



NEW HORIZONS IN FAITH AND ORDER

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NEW HORIZONS IN FAITH AND ORDER

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Dedication

This issue is dedicated to Bob Edgar for his public and personal support for the work of Faith and Order in his capacity as General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA from 2000-2007, particularly during preparation for the NCCCUSA Faith and Order Commission's fiftieth anniversary conference, "On Being Christian Together." Bob's overall commitment to younger ecumenists was expressed nowhere more clearly than his support for the Postdoctoral Fellows program and the development of this journal. For this investment in the next generation, we are deeply grateful.

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Foreword

Author

[Foreword text goes here]

Editorial

R. Keelan Downton

It is my great privilege to introduce the inaugural issue of this much anticipated journal. It represents the commitment of countless individuals and communions to empowering the next generation of ecumenists for making significant contributions to the challenging process of living into the unity for which Christ prayed. As a periodical edited by younger theologians and juried by senior scholars, it is not only a unique publishing venue for academicians from across the *oikumene* to share ideas in the early stages of their careers but also a place for others to sense the pulse of creative ecumenical thought beyond the institutions with which these cutting-edge ecumenists are involved. The articles in this inaugural issue include a fascinating combination of authors and topics that we expect will draw submissions from an even more ecclesially and geographically diverse pool of contributors.

Kenneth Loyer's consideration of the place of Mary in Christian doctrine and piety in light of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* takes on particular significance following the World Methodist Council's affirmation of the *Joint Declaration* in July 2006 and the upcoming ten year anniversary of the document in 2009. After summarizing the *Declaration's* "emphasis on God's grace, the freedom of human response, and the subsequent renewal of life for the glory of God", he draws a parallel to the life of Mary as an exemplar of faith and calls attention to the idea of "primacy of grace" as a more constructive way to frame dialogue about Mary than whether or not she had sin from which she needed to be justified. As an example of "responsible reception," the Marian narrative provides a paradigmatic expression of divine and human action in justification. Furthermore, attention to the Christological intent of the *theotokos* title makes it possible to hear assertions about Mary correctly as assertions about God and God's work. He argues that ecumenical discourse on both Mary and justification would be furthered by considering the ways they intersect and inform each other.

Joel Halldorf's reflection on worship at the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Porto Alegre, 2006) provides important followup to the Assembly in terms of the intersection he perceives between a WCC worship tradition and the recommendations of the *Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC*. He makes use of both to analyze three Assembly prayer services, asking pointed questions along the way. He concludes with a negative

assessment of worship at the Assembly, siding with the *Special Commission* in terms of caution over social/political issues but disagreeing with their critique of experimental forms.

Christopher Dorn considers the ways twentieth century liturgical and ecumenical movements influenced later changes in the eucharistic liturgies of Reformed churches with particular consideration of the liturgy adopted by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) in 1968. His article catalogs some of the interaction between liturgical reformers and ecumenists prior to 1968 and argues that the revised liturgy draws from the eucharistic prayers of the early church to prioritize *corporate action* in the Lord's Supper form over the pastoral exhortation modeled in Calvin's form. He interprets this observation as evidence of a general movement of Reformed churches towards focus on a common apostolic heritage.

Reviews by Ukrainian Catholic Adam J. DeVille (Reinhard Hütter's *Bound to Be Free*) and Episcopalian Rachel Lyle (Paul Avis's *Paths to Unity*) further broaden the ecclesial breadth of the contributors and round out the issue with optimistic and challenging analyses that look forward to further dialogue concerning the papacy and a "21st century Renaissance of the Ecumenical Movement."

Discerning readers will notice several themes within the major articles that may provide some indication of where younger ecumenists perceive the horizons of Faith and Order discourse. First, all three articles are concerned in significant ways with the worship life of the church. This is most obvious in Halldorf and Dorn who both refer to WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 6, *Ways of Worship* (1951). Second, each of the three articles build on previous ecumenical activity by assuming that the discreet traditions they draw from are interrelated in complex ways through their ecumenical discourse. This is reflected not only in the substance of their work but also their ecclesial and academic locations. Loyer writes as a United Methodist about Lutheran-Roman Catholic perspectives on Mary. Halldorf makes use of the *Special Commission's* recommendations to assess WCC, Anglican, and Pentecostal prayer services from the context of his participation in Lutheran, Pentecostal, and Orthodox communities in Sweden. Dorn writes as a Reformed liturgist at a Jesuit university drawing from Reformed, Lutheran, and Benedictine sources. Third, all writers display a heightened consciousness of the individual Christian life *in relation to* the life of the entire church in contrast to the preoccupation with ecclesiastical forms apparent in much twentieth-century ecumenical literature. Loyer does not merely approach Mary as "a model of faithful living" and an example of common dependence upon God but describes her experience as a helpful lens for further (corporate) dialogue about justification. Halldorf is concerned to preserve either the specificity of individual moral responsibility or the interconnectedness of Christians at all times and in all places during corporate confession, eschewing models of confession that differentiate according to region or tradition. Dorn notes the

liturgical movement's "pastoral concern for individual Christians" and writes, "the liturgy binds the lives of individual Christians to the one visible church". These commonalities may display a common existentialist influence, yet such consciousness is hardly monolithic. The contrast between Dorn's apparent desire for objective, corporate expressions and Halldorf's desire for expressions that cohere with the moral life of individuals and remain open to experimentation deserves serious attention and may not be confined to differences between Reformed and Pentecostal ecclesiologies.

Attention to how all three authors focus on worship, write from within complex personal and ecclesiological identities, and employ existentialist assumptions with a view towards participation in the life of the whole may well provide some intimation of what lies over the horizon. Might churches find a need to explore whether such layering of identities should be considered a sign of doctrinal dissolution or Spirit-led reception? Will focus on worship forms mean that aesthetics as a discipline becomes an increasingly important discussion for unity? Is there a looming divide between those who quote and utilize twentieth century ecumenical documents as their own and those who treat them as laudable but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to produce a shared theology? These questions, and many others, are suggestive of where ecumenical discourse may be headed in its second century. So without further proviso, and on behalf of the editorial board, I invite your critical engagement with the work of these fine younger theologians in the hope that our common efforts towards unity will continue in faithfulness to our gospel calling to the glory of God, the Trinity one in essence and undivided.

R. Keelan Downton
Editor

Justification and Mary: Exploring the Potential for Mutual Affirmation and Amplification in Ecumenical Dialogue

Kenneth Loyer

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* represents a momentous agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation regarding “basic truths of the doctrine of justification.”¹ This celebrated text, produced by a long and fruitful bilateral dialogue, presents the consensus on justification that participating Lutheran churches and Roman Catholics have reached and asserts that the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century regarding this doctrine do not apply to the positions articulated in the document.² It thus provides a solid basis for future Lutheran-Roman Catholic conversation. Given its mostly positive reception by other churches thus far, the scope of the *Joint Declaration* can be said to have expanded to include, in some sense, the ecclesial bodies that have affirmed this agreement.³ In other words, it holds promise not only for the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church but also for other churches in ecumenical dialogue about the vital issues of the Christian faith.

One such issue is the person of Mary. Admittedly, Protestants and Catholics have a long way to go before they can reach a consensus about the place of Mary in Christian doctrine and piety. Yet the outlook for progress appears to be promising. The recent convergence on the doctrine of justification proves that

1. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), §40. This document also appears in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, Faith and Order Paper 187 (Grand Rapids/Geneva: Eerdmans/World Council of Churches, 2000), 566-582.

2. With the lifting of these condemnations, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation can now state in regard to one another what Paul says to all Christians: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1; all Scripture quotations come from the NRSV).

3. Member churches of the World Methodist Council are now fully included in this agreement, which was expanded upon the ratification of the Methodist Statement of Association at the 2006 World Methodist Conference in Seoul. The signing ceremony took place on July 23, 2006. It is hoped that other church bodies, such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, will also become formally associated with the *Joint Declaration*. For a discussion of the ecumenical significance of the Methodist association with the *Joint Declaration*, see Kenneth Loyer, “Progress and Possibility: Ecumenism at the 2006 World Methodist Conference,” in *Ecumenical Trends* 35, no 9 (Oct 2006):9-14, in particular pp. 9-11, 14.

long-standing, bitter disagreements can be resolved through patient dialogue that is led by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this convergence can shed important light on ecumenical conversation about Mary, who is an exemplar of the faith. And as it will be argued here, the influence also flows in the other direction: Mary's experience can deepen ecumenical conversation about justification, because she represents a way to interpret human agency, through grace and faith, in the process of salvation that might satisfy both Catholics and Lutherans.⁴ Toward that end, a proposal will later be offered that seeks to describe the interplay between divine and human agency in the mystery of salvation. More immediately, however, a discussion of three prominent themes in the *Joint Declaration* will aid us in exploring the potential for mutual affirmation and amplification regarding justification and Mary in ecumenical dialogue.⁵

THE RELEVANCE OF JUSTIFICATION IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE ON MARY

We will begin with the relevance of justification in ecumenical dialogue on Mary and then turn, in the second part of the essay, to the relevance of Mary in ecumenical dialogue on justification. The recent convergence on the doctrine of justification can inform ecumenical study of Mary because three prominent themes in the *Joint Declaration* find notable expression in Mary's experience as the Mother of our Lord. As we consider those themes, a brief explanation of their context is appropriate.

Three Prominent Themes in the Joint Declaration

The mutual understanding of justification is plainly stated in paragraphs 15-17 of the *Joint Declaration*. Through their "common listening"⁶ to Holy Scripture and through theological dialogue, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation have reached a consensus "on basic truths"⁷ concerning the doctrine of justification. While the common understanding of justification is later explicated in seven points, there are three prominent themes in that understanding that are particularly relevant to this study.

4. Throughout this study, the term "ecumenical" is used to refer principally to dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. Without in any way meaning to exclude Orthodox Christians, this study will deal primarily with Catholics and Protestants (especially Lutherans); and in this way, it is patterned somewhat after the *Joint Declaration*.

5. I myself prefer the term "salvation" instead of justification because salvation encompasses justification and sanctification. But I will follow the language of the *Joint Declaration* since it is my hope to show how this consensus can contribute to an ecumenical understanding of Mary and vice versa.

6. *Joint Declaration*, §14.

7. *Ibid.*

First, justification is the work of the Triune God.⁸ God the Father has sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to redeem humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit. The *Joint Declaration* is quite clear that God is the ultimate “actor” in justification, and that humans can by no means attain salvation themselves: “We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation.”⁹ Through the gift of justifying faith, God bestows grace to the human soul. Justification occurs “solely by God’s grace,”¹⁰ imparted in the reception of the Holy Spirit through the waters of baptism.¹¹ God alone chooses the condition of pardon and acceptance, and this condition is faith.¹² Justification is God’s work, not a human work, for faith itself comes always as a free gift from a gracious God. The priority and enabling power lie solely with the one God who is in perfect unity Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Humans do, however, play a role in justification—a necessary but not sufficient role—and this is a second point of emphasis in the *Joint Declaration*. While justification is undeniably the work of God, God does not exhaustively coerce anyone come to faith. God offers grace but not in an overwhelming, determinative way. Humans always remain free to respond to God’s grace.

Catholics have typically described this free response by using the word “cooperation.” Regrettably, however, that term has tended only to compound the disparity between Catholics and some Protestants rather than reduce it. Lutherans, for example, are generally leery of any notion of cooperation vis-à-vis justification because according to Lutheran teaching humans are simply unable to cooperate in their salvation on account of their sinfulness. The gift of faith can only be received in a totally passive sense. But as the *Joint Declaration* clarifies, Catholics speak of cooperation “as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.”¹³ Used in this way, the term is

8. *Ibid.*, §15.

9. *Ibid.*, §19.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, §11.

12. Cf. the rich and neatly corresponding account of justification by faith presented by John Wesley in his sermon “Justification by Faith,” IV.6 (Sermon 5 [1746], in *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 1, Sermons I, edited by Albert C. Outler [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], pp. 181-199). It is noteworthy that the Methodist Statement of Association, which draws heavily from Wesley’s sermons, has been found to declare and demonstrate “Methodist agreement with the consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.” See *Official Common Affirmation*, signed on July 23, 2006 by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Methodist Council, http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Methodist-Statement-2006-EN.pdf (accessed November 10, 2006). This document also appears in Kenneth Loyer, “Progress and Possibility: Ecumenism at the 2006 World Methodist Conference,” in *Ecumenical Trends* 35, no. 9 (Oct 2006):9-14, in particular p. 9).

13. *Joint Declaration*, §20.

not the problem that some well-intentioned Protestants have assumed. Later we will consider the phrase “responsible reception” as a possible alternative to the sometimes-misunderstood term “cooperation.” But whether one speaks of human consent as strictly passive or relatively active, it is crucial to emphasize that this consent is not in itself meritorious for salvation: the human reception of saving grace is actually part of God’s gift of that grace.¹⁴ This point is essential in order to avoid the Pelagian or semi-Pelagian tendencies that unfortunately crop up from time to time. St. Thomas Aquinas, the trustworthy Augustinian, aptly expresses the interplay between God’s grace and human freedom in a noncompetitive relationship when he prays: “Bestow upon me the power to accomplish Your will, as is necessary and fitting for the salvation of my soul.”¹⁵ Properly speaking, God’s purposes can be brought about only by his own action; and yet he graciously incorporates into his saving acts those who respond in faith. Put simply, God’s priority and enabling power create the possibility for a free human response, a response that is fully dependent on (but not coerced by) God’s initiating work. So while justification is the action of God, humans are given the privilege of freely sharing in that action which is itself wholly meritorious for human salvation.

A third prominent theme in the *Joint Declaration* deals with the results of the giving and accepting of God’s justifying grace. Here these results are described in terms of renewal.¹⁶ Such renewal, which Protestants typically call sanctification,¹⁷ proceeds from God’s grace imparted in justification and is expressed through good works.¹⁸ As “the fruits and signs of justification,” good works necessarily follow justification.¹⁹ The Holy Spirit renews the hearts of believers while calling them and equipping them to live lives of faith, hope, and love. Because of the divine initiative in this process, the renewal of life is always dependent upon God’s “unfathomable grace.”²⁰ As St. Augustine observes, “When

14. Alain Blancy, Maurice Jourjon, and the Dombes Group, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints: Toward a Common Christian Understanding* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), §220, p. 91.

15. Thomas Aquinas, “For Ordering a Life Wisely,” in *The Aquinas Prayer Book: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated and edited by Robert Anderson and Johann Moser (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1993), 5.

16. E.g., *Joint Declaration*, §23, §26.

17. John Wesley, for example, has developed a robust doctrine of sanctification in which he asserts the dynamic, organic unity between justification and sanctification: “at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, *sanctification* begins” (Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” [1765], I.4, in *Works*, Volume 2, Sermons II, pp. 152-169, italics original). While a theoretical distinction can be drawn between justification and sanctification, they are in reality inseparable.

18. *Joint Declaration*, §26.

19. *Ibid.*, §39.

20. *Ibid.*, §27.

God crowns our merits, he is but crowning his own gifts."²¹ Thus the good works of the Christian witness to the prior and sustaining act of God and ultimately bring glory to God.

There are no doubt other important components of the common understanding of justification articulated in the *Joint Declaration*. But these three are of particular interest for the purposes of this study because they represent significant points of contact between the doctrine of justification and Mary's encounter with, and corresponding assent to, God's grace. The God who justifies us through the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism is the same God who imparts to Mary the saving grace through which she responds to God's word in faith and so becomes a literal conduit of the living God. Clearly, then, the priority and enabling power of God, the freedom of human response, and the corresponding results of justification indicate the relevance of justification in ecumenical dialogue about Mary. One way of gaining a deeper understanding of that relevance is to think about Mary as a unique model of justification by faith.

*"An Example of the Lot of All the Saved":
Mary as a Unique Model of Justification by Faith*

By consenting to the saving purposes of God, Mary embodies Christian discipleship and sets a precedent for all other believers to follow. In an important ecumenical study, the Dombes Group (composed of Roman Catholic and Reformed scholars) has described Mary as "an example of the lot of all the saved."²² Thinking about Mary in this way may be the most promising approach for producing an ecumenical consensus. Building on this appellation, we can infer that she epitomizes salvation. Based on the centrality of justification by faith in salvation, she can therefore be considered a model of justification by faith.

Of course, Mary remains unique in a very important sense. While Protestants have generally given little notice to Mary's role in salvation history, the biblical story itself clearly indicates her uniqueness as the Mother of the Lord (Luke 1:43). She was, in the words of one evangelical study, "chosen by God."²³ God entrusted to Mary a special place in his saving acts, and in her fiat she became *Theotokos* or Mother of God.²⁴ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Mary was

21. Augustine, "Grace and Free Will," chap. 6, §15, in *Saint Augustine: The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will*, translated by Robert P. Russell (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 267.

22. Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, §219, p. 91.

23. David F. Wright, editor, *Chosen By God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective* (Reading: Marshall Pickering, 1989).

24. Significantly, this designation is principally a confession concerning Christ's incarnation. Its original focus was not on the person of Mary as much as on the person of Christ. And as it is noted later, knowledge of this fact will aid us in a responsible Mariology, namely, one that directs us through Mary to Christ instead of to Mary as an end in herself.

invited to conceive him in whom 'the fullness of deity' would dwell 'bodily' [Col 2:9]."²⁵ The passive verb is fitting, for it reveals the primacy of God's will and work. Elsewhere, the same text speaks of Mary's predestination:

'God sent forth his Son' [Gal 4:4, Heb 10:5], but to prepare a body for him, he wanted the free cooperation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, 'a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary' [Luke 1:26-27].²⁶

By virtue of her divine motherhood, which has been brought about by the grace of God and Mary's consent to that grace, Mary is indeed unique among all humans. She herself testified that "all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). And she has rightly been described as not only Mother of God but also Mother of Believers.²⁷

In addition to Mary's uniqueness, we find in her a true pattern of faithful living. Through her fiat she exemplifies "the decisive and perfect example of the Yes which Christian faith must utter."²⁸ Consequently, she represents a model of justification by faith. Though Catholics tend to think more often than Protestants of Mary as a model of faith through their regular veneration of her, it is proper for all Christians to acknowledge Mary's embodiment of justifying faith. Yet Protestants have typically showed hesitancy toward Catholic doctrine and practice concerning Mary. While some of these reservations may have been warranted, in light of what might be called excessive Mariology, Protestants certainly have much to learn about actual Catholic teaching about Mary and the rationale behind it. Likewise, Catholics would benefit from hearing Protestant concerns about devotion toward Mary possibly undercutting the centrality of Christ. There is, in other words, room for growth in understanding on both sides. Certainly, "Mary needs to be liberated from the grizzly hang-ups and defensive positions of centuries, to be revealed as what the biblical tradition shows her to be: the person who *par excellence* opened herself in lowliness to One who brings new life out of acknowledged impotence."²⁹ With its strong biblical basis, the common understanding of justification can aid us in this endeavor. Mary's

25. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), §484, p. 136.

26. *Ibid.*, §488, p. 137. Incidentally, Protestants might be pleased to note how thoroughly this text is bathed in Scripture.

27. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, for example, proposes this title for Mary in her insightful study of Mary in Luke-Acts: "'Nothing Will Be Impossible with God': Mary as the Mother of Believers," in *Mary, Mother of God*, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 19-35.

28. Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, back cover.

29. R. Ferguson, *Chasing the Wild Goose: The Iona Community* (London: SPCK, 1988), as quoted in Wright, *Chosen By God*, 12.

experience in the annunciation, conception, and subsequent birth or “delivery”³⁰ of the Incarnate Son of God into the world is particularly illustrative of the priority and enabling power of God, the freedom of human response, and the corresponding results of justification. We will now read Mary’s experience through those lenses as we seek to explore the potential for mutual affirmation and amplification regarding justification and Mary in ecumenical dialogue.

*“You Have Found Favor with God”:
The Priority and Enabling Power of God*

Of all the Gospel writers, it is Luke who recounts Mary’s experience prior to and immediately after the birth of Christ in the greatest detail. Luke’s infancy narratives mention Mary by name some twelve times, versus five times in Matthew. Furthermore, her portrayal in Luke is vastly different from her portrayal in Matthew. Whereas Matthew refers to Mary in a passive or subordinate way, Luke seems to place her at the center of the entire nativity story. Because Mary figures so prominently in Luke’s account, we will rely largely on it here, beginning with the annunciation.³¹

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth” begins Luke’s account of the annunciation (Luke 1:26). Immediately, the priority of God is clear: the angel “was sent by God” to visit Mary (1:26). Gabriel “came *to her* and said, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is with you*’ (1:28, emphasis added). Through Gabriel, the messenger of God’s revelation, Mary learns of the nearness of God and hears the promise that she will, by the grace of God, herself become a special herald of God’s revelation to the world. God has drawn near to Mary with a word of good and glorious news: “you have found favor with God” (1:30). Because of God’s favor—his choosing of Mary—God will dwell in her in an extraordinary way:

And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob, and of his kingdom there will be no end. (1:31-33)

Gabriel speaks of God’s enabling power, through which this extraordinary birth will occur. Luke continues with Gabriel’s message to the blessed Virgin, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God”

30. The quotation marks are meant to signify that the birth of Christ is Mary’s “delivery” of him into the world only in so far as it is simultaneously—and even principally—his own delivery of *himself* into the world through a compliant person in whom there is space for God.

31. Stephen Benko, *Protestants, Catholics, and Mary* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1968), 13-14. Benko gives a fine analysis of Mary in the New Testament in his opening chapter.

(1:35). Mary will become “The Container of the Uncontainable.”³² Gabriel’s visit testifies to the priority and enabling power of God, for whom nothing is impossible (1:37).

“Let It Be with Me According to Your Word”:

The Freedom of Human Response

Of course, Luke’s account of the annunciation does not end there. Mary, sustained by the grace of God, becomes God’s willing vessel through her fiat: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (1:38). Having heard God’s word proclaimed by the angel Gabriel, Mary, for her part, believes that God’s word will be fulfilled. Through the grace of God, which creates the possibility for a free human response, Mary consents to the will of her Creator.

“My Soul Magnifies the Lord”:

Renewal of Life to the Glory of God

The corresponding result of God’s gracious gift, which necessarily includes reception in order to be a gift in the proper sense of the term,³³ is nothing short of spectacular: Mary gives birth to God. Charles Wesley expresses this marvel in his characteristic poetic brilliance:

Being’s Source begins to *be*,
And God Himself is born!³⁴

In another hymn, Wesley writes:

Who gave all things to be,
What a wonder to see
Him born of His creature
And nursed on her knee!³⁵

“God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God”—the Divine Son enters the world in the fullness of human nature through the Virgin’s womb.³⁶ And the worship of God abounds: an angel (2:9-14), the heavenly host (2:13-14), the shepherds (2:15-20), Simeon (2:25-35), Anna (2:36-40), and the Magi (Matt 2:1-

32. This is Robert Jenson’s clever translation of the Greek inscription on some Orthodox icons, which are called as a type the Virgin of the Sign (“A Space for God,” in *Mary, Mother of God*, 50-51).

33. Properly speaking, if a gift is not received it is not a gift but rather an offer. Later this point will be expounded upon in relation to the human role in salvation.

34. George Osborn, editor, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868-1872), vol. 4 (1869), 108.

35. *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, vol. 7 (1870), 81.

36. The Nicene Creed.

12) erupt in praise to God.

Whereas the actual birth of Christ is the ultimate realization of God's promise to Mary in the annunciation, we see the first fruits, so to speak, of that promise in the events shortly after Gabriel's visit to Mary. Luke says that she herself embarks on a visit; she travels "with haste" to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:39). When Mary greets Elizabeth, John leaps "for joy" in her womb (1:41, 44). Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Spirit," then acclaims Mary as "blessed... among women" for God's choosing of her and for her trust in the angel's message about her pregnancy (1:41, 44). Following this witness of the Spirit, Mary bursts forth in a hymn of praise: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." (1:46-47). In a stirring echo of Hannah's song after Samuel's birth (1 Sam 2:1-10), Mary praises God for having "looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant" (Luke 1:48). She exults in the God who brings salvation to the lowly and who keeps covenant faithfulness forever (cf. Luke 1:52, 55).³⁷

If Mary is, as Protestants and Catholics alike would agree, a model of faithful living, and if a consensus can be reached on "basic truths" of justification, then it seems that progress in ecumenical dialogue about Mary is sure to follow, in so far as the doctrine of justification relates to the experience of the Virgin Mother. This is a necessary qualification, for the question of sin in Mary's life is a disputed one. Put rather bluntly, did Mary have any sin from which to be justified? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that God preserved Mary from the stain of original sin through the Immaculate Conception, and that Mary "remained free of every personal sin her whole life long."³⁸ Further, it is Catholic teaching that "when the course of her earthly life was finished, [Mary] was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death."³⁹ For many Protestants, however, the lack of biblical evidence for the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary leads to a certain reluctance or even suspicion about these dogmas.

But what is most important for our purposes here is not the Catholic declaration of the absence of personal sin in Mary's life (or the common questioning of this understanding by many Protestants) but rather the primacy of grace in Catholic teaching about Mary, on which this declaration is based. Whether Mary needed to be justified from personal sin or not, she remained completely dependent on the grace of God her whole life long. There is a notable

37. David L. Tiede, "Luke: Introduction and Notes," in *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, eds. Wayne A. Meeks et al. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), pp. 1956-7.

38. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §493, p. 138.

39. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), as quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §966, p. 274.

parallel, then, between the role of grace in the life of Mary and the role of grace in the lives of all other believers. The accentuation on grace in Catholic teaching about Mary corresponds nicely to what is doubtless the underlying theme in the common understanding of justification, namely, that justification is the work of God—and nothing earned by human merit—that occurs by faith through grace (Eph 2:8-10). Moreover, from this foundational point, the two other selected themes in the consensus on justification logically follow in the case of Mary: through the grace of God, Mary is free to respond to God's initiating work, which she does favorably, and which, in turn, results in a kind of renewal (however narrowly conceived) with a clear doxological bend. Mary's experience in the annunciation, conception, and birth of Jesus therefore reflects the justification of the believer by faith through grace in at least three vital ways: both show (1) the primacy of God's grace, which allows for (2) the freedom of human response, and which, when received in faith, (3) renews the life of the believer to the praise of God.

Because these themes find concrete expression in Mary's life, the *Joint Declaration* can shed light on her place in the Christian faith. If nothing else, it may serve to remind us how Mary fully depended, as all humans do, on the grace of God. While she plays a special role in salvation history, it is only by God's prior and enabling power that Mary can freely respond in faith, with the birth of Christ as a result. That birth is, of course, a decisive moment with far-reaching implications not only for Mary alone but also for the universal Church, which she in that grace-filled moment represents. Though Mary is unique in God's choosing of her and in her consent to God's claim upon her life, she nevertheless relies utterly on the initiating and sustaining power of God. And in that crucial regard, the doctrine of justification by faith is directly relevant to the experience of Mary. Through its emphasis on God's grace, the freedom of human response, and the subsequent renewal of life for the glory of God, the recent consensus on the doctrine of justification can thus contribute to ecumenical conversation regarding Mary.

THE RELEVANCE OF MARY IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE ON JUSTIFICATION

But does the influence also run the other way? Can the witness of Mary, despite the lack of ecumenical consensus about her, deepen the continued conversation about justification? It would seem so, and for two primary reasons: (1) Mary's experience evokes another issue, namely, the debate concerning the role of human persons, through grace and faith, in the process of salvation; and (2) Mary continually orients believers toward Christ, because her faithful witness signifies the depth and power of his redeeming love.

*Gracious Offer, Responsible Reception:
The Role of Humans in Salvation*

First, Mary's experience raises a more general question about the role of humans in salvation. The *Joint Declaration* affirms the agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and participating Lutheran churches that humans cannot save themselves, "for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities."⁴⁰ Humans are not capable of earning their salvation, for it cannot be earned. The Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation agree on this indispensable point. Yet they have different understandings of the related issue of human freedom with regard to salvation, each with a nuanced account that creates tension (though not intolerable tension⁴¹) in relationship to the other.

One pivotal question concerns the nature of the human reception of God's grace. Lutherans hold to a merely passive understanding of such reception, whereas Catholic doctrine attributes a more active role to humans in receiving God's grace.⁴² But they still *receive* God's justifying grace; they do not take it or achieve it in a meritorious sense.

Earlier, I intimated that my Wesleyan convictions place me closer in line with the Catholics on this issue. Humans do, I think, possess the ability to consent actively to God's saving grace, which always precedes human effort. Among Catholics and like-minded Christians from other traditions, the human role in salvation has chiefly been described in terms of cooperation. But because of the common misunderstanding of the word by advocates of mere human passivity, the need has arisen to qualify this term in order to correct misinterpretation and ensure clarity. This qualification sometimes finds expression through the use of quotation marks, as in *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*. In this remarkably lucid text, the Dombes Group acknowledges the checkered history of the term "cooperation" and then attempts both to "purify and 'convert' it."⁴³ This is an admirable intention, given that the term "cooperation" "is alive in the mentalities of both [Catholics and Protestants]," and the Dombes Group does a very fine job of "reconstructing" it.⁴⁴ The writers of this text allude to the possibility of another term emerging from their conversation (or another) some day, a term that "is more satisfactory to all concerned, because it will be free of

40. *Joint Declaration*, §19.

41. That is, this tension need not be church-dividing. But neither need the tension be accepted as inescapable when it may ultimately be resolved. Below the phrase "responsible reception" will be posited in a modest effort to deepen the consensus on justification and to promote church-uniting dialogue on Mary.

42. *Joint Declaration*, §20-21.

43. Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, §214, p. 89.

44. *Ibid.*

all equivocations."⁴⁵ What is needed is a way forward on this issue without having to rely on the often-misconstrued word "cooperation."

Some theologians speak of the active response of the human in relation to God's prior and sustaining work, though it is not clear whether this phrase could ever hold a sufficiently broad appeal so as to drive the discussion forward. While it is helpful for some, the very mention of the term "active" might be enough to elicit an objection from those who favor a strictly passive view of the human reception of God's grace. Perhaps a way beyond this theological impasse can be forged in the phrase "responsible reception."

Responsible reception implies, first of all, that something is offered. In this case, it is the grace of God. But just because something is offered does not actually make it a gift. The object must be received in order truly to be a gift. If the intended gift is not received, it remains an offer and not a gift. Second, this proposal thus assumes reception of the gift. Yet such reception is not a work, for someone "who accepts a gift plays no part in the initiative that produces the gift."⁴⁶ The response to the gift is part of the gift itself; it is contained in the gift, so to speak. The third point follows from the description of the reception: if God's grace is to be properly received, it must be *responsibly* received. God entrusts his grace to us but does not overwhelm us with it in such a way that would abolish our human freedom to respond. Rather, we always remain free to accept or reject God's grace. An appropriate response to this grace is a responsible one, in which we relinquish control of our own lives, open wide our hearts to God, and so become "participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) through God's presence among and within us. When greeted by the gift of saving faith, God's grace is responsibly received. The fact that responsible reception of God's grace is indeed a response to God's initiative is underscored in the presence of the word "response" in the word "responsible." The phrase "responsible reception" indicates that the human action of reception is itself a response to God's prior action in the offering of grace because the word "responsible" literally assumes the word "response."⁴⁷

Humans thus have a necessary but not sufficient role in "working out their own salvation" (Phil 2:12-13). John Wesley describes the relationship between God's work and the human freedom of response in this memorable line: "God works; therefore you *can* work.... God works; therefore, you *must* work."⁴⁸ As Wesley rightly maintains, God's grace goes before, accompanies, and follows the efforts of the believer. Under the heading of responsible reception, the Christian

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*, §220, p. 91.

47. The same point is nicely conveyed in German as well: *die Antwort* ("response") and *die Verantwortung* ("responsibility").

48. Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (1785), III.2, in *Works*, Volume 3, Sermons III, pp. 199-209.

life in its entirety can be regarded as a continual process of responding to—or, in a slightly more passive sense, but one that certainly remains compatible with this view—receiving God’s grace.⁴⁹ The crucial point is that while humans remain free to consent to God’s saving initiative, human freedom of consent in no way contributes anything to justification about which humans could boast of their own merit before God (Rom 3:27). Human consent comes always as a reception of or response to the prior and enabling power of God, and it results, through grace and by faith, in the renewal of life to God’s glory.

I do not pretend that my proposal is itself impervious to ambiguity or misunderstanding. But I set it forward as a modest attempt to bridge the gap between the Catholic and Lutheran⁵⁰ positions on human agency, through grace and faith, in the process of salvation. It seems that this alternative could maintain the active connotations of the word “cooperation” and of the phrase “active response” while simultaneously heeding the emphasis of those in the “passive camp” on the saving power and gratuitous act of God.⁵¹ Hence, responsible *reception*—we receive God’s offer. God’s grace elicits in us the freedom to respond. We can respond in faith only by the grace of God, and yet that is precisely what must happen in order for this grace to be fully efficacious. As Augustine says, “He who made you without you will not save you without you.”⁵² God still does the saving, but not in an overpowering, unilateral manner.

Mary stands as an example of responsible reception at its finest. In her fiat, she voices her consent to God. She did not earn her special place in the history of salvation; rather, God chose her for this task and equipped her with the

49. One might say that the response *is* the reception and vice versa.

50. Lutherans, of course, are not the only Protestants to describe the human role in the process of salvation in merely passive terms. As it is observed in the next footnote, Barth operates out of that understanding also, as do Protestants of various other stripes.

51. I would, however, not go as far as Barth, who insists on the unilateral power of God’s revelation as the sole factor in salvation: “No receptivity, no exchange, no transmission of power can be envisaged, even with the most careful reservations. For faith is precisely not an act of reciprocity but an act which consists in renouncing any reciprocity and acknowledging the sole Redeemer apart from whom there is no recourse. Revelation and reconciliation are irreversibly one-directional; they are indivisibly and exclusively the work of God”. *Church Dogmatics* I/2, 15, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrence (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 133. Positively, Barth’s view of providence gives God the special place that God deserves. But Barth’s belief in the utter passivity of human persons in their encounter with God’s word appears to reflect an implicit competitive account of grace and human freedom rather than a noncompetitive one (such as what is found in Aquinas). For an instructive overview of the principal contemporary accounts of the relationship between divine and human agency, including a nuanced distinction between a competitive account of grace and human freedom and a noncompetitive account, see Reinhard Hütter, “The Christian Life,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, publication forthcoming), especially pp. 10ff. of Hütter’s article.

52. Augustine, *Sermon 169*, pp. 11, 13, as quoted in *Mary in the Plan of God and the Communion of Saints*, §220, p. 92.

necessary grace by which she could herself respond appropriately: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). God drew near to Mary, who accepted God's promise through faith and, renouncing control of her own life, presented herself to God as an instrument for God's good purposes.⁵³ God offered, she consented, and God's gift—of himself!—came into the world. Mary believed that God's word would be fulfilled, the Spirit came upon her, and she received Christ by bearing him into the world. Mary's experience reflects that of other Christians in baptism and eucharist, respectively, when the Holy Spirit initiates them into the body of Christ and they receive Christ, in the meal of bread and wine, for themselves. In baptism and eucharist, all Christians are equipped with the sufficient grace to live as Christ's disciples and to "bear" him, in a sense, into the world. Just as Mary believed that God would do as he had promised, so the Christian hears the word of God, accepts it in faith, and acts according to that faith. It is through the responsible reception of God's gracious offer that the gift of salvation is imparted—for Mary and for all the faithful. In this way, Mary's experience can shed light on the discussion of human agency vis-à-vis the doctrine of justification.

Proper Mariology as Orientation toward Christ

A second reason for the relevance of Mary in ecumenical dialogue on justification derives from her continued orientation toward Christ. A proper understanding of Mary rests on this central principle. Mary is *Theotokos*, a designation that was originally Christological and not Mariological. The term was useful for the Church in formulating orthodox Christology, which entailed stating true claims about the person of Christ as well as refuting false ones. With its use firmly established by Chalcedon in 451, the term "*Theotokos*" expresses the Christological claim that the One to whom Mary gave birth is irrefutably both fully God and fully human.⁵⁴ Fittingly, Jaroslav Pelikan translates *Theotokos* as "the one who gave birth to the one who is God."⁵⁵ This translation is consonant with the historical context out of which the title emerged. Moreover, it creates a kind of semantic crescendo in the mellifluous movement from Mary's past act as mother to Christ's continued identity as God (note the present tense: "the one who *is* God").⁵⁶ Perhaps more so than "Mother of God," Pelikan's astute rendering reminds us of the original meaning and purpose of the term. But whatever the translation (e.g., "Mother of God," "God-bearer," or the one supplied by Pelikan), it is crucial to recall that *Theotokos* served originally as a Christological

53. Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God and the Communion of Saints*, §216, p. 89.

54. Benko, for example, places the word "*Theotokos*" in its historical setting through a thorough analysis of its usage throughout church history. *Protestants, Catholics, and Mary*, 129-144.

55. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 55.

56. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

confession of the incarnation of the Son of God. Mary is mother, but Christ is God. Or, more positively, Mary is mother, *and* Christ is God. This is one way in which a sound Mariology increases our devotion to Christ.

Geoffrey Wainwright clues us in on another way by highlighting the importance of growth in understanding, particularly among Protestants: "For possible convergence towards agreement between Protestants and Catholics concerning Mary, it will be important that Protestants familiarize themselves with Catholic doctrine and practice in her regard."⁵⁷ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Catholic Mariology is inevitably Christocentric: "What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ."⁵⁸ In Catholic teaching, then, Mary is by no means an end in and of herself but rather cannot be understood apart from the Son whom she bore.

Protestants have long been suspicious of Catholic teaching on Mary, usually out of the assumption that it detracts from the centrality of Christ. But Catholic doctrine is actually contrary to this assumption. For example, whereas a major sticking point on the Protestant side has been the alleged Catholic belief in Mary's co-mediation with Christ, *Lumen Gentium* seeks to clarify that Catholic teaching on Mary confirms, rather than eclipses, the apostolic teaching that Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5-6): "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power."⁵⁹ The document continues, seemingly anticipating Protestant objection, "the blessed Virgin's salutary influence on human persons originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God."⁶⁰ Finally, we should note the strengthening of language: Mary's significance in Christian faith and life "flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it."⁶¹ Mary is only intelligible in terms of Christ. Paradoxically, although he established his earthly origin in his mother's womb, her life actually

57. Wainwright, *Is the Reformation Over?*, The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology, 2000 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000), 53. Throughout the research and writing of this article, I have attempted to heed Wainwright's advice. In addition to gaining a better conceptual grasp of Catholic doctrine concerning Mary, I have taken up some Catholic practice in her regard, including the invoking of her in a certain prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas as well as in some of my own prayers. These practices have added much to the "theoretical" knowledge that I have gained through a study of Catholic teaching.

58. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §487, p. 136.

59. *Lumen Gentium*, §60, as quoted in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, O.P., new revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 418.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

originates in him: he is in fact “before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:17). Mary points all believers in the direction of Christ, upon whom her status and influence wholly depend. Her experience testifies to the depth and power of the love of God, who “shuns not the Virgin’s womb” in redeeming a fallen world.⁶²

It may be a stretch for some Protestants—both individual Protestants and, perhaps especially, certain Protestant ecclesial bodies—to let go of preconceived notions about Catholic devotion to Mary. But as Wainwright suggests, it is critical for Protestants to become acquainted with Catholic teaching and practice in her regard. Continued progress in ecumenical dialogue about Mary will require it.

The current ecumenical landscape provides some reasons to be hopeful. For instance, one of several encouraging signs of the bilateral dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics about Mary is the document *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints*.⁶³ This text is significant because of its extended inquiry into the communion of saints both as its own ecumenical topic and also in relation to other issues, such as the recognition of Mary by these ecclesial bodies. The text does not gloss over the differences in perspective that Catholics and Lutherans take concerning her role in the faith. Instead, it explores these differences in open, honest, and possibly even painful ways. It also contains important statements of consensus, however basic, that provide hope for continued progress in ecumenical conversation about Mary. Together, the contributors to this text can affirm that her role in salvation history cannot be understood apart from the rest of the story: “If Mary, with salvation-historical consistency, has her place in the mysteries of incarnation and redemption, then her veneration is always and above all also veneration of these mysteries.”⁶⁴ Proper Marian devotion constantly orients Christians to the holy mysteries of God’s salvation, particularly the justifying work of Christ.

Another promising sign in recent ecumenical study and conversation is the affirmation of this key principle by some Protestant evangelical theologians. Timothy George, for example, observes that when “we praise and love Mary, it is God whom we praise for his gracious favor to his chosen handmaid.”⁶⁵ As we acknowledge the unique status of Mary in God’s saving purposes, we are in fact acknowledging the saving God. Our recognition of Mary is, at its very

62. John F. Wade, “O Come All Ye Faithful” (ca. 1743), translated by Frederick Oakeley et al. (1841), in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), no. 234.

63. *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints*, Bilateral Working Group of the German National Bishops’ Conference and the Church Leadership of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, trans. Mark W. Jeske, Michael Root, and Daniel R. Smith (Collegeville: Unitas Books, 2004).

64. *Ibid.*, §254.

65. Timothy George, “The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,” in *Mary, Mother of God*, 116.

core, a recognition of the God of her salvation, who is indeed the God of our own. Mary is the servant of the God whom she bears. Her identity as disciple, after all, precedes her function as mother. As George cleverly articulates, “had she not believed she could not have conceived.”⁶⁶ He then adds this necessary qualification, fully compatible with the doctrine of justification: “And this faith, too, is not the achievement of merit but the gift of grace.”⁶⁷ Mary embodies salvation *sola gratia*. For this reason, it is appropriate for all Christians—including reluctant Protestants—to consider her as a mother in faith, the foremost witness to the redeeming grace of God. Mary directs believers to Christ because our faith looks in the same direction as does hers: to the Holy Trinity.⁶⁸

In his commentary on the *Magnificat*, Martin Luther identifies Mary as a model for all believers. She “teaches us, with her words and by the example of her experience, how to know, love, and praise God.”⁶⁹ Through her exemplary faith, she accepts God’s calling on her life and entrusts herself fully to God. Her response is suitably doxological: she exalts God for having regarding her lowly estate. Luther commends Mary for her faith, although he adds that in our admiration of her it is necessary to recall how she humbly deflects glory away from herself and toward God:

Whoever... would show her the proper honor must not regard her alone and by herself, but set her in the presence of God and far beneath Him, must there strip her of all honor, and regard her low estate, as she says; he should then marvel at the exceedingly abundant grace of God, who regards, embraces, and blesses so poor and despised a mortal.⁷⁰

Mary traces everything back to God; she lays claim to “no works, no honor, no fame” herself but “would have us honor God in her and come through her to a good confidence in His grace.”⁷¹ Of the house of David (Luke 1:27), she occupies a position in the Jewish tradition. Her experience thus reveals God’s faithfulness to the people of Israel: “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promises he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (1:54-55).

Mary’s *Magnificat* is ultimately not her song alone, but the song of all the faithful. She sings not only for herself but also for all believers, to sing it after her.⁷² By epitomizing humble faith and trust in God, Mary helps us to sing

66. *Ibid.*, 115-16.

67. *Ibid.*, 116.

68. *Communio Sanctorum*, §268.

69. Martin Luther, “The Magnificat,” trans. A.T.W. Steinhaeuser, in *Luther’s Works*, volume 21, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 301.

70. Luther, “The Magnificat,” 301

71. *Ibid.*, 322.

72. *Ibid.*

of God's mercies ourselves. Drawing from Luther, we might even consider Mary the conductor of the heavenly choir—with whom she herself sings to the glory of God. By God's grace through faith, Mary leads all the faithful in a chorus of praise to "the Mighty One who has done great things" (Luke 1:49).

CONCLUSION

We have now come full circle:⁷³ the consensus on justification can guide ecumenical conversation about Mary, and Mary's own experience can likewise have a bearing on continued dialogue about justification. Each provides a potentially helpful lens through which to view the other. On the one hand, the common understanding of justification leads us to consider Mary because of her unique identity as a model of salvation, at the heart of which lies justification by faith. The common understanding of justification affirms and amplifies the prior and enabling act of God, the freedom of human response, and the subsequent renewal of life to the glory of God that are all part of Mary's experience.

On the other hand, Mary points us back to the topic of justification. Her experience in at least the three aforementioned ways illustrates justification at work and thus provides important clues that might aid Catholics and Lutherans in reaching an agreement on the role of human persons, through grace and faith, in salvation. Mary can deepen the consensus on justification by having exemplified the interplay between divine grace and human freedom in salvation. As the story of the annunciation indicates, it is God's prior and enabling work that makes possible a faithful response. And Mary, for her part, consents to God's grace in her fiat. The grace of God and the freedom of human response exist simultaneously in the experience of Mary, not unlike in the case of all who would join in the singing of her *Magnificat*. In these ways, justification and Mary can inform one another.

Furthermore, both the doctrine of justification and the witness of Mary ultimately direct us to the Triune God. While justification orders us toward our chief end because it is God's work in every believer, including Mary, Mary points us to God because it is only by the grace of God that she can live in obedience to her high and holy calling as the handmaiden of the Lord. Through this mutual orientation of justification and Mary toward the other and, above all, toward God, each can support and strengthen the other while principally directing praise to God.

Given the relationship, then, between justification and Mary, there is sufficient reason to believe that ecumenical dialogue on each issue can be enhanced through a consideration of the other. While much work remains to be done, the recent progress on justification may bode well for dialogue on Mary. As

73. Or, perhaps, we have completed the same circle twice—the first time in one direction, the second time in the other.

we seek the Spirit's guidance toward further progress, perhaps a way forward can be discerned through ever-deepening study, conversation, and common prayer to the sole Source of salvation—for Mary and for us.

O God, you have taken to yourself the blessed Virgin Mary, mother of your incarnate Son: Grant that we, who have been redeemed by his blood, may share with her the glory of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.⁷⁴

74. "Saint Mary the Virgin," in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979).

A New Crisis? Analysis and Reflections Concerning Worship at the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches

Joel Halldorf

INTRODUCTION

In February 2006, the Ninth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In this article, I will first sketch the tradition of worship at the WCC, as it has developed in the last fifty years. This tradition received severe criticism in the Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, which was submitted to the central committee in 2002. After reviewing this critique I will examine the worship at the Porto Alegre Assembly as the meeting place of two frontiers: the experimental WCC tradition and the critical Special Commission. I will focus my attention on a selected number of evening prayers at the Porto Alegre Assembly, which function as case studies. This overall perspective will not stop me from making personal theological and/or practical remarks on certain features of the worship, and how this mirrors general currents in the WCC. One example of this is the relationship between the North and the South as expressed in the Assembly's prayer life.

BACKGROUND

Worship as a problem

In its initial phases, the ecumenical movement that would eventually form the WCC did not address worship as a major part of their agenda. Records from the First World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927) do not treat worship in any significant way. The first attempt to do so from an ecumenical perspective, *Ways of Worship* (1951), took a descriptive and comparative approach. Its focus on dividing issues and practices met a clear need for different churches within the movement to learn more about each other and about the difficult nature of the ecumenical task. As the Third World Conference on Faith and Order (Lund, 1952) noted, in worship "disunity becomes explicit and the sense of separation most acute."¹ Worship tended to be seen as stumbling block for unity rather than as the cornerstone upon which the ecumenical community should be built. Common worship at most ecumenical events consisted of a rotation of

1. Quoted in Teresa Berger, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky et al., (Geneva: WCC Publications 1991), s.v. "Worship in the Ecumenical Movement," 1107.

confessional liturgies.²

Worship as a possibility

Gradually, the appreciation of worship started to change in the ecumenical tradition of the WCC. Instead of being a place of experienced disunity, it came to be described as a uniting force. In worship, participants experienced a feeling of being one that went beyond the theological difficulties expressed in the documents. This suggests a paradigmatic shift rooted in praxis and illustrates some inadequacies with theoretical approaches like that of Lund 1952 that prioritize dogmatic reasoning over lived spirituality. This shift was articulated most clearly at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order (Montreal, 1963). Its description of worship as *the* central act of the life of the church presented a more radical formulation than the earlier Lund statement describing worship as an act *no less important* than faith and order.³ Montreal furthermore spelled out the ecclesiological significance of worship:

Christian worship... is an act formative of Christian community—an act, moreover, which is conducted within the context of the whole Church, and which represents the one, catholic Church.⁴

Writing in 1991, Berger asks “whether subsequent ecumenical discussions have ever taken these statements seriously enough.”⁵ As we shall see, the Orthodox may have been the first to really do so, but did not arrive at the conclusions Berger seems to desire.

Vancouver breakthrough and the formation of an ecumenical worship tradition in the WCC

The Sixth Assembly of the WCC (Vancouver, 1983) marks another significant development in the role and appreciation of worship in WCC. According to Eden Grace, “ecumenical worship was enacted in breathtakingly exciting ways.”⁶ In evaluations afterwards, 90 percent of the delegates mentioned worship as the

2. Eden Grace, “Worship in the World Council of Churches: the tradition of ‘ecumenical worship’ in light of recent Orthodox critique,” *Ecumenical Review*, 54, no.1 (January-April, 2002): 3–27. Also available online at <http://www.edengrace.org/ecumenicalworship.html> (accessed December 1, 2006).

3. Berger, “Worship in the Ecumenical Movement,” 1108.

4. “Report of Section IV: Worship and the Oneness of Christ’s Church,” in *The Ecumenical Movement – An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, eds. Michael Kinnamon and Brian Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications 1997), 508.

5. Berger, “Worship in the Ecumenical Movement,” 1109.

6. Grace, “Worship in the World Council of Churches.”

most significant aspect at the Assembly.⁷ The Lima liturgy with its Eucharistic celebration was one of the high points of the Assembly.⁸ But with a tone of hesitation, Berger remarks: "Maybe here, too, reflection on worship was overtaken by the actual experience of worship by the participants."⁹ The step from praxis to theory, from experience to dogmatic conclusions, still awaited. However, with this Assembly came a significant and far-reaching recognition of the importance of worship.

The Vancouver Assembly exhibited features that emerged as a distinctive WCC approach to worship. The first feature of this "WCC worship tradition" is a willingness to use not only a variety of confessional traditions, but also traditions of other religious communities, especially indigenous people-groups. The second is a desire to minimize the use of spoken words. Since spoken languages require translation, they tend to decrease participation and increase a sense of divisiveness. Creative symbols, music and silence, on the other hand, can be understood more broadly by participants from different geographical and cultural background. Third, there is an emphasis on lay participation and elements that engage the entire congregation.¹⁰ Fourth, the Vancouver Assembly introduced the worship tent as a space designated entirely to worship. Prior Assemblies had conducted worship in the main meeting space or local churches. The tent provided a confessionally neutral place and reminded worshipers that they are a "pilgrim people."¹¹

To some extent these changes in WCC worship reflected a wider realization of the western world in the twentieth century: The world not only is bigger than we once thought, but also filled with diverse cultures that can enrich our experience. African drums are as appropriate as an organ for singing the Lord's praise. Restrictions on the major symbolic elements—the bread and the wine of the Eucharist—demand a new kind of creativity,¹² so that the holistic way traditional liturgy engages multiple senses is expressed in different and sometimes more modern ways. The final important factor in the Vancouver breakthrough was the decision to move with determination from confessional to interconfessional worship. This decision demonstrated profound commitment to worshipping as an ecumenical body in a way that reflected the multitudes of traditions present by

7. Per Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically: Orders of Service from Global Meetings With Suggestions for Local Use* (Geneva: WCC Publications 1995), 7.

8. Teresa Berger, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky et al., (Geneva: WCC Publications 1991), s.v. "Lima liturgy," 616.

9. Berger, "Worship in the Ecumenical Movement," 1111.

10. Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 2-10 and Grace, "Worship in the World Council of Churches."

11. Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 7.

12. With the exception of the Lima liturgy of 1983, the Eucharist has not been celebrated at any official worship in the WCC Assemblies.

forming something from the shared history and longing of WCC member-churches that was new but not mere eclecticism.

Thus from Vancouver emerged the definitive elements of a WCC worship tradition created within a specific ecumenical context. Among its main characteristics are attentiveness to local traditions, a hesitance towards spoken language in favor of symbolic expressions, emphasis on participation, and designation of a unique worship space.

ORTHODOX CONCERNS REGARDING THE WCC AND ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

The Orthodox were involved in the WCC from its inception. Orthodox theologians and diaspora church leaders such as Anthony Bloom, Vladimir Lossky and John Meyendorff had an important role in the dialogue with the western churches. As communism and church-persecution spread in Eastern Europe, WCC-meetings became something of a refuge for many Orthodox.¹³ However, with the fall of the Berlin wall, the situation changed dramatically for these churches, and their relationship to the WCC and the conditions for their participation in the ecumenical work has to be reconsidered.

At the Eighth Assembly (Harare, 1998), a crisis regarding Orthodox participation in the WCC became apparent. The Orthodox felt trapped in an institution dominated by liberal Protestantism, and found it hard to make their voice heard or stop decisions they disliked. To address this crisis, a "Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC" was formed.

The issue of ecumenical worship received particular attention in the Special Commissions report. The report echoes the attitude of Lund 1952 in stating, "it is in common prayer that the pain of Christian division is most acutely experienced."¹⁴

The Commission approached the issue of worship with two goals. First, it sought to differentiate interconfessional prayer at WCC gatherings from worship conducted by an ecclesial body. Second, it sought to make practical recommendations for common prayer at these gatherings to reduce the chances of causing spiritual, theological or ecclesiological offence. By addressing the ecclesiological aspects of worship at the WCC, the Commission finally drew attention to the experience of unity at these gatherings. But the discovery of the experience of unity in worship despite doctrinal differences resulted in recommendations for changes of praxis (worship) instead of changes in the underlying theory (dogmatics).

13. J. Jonsson, *Vänner kallar jag er - En resa till Ekumene* (Örebro: Cordia, 2004), 36.

14. World Council of Churches Central Committee, *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC*, §40, <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments.nsf/index/gen-5-en.html> (accessed December 1, 2006).

The Commission report describes the term “ecumenical worship” as a source of confusion concerning the ecclesial character of the worship, suggesting that the terms “confessional common prayer” and “interconfessional common prayer” should be used instead. The first phrase designates an event where one hosting church invites the others to participate in a prayer from its tradition. The second designates an event that does not emerge out of a single ecclesial tradition, but is prepared for a specific ecumenical context by an *ad hoc* committee that has no ecclesial status.¹⁵

The report displays a hesitant attitude towards prayers of experimental character¹⁶ and the use of symbols and symbolic actions in the services. When symbols are used, they should be used in a way so that everybody can understand them, and insensitiveness to other traditions or opinions is avoided.¹⁷ Use of rites and symbols from outside the Christian tradition is not encouraged out of deference for those who regard such practices as “syncretism” rather than “inculturation.”¹⁸ In regard to spoken language, the Commission affirms inclusive language when addressing people, but is more hesitant when it comes to talk of the divine. When naming God in common prayer, the Commission states, “the revealed and biblical names for God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – should be used”.¹⁹ Finally, the report warns against including social and political issues in common prayer in ways that offend: “We are called to pray for justice and peace, yet we can distinguish between thematic prayer and prayer used to divide us further on social and political issues over which we have deep disagreement. Our common prayer is addressed to God, and is an invitation to listen to what God is trying to teach us.”²⁰

This last remark should be understood against the background of suspicion that the WCC seeks to further political agendas. In the chapter on “Social and political issues”, the report states:

Specifically, there has been a perception that churches are coerced into treating issues they deem as either foreign to their life or inappropriate for a worldwide forum. There has also been a perception that the WCC has on occasion sought to “preach” to the churches rather than be the instrument of their common reflection.²¹

15. WCC Central Committee, *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC*, “Appendix A: A Framework for Common Prayer at WCC Gatherings,” §15, <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments.nsf/index/gen-5-en.html> (accessed December 1, 2006).

16. *Ibid.*, §21.

17. *Ibid.*, §27.

18. *Ibid.*, §28.

19. *Ibid.*, §35.

20. *Ibid.*, §32.

21. WCC Central Committee, *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC*, §26, <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments.nsf/index/gen-5-en.html> (accessed

Taken together, these statements seem to imply that in some instances worship at WCC gatherings has not simply focused on God but has also taken the form of “preaching” to the delegates. The following analysis of specific prayers will assess whether this was the case at Porto Alegre, and if so, the content of such preaching.

PRAYERS AT PORTO ALEGRE - THREE CASES

With both the historical development and the recent criticism in mind, we now turn our attention to Porto Alegre and the worship there. I have selected three prayers that reflect the breadth of the worship at the Assembly: an interconfessional prayer service arranged by the WCC,²² that opened the Assembly, an evening prayer arranged by the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil,²³ and finally the Pentecostal evening prayer.²⁴ This combination of confessional prayers from an older tradition with a long established relationship to the WCC and a younger tradition with limited involvement in the WCC along with the opening interconfessional service provide a substantial but concise corpus of materials. The analysis is based on the written agendas for the services supplemented by personal impressions in the form of notes and memories. Each case-study includes a brief summary of the specific prayer followed by reflections on points of particular interest. All the prayer services took place in the designated tent that has been the space for Assembly worship since Vancouver. The front area of the tent had room for a large choir to the left and an elevated platform with microphones for others contributing to services on the right. These case-studies of specific services lead into discussion of some general features of the prayers at Porto Alegre.

Opening Prayer

The opening prayer service that initiated the Assembly highlighted creation as God’s gracious gift to mankind and called participants to commit to love and justice. It consisted of seven parts:

- Gathering

Participants are invited to greet one another. They sing the Assembly theme song, “God in your grace (transform the world).” Bishop Adriel de Souza Maia, President of the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil welcomes the Assembly. All stand to sing “Santus et Benedictus” while a procession carries a Bible to the main podium. The refrain of this song includes a wordless, non-linguistic expression of joy, “le lo le lo lay lo...”

December 1, 2006).

22. The opening prayer of the Assembly, February 14, 2006.

23. Used February 17, 2006.

24. Used February 18, 2006.

- Gifts of Grace

Representatives from each region of the world present symbolic gifts to the Assembly and explain their meanings. The choir sings Psalm 204, a song praising God and God's creation that includes a sung congregational response.

- Cries of the World

A prayer from each part of the world is said, followed by a sung response from the congregation, "Hear us, O Lord."

- Listening to the Word of God

As individuals read passages from the Bible (Is. 64:1-5a, Eph. 4:1-6, 11-16, and Jh. 20:10-18) the congregation responds in song. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana preaches a sermon.

- Our Calling as Churches

The congregation recites the Nicene Creed together. Then they read a litany of commitment to love and justice followed by a sung response.

- Words of Promise and Hope

Someone reads Revelation 21:1-5a and the congregation responds with a song based on the text.

- Blessing

After the blessing is pronounced, the congregation responds with a reprise of "God in your grace, transform the world." As people leave the tent, they are offered literal fruit of God's creation to share as a common meal.

The presentation of gifts to the Assembly continued the tradition of symbolic actions in WCC-services. The gifts reminded participants of the richness of the world through God's grace as well as the richness present in the gathering itself insofar as it drew together people from cultures all over the world. As the Special Commission recommended, the meaning of each symbol was carefully explained. For example:

From the Caribbean - sugar cane, source of numerous products in the islands, ranging from popular dishes and drinks to fibers and sources of energy. It is offered as representation of the strength, the resilience and the sweetness of the Caribbean people.²⁵

The discovery of the global perspective and the turn away from a Eurocentric perspective is an important part of the WCC journey the last fifty years (and one that by no means is over). With the European legacy of imperialism, racism, and world dominance, the celebration of cultural diversity as richness serves as an important antidote against arrogance. As the opportunity for oppressed people to express how they can be a blessing to the world, such actions should not be underestimated, but at the same time, too strong an identification with any particular nation, race or culture may be theologically problematic. We should

25. The person handing over the gift also explained its meaning to the congregation. These words were did not appear in the agendas but were printed in the Assembly newspaper the next day. "Gifts from the regions: Symbolic gifts offered in opening prayer," *Transforma mundo*, 15 February 2006, 7, www.wcc-assembly.info/fileadmin/files/wccassembly/newspaper/15feb_o_mundo.pdf.

not deny our place in the creation and the blessings of our culture: these are a gift from God. But since, as Christians, our true homeland is the Kingdom of God, we should be careful in allying ourselves with earthly regimes or accepting worldly boundaries such as race and ethnicity. History is full of examples where alliances of this kind have produced horrific results. It would be an overreaction to deem a celebration of this kind as “wrong” or even “theologically suspect” in itself. The question is rather if this indicates a general and problematic trend towards differentiation in the WCC.

The Special Commission addressed the issue of sensitivity towards other traditions. The gift presented from Africa is an interesting case to approach from this perspective:

From Africa - a stone brought from the Turkana regions of eastern Kenya, considered by anthropologists and genetics to be the cradle of humanity. It represents God's grace in creation and providence through the development of humankind.

The apparent reference to and acceptance of the theory of evolution in the context of a service would doubtless shock some Christians. This is a sensitive issue among Evangelicals and, to some extent, also among Pentecostals. In the “cultural clash” between liberals and conservatives that shaped much of Evangelical identity in the early twentieth century, response to the theory of evolution was one of the most burning issues. For many communities, this question has not disappeared from the agenda but continues to feature prominently in discussions of school curricula and apologetics.

What degree of theological sensitivity is possible or even desirable in a gathering of this kind? To many, perhaps the majority of Christians, evolution is a non-issue that calls to mind unwelcome associations with “unscientific” anti-evolutionists. Though alluding to the issue in only passing might serve to de-charge the question or protest against tendencies to reduce Christianity to two or three issues, it has the potential to alienate some of the people present. In worship, the “we” of the assembled congregation is defined. This symbolic action defined the “we” of the Porto Alegre Assembly as “people who accept the theory of evolution.” If the WCC wants to include more Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, greater awareness of issues sensitive to these traditions is needed.

The example also shows how difficult it is to avoid provocative issues. It is impossible to be aware of all “sore toes” present or to control the interpretation of every public remark or action. Rather than excluding the risk of provocation (which is impossible and perhaps not even desirable), the goal should be to avoid making any group feel particularly “harassed” by a pattern of provocations. An ongoing experience of provocation creates a defensive mood, increases suspicion, limits generosity and makes ecumenical dialogue near impossible. The problem in much ecumenical dialogue today, official and private, is that many

different, even opposite, groups feel “oppressed” at the same time. While some conservative groups feel that the WCC is governed by a “liberal” agenda, others are disturbed by an Orthodox influence that they regard as “out of proportion.” While some worry about the “moral laxity” exported from the West (for example concerning issues of homosexuality and birth-control), others are alarmed at the expansion of “fundamentalist” Christian groups in many regions of the world. This wide-spread sense of being the harassed group makes difficult ecumenical dialogue, and stands as a great challenge in the continuing conversation.

An additional challenge is apparent in the representation of Europe and North America in symbolic action:

From Europe - a reindeer calfskin, a gift of the Sami herders, an indigenous people in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russian. It represents the Sami's grateful pride in their own identity as their culture finally is affirmed by churches.

Few of the representations were more politically motivated than this. The Sami people are virtually unknown despite being in one sense the only indigenous people of Europe and having endured persecutions from both church and state. Similarly, a representative of the First Nations in North America presented sweetgrass, wheat, and corn. Though such representation before the whole world at the WCC Assembly provided recognition of great importance for these groups, it is worth asking whether it does not also indicate a particular ambivalence in the WCC towards Europe and the western world at large. After decades of dominance, it is reasonable that the West takes a step back, but new discrimination will not redeem earlier wrongdoings. It must be possible to be proud of your heritage and home also as a westerner. At the plenary presentation of the different regions, the presentation of the European delegates was met with less enthusiasm and even occasional booing from the rest of the plenary. This grieved many of the participants, particularly in light of the way Western regions were represented in the opening service, and left some wondering: Is there no gift from the mainstream of western cultures? This is a problem that the WCC will have to address, a problem that perhaps can be associated with the issue of identification with earthly kingdoms touched upon earlier.

The third part of the service, “Cries of the world”, included prayers in connection to each region of the world. In these prayers, the world is clearly divided into victims and perpetrators. In the prayers from regions in the southern hemisphere the tendency is to ask God for protection from foreign oppressors:

Africa: We have come, a people not broken by centuries of exploitation, oppression, enslavement, poverty, disease and misrule, but held up by the great resilience, strength of spirit and mutual love with which you have so richly endowed us.

Carribean: We come with our frustrations, and with our problems of pollution

resulting from an exploitative tourism industry.

South America: We cry out for an end to all forms of violence. Violence which - often organized - is a response to foreign political and economic interests which pay no regard to our peoples' pain, suffering and rights... So often our water falls into the hands of foreign groups and interests. So often we have to breathe air polluted by foreign-owned industries... We cry out for... fair trade, without having to be subjected unilaterally to the interests of large corporations or the countries reckoned to be great.

Only the prayers from western regions included unconditional confession of sins.

Europe: We come aware of our rich heritage of civilization, culture, knowledge and spirituality—a tradition of life: liberty, democracy and human advancement; but also are fully aware that we carry a tradition of death: wars, conquest, exploitation, racism and genocide.

North America: We confess that we have trampled heavily on the earth; we have exploited its resources. We whose ancestors come from nations afar have not loved the First Nations as we love our self, nor have we respected any other ethnicity as we respect our own. We have been content to share in profits from the legacies of slavery and oppression. We have dominated others through religion, language, mass communications, economics, as well as by force of arms. Free us, Lord, from the sin of racism. Free us from our compulsion to despoil the earth. Free us from our thirst for violence. Free us from the hunger for revenge. Free us from our lust for empire. Free us from the scourge of war. Free us from self-satisfaction, and self-adoration.

The prayer from the Pacific stands out as the only southern region where the perpetrators are—at least in part—found within the community of speakers:²⁶

Pacific: We come before you in shame, O Lord. We are not good stewards of your islands nor dutiful keepers of your seas. We have desecrated and threatened your Creation.

Listening to these prayers produced an odd feeling of being in a classroom hearing a lecture about the state of the world that includes lengthy explanations about why things are the way they are, and made clear which parties are to blame. Who is addressed in such prayers? Is it God who needs to be enlightened or are the prayers utilized as a means to instruct the Assembly how to correctly interpret the world? This instrumentalization of worship brings to mind the critique of the Special Commission cited earlier:

We are called to pray for justice and peace, yet we can distinguish between thematic prayer and prayer used to divide us further on social and political

26. This may simply be the result of the identification of countries within the region such as Australia and New Zealand as "western."

issues over which we have deep disagreement. Our common prayer is addressed to God, and is an invitation to listen to what God is trying to teach us. Among the concerns of the commission was also the tendency to “preach” to the Assembly on social and political issues. Apparently, this remark did not stop the WCC from continuing the preaching at Porto Alegre.

But let us move from these general remarks to a more specific critique of the theology of the prayers quoted above. While no one can deny the fact that the western countries to a large extent have exploited the rest of the world, we have to ask if the line between good and evil can really be drawn geographically. *Simul iustus et peccator*, both sinner and justified, said Luther. Does this not apply to all people? In these prayers, once again, the individual is categorized according to his/her nation/region/culture.

Furthermore, even if the world can be simplistically divided into victims and perpetrators, is region vs. region the right way to do it? Is it more reasonable that a minimum-wage worker at a large company in the USA apologizes for the damages he causes the world than a Brazilian farmer who cuts down rainforest to be able to feed his family? Is it not true that wars and exploitation take place without the involvement of the western world? Who apologizes for local African war-lords, South American dictators, and Arabian *muhajjin* warriors? In short, isn't the world a lot more complicated than the rhetoric of these prayers disclose? Orthodox theologian Emmanuel Clapsis criticizes the WCC for this tendency to simplify complicated political issues:

Christian declarations on political issues often have a degree of certainty. A modicum of caution is appropriate in looking at these, because political judgments in modern society are extraordinary ambiguous in nature. They can rarely be grasped in terms of simple, straightforward judgments.²⁷

There must be room for a “prophetic” voice within the WCC, a possibility for the organization to challenge the world (and though this departs from Orthodox recommendations, possibly even its member churches). The church should not be passive when injustice and atrocities are committed. But the prophetic spirit lies close to the sectarian spirit, and to over-simplify complicated issues in an attempt to describe the world in black and white is more akin to the latter!

The problem of alienation of Christians who feel differently about these issues also plays a part here. A harsh and one-sided assignment of blame will cause bitterness and lock people into their positions, leaving little opening for changes of mind.

In summary, the interconfessional opening prayer contained significant political content with a regionalistic flavor. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Does this suggest that a Christian should identify him or herself with

27. Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 222.

a region/nation prior to identification with the kingdom of God? Is it pastorally responsible to divide a worshipping community into victims and perpetrators? It is of course possible to imagine times when this would be an appropriate prophetic stand, but awareness of globalization suggests that the line between exploiter and exploited ought to be drawn with more nuance.

The Anglican evening prayer

The worship instructions for the evening prayer on February 17 noted that this was “adapted from the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil.” The service included the following elements:

- Introductory sentences on the joy of coming together to worship
- Confession of Sins
- Invitatory
- Psalm 100 (sung)
- Reading of Is. 61:1-4
- The Magnificat (sung)
- Reading of Rev. 22:1-5
- *Nunc Dimittis* (sung)
- Recitation of the Apostles Creed
- Intercessory Prayer for world leaders, Christian people, those who suffer, and the Assembly
- The Lord’s Prayer
- Hymn: “The Day Thou Gavest”
- Blessing: Prayer of St. Chrysostom

One notable element in the regular prayer services at the Assembly was that most of them included a significant number of readings. In this Anglican service, it was particularly obvious. Rather than one or two Bible verses to meditate on, it included whole passages and long, elaborately worded prayers. In many instances the main language of a service was unknown to many participants, requiring them to focus on the handouts available in the official languages of the Council.

The services did not seem to bear the mark of “a desire to avoid language,” already noted as a goal within the WCC worship tradition. This might be the result of the Orthodox criticism of symbolic actions and services of an “experimental character.” The return to confessional prayers might also have resulted in services of a sort not specifically adapted to the context of a WCC Assembly. As noted, one reason to avoid spoken or written language is the need for translation. Other forms of expression do not alienate in the same way and therefore encourage a feeling of oneness. Another reason is that with an Assembly schedule, evening prayers are held after a day of often tiring plenary sessions and negotiations. The abundance of words during the day makes reading through a long written agenda a rather unappealing endeavor. Also, since the songs in many cases are entirely new, they don’t provide the space for rest they might within a familiar tradition

but require full focus on text and melody.

It is interesting to note that the two readings are taken from the same books of the Bible as two of the readings in the Opening prayer. In addition, Isaiah appeared twice in morning Bible studies (61:1-4, 65:17-25) and Revelations was used at least once more in an evening service and as the text for the closing sermon. As favorite texts of the Assembly, Isaiah (notably within chapters 56-66) and Revelations seem to function as a kind of "canon within the canon," especially concerning their prophetic words of a coming kingdom of joy.

The readings in the Anglican service (Is. 61:1-4 and Rev. 22:1-5) echo earlier references to "a new heavens and a new earth." The intercessory prayer refers back to these passages and offers an interpretation:

The prophet Isaiah foresaw the rebuilding of the land, and the recreation of a new society under God's rule. We pray to the Almighty Father that he may guide the nations upon earth into the ways of justice and peace... The Book of Revelation set before the Church a vision of God's Kingdom where the leaves of the tree of eternal life are for the healing of the nations. Let us pray that all Christian people may be bearers of God's light in the world, and agents of healing and reconciliation.

Historically, the unfortunate distinction between post- and pre-millennialism has resulted in two different distortions. One distortion is a passive or destructive attitude towards creation excused by the conviction that this will all perish when God's Kingdom is restored. The other is an over-optimistic view of what human nature and institutions can achieve that is often coupled with a materialistic inner-worldly perspective of the Kingdom of God. Generally, the WCC seems to strive for a sound middle-way between these two extremes; what is sometimes called a realized eschatology. According to this perspective, the Kingdom of God has started to break into the world, and it is our task to make it visible in us and in the world. It will not, however, be completed by our activity—only by Christ's return to the world in the last days. Both the Anglican-service readings can be interpreted in this way. But the WCC as whole can be accused of is being a bit too inner-worldly when it comes to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is indeed justice, peace, food, and health-care for all, but this alone does not constitute the Kingdom of God. It is also the presence of God in the hearts of the people, the only thing that gives peace. While the lack of material resources is in many respects the greatest need in parts of the South, it is the spiritual poverty that is most alarming in the western world. This poverty is reflected in, among other things, skyrocketing sales numbers for anti-depressive medicine. This problem of the spiritually impoverished western world did not seem to be addressed in any significant way at the Porto Alegre Assembly.

In conclusion, this prayer service could not be described as exhibiting "a desire to avoid language," though it may represent improvement in comparison

with earlier Assemblies. Also, though many of the readings were connected to the biblical vision of a “new heaven and a new earth,” the general tendency of the WCC appears to approach reform primarily in a materialistic way.

The Pentecostal evening prayer

The Pentecostal service had a different choir and a different worship leader than the other prayers.²⁸ It included the following elements:

- Opening Music
- Words of Welcome (affective and informal)
- Song and Short Chant (repeated multiple times)
- Prayer for Forgiveness
- Song (repeated multiple times)
- “How Great Thou Art” (a choir performance familiar enough for many in the congregation to join in singing)
- Sermon
- Bible Readings (Rev. 2:19, Jh. 17:23, Jh. 13:34-35 and Rom. 14:17-18)
- Prayer (participants invited to pray aloud in groups of three or four)
- Blessing

This evening prayer service differed from the others in many respects. For one thing, the congregation read less texts (prayers, creeds, etc.) together. This reflects Pentecostal skepticism towards fixed agendas and written prayers that are sometimes viewed as a hindrance to the “free wind of the Spirit.” Also, the readings from the Bible were limited to one or two verses instead of lengthier passages common in the other services.

The Pentecostal prayer was the only evening prayer (aside from the opening and closing prayer) that included a sermon. Pastor Héctor Petrecca from Argentina gave the sermon in Spanish. As participants attempted to follow the distributed translation, his deviation from the written manuscript demonstrated another typical Pentecostal characteristic: spontaneity. The sermon included a mixture of deductive reasoning, examples in the form of stories and anecdotes, and even a few jokes.²⁹

The particular flavor of the South American Pentecostal movement characterized the whole service. While the Pentecostal movement in the USA has not been known for a strong social perspective, this is an important feature in the Pentecostal movement of South America. Early on in his sermon, Petrecca said: “The Gospel cannot be divided into social and spiritual.” In emphasizing the holistic character of the Gospel he countered one of the greatest theological deficiencies of much Pentecostal spirituality: the tendency to give priority to the spiritual in a way that completely ignores a theology of creation.

28. The worship leader was pastor Jorge Vaccaro.

29. For example: “Jesus did not only heal the sick and raise the dead, but he also blessed the children, defended the defenceless... and even did the cooking when the opportunity arose!”

The service also included a prayer for forgiveness with two characteristics worth mentioning. First, when it expressed areas of lack, it did not simply say “we have not” but added the word “always” to make it “we have not *always*... been at one with others... shared our bread with the hungry,”³⁰ This seemingly minor difference significantly expresses the fact that even if our deeds are not complete, we should not deny the good things that we actually do. While perceiving the darkness in one’s own soul demands a certain strength, another kind of strength is needed to recognize goodness in oneself. The official message of the Assembly expresses the same sense with the words “We have *often* failed to take decisive action against environmental destruction, poverty, racism, caste-ism, war, and genocide.”³¹

The second thing to be noted in the prayer for forgiveness relates to the perspective of the prayer: Who are “we” who ask of forgiveness?

We ask your forgiveness for our ancestors who seized the resources of our original peoples and imposed the Gospel by force rather than by love. Forgive us the times when we have been part of the destruction of your creation, this earth of ours that you have placed in our care.

In this prayer, there is no depiction of North against South or division of the Assembly into perpetrators and victims. It is a common confession and a common cry for forgiveness. Further, the prayer of forgiveness comes from the church. This is a service of the Pentecostals from South America. They have a double reason to alienate themselves from the evils connected with the early European missionaries: they are of different nationality (they are South American, not Europeans), and they belong to a different church tradition than the ones who by force took Christianity to these parts of the world. Furthermore, the church that is most strongly associated with missionary activity in South America—the Roman Catholic Church—continues to be the dominant church of the region. Tensions between this powerful, established church and the young, expanding Pentecostal movement have at times been severe. At the same time, the possessive “our” is not used only in reference to the “violent ancestors” (thus implying that Christianity is European by nature), but also in reference to the “original people.” These formulations in the prayer for forgiveness indicate that the strongest identification of the worshippers is with the Kingdom of God (as found in the church) and not with a certain nation or culture. Finally, the

30. Emphasis added.

31. Emphasis added. World Council of Churches Ninth Assembly, “‘God, in your Grace, Transform the World’ - Message of the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches: An Invitation to Prayer,” <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/Assembly-documents/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/message-as-adopted.html> (accessed December 1, 2006). It is worth noting that the word “often” was added following a suggestion from one of the delegates during plenary discussions that was motivated by thoughts similar to those expressed in this article.

church is understood not as a particular tradition, but as the whole body of Christ, all Christians everywhere. We take part in the good and the bad deeds of all the saints through the ages. Therefore we confess our sins together, not as discreet traditions. This strong affirmation of unity exemplifies how the praxis of the worship can go farther than the theory expressed in negotiations and documents.

At the end of the service, the participants were "invited to pray aloud in groups of three or four." This was the only time when an interactive element was included in a prayer at the Porto Alegre Assembly. Many services included singing and sung responses, and also a handing out of symbolic items (fruit to eat, sunflowers, etc.), but aside from this there was very little opportunity for active participation in the service or interaction between the worshippers. As noted earlier, both participation and interaction between worshippers have been distinctive marks of the WCC-worship tradition in the past.

The Pentecostal evening prayer service included some unique features that were not part of other prayer services at the Porto Alegre Assembly. The "sound" of the service took on an informal, affective tone and included far fewer readings. This might have served the needs of those who were tired from long negotiations better than a set of liturgical readings that were unfamiliar to most of the participants. Furthermore, the prayer for forgiveness did not explicitly put blame on any specific group so that the gathering's foremost identity as a Christian community was maintained.

General remarks concerning the worship at Porto Alegre

It may be helpful to offer some concluding remarks regarding the "clash" of the WCC worship tradition and the critique voiced by the Special Commission though I have alluded to some of them already (i.e. the issue of politics and instrumentalization of worship).

The use of symbols has been an important feature in the services at WCC gatherings. The Special Commission however leveled some critique of this praxis, pointing to the need to be clear about the meaning of the symbols and also not including symbols that could be perceived as expressions of syncretism. At the Porto Alegre Assembly, most symbols used were general and did not connect to non-Christian religions. The symbols were also clearly explained at all times. Every day had a certain symbol, and these were carefully presented in the worship book. For example:

Sunflower. For some indigenous peoples in Latin America the sunflower has become a symbol of resurrection. Rising from the ground, this flower turns towards the source of light in the heavens. Its bold colours and simple elegance testify to the original beauty of creation. Despite a long history of human transgression that has sullied the planet and threatens the world entrusted to our care, the growth and flowering of each young plant reminds us of the potential for rebirth, renewal and, through the Creator's grace, the coming of a new heaven and a new

earth (*Is. 65; Rev. 21*).

This appears to be the only reference to non-Christian religious tradition in the worship material, and it is done so mildly and in such a general way that it is hard to imagine anyone being offended. Nevertheless, though such long and explicit explanations go a long way in preventing misunderstandings, they are not entirely unproblematic. Christians, especially in the Orthodox tradition, have long been aware of the shortcomings of spoken language. Symbolic and artistic expressions have often functioned as ways to refer to the divine without implying that they expressed the mystery of God exhaustively. Master iconographers and poets such as Ephrem the Syrian and John Damascene are outstanding examples. Symbols possess an unspoken, perhaps even unspeakable, dimension that connects with our imagination and creativity. If we try to express the full meaning of a symbol, however, we close the door to this dimension and the thing is transformed from a symbol to a sign.³² It loses the peculiar characteristic that made it most valuable: its ability to speak to us about the unspeakable. Therefore, attempts to explain the meaning of a symbol fully actually reduce its efficaciousness.

Special Commission recommendations restricting the use of symbols and experimental worship may in fact be detrimental to the spiritual life of the WCC. The value of symbols in the life of Christian worship is apparent in the central action of the Eucharist. Words conceptualize reality in a way that is foreign to human understanding. Symbols can often express paradoxes much better than mere words, since a word always is defined by its opposite—what it is not. This difference becomes especially important in relation to the divine. Symbols and symbolic actions is a way of creating an integrated and holistic presentation of reality, and our place in it. But if one attempts to translate symbols exhaustively into words and explanations, these dimensions are lost. Christian worship needs symbolic language, and until a common Eucharist is possible, creative and experimental modes of engagement are sorely needed.

The WCC worship tradition encourages participation from clergy and lay leaders as well as from the congregation. During the services, people participated from the podium by reading texts, praying, presenting a symbol, preaching, and singing. These included both lay and ordained, both men and women, and a variety of age ranges. Here, the WCC tradition was preserved. Participation from the congregation, however, was generally restricted to sung responses. This differed from previous WCC gatherings that encouraged congregational participation in symbolic actions such as hammering small notes on wooden crosses.

The reason for this change is not clear. There is nothing explicit against congregational participation in the report from the Special Commission. It may be that the recommendation that services should not be “of experimental character” and the shift to confessional prayers had an unexpected consequence. Many of

32. Rudolf Otto has elaborated on the differences between sign and symbol.

the older church traditions have heritages of clerical orientation with relatively little room for active participation aside from sharing in the Eucharist (which, of course, is not yet possible in WCC services). It hardly seems coincidental that the most clearly interactive element in these case studies came from a younger spiritual tradition, namely Pentecostalism.

Criticism from the Special Commission regarding the use of inclusive language in reference to God are similar to the guidelines for worship at the Seventh Assembly (Canberra, 1991). The difference is a matter of emphasis rather than content. The Canberra guidelines advise worship leaders to avoid "personal pronouns in reference to the persons of the Trinity whenever possible" while at the same time warning against substitutions for the Trinitarian formula such as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier.³³ The Special Commission warns against gender-inclusive language but at the same time encourages more attentiveness to the "feminine" images of God found in the Bible.³⁴ It also makes a critical distinction between the image of God and the name of God based on an earlier Faith and Order Paper, *Confessing One Faith*.³⁵ Images of God proliferate in descriptions of divine activity in history and include a wide variety of acceptable metaphors. But when referring to the name of God, "the revealed and biblical names for God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—should be used".³⁶ This recommendation seems to address the need felt by some for linguistic renewal while avoiding distortion of the tradition.

The official prayer services at Porto Alegre tended to use traditional language for speaking about God. At a prayer in the chapel at the campus, however, I was blessed in the name of the "Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier." Services in this chapel were not a part of the official program and thus were not subject to the same restrictions. Occasions such as this indicate that some of the delegates at Porto Alegre do prefer more inclusive language.

SUMMARY

The worship at the WCC General Assembly in Porto Alegre, from the perspective of this Pentecostal observer, did not live up to the reputation of vitality and innovative creativity of the WCC worship tradition expressed most

33. Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 3.

34. WCC Central Committee, *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation*, "Appendix A," §33-35, <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments.nsf/index/gen-5-en.html> (accessed December 1, 2006).

35. WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 153, *Confessing the One Faith : An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), §50-52

36. WCC Central Committee, *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation*, "Appendix A," §34.

clearly at Vancouver 1983. While Harling could note how the worship tent at Canberra 1991 brought more and more people each day,³⁷ the opposite seemed true to me at Porto Alegre.

The crisis of regarding Orthodox participation that surfaced at Harare 1998 identified the issue of worship as a major concern. The two points I have described as most problematic about the worship at Porto Alegre relate to the Special Commission in different ways. The first one could have been avoided if the recommendations from the Special Commission were followed more carefully, while the second stems from adherence to the recommendations. First, I side with the critique of the Special Commission that the inclusion of political and social issues in the services is unwise and tends to oversimplify. This is not to say that this aspect should be excluded from the worship completely, but rather that it should be handled with greater care. I submit that the Pentecostal evening service provides a positive example in this regard. Second, I disagree with the Special Commission's attempt to restrain the use of symbolic actions and experimental worship forms in the common prayer life of the WCC. Symbolic elements are vital to Christian worship—and so also to ecumenical worship—and may further unity by encouraging the creation of and common participation in new symbols and forms.

If I have correctly assessed this crisis, what is the way forward for the WCC worship tradition? One option is to draw more extensively from existing ecumenical grassroots movements³⁸ instead of specific confessional traditions. These grassroots movements provide vital forms of worship (therein lies the key to their apparent success), forms developed with particular attention to our present context and often ecumenical by nature. These movements typically do not belong to any one tradition, but gather people and inspiration from different church traditions. This approach would also provide the WCC with better connections to ecumenical grassroots movements across the board.

It is surely no coincidence that it was the highly praxis-oriented Orthodox who remarked that the worship at the WCC as an action actually expressed a higher degree of unity than what was achieved through the negotiations. Harmony between dogma and liturgy is essential—*lex orandi, lex credendi* (as the prayer so is the faith). Some of the changes in worship at Porto Alegre were intended to resolve perceived disharmony by adjusting liturgical practice to cohere with dogmatic assertions. Might it be possible to move in the other direction, allowing experiences of unity in worship to inform dogma and allowing ecumenical praxis to be the source of ecumenical theory?

37. Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 8.

38. Taizé, Iona, Focolare, the "emerging church movement," etc.

The Lord's Supper in Reformed Churches in an Age of Liturgical and Ecumenical Renewal: 1900-1968

Christopher Dorn

The liturgical and ecumenical movements of the twentieth century created a climate for liturgical study and reform never before seen in the history of the Christian churches. Under the influence of these movements, the understanding and practice of worship in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformation, and free churches would undergo significant changes. These changes are most dramatically reflected in the proliferation of liturgies for the Eucharist or Lord's Supper that appeared in the latter half of the century.¹ In this essay, I attempt to demonstrate how these movements contributed to changes in conception of the shape and meaning of the Lord's Supper in churches belonging to the Reformed tradition.

I begin by sketching a survey of the modern liturgical movement. At the turn of the twentieth century, some theologians became acutely aware of a need to integrate the individual Christian into the corporate life of the church. In response to this need, many began to give increasing attention to the liturgy, since it is the liturgy that binds individuals together in the corporate act of worship. Second, I introduce the modern ecumenical movement. The emergence of the Faith and Order movement in the early twentieth century provided an unprecedented occasion for Christian churches to engage in interconfessional dialogue about the doctrines that have historically divided them. Since it is in the meaning and practice of the sacraments that the "deepest and most stubborn divisions among the churches" have arisen, it is no accident that Faith and Order was intensely concerned with the problem of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the outset.² Analysis of how both these movements shaped the understanding of the Lord's Supper in Reformed churches makes it possible to appreciate changes in conception of this sacrament reflected in theological statements and eucharistic liturgies that came out of them in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the concluding part of this essay, I substantiate this claim by considering briefly the eucharistic liturgy that the Reformed Church in America (RCA) adopted in 1968.³

1. See Frank C. Senn, ed., *New Eucharistic Prayers: An Ecumenical Study of Their Development and Structure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

2. Robert Hotz, "Sacrament," *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 885-889.

3. This small Dutch Reformed communion traces its origins from the sixteenth century reforms

I indicate how this liturgy embodies many of the ideals that the liturgical and ecumenical movements both promoted and consolidated among the Reformed churches, and thus is illustrative of the changes in conception that the Lord's Supper underwent among them.

THE MODERN LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

Origins

In the early nineteenth century, a French Benedictine, Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875), inaugurated a project of liturgical restoration in the Roman Catholic Church, setting the stage for the modern liturgical movement. Having felt called to a liturgical vocation in 1829, Guéranger refounded the Benedictine abbey at Solesmes, France in 1833 for the purpose of forming there a monastic community devoted both to the celebration of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours and to the study of the Scriptures, the history of the liturgy, the lives of the saints, and mystical and ascetical theology. Guéranger used the phrase "liturgical movement" to designate a growing interest among both intellectuals and the faithful in reforming Roman Catholic worship practices in France after generations of neglect.⁴

Let us hope that the liturgical movement which is expanding and spreading will awaken also among the faithful the meaning of the Divine Office, that their attendance in church will become more intelligent, and that the time will come when, once more imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, they will feel the need to participate in the sacred chants.⁵

This *desideratum* of Guéranger received an official stamp of endorsement in 1903 when Pope Pius X issued his *motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini*, on church music.⁶ In this pronouncement Pius X advocated a return to the use of Gregorian chant in public worship as a means to encourage the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy of the church. Two years later Pius X reinforced this

in the southwest German principality of the Rhine Palatinate, during the time when the elector Frederic III ruled the territory (1559-1576). Its eucharistic liturgy can be found in *The Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America together with the Psalter Selected and arranged for responsive reading*, ed. Gerrit T. Vander Lugt (New York: The Board of Education, 1968), 63-70. (Hereafter cited as Liturgy and Psalms.)

4. R.W. Franklin, *Nineteenth-Century Churches: The History of a New Catholicism in Württemberg, England, and France* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 3.

5. *Institutions liturgique*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Julien, Lanier et Ce, Editeurs, 1851), 170-71; cited in Robert L. Tuzik, *How Firm a Foundation: Leaders of the Liturgical Movement* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990), 17.

6. For the text, see *Worship and Liturgy: Official Catholic Teachings*, ed. James J. Megivern (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1978), 16-26.

theme of the corporate character of the liturgy when he issued a decree calling for more frequent reception of Holy Communion.⁷

These papal pronouncements heralded profound changes in Roman Catholic thought and practice regarding worship. The point of departure for these changes has been associated with *Le Congrès National des OEuvres catholiques de Malines* (Malines, Belgium) held in 1909. Historians identify a paper delivered there by a Belgian Benedictine, Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960), as the formal origin of the modern liturgical movement.⁸ Beauduin drew inspiration from an important theme in the *motu proprio* of Pius X: the true and indispensable source for the Christian spirit is the active participation in the holy mysteries and solemn prayer of the church.⁹ Beauduin made three assertions about the liturgy. First, it is the primary means of instructing the faithful in the holy mysteries of the Christian faith. Second, it is the means through which the faithful learn the language of the church's prayers necessary for the proper nourishment of their spiritual lives. Finally, above all, as corporate prayer the liturgy binds the lives of individual Christians to the one visible church, expressing the unity for which Jesus prayed in the Gospel of John (17:20-23).¹⁰ But if the liturgy is to reclaim its central and integrating role in the life of the church, it must be rendered intelligible to all the faithful. Accordingly, Beauduin proposed to the conference the adoption of the following measures:

- (1) the translation of the Roman Missal, so that it might serve as the main devotional book among the faithful;
- (2) the promotion of the recitation of Compline in the home, and the encouragement of the attendance of the parochial mass and Vespers;
- (3) the restoration of Gregorian Chant, in keeping with the *motu proprio* of Pius X; and
- (4) the scheduling of annual retreats for parish choirs to centers of liturgical worship and life.¹¹

These pragmatic proposals illustrate the influence of pastoral concern for individual Christians in parish assemblies on the modern liturgical movement during this early phase. Renewed interest in the liturgy was undoubtedly part of the pastoral response to the pressing need for genuine community in a modern

7. *Sacra Tridentina: Decree on Frequent and Daily Reception of Holy Communion* (December 20, 1905) in *Worship and Liturgy: Official Catholic Teachings*, 27-32.

8. See Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider's View of Liturgical Renewal*, trans. John Sullivan (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988), 10.

9. *Tra Le Sollecitudini* in *ibid.*, 17-18.

10. For a summary of the paper, see Raymond Loonbeek and Jacques Mortiau, *Un Pionnier Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960): Liturgie et Unité des chrétiens*, vol. 1 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Editions de Chevetogne, 2001), 79-81.

11. Frank Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Evangelical and Catholic* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), 613.

world increasingly fragmented by the forces of urbanization and secularization.¹² In an amplified and longer version of the paper, *La Piété de l'Église, principes et faits*,¹³ Beauduin argued that liturgical renewal would generate a deeper sense of community amid these deplorable conditions, for the liturgy facilitates an inner understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Beauduin identified the church's liturgy as the medium through which Christ acts to organically unite the members of his body with himself and with one another: "By means of living the liturgy wholeheartedly Christians become more and more conscious of their supernatural fraternity, of their union in the mystical body of Christ."¹⁴

Concern to restore the *communio*-character to the liturgy and the sacraments was not limited to Roman Catholic liturgical studies. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) emphasized a strikingly similar concern to reclaim for the liturgy its rightful place in the thought and life of its congregations. One member of its liturgical committee would insist that the "deepest meaning" of Christian personhood is expressed in the "communion and fellowship of Christians in their common worship of their God and Savior."¹⁵ But at this early stage of the liturgical movement the insights that Beauduin and others sought to apply to the existential needs of the members of parish assemblies still required a solid foundation in exegetical, historical, and theological research. The next phase of the liturgical movement emphasized its coherence with the spirit of the liturgy, Scripture, and the teachings of the church fathers.¹⁶ Among the most outstanding scholars here include the German Benedictine Dom Odo Casel (1886-1948), of the Abbey of Maria Laach, a leading center of liturgical scholarship; the Swedish Lutheran Bishop Yngve Brilioth (1891-1959); and the Anglican Benedictine Dom Gregory Dix (1901-1952). In the period between the two World Wars, these scholars challenged conventional views of the history and meaning of Christian worship in a way that would dramatically alter the liturgical landscape of many churches—including that of the Reformed churches—in the years that followed.

Odo Casel

Casel's seminal contribution to the liturgical movement was his "mystery

12. *Ibid.*, 611. In the informative first chapter, "The Continental Liturgical Movement and its Influence," in his *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century 1900-1965*, Vol. 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), Horton Davies characterizes Beauduin as a "man who knew the supreme importance of worship, but also the extraordinary difficulty of maintaining the life of devotion in the crowded tenements of the industrial cities of present-day Europe, and with the apparent lack of any nexus between worship and daily work" (24).

13. Originally published in 1914.

14. Lambert Beauduin, "La Piété de l'Église," *Mélanges liturgiques* (Louvain, 1954), 17-18.

15. Gerrit T. VanderLugt, "Principles of Reformed Worship," *The Church Herald* (May 11, 1951), 8.

16. Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 268.

theology" or "theology of the mysteries."¹⁷ The content of the Christian message can be reduced neither to a set of dogmatic propositions nor to a moral code, but in essence is the mystery (*mysterion*) of God's saving plan (*oikonomia*), hidden in eternity, but revealed and realized progressively in time and in the world.¹⁸ Its final revelation and first realization appeared in Jesus Christ. In this connection, Casel appealed to the Letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, which refer to Jesus Christ as the "mystery of God's will" (Eph. 1:9), and the "mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints" (Col. 1:26).¹⁹

So then this mystery is no less than God's self-revelation in the incarnate Logos, the Son of God having become flesh. But at the heart of this mystery is the *pasch*, a term that designates the passing of the Son of God from this life, through his death on the cross, to his new life in the Spirit, through his resurrection and ascension into glory. The content of the mystery therefore comprehends the person of the incarnate Son of God and his saving actions for the church. The church is embraced in this mystery through these saving actions and is the form in which God's saving plan in Jesus Christ is further revealed and realized. According to the Letter to the Ephesians, the goal of this mystery is the unity of all human beings with God and with one another, when the "times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (1:10).

The accomplishment of God's saving plan in the *pasch* of Jesus Christ is a unique and unrepeatable event that happened in the past. But it is Christ's will that his saving actions have a continuing presence in the church to "give healing and life to the faithful."²⁰ In this connection, Casel applied the concept of mystery to Christian worship, which he saw as the ritual performance of the essence of the Christian message. In the church's performance of its liturgical rites, especially the sacraments, Christ and his saving actions are objectively re-presented or re-actualized (*vergegenwärtigt*): "Christian liturgy is the ritual performance of the redemptive work of Christ in the Church and through it therefore, the presence of the divine salvific act under the veil of the symbol."²¹ The redemptive work of Christ is made present in its ritual performance, so that those who participate in the liturgy are thereby made participants in the salvation accomplished through

17. *Mysterientheologie*. Casel intended this term as an expression of the very essence of the Christian faith.

18. Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship and Other Writings*, ed. Burkhard Neunheuser, O.S.B. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press; and London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1932 for Part I, 1959 for Part II, 1962 for this English translation), 9.

19. In addition to texts from Ephesians and Colossians, Casel also often cites Heb. 1:1ff.; Jn. 1:14ff.; 1 Jn. 1:2; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:8ff. in support of his concept of the Christian mystery.

20. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 58.

21. Odo Casel, "Mysteriengegenwart," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1928), 145.

the passing of the Lord from death to life. This is attributable to the fact that Christ has entrusted the mystery of his *pasch* to the church, which through its worship is drawn into this sacrifice of Christ as it is liturgically re-presented; for as Christ sacrificed for the church, so the church through its worship takes an active part in this sacrifice, and makes it its own. Thus there is a sense in which it is proper to say that in the liturgy "Bridegroom and Bride, head and members act as one." According to Casel, the liturgy is no less than the "fulfillment in ritual of what the Lord did for our salvation...We act out the mysteries as the body of Christ; as his body we do all that the head does."²²

Casel's elaboration of the mystery of Christian worship (*Kultmysterium*) in this manner is influenced by the place that he assigned to the Hellenistic mystery rites in God's progressive working out of his saving plan in history. Casel believed that the cultic form (*Kulteidon*) of the mystery rites adumbrated the fulfillment of God's saving plan in the *pasch* of Jesus Christ. For this reason he interpreted them as a providential preparation for what God was about to accomplish for humanity in Christ.²³ Out of the variety of these mystery rites, Casel believed an ideal type could be distilled. The lord (*kyrios*) of the mystery rite is a god who appears on earth to share in the struggle and misery of humanity, to suffer and to die. But then the god returns to life, thereby renewing the whole of nature and giving new life to his companions, those initiated into his cult. In the ritual reenactment of his myth, the companions of the dying and rising god are effectively united with his fate, and thereby acquire salvation (*soteria*). This salvation is realized in perfect communion with the god after death.²⁴

In essence, then, the cult is a ritual memorial (*anamnesis*), a term used in this context to mean "a making present of some act of the god's upon which rests the existence and life of the community."²⁵ Casel saw in the form of the cult the longing of the *anima naturaliter christiana* for saving contact with God—a longing fulfilled in Christian revelation. But he did not mean to suggest that the mystery rites exercised a direct influence on Christian worship.²⁶ He did claim, on the other hand, that the common terminology implied an analogy between the two, if not in substance at least in mode of expression.²⁷ This he labored to show

22. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 104.

23. For a critical reflection on Casel's understanding of the relation of the Hellenistic mystery cults to Christian worship, see Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 86-98.

24. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 53. For a succinct summary of Casel's description of the mystery rites, see Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 273.

25. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 53.

26. Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 273-4; I.H. Dalmais, "Theology of the Liturgical Celebration," in *The Church at Prayer: Principles of the Liturgy*, ed. Aimé Georges Martimort, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 269.

27. *Ibid.*

in adducing numerous texts from the New Testament and the church fathers in support of his theory.

Casel's contributions to a deepened understanding of the liturgy are considerable. He supplied the liturgical movement with the rationale its pioneers had sought for an objective and corporate conception of the liturgy grounded in a firm biblical and Christ-centered foundation in contrast to a subjective and individualistic conception of the liturgy. This theology proved to be enormously fruitful for continuing theological reflection on the meaning of the liturgy throughout the twentieth century, not only in Roman Catholic but also in Protestant circles. In particular, Casel's use of the category of *anamnesis* created space for further dialogue about the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass that had divided Roman Catholic and Protestant churches since the sixteenth century.²⁸ As we have seen, the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist in Casel's theory is bound up in the liturgical re-presentation of the unique and unrepeatable event of Jesus' *pasch*. The Anglican theologian, A. G. Hebert, a member of the committee on the "Ways of Worship" appointed by Faith and Order in 1939, viewed this interpretation as a promising basis for progress in dialogue about the controverted doctrine.²⁹ Presumably having Casel and his school at Maria Laach in mind, Hebert confidently reported in 1951 that the eucharistic sacrifice "is finding in our day a truly evangelical expression from the catholic side, when it is insisted that the sacrificial action is not any sort of re-immolation of Christ, nor a sacrifice additional to His one sacrifice, but a participation in it."³⁰

Yngve Brilioth

Nattvarden i Evangeliskt Gudstjänstliv, by the Lutheran Theologian, Yngve Brilioth, is among the most influential early ecumenical studies on the meaning of the Eucharist.³¹ Brilioth's analysis of the tradition of the eucharistic celebration in the Western Church identified four elements in the various liturgical forms and doctrinal statements that he claimed were grounded in the institution narratives of the New Testament itself. These four elements are: thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), communion/fellowship, commemoration, and the eucharistic sacrifice. To these

28. For brief comparison of the Casel's theory and the statements of the Council of Trent on the sacrifice of the Mass, see Gerhard Karl Schäfer, *Eucharistie im ökumenischen Kontext: Zur Diskussion um das Herrenmahl in Glauben und Kirchenverfassung von Lausanne 1927 bis Lima 1982* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 90.

29. A. G. Hebert was himself a pioneer in the liturgical movement in the Anglican Church. His contribution to the movement was his widely read, *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935).

30. *Ways of Worship: The Report of a Theological Commission on Faith and Order*, eds. Pehr Edwall, Eric Hayman, William D. Maxwell (London: SCM Press LTD, 1951), 77.

31. It was first published in Swedish in 1926. An abridged English version followed in 1930. Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice, Evangelical and Catholic*, trans. A.G. Hebert (London: SPCK, 1930).

Brioliath added a fifth element, which he designated mystery—the element that suffuses and animates them all. Together these elements express the rich and manifold meaning of the Eucharist.³²

The thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) is expressed primarily in the great prayer that the presider offers over the bread and wine of the Eucharist. In it God is praised not only for his gifts of creation, but also for the work of redemption in Christ and the fulfillment of the divine promises.³³ Communion/fellowship in the Eucharist has a double signification: It is communion with God in Christ at the same time as it is fellowship with those who belong to Christ. This fellowship extends to the whole Church on earth, and includes not only the living, but also those who have gone on to be with Christ.³⁴ Commemoration is the liturgical proclamation of the saving acts of God in history that culminated in the passion and death of Christ. The eucharistic sacrifice is closely related to the commemoration as a representation and exhibition of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The faithful are incorporated into Christ's sacrifice through communion and not only share in the benefits of Christ's atoning death, but also in his self-offering. Thus in the eucharistic sacrifice, all four elements come together with one another.³⁵

If it is in the eucharistic sacrifice that these elements are combined, it is the element of mystery that integrates them and ensures their proper balance. Mystery, for Brioliath, refers to the real presence of Jesus Christ in the eucharistic celebration. The New Testament expresses this presence in three modes. In the Synoptic tradition, there is the "personal presence" of the Lord. Jesus Christ is the true celebrant at every Eucharist, presiding as Priest before God on behalf of the faithful, "at" rather than "on" the table.³⁶ In the Johannine tradition, there is the presence of the Lord in the sacraments. The Bread of Life uses the bread of the Eucharist as a "means of his presence" and "vehicle of his own self-communication."³⁷ The third is found in the Pauline tradition. Here the presence of Christ is in his mystical body, the Church, through which the faithful enter into the mystery of communion/fellowship.

These modes complement and complete each other. Historically, when one or two were stressed to the relative neglect of the other(s), the four elements through which the meaning of the Eucharist is expressed disintegrated, and a period of liturgical decay inevitably followed. For example, in the late medieval period the exaggerated focus on the second of the three modes led to a "materialistic" interpretation of Christ's presence in the bread and wine. This

32. For a favorable review of Brioliath's schematization, see Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, 75-85.

33. Brioliath, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 278.

34. *Ibid.*, 279.

35. *Ibid.*, 284.

36. *Ibid.*, 286.

37. *Ibid.*

incited reaction during the Reformation period. But in their concern to formulate an alternative definition of the real presence and to explain how the individual Christian appropriates the benefits of Christ's death through the reception of the sacrament, the Reformers only perpetuated this focus. Because of its relative neglect of the first and third modes of Christ's presence, the church during these two periods did not succeed in holding together the four elements, and so was unable to express adequately the meaning of the Eucharist.

In sum, the historian Brilioth served the churches in his own ecumenical context by demonstrating that the meanings of the Eucharist are multiple, and that for various reasons these received different accents in different periods and traditions.³⁸ For this reason, each ecclesial tradition can learn from one another, and also help one another to deepen together in their appreciation of the greater tradition of Christendom as a whole. On the other hand, he also showed that certain forms of expression must be present in the eucharistic forms to ensure the expression of the manifold meaning of the sacrament. These include praise, narrative recital, commemoration, self-offering, intercession, and doxology—elements that most classic eucharistic prayers contain.³⁹ Brilioth's criticisms of the liturgical forms and doctrines of the late medieval and Reformation periods constituted an indirect charge to the Protestant churches in his own day—especially those in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions—to recover the "objective expression of corporate faith and worship in a service whose name means the Thanksgiving."⁴⁰

In order to do this, however, the churches in these traditions would first have to recover the eucharistic prayer. This was certainly the case for the Reformed churches. In Calvin's Geneva, the Supper rite commenced with the singing of the Apostles' Creed and a prayer for worthy reception. Then the minister recited the institution narrative from First Corinthians 11:23-29. The following sections were penitential, consisting in an excommunication of those unworthy to participate in the sacrament, a self-examination, and the "comfortable" words (i.e. scriptural promise of redemption). Then came a long exposition of the promises that relate to Christ's institution of the Supper, culminating in the "Reformed" *Sursum corda*, which warns the people not to look for Christ in the elements of bread and wine, but to contemplate him in his glory at the right hand of the Father. The distribution followed, accompanied either by a singing of a Psalm or biblical verses read by the minister. The post-communion thanksgiving concluded the service, and the people were dismissed with a blessing.⁴¹ Thus

38. Senn, "Introduction," in *New Eucharistic Prayers*, 3.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 278.

41. John Calvin, *La Forme des Prieres et Chants ecclesiastiques, avec la maniere d'adminstrer les Sacramens, et consacrer le Mariage: selon la coustume de l'Eglise ancienne* in Petrus Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Dora Scheuner (eds.), *Joannis Calvini Opera selecta*, volume II (München,

the classic Reformed Lord's Supper rite can be seen as a paranetic and didactic exhortation addressed to the people in the name of God instead of a eucharistic prayer addressed to God in the name of the people. The Reformers evidently did not interpret the words of Christ to his disciples "do this" to mean to "take the bread and wine, give thanks over them, break the bread, and give the bread and the cup."

Gregory Dix

The Anglican scholar, Gregory Dix, contributed to liturgical renewal by arguing that the churches in the modern West inherited their ideas about the Eucharist from the late medieval and Reformation periods. In adopting these ideas, Dix claims the churches departed from the conception of the eucharistic rite embodied in the liturgies of the early church. In these liturgies the intention of the rite can be seen to cohere more faithfully with Jesus' command to his followers to "do this." Dix's understanding of the content of this command on the basis of the early liturgical data won many adherents in Protestant worship committees. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that his interpretation of Jesus' command that informed the structure of the new order for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper adopted by the RCA in 1968.

Dix's central thesis is implied in the title of his magisterial study, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, which appeared in 1945.⁴² He claimed to have discovered a single normal or standard structure that underlies most of the great liturgical rites that have come down from the early church. This structure or "shape" consists in four essential actions, which in turn can be traced from the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before his crucifixion. Dix observed that in these Last Supper accounts of the New Testament, Jesus is the subject of four verbs: he took; he blessed; he broke; and he gave. Since three of these verbs are repeated with respect to the cup, the New Testament actually describes a "seven-action scheme" that was condensed into a four-action scheme in the liturgical tradition. As Dix writes,

with absolute unanimity liturgical tradition reproduces these seven actions as four: (1) the offertory; bread and wine are "taken" and placed on the table together. (2) The prayer, the president gives thanks to God over bread and wine together. (3) The fraction; the bread is broken. (4) The bread and wine are distributed together.⁴³

1926-1952), 11-58. For a critical edition of the French *La maniere de celebrer la cene*, see Bruno Bürki, in *Coena Domini I: Die Abendmahlsliturgie der Reformationskirchen im 16./17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Irmgard Pahl (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1983, 347-367. ET in Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (New York: World Publishing, 1961), 197-210.

42. London: A & C Black, 1945.

43. *Ibid.*, 48.

This theory of the "four-action shape" proved to be very influential among Reformed churches that initiated liturgical reforms in the second half of the twentieth century, including the RCA. Liturgical scholar Howard Hageman explained that his committee modeled the order in which the events of the celebration were to unfold on the four actions Jesus performed during the Last Supper. After the service of the word, the celebration of the Supper was to proceed as follows:

- a) The minister and elders gather around the Table and it is uncovered. This represents "He took."
- b) There is a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing. This represents "He blessed."
- c) This is followed by the recitation of the words of institution, accompanied by the breaking of the bread and the lifting of the cup. This represents "He brake."
- d) The elements are then given to the elders and the people after the words of distribution. This represents "He gave."⁴⁴

Hageman added provocatively that when the people assemble to "do this in remembrance of him," they should, on the basis of this scriptural mandate, follow Jesus' example not only in word but also *in action*.⁴⁵

Hageman's focus on action represents a radical departure from the classic conception of the Reformed Lord's Supper expressed in Calvin's Genevan rite. There is no intention in Calvin's rite to imitate the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper. Rather, the "do this" mandate of Jesus affords an occasion to proclaim the meaning of his atoning death to the people. This is why Calvin's Supper form, and other forms that came out of Reformed churches of the sixteenth century, read like catechetical instruction.

For Dix, the shape itself performs the meaning of the Supper. The second action in this shape, expresses the essential meaning despite variations in the content of this prayer in liturgies inherited from the early church. In entering into this action, the people enter into the redeeming action of Christ himself. His death and resurrection are made present and "operative by its effects" in the *anamnesis*.⁴⁶ Put otherwise, the Eucharist is an action in which Christ, incorporating the members of his own body into his *pasch*, proleptically transfers all who are in him into the Kingdom of his Father. It is a corporate action of the whole body of Christ, head and members together, through which the redeemed are presented to the Father in Christ as the one new humanity in him.⁴⁷ With few exceptions, Reformed did not use this kind of language to express the theology of their Lord's

44. "The Order for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," in *A Companion to the Liturgy: A Guide to Worship in the Reformed Church in America*, ed. Garrett C. Roorda (New York: Half Moon Press, 1971), 35.

45. *Ibid.*, 36.

46. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 245.

47. *Ibid.*, 751.

Supper celebrations until recently. The exegetical, historical, and theological studies engendered by the liturgical movement, as we have just reviewed them, played a critical role in transforming the Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper. As we will see below, the ecumenical movement provided a context in which Reformed churches could interact with other communions influenced by similar ideas. As a result of this interaction, their conception of the sacrament in their own worship tradition would undergo a substantive change.

THE MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT: FAITH AND ORDER

The liturgical and ecumenical movements were intimately bound up with each another. This could hardly have been otherwise, since the principal concern of the liturgical movement was to recover the meaning of the Eucharist as the worship event *par excellence* through which Christians renew their unity with Christ and with one another. Indeed, insofar as it maintained that the ultimate goal of all sound liturgy is to unite Christians with the church in all times and in all places, the liturgical movement was ecumenical in its very essence. One member of the RCA liturgical committee later perceived this clearly as he reflected on the impact that the liturgical movement had on his own denomination. "Some," he observed, "see in the liturgy not only a bridge over which men may join the ranks in the Body of Christ with Christians of every century, but also the means by which a divided Christendom may be healed of its many divisions."⁴⁸

The desire for a worldwide forum in which a divided Christendom could engage in interconfessional dialogue about the doctrines and practices that obstruct unity guided the efforts of early members of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement. For many, the ultimate goal remains to lead the churches through these dialogues to a visible manifestation of their unity willed by Jesus Christ. As one expression of the wider ecumenical impulse, the Faith and Order movement played an instrumental role in creating possibilities for the churches to progress toward this unity,⁴⁹ particularly through its work on the sacraments.

The Lord's Supper received some attention at the First World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927), as well as at the second (Edinburgh, 1937) but only in the context of a general discussion about the sacraments.⁵⁰ An

48. Garrett C. Roorda, "Worship and Liturgy in the Reformed Church in America," in *A Companion to the Liturgy*, 1.

49. For a general introduction to the history of Faith and Order, see Tislington Tatlow, "The World Conference on Faith and Order," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517-1948* vol. 1 (eds.) Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, (Geneva: WCC, 1954), 405-441. For the history of the use and meaning of the terms "faith" and "order," see Günther Gassman, *Konzeptionen der Einheit in der Bewegung für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung 1910-1937* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 49-50.

50. The participants at both conferences restricted their theological considerations to the

avenue for more concentrated study opened up in 1939, when the continuation committee of the Edinburgh conference decided to appoint two international theological commissions to be devoted to liturgical issues. One was instructed to address the problem of "intercommunion," the other to study the "ways of worship" characteristic of the various Christian churches.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM REFORMED CHURCHES

Analysis of papers presented by Reformed scholars to the commission on "ways of worship"⁵¹ reveals radical changes in the historic Reformed conception of the Lord's Supper that these contributors criticized using insights appropriated from the liturgical movement. Space permits consideration of only two scholars whose work is representative.

Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950), professor of the history of religions at the University of Gronigen and known for his research in the phenomenology of religion, chaired the commission on "ways of worship." He viewed Odo Casel's *Mysterientheologie* as the most important theological contribution to the churches in the past 150 years⁵² and had played an active role in the liturgical movement, helping members of Reformed churches in his own day see the rich liturgical heritage of the broader Eastern and Western ecclesial traditions more clearly than their sixteenth century predecessors.⁵³

sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, since it was on these two sacraments that all the churches represented could agree. The statements on the sacraments are contained in the final report ("Sacraments") of the sixth section at Lausanne; those at Edinburgh are found in the final report ("The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments") of the fifth section. See resp. *Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, ed. H.N. Bate (London: Student Christian Movement, 1927), 390-91; *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937*, ed. Leonard Hodgson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 239-249.

51. WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 6, *Ways of Worship: The Report of a Theological Commission on Faith and Order*, eds. Pehr Edwall, Eric Hayman, and William D. Maxwell (London: SCM Press, 1951). The Reformed contributors include W.D. Maxwell, J. Schweizer, A. Graf, R. Paquier, G. van der Leeuw, and M. Thurian.

52. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacramentstheologie* (Nijkerk: G.F. Callenbach, 1949), 239. Compare this assertion to his optimistic assessment of the potential of Casel's theology in *Ways of Worship*, 229: "The idea of representation as it is advocated in many circles nowadays, Roman Catholic as well as Anglican and Lutheran, seems to present some perspectives for a future development of sacramental theology for the Reformed Churches also."

53. He served as mentor of the *Liturgische Kring*, a group of pastors and laypersons dedicated to the renewal of liturgical life in the Netherlands Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*). This group succeeded in adding to the 1563 Palatinate form for the Supper a number of eucharistic liturgies for use in Dutch Reformed congregations, and the *Dienstboek in Ontwerp* (Worship Book in Preparation) published in 1955 by the Netherlands Reformed Church bears the stamp of their labors. *Dienstboek voor de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk: in Ontwerp* ('s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum N.V., 1955). For an overview of its contents, see Howard Hageman,

Van der Leeuw drafted the introductory report and contributed one paper⁵⁴ in which he identified the separation of the sacrament from the word in typical Reformed worship as the central challenge for Reformed churches seeking liturgical renewal in the twentieth century. Sixteenth century Protestant reformers affirmed the unity of word and sacrament as the norm for Sunday worship. Calvin regarded limited lay participation in communion (only a few times a year) as a Roman Catholic abuse to be corrected but churches soon departed from his intention so that infrequent communion remained the rule in Reformed congregations into the twentieth century. Celebrated only on special occasions in a spirit of solemn reverence, the Lord's Supper was regarded as the "spiritual peak" in the life of the congregation.⁵⁵ Van der Leeuw objected that "Holy Communion can never be the acme of worship, since it is itself worship, and every gathering of the members of Christ's body is essentially a gathering at the Table where He laid down the law of the New Covenant in his blood."⁵⁶ According to van der Leeuw, the recent demand for increased celebration of the Lord's Supper in Reformed churches arose from a growing recognition of "Holy Communion" as the central act of worship.

But van der Leeuw criticized not only the practice but also the form for the Reformed Supper. In Reformed churches, there had been an "almost exclusive relation between the Eucharist and the death of the Lord, with a total neglect of his resurrection." For this reason, the Lord's Supper resembled more a "funerary ceremony" than a "joyful feast."⁵⁷ But the "resurrection is included in the sacrifice of the Lord," which helps explain why the church of the apostolic era broke bread "with exultation," as is apparent in Acts 2:46. Here we see the ecumenical impulse to overcome the onesided confessional stance by returning to the common heritage of the church of the apostolic era.

Perhaps the most severe criticisms of classic Reformed sacramental theology and practice came from Richard Paquier (1905-1985). Paquier founded *Eglise et Liturgie*, a group of Swiss Reformed pastors and laypersons who worked towards an "ecumenically-oriented renewal of the concept of the church and the reform of worship in line with an evangelical catholicity."⁵⁸ Paquier was drawn to the

"Three Reformed Liturgies," *Theology Today* XV, no. 4 (January 1959): 508-510. Van der Leeuw's most enduring legacy may prove to be the foundation of *Studia Liturgica*, an international and ecumenical journal for liturgical research and renewal, which first appeared in 1962. Wiebe Vos, editor and founder, was a pupil and disciple of van der Leeuw, and from him "inherited a deep concern for an ecumenical approach to liturgical matters in the spirit of that great and gifted pioneer." Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, 1900-1965*, 36.

54. His death prevented him from revising and expanding this work further.

55. *Ways of Worship*, 225.

56. *Ibid.*, 226.

57. *Ibid.*, 229.

58. Bruno Bürki, "Reformed Worship in Continental Europe since the Seventeenth Century," in

liturgical life of the Anglican world, and also profoundly versed in the liturgical traditions of the churches in both the East and the West. Paquier and his group were unwilling to deepen and extend the influence of the Calvinian liturgical tradition, but instead adopted an approach to liturgical reform shaped by their studies of the liturgies of the early Church. Paquier charged that the sixteenth century liturgies of Calvin were innovations; authentic liturgy developed from the apostolic times and found expression in the classic eucharistic liturgies of the third and fourth centuries. The goal of the *Eglise et Liturgie* was to rehabilitate these liturgical sources, from which the Reformers departed in their protests against perceived abuses in the eucharistic theology and practice of the late middle ages.⁵⁹ In regard to new forms for the Lord's Supper, Paquier and his group succeeded already in 1931 in composing and distributing a "complete, ecumenically recognizable eucharistic prayer."⁶⁰ This prayer came out in several versions, and a final formulation was published in 1952.⁶¹ *Eglise et Liturgie* played an instrumental role in assisting the Reformed Church of France (ERF) and the French Reformed churches of Switzerland in recovering the traditional structure of the eucharistic prayer, and the eucharistic liturgies that these churches created after the Second World War are profoundly indebted to its pioneering labors. Through the mediation of the ERF, the RCA also owed a debt to *Eglise et Liturgie* for its own new eucharistic prayer, which in large part is a translation of one found in the *Liturgie de l'Eglise réformée de France*, first published in 1950 before it appeared in a definitive edition in 1963.⁶²

Paquier's rejection of much of the Reformed liturgical tradition finds expression in the paper that he contributed to the volume. He believed that the liturgical life of the Reformed churches was vitiated by a flawed theological conception of the relation between word and sacrament. The word of God in these churches is the "sole path from God to man." The sacraments do not have a value *sui generis*; rather they are accorded the status of a seal and a pledge of the grace that the word alone is sufficient to confer.⁶³ This conception, according to Paquier, led those in the Reformed tradition to interpret the sacraments only in terms of the word, as a *verbum visibile*, which God, in graciously condescending to

Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present, ed. by Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 49. For a biographical sketch of Paquier, see also Bruno Bürki, *Cène du Seigneur—eucharistie de l'Eglise: Le cheminement des Eglises réformées romandes et françoises depuis le XVIIIe siècle, d'après leurs textes liturgiques: Volume B: Commentaire* (Fribourg Suisse: Editions Universitaires, 1985), 46-56.

59. *Ibid.*, 51.

60. Bürki, "Reformed Worship in Continental Europe since the Seventeenth Century," 49.

61. For complete texts of the 1931 and 1952 eucharistic liturgies, see Bürki, *Cène du Seigneur: Volume A*, 127-145.

62. Bürki, *Cène du Seigneur—eucharistie de l'Eglise, Volume B: Commentaire*, 165.

63. *Ways of Worship.*, 242.

frail human beings, instituted as a pedagogical aid, so that they might understand the promises addressed to them in Christ more adequately.⁶⁴ By reducing the sacraments to another form of the word, however, the Reformers were unable to prevent their churches from collapsing the one into the other. For the Reformers, in Paquier's judgment, "there [was] no difference between the Word and the sacraments, neither quantitative nor qualitative."⁶⁵

Paquier warned that Reformed churches could establish a solid liturgical foundation for the sacraments only by drawing a proper theological distinction between word and sacrament. Without this foundation, the sacraments and any new liturgies accompanying them would always appear as "invaders, or as needless postscripts, in the minds of Churches which wish to be fundamentally Churches of the Word."⁶⁶

THE RCA'S RECEPTION OF LITURGICAL RENEWAL IN REFORMED CHURCHES

The RCA demonstrated sensitivity to currents of liturgical renewal circulating within other Reformed churches. In 1950, a young Howard Hageman published an article in *Theology Today* on the worldwide renewal of interest in liturgy and worship.⁶⁷ This enthusiastic report of his personal encounter with the liturgical and ecumenical movements reveals Hageman's commitment to liturgical and sacramental renewal. Later that same year the General Synod of the RCA would appoint him as one of four members to serve on its new liturgical committee. His liturgical scholarship and theological acumen guided this committee, after almost two decades of exacting study and experimentation, as it completed its integration of word and sacrament in Lord's Day worship and provided a form for the sacrament that adheres to the structure of the classic eucharistic prayers used by third and fourth century churches.

The order of worship the committee prepared directs the minister to move from the pulpit to the table for receiving the worshippers' offerings after the

64. *Ibid.* In this connection, see the statement of John Calvin: "[O]ur merciful Lord, according to this infinite kindness, so tempers himself to our capacity that, since we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and, do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual, he condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings." *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.14.3.

65. *Ways of Worship*, 242. In this connection, see also Calvin here: "Therefore let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1292 [4.14.17].

66. *Ibid.*, 245.

67. "The Liturgical Revival," *Theology Today* VI, no. 4 (January 1950), 490-505.

sermon and prayer for blessing on the word.⁶⁸ This liturgical gesture is intended to draw attention to the second focal point of worship: it is from the *table* that the minister offers the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.⁶⁹ When the service of the word is not accompanied by the celebration of the sacrament, by standing behind the table, the minister gives the impression that the service is normally to be completed by the Lord's Supper. Indeed, the committee members hoped that this transition from pulpit to table every Sunday would eventually habituate worshippers to expect the service to culminate in communion.⁷⁰

On those special Sundays when the Supper is celebrated, the great prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and the wine is appointed in the place of the ordinary prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, which are deferred to the end of the service. The "Communion Prayer" has the following structure:

- Introductory dialogue
- Preface
- Sanctus
- Anamnesis
- Self-Offering
- Epiclesis
- Lord's Prayer
- Words of Institution
- Words of Distribution⁷¹

This structure suggests the RCA intentionally based the new liturgy for the Supper on the classic eucharistic prayers of the early church. In doing so, the church responded to the *desideratum* of ecumenical Reformed scholars for a new form for the Supper that would be devotional rather than didactic, joyful rather than somber, and oriented to Jesus' resurrection as well as to his death. In short, the RCA recovered the concept that the Lord's Supper is a joyful celebration of praise and thanks—a Eucharist!

Furthermore, in contrast to what Calvin's form for the Supper envisaged, the celebration organized on the basis of the Communion Prayer is a corporate action, not an additional sermon delivered by the minister. Instead of a paranetic and didactic exhortation addressed to the communicants in the name of God, the action is conceived as a prayer addressed to God in the name of the communicants. Thus, it opens with an invitation for the worshippers to lift up their hearts. After a preface in which the minister thanks God on behalf of the worshippers for the gifts of creation and the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, they respond with the *sanctus* and the *benedictus*—liturgical formulae that express the awe,

68. *Ibid.*, 14.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*, 8.

71. For the text of the prayer, see *Liturgy and Psalms*, 66-68.

wonder, and joy appropriate to the occasion.

The motivation for this joyful celebration is the Christ event. But this event is not restricted to the "perfect sacrifice that Christ offered once and for all on the cross for the sin of the whole world."⁷² "His resurrection and...his coming again" impress on the worshippers that the Supper is not a funerary ceremony but a Supper of intimate communion with the resurrected Christ who was crucified for them.⁷³ They express their desire for this communion by offering themselves to the Father as "holy and living sacrifices."⁷⁴ The prayer of offering serves as a bridge to the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) to transform the worshippers so that their desire to participate in the divine blessings presented to them in the *anamnesis* of the *pasch* of Jesus Christ may be actualized. Their celebration anticipates the fulfillment of this desire on the day of redemption, depicted in the New Testament image of the eschatological Supper of the Lamb. This is why the worshippers are to look forward expectantly to Jesus' *parousia*, when his "whole church will be gathered from the ends of the earth into [his] kingdom."⁷⁵ Thus, the joy of present and future communion with the resurrected and triumphant Lord is sustained to the very end of the prayer.

This eucharistic liturgy illustrates the changes in the understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper in the churches belonging to the Reformed tradition. These changes, in turn, can be understood only in the context of the worldwide liturgical and ecumenical renewal movements that inspired churches across the Western ecclesial traditions during the first seventy years of the last century. I have sought to show how these movements assisted the Reformed tradition toward a conception of the Lord's Supper that departed from the one it had inherited from Calvin. With a recovery of a celebration that can be truly called eucharistic, churches in this tradition may now claim together with others a common heritage that comes to them from the church of the apostolic era.

72. *Ibid.*, 66.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, 67.

Reviews

Bound to Be Free: Evangelical Catholic Engagements in Ecclesiology, Ethics, and Ecumenism by Reinhard Hütter. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. 313+pp. ISBN: 0-8028-2750-0. \$28.00.

This is an important and engaging volume that advances substantial arguments in a frequently clear and compelling fashion. This book is not, however, an easy volume to review for several reasons. First, the author describes his work as “evangelical catholic.” Within this somewhat ambiguous term, the author both strongly engages and strongly criticizes his own tradition and much of Catholic tradition, appearing to leave him (to borrow a phrase from Hütter’s Duke colleague Stanley Hauerwas, whose influence on this volume is clear) “ecclesially homeless.” The additional challenge in reviewing this is that this book is a collection of essays rather than a monograph. To his credit, the author has helpfully grouped the essays together into three broad categories under the overall rubric of freedom: the first is “free to be church”; the second, “free to live with God”; and the third, “free to speak ecumenically.”

The author begins by noting that his goal is to show how each of these categories “interrelate and, indeed, interpenetrate. This mutual interpenetration, or perichoresis, has long been obscured by ongoing Christian division.” Christian divisions, the author rightly suggests, have often been perpetuated by the mistaken belief that speaking freely is irreconcilable with speaking ecumenically, that unity can only be purchased at the cost of ecclesial identity. Hütter sets out to debunk these notions, and does so convincingly in most respects.

In his first section, “Free to be Church,” Hütter (especially in chapters two, three, and five) undertakes detailed discussions of intra-Protestant debates about ecclesiology among Erik Peterson, Adolf von Harnack, and especially Karl Barth. This is a less than scintillating section of the book in part because the debates are intramural, and in part because the conclusions—e.g., the “church’s public character is reclaimed only and precisely by overcoming the internal splits and by (re-)creating a truly catholic and evangelical church and theology”—seem banal expressions of the author’s desire to get evangelicals to take ecclesiology and liturgy more seriously.

Hütter’s second section, on the freedom to live with God, displays some of his richest thinking, especially in chapters seven and eight that form the heart

of the book. In the most sustained reflection about freedom properly understood Hütter forcefully debunks notions of freedom generally found in Western culture and certain strands of particularly Protestant theology. In doing so, he draws extensively on *Veritatis Splendor*, the 1993 encyclical of Pope John Paul II on moral theology. Through these reflections Hütter attempts to correct “the deeply problematic opposition that is widely assumed to exist between freedom and law.” In the end, he concludes this section by arguing that freedom, properly understood, leads to liturgy and finds its perfection in praise and doxology. This underdeveloped doxological connection could be further explored in conjunction with recent scholarship of Catherine Pickstock and Marva Dawn.

In his final and shortest section, the author engages three Roman Catholic documents, chiefly the 1995 encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (henceforth: *UUS*). This final section is quite disappointing.

Hütter claims that the encyclical’s “core thesis” is that “*the primacy of the bishop of Rome in its present form represents the condition for the possibility of Christian unity—visible Christian unity can only mean one thing: ‘redintegratio,’ that is, reunification with the Roman Catholic Church understood in terms of absorption*” (p. 190; italics in original). Hütter nowhere cites a single passage from the encyclical to back up this egregious interpretation. He does not cite because he could not: the very words “absorption” and “reunification” (and their cognates) do not occur in *UUS*. Moreover, the language of “absorption” that Hütter imputes to *UUS* is not only not found in the encyclical or other relevant Catholic documents of the postconciliar period: it is positively and explicitly refused by them! In a 1977 address in the Vatican to a visiting Anglican delegation, Pope Paul VI—picking up a phrase from the Malines Conversations of the 1920s—spoke about that day when “these words of hope ‘the Anglican Church united not absorbed’ are no longer a mere dream.” Earlier, in 1970, the pope had spoken about the coming unity between Catholics and Anglicans when “there will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church—this humble ‘Servant of the servants of God’—is able to embrace her ever beloved sister in the one authentic Communion of the family of Christ.” It is—or it should be—clear that “absorption,” like “return,” is no longer a part of the Roman ecumenical vocabulary. As Joseph Ratzinger said some years back, the goal of ecumenism as Catholics see it is that “the churches should certainly remain churches, but also progressively become one Church.”

The author’s claim that papal primacy “in its present form” is the condition of unity is flatly contradicted by the encyclical in what is indisputably its most novel and important passage in paragraphs 95 and 96 (my emphasis added):

as Bishop of Rome I am... convinced that I have a particular responsibility in... acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising

the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless *open to a new situation*...

Hütter ends this chapter by claiming that “Roman Catholic papalism and Protestant antipapalism correspond to one another in an ecumenically prohibitive way.” Perhaps sixty, and certainly a hundred, years ago they did, but this claim is hard to accept in light of the many documents on the papacy published since 1970, especially that extraordinary document produced by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in 1999, *The Gift of Authority*.

Since the publication of this book, it has been reported that Hütter has found his home and has been received into full communion with the Catholic Church. This suggests that his “engagements” with questions addressed in this volume—above all the papacy—will likely undergo further development and thereby invite continued discussion. That is a prospect that theologians of all traditions can look forward to because this book—though not without problems—reconfirms Hütter as a substantial theologian whose work is important both in itself and in the cause of Christian unity.

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Avis, Paul, ed., *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method by members of the Faith and Order Advisory Group*. London: Church House Publishing, 2004. 160+pp. ISBN: 071515768X. £12.99.

In *Paths to Unity*, Anglicans from the Faith and Order Advisory Group assess the ecumenical model of “full, visible unity.” Without claiming to make “a definitive statement of Anglican ecumenical method,” each author problematizes a methodological concern in the trajectory of full, visible unity as it now stands.

The premise for *Paths to Unity* is that the ecumenical movement is at a moment of transition. Its theology must be reconstructed or risk slipping into a state of inertia. Though each author explores different aspects of this malady, the book’s thesis coherently develops throughout in the form of a call to action: Anglicans engaged in ecumenical work must further flesh out what their stated goal of “full, visible unity” entails. In so doing, they ought to take particular care for the ecclesiology which supports such a vision of church. The individual chapters offered by Anglican clergy and academics discuss important themes such as provisional and eschatological understandings of church, diachronic and synchronic diversity as they relate to the quest for Christian unity, and biblical hermeneutics as it undergirds modern ecumenism.

Martin Davie indicts the Church of England for glossing over significant differences in understanding regarding the importance of the episcopate and the papacy—divisive issues for disparate groups *within* one denomination. Joy Tetley warns against proof-texting and Paula Gooder offers a critique of the use of scripture in ecumenical documents such as *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry*, with its scant references to the Old Testament and overabundance of Pauline material. John Webster challenges *koinonia* ecclesiology and urges us to a greater emphasis on the Christological and pneumatological dimensions of this “full, visible unity.” Peter Fisher asks us to be more *realistic* about the diversity represented in ecumenical work (both synchronic and diachronic), especially urging us to remember those evangelical members of ecumenical consultations who are often underrepresented. Paul Avis argues for increased integration between our understandings of unity and mission. He also emphasizes how Christians who honestly acknowledge the breadth of diversity within the body of Christ are compelled to take a less absolutist stance in relation to denominational truth claims. Couched in the important framework of visible and invisible understandings of church, Christopher Hill reflects on the potentials and challenges of the historic episcopate within the Anglican tradition. Ultimately, Hill nods to Miroslav Volf’s ecclesiology, particularly as it emphasizes obligation to openness inherent in catholicity.

Though in some sense, this volume represents a “call to action” in ecumenism both *by* and *for* Anglicans, it makes an important contribution to the

ecumenical movement at large by its diagnosis of the problem of ecumenical inertia. More importantly, it highlights and refines the constituent elements of Christian unity. The strength of this work lies in its ability to make the implicit *explicit*. As a new generation of ecumenists is called to reconstruct ecumenical theology, this book provides great focus for those areas which must be handled with the utmost care. *Paths to Unity* witnesses to the need for a 21st century Renaissance of the Ecumenical Movement, helping us to see which aspects of the ecumenical infrastructure we must carefully guard, and which must be reevaluated.

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