiveness of sin. Whereas the traditional view keeps them separate, Luther at times goes so far as to say that “But ‘the grace of God’ [*favor*] and the ‘gift’ are the same thing, namely, the very righteousness which is freely given to us through Christ.”⁹

There is, though, one crucial distinction for Luther between two kinds of righteousness: the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of the human being. The first is “alien” righteousness. It is given to us from outside, in the sense that it does not come from within human resources. It comes from Christ and it is that kind of righteousness that Christ is in himself. This kind of righteousness of Christ makes the human being just. On that basis, Luther calls the other kind of righteousness “our” righteousness. It is a result of the first kind of righteousness and makes it effective, “perfects” it. Even though it is called “our” righteousness, its origin and source are outside the human being, in the righteousness of Christ. It is “ours” in a sense that it indwells us and begins to renovate and purify us. Indeed, Luther uses dramatic sayings such as that Christ present in faith “absorbs all sin in a moment,” since the righteousness of Christ infused into the human heart is “infinite”; at the same time, the power of sin and death is deteriorating day by day but is not fully destroyed until death.¹⁰ This means that the central Lutheran principle of *simul iustus et peccator*, “simultaneously just and sinner,” is not dismissed.

Good deeds follow “our” righteousness, they spring from the union with Christ. Even more, from Christ’s presence in the believer results a daring and bold idea of Christian as “christ” (lowercase) to the neighbor. The Christian begins to do what Christ does: “I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me ... [T]hrough faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ.”¹¹

Let us now correlate Luther’s main insights with those of the JDDJ.

The New Interpretation and the JDDJ

As limited as the JDDJ is – leaving out a number of soteriological, and moreover anthropological, issues which have bearing on salvation – its main affirmations clearly echo and further elaborate the Helsinki School’s insights. This is not to try to establish a causal relationship between the two (although it is significant that several Mannermaa scholars were involved in the process); my attempt is more modest, just to compare notes.

Even though the JDDJ follows the ecumenical convergence-method, which allows both the acknowledgment of agreements and the identification of continuing divergences, I will set aside the differences and just list here sig-

nificant common statements. Based on the common Bible reading¹² and a careful revisiting of the five-hundred years long doctrinal disputes, these groundbreaking joint statements include the following:

- “[A]ll persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation” (#19).
- “God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ” (#22).
- “[S]inners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life” (#25).
- “[I]n baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God’s unconditional justifying grace” (#28).
- “[P]ersons are justified by faith in the gospel ‘apart from works prescribed by the law’ (*Rom* 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation. We also confess that God’s commandments retain their validity for the justified” (#31).
- “[T]he faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God” (#34).
- “[G]ood works — a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love — follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit” (#37).

A brief summary of the main mutual agreement goes something like this: not by works but solely on the basis of God’s grace, in union with Christ through faith, sinners are forgiven and made righteous even when the fight with sin and pursuit of renewal are a daily task; renewed persons bring forth good works, and they can be confident that the just and faithful God will see to their final salvation.

As said, each common statement also allowed Catholics and Protestants to highlight their distinctive convictions; those divergences, however, do not undermine the groundbreaking ecumenical breakthrough. What, then, about the relation of the Reformation-Catholic (Christian West) common agreement in relation to the Christian East?

The New Interpretation of Luther as the Arbiter between East and West

Although much ecumenical work is still needed in terms of the negotiation between the Eastern Orthodox and

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Christian West's soteriologies, some promising first steps have already been taken even on the Lutheran side – which has been traditionally reserved, at times even hostile, to the doctrine of *theōsis*. Recall that the Mannermaa School's work was inspired by the Lutheran-Orthodox talks.

In these conversations, surprisingly important commonalities were discerned between the two traditions. The Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue produced (in Kiev, 1977) a highly influential soteriological document titled "Salvation as Justification and Deification." The preamble to the theses claims that


Until recently, there has been a predominant opinion that the Lutheran and Orthodox doctrines of salvation greatly differ from each other. In the conversations, however, it has become evident that both these important aspects of salvation discussed in the conversations have a strong New Testament basis and there is great unanimity with regard to them both.¹³

It was found that the doctrine of deification covers the idea of a Christian's life as righteous and sinful at the same time, as Lutheran theology has always emphasized. The idea of deification makes more explicit what is sometimes in danger of being under-emphasized in Lutheranism, namely the sanative role of grace: "When the Christian has been justified, he takes a new road leading to deification."¹⁴

These initial common statements launched an inquiry into the relation of Luther's view of justification by faith (as explained above) and *theōsis*. Although *theōsis* is not the choice term for Lutherans, not even for Luther himself, it is not totally missing. Helsinki scholars have identified about thirty instances of deification in Luther's corpus, among statements such as this one: "[I]t is true that a man helped by grace is more than a man; indeed, the grace of God gives him the form of God and deifies him, so that even the Scriptures call him 'God' and 'God's son.'"¹⁵

More important than the terminology is Luther's conception of salvation as participation in Christ, *perichōrēsis*, *unio*, and the like. Notwithstanding noted differences in anthropology and the theology of grace between the Orthodox and the Lutherans, the Reformer's *in ipsa fide Christus adest* ("in faith itself Christ is present") undoubtedly speaks to the same matter as *theōsis*.

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I propose that a longer-term joint study program inviting the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant theologians be established to harvest the work already done, not only around the JDDJ but in many Catholic-Protestant, Catholic-Orthodox, and similar dialogues. 

Notes:

1. For details and documentation, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004); Kärkkäinen, *Spirit and Salvation. A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), chap. 11 particularly.

2. The responses to Mannermaa-School's new interpretation have been understandably varied. Whereas the Continental, particularly German, Luther scholarship has been deeply critical, a number of leading American Lutherans have enthusiastically endorsed it. Understandably, conservative Lutherans (Missouri Synod), along with many evangelicals, to whom the forensic-imputational template is the only correct interpretation, have expressed deep reservations.

3. *Luther's Works*, American ed, 55 vols (Libronix Digital Library), edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 31:56 (hereafter *LW*).

4. *LW* 31:56.

5. Luther, "Lectures on Galatians" (1535); *LW* 26:353.

6. *LW* 26:88.

7. Recall that it is this major writing of the mature Luther which is endorsed "officially" by the drafters of the *Formula of Concord* (the official "summation" of Lutheran Confessional teaching on disputed issues among various fractions in the emerging new church) as a reliable guide to the Lutheran doctrine of salvation!

8. Luther, "Lectures on Galatians" (1535); *LW* 26, 129).

9. Luther, "Lectures on Romans. Glosses and Scholia" (1515-16); *LW* 25:306.

10. Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *LW* 31.

11. Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" (1520); *LW* 31, 367.

12. The common Bible reading helped Catholics and Lutherans state jointly the following (JDDJ #11): "Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Rom* 3:23-25; *Acts* 13:39; *Lk* 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (*Rom* 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (*Gal* 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom (*Rom* 5:1f). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (*Rom* 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (*Rom* 8:1f, 9f; *I Cor* 12:12f). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the gospel of God's Son" (*Rom* 1:1-3)."

13. In *Dialogue between Neighbours: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986*, ed. Hannu Kamppuri (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1986), 73.

14. *Dialogue Between Neighbors*, ed. Kamppuri, 75.

15. *LW* 51:58.

Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment in Recent Anglican-Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue

By Craig A. Phillips

One of the most visible fruits of the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) is continued ecumenical engagement and substantial theological agreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.¹ Where the earliest ecumenical work between the two churches focused primarily on doctrinal issues, since 1994 or so the focus of this dialogue has shifted to issues of ecclesiology and moral theology. The suggestion that ecumenical dialogue might begin with moral theology is found in the *Decree on Ecumenism* which, citing Col. 3:17, states that "...ecumenical dialogue might start with discussion of the application of the Gospel to moral conduct."²

The 2014 report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation USA., *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment: Seeking a Unified Moral Witness*, provides an excellent example of "the application of the Gospel to moral conduct."³ The document itself is a reflection on three previous documents: (1) the 1994 report of the Second Anglican Roman Catholic International Consultation (ARCIC II), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*,⁴ (2) the 1995 report of the ARC-USA, *Christian Ethics In The Ecumenical Dialogue: Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission II And Recent Papal Teachings*,⁵ which itself is a response to both *Life in Christ*, and (3) *Veritatis Splendor*, the 1993 Papal Encyclical of John Paul II addressed "To All the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching."

In this examination of *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, I will offer my own reflections and insights as they relate to the Episcopal Church, not only as a scholar but also as a priest who for a good part of my forty years of ordained ministry has worked in a parish setting.

Before examining the 2014 ARC-USA document *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, it is salutary to cite two statements from the beginning of the 1995 response of ARC-USA to the ARCIC II document *Life in Christ*. Here we read:

According to *Life in Christ*, therefore, it would appear that our differences concerning morals amount to relatively narrow disagreements over secondary issues, or to variations of emphasis which involved no real disagreement at all, or to matters of practice which are not seen to present a significant challenge to moral teaching. ... In the perspective of *Life of Christ*, none of our differences regarding morals is a valid warrant for our Churches to remain separated.

In the paragraph that immediately follows we find a more sobering response:

The optimistic thesis of *Life in Christ* appears to be significantly challenged, in its turn, by the papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (VS), which was published only months earlier (5 Oct. 1993). We note with regret that these two documents were prepared independently of each other, and we find our Churches challenged to be more collaborative in the future. Still, now we must take account of important contrasts in outlook between the two documents and the likely implication of these contrasts for the eventual assessment of *Life in Christ* by the papal magisterium.⁶

In many ways the 2014 ARC-USA document takes up the challenge outlined in the passage just cited.

Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment

The ARC-USA document *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment* is not an official document of either church. In the preface we read: "...[T]he members of the dialogue do not speak officially for either of our churches" but they "submit this statement to the leadership of our churches and to all their faithful for their prayerful consideration as a means of hastening progress along the path to full, visible unity." The document they produced seeks to address "questions of ethics and the Christian life in the context of ecclesiology" to gain "greater clarity regarding areas of agreement and disagreement" between the moral teaching of the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Part Four of the document focuses attention on two "case studies," namely "migration and immigration" and "same-sex relations" as a way of illustrating similarities and differences in the way that the respective churches engage in moral and ethical reflection and in the way that these reflections are shaped by their particular ecclesiological structures and ecclesiologies.

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Rev. Dr. Craig A. Phillips is the Rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Arlington, Virginia and serves on the adjunct faculty at Virginia Theological Seminary. He completed his doctoral work in Theology and Ethics at Duke University, and has taught at Temple, Georgetown, Duke, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Rosemont College. He holds a M.Div. from Harvard University and an A.B. in Religious Studies and Classics from Brown University. His current research concerns the intersections of theology, contemporary philosophy, and literary theory.

Before we move to an examination of the case studies it is important to note very briefly what the document has to say about differences and similarities in the ecclesiologies and moral perspectives of the respective churches.

Part Two of *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment* articulates a shared understanding of Christian moral formation.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics share an understanding of Christian moral formation that includes four necessary characteristics. (1) The Christian moral vision of human flourishing begins and ends in the person of Jesus Christ. (2) Christian moral formation occurs in community where we read the Scriptures and celebrate the sacraments. (3) Christian moral formation occurs in the midst of suffering, under conditions of finitude and sin. (4) To aid in moral formation, each of our churches has specific moral teaching. In brief, these characteristics are Christ, community, suffering, and teaching.⁷

Part Three identifies the main differences in the ecclesiologies of the respective churches. The main difference as it relates to questions of moral theology is summarized in the following statement: “The absence of an authoritative universal magisterium among the churches of the Anglican Communion marks a signal difference in the structure of teaching authority.”

Without such a universal teaching authority it is difficult to state definitively the teaching Anglicans hold on many specific matters, beyond the governing documents and prayer book of each particular church. This fact marks a signal difference in the structure of teaching authority from the Roman Catholic Church and helps to explain a significant tension in the relationship between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.⁸

The passage just cited refers to the centrality of the Prayer Book in the life of Anglican communities. Almost every national Church in the Anglican Communion has its own prayer book written in the language(s) of its people. The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* is the primary document that expresses the doctrine, discipline, and theology of the Episcopal Church. This means that what the Episcopal Church teaches is expressed in the liturgies of the church and not in doctrinal statements. The church follows the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which simply put means “praying shapes believing.” If you want to know what the Episcopal Church teaches about baptism, for example, you would not turn to statements issued by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church or to statements from its Bishops (even though they might be helpful), but to what is printed and prayed in the service for Holy Baptism in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The Baptismal Covenant found in the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* establishes a baptismal ecclesiology that gives shape to an ethics.⁹ The two are integrally intertwined. This understanding of the meaning of baptism

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and its implications for Christian discipleship provided the theological framework that supported the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church, the church’s stand against racism, discrimination, the ordination of homosexual clergy, and current debates about the blessing of same-sex relationships or same-sex marriage. These decisions, however, did not take place all at once. The Episcopal Church examined these issues as they arose in the life of the church over the past forty years and in each case a deepened understanding of the Baptismal Covenant led to new theological and ethical understandings. As the implications of the baptismal covenant took a deeper hold over the self-understanding of the church and its commitment to social justice, the church’s baptismal ecclesiology shaped its ethics, providing its basic form. In other words, the baptismal covenant provided the model for the theological virtues that shape the contemporary moral theology and ethics of the Episcopal Church.

The question from the Baptismal Covenant that had the greatest impact in shaping these virtues is: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”¹⁰ I will discuss this question further in the next section.

As the primary document under investigation notes, there is a tension between the tendency of Roman Catholics to seek universal (“catholic”) perspectives on moral issues and that of Anglicans to focus on the particular, the contingent, and the local. The reliance on the *Book of Common Prayer* in the Episcopal Church is quite different from the centralized teaching office of the Papal Office or the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

Two Case Studies

Part 4 of *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment* contains two case studies, the first on immigration/migration and the second on same-sex relations, that cast light on how differences in ecclesiology shape the respective moral visions of the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal Churches.

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rather Christians who bear a vision, and therefore a care, for the nation.¹³

The discussion of migration highlights the national, local, and contingent character of Episcopal politics and its concomitant inability to speak universally on how to care for migrants and immigrants. Because positions taken on immigration seem always already to be implicated in partisan politics, it is often more difficult in the Episcopal Church today to talk about migration and immigration than it is to talk about issues of sexuality.

Same-sex Relations: A Case Study

Before examining the conclusions of the case study on same-sex relations, it is helpful to provide some context to it.

The 1986 “Letter to all Catholic Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” known as *Homosexualitatis Problema*, was published under the signature of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and with the approval of Pope John Paul II. This letter calls homosexuals to join their “sufferings and difficulties” to the sacrifice of the Lord’s cross.

Fundamentally, [homosexuals] are called to enact the will of God in their life by joining whatever sufferings and difficulties they experience in virtue of their condition to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross. ... Just as the Cross was central to the expression of God’s redemptive love for us in Jesus, so the conformity of the self-denial of homosexual men and women with the sacrifice of the Lord will constitute for them a source of self-giving which will save them from a way of life which constantly threatens to destroy them ... Christians who are homosexual are called, as all of us are, to a chaste life. As they dedicate their lives to understanding the nature of God’s personal call to them, they will be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance more faithfully and receive the Lord’s grace so freely offered there in order to convert their lives more fully to his Way.¹⁴

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Immigration/Migration: A Case Study

The Roman Catholic position on immigration/migration focuses on universal human rights. The church speaking universally from Rome can issue statements without regard for their reception in particular nation states. The national character of the Episcopal Church (as a “national” church within the wider Anglican Communion), however, makes statements on this issue politically contentious. The document summarizes the “implicit Anglican/Episcopal moral teaching on immigration” as follows:

...[A]s human beings, we should value those around us, our fellow citizens, while at the same time seeking communion and fellowship with all. Although its record is blemished, the U.S. has often welcomed immigrants, and in doing so has shown an important part of its spiritual core. The church should advocate for every undocumented worker and support humanitarian relief. But when considering policy changes that go beyond humanitarian relief, Anglicans need to show their respect for (if not agreement with) arguments to the contrary, out of solidarity with their fellow-citizens.¹²

The final line of this paragraph highlights the difficulty that the Episcopal Church has in speaking in the context of what has become a partisan political issue in the United States. As a result, the document notes that the positions enunciated in the document “The Nation and the Common Good” were “couched as a theological resource of the House of Bishops, not as a pastoral letter or teaching.” “The Nation and the Common Good,” we read, “recognizes a variety of reasonable positions legitimately held by American citizens on this issue.”

It articulates those points at which there is a moral imperative to act and those where there is no moral obligation to implement reform. Perhaps most importantly, it is shaped by implicit teachings about a special or unique relationship to the nation – that Anglicans are neither a dissenting religious body nor an arm of the state, but

In an insightful 2004 critique of this letter Paul G. Crowley, S.J. observes that:

This counsel of the Cross, while plausibly offered as a word of comfort and as a form of ecclesial support to gay Catholics, problematizes homosexuality in such a way that the Cross becomes a symbol of existential imprisonment in a condition not of one's choosing.¹⁵

Crowley also observes that "While penance is mentioned here as providing help to gay persons for attaining a chaste life, no mention is made of the graces accruing from one's baptism or from the life of the Eucharist.¹⁶ These two criticisms are addressed in part by the 2006 statement of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care."¹⁷ "The Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance are essential sources of consolation and aid on this path. These sacraments invite every person to enter into the dying and rising of Christ, for the Paschal Mystery is at the center of Christian life."¹⁸ Note that every Christian, and not just homosexuals, are invited to enter into the mystery of the cross. While the Eucharist is mentioned, however, no mention is made of the sacrament of baptism.

The most telling passage in the Guidelines from the US Catholic Bishops, however, is this:

In fact, the Church actively asserts and promotes the intrinsic dignity of every person. As human persons, persons with a homosexual inclination have the same basic rights as all people, including the right to be treated with dignity. Nevertheless 'sexual orientation' does not constitute a quality comparable to race, ethnic background, etc., in respect to nondiscrimination.¹⁹

Many people within the Episcopal Church would disagree with the final assertion of this citation because they understand sexual orientation to be intrinsic to human persons, akin to race and or ethnicity, and not a matter of choice or learned behavior. Contrast this statement with the following question from the Baptismal Covenant of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*: "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" This question provides the theological basis for a position directly opposed to that outlined by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, a position that leads to the full inclusion and ordination of practicing homosexuals in the Episcopal Church.²⁰

In the earlier discussion of immigration/migration the document summarizes the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on justice: "Underlying the church's teaching on justice is the recognition of the basic human rights and correlative duties deriving from persons' intrinsic dignity."²¹ Where in the Roman Catholic Church this is a principle derived from natural law, in the Episcopal Church this principle of justice has been embodied in a baptismal ecclesiol-

ogy such that to respect the intrinsic dignity of each person is to welcome them fully into the communion of the church.

The discussion of same-sex relations highlights differences in the ways that the respective churches approach moral issues based on their methods of moral reasoning. Where in the Roman Catholic Church the application of the moral law is seen as universal in scope, in the Episcopal Church moral reasoning is more fluid, local, and at times contested. Where the moral theology of the Roman Catholic Church is based on adherence to natural law, the moral theology of the Episcopal Church is based on a baptismal ecclesiology. This point of difference is a place where further dialogue on the sacrament of baptism and its central role in moral theology and Christian formation might begin.

Where the moral theology of the Roman Catholic Church is based on adherence to natural law, the moral theology of the Episcopal Church is based on a baptismal ecclesiology.

Conclusion

If one is looking for substantive suggestions as to how the two respective churches might come to a common resolution of these particular moral issues, *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment* will disappoint, as it seeks primarily to diagnose why differences on these issues persist. The document identifies the root cause of these differences in the ecclesiology of the respective churches. Near the end of the document we read:


Where one church tends toward the particular and the national in its teaching, the other focuses first on the universal and the global, as in the instance of immigration/migration. In each case, the way in which we teach follows from our structures, which in turn shape the content of our teaching.²²

It is hard to see how our differences in moral theology and ecclesiology will be resolved, and it is not clear to many whether they should be. The ecumenical movement teaches that legitimate diversity has its place in the Church, and history demonstrates that this is true.²³

In summary, it is appropriate to ask if ecclesiology has become a discourse of limits. Has it always been seen as such in ecumenical discussions or is this a newer development? ARCIC I recognized that authority in the church,

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particularly papal authority, was a dividing issue, but at the time the division was understood to be more of a doctrinal issue than an ecclesiological one.

Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment affirms a willingness to embark on a mutual path towards greater understanding of the other partner in dialogue and a commitment to working together to address moral issues that confront the respective churches. The recognition that respective ecclesiologies are the principal reason behind an inability to achieve a common moral and ethical perspective on the issues at hand suggests where further ecumenical dialogue between the churches might begin. Speaking from my own perspective as an Episcopalian, the best place to start is at the intersection of ecclesiology and baptism. 

Notes:

1. Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ecumenism - Unitatis Redintegratio*, November 21, 1964. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.
2. *Decree on Ecumenism*, §23. The full passages is: “While it is true that many Christians understand the moral teaching of the Gospel differently from Catholics, and do not accept the same solutions to the more difficult problems of modern society, nevertheless they share our desire to stand by the words of Christ as the source of Christian virtue, and to obey the command of the Apostle: ‘And whatever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him’. For that reason an ecumenical dialogue might start with discussion of the application of the Gospel to moral conduct.”
3. Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the U.S.A. (ARC-USA), *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment: Seeking a Unified Moral Witness*, April 22, 2014. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/anglican/upload/arcusa-2014-statement.pdf>.
4. The 1994 report of the Second Anglican Roman Catholic International Consultation (ARCIC-II), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930906_life-in-christ_en.html.
5. *Christian Ethics in the Ecumenical Dialogue: Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission II and Recent Papal Teachings*, June 22, 1995. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/anglican/ethics-in-ecumenical-dialogue.cfm>.
6. *Christian Ethics in the Ecumenical Dialogue*, §2 and §3.
7. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §14.
8. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §29.
9. See Louis Weil, *A Theology of Worship* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2002), 13. “The model of baptism as the fundamental sacrament of identity in the church is sometimes referred to as a ‘baptismal ecclesiology’ – that is, an understanding of the church that defines Christian community in terms of the common ground that all baptized members share. This understanding of the church sees baptism as the defining sacrament of incorporation into its life.”
10. *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), p. 305. For insightful reflections on the Baptismal Covenant see Fredrica Harris Thompsett, “Baptismal Living: Steadfast Covenant of Hope,” *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 1 (Winter 2004), 9-18.
11. This statement requires clarification. The Dioceses that comprise the Episcopal Church are not confined solely to the United States. The Dioceses of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, for example, are also part of the Episcopal Church.
12. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §40.
13. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §41.
14. *Homosexualitatis Problema*, “Letter to All Catholic Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” *Origins* 16 (November 13, 1986) 379–82.
15. Paul G. Crowley, S. J., “Homosexuality and the Counsel of the Cross,” *Theological Studies* 65 (2004), 516.
16. *Ibid.*, 505, note 10. See also M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Intersections in African American Theology. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2010), 73-78.
17. “Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care,” Issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 14, 2006. <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination.pdf>.
18. “Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination,” 13. The document refers to the Second Vatican Council, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), no. 6.
19. “Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination,” 15. The passage cited is from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons,” (July 23, 1992), no. 10.
20. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 305.
21. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §34.
22. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §64.
23. *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment*, §65.

In Memoriam

Gerard Mannion (1970-2019)

By Brian P. Flanagan

Gerard Mannion was the Joseph and Winifred Amaturio Chair in Catholic Studies at Georgetown University, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Berkley Center at Georgetown. Before Georgetown he had taught and researched at the University of San Diego, the Catholic University of Leuven, Liverpool Hope University, and Oxford University, with visiting lectureships at numerous other universities. He authored and edited numerous books and articles, and he was the editor of two academic series in ecclesiology published by Bloomsbury Publishing and Palgrave Macmillan. He was the Founding Chair of the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network and active in numerous other scholarly societies. He was born in England of Irish parents, and left behind his partner, Amanda Farrell, numerous loving siblings, nieces, and nephews, and many friends across the academy and world. He died suddenly while out for a run just days short of his 49th birthday.

Such are the details that one can find easily with a quick Google search or a look at Gerard's CV. They might evidence the material details of an outstanding academic career, of the accomplishments of a thinker and teacher operating within the usual pathways of academic excellence: teach, research, edit, publish, repeat. And that these details are now a closed set when they had so recently showed no sign of slowing their proliferation might be viewed only as the tragic ending of an otherwise ordinary vocation – which, frankly, is probably how Gerard saw his own life and work. This would be a grave mistake. These scraps of demographic and academic information, by themselves, fail to communicate the magnitude of the loss that Gerard's death represents, not only for those of us who knew and loved him, but also for the churches, the academy, and the world.

One of the first things one notices in an attentive reading of Gerard's CV is the frequency of the words "edited" and "edited with." For instance, looking at his publications, one finds significant individual works, like his important and engaging book *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity* (2007). But, in greater proportion, one finds titles like *Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism* (2017, edited); *Where We Dwell in Common: Pathways for Dialogue in the 21st Century* (2015, edited); *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church* (2007, edited with Lewis Mudge); *Catholic Social Justice* (2007, edited with Philomena Cullen and Bernard Hoose)... and the list could continue. My own first book was published in the Bloomsbury Ecclesiological Investigations series that Gerard edited; numerous other scholars, both established

and at the beginnings of their careers, found their works guided to publication by Gerard and their ideas given both serious hearing and collegial amplification in his company.

On paper alone, it would be easy to mistake Gerard's life work for that of some stereotypical academic editor, whose eye for detail, relevance, and grammar was stronger than their own thought or writing, or who, out of a sense of duty or excessive humility, saw their vocation primarily as one of serving as an amanuensis and servant to other, stronger personalities and thinkers. This could not be further from the truth in Gerard's case: he was simultaneously one of the strongest, most original personalities and thinkers that I have ever known and, at the same time, one of the theologians who most often used their powers in the service of others rather than for themselves. Or, perhaps better, it was precisely because of the strength of his personality and thought that Gerard was able to be of such enormous, tireless service to us all.

More than for any other accolade, we may celebrate Gerard for being a theologian *with* others – a theologian *en conjunto* despite being Irish rather than Latino. More than an editor maintaining distance from his own thoughts, Gerard saw his own experiences, voice, and contributions to scholarship as valuable and worthy of a hearing, *and* he saw the experiences, voices, and contributions of others to be equally valuable and important. This was particularly true when those other voices were more junior than he, came from a more marginalized part of the world or part of the church than his, or brought to the wider world a perspective more often drowned out in the conversation. In his work in founding and maintaining the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network, Gerard intentionally cultivated an ecumenical, interreligious, international, and intergenerational spirit. In addition to some of the usual locations for academic meetings and conferences in Europe and North America, he brought our meetings to Kerala, to Belgrade, to Hong Kong, and even to Dayton, Ohio, making sure that scholars from around the world were part of our conversations. He helped ensure that our ecclesiological

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Brian P. Flanagan is Associate Professor of Theology at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia. He is the author of *Stumbling in Holiness: Sin and Sanctity in the Church* (Liturgical Press, 2018), and the Co-Chair of the Ecclesiological Investigations Unit of the American Academy of Religion.

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studies included not only “traditional” ecclesiological topics like ecclesial structures and ecumenical dialogues, but also issues at the intersection of ecclesiology and ethics like migration, interculturality, race, gender, and religious pluralism. He was intentionally and rigorously ecumenical, ensuring that any collaboration of which Ecclesiological Investigations was a part included voices from a variety of Christian churches and experiences. And, precisely because he was never anxious about the importance of his voice, he never hesitated to insist that the voices of junior scholars were heard just as regularly and often. Gerard was as happy to listen to me or another doctoral student or early-career academic, to encourage us in our work, to promote our ideas or give us credit, as he would be for any “big name” senior scholar.

For the readers of this journal, it must be emphasized that Gerard’s life lived with others has obvious relevance for ecumenical progress. “Dialogue,” literally “conversing with” or “thinking with others,” was another key feature of Gerard’s vocabulary and way of life. No less than we Roman Catholic theologians have much work yet to do in unpacking and implementing Gerard’s hoped-for reforms within our church, ecumenism in general has much to learn from his example. As far as I am aware, he never served on any of the official inter-church dialogues. But rather than waiting for ecclesial divisions to cease or for official dialogues to reach their conclusions, Gerard attempted to simply live into a world where ecclesial divisions mattered, but did not matter that much; in which the realities of difference were never ignored, but also never allowed to dominate relations between people or provide cover for dismissive attitudes. In the face of the “not yet” of the divisions of the church, Gerard lived into the “already” of being with others across the divisions of the church, both theologically in the voices he listened to and amplified in his scholarship, and personally in the ways in which he brought people together.

This brings me to the foundation of Gerard’s life as a theologian with others – the fact that, before all else, Gerard was a *person* with others. We often joked that, when making dinner reservations at a conference with Gerard, you needed to double the planned number of seats, since on the way to the restaurant he was likely to invite a colleague walking by in the hall, the friend of a friend who had no plans yet, or the


bartender at the reception who had just finished his shift to join the group that evening. This constant bringing-together was not superficial or frenetic, but a reflection of his deep love for others and his refusal to live as though anyone in the world could be excluded from a table. As Dennis Doyle of the University of Dayton observed in his eulogy,

If you were friends with Gerard Mannion, you were his best friend. Gerard had so many best friends that it would be next to impossible to count. This was something real and special. Very few of us would be capable of having more than one or perhaps a couple of best friends. There would be something superficial about claiming too many special relationships. With Gerard, though, there was nothing superficial about it. Gerard had an exceptional and amazing gift when it came to personal friendships that carried over into building communities and even an international research organization.

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The theological term for the kind of life that Gerard lived, a life lived with others, is the life of *communion*. And while Gerard was rightly suspicious of forms of “communion ecclesiology” that forced unity upon others from the top, he pioneered in his life and his work what communion ecclesiology from below looks like – a life of relationships, based on a sense of one’s own worth and the inestimable worth of the other, not simply open to dialogue but rooted deeply in a flourishing, ever-expanding community of being-with-others. And that communion continues: even in death, Gerard’s absence has brought people together to remember him and to strategize ways to continue his work. We in the Ecclesiological Investigations Network have noted, jokingly but seriously, that each of us will need to begin reaching out to a new theologian or dialogue partner every week in order to maintain Gerard’s extravagant welcome to the table. And we know that Gerard is continuing to use his influence, and his networking skills, as a saint among

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the saints to work for the renewal of the Catholic Church, the fuller unity of the Body of Christ, and the healing of our world. I am grateful to God for the gift of Gerard's life, for the chance to have walked with him for a while, and for the foretaste of communion with God and strangers-made-friends that Gerard loved into being around him. 

Editors' Note: In addition to this in memoriam reflection, the foregoing article by Craig Philips began as a paper presented at an Ecclesiological Investigations international gathering (Washington DC, 2015), and

this issue's three articles on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification were first given as a panel of the Ecclesiological Investigations Unit at the American Academy of Religion (San Diego, 2019). Gerard's presence and influence can therefore be felt throughout this issue of Ecumenical Trends. The Editors are grateful for the collegiality of the Ecclesiological Investigations leadership, especially Brian Flanagan and Vladimir Latinovic, who supported the revision and publication of these papers as a set in Ecumenical Trends.

RECEIVING THE JOINT DECLARATION..., from page 15

20. Ibid.

21. This statement, along with all the others here discussed are helpfully anthologized in the 20th anniversary edition of the JDDJ issued by the LWF, available at: <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-joint-declaration-doctrine-justification-20th-anniversary-edition>.

22. "We declare that the common understanding of justification as it is outlined in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ 15-17) corresponds to Methodist doctrine": WMC Council §2.

23. The Methodist document also lacks engagement with the condemnations, as Methodists did not arise in the same polemical situation as the other communions.

24. Official Common Statement, ¶2.

25. Ibid., ¶4.

26. Available in the 20th anniversary edition of the JDDJ (see again note 21), 43.

27. This booklet is published by the LWF, but it lists all of the parties involved as holding copyright. The level of actual consultation between the parties at the time of its publication is unclear, but as a witness to the more informal cooperation which exists in the wake of the JDDJ, it is clear.

28. Negative responses were received from the following churches: the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden, Germany, the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japan, the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Madagascar, and the Lutheran Church of Nigeria. In addition, three responses are categorized, "Difficult to Interpret, but Seem to Be 'No'": Church of Lippe, Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe, Germany. See LWI, "Responses to the 'Joint Declaration' from LWF Member Churches," June 24, 1998. The actual responses are available in GER-DER.

29. Catherine Clifford, "The Joint Declaration, Method, and the Hermeneutics of Ecumenical Consensus," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38.1 (2001): 79-94.

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“Abide In My Love... You Shall Bear Much Fruit”

(cf. John 15:5-9)

Theme for 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Announced

The theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is “Abide in My Love... You Shall Bear Much Fruit.” It was discerned by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland and finds its origins in the Gospel of John (cf. John 15:5-9).

“Jesus gave his life for all out of his love for all,” said Fr. James Loughran, SA, Director of Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute (GEII). “To abide in his love reminds us that we live in a community celebrating our gift of unity.”


The Monastic Community of Grandchamp discerned the theme for 2021 and prepared working drafts of the background and worship materials. These documents subsequently were finalized during a meeting of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the International Committee of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches at Grandchamp in September, 2019. Fr. James Puglisi, SA, director of the Centro Pro Unione, a ministry of the Friars of the Atonement that includes an ecumenical library and research center in Rome, Italy, served on the international team.

Established in the Reformed Church in Grandchamp, Areuse, in the canton of Neuchatel, Switzerland, in the 1930s, the Monastic Community of Grandchamp had close ties to the Community of Taizé and Abbé Paul Couturier, a seminal figure in the history of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Today, the community comprises 50 sisters from different generations, churches, countries, and continents, called in vocation to prayer, reconciliation, and unity in the church, the human family and the whole of creation.

In choosing the 2021 theme, the Community of Grandchamp desired to share the experience and wisdom of their contemplative life abiding in the love of God and keeping his commandment of “loving one another as He has loved us.” They remind Christians worldwide about the importance of praying for the fruits of closer communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ and greater solidarity with the whole of creation.

“In these days of the Coronavirus threat, our world has become smaller,” said Fr. James Loughran, SA. “We are one in our response. More than ever, we need to appreciate the value of Christian unity.”

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is January 18-25. Those dates were proposed by Servant of God, Fr. Paul Wattson, SA, founder of the Society of the Atonement, who initiated observance of the first “Church Unity Octave” in 1908, to cover the original days of the feasts of the Chair of St. Peter (Jan. 18) and the Conversion of St. Paul (Jan. 25), and therefore they have a symbolic significance.

Each year, GEII adapts the texts chosen and prepared by representatives of the Vatican and the World Council of Churches and publishes a full suite of print and digital materials and resources for use in celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the U.S. These materials and resources will be available through the GEII website (www.geii.org) by October 1st. 

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