



# Information Service

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| POPE FRANCIS AND ECUMENISM (July-December 2013) .....   | 3  |
| VISIT TO ROME OF HIS HOLINESS MORAN BASELIOS MARTHOMA PAULOSE II,<br>CATHOLICOS OF THE EAST AND METROPOLITAN OF THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX<br>SYRIAN CHURCH, 4-6 September 2013 .....   | 7  |
| TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES<br>Busan, South Korea, 30 October – 8 November 2013 .....   | 9  |
| VISIT OF A DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE FOR<br>THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW, 28 November – 1 December 2013   |    |
| Message of Pope Francis to His Holiness Bartholomew .....   | 10 |
| Address of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew .....   | 11 |
| ECUMENICAL NEWS   |    |
| International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: Sixth Round of Conversations<br>Baltimore, MD, USA, 13-19 July 2013 .....  | 14 |
| COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS .....  | 16 |
| DOCUMENTATION SUPPLEMENT  |    |
| The Word of God in the Life of the Church<br>A Report of International Conversations between the Catholic Church and<br>the Baptist World Alliance, 2006-2010 .....   | 20 |
| Commentary on “The Word of God in the Life of the Church”<br>A Catholic Reflection on the Report of the International Conversations between the<br>Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance 2006-2010, by Thomas A. Baima ..... | 66 |

EDITOR

Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP

ADDRESS FOR ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

VA – 00120 Vatican City

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## POPE FRANCIS AND ECUMENISM

### POPE FRANCIS' PRESS CONFERENCE ON RETURN FLIGHT FROM RIO DE JANEIRO

28 July 2013

Question (Alexey Bukalov):

[...] “*Holy Father, returning to ecumenism: today, the Orthodox are celebrating one thousand and twenty-five years of Christianity, and there are great festivities in many capital cities. If you would comment on this, I would be grateful. Thank you.*”

Pope Francis:

“In the Orthodox Churches, they have retained that pristine liturgy, which is so beautiful. We have lost some of the sense of adoration. The Orthodox preserved it; they praise God, they adore God, they sing, time does not matter. God is at the centre, and I would like to say, as you ask me this question, that this is a richness. Once, speaking of the Western Church, of Western Europe, especially the older Church, they said this phrase to me: *Lux ex oriente, ex occidente luxus*. Consumerism, comfort, they have done such harm. Instead, you retain this beauty of God in the centre, the reference point. When reading Dostoevsky – I believe that for all of us he is an author that we must read and re-read due to his wisdom – one senses what the Russian soul is, what the Eastern soul is. It is something that does us much good. We need this renewal, this fresh air from the East, this light from the East. John Paul II wrote about this in his Letter. But many times the *luxus* of the West makes us lose this horizon. I don't know, but these are the thoughts that come to me. Thank you.” [...]

ORE, 7-14 August 2013

### INTERVIEW WITH POPE FRANCIS BY FR ANTONIO SPADARO, EDITOR OF JESUIT MAGAZINE ‘LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA’

19 August 2013

Question:

[...] “*How can we reconcile in harmony Petrine primacy and collegiality? Which roads are feasible also from an ecumenical perspective?*”

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\* Sources of the texts are designated as follows: OR: *L'Osservatore Romano*, daily edition in Italian; ORE: *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English. If texts come from sources other than *L'Osservatore Romano*, this will be noted. When translation is made by the *Information Service* it is indicated by the abbreviation: *IS*.

Pope Francis:

“We must walk together: the people, the bishops and the pope. Synodality should be lived at various levels. Maybe it is time to change the methods of the Synod of Bishops, because it seems to me that the current method is not dynamic. This will also have ecumenical value, especially with our Orthodox brethren. From them we can learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and the tradition of synodality. The joint effort of reflection, looking at how the church was governed in the early centuries, before the breakup between East and West, will bear fruit in due time. In ecumenical relations it is important not only to know each other better, but also to recognize what the Spirit has sown in the other as a gift for us. I want to continue the discussion that was begun in 2007 by the joint [Catholic–Orthodox] commission on how to exercise the Petrine primacy, which led to the signing of the Ravenna Document. We must continue on this path.”

I ask how Pope Francis envisions the future unity of the church in light of this response. He answers: “We must walk united with our differences: there is no other way to become one. This is the way of Jesus.” [...]

ORE, 25 September 2013

### POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM

28-30 August 2013

Milan (Italy)

*To my Venerable Brother  
Cardinal Kurt Koch  
President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian  
Unity*

It was with great joy that I learned of this inter-Christian Symposium, organized every two years by the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at the Pontifical University *Antonianum* and by the Department of Theology at the Orthodox Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Its aim is to deepen understanding of the theological and spiritual Traditions of East and West and to cultivate brotherly relations of friendship and scholarship among members of the two academic institutions.

I would, therefore, like to extend my cordial greeting to the organizers, the speakers and to all the partic-

ipants in the 13th year of this praiseworthy initiative, which is taking place this year in Milan, with the collaboration of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, on the theme: “The life of Christians and civil power — Historical questions and current perspectives in East and West”. This subject fits well into the framework of the many initiatives organized to commemorate the 17th centenary of the promulgation of the Edict of Constantine. Among the especially important events in Milan, there was the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I to the Church of St Ambrose and to the city.

The historical decision, with which religious freedom for Christians was decreed, opened up new ways for spreading the Gospel and contributed greatly to the birth of European civilization. The commemoration of that event offers the Symposium an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the ways in which the Christian world relates to civil society and with the authority that presides over it. These ways have developed in the course of history in very different contexts, with significant diversification in East and West. At the same time, they have retained several fundamental common traits, such as the conviction that civil power finds its limits before the law of God, reserving just space for the autonomy of conscience, with the awareness that ecclesiastical authority and civil power are called to cooperate for the integral good of the human community.

With the hope that the work of this Symposium bear abundant fruit for the progress of historical research and mutual understanding between the different Traditions, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to those who have contributed to the organization of the Conference and to all those who are taking part in it.

*From the Vatican, 19 August 2013*

FRANCIS

News.va Aug. 30, 2013

GENERAL AUDIENCE

*25 September 2013*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning,

In the *Creed* we say “I believe in one ... Church”. In other words we profess that the Church is one, and this Church by her nature is one. [...]

Unity in faith, hope and charity, unity in the sacraments, in the ministry: these are like the pillars that hold up and keep together the one great edifice of the Church. [...]

Let us all ask ourselves: as a Catholic, do I feel this unity? As a Catholic, do I live this unity of the Church? Or doesn't it concern me because I am closed within my own small group or within myself? Am I one of

those who “privatize” the Church to their own group, their own country or their own friends? It is sad to find a “privatized” Church out of selfishness or a lack of faith. [...]

It is important to look beyond our own boundaries, to feel that we are Church, one family in God!

Let us go a step further and ask ourselves: are there wounds in this unity? Can we hurt this unity? Unfortunately, we see that in the process of history, and now too, we do not always live in unity. At times misunderstanding arises, as well as conflict, tension and division which injure her and so the Church does not have the face we should like her to have; she does not express love, the love that God desires. It is we who create wounds! And if we look at the divisions that still exist among Christians, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants ... we are aware of the effort required to make this unity fully visible. God gives us unity, but we often have a lot of trouble putting it into practice. It is necessary to seek to build communion, to teach communion, to get the better of misunderstandings and divisions, starting with the family, with ecclesial reality, in ecumenical dialogue too. Our world needs unity, this is an age in which we all need unity, we need reconciliation and communion and the Church is the home of communion. [...]

Am I humble enough to patiently stitch up, through sacrifice, the open wounds in communion?.

Finally, the last step which takes us to a greater depth. Now, this is a good question: who is the driving force of the Church's unity? It is the Holy Spirit, whom we have all received at Baptism and also in the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is the Holy Spirit. Our unity is not primarily a fruit of our own consensus or of the democracy in the Church, or of our effort to get along with each other; rather, it comes from the One who creates unity in diversity, because the Holy Spirit is harmony and always creates harmony in the Church. And harmonious unity in the many different cultures, languages, and ways of thinking. The Holy Spirit is the mover. This is why prayer is important. It is the soul of our commitment as men and women of communion, of unity. Pray to the Holy Spirit that he may come and create unity in the Church.

Let us ask the Lord: Lord, grant that we be more and more united, never to be instruments of division; enable us to commit ourselves, as the beautiful Franciscan prayer says, to sowing love where there is hatred; where there is injury, pardon; and union where there is discord. So be it.

ORE, 2 October 2013

ANGELUS

*29 September 2013*

[...] I address a special greeting to my Brother, H.B. Youhanna X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. His presence invites us to pray once again for peace in Syria and in the Middle East. [...]

ORE, 2 October 2013

POPE FRANCIS TO A DELEGATION OF THE  
LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION AND TO  
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LUTHERAN-  
CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON UNITY

21 October 2013

Dear Lutheran brothers and sisters,

I warmly welcome you, the members of the Lutheran World Federation and the representatives of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity. This meeting follows upon my very cordial and pleasant meeting with you, dear Bishop Younan, and with the Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Reverend Junge, during the inaugural celebration of my ministry as the Bishop of Rome.

It is with a sense of profound gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ that I think of the many advances made in relations between Lutherans and Catholics in these past decades, not only through theological dialogue, but also through fraternal cooperation in a variety of pastoral settings, and above all, in the commitment to progress in spiritual ecumenism. In a certain sense, this last area constitutes the soul of our journey towards full communion, and permits us even now a foretaste of its results, however imperfect. In the measure in which we draw closer to our Lord Jesus Christ in humility of spirit, we are certain to draw closer to one another. And, in the measure in which we ask the Lord for the gift of unity, we are sure that he will take us by the hand and be our guide.

This year, as a result of a now fifty year old theological dialogue and with a view to the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, the text of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity was published, with the significant title: *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. I believe that it is truly important for everyone to confront in dialogue the historical reality of the Reformation, its consequences and the responses it elicited. Catholics and Lutherans can ask forgiveness for the harm they have caused one another and for their offences committed in the sight of God. Together we can rejoice in the longing for unity which the Lord has awakened in our hearts, and which makes us look with hope to the future.

In light of this decades-long journey and of the many examples of fraternal communion between Lutherans and Catholics which we have witnessed, and encouraged by faith in the grace given to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am certain that we will continue our journey of dialogue and of communion, addressing fundamental questions as well as differences in the fields of anthropology and ethics. Certainly, there are no lack of difficulties, and none will lack in the future. They will continue to require patience, dialogue and mutual understanding. But we must not be afraid! We know well – as Benedict XVI often reminded us – that unity is not primarily the fruit of our labors, but the working of the Holy Spirit, to whom we must open our

hearts in faith, so that he will lead us along the paths of reconciliation and communion.

Blessed John Paul II asked: “How can we proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without at the same time being committed to working for reconciliation between Christians?” (*Ut unum sint*, 98). May the faithful and constant prayer of our communities sustain theological dialogue, the renewal of life and the conversion of hearts, so that, with the Triune God, we will be able to journey together toward the fulfilment of Jesus’ desire that all may be one. Thank you.

ORE, 25 October 2013

MOSCOW SYNODAL CHOIR IN THE VATICAN

3 November 2013

*On 3 November 2013, with the blessing of the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the Moscow Synodal Choir gave a joint concert with the Sistine Chapel Choir at the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.*

*For the occasion, Pope Francis sent a Message of greeting which was read out by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches.*

*Hereafter is the text of the Pope’s Message.*

To live a moment of spiritual elevation in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, through musical art of the Latin Church and of the Russian Orthodox Church, is an interesting and profound experience. In fact this Basilica was born to celebrate in the West the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, which had recognized Mary, Theotokos, Mother of God. Therefore, this Basilica unites two ecclesial traditions that recognize one another in the same faith, enriching themselves with their cultural diversity.

Evaluating the history of Christianity in its age-old dimension, we can observe that what was separated by historical events, imposed by the different ways of understanding Revelation, meanwhile maintained a profound unity in art. Today this artistic unity can find continuously fecund points of encounter in the intelligent frequentation, study and reflection of the common sources. This means true and mutual understanding, respect and enrichment for both.

In the Church in fact art in all its forms does not exist having only as its end a simple aesthetic fruition, but that through it, in every historical moment and in every culture, the Church is the interpreter of the Revelation to the People of God. Art exists in the Church essentially to evangelize and it is in this perspective that we can say with Dostoevsky: “Beauty will save the world.”

Today the Church can and must breathe with her two lungs: that of the East and of the West. While we have not succeeded in doing it entirely, in keeping with the measure requested by Jesus in his prayer to the Father, we can do so in other ways, as for instance through the great patrimony of art and culture that the

different traditions have produced in abundance for the life of the People of God.

Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, in one word, beauty unites to make the celebrated faith grow, in prophetic hope, and in witnessed charity. Seeking to anticipate in history that unity desired that we all seek and that by the grace of God one day we will achieve.

byztex.blogspot.it/2013/11/Moscow-synodal-  
choir-performs-in-rome.html  
[translation by ZENIT.org]  
ORE, 8 November 2013

#### INTERVIEW OF POPE FRANCIS WITH THE DAILY «LA STAMPA»

10 December 2013

Question:

[...] “*You announced a “conversion of the papacy”. Did a concrete path emerge from your encounters with the Orthodox Patriarchs?*”

Pope Francis:

“John Paul II spoke even more explicitly about a way of exercising primacy that is open to a new situation. Not just from the point of view of ecumenical relations but also as regards relations with the Curia and local Churches. Over the course of these first nine months, I have received visits from many Orthodox brothers: Bartholomew, Hilarion, the theologian Zizioulas, the Copt Tawadros. The latter is a mystic, he would enter the chapel, remove his shoes and go and pray. I felt like their brother. They have the apostolic succession; I received them as brother bishops. It is painful that we are not yet able to celebrate the Eucharist together, but

there is friendship. I believe that the way forward is this: friendship, common work and prayer for unity. We blessed each other; one brother blesses the other, one brother is called Peter and the other Andrew, Mark, Thomas.”

Question:

“*Is Christian unity a priority for you?*”

Pope Francis:

“Yes, for me ecumenism is a priority. Today there is an ecumenism of blood. In some countries, they kill Christians for wearing a cross or carrying a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox. Our blood is mixed. To those who kill, we are Christians. We are united in blood, even though we have not yet managed to take necessary steps towards unity and perhaps the time has not yet come. Unity is a gift and we have to ask for it. I knew a parish priest in Hamburg who was working for the cause of beatification of a Catholic priest guillotined by the Nazis for teaching children the catechism. Just after him on the list of condemned individuals was a Lutheran pastor who was killed for the same reason. Their blood was mixed. The parish priest told me he had gone to the bishop and said to him: “I will continue to work for the cause, but both of their causes, not just the Catholic priest’s.” This is what the ecumenism of blood is. It exists today; you just need to read the newspapers. Those who kill Christians won’t ask for your identity card to see which Church you were baptised in. We have to take these things into consideration.” [...]

ORE, 20/27 December 2013

VISIT TO ROME OF  
HIS HOLINESS MORAN BASELIOS MARTHOMA PAULOSE II  
CATHOLICOS OF THE EAST AND METROPOLITAN OF  
THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

*4 – 6 September 2013*

*Working together to overcome the “culture of conflict” and making room for a “culture of encounter” which helps us to look with trust to the prospect of full communion were the themes addressed by Pope Francis to His Holiness Moran Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, whom the Holy Father received in audience on Thursday morning, 5 September.*

*The Catholicos’ trip to Rome was undertaken within the framework of a pastoral visit to Orthodox faithful in Europe. Besides his audience with the Pope, the Catholicos visited the tomb of the Apostle Peter and was received at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, where he had talks with the President, Cardinal Kurt Koch.*

*The following are the addresses of both the Holy Father and the Catholicos.*

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

*5 September 2013*

Your Holiness,  
Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is a joy for me to meet Your Holiness and the distinguished delegation of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Through you, I greet a Church that was founded upon the witness, even to martyrdom, that Saint Thomas gave to Our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostolic fraternity which united the first disciples in their service of the Gospel, today also unites our Churches, notwithstanding the many divisions that have arisen in the sometimes sad course of history, divisions which, thanks be to God, we are endeavoring to overcome in obedience to the Lord’s will and desire (cf. *Jn 17:21*).

The Apostle Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (*Jn 2:28*) with one of the most beautiful confessions of faith in Christ handed down by the Gospels, a faith which proclaims the divinity of Christ, his lordship in our lives, and his victory over sin and death through his resurrection. This event is so real that Saint Thomas is invited to touch for himself the actual marks of the crucified and risen Jesus (cf. *Jn 20:27*). It is precisely in this faith that we meet each other; it is this faith that unites us, even if we cannot yet share the Eucharistic table; and it is this faith which urges us to continue and intensify the commitment to ecumenism, encounter and dialogue towards full communion. With deep affection I welcome Your Holiness and the members of your delegation and I ask you to convey my cordial greetings to the Bishops, clergy and faithful of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. I also greet the communities you are visiting in Europe.

Thirty years ago, in June of 1983, Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews I paid a visit to my venerable predecessor, Pope John Paul II and to the Church of Rome. Together, they recognized their common faith in Christ. Afterwards, they met again at

Kottayam, in the Cathedral of Mar Elias, in February of 1986 during the pastoral visits of the Pope in India. On that occasion, Pope John Paul II said: “With you I desire that our Churches may soon find effective ways of resolving the urgent pastoral problems that face us, and that we may progress together in brotherly love and in our theological dialogue, for it is by these means that reconciliation among Christians and reconciliation in the world can come about. I can assure you that the Catholic Church, with the commitment she made at the Second Vatican Council, is ready to participate fully in this enterprise.”

From those encounters began a concrete path of dialogue with the institution of a mixed commission, which brought to birth the agreement of 1990, on the day of Pentecost, a commission which continues its important work and which has brought us to significant steps on themes such as the common use of buildings of worship and cemeteries, the mutual concession of spiritual and even liturgical resources in specific pastoral situations, and the necessity to identify new forms of collaboration when faced with growing social and religious challenges.

I wanted to recall some of the steps in these 30 years of the growing closeness between us, because I believe that on the ecumenical path it is important to look with trust to the steps that have been completed, overcoming prejudices and closed attitudes which are part of a kind of “culture of clashes” and source of division, and giving way to a “culture of encounter”, which educates us for mutual understanding and for working towards unity. Alone however, this is impossible; our witnesses and poverty slow the progress. For this reason, it is important to intensify our prayer, because only the Holy Spirit with his grace, his light and his warmth can melt our coldness and guide our steps towards an ever greater brotherhood. Prayer and commitment in order to let relationships of friendship and cooperation grow at various levels, in the clergy, among the faithful, and among the various churches born

from the witness given by St Thomas. May the Holy Spirit continue to enlighten us and guide us towards reconciliation and harmony, overcoming all causes of division and rivalry which have marked our past. Your Holiness, let us walk this path together, looking with trust towards that day in which, with the help of God, we will be united at the altar of Christ's sacrifice, in the fullness of Eucharistic communion.

Let us pray for one another, invoking the protection of Saint Peter and Saint Thomas upon all the flock that has been entrusted to our pastoral care. May they who worked together for the Gospel, intercede for us and accompany the journey of our Churches.

ORE, 11 September 2013

#### ADDRESS OF THE CATHOLICOS MORAN BASELIOS MARTHOMA PAULOSE II

*5 September 2013*

Your Holiness, most Venerable Brother in Christ,

Praising the Triune God, let me humbly greet Your Holiness in the name of the Bishops, Clergy and the Faithful of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India. I thank God for this occasion for us to meet each other in the first year of your blessed pontificate, in this city sanctified by the martyrdom of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. People of goodwill everywhere are rejoicing in the gracious words of Your Holiness and the way in which you exemplify the pastoral ministry of Christ our Good Shepherd.

My illustrious predecessors in the Indian Catholicate of the See of Apostle Thomas, His Holiness Baselios Augen I had the privilege of receiving His Holiness Pope Paul VI in Bombay in 1964, and His Holiness Catholicos Marthoma Mathews I visited His Holiness Pope John Paul II in Rome, and also received the Blessed Father at the Mar Elia Orthodox Cathedral at Kottayam in 1986. Since that time, with the instruction and blessing of both the Heads of Churches we have the ongoing bilateral Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church.

Participation of the representatives of the Malankara Orthodox Church in the conciliar process of the Catholic Church since the Vatican II has been of crucial importance in the growth of our mutual understanding. At the Second Vatican Council Fr. K. Philipose (later Metropolitan Mar Theophilos), Fr. Paul Verghese (later Metropolitan Mar Gregorios) and Dr. C. T. Eapen were "Observers". Fr. K. M. George participated as "fraternal delegate" in the Millennium Synod of

Asian Bishops in 1998 and the Synod of Bishops in 2008 at the Vatican. Being a founding member of the World Council of Churches the Malankara Orthodox Church has had several other avenues of conversing with the Catholic Church through the Faith and Order Commission and other commissions of the WCC.

Your Holiness,

The Malankara Orthodox Church, faithfully rooted in the apostolic tradition of the holy Apostle Thomas in India, is committed to the true unity of our churches as willed by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. In the broader frame of unity of all Christians, I have a special dream for the unity of Christians in the St Thomas tradition. Wherever possible and appropriate, we are willing to cooperate with our sister churches in ministering to the pastoral needs of the people, particularly the poor and the marginalized. Some of the present pastoral issues may be resolved on the basis of the common tradition that existed before the unfortunate division in the Indian church in the 16th century.

I particularly acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in fostering our bilateral relations. By arranging mutual visits, encouraging theological dialogues, providing scholarships for theological students and above all respecting the Orthodox identity of our Indian Church, the Council fruitfully promotes our search for true unity in mutual respect and Christian love.

Although Christians are a small minority in India and Asia in general we have the great task of witnessing to the life giving Gospel of Christ by caring for the poor and the downtrodden, by nurturing peace, justice and communal harmony and by working with and learning from the great spiritual-ethical traditions of India. In all this the Indian Catholic and Orthodox churches can fruitfully cooperate in the bond of love.

My venerable Elder Brother in Christ, I gladly join Your Holiness in your deep prayer for peace in our world, especially in Syria, the Middle East, and Asia. With great joy and hope, we invite Your Holiness to visit India, and we offer our humble prayers to God our Father that your blessed ministry may continue to inspire our churches in the power of the Holy Spirit and bring new hope for humanity at large.

Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One true God, now and for evermore. Amen.

[www.neamericandiocese.org](http://www.neamericandiocese.org)

# TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

*Busan, South Korea  
30 October – 8 November 2013*

*The World Council of Churches (WCC) held its tenth General Assembly in Busan, South Korea, October 30 – November 8. The WCC Assembly is held every seven years. This year it was hosted by the Council of Churches of Korea, in the diocese of Busan, and discussed the theme “God of life, Lead us to Justice and Peace”. More than three thousand participants took part in the gathering, including official delegates representing the 345 Churches and ecclesial Communities affiliated with the World Council of Churches, delegations of non-member Churches and representatives from various associated organisations. Although the Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, it maintains a multilateral collaboration with this organism, through its participation in the theological research of the Commission on Faith and Order on the fundamental questions which still divide Christians in the field of ecclesiology and especially through a Joint Working Group which coordinates the various common activities and initiatives. Thus, an official Catholic delegation was present in Busan, whose members participated as observers. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity took part in the inaugural session of the Assembly and delivered a message to participants from Pope Francis, which text is published as follows.*

## MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO CARDINAL KURT KOCH ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WCC

*To My Venerable Brother  
Cardinal Kurt Koch  
President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian  
Unity*

On the occasion of the Tenth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, I ask you to convey my cordial greetings and good wishes to all gathered in Busan, and in a particular way to the General Secretary, Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, and the representatives of the Christian communities present. I assure you of my close pastoral interest in the deliberations of the Assembly and I willingly reaffirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to continuing its long-standing cooperation with the World Council of Churches.

The theme of the Assembly, *God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace*, is above all a prayerful invocation of the Triune God who draws all creation to its fulfillment through the redemptive power of the Cross of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Truly, wherever the gift of life is cherished, and justice and peace prevail, God's Kingdom is present and his sovereign power is already at work.

For this reason, I trust that the present Assembly will help to consolidate the commitment of all Christ's followers to intensified prayer and cooperation in the service of the Gospel and the integral good of our human family. The globalized world in which we live demands of us a common witness to the God-given dignity of every human being and the effective promotion of the cultural, social and legal conditions which enable individuals and communities to grow in freedom, and

which support the mission of the family as the fundamental building-block of society, ensure a sound and integral education for the young, and guarantee for all the untrammelled exercise of religious liberty. In fidelity to the Gospel, and in response to the urgent needs of the present time, we are called to reach out to those who find themselves in the existential peripheries of our societies and to show particular solidarity with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, the disabled, the unborn and the sick, migrants and refugees, the elderly and the young who lack employment.

Conscious that the soul of ecumenism remains authentic conversion, holiness and prayer (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8), I pray that the General Assembly will contribute to a new impulse of vitality and vision on the part of all committed to the sacred cause of Christian unity, in fidelity to the Lord's will for his Church (cf. *Jn* 17:21) and in openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Upon all gathered in Busan I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God, source of all life and of every spiritual gift.

From the Vatican, 4 October 2013, Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi

FRANCIS

ORE, 1 November 2013

# VISIT OF A DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE FOR THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW

28 November – 1 December 2013

*Every year a customary exchange of delegations takes place between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate on their patron saints' feast days, in Rome on 29 June for the celebration of Sts Peter and Paul, and on 30 November in Istanbul for the celebration of St Andrew. This year Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, led the Holy See's delegation to Istanbul, and was accompanied by Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Dicastery, and Msgr. Andrea Palmieri, Undersecretary. Archbishop Antonio Lucibello, Apostolic Nuncio to Turkey also joined the delegation. The delegation took part in the Divine Liturgy presided over by the His Holiness Bartholomew I at the Patriarchal Church of Phanar, and then met with the Ecumenical Patriarch and had conversations with the Synodal Commission in charge of relations with the Catholic Church. Cardinal Koch delivered a gift and a message of Pope Francis to the Ecumenical Patriarch, which he read publicly at the end of the Divine Liturgy. The Holy Father had offered Mass in the Chapel of Santa Marta on Saturday morning, 30 November, for Bartholomew I. The delegation also visited the Theological School of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Halki, which was closed by Turkish authorities in 1971 and is now awaiting permission to reopen. The following are the texts of the Pope's letter to Bartholomew and the greeting of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the delegation.*

## MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I

To His Holiness Bartholomew I  
Archbishop of Constantinople  
Ecumenical Patriarch

“Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Eph* 6:23).

After welcoming with joy the delegation which Your Holiness sent to Rome for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, it is with the same joy that I convey, through this message entrusted to Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, my spiritual closeness on the feast of Saint Andrew, Peter's brother and the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With the heartfelt affection reserved for beloved brothers, I offer my prayerful best wishes to Your Holiness, to the members of the Holy Synod, to the clergy, monks and all the faithful, and – together with my Catholic brothers and sisters – join your own prayer on this festive occasion.

Your Holiness, beloved brother in Christ, this is the first time that I address you on the occasion of the feast of the Apostle Andrew, the first-called. I take this opportunity to assure you of my intention to pursue fraternal relations between the Church of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It is for me a source of great reassurance to reflect on the depth and the authenticity of our existing bonds, the fruit of a grace-filled journey along which the Lord has guided our Churches since the historic encounter in Jerusalem between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, the fiftieth anniversary of which we will celebrate shortly. God, the source of all peace and love, has taught us throughout these years to regard one another as members of the same family. For indeed we have one Lord

and one Savior. We belong to him through the gift of the good news of salvation transmitted by the apostles, through the one baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, and through the holy ministry. United in Christ, therefore, we already experience the joy of authentic brothers in Christ, while yet fully aware of not having reached the goal of full communion. In anticipation of the day in which we will finally take part together in the Eucharistic feast, Christians are duty-bound to prepare to receive this gift of God through prayer, inner conversion, renewal of life and fraternal dialogue.

Our joy in celebrating the feast of the Apostle Andrew must not make us turn our gaze from the dramatic situation of the many people who are suffering due to violence and war, hunger, poverty and grave natural disasters. I am aware that you are deeply concerned for the situation of Christians in the Middle East and for their right to remain in their homelands. Dialogue, pardon and reconciliation are the only possible means to achieve the resolution of conflict. Let us be unceasing in our prayer to the all-powerful and merciful God for peace in this region, and let us continue to work for reconciliation and the just recognition of peoples' rights.

Your Holiness, the memory of the martyrdom of the apostle Saint Andrew also makes us think of the many Christians of all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities who in many parts of the world experience discrimination and at times pay with their own blood the price of their profession of faith. We are presently marking the 1700th anniversary of Constantine's Edict, which put an end to religious persecution in the Roman Empire in both East and West, and opened new channels for the dissemination of the Gospel. Today, as then, Christians of East and West must give common witness so that, strengthened by the Spirit of the risen Christ, they may disseminate the

message of salvation to the entire world. There is likewise an urgent need for effective and committed cooperation among Christians in order to safeguard everywhere the right to express publicly one's faith and to be treated fairly when promoting the contribution which Christianity continues to offer to contemporary society and culture.

It is with sentiments of profound esteem and warm friendship in Christ that I invoke abundant blessings on Your Holiness and on all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, asking the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God and of the holy apostles and martyrs Peter and Andrew. With the same sentiments I renew my best wishes and exchange with you a fraternal embrace of peace.

From the Vatican, 25 November 2013

FRANCISCUS

ORE, 6 December 2013

GREETING BY HIS ALL-HOLINESS  
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I  
TO THE DELEGATION OF THE CHURCH OF  
ROME

30 November 2013

Your Eminence and beloved brother Kurt Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and members of the honourable Delegation of the Church of Rome, distinguished representatives of His Holiness our brother Francis, Pope of Rome,

Behold once again we celebrate the great feast of the "first called" Apostle Andrew, brother of St. Peter, which we have shared together for decades through the participation of beloved representatives from Rome. In celebrating today the sacred commemoration of our patron Saint, we give thanks to the Lord's Name and express our joy because, through his prayers and intercessions, the Great Church of Constantinople has matured and magnified, persecuted and survived, to this day remaining a living witness to the truth. The small leaven of the original few faithful has, through the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit, transformed a multitude of peoples and cultures, cultivating widely and profoundly, eastward and westward, the dough of ecclesiastical witness, truth and tradition.

In this atmosphere of joy and gratitude, we perceive the intense fraternal love of the one who sent you, Your Eminence, namely His Holiness our beloved brother Pope Francis of Rome, and we express to you our special thanks for coming to concelebrate and rejoice with all of us.

In particular, we express our joy and delight as well as our expectation in favourable hope both on our behalf and on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, that the election and installation of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Throne of the Senior Rome, succeeding

the wise and prudent mystic of theology and letters, Pope Benedict XVI, will constitute a renewed inspiration for the common journey of our two Churches toward the world in order that we may assume social and moral initiatives for the consolation of humanity, which is suffering from diverse global crises. We have already conveyed these expectations and sentiments to His Holiness on the day of his inaugural Mass, declaring our willingness and readiness to cooperate in every domain.

The festive commemoration of the Holy Apostles, whose successors we have been instituted by the Grace of the all-merciful God, also comprises a source of comfort in life's sorrows and tribulations, as well as an occasion for deeper reflection and contemplation on the palpable support and spiritual appreciation of matters pertaining to the pastoral, ecclesiastical and responsible obligation of the Church in our contemporary world.

In light of this obligation, our brotherly sentiments are pervaded by a certain sadness, which derives from the fact that we have not yet achieved the level of eating the same Bread and drinking of the same Cup, so that as many members we may be one body, to adapt the words of the Apostle (cf. *1 Cor* 10.17). We sincerely experience the ontological and existential sorrow of this spiritual division as the most painful separation of all.

In order to transcend these difficulties and achieve the desired unity of all people in Christ, on the one hand we wholeheartedly pray to God and on the other hand we conduct a dialogue of love and truth in mutual sincerity. We consider especially significant and for many reasons decisive the newly commenced period of our dialogue, which we are called to develop with love "by our obedience to the truth through the Spirit for a sincere love of one another" (*1 Pt.* 1.22). This is why we deem it absolutely mandatory to avoid every action and decision, which might be perceived as an impediment in these final days. On the contrary, we consider it beneficial to pursue parallel activities on various levels, which would support both the Theological Dialogue and the wider social mission of the Church.

His Holiness brother Pope Francis and our Modesty have already exchanged ideas and opinions on these matters during our encounter in Rome. Indeed, as a first step of outreach toward the world, as an affirmation of our desire to increase our efforts toward Christian and peaceful reconciliation, we are planning a meeting in Jerusalem – to demonstrate our common will to advance along the path paved by our predecessors – in the new year that is upon us, which marks the fiftieth anniversary since the time when the two great contemporary church leaders, Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, met in the place where the sacred feet of our Lord once walked. In so doing, they carved a new historical path, which milestone we must honour in spirit and truth, surrendering the rest to the will of our Lord.

Moreover, as two ecclesiastical and spiritual leaders, we shall meet in order to address an appeal and invita-

tion to all people, irrespective of faith and virtue, for a dialogue that ultimately aims at the knowledge of Christ's truth and the taste of the immense joy, which attends their acquaintance with Christ. However, this can only be achieved through the restoration of an inward separation from one another and through the unity of all people in Christ, which is truly the fullness of love and joy.

As Christians, we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ's assurance that our heavenly Father cares about and provides for the needs of all people, which leads us to conclude that today's crisis is the result of people's estrangement from faith in God and the fulfilment of His Commandments.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to mobilize our strength in order to attract the attention of society to the fact that, if we are to confront this crisis, our relations must acquire a moral dimension in accordance with the precepts of the Holy Gospel. One of the most fundamental evangelical moral commandments of Scripture is to avoid greed, "which is idolatry" (*Col 3.6*). As the desire to acquire and possess more than what we need, particularly when manifested as relentless ignorance of moral boundaries, greed provokes and causes social crises such as the one we face today. At any rate, through the well-known parable of the rich man, our Lord Jesus Christ reminds all of us about the truth poetically described by the hymnographer: "wealth does remain forever; and worldly glory will not accompany us later. For once death arrives, all these disappear".

Thus, beyond the purely theological aspect, dialogue and communication are necessary to discover and establish more effective rules for a healthy and beneficial life. In particular, it would be appropriate to emphasize that, to improve relations among Christians, dialogues are crucial. For throughout past centuries, on account of the devil's envy, Christians were divided and some of them consolidated into groups, which they called Churches, thereby overturning our faith in the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, declared by the Symbol of Faith, the Nicæan-Costantinopolitan Creed. Furthermore, they endeavoured to maintain the independence of their group by means of various arguments. In this way, numerous such arguments accumulated, whereby they sought to justify the continuation of this division despite the Lord's will that all those who believe in Him "may be one". In the more distant past, conversations between delegations from various Christian groups, which considered themselves to be authentic Churches and possess the truth of Christ, one might say comprised monologues where each side presented its own positions and arguments. The positions of each side have today been clarified, though their ideas about which of these is correct do not coincide. Hence, the division persists. It is our obligation, then, to continue our dialogue and in-depth exploration until we ascertain and discern the teaching of the Lord and His Apostles, as this was experienced

and witnessed by the common Patristic theology of the undivided Church.

Dialogue has proven to be the only proper and sure way of communication. It is this conviction that both His Holiness and we are obliged to proclaim during our planned encounter in the Holy Land, inviting all people to dialogue, which God Himself adopted and adopts in order to transmit His truth.

Your Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch,

Our effort to develop dialogues is, as manifested by what we have said, an effort ultimately leading to familiarity with Christ's love and person. Nonetheless, it passes through the previous stages of familiarity and love of our fellow human beings in order to discover common points of contact and communication with them, as also observed by the Apostle, who became all things to all people so that he might at least save some (*Cf. Cor 9.22*).

In reflecting and thinking this way, we have as our counsellor St. John of the Ladder, who urges us never to refrain from dialogue with every person of good will, who asks from us the reason about the hope that is within us (*Step 26, ii, 11*). Indeed we have St. Andrew the Apostle, whom we commemorate in today's feast, St. Peter the chief of the Apostles and all the holy Apostles as our models. For they dared to dialogue with idolaters and all their adversaries to the point of sacrificing their lives in order that they might succeed in bringing them to the knowledge of Christ.

Once again during this formal occasion, we declare that the Ecumenical Patriarchate desires and pursues dialogue with all people – with Orthodox and non-Orthodox, Christians and non-Christians, so that we might first of all become acquainted with one another and develop peaceful relations, while at the same time achieving the goal of peaceful coexistence of all people.

With regard to the Theological Dialogue with the venerable and precious Church of Senior Rome, we both desire and do all that we can to continue it, alleviating any barriers introduced by each side or else by other sources, seeking also the intervention of the recently elected new first-bishop, the honourable and beloved brother Pope Francis, who surely desires the cultivation of good relations among us and the promotion of cooperation and ultimate unity of our Churches. Moreover, we await his visit here with joy and pleasure, as soon as his duties permit, hopefully for our Thronal Feast next year.

We emphasize our joy that the historical encounter of our two predecessors fifty years ago brought about a change in the spirit of relations between our two Churches, allowing the restoration of peace and the commencement of the journey and dialogue of love and truth. Furthermore, we declare the willingness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to renew the decisiveness of our obligation and responsibility with regard to our planned meeting so that we may continue this journey,

“making disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey” all that our Lord commanded.

Wherefore, we give thanks once more to our brother Pope Francis of Rome for participating through his honourable Delegation in the joy of our Thronal Feast. We convey to him our fraternal embrace of love and the invitation for us to collaborate for the resolution to the impasse of humanity, from the protection of Christians against division into various groups, so that the world may believe that Jesus Christ was sent by God for the salvation of all people (Cf. *Jn* 27. 21-26). Amen.

## ECUMENICAL NEWS

### INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC-PENTECOSTAL DIALOGUE: SIXTH ROUND OF CONVERSATIONS

*Baltimore, MD, USA  
13-19 July 2013*

The Third Session of the Sixth Phase of the Catholic-Pentecostal International Dialogue took place in Baltimore, MD, USA, July 13 through 19, 2013. The Dialogue is between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and some Classical Pentecostal churches and leaders. The general theme for the present phase of Dialogue is “Charisms in the Church: Their Spiritual Significance, Discernment, and Pastoral Implications”. The topics discussed at the past two sessions were Charisms - Our Common Ground (2011) and Discernment (2012). The topic for this year’s session (2013) is Healing.

Begun in 1972, the Dialogue does not seek to establish structural unity. Its goal, rather, is to promote mutual respect and understanding in matters of faith and practice. Genuine exchange and frank dialogue concerning the positions and practices of the two traditions have been guiding principles of the conversations, which include daily prayer services that are led alternatively by Catholics and Pentecostals.

The Pentecostal Co-Chair of the Dialogue is Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA (Assemblies of God). The Catholic Co-Chair of the Dialogue is the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh, NC, USA.

During the third session, Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost (Ghana) presented the paper “Healing: A Pentecostal Perspective” and Dr. Mary Healy, Associate Professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary Detroit, MI, (USA) presented the paper “A Catholic Perspective on Healing.” According to the agreed agenda, the Dialogue expects to devote the 2014 session to “Prophecy.” The 2015 session is dedicated to writing the Final Report.

The members of the Dialogue were pleased to meet in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the first Catholic Diocese in the United States, established in 1789. The participants attended Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Most Reverend William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore, Principal Celebrant; Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, principal concelebrant and homilist; Bishop Denis Madden, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore and chairman of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), also a principal concelebrant. After the Sunday Mass, the members of the Dialogue met with Archbishop Lori and toured the Cathedral, an impressively beautiful and spiritual space, de-

scribed by Pope John Paul II as “a worldwide symbol of religious freedom.”

Rev. Robeck noted, “Healing is a subject on which Catholics and Pentecostals have much in common. While many people may view the healing ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ with skepticism, or dismiss it altogether, Catholics and Pentecostals believe that God continues to heal and perform miracles. As a result, Catholics and Pentecostals affirm together that ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever’ (Heb. 13: 8). With such common ground, we are optimistic that we will be able to produce a document that will prove to be useful within our communities.”

According to Bishop Burbidge, “This year’s Dialogue has provided a wonderful opportunity for members of the Catholic and Pentecostal teams to renew our common faith in the healing power of Jesus, the One who continues to demonstrate His love and miracles in our midst. The Dialogue has helped us to focus on how the charism of healing is understood, expressed and celebrated in our churches and faith communities. We have acknowledged that our theological understanding of the charism of healing requires further exploration. In addition, we noted that the context and supervision of healing ministries within our churches and faith communities will also benefit from further study and discussion. The Dialogue benefitted greatly from the expertise and wisdom of the participants. Our conversations were carried out with great respect and were always rooted in prayer asking the Lord to bring to completion the work we have carried out in His name.”

The members from the Classical Pentecostal churches are: Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA (Assemblies of God), Co-Chair; Rev. David Cole, Liaison to the Greater Christian Community Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, Vice President for Student Development and Pastoral Care, Briercree College and Seminary, Canada (Open Bible Churches), Co-Secretary; Rev. S. David Moore, Incoming M.G.; “Pat” Robertson Professor, The King’s University; Van Nuys, CA, USA (International Church of the Four-square Gospel, USA); and Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana. Mr. Jelle Creemers, Th.M. at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium, attended as an observer.

The members of the Catholic team are: Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh NC, USA, Co-Chair; Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez, Bureau Chief of Western Section, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary; Dr. Mary Healy, Associate Professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, MI, USA; Rev. Lawrence Iwuamadi, Catholic Professor, Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland/Nigeria; Sr. Maria Ko,

F.M.A., Professor, Pontifical Faculty Auxilium, Rome and Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, China; Rev. Marcial Maçaneiro SCJ, Professor, Pontifical University of São Paulo and Dehonian Faculty, Brazil; and Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi, Associate Director, Centro Pro Unione and Professor, Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rome, Italy.

## COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

POPE FRANCIS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF  
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ROME

*Hall of Popes*

*Friday, 11 October 2013*

Dear Friends of the Jewish Community of Rome, *Shalom!*

I am pleased to welcome you and to have the opportunity to deepen and expand upon the first meeting that was held with several of your representatives on 20 March. I greet all of you with affection, especially the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Riccardo Di Segni, whom I thank for the words which he has addressed to me. I also wish to thank him for reminding me of the courage of our father Abraham, when he struggled with the Lord to save Sodom and Gomorrah: “and if there were thirty, and if there were twenty-five, and if there were twenty...”. It is truly a courageous intercession to the Lord. Thank you. I also wish to greet the President of the Jewish Community of Rome, Dr. Riccardo Pacifici, and the President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Dr. Renzo Gattegna.

As the Bishop of Rome, I feel particularly close to the life of the city's Jewish community: I know that with an uninterrupted presence of more than two thousand years, it is Western Europe's most ancient community. For many centuries then, the Jewish community and the Church of Rome have lived together in this, our city, through a history — we well know — often marked by misunderstanding and even genuine injustice. Yet it is a story that, with God's help, has for many decades now seen the development of friendly and fraternal relations.

On the part of Catholics, the reflection carried out at the Second Vatican Council has certainly contributed to this change in mentality. However, a contribution of no little import has also come from the lives and action, on both sides, of wise and generous men who were able to recognize the call of the Lord and head courageously down new paths of encounter and dialogue.

Paradoxically, the common tragedy of the war has taught us to journey together. In just a few days we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews of Rome. We will remember and pray for the many innocent victims of inhuman cruelty and for their families. It will also be an occasion to heighten our attention and be watchful so that forms of intolerance and anti-Semitism do not recur under any pretext, here in Rome and in the rest of the world. I have said it on other occasions and I would like to repeat it now: it is a contradiction for a Christian to be anti-Semitic. His roots are a bit Jewish. A Christian cannot be an anti-

Semite! May anti-Semitism be banished from the heart and life of every man and every woman!

The anniversary will also be an occasion which allows us to remember how in the hour of darkness the Christian community of this city reached out to its brother in trouble. We know that many religious institutes, monasteries and the Papal Basilicas themselves, understanding the will of the Pope, opened their doors in fraternal welcome, and how many common Christians offered whatever help they were able to give, great or small as the case might be.

The vast majority were not aware of the need to update the Christian understanding of Judaism and perhaps they knew very little about the life of the Jewish community. However, they had the courage to do the right thing at the time: protect their brother who was in danger. I like to emphasize this aspect, because if it is true that it is important, on both sides, to deepen theological reflection through dialogue, it is also true that there is another vital dialogue, that of everyday experience, which is equally fundamental. Indeed, without the latter, without a real and concrete culture of encounter that leads to authentic relationships, without prejudice and suspicion, engagement in the intellectual field would serve but little. Here, too, as I often like to emphasize, the People of God have their own nose and they sense the path that God is asking them to take. In this case it is the path of friendship, closeness and fraternity.

I hope to contribute here in Rome, as its Bishop, to this closeness and friendship, as I also had the grace — for indeed it was a grace — to do with the Jewish community in Buenos Aires. Among the many things that can unite us is our common witness to the truth of the “Ten Commandments”, the Decalogue, as a solid foundation and source of life for our society, which is so disoriented by an extreme pluralism of choice and direction, and marked by a relativism which leads to no longer having sure and solid points of reference (cf. Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17 January 2010, 5-6).

Dear friends, I wish to thank you for your visit, and with you I invoke the protection and blessing of the Most High upon our common journey of friendship and trust. May he, in his goodness, grant his peace in our day. Thank you.

ORE, 18 October 2013

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS ON THE 70<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPORTATION OF  
THE JEWISH POPULATION OF ROME, ON 16  
OCTOBER 1943

*Distinguished Chief Rabbi  
Esteemed Members of the Jewish Community of Rome,*

I wish to join, through spiritual closeness and prayer, in the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews of Rome. As we remember those tragic hours of October 1943, it is our duty to keep before our eyes the fate of those who were deported, to understand their fear, their pain and their desperation in order not to forget them, and to keep them alive in our memory and in our prayers, along with their families, relatives and friends who mourned their loss and felt consternation at the barbarity the human being can attain.

Commemorating an event, however, does not mean simply having a memory of it; it also and above all means making every effort to understand the message which it represents for our own times, so that the remembrance of the past may be a lesson to the present and become a light which illumines the road to the future. Blessed John Paul II wrote that memory is called to play its necessary role “in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the *Shoah* will never again be possible” (Introductory Letter to the document: Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, *We Remember. A Reflection on the Shoah*, 16 March 1998) and Pope Benedict XVI stated at the concentration camp of Auschwitz that “the past is never simply the past. It always has something to say to us; it tells us the paths to take and the paths not to take” (*Address*, 28 May 2006).

What the day commemorates could be described as a *memoria futuri*, an appeal to the younger generations not to be indifferent to their own existence, nor to allow themselves to be swept away by ideologies, never to justify the evil we encounter, always to be on the alert against anti-Semitism and against racism whatever their origin may be. I hope that, through initiatives such as this one, networks of friendship and fraternity between Jews and Catholics may be formed and nourished in this, our beloved city of Rome.

The Lord says through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: “I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (*Jer* 29:11). May the memory of the tragedies of the past become a commitment for everyone of us to adhere with all our strength to the future that God wills to prepare and build for us and with us.

*Shalom!*

*From the Vatican, 11 October 2013*

FRANCISCUS

ORE, 18 October 2013

ADDRESS OF THE POPE TO A DELEGATION  
OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER

*Clementine Hall  
Thursday, 24 October 2013*

Dear Friends,

I welcome this Delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an international Jewish organization for the defense of human rights. I am aware that this meeting had been planned some time ago by my predecessor Benedict XVI, whom you asked to visit and who remains in our affectionate thoughts and prayers.

These meetings are a concrete sign of the respect and esteem which you have for the Bishops of Rome, for which I am grateful. They are likewise an expression of the appreciation of the Pope for the task to which you have dedicated yourselves: to combat every form of racism, intolerance and anti-Semitism, to keep alive the memory of the *Shoah*, and to promote mutual understanding through education and commitment to the good of society.

In these last few weeks, I have reaffirmed on more than one occasion the Church’s condemnation of all forms of anti-Semitism. Today I wish to emphasize that the problem of intolerance must be confronted in all its forms: wherever any minority is persecuted and marginalized because of its religious convictions or ethnic identity, the wellbeing of society as a whole is endangered and each one of us must feel affected. With particular sadness I think of the sufferings, the marginalization and the very real persecutions which not a few Christians are undergoing in various countries. Let us combine our efforts in promoting a culture of encounter, respect, understanding and mutual forgiveness.

For the building of such a culture, I would like to highlight especially the importance of education, not only as the transmission of facts, but as the handing on of a living witness. This presupposes the establishment of a communion of life, a covenant with the coming generations, which is always open to truth. To the young, we must be able to convey not only a knowledge of the history of Jewish-Catholic dialogue about past difficulties, but also an awareness of the progress made in recent decades. Above all we must be able to transmit a passion for meeting and coming to know others, promoting an active and responsible involvement of our young people. It is here that commitment to the service of society and to those most in need acquires a special value. I encourage you to continue to pass on to the young the importance of working together to reject walls and build bridges between our cultures and our faith traditions. May we go forward with trust, courage and hope! *Shalom!*

ORE, 1 November 2013

## JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 22ND INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC-JEWISH LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING, MADRID

*October 13-16, 2013*

The International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC) is the official forum for ongoing dialogue between the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC). The 22nd meeting of the ILC took place in Madrid, Spain, from 13-16 October, 2013, hosted by the Spanish Bishops' Conference and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain. Jewish and Christian representatives from five continents attended the gathering. Ms. Betty Ehrenberg, Chair of IJCIC and Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, co-chaired the meeting.

The theme of the meeting was "Challenges for Religion in Contemporary Society". These challenges were addressed in a series of presentations, discussions and workshops on the social, political, cultural, ethical, and religious circumstances in which men and women today seek to express their religious beliefs and follow the teachings of their religious traditions.

### *Our Shared Heritage*

Jews and Christians share the heritage of the biblical testimony of God's relationship with the human family throughout history. Our Scriptures bear witness to both individuals and the people as a whole being called, taught, guided and protected by Divine Providence. In light of this sacred history, Catholic and Jewish participants in the meeting responded to emerging opportunities and difficulties facing religious belief and practice in today's world.

Nearly fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council promulgated the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, setting the Catholic Church on a new path in its relations with the Jewish people. The establishment of the ILC as the instrument for formal relations between the Holy See and the international Jewish community is among the most significant fruits of *Nostra Aetate*. Open discussion in a spirit of mutual trust and respect characterized our meeting in Madrid and continues the progress made in teaching and implementing the principles enunciated in that fundamental Declaration. At this 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, we reaffirmed the unique relationship between Catholics and Jews based on a common spiritual legacy and our shared responsibility to defend human dignity.

As Catholics and Jews we strive to build a world in which human rights are recognized and respected and where all peoples and societies can flourish in peace and freedom. We commit ourselves to strengthen our collaboration in the pursuit of an ever more just and equitable distribution of resources, so that all may benefit from advances in science, medicine, education and economic development. We see ourselves as partners in healing our created world so that it may reflect ever

more brightly the original biblical vision: "And God saw all that God had made, and behold it was very good" (*Gen 1:31*).

In small group discussions, the delegates examined the current rise of anti-Semitism, the growing phenomenon of the persecution of Christians in various parts of the world, and threats to religious freedom in many societies. In light of our shared religious ideals, we examined the real difficulties facing our religious traditions today, including violence, terrorism, extremism, discrimination, and poverty. We are deeply saddened to see God's name desecrated by evil couched in religious terms.

### *Religious Freedom*

Encouraged in our work by Pope Francis' expressions of his concern for the universal welfare of all, particularly the poor and the oppressed, we share the belief in the God-given dignity of every individual. This requires that each person be accorded full freedom of conscience and freedom of religious expression individually and institutionally, privately and publicly. We deplore the abuse of religion, the use of religion for political ends. Both Jews and Catholics condemn persecution on religious grounds.

We call on political leaders and governments, on individuals, and on religious leaders and institutions to act to ensure the physical safety and legal protection of all who exercise the fundamental right to religious freedom; to protect the right to change or leave one's religious belief; to protect the right to manifest one's religious beliefs; to educate one's children in accordance with these beliefs. Among the religious claims under attack today that fall within the right to be protected are the right to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the use and display of religious symbols in public.

### *Persecution of Christians*

The ILC recommends to the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and IJCIC to work together on situations involving the persecution of Christian minorities worldwide as they arise; to call attention to these problems and to support efforts to guarantee full citizenship to all citizens regardless of religious or ethnic identity in the Middle East and beyond. Further, we encourage efforts to promote the well-being of minority Christian and Jewish communities throughout the Middle East.

### *The Rise of Anti-Semitism*

As Pope Francis has repeatedly said, "a Christian cannot be an anti-Semite." We encourage all religious leaders to continue to be a strong voice against this sin. The celebration of the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* in 2015 is a privileged moment in which to reaffirm its condemnation of anti-Semitism. We urge that anti-Semitic teachings be eliminated from preaching and textbooks everywhere in the world. Similarly, any expression of anti-Christian sentiment is equally unacceptable.

### *Education*

We recommend that all Jewish and Catholic seminaries include instruction about *Nostra Aetate* and the subsequent documents of the Holy See implementing the Council's Declaration in their curricula. As a new generation of Jewish and Catholic leaders arises, we underscore the profound ways that *Nostra Aetate* changed the relationship between Jews and Catholics. It is imperative that the next generation embrace these teachings and ensure that they reach every corner of the world.

In the face of these challenges, we Catholics and Jews renew our commitment to educate our own respective communities in the knowledge of and respect for each other. We agree to cooperate to improve the lives of those on the margins of society, the poor, the sick, refugees, victims of human trafficking, and to protect God's creation from the dangers posed by climate change. We cannot do this alone; we call on all those in positions of authority and influence to join in serving the common good so that all may live in dignity and security, and so that justice and peace may prevail.

ORE, 25 October 2013

# DOCUMENTATION SUPPLEMENT

## THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

### *A Report of International Conversations between The Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance 2006-2010*

#### PREFACE

It is with gratitude to God and with deep appreciation of the friendship that has grown between Catholic and Baptist participants in these conversations, that we come to the end of five years' work. In our last meeting in Oxford, England, there was a sense of sadness that we would not be meeting and sharing in prayers again in the way to which we had grown accustomed, a feeling only alleviated by the pledge to keep in contact with each other and sustain at least a 'virtual' community.

We therefore warmly commend this report to Baptist and Catholic readers, and all others interested in relations between them. As we suggest in our conclusion, we do not think that such a sustained attempt has ever been made before to identify as accurately as possible the convergence and divergence between Catholic and Baptist Christians. Sympathetic readers will, we believe, find a great deal of light cast here not only on the beliefs of another Christian communion, but on the convictions of their own. It has been in setting our beliefs side by side in a thorough way that we have come to understand both them and each other more deeply, so that we have been able to move further towards the goal set by our Teacher and Master Jesus Christ, 'that they all may be one'. While we do not expect our readers to be surprised by differences that remain, we think they *will* be surprised by the extent of the common mind that has been revealed. We hope that readers may be helped here by the typographical convention we have adopted, placing a summary of our convergence in paragraphs in bold type. Here we simply set out what we can say together, without explicitly making the point each time that we *are* in agreement. The passages in regular type are a kind of commentary on the statements in bold, either expanding on our agreement, or explaining the divergences that remain.

We came to discover, as we met year by year, that the choice of the overall theme of 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church' had been a wise one, not only prompting us to reflect continually on the relation between Scripture and tradition, but also directing our attention to the one who is the living Word of God and the Lord of the Church. So we have tried to fulfill the aim which was formed at the planning of these conversations, to foster a life of shared discipleship.

We have thought it helpful to provide references to Catholic Councils and papal teaching in the footnotes, so that both Catholics and Baptists can follow up issues in greater depth. We have also provided references to historic Baptist confessions of faith for further study, largely coming from the beginnings of Baptist life in England in the seventeenth century. However, we must emphasize (as we do in an important footnote) that the Catholic and Baptist references are not the same kind of authority, as Baptist confessions are not binding on local churches as Catholic teaching is on the Catholic faithful. Nevertheless, Baptists might like to be reminded of their heritage of faith, and others will find significant witness here to what Baptists believe.

In the light of the whole report we hope it will become clear how much our conversations with each other have been assisted and informed by conversations we have already each held with other Christian communions. This, we think, illustrates how Catholics and Baptists have been engaged in seeking to find the mind of Christ for His Church in our time. It has been our joy to add a further stage to this pilgrimage of hope together. Meeting as we did just before Christmas each year, we were prompted to say with the early Church, *Maranatha!* 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

+Arthur Serratelli  
Paul S. Fiddes

*Co-Chairs of the International Conversations*

## The Status of this Report

The Report published here is the work of the International Conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance. It is a study document produced by participants in the Conversations. The authorities who appointed the participants have allowed the Report to be published so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the Baptist World Alliance, who will both also evaluate the document.

### I. INTRODUCTION: AIMS, HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF THE CONVERSATIONS

1. Representatives of the Catholic Church (through its Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity)<sup>1</sup> and the Baptist World Alliance (through its Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation Commission) met in Vatican City, Rome in March 2006 and issued the following warm statement:

“The goal of these conversations is to respond to the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ to his Father for his disciples ‘that they may all be one ... that the world may believe’ (Jn 17:21). Facing the challenges of our world today, we believe this means that we should continue to explore our common ground in biblical teaching, apostolic faith and practical Christian living, as well as areas that still divide us, in order to:

1. Increase our mutual understanding, appreciation of each other and Christian charity towards each other;
2. Foster a shared life of discipleship within the communion of the triune God;
3. Develop and extend a common witness to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and the Lord of all life;
4. Encourage further action together on ethical issues, including justice, peace and the sanctity of life, in accord with God’s purpose and to the praise of God’s glory.

We envisage that we can move towards the fulfilment of these aims by focusing on the theme: ‘The Word of God in the Life of the Church: Scripture, Tradition and *Koinonia*.’ ”

2. The theme which had been identified was handled in five annual meetings lasting a week in December each year, from 2006-2010:

(1) *The Authority of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, hosted by Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

<sup>1</sup> In this report the Roman Catholic Church is abbreviated to the ‘Catholic’ Church. This must not be taken to mean that Baptists renounce the description ‘catholic’ in the sense of belonging to the universal church: see §30.

(2) *Baptism and Lord’s Supper/Eucharist as Visible Word of God in the Koinonia of the Church*, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, Italy.

(3) *Mary in the Communion of the Church*, hosted by the Baptist House of Studies at the Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

(4) *Oversight and Primacy in the Ministry of the Church*, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, Italy.

(5) *A Final Meeting* for gathering the harvest of the previous sessions, and working on a draft report, hosted by two Halls of the University of Oxford: Regent’s Park College (Baptist) and St. Benet’s Hall (Benedictine).

Two or three theological papers were given by members of each communion on each of these occasions (listed in the appendix), and the fruits of the week’s discussion were gathered together on the last day into agreed memoranda which have formed the basis of this report. A highly valued part of each meeting was the sharing in morning and evening prayer, which united participants in fellowship and gave depth to all the discussion.

It was originally envisaged that the last session might address the theme: ‘The Word of God in the contemporary situation’, exploring challenges in ethics, mission and evangelism that face our two Christian communions today. While this theme was present as a continual context for all our conversations, it did not prove possible to find the time in our limited program to treat it separately. We hope that it may be possible to continue these conversations, perhaps in different forms and forums, further exploring these practical issues on the basis of the theological convergence that comes to light in this present report.

3. The meeting in the Vatican in March 2006 was not, however, the beginning of the story of conversations. There had been an earlier round of conversations in 1984-88, under the title ‘Summons to Witness to Christ in Today’s World’ (between what were then called the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Division of Study and Research of the BWA). The co-chairmen reflected that ‘those of us who took part in the conversations regarded our experience together as a great gift from God,’ and the report ended on the note of mutual respect and growing understanding. An essential part of those conversations was firm agree-

ment between Baptists and Catholics on the person and work of Christ, so that when the steering committee came to decide on the contents of the present conversations there seemed no need to repeat this. However, it is important to register this previous convergence at the beginning of this report, as it provides a necessary Christological basis for the theme of 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church'. The two delegations in 1984-88 agreed that:

The Christological statements in the New Testament express the faith of individuals and groups. In their earliest forms, such as we find in Paul's resurrection *paradosis* (1 Cor 15:1-11) and in the 'kerygmatic' speeches of Acts (e.g. 2:22-24; 3:14-16; 4:10-12; 10:40-43), Jesus is proclaimed as the one whom God raised up (or made Lord and Messiah) for our sins or in whose name we are saved. The doctrine of the person of Christ [thus] cannot be separated from the message of the saving work which God accomplished through Christ. (§6)

The work of Christ is presented under a variety of metaphors such as justification (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:26-28; 5:18), salvation (2 Cor 7:10; Rom 1:16, 10:10; 13:11), expiation and redemption (Rom 3:24-25; 8:32) and reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20; Rom 5:10-11). These expressions point to the ontological, objective event wherein God has begun the restoration of a fallen humanity to relationship with himself and has inaugurated a renewal of creation through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. The offer of salvation from God in Christ is received in faith which is a gift of God 'who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4). (§10)

Discussion of our witness to Christ has revealed that our two communions are one in their confession of Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord and Savior. The faith in Christ proclaimed in the New Testament and expressed in the first four ecumenical councils is shared by both of our churches. Our discussion uncovered no significant differences with regard to the person and work of Christ, although some did appear with regard to the appropriation of Christ's saving work. We believe that this communion of faith in Christ should be stressed and rejoiced in as a basis for our discussions of other areas of church doctrine and life, where serious differences may remain. (§11)

4. The 'differences' that remain are identified in the earlier report as 'theological authority and method' (relating to scripture and tradition), 'the shape of *koinonia*' as it is made actual in the church, and the relationship

between faith and the sacraments. To these three topics the report adds the need to clarify the terms 'mission' and 'evangelism/evangelization', together with the need to consider further the challenge to common witness that arises from differences over 'the place of Mary in faith and practice'. As outlined above (§2), the present conversations take up four of these five 'areas needing continued exploration'. The first was seen as key to all, and occupied us in our very first meeting in 2006.

There was a conscious sense in the steering committee of March 2006 that by tackling these specific points in depth within the overarching theme of 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church', rather than taking a broad sweep of issues as before, it would be possible to advance beyond the first stages of mutual understanding into a relation which had the character of 'a shared life of discipleship'. We notice that the opening paragraph of the agenda proposed in 2006 is somewhat less tentative than the Preface to the 1988 Report. Now we were in a position where we could speak about *increasing* a mutual understanding that we already have (point 1), *extending* a common witness to Jesus Christ (point 3) that we are already making, and *furthering* action together on ethical issues that we are already taking (point 4). The aim in these conversations was not to seek a united church structure (what is often called 'organic' unity) – but it was felt that this time we could still set our goal as becoming more clearly one as Jesus prayed. We must notice that some Baptist conventions in South America during the 1980s had serious reservations about engaging in the process of mutual dialogue with Catholics, in the light of what they judged to be a situation hostile to Baptist witness to the gospel. In July 2006, however, at the Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance in Mexico City, the General Secretary Dr. Denton Lotz reported that in recent talks with Latin American Baptist leaders they had said that they understood the reasons for the new conversations, and that they would approve their taking place.<sup>2</sup>

5. We had the advantage also of certain informal conversations that had already happened before 2006, and which had addressed some of the issues identified in a provisional way. In 2001 a meeting was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina between representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Union of Baptists in Latin America; this was addressed by Cardinal Kasper, then President of the Pontifical Council, and papers were given on *koinonia* and the sacraments or ordinances. Discussion on these themes was renewed in the first and second meetings of the present conversations. In December 2003, papers were delivered at a meeting of European Baptist theologians and the Pontifical Council in Vatican City. The themes

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Decision Meeting, BWA General Council/Annual Gathering, Mexico City, July 7, 2006 as printed in *Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering, Accra, Ghana, July 2-7, 2007* (Falls Church, VA: Baptist World Alliance, 1977), p. 52.

were twofold: first the 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification' achieved between Catholics and Lutherans, and second the Petrine Ministry, responding to the encyclical *Ut unum sint* ('That they may be one'), in which Pope John Paul II expresses his belief about the special place of the Bishop of Rome in being a minister of unity to the churches. In those conversations a Baptist paper proposed that the Petrine Ministry could only be discussed in the context of a general theology of 'oversight' in the church,<sup>3</sup> and this was the strategy we adopted in the fourth meeting of the present conversations. A year later in December 2004 the focus moved from Europe to North America, and papers were delivered in Washington DC by North American Baptists and theologians appointed by the Pontifical Council, the two themes being baptism and the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the December 2004 meeting a paper from the Baptist delegation affirmed that evangelicals should give the same honor to Mary that is given her in scripture and the earliest church, celebrating her as an example for all believers as one who was truly obedient to the Word of God, and recognizing her significant part within the history of salvation.<sup>4</sup> These themes have been picked up in the second and third rounds of the present conversations.

6. Grateful for this rich background in earlier conversations between Baptists and Catholics, we now come to record the substance of our own present conversations. The reader will find a common shape to the following five sections. **Agreement between Baptist and Catholic representatives, in summary form, is placed in bold type.** What follows or precedes this in regular type may be a further exploration of our convergence, or it may register where divergences remain. What emerges is a certain degree of consensus, with some remaining differences between us. We hope that this approach will make clear, as the report progresses, how much we share a life of Christian discipleship.

## II. THE *KOINONIA* OF THE TRIUNE GOD AND THE CHURCH

**7. The One God exists from eternity in a life of relationship, in a communion (*koinonia*) of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, is the Word of God as God's self-communication of self-giving love. Jesus Christ is thus God's self-revelation who draws us into the communion of God's own triune life and into communion (*koinonia*) with each other. This means that the Word of God in the church in the**

**fullest sense is Christ himself who rules as Lord in the grace and power of the Spirit.**

8. The first round of conversations began by setting the doctrine of the Word of God in the context of the *koinonia* of the triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the life of God is characterized by mutual relationships of self-giving and receiving love, in which each of the three 'persons' (the Greek term is *hypostasis* or 'distinct identity') is entirely constituted by relations in the one being of God. We could find no differences between ourselves as Baptists and Catholics with regard to our confession of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and it gave us joy to add this agreement to our earlier consensus on the nature and person of Christ (see above, §3). Christ as the Word of God is the self-communication of God, so that the Word is not in the first place a bundle of propositions or concepts but God's own personal self-unveiling. This Word not only *reveals* the nature of God as Trinity, showing us a Father speaking forth a Word – as a Son – eternally and in history, but actually *draws* us into the life of the triune God. Thereby, the communion (*koinonia*) of God is the foundation for the communion of the church. [Jn 17:22-3, 1 Jn. 1:3, Eph 4:3-6, 2 Pet 1:4]

In recent years this has become our common language, whether Catholic or Protestant, or specifically Baptist. Through the work of our theologians we have all emphasized that God 'in God's self' corresponds to 'God for us'; we have affirmed that who God is eternally, in triune communion, must be the same as the God we know in revelation. Human beings can thus engage in the story of the interweaving relations of the Trinity, and are called to participate in God's own life. One implication of this theology of *koinonia* is that the saving work of Christ (see §3 above) is understood in the context of God's humility in allowing Jesus' fellowship with his Father to be disturbed by human sin in the cross, as revealed in Jesus' cry of forsakenness. The brokenness of human fellowship in the world is thus healed by the sacrificial love of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

9. Since the *koinonia* of the church shares in the *koinonia* of the Trinity, the church stands under the rule of the Word which is Christ. An early paper from the Catholic group affirmed that 'Christ remains truly present in his church' so that 'the crucified and risen Lord Jesus accompanies and guides in the Spirit the community he has gathered together.' Both Baptists and Catholics appealed in discussion to the words of the risen Christ in Matthew 28:20: 'Behold I am with you always', and the Baptists explained that another text which has had historic importance for them on this theme is Matthew 18:20, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' All this is common ground for the church of Christ, but differences begin to appear when we consider the *implications* of the presence of Christ who rules among

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Wright, 'The Petrine Ministry: Baptist Reflections', later published in *Pro Ecclesia* 13/4 (2004), pp. 451-65.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy George, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective', in Denton Lotz (ed.), *Papers Delivered at Meeting of North American Baptist Theologians and The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Washington DC, December 10-11, 2004 (n.p., n.d.)

the people of God for the shape and structure of the church (see §§14-15 below).

10. The Trinitarian *koinonia* consists not only of relations between the Father and the Son – for instance, the Father sends out the Son on mission into the world and the Son glorifies the Father in his obedience – but of their mutual relation with and in the Holy Spirit. While the western understanding of the Trinity has tended to emphasize the nature of the Spirit as the ‘bond of love’ between Father and Son, the eastern church reminds us that the Spirit has a particular identity and distinct personal activity in the fellowship of the one God. For this third movement of relationship the scriptures give us a whole series of impressionistic images – a wind blowing, breath stirring, oil trickling, wings beating, water flowing and fire burning. These images evoke an activity which disturbs, opens, deepens and provokes. Following Richard of St Victor we may identify the role of the Spirit as opening up the other persons in God to new depths of relation;<sup>5</sup> with some modern theologians we may also see this as an opening of God to new possibilities of the future, an opening to interaction and partnership between God and the world. The Spirit thus opens this *koinonia* to ever-new dimensions of relationship.

In relation to the Word, the Spirit thus not only makes reception of the Word possible, uniting human persons with the life of God, but also enables us to find new and unpredictable aspects in the Word; this is why the Spirit is often associated with prophecy, or the ability to see into a reality more deeply. Word and Spirit belong together in the life of the church: the self-expression of God’s purpose and the continual renewing of that purpose come together since, as an Old Testament scholar put it, God always fulfills his promise in unexpected ways.<sup>6</sup> It follows that our *perception* of God’s purpose always needs to be renewed. This is an argument for the importance of tradition, in which the Word speaks anew in new times. It is also an argument for the church to be renewed and reformed,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*, 3.11, 19. Translated in Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God. A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Walther Zimmerli, ‘Promise and Fulfilment’, in C. Westermann (ed.), *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, transl. J.L. Mays (London: SCM Press, 1963), 107.

<sup>7</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* 6. Cf. *An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith* [General Baptist] (London:1679), XXX, in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), pp. 297-334. References to historic Baptist confessions in this Report are taken both from the Particular (i.e. Calvinistic) and General (i.e. Arminian) streams of Baptist life. They are given only as illustrations of the points being made, and are not to be regarded as having an authority comparable to that which the references in this report to Councils and papal teaching have for Catholics. Confessions of faith among Baptists are not considered binding on the local church, but provide guidance for teaching, express mutual agreement at the time of writing and ex-

always willing to let the Word provoke and challenge its life.

It is important to note that the Catholic understanding of the fundamental unity of the missions of the Word and the Holy Spirit are that the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ. There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, through the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe: “No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>8</sup>

**11. The church is thus to be understood as a *koinonia* (‘communion’, ‘participation’ or ‘fellowship’), which is grounded in the *koinonia* of the triune God. Believers are joined in *koinonia* through participation in the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the same time they are in *koinonia* through their participation in the community of believers gathered by Christ in his church: ‘... that you may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (1 Jn 1:3). While the phrase ‘communion ecclesiology’ is relatively recent, and is more frequently used by Catholic theologians than by Baptist ones, we both recognize it as expressing the heart of the nature of the church.**

**12. The principle of *koinonia* applies both to the church gathered in a local congregation and to congregations gathered together, whether in a regional association of churches (in the Baptist model) or in a local church (in the Catholic sense), or in still wider expressions of the church universal. We agree that the local fellowship does not derive from the universal church, nor is the universal a mere sum of various local forms, but that there is mutual existence and co-inherence between the local and universal church of Christ.**

13. Despite this agreement, a certain asymmetry exists between Baptists and Catholics regarding the meaning of the ‘local’ church. Catholics define the local church (usually identified as the ‘particular church’ or diocese)<sup>9</sup> as:

‘a section of the people of God whose pastoral care is entrusted to a bishop in cooperation with his priests. Thus, in conjunction with their pastor and gathered by him into one

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plain beliefs to those outside the Baptist community. Quotations from Baptist confessions, historic and contemporary, illustrate only what large numbers of Baptists have believed and do believe. The first citation from a particular document gives the modern book in which it may be consulted.

<sup>8</sup> *Dominus Iesus* 12, citing *Redemptoris missio*, 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> There are differences here in Catholic writings: ‘local’ may not always be identical with particular, but may represent the national Church rather than a diocese.

flock in the holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, they constitute a particular church'.<sup>10</sup>

For Catholics, the ministry of the bishop is essential for the identity of the local church as the office which witnesses to the continuity of the church with its apostolic origins. In the local church the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's supper is celebrated.<sup>11</sup> Thus for Catholics the 'local' church is defined and identified by word, sacrament and apostolic ministry.

The Baptist understanding of the 'local' church is similar in principle, holding to all three elements mentioned above, but it results in the identification of the local church with a single congregation rather than a diocese. Baptists identify the local church as a congregation of believers, joined together through faith and baptism, where the Word of God is preached and the Lord's Supper is celebrated.<sup>12</sup> Baptists believe that the third element of apostolic ministry is not absent, but is understood to be offered by the minister (or ministers) called by the members of the local congregation to serve among them. Where it is reflected upon theologically, this office of ministry is understood to be episcopal, since it exercises 'oversight' (*episkope*); early Baptists in fact called their ministers either 'elders' (*presbuteroi*) or 'bishops', making no distinction between these terms.<sup>13</sup> (The meaning and practice of *episkope* is to be explored further below in the report.) This ministry is also understood as apostolic, in the sense that it continues the witness of the apostles to Christ and enables the congregation to stand in the apostolic tradition of faith. This understanding of 'apostolic ministry', without which early Baptists thought the local church was not 'completely organized according to the mind of Christ',<sup>14</sup> thus results for them in the equivalence of local church and local congregation.

We must add that even though Catholics do not identify the parish as the local church, nevertheless as the place of Sunday Eucharistic worship, and as the place of Christian initiation, it is where the people of God experience the church most immediately. The parish is where Catholics assemble to hear the gospel of Christ proclaimed and to be united with Christ and

with one another through the celebration of the Eucharist.

14. Despite agreement on the basis of 'communion ecclesiology' in the communion of the triune God, differences can also be discerned between Baptists and Catholics. For Catholics, each parish is in a relationship of communion with its bishop, and each diocese is in a relationship of communion within the universal church through union with the Bishop of Rome. The Bishops, by being in communion with each other and with the Bishop of Rome, assure the continuity of the churches with the apostolic church. While local churches are in communion with each other, this is expressed visibly and personally in the collegiality of bishops, each bishop representing his own 'particular' church in the episcopal college – that is, in the joining together of all bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome. This relationship of communion is worked out concretely through solicitude for the entire church in such things as common efforts in evangelization, assistance given to other churches, and collaboration in joint efforts.<sup>15</sup> This cooperation is often organized by regional 'conferences' of Bishops, which express communion in practice even though they cannot express fullness of communion, or the fullness of collegiality of the worldwide college of bishops in their representation of all particular churches (dioceses) within the communion of the one church.

The Catholic Church thus understands itself to be one church, which is concretely realized in each local church: As Pope John Paul II expressed it, 'The Catholic Church herself subsists in each particular church, which can be complete only through effective communion in faith, sacraments and unity with the whole body of Christ.'<sup>16</sup> The particular church embodies the church universal insofar as it is the specific place where the church universal is manifested and encountered, but it can only manifest this universality in its communion with the other particular churches.

15. For Baptists, because Christ rules in the midst of the local congregation (see §9 on the rule of Christ as Word), then that single gathering of believers has certain privileges: early Baptists called them 'signs (or seals) of the covenant'. The congregation shares in the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king, so that it has the responsibility for calling its own ministry, to celebrate the gospel sacraments or ordinances, and to order its own life under Christ.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Christus Dominus* 11. Translations of texts from the Church Councils are from Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees from the Ecumenical Councils, Volumes I and II* (Sheed and Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 26.

<sup>12</sup> *The Confession of Faith of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists* [Particular Baptist] (London: 1644), XXXIII-XXXIV, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 153-71; *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679), XXX.

<sup>13</sup> *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith)* [Particular Baptist] (London: 1677), XXVI.8-9, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 241-95.

<sup>14</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.8; cf. *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1678), XXXI.

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<sup>15</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 23.

<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, Address on September 12, 1987, in *Origins* 17:16 (October 1, 1987), p. 258. Whereas *Lumen Gentium* 8 states that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II asserts by analogy that all the elements of the Catholic church are present in the particular or local church.

<sup>17</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XXXIV-XXXVI; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.7.

This authority is not its own; it is Christ's, but it shares in it. The congregation stands under the rule of the Word because the risen Christ stands in its midst and the members look for his purpose in the written word of scripture and seek for his mind together in the church meeting. Baptists thus think that the local congregation cannot be imposed upon by any external human or ecclesial authority. It has the 'freedom' to order its own life. This is not 'autonomy' – a modern concept that means 'self-rule' and that did not appear among Baptists as a description of the local church until the end of the nineteenth century. The freedom of the local congregation is not the individualistic freedom espoused by the Enlightenment, but is freedom 'under the rule of Christ'.

Each local church is nevertheless in 'communion' with others, not through its minister or bishop, but directly through Christ who rules in other expressions of the church. He rules in the gathering of churches together in 'association'. He rules in a council or convention of churches at national level. In all these contexts churches should be seeking to hear his word, to know his mind, his purpose for them. Since Christ also rules among the churches gathered together, a local church is expected to take the resolutions of assemblies of churches seriously into account as a means of finding the purpose of Christ for its life and mission in the world, though it remains free in its own final decisions. At the same time, associating or communing together provides opportunities for mutual help, the sharing of resources and social and evangelistic action on a wider than local level. Local churches are inter-dependent, but Baptists have not sought to codify the relations between them into structures of authority or matters of canonical law, leaving the authority of Christ as a demand to be discerned in the situation. As the 'London Confession' of 1644 put it:

And although the particular Congregations be distinct and several Bodies, every one a compact and knit City in it self; yet are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsel and help of one another in all needful affairs of the Church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their only head.<sup>18</sup>

Since local congregations are members of 'one body ... under Christ their only head', the universal church is no mere accumulation of local churches; it has reality as the body of the risen Christ. Yet since Christ rules in the local church, Baptists agree with the Catholic per-

<sup>18</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XLVII. Spelling modernized. This is virtually identical to article 38 of the Separatist *A True Confession* (1596), in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, p. 94.

ception that this embodies and manifests the universal.<sup>19</sup>

**16. The *koinonia* of the church may also be understood as a 'covenant community' although this language is less familiar to Catholics than to Baptists. 'Covenant' expresses at once both the initiative and prior activity of God in making relationship with his people through Christ, and the willing commitment of people to each other and to God. The church is a 'gift' in the sense that it is 'gathered' by Christ, and it 'gathers' in response to the call of Christ. The term *ekklesia* indicates an 'assembly' that is 'called out' by God. Calling the church a 'fellowship of believers' does not mean that the church is constituted only by faith: faith is always a response to the initiating grace of God. The fellowship or *koinonia* of the church itself is both a gift and calling, just as the unity of the church is both a gift of the Spirit and a task to be achieved.**

17. 'Covenant' must not be confused either with a legal contract or a merely 'voluntary' agreement. Covenant is not a mere human decision to ally strategically with others to achieve certain ends, or even to worship in a way that suits one's own choice. Covenant is based on the calling of God through Christ, and from their beginnings Baptists have understood that the eternal 'covenant of grace' between God and humanity, initiated by God, is actualized in a particular time and place when believers covenant together in a local church.<sup>20</sup> More recently, some Baptists have been extending their concept of covenant to give a stronger theological basis for the gathering together of churches into associations, and then into regional and national conventions or unions. In this way, 'covenant ecclesiology' is parallel to 'communion ecclesiology', and will be more familiar language to Baptists.

18. The basis of acts of covenant today in the 'new covenant' established in the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ underlines the strong relationship both Catholics and Baptists find between sacrament (or 'ordinance') and church. For both, the church is constituted by the presence and saving activity of Christ through the Spirit, and for both, this constitution is in-

<sup>19</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.1-2.

<sup>20</sup> 'A visible communion of Saints is of two, three or more Saints joined together by covenant with God and themselves'; so John Smyth, *Principles and Inferences concerning the Visible Church* (1607), in W.T. Whitley (ed.), *The Works of John Smyth* (2 volumes; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), I, p. 252. Covenant might also be expressed in the form of 'consenting to walk together': see *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.5-6. For a thorough review of the Baptist idea of covenant, see Paul S. Fiddes, ' "Walking Together": the Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and Today', in Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces. Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 21-47.

separable from baptism. Baptism will be a separate topic later in this report, but here we must link it to the *koinonia* of the church, and notice an important divergence as well as convergence between Catholics and Baptists. Catholics speak of all those baptized, including young infants, as being incorporated into the body of Christ through their baptism. Baptists think of baptism as entering into covenant by repentant believers, or baptism as a ‘seal’ of the covenant, which implies for them that those baptized are taking on the responsibilities of disciples. As will become clear later, this does not mean that Baptists cannot recognize a process of initiation into Christ and his church in the Catholic rites of baptism and confirmation. Moreover, the very notion of covenant means that some Baptists are able to speak, with Catholics, of ‘the church in Christ as sacrament .... of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity’.<sup>21</sup>

19. Baptists will be most familiar with the language of ‘communion’ in the designation of the church as a ‘fellowship of believers’, understanding that a particular church is founded through the baptism of believing disciples. We should note that for Catholics, too, baptism is an event of faith. It both imparts faith and requires faith. Catholics also, therefore, think of the church as a community of believers, for ‘it is only within the faith of the church that each of the faithful can believe’.<sup>22</sup> This communal faith is operative in the paradigm of infant baptism. The infant is baptized into the faith of the church; the baptismal rite itself contains an act of faith professed by both parents and godparents and the assembled church. The child is welcomed into the faith of the community where the infant will be drawn to personal belief through hearing the Gospel proclaimed in word and witness. In infant baptism, the community of faith precedes the individual believer (and this, of course, is also true of the Baptist understanding of the baptism of a professing believer). Catholics allow for very young infants to be understood as believers in so far as they are included in the community of faith and so have received ‘infused’ faith. However, full initiation requires receiving the three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. In so far as an individually-owned faith is included in this sequence, this is not far from the Baptist conviction that for full membership in the church, people must be able to profess their own faith. Baptists nevertheless cannot find meaning in attributing ‘infused faith’ to very young infants, although they welcome them as ‘belonging’ to the community of faith, embraced by its love and care.

**20. Communion with the triune God and with the whole church of Christ is continually actualized in the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper. In the celebration, those participating are sharing communion not**

**only with each other in the local congregation, but with the whole church of Christ in time and space. ‘Because there is one bread, all of us share in one body’ (1 Cor 10:17). Because we hear the word of God in the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, this is a sharing in both word and sacrament (or ordinance) at the same time.**

21. While both Catholics and Baptists can make the affirmation above, and while in doing so they will each intend to be faithful to the tradition handed down by the apostles (1 Cor 11: 23), they will diverge on some of the conditions regarding the minister of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, and that person’s role in representing and promoting the unity of the community in a sacrament/ordinance of unity. For Catholics, it is essential that the celebration of the Eucharist be presided over by a bishop, or by a priest ordained by a bishop in apostolic succession who represents the bishop in the Eucharistic assembly. ‘Communion ecclesiology’ requires that there should be a bishop who represents Christ and the church, local and universal, as a visible sign of communion. For the Eucharist to be celebrated in communion with the apostolic church, there must be a bishop who safeguards and preserves the apostolic succession of the gospel as an ‘authentic teacher’ of the faith. The bishop, in his person, through his membership in the college of bishops, is in communion with the whole church, including communion with the Bishop of Rome and his ministry of unity. Catholics can recognize that the liturgical actions, such as the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, in ‘ecclesial communities’ (such as Baptists) outside the Catholic Church ‘can truly engender a life of grace’ and are ‘capable of giving access to the communion of salvation’, but there cannot be a *fullness* of communion because there is the element of *ecclesial* communion missing.<sup>23</sup>

22. Baptists can agree that the minister presiding at the Lord’s Table represents the universal church in the local congregation (see §§171, 178), and that it is therefore *appropriate* for the minister normally to preside. It is also the ‘good order’ of Christ for the person to preside who preserves the apostolic tradition, and is responsible for teaching it. However, it is not *essential* for full communion with God and the church for an ordained minister to preside. A fullness of communion can exist wherever the bread is broken and the wine poured out in faithful remembrance of Christ within a congregation gathered together as church. For Baptists this is because the church is assured of the presence of Christ (‘wherever two or three are gathered together there I am in the midst of them’), and so a local congregation is in communion with all other churches where Christ is also present in the fellowship of the

<sup>21</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 1.

<sup>22</sup> CCC 1253.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.

Spirit.<sup>24</sup> The essential, God-given sign of communion is not the person presiding, but the visibility of the body of Christ in the gathered church which is making confession of the apostolic faith.

Catholics and Baptists also may have differing practices regarding the frequency with which they celebrate the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. Catholics observe the Lord's Day through a celebration of the Eucharist at least on Sunday. Though some Baptists celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly or fortnightly, many Baptists do so regularly but less frequently. Baptists believe that in worship where scripture is read and preached, and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) is offered to God in prayer, they can still enjoy a wholeness of communion with the triune God, each other and the whole church of Christ.

### **23. Local churches must be in visible and not only spiritual communion with each other, or else communion will lack fullness.**

24. For Catholics visible communion between the churches is focused, and essentially embodied, in the person of the bishop since the unity and fellowship of the Catholic Church is made visible in the college of bishops. Varying levels and degrees of collegiality exist in different groupings of bishops – in national conferences of bishops, in synods and ecumenical councils. The latter is the most complete expression of episcopal collegiality. For Catholics, however, the reality of 'communion ecclesiology' is by no means restricted to the visible sign of episcopacy. Communion is expressed sacramentally, particularly in the Eucharist, and in a multitude of ways in which local churches and congregations within them meet with each other and assist each other, outside formal ecclesial structures. There are also 'renewal movements' in the church that cut across the formal lines of local churches.

Both Baptists and Catholics hold that they are in communion with the blessed in heaven in the communion of saints and agree that the church has visible and invisible dimensions, though they envisage these differently to some extent (cf. §25 following). In Catholic perspective, saints who have departed in the faith are not visibly part of the church, but the church itself is always visible. The Catholic Church believes that the church universal must be both *visible* and *undivided*, and it finds these characteristics together in itself. The church universal becomes visible in the celebration of the liturgy since the full nature of the church is expressed in worship: 'the principal manifestation of the church consists in the full, active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebration, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.'<sup>25</sup> It is visible

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<sup>24</sup> See *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam* [General Baptist] (Amsterdam: 1611), 11, in Lumpkin (ed.) *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 116-123.

<sup>25</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41.

insofar as it is a hierarchically constituted society<sup>26</sup> wherein the communion and unity of the church is represented in the persons of the bishops in their collegial relations with each other and the bishop of Rome. Finally, it is visible wherever the people of God profess the faith, commune in the sacraments, and follow their legitimate pastors.<sup>27</sup> The Second Vatican Council alludes to the visibility of the church in describing it as 'a sacrament - a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race,'<sup>28</sup> since signs are by nature visible.

Several recent documents have followed Vatican II in affirming that 'the One Church of Christ ... subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him'.<sup>29</sup> This phrase seeks to harmonize two doctrinal assertions – first, that the church of Christ exists in its fullness only in the Catholic Church, and second, that outside of her structure, many 'elements of the church' (*elementa Ecclesiae*) can be found, characterized by sanctification and truth, which 'derive their efficacy from the fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.'<sup>30</sup> The document *Dominus Iesus* sets out to clarify the consequences of this approach. The non-Catholic Christian communities in the West, stemming from the Reformation, are 'not churches in the proper sense', but may be called 'ecclesial communities'. They certainly possess aspects or elements of the One Church, and those baptized in them are incorporated into Christ and 'are thus in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church.' For Catholics baptism is the first sacramental bond of communion with other Christians. Moreover, since all ecclesial communities or churches share in the *koinonia* of the Trinity, in spite of separation they cannot be 'out of communion', but share a 'degree of communion'.<sup>31</sup>

25. Some Baptists in the last century have taken the view that the church of Christ only becomes visible in the local church, and that the universal church must remain 'invisible' until the coming of God's kingdom, being only a 'spiritual' reality until then. However, this was not the historic understanding of Baptists, and has

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<sup>26</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 20.

<sup>27</sup> See Robert Bellarmine's definition of the church: 'The one and true Church is the assembly of men, bound together by the profession of the same Christian faith, and by the communion of the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors, and in particular of the one Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff.' St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (Naples: 1857), vol. II, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 8; cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4; *Ut Unum Sint*, 10, 86; *Dominus Iesus* 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Dominus Iesus* 17; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.

<sup>31</sup> *The Church, Local and Universal*. A Study Commissioned and Received by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (Faith and Order Paper 150; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), p. 10.

been repeatedly countered in Baptist writings of more recent years. In older confessions and Baptist writings we find a classification of the *visible* local church ('visible saints'), the *invisible* church universal (made up of all persons regenerated by the Spirit of God, whether inside the institutions of the church or not) and the *visible* church universal (made up of all regenerate people who consciously profess Christ, together with the churches to which they belong).<sup>32</sup> Communion between churches is made visible in associations and unions of churches, where representatives or 'messengers' of the local church are not confined to the ordained ministers but drawn from a wide range of the congregation. This in line with the Baptist conviction that *episkope* flows between the communal, the personal and the collegial so that pastors and people can all, in appropriate ways, exercise *episkope* or (in the words of many early covenants), 'watch over each other'. Most Baptists prefer not to call these trans-local structures of communion 'the church' but regard them as 'ecclesial' or 'churchly'.

It follows that Baptists can affirm the visibility of the church universal even when it is divided, tragic and sinful though this situation is. Baptists thus do not associate the terms 'visible' and 'undivided' in the way that Catholics do. Though the unity of the divine *koinonia* should ideally be reflected in the church, it is a sign of the humility of God that God actually consents to dwell in a church which is broken, and which contains tensions and conflict. Moreover, Baptists will tend to agree that the 'full communion' for which we are working and hoping is 'reconciled diversity'. Just as God lives in unity and true diversity as three persons in one God, so the church in God's image can and should show – in the words of the WCC document 'Towards Koinonia' – *legitimate diversity* rather than uniformity.<sup>33</sup>

The Baptist view of other Christian communions is that they are to be regarded as 'church' where they show characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ; these might be variously described as a corporate life which shows marks of the presence of Christ, the true preaching of the word and celebration of the sacraments or ordinances. Baptists have primarily found their unity with other Christians on the basis of this kind of discernment of the church as a body, and on what they see as evidence of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual from another church. Looking for doctrinal agreement or a common understanding of the sacraments (or ordinances) and ecclesi-

ology would generally only come as a second stage after this initial discernment and recognition of the other.

## 26. Local churches and congregations have communion with each other in order to hear the Word of God and find the 'mind of Christ' together.

27. For Catholics, the pope and the college of bishops have a unique role in safeguarding unity and truth in the church. They discern the mind of Christ by meditating on scripture, consulting the wisdom of tradition, and attending to the witness of holy women and men. They listen to a whole range of voices – priests, deacons, laity, religious orders of men and women, theologians and ecumenical partners. They read the "signs of the times" in our contemporary world.<sup>34</sup> For Catholics, to live in accord with the purpose of Christ in a local church or local congregation means *sentire cum ecclesia* ('being in mind and heart with the church'). This 'reception' includes not only accepting the conclusions of ecumenical councils, the dogmatic decrees of the Pope, and the formulations of creeds, but also being immersed in the sacred scriptures, being formed by the liturgy and prayer life of the church, and being knowledgeable of the church's tradition and the ordinary teaching of the church contained in the catechism and promulgated from time to time in encyclicals and other teaching instruments of the Pope and bishops. The *sensus fidei* (the 'instinctive sensitivity and discernment' of the baptized faithful) also has a part to play in reception, and may contribute to the understanding of church teaching while not conflicting with it.

28. For Baptists, local churches find the mind of Christ together by gathering in an assembly where pastors and people have the same powers of representation, in accord with the conviction that *episkope* is shared between ordained ministers and all baptized believers. However, not all voices have the same influence, and people are expected to give weight to the voices of those appointed as 'overseers' and teachers of the faith in the churches. This personal office of oversight is exercised not only in the local congregation, but in the associations, unions and conventions that have set aside a trans-local ministry of 'regional ministers', 'executive ministers', 'presidents', 'general secretaries' and (in some national unions) 'bishops'. Such are trusted teachers and guides in the faith, who can offer their gifts to help churches find the mind of Christ and live under his rule. As already mentioned, for Baptists no decisions made at an assembly of churches can be imposed on the local church. But the Baptist version of 'reception' at the local level is that a congregation should listen to churches gathered together, not supposing that it has all the gifts in itself which are needed to discover and implement the purpose of Christ for its life and mission.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. *The Orthodox Creed* (1678), XXIX-XXX, in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 318-19.

<sup>33</sup> 'Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness', in Best and Gassmann (eds), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), para. 57, p. 280. 'Towards Koinonia' suggests that diversity is not acceptable where it denies the 'common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour', where it justifies discrimination on the basis of race or gender, where it prevents reconciliation, where it hinders the common mission of the church, and where it endangers the life in *koinonia*.

<sup>34</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* 4.

<sup>35</sup> See *We Baptists*. Study and Research Division, Baptist World Alliance (Franklin: Provident House, 1999), pp. 24-5.

29. The universal communion of the church of Jesus Christ may be aptly called ‘catholic’. Catholicity, deriving from a Greek word meaning ‘wholeness’ or ‘inclusiveness’ is to be understood both as the fullness of God’s self-manifestation in Christ and as the final destination of the gospel message in reaching and transforming all people. Catholicity is thus not a static possession of the church but is actively sought in the mission of evangelization, which aims at the proclamation and reception of the fullness of the gospel throughout time and space.

30. Both Baptists and Catholics consider themselves ‘catholic’ (lower-case-c) in the sense above, while the term ‘Catholic’ (upper-case-C) is used in this report to denote the Catholic Church that recognizes the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Catholicity is expressed when the message of Christ is proclaimed in a wide variety of languages and thought forms, when the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper is celebrated by peoples of many cultures, races and nations, and when ministry enjoys and serves communion both locally and at wider regional and world-wide levels.

31. The idea of catholicity functions, however, somewhat differently in the two traditions. Catholics think that the fullness of the Gospel as revealed in Christ must imply a fullness of the church, in the sense of a fully visible and organic unity and a universal extension to all people in time and space. Baptists certainly affirm the need for the church to be a stable reality in the midst of an unstable world. However, while striving to grasp the fullness of the mind of Christ, and having a hopeful vision of the universal church in its final completion, Baptists see the church here and now as sinful, in need of continual reformation, not yet fully unified, and having invisible as well as visible aspects (cf. §25 above).

32. Just as Christ is the source of the unity in the catholicity of the church, so Christ is the source and goal of the holiness of the church and its members. The final goal of the church is union with Christ, the all-holy one, in the communion of saints.

33. While Catholics and Baptists are agreed on the Christological basis and eschatological completion of holiness (Eph 5:25-7), they differ in the way they articulate the relationship between the holiness of the church as a body and the holiness of the individual members of the church. While both Catholics and Baptists affirm the sinlessness of Christ, only Catholics draw the conclusion that the church, in union with Christ and as his body, must also be sinless in herself.<sup>36</sup> Catholics express it in this manner: ‘While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled knew nothing of sin, but came to expiate only the sins of the people, the church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and

always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal’.<sup>37</sup> This means for Catholics that the church as such realizes and generates embodied holiness, while still entering upon a path of constant renewal as a pilgrim community because of the sins of her members. Baptists agree that holiness is the goal of the church as a pilgrim community, but they tend to place more emphasis on the as-yet unrealized nature of the church’s holiness, equating the state of the church with the imperfect holiness of its members who are ‘sinners and at the same time justified’.<sup>38</sup>

### III. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

34. The report of the conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, 1984-88, was able ‘to articulate [a] shared response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as this has been given to us in the Bible and in the faith and practice of our respective communities’ (report, §4). Yet it acknowledged substantive differences in the manner in which the two communions understand the relationship between the canon of Scripture and the traditions of the communities that interpret it. Accordingly the report listed ‘Theological Authority and Method’ first among five areas of the conversations in need of continued exploration. The paragraphs that summarize these differing configurations of authority and call for further discussion of them provide the appropriate point of departure for this section of the present report:

These conversations between Baptists and Roman Catholics have frequently surfaced different views and uses of theological authority and method. The theoretical reason for that is clear: Baptists rely on Scriptures alone, as interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Reformation principle. Roman Catholics receive God’s revelation from the Scriptures interpreted in the light of the tradition under the leadership of the magisterium, in a communal process guided by the Holy Spirit.

In fact, however, the differences are not as sharp as this formulation would suggest. At the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church dealt carefully and in detail with the relationship between Scripture and tradition (“Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” 2). It endeavored to reach and express an understanding of the relationship between Scripture, tradition and the teaching office of the church (magisterium). Each of

<sup>37</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 8, citing Heb 7:26, 2 Cor 5:21, and Heb. 2:17.

<sup>38</sup> So Luther: *simul justus et peccator*.

<sup>36</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 39.

these has its own place in the presentation of the truth of Jesus Christ. The place of one is not identical with that of the other, yet in the Roman Catholic view these three combine together to present divine revelation. On the other hand, Baptists invoke the Baptist heritage as decisively as Roman Catholics cite tradition, usually disclaiming that it bears the same authority as Scripture but holding on to it vigorously nonetheless ... The key issue needing discussion here is that of development of doctrine. (§§ 38-39)

When the Catholic and Baptist delegations met eighteen years later for a new series of conversations, participants were able to identify a deepened and striking convergence on the nature of Scripture as the inspired Word of God and its central place in the life of the church, along with a mutual welcome for two developments that surfaced during this new phase of dialogue: a more appreciative assessment of the value of tradition and its relation to Scripture by the *Baptist* participants and a more critical approach to tradition in its relation to Scripture by the *Catholic* participants.

#### *The place of Scripture in the life of the church*

35. In sacred Scripture the Word of God has been put down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, announcing the gift of salvation. Scripture is thus central to the life of the church, which shares in the *koinonia* of the triune God. The Scriptures that contain the Word, bear witness to the Word, and are a form of the Word of God are active in the church today. They offer guidance to the community God has gathered together and enable its members to share in the ministry of Christ by the power of the Spirit to the glory of God. The church in all of its aspects including its ministry stands under the Word of God. The Word of God assumes various forms in the world through the spoken word of preaching, through the written word of the Scriptures, through baptism and the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper), through the events of God's action in history and in the witness of faithful believers.

36. As is evident in the common affirmations above, we discovered that it was impossible to address the themes of the Word of God, revelation, Scripture, and authority apart from their ecclesiological dimensions. The previous section of the report has already highlighted some convergences and divergences in an understanding of the church. Now we must observe that the inseparability of the Word of God, and its transmission, from the community to which divine revelation is entrusted means that the differing ecclesiologies of Catholics and Baptists necessarily result in differentiated understandings of the function of Scripture in the life of the church. Nevertheless, the Catholic and Baptist participants in these conversations were also able to find significant agreement regarding the use of

the Bible in the church. For instance, both Catholics and Baptists affirm a teaching authority in the church, but they conceive of it differently, the one finding it in the *magisterium* and the other in the local *congregation* (a difference explored in detail below, §§49 and 61).

**37. The Bible is the divinely-authorized written norm for faith and practice, but this normativity of Scripture is principally located in the worship of the church, from which its life and mission grows. The Bible was canonized by and for the worshipping community, and it comprises those writings that are suitable for reading, preaching, and supplying the narrative content of other acts of worship that recall and represent (in *anamnesis*) the mighty acts of God in the past. Both Catholic and Baptist patterns of worship presuppose that sacred Scripture is the source of the story of the triune God in which worshippers participate.**

38. Scripture has a central place in the liturgy and worship of the church because it recounts the history of salvation which is the story of the mission of the triune God in the world [1 Tim 4:14]. Likewise both Baptists and Catholics use Scripture in declaring the *kerygma* or the good news about Christ. We also agree in the catechetical use of the Scriptures, by which Christians are formed in the faith [2 Tim 3:16-17]. This agreement finds practical expression in cooperation in the translation and dissemination of the Scriptures.

39. The phrase '*written* norm' is deliberately used above, since Christ himself is of course the final authority for the beliefs and life of the Christian church, as the personal and incarnate Word to whom the Scriptures bear reliable testimony. Aptly, the Declaration of Principle of one Baptist union states that 'Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures'.<sup>39</sup> We may say that the Lord of the church is encountered in worship, and this encounter is enabled by the Scriptures which bear witness to him and which themselves shape that worship.

40. For both Baptists and Catholics the liturgical function of Scripture might be expressed as the 'sacramentality' of the word. While Baptists are less likely to use this kind of language, they do recognize the saving activity of the Word made flesh in reading, preaching and sharing Scripture, and the human possibility of encountering the Triune God through this means of grace [1 Cor 1:21]; it is this to which the term 'sacramental' refers. Scripture is essential to worship in both traditions. A weekly Eucharist is normative in Catholic parishes, in which the liturgy is permeated by Scripture in a similar way to Baptist use of the Bible in readings,

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<sup>39</sup> Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, clause 1, in Keith Parker, *Baptists in Europe: History and Confessions of Faith* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), p. 36.

prayers and hymns, even where the Lord's Supper is not celebrated. In addition there are Catholic services such as the hours of the divine office in which the liturgy of the word is the primary 'place' where the divine reality narrated in the biblical story of the Triune God is made present. Baptists are able to concur with the Catholic teaching that '[i]n the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them.'<sup>40</sup>

**41. 'God is the author of Sacred Scripture'.<sup>41</sup> The church 'accepts as sacred and canonical all the books of both the Old Testament and the New, in their entirety and with all their parts, in the conviction that they were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ... and therefore have God as their originator: on this basis they were handed on to the church'.<sup>42</sup>**

42. Alongside the divine origin of the Scriptures, Baptists and Catholics also recognize that God has given the Scriptures to the church through human instrumentality. While avoiding the suggestion that there is an actual incarnation of Christ in the written Scriptures (which can result in a simple equivalency between the authority of Christ and Scripture), we can use a Christological analogy to express the truth that Scriptures are both divine and human in authorship. Thus, in interpreting Scripture, a failure to give sufficient attention to the historical and cultural factors involved in their human composition can result in a 'Docetic' (or at least a 'one-nature') view of Scripture, in which they only 'appear' to be human. Correspondingly, a failure to appreciate their divine authorship results in an 'Ebionite' approach to the Bible, in which they are 'merely' human. Both Catholics and Baptists have experienced turmoil over the proper role of historical and critical investigation in the interpretation of Scripture. Each communion has labored to develop adequate ecclesial responses to the challenges of modernity, but in the main, both communions seek to practice a kind of 'Chalcedonian reading' of Scripture, just as they hold to a 'Chalcedonian Christology'. As the Council of Chalcedon confesses that 'we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man', by analogy we can hold the Scriptures as both human and divine. A 'Chalcedonian reading' thus has a proper place for the use of historical-critical, cultural-critical and literary-critical tools in discerning human instrumentality in the gift of the Scriptures to the church; yet it recognizes the shortcomings of all such

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<sup>40</sup> *Dei Verbum* 21.

<sup>41</sup> CCC 105; so also *The New Hampshire Confession* (1833), i, in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 361-7, and the (Southern) Baptist *Faith and Message* (2000), I, accessed at [www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp](http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp): 'it has God for its author'; the 2000 version of the *Faith and Message* here repeats the phrasing of the versions of 1925 and 1963.

<sup>42</sup> *Dei Verbum* 11.

interpretation when it is exercised apart from the reading of Sacred Scripture in the church.

43. The activity of the Holy Spirit among the people of Israel and in the church of Christ, inspiring the writing of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, has also led these communities to discern these Scriptures as having canonical authority for faith and practice.

44. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* specifies that 'it was by the Apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books'.<sup>43</sup> Baptists customarily affirm the providence of the Spirit in 'preserving' Scripture during the history of the church. However, they do not always explicitly affirm that the Spirit who was active in inspiring the Scriptures was also working in the ecclesial tradition that recognized the canon of Scripture. Yet, despite this reticence, Baptists *assume* the providential guidance of the Spirit in the church's discernment of the canon since, with Catholics, they regard the canon of Scripture as the written norm for faith and practice on the grounds of its being divinely-authorized rather than an historical accident. Therefore both Catholics and Baptists recognize that the canon of Scripture has some relationship to 'traditioning' processes in the life of the church in the first few centuries after the writing of the New Testament documents, and in this recognition they trust that the Spirit has guided these processes.

45. Nevertheless, the Baptist affirmation of the canon of Scripture differs from the Catholic identification of the canon: Baptists exclude from the canon of the Old Testament the deuterocanonical books included in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and listed by the fourth session of the Council of Trent. When Baptists declared in their early confessions that 'the books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon (or rule) of Scripture',<sup>44</sup> they vested authority in the shorter canon they received from streams of the Protestant Reformation that preceded the Baptists. Yet many Baptists recognize that the deuterocanonical books are important for an understanding of the historical context of primitive Christianity, and some even appreciate their value as devotional literature to be read alongside the Protestant form of the Bible.

**46. Baptists and Catholics insist that the Old Testament and the New Testament together form a coherent story that requires a Christ-centered interpretation.**

47. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 'Christians ... read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen'.<sup>45</sup> The *Catechism* further

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<sup>43</sup> CCC 120.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. in the *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), I:3, reproduced in the *Philadelphia Confession* (1742).

<sup>45</sup> CCC 129.

quotes from Hugh of St. Victor, that ‘ “All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ, because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ” ’.<sup>46</sup> Baptists likewise read the Bible in this Christocentric fashion. For example, the 1963 version of the Southern Baptist Convention’s *Baptist Faith and Message* declares that ‘The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ,’ and according to language that replaced this phrase in the 2000 revision of the same confessional statement, ‘All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.’<sup>47</sup> Taken together, the 1963 emphasis on the Christocentric ‘criterion’ and the 2000 emphasis on the testimony of the whole of Scripture to Christ exemplify the way in which Baptists share with Catholics a commitment to reading the entire Bible as a coherent story centered on the person of Christ.

48. The Bible can and should be read by individual Christians on their own. Yet this reading should not be isolated from interpretation by the community which is indwelt by the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures.

49. Catholics believe that the Spirit has guided them to locate the communal interpretation of Scripture in the historically extended ecclesial community that is represented by its episcopal leadership: ‘The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God ..... has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the church whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. The teaching office is not above the Word of God but serves it ...’<sup>48</sup> ‘This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.’<sup>49</sup> Baptists also locate the communal interpretation of Scripture in the ecclesial community, but primarily in the form of the gathered local congregation.<sup>50</sup> This practice of ‘congregational hermeneutics’ can be traced back to the time of the early Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation.

50. Both Baptists and Catholics agree on affirming the ancient practice of reading the Bible according to multiple senses, which include the literal and spiritual senses. The spiritual sense of Scripture, grounded in the literal or ‘plain’ sense, facilitates its devotional use by individuals in local communities. The personal application of the Bible to one’s daily life (what was termed the ‘tropological’ or moral sense in the ancient church) is a vital support to the faith of the believer. Devotional

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<sup>46</sup> CCC 134.

<sup>47</sup> *Baptist Faith and Message* (1963), 2, accessed at [www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/history/bfam.stm.txt](http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/history/bfam.stm.txt); *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000), 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Dei Verbum* 10, also quoted in CCC 100.

<sup>49</sup> CCC 85.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. *Declaration of Faith* (Amsterdam: 1611), 19; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XLV; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.11, 15.

reading on the part of individuals should not be confused with private, isolated interpretations of Scripture. In fact, there should be continuity between the devotional nourishment by Scripture on the part of the single believer and the corporate interpretation of God’s Word which takes place in preaching, group Bible study, and reflection on scripture by the people of God seeking guidance for their life together; in this way, communal interpretation of Scripture contributes to the formulation of the normative doctrines of the Christian community.

51. Catholics and Baptists hold in high regard the principle of catholicity in the interpretation of the Bible and its embodiment in the life of the church.

52. Catholicity – understood as wholeness, universality, and inclusivity – implies an openness to the needs and gifts of the world and the expectation that all people are called to participate in the new creation brought about by Jesus Christ and the Spirit (on the meaning of ‘catholicity’ see §§29-31 above). Scripture is read and used in the light of this vision, so that in interpreting scripture it is important to know how churches in different parts of the world and in a variety of social, cultural and political circumstances hear the Word of God addressed to them.

53. Baptists and Catholics agree that the proper reading of the Bible should lead to the proper behavior of the Christian community.

54. The paradox inherent in biblical images of the church as hearer of the Word – for example, the church as the body of Christ and bride of Christ – is that despite being shaped by the Word, believers may still fail to act justly in the world. Instances of this paradox that come immediately to mind are the moral failures of many white Christians in South Africa in the era of apartheid, or in the Southern States of America and in the West Indies during the period of slavery; public apologies have rightly been made for such immoral behavior. Discussion of this tragic situation involves differences between Catholic and Baptists about whether the church as well as its members is sinful (see §33 above).

#### *The relation of Scripture and tradition*

55. Because of their historic insistence on the normativity of Scripture as the only trustworthy written rule for faith and practice, Baptists have historically tended to pit Scripture against tradition<sup>51</sup> and often have manifested an antipathy toward all post-biblical tradition. While this historical tendency continues to figure prominently in some contemporary attempts to articulate Baptist identity, a noteworthy trend in Baptist theological scholarship since the 1984-1988 conversa-

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<sup>51</sup> The meaning of this term emerges in the following discussion: see esp. §59.

tions has made it possible for Baptist participants in the current phase of conversations to express an appreciation for the value of tradition in the church's ongoing efforts to embody the teachings of the Scriptures in the present; consequently the Catholic participants were able to discern a convergence toward some sense of a shared tradition. This trend has been largely limited to a small number of Baptist academic theologians, however,<sup>52</sup> and does not represent a movement of large numbers of Baptist churches and their members toward a conscious embrace of the authority of tradition.

At the same time, the Baptist participants were able to discern in the contributions of members of the Catholic delegation a critical approach to the formation of tradition that defied stereotypes that many Baptists have of the nature of Catholic tradition. Presentations, responses, and comments by Catholic participants made it clear to the Baptist delegation that in Catholic perspective, tradition is developed<sup>53</sup> through human instrumentality in a process that requires dialogue and the taking into account of various voices within the church — not only the voices of the pope and the bishops but also of theologians, including lay theologians, and the laity itself — in order to discern what is truly authoritative in the tradition. A more appreciative assessment of the value of tradition exemplified by Baptists and a more critical approach to tradition by Catholics has made it possible for us to articulate a substantial common understanding of the relation of Scripture and tradition (as indicated below) even while identifying our differing sensibilities or remaining disagreements about the relation of Scripture and tradition.

**56. The Bible is the written embodiment of a living tradition (*paradosis*) which is handed down through the work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people of God. The source of this process of transmission is the living Word of God, Jesus Christ.**

57. The inspired text of Sacred Scripture is rooted in the handing on of the good news that Jesus is the risen Lord and Son of God, along with the teachings and way of life which he imparted to his disciples. The New Testament emerged over a period of time under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who not only inspired the authors who put into words its various books but also guided the process of handing on the Gospel within the apostolic community. A similar process also guided the writing of the Old Testament. This process implies that oral traditions were present before the formation of Scripture, a fact on which Baptists and Catholics are agreed.

The Bible is thus the church's book and is to be read and understood first of all in the midst of a community of believers. Although Scripture is the principal

and inspired witness to the Word of God, it is nevertheless never *read* 'alone', that is, never without the context of a community which translates it, proclaims it and interprets it, using other written sources.<sup>54</sup> Tradition for both Baptists and Catholics plays some form of didactic role. Creeds, confessions, preaching, catechesis, liturgy and worship all work together in the active process of the handing on the gospel. They all provide useful norms for Christian life. In receiving God's Word, the church receives also the mission to evangelize all people; the Bible is not only the church's book, but the church's book for the whole world.

**58. There is a certain 'co-inherence' of Scripture and living tradition, in the sense of a mutual indwelling and interweaving of one in the other. They should not be considered as two separate and unrelated sources, but as two streams flowing together which issue from the same source, the self-revelation of the triune God in Christ.**

59. On the basis of such mutual indwelling of Scripture and tradition, one can also distinguish between 'tradition' as the living gospel of Jesus Christ (sometimes expressed as 'Tradition-with-a-capital-T') and 'traditions' as the various forms by means of which the gospel finds expression in particular historical and cultural situations. Identifying whether a particular tradition is truly the living tradition of Christ can still raise problems. However, we agree that the Bible is to be used as a norm to critique and evaluate all traditions in order to distinguish which are merely human traditions and which are authentic expressions of the gospel [cf. Mk 7:5-13].

60. While Catholics and Baptists agree on the normativity of scripture, they admittedly have different sensibilities as they approach the issue of the *relation* of Scripture and tradition. Indeed, they have very different experiences in their respective histories on this matter. Both have known the antagonisms between, and oppression of, Christian communities in the aftermath of the Reformation.

Baptists experienced a denial of religious liberty by state churches, which made them suspicious of traditions in general. The same suspicion toward tradition can also arise as a result of either a narrow Biblicism or, at the other end of the spectrum, a rationalism of the type fostered by the Enlightenment. The emphasis upon knowledge of Scripture is an unmistakable characteristic of Baptist life and tradition, where Baptists constantly appeal to the authority of the Bible. However, Baptists themselves confess that they have not always used their acquaintance with the Bible for the purpose of being conformed to the image of Christ.

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<sup>52</sup> For a useful summary of this trend, see Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity. Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), chapters 1, 3.

<sup>53</sup> See *Dei Verbum* 8.

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<sup>54</sup> This perception overcomes the historic opposition between '*scriptura sola*' (scripture alone) and '*scriptura numquam sola*' (scripture never alone).

Catholics were guided during the period after the Reformation by leaders who had a heightened awareness of the dangers of private interpretation of Scripture. Because of this, it is fair to say that, between the Councils of Trent and Vatican II, the popular reading of the Bible by Catholics did not receive the encouragement that it deserved. Relatively few resources were offered to lay Catholics who wanted to encounter the Word of God in Scripture. Despite the insistence by the Second Vatican Council upon the necessity of being nourished by familiarity with Scripture, it must be admitted that some Catholics still have not embraced the rightful role and authority of Scripture in their lives, especially by means of such practices as reading the Bible in the family. Obviously, both communities can honestly admit to some shortcomings.

61. Catholics and Baptists have different conceptions of the authority to interpret Scripture. As noted above, Catholics maintain that the Bible as a whole is authoritatively interpreted by the official teaching office of the church (*magisterium*) as exercised by the bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome. Baptists maintain that a local congregation of believers has the responsibility and freedom to interpret the Bible under the rule of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, always remembering that it is in covenant with other churches. Despite this exercise of ‘congregational hermeneutics’, the conscience of the individual cannot be coerced or compelled to accept the interpretation of Scripture proposed by the local congregation and denominational bodies. No formulation in any church teaching has the same binding force as Scripture. At the same time, the congregation has the obligation to test insights into Scripture brought forward by individual Christians.

62. Thus, it can hardly be denied that Catholics and Baptists have different approaches to the nature of tradition. Baptists tend to speak more about ‘faith and practice’ than about ‘tradition.’ Most Baptists acknowledge those traditions that support the primacy of Scripture, but some still want to deny traditions altogether. For their part, Catholics stress that tradition is nothing less than the handing down of *revelation* in words and deeds. In our conversation together, some convergence was, however, assisted by paragraph 9 of Vatican II’s ‘Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation’ (*Dei Verbum*), which reads:

Hence sacred tradition and scripture are bound together in a close and reciprocal relationship. They both flow from the same divine wellspring, merge together to some extent, and are on course towards the same end. Scripture is the utterance of God as it is set down in writing under the guidance of God’s Spirit; tradition preserves the word of God as it was entrusted to the apostles by Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit, and transmits it to their successors, so that these in turn, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, may faithfully preserve, expound and disseminate

the word by their preaching. Consequently, the church’s certainty about all that is to be revealed is not drawn from Holy Scripture alone; both scripture and tradition are to be accepted and honored with like devotion and reverence.<sup>55</sup>

It was agreed in our discussion that this statement meets many concerns of Baptists about the priority of scripture over tradition, and the need for tradition always to stand under the correction of scripture (an exception to this agreement is noted below, in §65). In his commentary on *Dei Verbum*, Joseph Ratzinger stressed the difference as well as the unity between Scripture and tradition: ‘it is stated that Scripture *is* the Word of God consigned to writing. Tradition, however, is described only functionally in what it *does*: it hands on the Word of God, but is not the Word of God’.<sup>56</sup> Tradition is the dynamic process of transmission, ‘preserving, expounding and spreading abroad’ the Word of God. It is not in itself a set of revealed truths which are supplementary to Scripture and which have no basis in scripture; rather, the Constitution affirms that the process of tradition increases ‘certainty’ about the meaning of revealed truths, as the scriptures are read in the communion of saints within the church. The phrase that certainty in faith comes ‘not .... from the holy Scriptures alone’ (*non ... per solam sacram scripturam*) is intended to acknowledge the way that tradition can contribute to our certainty about the meaning of the gospel. In confessing a trinitarian faith, for example, Baptists are dependent on post-biblical development of doctrine, i.e. tradition, for their ‘certainty’ about the triune nature of God. One Baptist theologian urges that ‘Baptists who ... insist on a clearly articulated doctrine of the Trinity, often using terms easily traceable to the patristic age, would do well to affirm *suprema Scriptura* [‘scripture as supreme’] rather than an unqualified *sola Scriptura* [‘scripture alone’].<sup>57</sup> There are, of course, other doctrines that have emerged in the course of tradition for which Baptists will not find a basis in Scripture in the same way.<sup>58</sup>

**63. Apostolic tradition, transmitted by the apostles, is handed on over the course of time by the church, which seeks ever to grow in understanding it more completely. It is to be distinguished from those subsequent traditions which are merely ecclesiastical. Only apostolic tradition is normative**

<sup>55</sup> *Dei Verbum* 9.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Chapter II, The Transmission of Divine Revelation’, in Herbert Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 3, trans. Lalit Adolphus, Kevin Smyth and Richard Strachan (London: Burns & Oates, 1967-69), p. 194.

<sup>57</sup> James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 181.

<sup>58</sup> Examples noted in this report are some of the Marian doctrines, and the doctrine of the infallibility of the teaching office of the church.

## before, during and after the formation of the canonical Scriptures.

64. In giving primacy to apostolic tradition, Catholics judge that some teaching of the church can be recognized as ‘apostolic’ when it faithfully clarifies the earlier teaching of the apostles. For example, the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon that Jesus Christ is ‘truly God and truly human’ is a trustworthy witness to the apostolic message about Christ, while it is later than the time of the apostles. In principle Baptists can agree with this understanding, though they may question some claims that particular post-biblical developments of doctrine are trustworthy witnesses to the apostolic message about Christ.

65. Vatican II reaffirms the teaching of Trent on the close connection and communication between Sacred Scripture and tradition, but does so within the context of a deeper understanding of both and how they are interrelated. *Dei Verbum* §9 states that ‘for Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is con-signed to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.’ However, one phrase stands out in *Dei Verbum* 9 which it seems Baptists cannot accept, namely: ‘both scripture and tradition are to be accepted and honored with like feelings of devotion and reverence’. This view of tradition goes beyond what Baptists confess and seems to conflict with what they affirm regarding the inspiration of Scripture alone and its sufficiency. In further exploring this theme, nevertheless we found that both the Council of Trent and Vatican II included Catholic bishops who voiced the same concern that Baptists would have about attributing ‘like devotion’ to Scripture and tradition, that is, the potential danger of obscuring the unique authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God.<sup>59</sup> We noted that it was never the intention of the bishops at either council to call into question the inspiration and primacy of Scripture. In both councils, moreover, the bishops embraced the crucial distinction between apostolic tradition and merely ecclesiastical traditions. Normative tradition stems from the apostolic church of the time of the apostles, the primitive community which received the fullness of revelation in Christ. Such views, expressed in the debates and sometimes echoed in the final texts of Trent

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<sup>59</sup> For example, in the vote of the general congregation of 1 April 1546 there were thirty three votes for a statement on the parity of Scripture and tradition (*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*) but also eleven votes in favor of replacing *pari* (like) with *simili* (similar): see Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Ernest Graf (St. Louis: Herder, 1961), vol. 2, p. 82.

and Vatican II, are more congenial to the Baptist understanding of the relation of Scripture and tradition.

66. There are questions that remain to be resolved on the relation between revelation, Scripture, tradition and proclamation, but these are as much issues within each communion as issues that divide us.

67. One open issue concerns the ongoing self-disclosure of God. Both Baptists and Catholics think that ‘public’ revelation, or revelation whose content is to be proclaimed as essential to the gospel and of universal relevance to all people, ended with the death of the last apostle. But this needs to be aligned with the conviction that God still speaks today in the acts of reading scripture and proclamation (preaching) of the gospel, insofar as these offer an encounter with a self-revealing God. This issue has a bearing on the nature of revelation within tradition, and recalls the recent Catholic account of tradition as being that ‘God who spoke of old still maintains an uninterrupted conversation with the bride of his beloved Son,’ the church.<sup>60</sup> It also makes more urgent the finding of a method for using the criterion of scripture to distinguish authentic and legitimate development of the original revealed message from illegitimate ‘accretion.’

68. Connected with the affirmation that ‘God speaks today’, we several times noticed during our conversation a possible correlation between *tradition* as emphasized by Catholics and *preaching* as given prominence in worship by Baptists. In preaching, the Word of God as originally given becomes newly alive in the present situation, in a form which is suitable for the particularities of history, social context and culture. In the relation between Scripture and preaching there may be a clue to the relation between Scripture and tradition. To this end, further reflection on the theology of proclamation is needed. Baptists may also find a hint in their own early history, when it was common to have two periods of teaching and preaching in a service of worship – a strict exegesis of Scripture and a more ‘prophetic’ application of the Word to the present situation – which again seems to be relevant to the relation between Scripture and tradition.

69. We agree that conscience needs to be formed in order to hear the Word of God clearly. In the Catholic perspective the education of conscience is a life-long task and ‘guarantees freedom’; in the formation of conscience the Word of God is a ‘light for our path’ (Psa 119).<sup>61</sup> Baptists have always defended freedom (or ‘liberty’) of conscience in the service of advocating freedom of religion, believing that conscience can be a means of standing under the rule of Christ.<sup>62</sup> From their beginning Baptists have called for freedom of

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<sup>60</sup> *Dei Verbum* 8; CCC 94.

<sup>61</sup> CCC 1783-5.

<sup>62</sup> See *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XLIX-LII; *Brief Confession* (London: 1600), XXIV.

conscience before God not only for Christians but for those of every religion and none.<sup>63</sup> They also recognize that conscience can become distorted, so that it is inviolable but not infallible. However, as yet our communions have not sufficiently explored together the relation of conscience to the reception of church *doctrine*. The issue of conscience is connected with the ‘reception’ of tradition and wider teaching by the local church and the local congregation and this needs much more reflection.

70. The question of the difference between the ‘living tradition’ of Christ and human ‘traditions’ can look quite different from the perspective of the global South, in comparison with North America and Europe; the insights of flourishing African Christianity, for instance, will increasingly need to shape our thinking in the future. We must ask ourselves whether the cultural presuppositions of the global North and the modern West precondition our understanding of tradition. In general, we need to reflect on the way that a given context determines how we understand both the nature and the content of tradition.

71. Both of our communities acknowledge the need to learn from the world as well as to learn within the church. God is free to speak God’s Word through whatever means in the world God wishes, and so the question arises as to how one discerns what Karl Barth called ‘the secular parables of the Kingdom’,<sup>64</sup> or what Vatican II calls ‘the signs of the times’.<sup>65</sup> Other questions are how one can avoid confusing the Word *with* culture, even though we can discern the Word *in* the culture, and how hearing the Word in the world affects the development of tradition.

We think that it is a mark of the progress Baptists and Catholics have made in their discussion of Scripture and tradition that the set of unresolved questions above (§§ 67-71) takes the ‘missional’ form it does, rather than the more conventional disputes that have divided Christian communions in the past.

#### IV. BAPTISM AND LORD’S SUPPER OR EUCCHARIST: THE VISIBLE WORD OF GOD IN THE KOINONIA OF THE CHURCH

##### *The meaning of sacrament and ordinance*

72. The report of the earlier conversations between Catholics and Baptists (1984-88) identified the relation

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<sup>63</sup> See Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (Amsterdam: 1612), p. 69 : ‘... for men’s religion to God, is betwixt God and themselves; the King shall not answer for it, neither may the King be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.’

<sup>64</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, transl. & ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-77), IV/3, pp. 113-17.

<sup>65</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* 4.

between faith and sacraments – which the report noted are ‘called “ordinances” by most Baptists’ – as a key problem to be dealt with in the future. In our present conversations we have sought to address this issue in the context of our main theme of ‘The Word of God in the Life of the Church.’ On the one hand, the development of convictions about the nature of sacraments or ordinances belongs to the larger context of the relation between Scripture and tradition which we have explored above. On the other, sacraments or ordinances may be understood as the ‘making visible’ of the Word of God who rules in the church, so that the same interweaving of divine grace and human faith that we find in the hearing of the Word is to be found in the bodily practices of sacraments or ordinances. Further, as the activity of the Word of God in the life of the church is grounded in the being of the Word in the triune life of God (see §§8-9), so the sacraments/ordinances are rooted in the relationships of God as Trinity.

#### **73. Sacraments/ordinances are signs through which God acts, visible signs of invisible grace or divine blessing.**

74. Catholics describe sacraments in terms of Christ’s actions through signs to make grace present. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes ‘sacraments’ thus:

‘Seated at the right hand of the Father,’ and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.<sup>66</sup>

75. Among Baptists, the term ‘ordinance’ lays stress on the fact that these acts have been ordained or instituted by Jesus Christ and entrusted to the church, to signify the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ [1 Cor 11:25; Lk 22:14-20; Matt 28:19]. Many Baptists who use the term ‘ordinance’ do so as a deliberate rejection of the term ‘sacrament’, and often they intend to differentiate themselves from what they understand to be the *Catholic* understanding of ‘sacrament’. They lay stress on the ‘remembering’ of Christ at the Lord’s table and the witness of baptism to a regeneration that has already taken place in the believer. However, in practice these Baptist Christians approach the ‘ordinances’ in a way that may seem quite ‘sacramental’ to other Christians. All Baptists approach the ordinances with reverence and expectation, are ready to pray for the activity of the Holy Spirit as they celebrate them, and will usually hope to experience God’s ‘blessing’ there, though some prefer to speak of ‘grace’ as well as blessing. They think that Christ promises to meet his disciples in the

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<sup>66</sup> CCC 1084.

waters of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper and that this meeting will change lives. The function of the ordinances as signs does not mean that they are merely *empty* symbols.

As the Baptists in this conversation have talked together, they have thus come to think that there is not an absolute difference, but a kind of overlapping of meaning between 'sacrament' and 'ordinance.' In fact, while most Baptists today prefer to speak of these acts of worship as 'ordinances' some of the confessions and writings of the early Baptists employed the language of 'sacrament';<sup>67</sup> further, whether using the term 'sacrament' or 'ordinance', they affirmed the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and the transformative grace of God in baptism in a sacramental way, while rejecting Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation and regeneration of infants.<sup>68</sup> Some contemporary Baptists have continued this earlier Baptist sacramental viewpoint. While Baptists can generally agree with the phrase in the *Catholic Catechism* quoted above, that 'Christ acts through the sacraments', they will, however, disagree with the last sentence, preferring to say only that *Christ* offers the grace that the sacraments or ordinances signify.<sup>69</sup>

76. The differing Catholic and Baptist terminology, as well as the differences among Baptists themselves, necessitates the following conventions in the present document: perspectives that are *only* Catholic will be indicated by using the term 'sacrament' on its own, whilst the term 'sacrament/ordinance' will be used to express the varying Baptist perspectives as well as Catholic and Baptist convergences.

**77. The terms 'sacrament' and 'ordinance' express both God's own gift of love (*agape*) and faith-filled human response. The sacrament/ordinance becomes the point of intersection between a divine commitment and a human commitment, where the priority belongs to God's salvific act.**

78. The Latin word *sacramentum* translates the Greek word *mysterion*, which refers to God's acts in history for the salvation of the world, especially the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his Son [cf. Col 2:2-3]. *Sacramentum* was already used in Roman times with the secular meaning of a soldier's pledge of allegiance. In their theological meaning, both terms (*mysterion* and *sacramentum*) have a complementary sense; they express at the same time the action of God (the 'mystery' of

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<sup>67</sup> e.g. *Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles* by John Smyth [General Baptist] (1609), (13), in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 100-102; *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679), XXVII.

<sup>68</sup> e.g. *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith* [General Baptist] (London: 1660), XII, in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 224-235; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXIX.1, XXX.6-7.

<sup>69</sup> That is, declining to regard the sacraments as causal in themselves, as conceived in Catholic thought. See further §§88, 90.

God's saving work) and the active and lively human response to that divine salvific act in personal commitment and freedom (the 'pledge' of faith). The term 'ordinance', which most Baptists prefer to 'sacrament', stresses institution by the command of Christ. However, this term *can* indicate both the action of God and the necessity of faith, as does 'sacrament'.

**79. Christ must be central to any account of the meaning of the sacraments/ordinances and of their relationship to the church.**

80. For both Baptists and Catholics, Christ is the originator, 'the author and perfecter' of the sacraments/ordinances.<sup>70</sup> They are united in their understanding of these acts of worship as ordained by Christ, who acts in and through them in the context of the church. The rites and signs of the sacraments/ordinances have no efficacy apart from Christ who acts through them. They not only witness to Christ in his death and resurrection, but offer an opportunity for deeper union with him.

**81. There is a co-inherence between sacraments/ordinances and the preaching of the Word of God.**

82. For both Catholic and Baptist traditions, the sacraments/ordinances proclaim what God has done in Christ; thus they function as the tangible and visible words of God in their communication of the good news of salvation.<sup>71</sup> Therefore the sacraments/ordinances not only build up the Christian community, but are also directed toward the world and its salvation as the church participates in the mission of God. Normally the sacraments/ordinances are celebrated in the context of the ministry of the Word in reading scripture and preaching.

**83. Baptism and the Eucharist/Lord's Supper are central to the life of the church.**

84. Among both Catholics and Baptists acts of worship other than Baptism and the Eucharist/Lord's Supper can also be designated as sacraments or ordinances. Further, in both communions acts of worship which are not strictly identified as sacraments or ordinances also partake of their qualities. But baptism and Eucharist/Lord's Supper retain their central place as the 'principal sacraments' or ordinances.<sup>72</sup>

Catholics number baptism and the Eucharist among seven sacraments, which include additionally confirmation, penance, the anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony. Baptists typically identify only baptism

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<sup>70</sup> Heb. 12:2; cf. the application of *auctor* to Christ in relation to the Eucharist in Ambrose of Milan in *De sacramentis* IV.4.13 and in relation to baptism by Augustine of Hippo in *Contra Litteras Petitioni* II.24.57.

<sup>71</sup> Correspondingly, see discussion of the sacrament-like nature of the preached and written Word in §40 above.

<sup>72</sup> For Catholics, these are identified as *sacramenta maiora*.

and the Lord's Supper as sacraments/ordinances, but a few Baptists also accord a similar status to foot washing<sup>73</sup> and occasionally to other rites as well. Even though Baptists do not usually identify all seven Catholic sacraments as sacraments/ordinances,<sup>74</sup> Baptists do act in ways that have some correspondence to the remaining five: they provide opportunities for the reconciliation of believers to God and one another through times of mutual confession, call for the rededication of life in worship, provide pastoral counselling or spiritual direction, pray for the sick (and sometimes anoint believers with oil), ordain ministers, and perform rites of Christian marriage. Some Baptists also offer the laying on of hands after baptism, following the practice of the early General Baptists. Baptists believe that, in these actions just described, they experience the presence and grace of Christ and commune with him, as do Catholics in the seven sacraments of their respective tradition.

**85. The sacraments/ordinances are experiences of encounter with Christ that transform the lives of those who enter into these moments of worship by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Both Catholics and Baptists affirm the full freedom of God in relation to the sacraments/ordinances, and both traditions emphasize that no experience of salvation is fully whole without the free and loving entrance of the believer into the covenantal fellowship of Christ's church, for there can be no experience of grace apart from faith.**

86. The Constitution on the Liturgy from Vatican II summarizes the purpose of the sacraments for Catholics:

The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to express a relationship of worship to God; because they are signs, they certainly also belong under the heading of teaching. They not only presuppose faith; they also nourish it, strengthen it and express it, both through words and through objects. This is why they are called sacraments of faith. It is true that they confer grace; but, while they are being celebrated, they also are very powerful in opening people up to receive this same grace fruitfully, so that they can express properly their relationship to God, and enact divine love.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Examples among contemporary groups are the 'Primitive Baptists', 'Old Regular Baptists' and 'Freewill Baptists', all in the USA, together with some Baptists in Russia (under Mennonite influence).

<sup>74</sup> There are exceptions – e.g. the Baptist theologian John Colwell, *Promise and Presence. An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), argues for the seven Catholic sacraments.

<sup>75</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 59.

87. An early confession, approved by the Baptist congregation of John Smyth in 1610, sounds many of the same notes as the modern Constitution above:

There are two sacraments appointed by Christ in his holy church .... namely the Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. These are outward visible handlings and tokens, setting before our eyes, on God's side, the inward spiritual handling which God, through Christ, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, sets forth in justification in the penitent faithful soul; and which, on our behalf, witnesses to our religion, experience, faith, and obedience, through the obtaining of a good conscience to the service of God.<sup>76</sup>

88. Baptists emphasize the freedom of God to work through the sacrament/ordinance when and where God wills, although they have confidence that God will be faithful to his promises to do so. Baptists generally reject the *ex opere operato* account of the gift of grace through the sacraments ('through the act performed', or 'by the very fact of the action's being performed'),<sup>77</sup> because they understand it to be asserting that the sacraments confer grace in and of themselves, which would infringe the freedom of God.

89. For Catholics, however, the concept of *ex opere operato* in no way intends a 'magical' interpretation of sacramental efficacy. It rather protects the objectivity and primacy of God's own action in the sacrament with respect to the minister's action, by assuring Christians of God's sovereign and gratuitous intervention in the sacraments. In Catholic teaching, the reception of the grace of the sacrament depends on the disposition of the one receiving it, on the receiver's not placing an obstacle in the way of God's grace, on the presence of faith, and on the minister's intention to 'do what the church does' and fulfill what is essential to each sacrament. Divine generosity grants the gift, and human freedom accepts it by cooperating with God, in a personal act inclusive of conversion – which implies the rejection of sin – reaching to God through faith, hope, and charity, and the will to live according to Christ. Although the sacrament cannot be fruitful apart from these dispositions, the salvific action itself gives rise to this willingness. In this sense, the grace conferred by the sacraments is 'operative': it is not a purely human contribution to sacramental efficacy, but instead is the first effect of sacramental grace. If a person should remove himself or herself from the action of grace, the sacrament becomes ineffectual, at least in what refers to sanctification. The final effect of the sacraments in each person is always the result of a harmonic ex-

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<sup>76</sup> *A Short Confession of Faith* [General Baptist/Mennonite] (1610), 28; in W. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 102-13. Spelling slightly modernized.

<sup>77</sup> CCC 1128.

change between the objective and the subjective, the gift of God and the personal attitude. The sacramental objectivity of the *ex opere operato* and the *opus operatum* ('the act performed') does not cancel human freedom, but neither does the human response give objective validity to the sacraments, which would limit God's freedom.

90. Understanding Catholic teaching on *ex opere operato* more fully enables Baptists to be able to confess with Catholics, as above, that God displays a full freedom in the sacraments/ordinances, and that 'there can be no experience of grace without faith.' Baptists will, however, remain uncomfortable with the inference drawn from the Catholic teaching of *ex opere operato* that the sacraments themselves 'confer grace', 'impart grace', 'effect grace' or 'make grace present'. They will lay stress on the teaching's own insight that God acts in the sacrament to insist that God *uses* the sacraments/ordinances to make God's self-present, as an occasion for *God's* imparting of a grace which can be nothing other than God's own gracious coming (cf. §89).

**91. The essential relationship between faith and the sacrament/ordinance involves the faith of the individual believer and the community.**

92. Both traditions affirm that faith is visibly expressed through both its public profession and through the community celebrating worship. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the sacraments as 'sacraments of faith'.<sup>78</sup> Sacraments are the word of God expressed in sacramental form. They are received in faith through a free acceptance of God's gift. Thus there is no sacramental event without faith. The sacraments express acceptance of God's word and are, thereby, a profession of faith. Faith is always both personal faith and ecclesial faith. Baptist teaching has always similarly insisted on the necessity of faith for receiving the grace of God through the sacrament/ordinance.<sup>79</sup> If Christ is personally encountered through the Lord's Supper or baptism, then a response of belief and trust is essential for the meeting to happen, although this human act is always enabled through the work of the Holy Spirit and is supported and encouraged by the faith of others.

*Baptism*

**93. We baptize in obedience to Christ's command: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matt 28:19-20). Baptism has its foundation and meaning**

**in the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology. Through baptism we are brought more deeply into the communion of the triune God, and we share in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.**

94. Baptists and Catholics can make a number of common affirmations about the doctrine of baptism, owing to our common confessions of faith about God as Trinity and the person and work of Christ which are intrinsic to baptism. For both communions, baptism is a profession of faith in God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We both acknowledge that the act of baptism provides an occasion for special encounter with this gracious God and for being drawn into the *koinonia* (fellowship) of God's relational life. We share belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was incarnate, suffered, died and rose for our salvation. We are baptized into the very baptism of Christ, which is his humble coming down low into human existence through his ministry, sacrificial death and transformative resurrection (Rom 6:3-4). Recalling the words of Jesus, 'You will be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized' (Mk 10:39), we understand the 'one baptism' of Ephesians 4:5 to be *in the first place* an immersion into the one Lord Jesus Christ ('One Lord, one faith, one baptism'), not a reference to a unified act of baptism among all Christian churches.

95. Many Baptists understand baptism to be a sign of the benefits of salvation that have *already* been received. For them, baptism is an opportunity for the exercise of God-given faith in response to a gift of salvation that God has *already* given. While this act of faith is also a moment for receiving God's gracious blessing, and so is an occasion when God brings us more deeply into the communion of God's life, this divine act cannot be understood as having any saving effect. Some Baptists, however, draw on the understanding that salvation is not an isolated moment, but an extended process of 'being saved' (as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 1:18);<sup>80</sup> so they think that through baptism we are drawn further into God because baptism is part of a whole process of being transformed by the saving grace of God which begins in the preparatory work of God in the heart and continues in conversion and baptism. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, consistently teaches that baptism efficaciously brings about the benefits of salvation.

96. We all confess with St Paul that 'in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body' (1 Cor 12:13), but among Baptists there are differing views about the relation of baptism in Spirit to baptism in water. Those who think that baptism is *only* a sign of a salvation that has already happened, and who identify 'baptism in

<sup>78</sup> CCC 1122-1126; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 59.

<sup>79</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XXXIX; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXIX.2, XXX.7; *Orthodox Creed*, XXVIII, XXXIII.

<sup>80</sup> The view of salvation as a process, including sanctification and final glorification may, of course, be shared by Baptists who do not want to include baptism as part of that process.

Spirit' with that earlier moment of regeneration, will believe that spirit-baptism always precedes the sign of water-baptism. Those Baptists who envisage baptism as part of a whole process of 'being saved' (see §95) think that baptism in water is usually simultaneous with baptism in the Spirit. They understand 'baptism in the Spirit' at the time of water-baptism to be a deeper reception of the Spirit who has already been given at the moment of conversion. Catholics simply stress that the gift of the Spirit is given in baptism, whatever the age of the recipient. Both Catholics and Baptists have groups in their communions (usually influenced by the movement for 'charismatic renewal') which speak of a 'baptism of the Spirit' at a later point than either conversion or baptism, but we understand this 'second blessing' to be a deeper reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit who has already been given.

### 97. Faith is always necessary for baptism.

98. Catholics and Baptists agree that the first directing of conscious faith towards Christ will be initiated by the grace of God and is accompanied by an act of the Holy Spirit bringing the believer into fellowship with Christ. Correspondingly, for both Baptists and Catholics, baptism is the sacrament/ordinance of this faith, and there is a large degree of agreement on the nature of faith embodied in this event. For both, the act of baptism is an affirmation of faith in the triune God into whose name Christians are baptized. Both agree that baptism involves the faith of the community, and that members can help each other's faith develop. The act of being baptized in the midst of the public prayer of the church manifests the willingness to live out faith in the context of the faith community, which receives the baptized. Both Baptists and Catholics affirm that the nature of initiation as a process (see §§101-103 below) means that the faith that one brings to baptism is not a mature one, but a faith that needs to grow and to develop. Catholics and Baptists can agree that the practice of baptism that most fully expresses its meaning is that of a believing disciple, whose faith is supported by the faith of the believing community.

99. From their understanding of the role of faith in baptism as expressed above, Baptists require among their churches that every baptism that takes place should include the personal confession of faith of those baptized. Baptists only baptize those persons who are already believing disciples, that is, at an age when they can meaningfully take on the responsibility of sharing in God's mission in the world.

100. Catholics also believe that faith is necessary for baptism, but allow the community to profess faith for an infant if the parents indicate that it is their will that the child be baptized and have the intent to raise the child in the faith of the church. Catholic parents find that this practice fits their role as nurturers of life.<sup>81</sup> By

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<sup>81</sup> CCC 1252.

its very nature infant baptism requires a post-baptismal 'catechesis', that is an engagement in a process of receiving Christian teaching and growing in faith. The whole ecclesial community bears a responsibility for the nurturing of baptismal faith.

Baptists, although they do not baptize infants, also believe that Christ calls children to himself as a sign of the Kingdom of God. They usually express this in an act of 'Presentation of Infants' in which the child is prayed for and blessed, and parents and church together make promises to bring up the child in the care and instruction of the Lord, with the hope that child will in due time come to his or her own faith in Christ. Some Baptists are increasingly understanding this wrapping of children in the prayers and nurture of the church as part of a whole process of Christian initiation.

### 101. Initiation into Christ and his church is a process wider than the act of baptism itself. We can work towards a mutual recognition of the different forms that *initiation* takes among us, as an entire 'journey' of faith and grace.

102. In conversations with other Christian communions, Baptists have recently been speaking of a process of initiation, or a 'journey of Christian beginnings'.<sup>82</sup> In strikingly similar terms the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, 'becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages'.<sup>83</sup> For adults who come to faith in both traditions, this journey begins with the church's evangelization, the proclamation of the gospel that calls a person to faith. God's call to faith comes by way of the faith community: 'But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent' (Rom 10:14-15)? Belief and acceptance of the gospel entail several steps or stages along a journey: conversion (which follows in response to the proclamation of the Gospel), then water baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, reception of the gifts of the Spirit with the responsibility to participate in God's mission in the world, and a sharing in the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper for the first time. This period of initiation is followed by life-long discipleship, which has a baptismal pattern of daily dying and rising with Christ.

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<sup>82</sup> This was a feature of earlier conversations between Baptists and Anglicans; see *Conversations Around the World. Conversations between the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance*, 44-51. Similarly, see *Dialogue between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and the European Baptist Federation (EBF) on the Doctrine and Practice of Baptism*. Leuvenberg Documents 9 (Frankfurt: Verlag Lembeck, 2005), 19-22; *Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity. Anglicans and Baptists in Conversation* (London: Church House Publishing 2005), 31-57.

<sup>83</sup> CCC 1229.

103. For Catholics, the sacraments of initiation are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The ‘journey of initiation’ as described above can include the baptism of young infants; although the sequence of stages will be different from that which happens with adults, all the elements of the journey will be present. Baptists only practice baptism when it follows conversion along the path of the journey, although this may be preceded by a long process of Christian nurture from infancy onwards (perhaps marked by the blessing of the child in the midst of the community of faith). However, Baptists and Catholics can both recognize that the processes of initiation, taken as a *whole* in both communions, are aimed at the making of Christian disciples and the deepening of each disciple’s relationship with the triune God.

We thus think that in relations between Baptists and Catholics it is more fruitful to work together towards a mutual recognition of *initiation*, rather than attempt to make an affirmation of ‘common baptism’. Baptists think that the baptism of believing disciples cannot have exactly the same meaning as the baptism of infants and hence find the notion of ‘common baptism’ to be untenable. In recent conversations with other communions, Baptists have therefore preferred to speak of a ‘common initiation,’ recognizing in others a ‘journey of Christian beginnings’ despite differences regarding baptism.<sup>84</sup> The issue of ‘common baptism’ will always run into the impasse of the nature of faith in baptism which was noted in earlier Catholic-Baptist conversations. Baptists may well recognize the place of faith in the baptism of young infants, in the sense of the faith of the parents and the church, but most Baptists will not consider this to be the kind of faith appropriate to the sacrament/ordinance of baptism. However, some Baptists are more ready than others to accept that infant baptism plus adult profession of faith is a process of initiation equivalent to the baptism of believing disciples.

104. Baptists are more easily able to recognize the ‘journey of Christian beginnings’ in those churches that baptize young infants when the process of initiation is not seen to be concluded until a person comes to a point of affirming faith in Christ for himself or herself. Baptists will thus often see the act of confirmation as an opportunity for two happenings that are otherwise associated with the baptism of a believing disciple – a personal and public profession of faith, and a receiving of gifts of the Holy Spirit for service in the world. Baptists note that the Rite of Confirmation of the Catholic Church affirms that ‘the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace.’<sup>85</sup>

105. Catholics nevertheless caution that the essence of Confirmation is not to be found in the public profes-

sion of faith, although the rite of Confirmation incorporates the profession of faith as a renewal of baptismal promises. In fact, the essence of the sacrament is not the adult profession of faith, but rather the reception of the Holy Spirit by which the confirmands are ‘endowed ... with special strength,’<sup>86</sup> and which confers a character by which the confirmands are more ‘closely bound to the Church,’<sup>87</sup> and ‘under more pressing obligation to spread the faith by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ.’<sup>88</sup> Finally, ‘confirmation is so closely linked with the holy Eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by baptism and confirmation, are incorporated fully into the Body of Christ by participation in the Eucharist.’<sup>89</sup> While the nature and requirements of confirmation may satisfy Baptist requirements for profession of faith by a disciple (although the age at which confirmation is sometimes received may still pose an obstacle for this recognition),<sup>90</sup> Catholics caution that it is essential to see confirmation as first an act of God before it is a human act of profession of faith. The emphasis is on God’s gracious initiative in acting through sacramental instrumentality. Baptists are, in principle, willing to accept this caution since for them the baptism of believing disciples is the occasion for receiving gifts of the Holy Spirit to equip them for sharing in God’s mission in the world, and this is exactly what they hope Catholics will affirm in their act of confirmation of a believer.

106. Catholics and Baptists agree that even though the process of initiation begins before baptism and continues afterwards, baptism stands as a radical stage in this journey. They concur here in a Baptist statement:

Whenever God meets us with grace, lives are transformed and relationships are given new depth. In this particular meeting place ordained by Christ, there is such a rich focus of life-giving that we can, with New Testament writers, apply to it the images of new birth or regeneration (Jn 3:5, Titus 3:5), forgiveness of sins and cleansing from sin (Acts 2:38, 1 Cor 6:11, Heb 10:22), death and resurrection with Christ (Rom 6:1-6), baptism in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13, Acts 2:38, 10:47 cf. Mk 1:9-11), deliverance from evil powers (Col 1:13), union with Christ (Gal 3:27), adoption as children of God (Gal 3:26), and membership in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3:27-28).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 11.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* See also *Ad Gentes* 11.

<sup>89</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 15 August 1972, referring to *Presbyterorum ordinis* 5.

<sup>90</sup> For example, in eastern Catholic churches confirmation accompanies baptism; see CCC 1290.

<sup>91</sup> *Believing and Being Baptized. Baptism, so-called re-baptism, and children in the church. A discussion document by the Doctrine and*

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<sup>84</sup> See note 32 above.

<sup>85</sup> Roman Ritual, *Rite of Confirmation* (OC), Introduction 1.

There is, however, a diversity of views among Baptists about the extent to which these benefits of salvation are *effected* as well as *expressed* in the act of baptism. As already indicated above (§§95-96), some understand baptism to be essentially a sign of the benefits of salvation that have *already* been received. Other Baptists, however, believe that if baptism is an encounter between the faith of the believer and the transforming grace of God, what the images of salvation express must be actually *given* in baptism (1 Pet 3:21, 'baptism now saves you .... as an appeal to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ'). However, they stress that salvation is a continuous and daily process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ ('to us who are being saved the message of the cross is the power of God' 1 Cor 1:18). Catholics invariably believe that the benefits of salvation expressed in the scripture images above are actually *effected* in baptism, though they agree that they are not to be restricted to the event of baptism.

**107. Baptism is administered, with water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and is a once-for-all event.**

108. Baptists and Catholics have substantial agreement on the manner and once-for-allness of baptism. Both communions agree that baptism is administered by water with the words 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'<sup>92</sup> We agree that immersion into water is the mode that is *most expressive* of the meaning of baptism, signifying the death and resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, Catholics do not *require* immersion, but also administer baptism by pouring water so that it flows over the candidate's head (effusion) while reciting the baptismal formula. Many Baptists also, while regarding immersion as the normative practice, will still recognize the baptism of a believing disciple that has involved effusion, as was the usual practice of early Baptists themselves.<sup>93</sup>

We also agree that baptism, rightly understood, is to be received only once, although disagreement exists on whether infant baptism is truly baptism. Most Baptists do not regard infant baptism as being baptism at all,<sup>94</sup> and so do not accept that the baptism as a believer of those baptized in infancy is a repetition of baptism. Nevertheless, some who take this view may still affirm aspects of the grace of God and human faith within in-

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*Worship Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (London: Baptist Union, 1996), pp. 9-10.

<sup>92</sup> This does not exclude a variation of words in the Eastern liturgies where the catechumen turns toward the East and the priest says: "The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>93</sup> Baptism by effusion was practiced by General Baptists from 1609 to about 1630.

<sup>94</sup> But see §110 for other views held by Baptists.

fant baptism and can recognize it as part of the journey of Christian beginnings (see §§101-103 above).

**109. In baptism we are united with other believers in the church of Christ, 'for in the one Spirit we are all baptized into one body' (1 Cor 12:13).**

110. Baptists take varying views on the relationship between baptism and the church. A first group considers that someone can be initiated into Christ and his church regardless of his or her baptism. This group can thus recognize a paedobaptist church as a true church of Jesus Christ while not recognizing its baptism, on the basis that it is faith that constitutes the church and not baptism. Some, who belong to 'open membership' churches, are thus able to welcome into membership believers baptized as infants, without requiring them to receive a second baptism. This will usually not be because of a positive evaluation of infant baptism, but because a profession of personal faith is considered to be the essential element for membership.

A second group believes that baptism cannot be separated from church membership. For this group, baptism as well as faith is required. Most of those who hold this conviction will belong to 'closed membership' Baptist churches who will insist on believers' baptism for admission into membership of their churches. However, there has always been a third group of Baptists who have combined the belief in an indissoluble link between baptism and church membership with an 'open membership' approach. In the past these would have appealed to freedom of conscience before God to accept into membership those who *themselves* believed that they had been truly baptized as infants, and whose conscientious conviction could not be denied. Recently, there is a small but growing number of Baptists willing to recognize the baptism of infants as a secondary form of baptism 'derived' from the norm of believers' baptism, while continuing themselves only to practice the normative form.

111. Catholics believe that baptism incorporates recipients into the church. Catechumens, those on the way to baptism, moved by the Spirit and explicitly desiring to be incorporated into the church, are also considered members of the church.<sup>95</sup> Baptism in a local community gives the baptized his or her ecclesial identity as a Catholic. The faith of the community that baptizes, receives, and nurtures the newly baptized in faith, and whose faith the baptized professes, determines the ecclesial identity of the person baptized. No rite of baptism specifies a name of a church or denomination into which one is baptized, for it is presupposed that one is baptized into the church of Christ. Thus ecclesial identity comes, not from the rite of baptism itself, but from the community in which baptism occurs.

112. Baptists find it difficult to agree with Catholics that very young infants are members of the body of

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<sup>95</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 14.

Christ by virtue of their baptism. Baptists hesitate to apply the term ‘member’ to very young infants before they have exercised *any* faith at all for themselves, including a simple faith suitable for a young age, holding that a member must make his or her own active contribution to the way that Christ, in the community of the church, becomes material, tangible, and visible in the world. However, young infants are regarded as *belonging* in their own way to ‘the body of Christ’ insofar as they are welcomed and embraced by the church and immersed into its prayers and ongoing pastoral care. As with the catechumenate in the Catholic Church, children who *have* come to faith and are on the way to baptism may be considered as members of the body of Christ. With baptism they become members commissioned for service in a covenanted relationship with other disciples, and so will be formally received into membership of a particular local church.

### 113. Baptism signifies forgiveness of sins and new birth.

114. Catholics affirm that the two principal effects of baptism are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit.<sup>96</sup> The newly baptized is made ‘a new creature,’ an adopted son or daughter of God who has become a ‘partaker of the divine nature,’ member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit [2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4; cf. Gal 4:5-7; 1 Cor 6:15,12:27; Rom 8:17]. Baptism is an ‘effectual sign’ and bestows sanctifying grace. Catholics interpret the gifts of baptism as the grace of justification, which includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner person.<sup>97</sup> As the consensus statement between Lutherans and Catholics in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) states, ‘By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they [sinners] are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life.’<sup>98</sup> The document then further elucidates the Catholic position: ‘Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it. The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him.’<sup>99</sup>

115. Whereas Baptists believe that baptism *signifies* new birth (regeneration) and forgiveness of sins, together with many other scriptural images of salvation,<sup>100</sup> there is a diversity of views among them about the extent to which this rich symbolism is *effected* in baptism. As already noted above (§§95-96, 106) some understand baptism to be essentially a sign of a salvation that has

*already* been received. Others, however, can discern the work of regeneration and remission of sins within baptism, because they do not think the gift of salvation can be restricted to one particular moment of conversion but understand it to be given before, during and after baptism.

### *The Eucharist/Lord’s Supper*

**116. The Eucharist/Lord’s Supper<sup>101</sup> is essential to the church. We celebrate the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper in obedience to Jesus’ command, ‘Do this in memory of me’ (1 Cor 11:24, Lk 22:19).**

117. Baptists and Catholics agree that the church cannot be the church without the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper. Likewise, there can be no Eucharist/Lord’s Supper without the church, for it is never a private or individual act, but one always done in the context of a community. Catholics believe that in a certain sense ‘the Eucharist makes the Church.’<sup>102</sup> While Baptists would mostly find this a strange expression, they agree that in the Lord’s Supper Christ unites those who receive the bread and wine with all the rest of the faithful in one body, the church [1 Cor 10:16-17]. Communion in the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper renews, strengthens, and deepens the incorporation into the church already achieved through conversion and baptism.

118. The celebration of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper is both a sign and a source of unity [1 Cor 10: 16f]. We all yearn for the time that we will be able to celebrate it together, and so we are looking both for visible unity on earth and for the final coming of the Kingdom of God. At the moment we feel the pain of not being able to share fully in the fellowship of the Lord’s table.

In the Catholic view, since a sacrament is both an act of Christ and of the church through the Spirit, ‘Its celebration in a concrete community is the sign of the reality of its unity in faith, worship and community life.’<sup>103</sup> Consequently, Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression. In addition to this principle, the Catholic Church also teaches that ‘by baptism members of other churches and ecclesial communities are brought into a real, even if imperfect communion, with the Catholic Church and that baptism, which constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn ... is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ.’<sup>104</sup> In the light of these two basic principles, ‘in general the Catholic Church permits access to its Eucharistic communion .... only to

<sup>101</sup> The word “Eucharist” means “Thanksgiving.” Although a term not popularly used by Baptists, it is often used by Catholics to refer to the Lord’s Supper.

<sup>102</sup> CCC 1396.

<sup>103</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993, 129. Hereafter, *Ecumenical Directory*.

<sup>104</sup> *Ecumenical Directory*, 129. See CCC 1399-1401.

<sup>96</sup> CCC 1262.

<sup>97</sup> CCC 1265, 2019-2020.

<sup>98</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999) 25.

<sup>99</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 27.

<sup>100</sup> See the citation from *Believing and Being Baptized, Baptist Union of Great Britain* in §106 above.

those who share its oneness in faith, worship and ecclesial life. For the same reasons, it also recognizes that in certain circumstances, by way of exception, and under certain conditions, access to these sacraments [Eucharist, penance and anointing of the sick] may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians of other churches and ecclesial Communities.<sup>105</sup>

Baptists, agreeing with Catholics that sharing in the Lord's Supper will strengthen the fellowship of believers within the church, generally have an 'open table' at which believers from all Christian communions are welcome.<sup>106</sup> A commonly-heard expression is that 'this is the Lord's table, not ours'. Although the nature of the invitation may differ from one church to another, a familiar wording would be a welcome to 'all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth'.

**119. The Bible must play a formative role in the liturgy of the Eucharist or in the order of worship of the Lord's Supper.**

120. Catholics and Baptists both affirm that Scripture informs us about the practice of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, which is structured upon the practice of Jesus as recorded in Scripture: he took, broke, and blessed bread and gave it to his disciples; he took a cup of wine, blessed it and shared it. Baptists think that taking this scriptural account as a model means sharing both bread and wine among the whole congregation. For Catholics, since the Second Vatican Council communion under both the form of bread and the form of wine may be offered to all the faithful,<sup>107</sup> although the actual practice may vary according to local directives and circumstances. Catholics hold that Christ is fully present whole and entire in each of the elements.<sup>108</sup>

At the Eucharist/Lord's Supper we also proclaim the Scriptures as expressing the faith of the church as we seek to model our lives according to God's Word. The Baptist order of worship usually centers on the reading of the 'words of institution' as recorded by Paul (1 Cor 11:23-26), and so follows the scriptural genre of narrative at this point, passing on the 'tradition' (v. 11) by telling the story to the congregation gathered. The Catholic liturgy of the mass takes the Pauline words into a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father and a prayer of consecration of the elements. While the Baptist practice stresses the scriptural element of story, the Catholic practice highlights the scriptural element of drama, enacting the breaking of bread and the lifting of the cup (which is present but may be underplayed in the Baptist form).

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<sup>105</sup> *Ecumenical Directory*, 131.

<sup>106</sup> Throughout the world an 'open table' is much more common among Baptists than 'open membership'; however, in some areas such as Brazil and Mexico the table may be restricted to Baptists only.

<sup>107</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 55.

<sup>108</sup> CCC 1390.

**121. There is a trinitarian pattern in the order of worship of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. In it the church prays to the Father in thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) as Jesus did, recalling God's acts in the history of salvation; it remembers, celebrates and participates (*anamnesis*) in the death and resurrection of the Son; and it calls upon the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) to make the presence of Christ real to his disciples.**

122. *Anamnesis* or memorial is a central key for clarifying the dimensions of sacrifice and temporality within the sacrament/ordinance. Both Baptists and Catholics have benefited from modern biblical scholarship which has stressed that 'remembering' (*anamnesis*) in Old and New Testament is not simply historical reminiscence, but a participation in the present in the mighty acts of God that are being remembered from the past.

123. Catholics understand memorial (*anamnesis*) and the invocation of the Spirit (*epiclesis*) in a strong sense. The church not only calls to mind the passion and resurrection of Christ Jesus in the Eucharist, but also 'presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.'<sup>109</sup> Catholics believe that the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the once-for-all sacrifice of the cross. It is a memorial of that sacrifice and an application of the fruits of that sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins<sup>110</sup> (cf. 1 Cor 11:23; Heb 7:24, 27). In the liturgical celebration of the events of Christ's passion, they 'become in a certain way present and real'.<sup>111</sup> Catholics believe that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice, 'not a multiplication or repetition of sacrifices'.<sup>112</sup> In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ also becomes the sacrifice of the church, the body of Christ, who participates in the offering of her Head.<sup>113</sup> Re-presenting (not repeating) the sacrifice of Christ by means of *anamnesis*, the Church is united to the sacrifice of Christ by Christ himself acting through an ordained minister. The church invokes the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) to transform the bread and wine into the sacramental body and blood of its Lord, Jesus Christ. It also prays that the Spirit may transform all those present into the ecclesial body of Christ.

124. Baptists do not agree with Catholics in all respects concerning the sacrificial character of the rite, even though they find some resonances with their account. They recognize that understanding the category of *anamnesis* in a scriptural way clarifies the Catholic insistence that the Eucharist is not a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. In their act of remembrance (*anamnesis*) Baptists also think that they are participating in the very events of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that

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<sup>109</sup> CCC 1354, 1362-1372.

<sup>110</sup> Council of Trent (1562): DS 1740.

<sup>111</sup> CCC 1363.

<sup>112</sup> CCC 1367.

<sup>113</sup> CCC 1368.

they are sharing in ‘all the benefits’ of Christ’s saving sacrifice.<sup>114</sup> However, they make a distinction between ‘sharing’ in the self-offering of Christ and ‘presenting’ the sacrifice of Christ to the Father, believing that only Christ can present himself. When they pray to God as Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) they are asking for the help of the Holy Spirit in making the act of remembrance, and asking that the Spirit may use the signs of bread and wine to bring them into closer fellowship with Christ and each other. They are not asking for the Holy Spirit to transform the substance of the bread and wine. They are happier, then, with the description of the Lord’s Supper, along with other acts of worship, as a ‘sacrifice of thanksgiving’ (*eucharistia*) [Psa 50:14, Heb. 13:15, cf. 1 Pet 2:5], or ‘a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God’.<sup>115</sup>

### 125. Christ is ‘really present’ to his disciples in the celebration of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper.

126. Catholics believe that in the Eucharist the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ through the efficacy of the Word of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus Catholics hold that Christ is ‘really, truly and substantially present’<sup>116</sup> in the fullest sense in the Eucharist, though the elements remain bread and wine to outward appearance, touch, smell and taste. This presence begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the appearances of the bread and wine subsist. For Catholics, this substantial change is ‘fittingly and properly called transubstantiation’.<sup>117</sup>

127. Baptists think that Christ, who is always present with his people, is certainly present at his table. Some Baptists think that sharing in the bread and wine makes them more aware of his presence; others think that Christ also makes *himself* more deeply and intensely present to his disciples through the use of the elements (not *in* them). As one modern Baptist confession of faith expresses it, ‘In the observance of the Supper we experience the saving nearness and fellowship of Jesus Christ, by recalling his suffering and dying for us.’<sup>118</sup> Baptists therefore do not accept any doctrine about the change of ‘substance’ of the bread and wine, and have historically rejected ‘transubstantiation’;<sup>119</sup> some have affirmed instead a ‘spiritual eating and drinking’, or being spiritually ‘nourished’ by Christ.<sup>120</sup> All lay as much emphasis on the presence of Christ in the ‘body’ of the

gathered believers who are sharing in the bread and wine as through the use of the elements themselves, appealing to the saying of St Paul that ‘because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread’ (1 Cor 10:17). In this way Baptists have found a congruence between their ecclesiology of a covenant community and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Catholics also recognize that there is a presence of Christ beyond the elements, including presence through the word read and preached, in the community of people, and in the minister presiding. However, they emphasize that Christ is most fully present in the Eucharistic elements,<sup>121</sup> expressing this in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

128. The difference in the way that Baptists and Catholics treat the elements of bread and wine after celebration shows that there is still a difference in understanding of the presence of Christ at the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper. Baptists dispose of the remaining bread and wine reverently, remembering that they have been ‘set apart’ for use in worship as a sign of the life and death of Christ,<sup>122</sup> but they do not think they have to be consumed and they do not find any meaning in reserving the bread.

129. Baptists and Catholics also differ over who presides or officiates at the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper. For Christ to be present in the sacrament, Catholics always require a priest to consecrate the elements. In the liturgy of the Eucharist the priest acts ‘in the person of Christ the head’ (*in persona Christi capitis*) with respect to Christ’s body, the church. He also acts ‘in the person of the church’ (*in persona ecclesiae*) with respect to the church’s offering of its priestly prayer to the Father. In Catholic theology, Christ is thus the principal actor in all the sacraments as well as head of the church. It is Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit who effects the change in the elements so that they become his body and blood. The ministerial priesthood sacramentally represents Christ, enabling the priest to recite effectively Christ’s words of institution in the first person singular (‘This is my body .... this is the cup of my blood’). Thus ‘in the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself present to his Church as Head of his Body....’<sup>123</sup> The priest, by reason of his ordination, is made ‘like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself.’<sup>124</sup> Because a sacrament makes present under sign that which it signifies, the sacramental priesthood makes the presence of Christ as head of the church visible in the midst of the commu-

<sup>114</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXX.1, 7; *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679), XXXIII.

<sup>115</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXX.2.

<sup>116</sup> Council of Trent, Session 13, canon 1.

<sup>117</sup> Council of Trent, Session 13, canons 2 and 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Confession of Faith of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany*, in Parker, *Baptists in Europe*, pp. 57-76, II.1.4.

<sup>119</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXX.6.

<sup>120</sup> *A Short Confession of Faith* (Amsterdam: 1610), 32; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXX.1,7

<sup>121</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

<sup>122</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXX.5: ‘set apart to the uses ordained by Christ.’

<sup>123</sup> CCC 1548.

<sup>124</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mediator Dei*, 20 November 1947, 69; *AAS*, 39 (1947) 548.

nity of believers.<sup>125</sup> Both the priestly sacramental representation of Christ and Christ's personal presence and activity in the liturgy constitute a dynamic and ongoing relationship of reciprocal participation in the sacramental event

While appreciating the Catholic stress on the personal presence and activity of Christ, Baptists nevertheless find the *necessity* of a sacramental office of ministry for celebration of the Supper to be in tension with the belief that the church is formed by the presence of the risen Christ — in the reading and preaching of the word, in the sacraments/ordinances and in the church meeting. The risen Christ stands in the congregation which is under his rule; it is his body, but he alone remains the head. As the body of Christ, the whole gathered congregation makes Christ visible. From their beginning Baptists have regarded the ordained ministry as a gift of Christ to his church, and have understood the administration of the sacraments/ordinances *normally* to be the minister's Christ-given responsibility and privilege.<sup>126</sup> The minister represents the whole church of God at the table (see further §171), helping to make clear that as the table of the Lord this is not the private table of any local congregation. But to see the office as somehow *assuring* the coming of Christ to his church in the sacraments/ordinances seems to Baptists to undermine the rule of Christ, even when it is believed (as Baptists do) that the office has been given by Christ in the first place. For Baptists, the ordained minister called by the congregation to be its pastor almost always presides at the table, if he or she is available; but today this is usually seen as a matter of good order rather than an absolute requirement, and in some circumstances a lay person can preside if this is agreed upon by the members of the local church.<sup>127</sup> While there is a divergence here with Catholic belief and practice, there is a certain convergence in the conviction that Christ *has* given the church an office of word and sacrament/ordinance.

### 130. There is a strongly ethical and eschatological dimension to the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

131. Among the dimensions of the church recognized by both Baptists and Catholics are not only *koinonia* (fellowship, communion), *kerygma* (proclamation) and *leiturgia* (service to God which includes thanksgiving or 'Eucharist'), but also *diakonia*, or service to others. These are all clearly expressed in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. This special meal compels us to share bread with others (especially the needy) as an act of both justice and compassion. Confession of sins is requisite for

celebrating Eucharist/Lord's Supper worthily for both Catholics and Baptists (1 Cor. 11:27-31), and St Paul's words make clear that this confession has particular reference to sorrow for lack of care for other people (1 Cor. 11:33-34). Both Catholics and Baptists stress the eschatological orientation of the Eucharist, celebrating the Supper 'until Christ comes'. While we experience the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as a 'Messianic banquet' in which the future is already in a sense present, our hope for the full coming of the reign of God is a motivation for working for the transformation of human society here and now.

## V. MARY AS MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH

132. 'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children' (Gal 4: 4-5). This New Testament confession calls to mind the crucial role of Mary in the mystery of the Incarnation and the communion of the church, and it requires all Christians to pay attention to how the Bible presents her. At the same time, the role of Mary remains a matter of serious contention between Baptists and Catholics.

**133. Mary has a significant place in the New Testament. She was a witness to the saving acts of Christ from his conception and birth to his death and the giving of the Holy Spirit after his resurrection. Chosen by God to be the mother of the Savior, Mary deserves to be honored and called 'blessed' (Lk 1: 42, 48) by all Christians in all times and all places. Beliefs about Mary should be rooted in Scripture, warranted by Scripture, and not contradicted by Scripture.**

134. Nevertheless, Baptists and Catholics disagree about what enjoys the warrant of scripture when it comes to Mary. Their doctrinal differences have their basis in different practical outworkings of their understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Baptists, with Catholics, find that there is explicit scriptural basis for the virginal conception (Mt 1: 22-23). Believing in the deity of Jesus Christ, they can also with Catholics confess Mary as 'Theotokos', or 'God-bearer' (Lk 1:43).<sup>128</sup> However, they do not find a scriptural warrant for what Catholics believe about her perpetual virginity (§141), immaculate conception (§147), and bodily assumption (§149). Catholics accept these doctrines as revealed by God, and as based in Scripture as it is interpreted in the ongoing life of the church.

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<sup>125</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 21.

<sup>126</sup> *A Short Confession* (Amsterdam: 1610), 24; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.8; *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679), XXXIII.

<sup>127</sup> This was already the practice in the congregation of Thomas Helwys in Amsterdam: see *Declaration of Faith* (Amsterdam: 1611), 11.

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<sup>128</sup> This was, for example, accepted by French Baptists in *Marie, Comité mixte baptiste-catholique en France*. Documents Episcopat 10 (Le Secrétariat Général de la Conférence des Evêques de France: 2009), §15.

135. Mary belongs to the Jewish people. She stands in a long line of those expecting the Messiah, at the point where Old and New Testaments meet [Gal 4: 4; Lk 2: 25-32]. Mary has a place in the genealogy of the Messiah [Mt 1: 16] and among the holy women who kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. Mary may be called 'Daughter of Israel' in that she is the mother of the one called the Son of David and insofar as she welcomes the Savior with joy and he takes up his dwelling within her. [See Zeph. 3:14-17; Joel 2:21-27; Zech 2:15, 9:9-10; Lk 1: 28-33; Lk 3:31.]

136. In their confessions of faith, Baptists have emphasized the importance of taking into account that Mary is Jewish, 'of the Tribe of *Judab*, of the seed of *Abraham* and *David*.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Catholics emphasize that Mary is the 'Daughter of Zion' (Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10) and personification of Israel, the dwelling place of God; she is thus also the image or type of the church, God's new dwelling place.<sup>130</sup>

137. A number of Old Testament passages may be interpreted as referring to Mary. Isaiah 7:14 is to be recognized as a prophetic text fulfilled in Mary's conceiving of Christ (Matt 1:22-23), and many Christian readers of the Old Testament find an implicit reference to Mary in 'the woman' of Gen. 3:15 whose son, the promised Messiah, triumphs over the Evil One.

138. A Christological reading of Scripture allows us to find types or foreshadowings of Christ in the Old Testament. In a similar way, Catholics find types or foreshadowings of Mary in the Old Testament: for example, they follow the ancient patristic tradition of interpreting Mary in light of Eve.<sup>131</sup> On the one hand, Eve who is involved in the fall is contrasted with Mary (the 'New Eve') who is involved in the coming of redemption; on the other, Eve, the 'mother of all the living,' is the prototype of Mary. Baptists differ among themselves on the extent to which typological readings for Mary may be found in the Old Testament.

139. The Gospels present Mary as a 'hearer of the Word' who responded to God's gracious initiative as an active and faith-filled disciple of her divine Son. Mary is one who heard and obeyed the word. (Lk 1:38). She 'treasured' and pondered the Word in her heart (Lk 1:29; 2:19.51). As a disciple, Mary was a woman of faith. She met the divine call with faith (Lk 1:45; 11:28) and made a complete gift of herself to God in her cry, 'let it be so' (Lk 1:38). Mary grew in faith and understanding. She was not merely a passive instrument in God's hand, but

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<sup>129</sup> See *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), IX; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), VIII.2; cf. *Brief Confession* (London: 1660), III.

<sup>130</sup> CCC 489.

<sup>131</sup> CCC 411.

was actively engaged, freely consenting to God's gracious election and eternal purpose. Mary's response to God was itself the result of grace.

140. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The virginal conception of Jesus is clearly attested in the Gospels according to Matthew (1:18-25) and Luke (1:26-38). Matthew (1:22-23) interprets the virginal conception as the fulfillment of prophecy (Is 7:14). The doctrine that Jesus was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary' is found in the Apostles' Creed and was added to the Nicene Creed at the Council of Constantinople (381).

As a sign of both Jesus' divine origin and his true humanity, Mary's virginal motherhood safeguards Christological orthodoxy. This doctrine first of all concerns the person and identity of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God who took human flesh from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of Jesus' divine origin insofar as the Virgin Mary conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit without the intervention of a human father. Jesus' birth of the Virgin Mary is also proof of his true humanity, in that he is born of a human mother. The virgin birth is an eschatological sign, that is, a sign that God is with us (Mt 1:23; 28:20), that the Messiah has come, and that the new age has begun.

141. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a virgin not only in conceiving the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit, but also in the course of giving him birth and for the remainder of her life.<sup>132</sup> Whereas the New Testament attests explicitly only to the first aspect of her virginity, the second and third aspects belong to an ancient tradition. Although both of these were disputed for a time, Catholics find that they were solidified by means of arguments appealing to Scripture during the post-Nicene period and prior to the Council of Ephesus.<sup>133</sup> The classical biblical text cited in favour of her perpetual virginity is John 19:25-27, in which Jesus entrusts his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple, since she has no other children. Mary was commonly referred to as '*Aeiparthenos*' or 'Ever-Virgin' from the late fourth century forward.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> CCC 499-500, 510.

<sup>133</sup> For instance, some patristic writers discerned Mary's virginity in the course of birth (*virginitas in partu*) by drawing an analogy with places and things consecrated to God, which could not be put to other uses, and defended it by appeal to several biblical texts, e.g. Isaiah 7:14, Ezekiel 44:2, and John 20:19.

<sup>134</sup> After Chalcedon this title was inserted into the prayers of the Eucharistic liturgy; it is found in the teaching of the Second Council of Constantinople (553), and was explicitly taught by the Lateran Synod (649), a council whose teaching was subsequently confirmed by the Third Council of Constantinople, an ecumenical council (681).

142. Although a number of the early Protestant Reformers did affirm Mary's perpetual virginity (e.g. Luther and Zwingli), Baptists do not find any basis for this in the Scriptures; according to the plain sense of the text, they usually assume that Mary delivered Jesus in the normal way, that she and Joseph lived a normal married life, and that the brothers and sisters of Jesus referred to in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament (Mk 3:31; 6:3; Mt 1:24-25; 12:46; 13:55; Lk 8:19-21; Jn 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19) were his true siblings, the offspring of their marriage. While Baptists do not think the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is rooted in scripture, some will nevertheless say that it does not directly contradict scripture, inasmuch as they think the texts cited above are capable of alternative explanations.<sup>135</sup>

**143. Mary is properly named the *Theotokos* or 'God-bearer'. The term indicates that she is the mother of the eternal Son of God according to his humanity. The title has a basis in Scripture ('the mother of my Lord', Luke 1:43) and safeguards the identity of Christ: whatever is said about Mary, including *Theotokos*, derives from what is said about Christ. Mary is the 'God-bearer' inasmuch as she is the human mother of the Son of God incarnate. To call Mary 'Mother of God' does not imply that Mary is divine or the source of Christ's divine nature, and certainly not that she is Mother of God the Father or of God the Holy Trinity.**

144. Any attempt to understand Christ apart from the mystery of the incarnation through Mary is a reduced Christology. One and the same Lord Jesus Christ, who is of the 'same substance' as the Father according to his divinity, is of the 'same substance'<sup>136</sup> with us according to his humanity by virtue of his birth from the Virgin Mary, *Theotokos*. Because the child to whom Mary gave birth is the very Son of God made man, Mary is in truth the 'Mother of God.' This teaching was affirmed at the Council of Ephesus (431) and confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon (451).

145. While Baptists affirm the content of the creeds of the first four ecumenical councils as reliable summaries of what Scripture teaches, they do not regard them, or other post-biblical statements, to be binding in the same way that Scripture is for the individual believer or for subsequent periods of church life. They therefore do not feel obliged to use the title *Theotokos*. In fact they rarely use the expression 'Mother of God' in preaching and prayer because it is easily misunderstood, and this potential for misunderstanding may explain why many Baptists have reservations about the

<sup>135</sup> e.g. Timothy George, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,' in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Mary, the Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004), pp.100-121.

<sup>136</sup> Chalcedon (451), 'Definition of the Faith,' cited in Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 86.

term itself, though not about the doctrine for which it stands. Catholics, on the other hand, commonly refer to Mary as 'Mother of God,' for example in the prayer, the 'Hail Mary.' Many Catholic theologians regard the identification of Mary as *Theotokos* as the 'fundamental principle' from which the other Marian doctrines flow. For example, her perpetual virginity signifies her total consecration, body and soul, to her role as *Theotokos*; the immaculate conception is her preparation for this role, and her glorious assumption is its logical and fitting consequence.

**146. Among all the women of the Bible, Mary has a special calling in the plan of salvation, but like every Christian, she too was elected, justified, and sanctified by God's grace (Rom 8:29-30). According to Scripture, 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Tim 2:5-6). All, therefore, are in need of redemption by Christ. Mary too has been redeemed by Christ, her Savior (Lk 1:47), by grace.**

147. Catholics, like Baptists, believe that Mary was redeemed by Christ,<sup>137</sup> but they also believe that the mode of her redemption was singular, namely, that it was by 'preservation' from original sin rather than by a cleansing from that sin after she had inherited it. They believe that from the first moment of her personal existence, by a singular grace of God, Mary was preserved from all stain of original sin by the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race. This is the dogma of the immaculate conception. It is a misconception of Catholic teaching, held by many non-Catholics, that the immaculate conception is thought to ensure the sinlessness of *Jesus* or his freedom from original sin in his subsequent birth from Mary. Correctly understood, the doctrine teaches the sinlessness of Mary: Mary is conceived immaculately to prepare her through grace to make the *response* of 'yes' to God in perfect freedom at the Annunciation.

The doctrine that Mary was preserved from original sin, the doctrine of the immaculate conception, was solemnly defined as a truth of divine revelation by Pope Pius IX (1854) after centuries of controversy.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>137</sup> CCC 491-2.

<sup>138</sup> Some of the great theologians of the Latin Church (St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and St. Thomas Aquinas) objected that the idea of Immaculate Conception could not be reconciled with faith in Christ as the universal Mediator. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, thought it necessary to affirm that Mary incurred original sin before being sanctified. Blessed John Duns Scotus responded to this objection by introducing the idea of redemption by 'preservation.' He reasoned that Christ, the perfect Mediator, is capable of a perfect act of mediation, i.e., preventing a soul from contracting original sin in the first place. This speculative insight eventually cleared the way for the formal recognition of belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception, a belief firmly held by Catholic Christians and carried forward by the annual celebration

The papal definition, far from imposing a new doctrine, was intended only to confirm that this belief about Mary's 'all-holiness' belonged to the apostolic tradition and was divinely revealed. Catholics find it to have a New Testament foundation in Luke 1:28-30: the angelic salutation which addresses Mary as *kecharitomene*, 'highly favored one', is an expression that refers to an already existing condition, and this can be understood as 'full of grace'. They find the doctrine further supported by Luke 1:42, Elizabeth's salutation which addresses her as 'blessed among women.' Mary's preservation from original sin is credited entirely to the merits of Christ (Lk 1:47) who shares with her his own victory over sin by preventing any 'stain' of Adam's sin from touching her. She is understood to be the 'elect' of God by a predestining grace (Rom 8:29 and Eph 1:4) given in view of her vocation as *Theotokos*. This doctrine has a doxological character: it praises God's gratuitous gift by which Mary freely cooperated in his saving plan.<sup>139</sup>

Catholics hold that, in addition to Mary's freedom from original sin, Mary's holiness also includes her freedom from personal sin. Mary's freedom from personal sin by virtue of her free cooperation with divine grace was at first disputed, since it was thought that she must have some sin for which Jesus died, but by the end of the fourth century, as Marian devotion spread, she was commonly called the 'all-holy' Mother of God and a consensus was reached regarding her freedom from personal sin.<sup>140</sup>

148. Baptists see no reason to believe that Mary was sinless, that is, free of either personal sin or original sin. They read the Apostle Paul's words, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23), and find no reason to regard her as an exception. In Scripture, the only person said to be exempted from sin is Jesus (Heb 4:15). He alone was perfectly holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners. According to the Bible, no other human being can claim this (Jn 8:46; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 2:3). Baptists find no biblical foundation for belief in the immaculate conception of Mary, and ask how she who never sinned could be forgiven and redeemed. Baptists do believe that Mary was the object of God's gracious election in Christ, and that she was uniquely prepared to become the mother of our Lord. However, Luke 1:28 makes no mention of Mary's conception and the Greek perfect passive participle *kecharitomene* is better rendered 'highly favored' as it expresses God's gracious regard and favor to Mary. This favor is an 'already existing condition' in the sense of her choice by God, and was shown through the coming and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35) through whom Mary, by divine grace alone, was enabled to conceive and bear the

Son of God. Baptists recognize that the Catholic teaching of the immaculate conception has been controverted through the centuries and only defined as dogma since 1854. They also recognize that it has been misunderstood by non-Catholics (see §147), and that this misconception needs to be cleared away. But along with many other Christians, Baptists think that this teaching makes it more difficult for Christian disciples to identify with Mary as an example of discipleship, growing in faith and trust through normal human conditions.

149. Catholics also believe that Mary's redemption is already complete. According to the dogma of the assumption, solemnly defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950, Christ the Lord took his mother, body and soul, into heavenly glory at the end of her earthly life.<sup>141</sup> This belief, commemorated in the church's liturgy since the late sixth century, is not based on an event attested in the Scriptures. It arises, rather, from the *sensus fidelium* ('sense of the faithful') and it celebrates the confident belief that by God's grace the *Theotokos*, from whose flesh the Son of God took his humanity, already enjoys in her whole person the risen life promised to all those who die in the Lord (Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 15:51-57). Catholics appeal to Genesis 3:15, in which the Messiah is promised victory over sin and death, in the confidence that Christ has shared his own victory over death with his mother. Baptists, however, can find no biblical or historical foundation for belief in Mary's bodily assumption, or for the belief that an exception has been made for Mary among other disciples of Christ in being glorified ahead of the end-times. As with the teaching of the immaculate conception, the dogmatic definition of the bodily assumption points to a different outworking of the relation between Scripture and tradition in our two communities.

**150. Mary is a model of discipleship in faithful listening and obedience to God's Word. Ordinary Christians are in solidarity with her as the first New Testament disciple.**

151. Baptists and Catholics agree that Mary is a member of the church and model of discipleship.<sup>142</sup> Mary heard the Word of God and said 'yes' at the annunciation, she grew in faith during her life as a pilgrim disciple and she was faithful along with others at the cross; she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit before the birth of Christ and she received the gift of the Spirit in the upper room at Pentecost. The picture of Mary as the sorrowing mother (Lk 2:35; Jn 19:25-27) is significant for both Baptists and Catholics in their discipleship, facing human sorrow and loss.

152. Catholic doctrine sees Mary as the model of all disciples, but in a particular way it finds in her — as virgin, handmaid, and mother — the archetype of the per-

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of a liturgical feast marking Mary's conception and the pious devotion of the Catholic faithful (*sensus fidelium*).

<sup>139</sup> CCC 511.

<sup>140</sup> CCC 493.

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<sup>141</sup> CCC 966.

<sup>142</sup> See *Marie, Comité mixte baptiste-catholique en France*, §63.

sonal dignity of women.<sup>143</sup> Mary of Nazareth is 'blessed among women' because God entrusted his Son to her, inaugurating the New Covenant with her free and active consent.<sup>144</sup> By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Mary entrusted herself without reserve to God, in faith, and cooperated generously in her Son's saving mission. Since 'all generations' will call her 'blessed,' Mary can be a model for women in the new circumstances of our day.<sup>145</sup>

153. Among both Baptists and Catholics, however, some are concerned about the way Mary is presented as a model of discipleship for women. They are concerned about what they perceive as an over-emphasis on the aspects of Mary's virginity and motherhood, to the exclusion of other aspects of her discipleship. They fear that emphasis on perpetual virginity can lead (often unintentionally) to a disparagement of sexuality and human passions as being inherently sinful, and that when there is an exclusive stress on women's vocation as mothers this can result in an exclusion of women from roles exercised by men in church and society. Other scripturally-based images may be employed to counteract this tendency, such as the image of Mary as prophet and liberator as portrayed in the 'Magnificat', which will have special meaning in a situation of oppression. Significantly, the Catholic Bishops of Oceania recently proclaimed Mary as 'Our Lady of Peace' since 'in Jesus Christ whom she nurtured in her womb there was born a new world where justice and mercy meet, a world of freedom and peace.'<sup>146</sup>

**154. Mary is not only a member, but also a representative figure, of the church of Christ in being specially chosen to bear witness to the Lord. Her faithfulness along with others at the cross represents the faithfulness of the church.**

155. Catholics regard Mary as the 'preeminent and entirely singular member of the Church' and a type or figure of church because of her faith, love, and intimate union with her divine Son.<sup>147</sup> As 'virgin,' the church herself keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse. As 'mother,' the church cooperates in the re-birth and spiritual formation of her sons and daughters. Mary is also called 'mother of the Church' because her maternal relationship to Christ the head extends to his brothers and sisters (Rom. 8:29), members of his body.<sup>148</sup> Baptists recognize Mary's exceptional role in the church of Christ because she alone

was drawn into God's plan as the Mother of the Word-made-flesh, giving her a unique place in the coming of the Redeemer into the world.<sup>149</sup> However, they will prefer to think that Mary, as a model disciple, is a *representative* figure of the church, rather than 'mother of the Church'.<sup>150</sup>

**156. The prayer of Christians always shares in the greater intercession of Christ as Son to the Father (1 Jn 2:1), exemplified in his life and continuing in his exaltation (Heb 7:25). As the Apostle Paul puts it, we say 'Amen' to God through Christ (2 Cor 1:20) and so we pray to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. We pray like this in the company of all the saints who are praying with Christ, those who are alive and those who have gone before us. So the church prays with Mary (Acts 1:14) and learns to pray like Mary in the communion of saints. For instance, Mary's prophetic canticle, the 'Magnificat' (Lk 1:46-55), expresses the church's song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord its Savior, its preferential love for the poor and lowly, and its mission to establish God's reign of justice.**

157. Catholics not only pray 'with Mary and all the saints', but pray to Mary in the sense of asking for her intercession for them. They recognize Mary as having a pre-eminent place in the company of the saints. They believe that she is their Mother in the order of grace (Jn 19:26-27), who intercedes for them with her Son, just as on earth she once interceded with him at the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2:3-5).<sup>151</sup> Of course, the special devotion with which they honor her 'differs essentially' from the worship paid to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>152</sup> When they invoke Mary in prayer, according to a very ancient tradition in the church, it is to enlist her motherly intercession with her Son on their behalf.

158. Baptists do not ascribe such pre-eminence to Mary for fear that it could detract from the unique glory and intercession of Christ. While they recognize the presence of Mary with Jesus and the saints in glory, and so can pray 'with' her, they do not ask for her intercession (or that of any of the saints)<sup>153</sup> for they believe that they can with confidence directly 'draw near to the throne of grace so that [they] may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb 4:16).

<sup>143</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 15 August 1988, 5.

<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, 25 March 1987, 46; *Mulieris Dignitatem* 11.

<sup>145</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*, 2 February 1974, 37.

<sup>146</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 22 November 2001, Joh. 53.

<sup>147</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 63.

<sup>148</sup> CCC 963-70.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. *Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion, containing a Confession of Faith of certain English people, living at Amsterdam* [General Baptist] (1612), 31, in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 124-142; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), VIII.1-2.

<sup>150</sup> So French Baptists in *Marie, Comité mixte baptiste-catholique en France*, §59.

<sup>151</sup> CCC 2618.

<sup>152</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 66; CCC 971.

<sup>153</sup> *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679), XLI.

159. Because Mary always witnesses to Christ, the representations of Mary which are received in particular cultures are subject to the gospel as the norm which is centred on Christ, and to which Scripture attests.

160. Since the Gospel is always received in particular times and places, it necessarily takes form in a variety of cultures, languages, and spiritual practices. Along with other elements of the Gospel, Mary will also be received in different cultural contexts. (This is already evident in the Gospels, where Mary is interpreted in light of the 'Daughter of Zion,' an image from the Old Testament). For Catholics, various 'readings' of Mary which are based in Scripture and shaped within particular cultures can be aids to Christian discipleship and growth in holiness, provided they conform to the norm of revelation as recognized in the wider church. Devotion to Mary in popular piety often centers upon an apparition, an icon, or statue, understood to be an expression of God's providential care for the local people, and bearing a title reflecting the people's experience (for example, the 'Virgin of Guadalupe' and the 'Black Madonna' of Czestochowa).

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary is always a witness to Christ; it recognizes that exaggerated veneration of Mary obscures the centrality of Christ, especially when popular devotion is divorced from the liturgy.<sup>154</sup> It has norms for determining the authenticity of apparitions and judging whether local practices and attitudes associated with Marian devotion are in harmony with Catholic doctrine and worship or not. No appearance by Mary to an individual is by itself regarded as a guarantee of a communication of the Gospel.

161. When they subject representations of Mary to the critique of the gospel, Baptists generally reject the usefulness for faith of the various Marian *apparitions* as reinforcing what they perceive to be oppressive and even idolatrous elements of a culture. Some Baptists will think that pictures of Mary, as with all religious art on many subjects, can be an aid to devotion to God when used with care. Others will avoid any representation of Mary, because of what they regard as the danger of giving to Mary the worship due to Christ alone. As should be clear from this section, Baptists nevertheless recognize that Mary as presented in the Bible should be honored by all Christians, and can be held as a model for their own discipleship.

## VI. THE MINISTRY OF OVERSIGHT (*EPISKOPE*) AND UNITY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

**162. Christ is the head of the church, her founder, creator and cornerstone. The church owes her**

<sup>154</sup> See *Lumen Gentium* 60, 66, 67; Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 23-26, 31.

whole existence to Christ and he continues to be her 'shepherd and guardian (*episkopos*)' (1 Pet 2:25). He nourishes and sustains his church with the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments/ordinances. Through these means, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the community of the church grows in her communion with God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

163. Baptists speak of the 'rule of Christ' in the local community of the church, which understands itself as being called into being by Christ, living in covenant with God and with each other. So the Second London Confession of 1677 (Particular Baptist) speaks of church members as those whom Christ 'commandeth to walk together in particular societies or Churches' and who 'willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ'.<sup>155</sup> A more modern Baptist statement on the church affirms that 'Such churches are gathered by the will of Christ and live by the indwelling of his Spirit. They do not have their origin, primarily, in human resolution'.<sup>156</sup> For Baptists, Christ thus creates *koinonia* in the church and remains its authority, discerned through the church meeting which gathers to seek the mind of Christ. *Episkope* flows from the creation of *koinonia*, as Christ and the community together – Christ calling, the community recognizing the call – appoint some to exercise personal oversight (*episkope*). Such are 'those which Christ hath appointed ... for the feeding, governing, serving and upbuilding of His Church',<sup>157</sup> an office 'to be continued to the end of the world'.<sup>158</sup>

164. For Catholics all ecclesial ministry is called to continue the ministry of Christ over his church. Through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments the ordained ministries in the name of Christ nourish and sustain the whole people of God. Founded on the one Gospel and in the one Eucharist, the church of Christ is kept in the unity of the one body. Catholic doctrine teaches that 'episcopal ministry' is exercised by bishops who are ordained in apostolic succession. Their ministry derives from the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles: 'That divine mission, which was committed by Christ to the apostles, is destined to last until the end of the world (cf. Matt. 28:20), since the Gospel, which they were charged to hand on, is, for the church, the principle of all its life for all time. For that very reason the apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society'.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>155</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.5-6.

<sup>156</sup> From *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* (1948), in Hayden (Ed), *Baptist Union Documents 1948-1977* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1980), p. 6.

<sup>157</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XXXVI.

<sup>158</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.8.

<sup>159</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 20.

165. *Episkope* (oversight) is a gift of Christ to the church to enable the ministry of the whole people of God. Christ calls the whole people of God to share in his ministry as prophet, priest and king. The *episkope* of some is a gift of Christ to enable and equip the body of Christ as a whole (Eph 4: 11-13).

166. In Catholic teaching, the expression ‘divine institution’ has been used to indicate that Christ has given to his church, in the persons of his chosen apostles, an ordained, sacramental ministry by means of which he wishes to continue to guide his flock as its one Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:11,16). Vatican II reaffirmed this when it taught that ‘bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church’.<sup>160</sup> Their ministry, therefore, is among the essential gifts Christ has given to the church. Catholics believe that the fullness of the sacrament of orders is conferred upon bishops through episcopal consecration.<sup>161</sup> Ordained ministry was intended by Christ to serve the entire priestly people of God (cf. 1 Pet 2:9). Thus, for Catholics, even although the ministerial priesthood ‘differs essentially and not only in degree from the common priesthood of the faithful’, nevertheless ‘each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ’.<sup>162</sup>

167. Baptists affirm that by union with Christ we share in ‘the priesthood of all believers’ by which they mean that the church as a whole is a priesthood to God offering sacrifices of thanksgiving and service.<sup>163</sup> This corresponds quite closely to the Catholic affirmation of the ‘common priesthood’. For Baptists, this priesthood of the church as a whole explicitly includes the task of the whole community to ‘watch over one another in love’, a form of communal *episkope*.<sup>164</sup> However the early Baptist Confessions also speak of Christ creating personal *episkope* in the form of ‘offices’ in his church, consisting of those called and appointed to ‘watch over’ the community or to ‘watch for their souls.’<sup>165</sup> It is a mark of Baptist covenant ecclesiology not to define in a legal or canonical way the respective authority of the minister and the whole meeting, but to leave the relationship as a matter of trust in each other and obedience to the rule of Christ. Thus an early confession simply asserts both kinds of *episkope*:

‘And as Christ for the keeping of this Church in holy and orderly Communion placeth some special men over the Church who

by their office are to govern, oversee, visit, *watch*; so likewise for the better keeping thereof in all places, by all members he hath given authority, and laid duty upon all, to *watch over one another*.<sup>166</sup>

168. Our differing patterns of *episkope* seek to be faithful to Scripture and to the apostolic tradition.

169. We can discern a diversity of forms and patterns of ministry in the New Testament, both ‘charismatic’ and more ‘ordered’. We find an inner circle of disciples (‘the Twelve’) being commissioned by Christ to continue his ministry [Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-20; Lk 24:36-51; Jn 20:21]. Later we find a larger group of ‘apostles’ commissioned through appearances of the risen Christ, and then a concern to continue their ministry with others being set aside by them. In the New Testament we also encounter the appointment of *episkopoi* (bishops) and *presbuteroi* (elders), terms used quite interchangeably [Phil.1:1, Acts 20:17, 28, Titus 1:5,7, 1 Pet 5:1-5], who together with the *diakonoi* (deacons, or pastoral servants) exercise ministry in the church. These ‘offices’ of ministry were established to guide and serve the community and especially to guard and transmit the ‘deposit’ of the faith (1 Tim 1:14).

170. Catholics see a great deal of this New Testament material as relevant to their understanding of the origins and development of ordained ministry in the three-fold form of bishops, presbyters and deacons. The later biblical evidence shows the apostles establishing presbyters or *episkopoi* in the churches through the laying on of hands (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5-7) and entrusting the tradition of the teaching of the gospel to dependable persons (1 Tim 1:3-7, 2 Tim 4:1-5). After the disappearance of the apostles and faced with the danger of heresies and schisms, the Catholic view is that the Christian communities considered those dependable men the guardians of the apostolic tradition and recognized in them an authority to make decisions.

The decisive features of succession in the threefold ministry of bishop-presbyter-deacon were soon recognized by the church of the first centuries, various aspects of which are witnessed to in the writings of such early fathers as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon, Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage. Catholics see this as a faithful implementation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of what is found in seed already in the Scriptures.<sup>167</sup> While the whole

<sup>160</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 20.

<sup>161</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 21.

<sup>162</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 10.

<sup>163</sup> See *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XVII: ‘an holy priesthood’. For modern statement, see *We Baptists*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>164</sup> The verb ‘to watch over’ in the early English Baptist confessions is an English form of the Latin *episkopein*, and a synonym for the verb ‘oversee’.

<sup>165</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.10.

<sup>166</sup> *Confession of Faith* (1644), XLIV, spelling modernized, our italics. This wording is virtually identical to article 26 in the Separatist *A True Confession* (1596), in Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions*, p. 90.

<sup>167</sup> This has been acknowledged in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue: “... the New Testament shows a variety of ministries and charisms, along with forms and concepts of ministry which are different while they overlap with one another. With due caution, one can distinguish lines of development within the New Testament. How this development is dis-

community hands on the apostolic tradition, that whole community itself discerned that Christ established the episcopal ministry in succession to the apostles as a sure means of fidelity to that tradition. The church in both East and West embraced the threefold order of ministry until the Reformation, a conviction which endures in the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox communities until the present time. Catholics and Orthodox have also concurred that only men, by God's design, were to be ordained, in light of a very strong common witness of the tradition.

Catholic confidence in the ultimate fidelity of the church to the apostolic tradition does not imply that leaders have not sometimes failed in their ministry, nor that the church is ever without need of renewal and reform. Indeed, 'In order that we may be continually renewed in him (see Eph 4, 23), he [Christ] gave us a share in his Spirit, who is one and the same in head and members (*in capite et in membris*).'<sup>168</sup> The church recognizes that, comprised of sinful members, it 'is at one and the same time holy and always in need of purification and it pursues unceasingly penance and renewal.'<sup>169</sup>

171. Baptists hold the same Scripture material (§169) to be generally in accord with their view of a two-fold ministry. They believe that the pattern of elders or bishops (*presbuteroi* and *episkopoi* being indistinguishable offices in the earliest period) together with *diakonoi* is expressed in the two offices of pastor and deacon.<sup>170</sup> Early Baptists thus called the ordained pastor of the congregation either 'bishop' or 'elder',<sup>171</sup> and Baptists today attribute much of the function of the 'bishop' in the Catholic tradition to him or her. Baptists see the apostolic tradition primarily as the faithful handing on of the original testimony to Jesus Christ; this continuity lies in the *whole* church and its ministry in its faithful

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cerned and evaluated is of course not independent of how one assesses the later historical development of the ministry. The Early Church's structure of the threefold ministry is not attested as such in the New Testament, but it did emerge by the further development of offices referred to in the New Testament which were then brought together into a particular configuration. The development of the office of ministry in the Early Church is a specific form of the reception of New Testament testimony to ministries and charisms which were effective in the church of the apostles." *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006)169.

<sup>168</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 7.

<sup>169</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 8.

<sup>170</sup> See *Short Confession of Faith* (John Smyth, 1609), (16); *Declaration of Faith* (Amsterdam: 1611), 20; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.9. An exception to the two-fold pattern of *episkope* occurred among the General (Arminian) English Baptists of the mid-seventeenth century who for a short period had a three-fold structure of Bishops or 'Messengers', (trans-local figures ministering among a group of churches whose name has clear apostolic overtones) Elders or Pastors, and Deacons or Overseers of the poor: see *Orthodox Creed* (1679), XXXI.

<sup>171</sup> e.g. *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.9.

witness to the Gospel. Nevertheless Baptists do see the 'overseers' (*episkopoi*, pastors) in the local church as inheriting the *role* of apostolic ministry through their faithful witness to the word of God in word and sacrament/ordinance, and through their representation of the whole, universal church on the local scene.

172. Baptists hold diverse views regarding women as pastors. Those who do not support the idea of women in pastoral *episkope* often base this on the maleness of Jesus and the apostles, or more usually on a particular interpretation of passages in the New Testament regarding the place of women in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16, 14:34-35; I Tim 2:8-15). Those who support the ordination of women believe that, since in Christ, 'there is neither male nor female' (Gal 3:28), any baptized Christian may be called to shepherd and watch over a congregation. Furthermore, they affirm that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts, freely and at will, to both women and men (1 Cor 12:4-11). The association of these gifts with ordained ministry is thought to be supported by many references in the New Testament to significant spiritual leadership of women (e.g. Rom 16:1-3,7; Acts 18:24-8).

The twentieth century saw much discussion across the whole Christian family on the question of the ordination of women. The Catholic Church affirms an unbroken tradition of the Church in not ordaining women. Indeed, Pope John Paul II expressed the conviction that 'the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women' (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, §4, 1994). The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus established the priesthood when he chose a dozen men out of his group of male and female followers. Pope John Paul notes that Jesus chose the Twelve after a night in prayer (cf. Lk 6:12) and that the Apostles themselves were careful in the choice of their successors. These men did not in fact receive only a function which could thereafter be exercised by any member of the Church; rather they were specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself.<sup>172</sup>

**173. *Episkope* is exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways in the church. These ways are not exclusive to one another but bound together in a network of dynamic relationships which together make up overall *episkope* in the church.**

174. For Baptists, *episkope* (oversight) is exercised by the local church meeting in a communal way; the members appoint the pastor and deacons according to what they discern to be the calling of Christ, in order to 'watch over' ('oversee') the body with competence and with fidelity to the word of God. The pastor, holding personal *episkope*, works collegially with his or her board of deacons and also with other ordained ministers who might be part of a ministerial team. Beyond the local church there are structures, bearing some of

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* §2, cf. Mt 10:1, 7-8; 28:16-20; Mk 3:13-16; 16:14-15

the characteristics of church, that connect the local church to a wider communion of faith and mission, such as regional associations, national unions and international federations. Within these structures some individuals are appointed who exercise a personal *episkope* which will be accorded varying degrees of 'authority' within their own sphere. They may be designated as 'regional ministers', 'directors of missions' or 'presidents' of unions and conventions, or 'regional general secretaries' of the Baptist World Alliance. In a few countries the term 'bishop' is used,<sup>173</sup> usually because it is a New Testament designation, rather than expressing any concept of apostolic succession.<sup>174</sup> These *episkopoi* are not consecrated into a 'third order' of ministry; they are regarded as exercising the same order of ministry as the local *episkopos* (pastor of a congregation), but with a wider sphere of service among the churches. Within a two-fold order of ministry, their *episkope* differs in scope but not in kind. They also exercise oversight communally, in fellowship with the wider groupings of churches by whom they are appointed, and collegially with each other and other ordained ministers. Whether at local or trans-local level, *episkope* generally flows between the communal and the personal in relations of trust, without any juridical authority being exercised.

175. Catholics see the bishop (*episkopos*) as exercising personal *episkope* over his own particular church (i.e. a diocese or, in the Eastern Churches, an *eparchy*, including many local congregations or parishes). As a member of the 'college of bishops' (i.e. all the bishops together in communion with the Bishop of Rome), he cares for the church universal within a collegial *episkope*. The fullest expression of this occurs in an ecumenical council. Within his own particular church (diocese) the bishop governs in a collaborative way with his Presbyteral Council, Pastoral Council, Finance Council and other consultative bodies which include the laity; this bears some analogy with collegiality.<sup>175</sup> The bishop exercises his *episkope* from within the community rather than over against it, and this might be called a kind of 'communal *episkope*' although the bishop has final juridical authority.

The Second Vatican Council gave special attention to the 'collegiality' of bishops. It is possible to say that from earliest times ecclesial life was 'collegial' in two senses: (a) the inner life of each local church was characterized by dialogue and collaboration, and (b) among the various local churches communication, solidarity and mutual accountability were the norm. The word

<sup>173</sup> E.g. Russia, Georgia, Burundi, Moldova, Latvia

<sup>174</sup> An exceptional example is in Georgia (Europe) where the Baptists are known as The Evangelical Church of Georgia, rather than a 'Union' and have adopted a threefold order of ministry. The national Baptist leader is termed 'Archbishop', has consecrated four bishops to assist him and adopts a model of 'bishop' drawn more from the episcopal traditions of Orthodox and Anglicanism.

<sup>175</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 6 January 2001, 45.

'college' in Catholic teaching about bishops should be understood as 'a permanent body whose form and authority is to be ascertained from revelation'.<sup>176</sup> Catholics hold that the 'college' of bishops succeeds the 'college' of the apostles, an institution that refers back to the very intention of Jesus Christ, in his laying the foundations of this ministry in the calling of the Twelve. This is the basis of the belief in an apostolic succession of bishops as successors of the apostles, which continues to the present time.

**176. *Episkope* is primarily exercised in the local or particular church, but always in communion with the wider church.**

177. Catholics hold that the particular church is that portion of the people of God (diocese or eparchy) gathered around the bishop, who makes the headship of Christ visible by proclaiming the Word, presiding over the Eucharist with his presbyters and deacons, and by shepherding his people in one community in the Holy Spirit.<sup>177</sup> In each particular church, in full communion with other particular churches, the Catholic Church subsists in its fullness, as pointed out by Pope John Paul II: 'The very mystery of the Church impels us to recognize that the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church is present in each particular Church throughout the world.'<sup>178</sup> The bishop is therefore not only the point of reference or 'visible principle'<sup>179</sup> for the unity of the diocese to which he is assigned, but he also, as member of the college of bishops and by means of his active collaboration with the other bishops, serves the bond of unity between his own local church and all other local churches which makes the local church 'complete'. In the parish the priest represents the bishop and it is this link with the bishop that makes visible the one church.

178. For Baptists, as for Catholics, Christ gathers the church (for Catholics the 'particular' church, for Baptists the local congregation) through the preaching of the Word, and the celebration of the sacraments/ordinances.<sup>180</sup> For Baptists, he also uses the personal *episkope* of those appointed by the community, which recognises their call and confirms their spiritual gifts. Most Baptists believe that a minister of a local church is a minister of the church in general (i.e. a minister of the universal church of Jesus Christ) and that he or she represents the universal church in the local congregation. The local congregation is wholly the

<sup>176</sup> Vatican II, *Nota Explicativa Praevia* 1.

<sup>177</sup> *Christus Dominus* 11; *Lumen Gentium* 21.

<sup>178</sup> John Paul II, *Meeting with the Bishops of the United States*, Los Angeles, 16 September, 1987. In context, the Pope also uses this argument to affirm that the ministry of the successor of Peter belongs to the essence of each particular church.

<sup>179</sup> See *Lumen Gentium* 23.

<sup>180</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XXXIII; *Brief Confession* (London: 1600), XI.

church but not the whole church.<sup>181</sup> This connectedness to the wider church – whether Baptist or a communion with other Christian churches – is a necessary component of a local church. Baptists can echo the Catholic conviction that this communion with the whole body of Christ makes the local church ‘complete’, and in this the pastor has a key role.

Thus in a Report to the Baptist Union of Great Britain on *Forms of Ministry among Baptists* ministers or pastors of local churches are seen as those called to exercise a general oversight related to every part of the life and work of the church community. This is what characterises the *episkopos* figure in the church and sets him or her apart from *diakonoi* who may have responsibility for particular areas of the church’s life. So the pastor or minister of a local church:

... will develop an overall vision of the whole Body and gifts of all its members, and is entrusted with this general oversight to enable all to grow in to the identity of Christ the Servant of humankind, and to help them make visible God’s own ministry of reconciliation in the world around them.<sup>182</sup>

Such an overall vision and oversight is possible because of the perspective brought from the life of the church *universal*. Ministers in their theological formation have gained a vision and understanding of the faith of the whole church universal and from that perspective the minister can proclaim the word of God into the particular local situation in which the church finds itself, and can call that community to take its place in the wider mission of the church in the world today. So the minister, as representative of the universal church can open the horizons of the local congregation to this greater vision.<sup>183</sup> This role is expressed in their ordination, in which (in most Baptist conventions and unions) hands are laid on by representatives of the wider fellowship of churches as well as the local church.

### 179. Personal *episkope* is established by Christ for the good of the church.

180. For Baptists, ordained ministry belongs to the well-being (*bene esse*) and good order of the church, recognizing that for practical reasons some local churches may not be able to enjoy the *episkope* (oversight) of an ordained pastor. Without this oversight, the congregation still remains under the *episkope* of its church meeting and its local leaders, such as its deacons. While in some Baptist churches the deacon is also an ordained office, local spiritual leadership will always include non-

ordained people. The *episkope* of the pastor is certainly essential in the will of Christ for the church: as the Particular Baptist ‘Second London Confession’ of 1677 expresses it, ‘A particular Church gathered, and *completely Organized*, according to the mind of Christ, consists of Officers and Members; And the Officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the Church .... for the peculiar Administration of Ordinances, and Execution of Power, or Duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the World, are Bishops or Elders and Deacons.’<sup>184</sup> However, the church can still exist as a church, though incomplete, without personal *episkope* as embodied in an office.

181. Catholics can agree that personal *episkope* is exercised at least for the good ordering of the church. However, more must be said than this. The ministry of bishops belongs to the sacramental structure (*esse*) of the church. By their episcopal consecration they receive the fullness of the sacrament of Orders. They are assisted in their ministry by the presbyters and deacons. Christ has so ordered his church that its full communion is maintained by the links of one faith, a common sacramental life and the fraternal harmony of the people of God under the guidance of those entrusted with episcopal ministry. Vatican II succinctly describes the role of the bishops within this order when it teaches: ‘It is through the faithful preaching of the Gospel by the apostles and their successors – the bishops with Peter’s successor at their head – through their administering the sacraments, and through their governing in love, that Jesus Christ wishes his people to increase, under the action of the Holy Spirit; and he perfects its fellowship in unity: in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God.’<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1677), XXVI.8. Our italics; so also *Orthodox Creed* (London: 1679) XXXI. According to the *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XXXVI, Elders and Deacons are ‘appointed by Christ for the feeding, governing, serving and building up of his Church’.

<sup>185</sup> The Decree on Ecumenism [*Unitatis redintegratio*], 2. This role is also nicely summed up in the first sentence of each of the three paragraphs of *Lumen Gentium*, which describe the prophetic, priestly and shepherding role of the bishops. ‘Among the principal tasks of bishops the preaching of the gospel is pre-eminent’ (LG 25). ‘The bishop, marked with the fullness of the sacrament of order, is “the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,” especially in the Eucharist which he offers or which he ensures is offered, and by which the church continuously lives and grows’ (LG 26). ‘The bishops govern the churches entrusted to them as vicars and legates of Christ, by counsel, persuasion and example and indeed also by authority and sacred power which they make use of only to build up their flock in truth and holiness, remembering that the greater must become as the younger and the leader as one who serves (see Lk 22, 26-27)’ (LG 27).

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<sup>181</sup> Cf. *Declaration of Faith* (Amsterdam: 1611), 11-12; *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XLVII.

<sup>182</sup> *Forms of Ministry among Baptists. Towards an Understanding of Spiritual Leadership*. A discussion document by the Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (London: Baptist Union, 1994), p. 25.

<sup>183</sup> *Forms of Ministry Among Baptists*, p. 30.

182. The ministry of episkope or oversight, the roots for which can be traced to the New Testament, is a service which includes as one of its principal purposes the promotion of the unity of the Christian community.

183. As the foregoing paragraphs make clear, Baptists and Catholics agree that the office of oversight (*episkope*) has a special part to play in linking the local church (however understood) to the whole fellowship of churches beyond the local level. For Catholics, this is not just one of the functions of the office but a structural and sacramental necessity for the oneness of the church universal. Catholic and Baptist communities also each tend to stress different aspects of the unity of the church. Baptists tend to emphasize the freedom of the local congregations under the rule of Christ, even as they remain connected to one another in covenantal relationship. Catholics tend to emphasize the universal unity of the whole catholic community, without stifling diversities that are legitimate and even mandated by the ecclesiology of communion.

**184. Jesus' prayer 'that all may be one so that the world may believe' (Jn 17:21) sets out the common vocation of all Christians to be one, and so to conform themselves to the will of their Lord. This unity is both spiritual and visible.**

185. Baptists may express caution about the nature and extent of such visibility, and may differ among themselves about the extent to which visible structures of unity beyond the local church are an ecclesial reality (see §25). However, Baptists can agree with Catholics that some degree of visibility is suggested by the reason Jesus gives for unity – that the world may believe. There must then be a form of unity which can be seen. The *Acts of the Apostles* repeats on various occasions the harmony of the earliest community, a harmony that others could see and be attracted by. It also shows the attempt to heal imminent divisions within the whole community, beyond the local, by means of common discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15). The letters to the Ephesians (4:3) and the Colossians (1:21-23) emphasize the unity of the whole body of Christ, with Jesus as its head (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22-23). Unity is not a creation of the church; it is a gift given and received; it is to be discovered and preserved. The very notion of the 'body of Christ' points to the embodiment of Christ in the world, and therefore his manifestation and visibility through the church. At the same time this gift of unity calls for a response.

**186. The unity of the church at all levels reflects its apostolicity, which is expressed both by *faith* and by *ministry*. The faith of the church is apostolic by being faithful to revelation as contained in Scripture and handed down through the ages. The ministry is apostolic in so far as it hands on the apostolic faith (2 Tim 2:2; 1 Cor 11:23, 15:3-5) and seeks to fulfill the missionary mandate contained in each**

**of the Gospels (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-18; Lk 24:44-49; Jn 20:21). Scripture itself attests that the church is founded upon the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20, 3:5), yet emphasizes that the one foundation is Jesus himself (1 Cor 3:11).**

187. Church unity requires unity in faith. This is true not only locally and regionally, but also at the widest level which considers all Christians throughout the whole world as belonging to the one body of Christ. Such unity of faith is expressed in the Scripture as the inspired Word of God; it can be summarized in brief New Testament professions such as 'Jesus is Lord' (Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 12:3, Phil 2:11); it is professed in the rite of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and it is reflected in the trinitarian and Christological doctrines (or 'dogmas') as formulated in the early councils. This unity in faith also has what might be called a 'spiritual' dimension as distinct from, yet related to, its more doctrinal dimension. Those who personally love and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who want to follow him in their daily lives are to that extent truly brothers and sisters, even if they belong to different churches or have different offices or ministries in their churches.

188. While Catholics often profess their common faith by means of creeds, especially the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, this is not a frequent practice among Baptists. Both Catholics and Baptists understand the words of the creeds as short expressions of the truth expressed in the Scriptures, but neither would put them on the same level as the Scriptures (see §59). Because of their connection to the official teaching office, however, creeds enjoy a normative authority for Catholics. For their part, Baptists affirm the contents of the creeds, and have explicitly commended them in some of their confessions of faith as reliable witnesses: a confession of a group of English General Baptist churches in 1679, for instance, explicitly affirms that the Apostles Creed, the Creed of Nicaea and the so-called Athanasian Creed are to be 'received' and 'believed' and Christians are to be 'instructed in the knowledge of them by the ministers of Christ'.<sup>186</sup> Baptists do not generally regard creeds as binding in the same way as Catholics do; however, both believe that the authority of creeds depends on their ability to reflect Scripture.

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<sup>186</sup> *Orthodox Creed*, XXXVIII; the creeds are then printed in full. In the later twentieth century the German-language Baptist confession used in Germany, Austria and Switzerland declares that 'it presupposes the Apostles' Creed as a common confession of Christendom' (Parker, *Baptists in Europe*, p. 57) and the Norwegian and Finnish Baptists have affirmed 'the content' of both the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed (Parker, *Baptists in Europe*, p. 111). The Apostles Creed was affirmed and recited by assembled delegates at the founding of the Baptist World Alliance (London, 1905) and at its centenary celebration (Birmingham, UK, 2005).

189. In addition to creeds, both Baptists and Catholics acknowledge other instances in which teaching or the evaluation of teaching plays an important role in fostering or maintaining unity in the apostolic faith. Both communities acknowledge a number of ways in which the truths of the faith are transmitted and preserved. These include worship, preaching, catechesis and the general sharing of faith among all the people of God. The writings of theologians and the witness of the saints also hand on the faith.

190. An important role of the ministry of *episkope* (oversight) is to safeguard and promote true doctrine in cooperation with the grace of God.

191. Catholics believe that Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide the community into the truth (Jn 16:13; cf. 14:16-17) includes the assurance that, in its profession of fundamental, normative doctrines concerning faith and morals, God preserves the community as a whole from error. This is the fundamental understanding of the word 'infallibility' in Catholic thought. Here, Catholics give attention to the authority of both the pope and the bishops. When the First Vatican Council applied this term to some teachings of the pope, it taught that, in the very precise and limited circumstances it was describing, the pope, in his ministry as Peter's successor, could exercise the infallibility of the church as a whole. The Second Vatican Council makes explicit that the ability to teach infallibly also belongs to the college of bishops in communion with the pope, especially when gathered in an ecumenical council.<sup>187</sup> Catholics believe that an essential responsibility of the ordained ministry of oversight that is conferred in the sacramental consecration of each new bishop is to hand on Christian doctrine concerning faith and morals. Whether individually in their own dioceses or in groups at various levels of church life, bishops are seen as teaching with a special authority because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The 'office' or 'task' of official teaching is often referred to by the Latin word *magisterium*, a word also sometimes used for those who exercise this office or even for the teaching itself.

192. Baptists believe that the community, guided by the Holy Spirit, stands under the ordering of the Word of God that comes through God-given ministry. Thus, the pastor in whom *episkope* is focused will also be the one who has primary (though not exclusive) responsibility for the ministry of the Word in the community.<sup>188</sup> The

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<sup>187</sup> e.g., when it proposes a teaching for belief as being divinely revealed. See CCC 891; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 25, *Dei Verbum* 10:2. They also can propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching "the faithful are to adhere [...] with a religious assent" (*Lumen Gentium* 25) which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it. Cf. CCC 892.

<sup>188</sup> *Confession of Faith* (London: 1644), XLV.

whole church shares in the ministry of Christ who is the Word of God, but to the pastor is assigned the primary responsibility for witnessing to the Word in proclamation and in teaching, interpreting in each age the written word of scripture. Other members of the church who have been given the gift of teaching can certainly share in this ministry of the Word; but to the pastor is given the responsibility for training, overseeing and coordinating all teaching and preaching that happens within the congregation. Thus the whole church is called to be 'apostolic' in witnessing to the good news of Christ and the forgiveness of sins as the apostles did, but some are called to be guardians of the apostolic tradition. This may mean at times that the pastor stands over against the congregation with a word of prophetic challenge. The church willingly accepts this oversight for as long as it recognises the overseer's calling to minister among them, but while taking the guidance of the pastor with great seriousness, it cannot abdicate its own responsibility for interpreting the Word in the congregation. It also retains the authority, in communal *episkope* (see §167), to discern that a pastor is no longer called by Christ to minister in its midst.<sup>189</sup> Such a decision is made by fallible people in good conscience before Christ.

Baptist associations or unions (conventions) of churches can also exercise communal *episkope* and remove a congregation from fellowship on account of doctrine, or if the church no longer appears to be a Baptist church in its practice. But at the moment Baptists do not consider that this could happen at a universal level. Likewise, there is no agreement between Baptists and Catholics about whether such a teaching role at a universal level of the life of the church can be found in the New Testament. Baptists reject the idea that the church has the charism to teach infallibly, attributing infallibility only to Christ as the Word of God.

193. The ministry of unity, as exercised by 'overseers' (*episkopoi*) is needed in the local church and at the various levels where the local churches may be grouped together.

194. For Baptists, the New Testament *episkopos* is primarily the pastor in the local congregation, while for Catholics it is the bishop who shepherds a community of many parishes. Baptists and Catholics emphasize the exercise of *episkope* in differing ways. While both communities see this ministry as being exercised in personal, communal and collegial modes (see §§173-175), Catholics tend to think of individual oversight first and so give greater accent to its personal character, as embodied in the ministry of bishops. This individual ministry is of course always exercised collegially within the college of bishops, which will then consult as appropriate with other communal structures. Baptists, by contrast, emphasize its exercise in communal ways (the gathered church, whether 'gathered' locally, in a region-

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<sup>189</sup> See *Short Confession of Faith* (1609), (13)

al area of a country or nationally), and only think of the personal and the collegial in that context, as called out by the mutual 'oversight' exercised within the whole *koinonia* of the church. These differences of emphasis would remain even were Baptists to consider some kind of ministry in service of the unity of all Christians beyond the national sphere, at the universal level.

195. Catholics believe that, in addition to collegial ways of maintaining unity, an individual ministry of *episkope* serving the unity of the whole community is the special role that Christ assigned to Peter. Although Catholic teaching about the pope at the First Vatican Council spoke of a 'primacy of jurisdiction', subsequently this was sometimes interpreted in ways which exceeded the intentions of that council. It would be a misunderstanding of the 'primacy of jurisdiction' to think of it as usurping or supplanting the role of bishops and other ministers in the local churches. One of the contributions of the Second Vatican Council was to insist that the primacy of the pope cannot be isolated from the church as a whole; it can be properly understood only from within an ecclesiology of communion. Its purpose is to build up the church, an aim that also provides a basis for speaking of its limits.

196. At the present time, however, Baptists and Catholics have no agreement about whether Christ's will for the unity of the whole church includes an individual ministry such as the papacy in service to universal unity, nor how such a ministry might be exercised. Most Baptists would not see a personal ministry of universal oversight as being at all necessary. If Baptists try to envisage participating in a world-wide ministry that fosters unity and cooperation among the churches, they tend to think of such a ministry as being shared among a group of persons, or rotating among a number of church leaders called by God.<sup>190</sup> One might compare this to the situation where Baptist leaders have sometimes been part of a collegial national leadership alongside Catholic leaders and others: for example, when a Baptist has been one of the four presidents of Churches Together in England (the English national ecumenical instrument).<sup>191</sup> Catholics, of course, regard this covenanting of church leaders together as an ecumenical rather than an ecclesial structure, while Baptists can regard such covenants as partaking in the characteristics of the church.

197. Christ is the head of the church. Under this supreme headship, the New Testament shows a certain

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<sup>190</sup> See response to *Ut unum sint* of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which was reflected upon by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Britain and Ireland: *One in Christ. Ecumenical Notes and Documentation* No. 4 (1999), pp. 360-65.

<sup>191</sup> There is a 'rotating' element to this in that whilst two of the four presidents are always the Anglican and Roman Catholic primates in England, the other two places are for a Free Church leader and a leader of another Church for a time-limited period.

primacy of leadership exercised by the apostle Peter among the Twelve, a role which is rooted in the intention of Jesus.

198. Baptists and Catholics disagree in their interpretation of many biblical texts which mention Peter. While the three key texts of Matthew 16:18-19, Luke 22:31-32 and John 21:15-19 show an interest in the leadership of Peter in the community of the early church, Baptists doubt that they provide a basis for the principle of an ongoing 'Petrine office' or 'Petrine ministry' which is to persist beyond the situation of the earliest community.<sup>192</sup>

Moreover, Baptists have traditionally argued that a text such as John 21:15-19 could apply to any pastor as an exhortation to care for the flock of Christ; it can also be interpreted as a reassurance to any Christian that he or she can be forgiven and have a fresh start. Baptists tend to think that Matthew 16:18-19 can refer to the 'rock' of any disciple confessing Christ, as well as to Peter in the immediate context. Texts that mention Peter should not be isolated from the mention of other apostles in the earliest communities. While a large number of verses certainly speak of Peter, this can also be said of Paul, who exercised a trans-regional ministry of unity; James seems to have been the leader in Jerusalem.

The weighing of these various testimonies is a complex task and such complexity needs to be taken into consideration in seeking biblical evidence about a possible ministry of primacy. In considering such biblical data, Baptists will want to distinguish logically between several strands of the issue: (a) the role of leadership that Peter played, historically (but not exclusively), among the other apostles; (b) the belief that this leadership role continues in a 'Petrine Ministry' after the death of Peter; (c) the belief that the New Testament supports the need for a universal ministry of unity embodied in an individual *episkopos*; (d) the belief that the continuing 'Petrine Ministry' exercises this universal ministry and is embodied in the Bishop of Rome, based on the presence and witness of Peter in Rome.

In the Catholic mind these four strands are intimately interconnected, and the term 'the Petrine Ministry' embraces them all. Discussion with other communions calls for a mutual assessment of these strands, the issues involved, and their inter-relation. Many Baptists will affirm the first, historical strand, and a few may be open to being convinced about the third, while regarding the actual institution of a universal ministry of *episkope* as a post-biblical development. The other two points are even more contentious. For their part, Catholics affirm that the Bible provides a *foundation* for the post-biblical development of a ministry in service to the universal unity of the church.

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<sup>192</sup> For example, these three texts are recalled by John Paul II in *Ut unum sint*, 91, and more recently by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church," 3.

199. A further issue concerns the relation of a primatial ministry to the local church of Rome. While Scripture does not record their deaths, the historical tradition that Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome, thus giving their ultimate witness to Christ in that city, is widely accepted by Baptists, Catholics and many other Christians.<sup>193</sup> We agree that, despite other issues arising in the power-struggle between western and eastern regions of the Roman Empire, this historical connection with the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul was a factor in affirming a particular role for the Church of Rome and its bishop in maintaining fidelity to the witness of the apostles.

At this early stage of Baptist-Catholic conversations, no agreement about a ministry of primacy can be recorded. However, the very clarification of these pertinent questions seems a promising beginning for further work in the future.

**200. The historical failures of the past among both Baptists and Catholics must be addressed, with due repentance and appropriate action in the present.**

201. The new situation created by the spirit of ecumenism invites all brothers and sisters in Christ to re-examine the past and, if appropriate, to revise some of the earlier stances taken by members of our communities. Many within both Christian communions wish to distance themselves from the negative judgments made of each other in the past. Historical failures have been acknowledged from the Catholic side, for instance by John Paul II in his encyclical on ecumenism *Ut unum sint* ("That they may be one") and on occasions such as the liturgy of reconciliation on the First Sunday of Lent during the Jubilee Year 2000. For their part, most contemporary Baptists wish to disassociate themselves from harsh names applied to the papacy by their ancestors in very different circumstances.

202. Baptists think that the history and reputation of the papacy includes positive and negative factors requiring re-evaluation today. The important place of Rome within the Christian community is related to its connection with the ministry and martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul. The wider ministry for unity of some famous bishops of Rome, such as that of Leo I at the time of the Council of Chalcedon, is acknowledged by many Christian communities. Practices such as seeking support from the pope or appealing to him in principal cases of dispute grew up in the early centuries, showing a widespread sense of the value of this ministry. At the same time, Baptists think that this history includes events and actions that did not have a unifying impact. Baptists and Catholics may draw different con-

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<sup>193</sup> The tradition that Peter and Paul were martyred in the city of Rome is recalled by John Paul II in *Ut unum sint*, paragraph 90.

clusions from the history of the use of papal authority, even in cases when they agree on the basic facts in question.

203. The witness of recent popes to many truths and values of the Gospel which are also cherished by the Baptist community has prompted many Baptist church leaders and scholars to re-evaluate long-cultivated views of the papacy. In particular, the long and dynamic pontificate of Pope John Paul II, with his strong presence in the mass media, spoke to the imagination of Baptists. Many Baptists can acknowledge some practical advantages to having a voice that can speak at times for the whole of the Christian community. This can serve a prophetic function, especially by drawing upon Scripture and proclaiming in our day the perennial truths of Christian faith. The usefulness of such teaching for catechesis and social solidarity extends more broadly than to the Catholic Church alone, so showing features of a ministry of unity.

204. While there is no substantial agreement on a universal ministry of unity, there are opportunities today for Catholics and Baptists to share in ministries that have a unifying effect at a world-wide level. Because of his wide recognition, the pope is in a position to initiate common efforts by other Christian leaders and their communities concerning cultural, scientific, ethical and theological questions. The deeper participation of the laity and ministers of other churches in the bishops' synods of the Catholic Church, and participation by Catholics in the various councils and assemblies of Baptist churches, are a means of unity that does not require ecclesial union. Perhaps a helpful step forward could be for Baptists, at whatever level of their life it is feasible, to make formal responses to John Paul II's invitation in *Ut unum sint* to consider ways in which a ministry of unity might be exercised so as to be acceptable to other Christians in the new ecumenical situation. Furthermore, the leaders of our churches might be encouraged to seek out and implement ways of acting together which are possible even now as they guide our communities at local, regional, national and universal levels.<sup>194</sup>

## VII. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

### *Finding a common mind*

205. In our conversations we have worked together carefully and patiently through the issues that have been previously held to be the most acute ones that divide us (see §4). There is thus a good deal of detail in the sections above in the report, but we do not think that such a sustained attempt has been made before to identify as accurately as possible convergence and divergence between Catholic and Baptist Christians. We think that sympathetic readers will find an astonishing amount of convergence and common mind, not just in

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<sup>194</sup> An example is given in §196.

the summary paragraphs (in bold type) but when the approaches identified as distinctively Catholic and Baptist are compared with each other.

It emerges that much of the underlying theology is held in common. We began with the theme of the Word of God in the life of the church: 'The Word of God in the church in the fullest sense is Jesus Christ himself who rules in the church in the grace and power of the Spirit' (§7). Our common starting point has thus been that the Word made flesh draws us into the trinitarian communion of God, which creates the communion of the church, so that the *koinonia* of the church shares in the *koinonia* of the Trinity (§§8-10).<sup>195</sup>

From this point of departure we have found much that we can own together in theological principles about Scripture, tradition, the sacraments/ordinances, the place of Mary in the life of the church, church order and ministry of oversight (*episkope*). We have tried to draw attention to this as we have reported on our discussions. Divergences are held respectfully, and often lie in the way that our respective communions have developed, in relation to historical conflicts and various social contexts. This exercise together has thus generated a great deal of mutual understanding and sympathy, as well as clearing away of long-held misconceptions. Working together has enabled us not just to re-state our convictions in clearer ways, but to re-think them in new perspectives, so that this has been – in the language of a recent movement of thought – 'receptive ecumenism'.<sup>196</sup> It has truly been an experience of 'exchange of gifts', in the phrase used memorably by Pope John Paul II.<sup>197</sup> Echoing the participants in the first conversations of 1984-88, we thank God for this gift of being together.

### *Making progress*

206. One of the greatest advances we have made together has been in our mutual understanding of the relation between Scripture and tradition. With one exception (the phrase 'like feelings of devotion and reverence' applying to Scripture and tradition: see §65), we believe that we have discovered a common belief in the foundation of Scripture and tradition in the one source of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Differences remain in the practical outworking of this theological principle, either with regard to the respective weight given to Scripture or tradition, or to different exegesis of scripture in church teaching; instances appear in the sections on Mary and oversight (*episkope*) in the church. But

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<sup>195</sup>The Synod of Bishops in 1985 identified communion ecclesiology as a central theme of Vatican II. Recently, Baptists have been challenged to think about their life together as a World Alliance in terms of communion.

<sup>196</sup> See Paul D. Murray, 'Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for our Needs', *Lowain Studies* 33/1-2 (2008), pp. 30-45.

<sup>197</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut unum sint*, 25 May 1995, 28.

since the basis from which we are working is held largely in common, we can talk together meaningfully about these differences rather than simply facing an impasse, and work to come even closer together.

207. Similarly, we have proposed a certain theological convergence on the question of baptism, where we agree in principle that baptism is to be understood not as an isolated event but as part of a whole journey of Christian initiation. This is a common perspective, in accord with that achieved between Baptists and the Anglican Communion. Again, while differences about baptism remain (see §§103, 112), we have a firm basis from which to move forward towards a mutual recognition of journeys of Christian beginning. We may no longer be facing what may have seemed an insuperable gap between the practice of infant baptism and the baptism of professing disciples.

### *Revisiting old issues*

208. As well as the creation of common theological space in which to talk, each delegation has been brought to some re-considerations of traditional positions. Our re-examination of the rich tapestry of the biblical witness to Mary the Mother of Jesus has led us to a common understanding of Mary as a model of discipleship in the *koinonia* of the church. In this way, Baptist participants in these conversations have been led to reconsider the honour they give to her, and to affirm the special place given her by God in the history of salvation. A richer understanding of the relation of Mary to Christ has led Baptist participants to affirm her more clearly as 'God-bearer' (*Theotokos*), since this title is essentially an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In these conversations, Catholics were invited to think more deeply about the significance of biblical images of Mary as the foundation of Marian doctrine and devotion. Catholic participants have also become aware that other Christians may experience some popular expressions of the veneration of Mary to be an obscuring of the centrality of Christ and true Christian discipleship. Catholics have discovered the pain that this can cause.

209. On another issue, the Baptist participants have found it fruitful to think about the question of a universal ministry of unity in a new way; though they have not come to a point of affirming the need for it, age-old hostilities have been removed and some serious suggestions have been made for deeper cooperation in making the Christian voice heard today (see §§196, 204). In their turn, the Catholic members of the conversation feel they have been invited to develop a richer theology of the local congregation and to think further about the formation of Christian discipleship in the parish.

### *Receiving the report*

210. We commend this report to our two communions of faith for thoughtful and prayerful reflection. We have tackled issues that deeply affect our respective senses of identity, and we realize that parts of this report may be challenging to our fellow church members. We hope then that it will result in further conversations between and within each of our communions, in which the report will be read with patience, sympathy and charity rather than suspicion. Such conversations may take place in institutions of theological formation, among pastors and priests in the congregations, in local study groups and in regional and national consultations and dialogues. We also hope that theologians of other Christian communions will be interested and informed by this serious and unique attempt to make comparisons and contrasts between the convictions of Baptists and Catholics.

211. While ongoing theological dialogue on doctrinal issues needs continued attention, so does dialogue on ethical issues as well. Our original aims included a desire to ‘encourage further action together on ethical issues, including justice, peace and the sanctity of life.’ Regrettably, this has been an area we have not been able to explore in this round of conversations. However, our conversations *have* been enlightened by exploring contexts other than Western Europe and North America through the experience of our participants – for instance, those who have come from Jamaica, Poland, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Ghana, Singapore, Philippines and Taiwan. In the light of this, we hope that future conversations, in addition to the ethical topics already identified, will also consider the issues of gospel and inculturation, together with the urgent problem of religious liberty. We hope that encouragement of ethical action, in the context of mission and evangelism, will be deepened by the theological foundation laid in this report.

#### *Recognizing Christ in one other*

212. What can we say at the end? We hope that the *koinonia* we have experienced together in worship and discussion will be extended in the life of our communions of faith. Though it may not be enough for those who want more, we can at least say that we each discern in the other’s communion characteristics of the church of Christ, because we can recognize there the presence of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. We enjoy a ‘certain, though imperfect communion’,<sup>198</sup> though we continue to grieve over the divisions between us. We hope that this kind of mutual acknowledgement may have an effect at local levels of Baptist and Catholic churches in their life and mission, beyond the rarified heights of theological conversations. In the local congregations and parishes, may this discernment of Christ in each other be echoed. May Christ, the Word of God, con-

tinue to guide, correct and renew us according to his Word.

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<sup>198</sup> *Ut unum sint*, 11; See *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.

## APPENDIX 1

*Speech of welcome by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, to the Joint International Commission of the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome, 6 December 2007.*<sup>199</sup>

Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial welcome to you, the members of the joint international commission sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. I am pleased that you have chosen as the site of your meeting this city of Rome, where the Apostles Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel and crowned their witness to the Risen Lord by the shedding of their blood. It is my hope that your conversations will bear abundant fruit for the progress of dialogue and the increase of understanding and cooperation between Catholics and Baptists.

The theme which you have chosen for this phase of contacts – *The Word of God in the Life of the Church: Scripture, Tradition and Koinonia* – offers a promising context for the examination of such historically controverted issues as the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, the understanding of Baptism and the sacraments, the place of Mary in the communion of the church, and the nature of oversight and primacy in the church's ministerial structure. If our hope for reconciliation and greater fellowship between Baptists and Catholics is to be realized, issues such as these need to be faced together, in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and fidelity to the liberating truth and saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As believers in Christ, we acknowledge him as the one mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2: 5), our Savior, our Redeemer. He is the cornerstone (Eph 2: 21; 1 Pet 2: 4-8); and the head of the body, which is the church (Col 1: 18). In this Advent season, we look to his coming with prayerful expectation. Today, as ever, the world needs our common witness to Christ and to the hope brought by the Gospel. Obedience to the Lord's will should constantly spur us, then, to strive for that unity so movingly expressed in his priestly prayer: 'that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe' (Jn 17: 21). For the lack of unity between Christians 'openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and harms the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature' (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1).

Dear friends, I offer you my cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the important work which you have undertaken. Upon your conversations, and upon each of you and your loved

ones, I gladly invoke the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, understanding, strength and peace.

*Message of welcome by the Revd. Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, to the Joint International Commission of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Baptist World Alliance, Oxford, 13 December 2010.*

Friends in Christ, during this Advent season, as the church waits for the coming of the Lord, you gather to wait for the light that will shine on your deliberations, enlightening your minds as you bring to completion a phase of the valuable work you perform in the service of the kingdom. We take seriously the prayer of our Lord for the unity of the church (Jn 17:20-26) and we regard, as a vital part of our stewardship, both prayer and work for the realization of the visible unity of the church. We have chosen the route of dialogue in the service of the unity for which our Lord prayed.

Dialogue is not only about the partners' sincere search for truth. It is not merely about the discernment of convergences and divergences. Nor is it simply about discerning the ways in which we may learn from each other as we make our way toward *koinonia* in faith, life and witness. Dialogue is also about a constant yielding of the mind to the impulse of the Spirit, a faithful striving to exemplify Christian love in community, and a patient engagement to the glory of the Lord. Partners who engage in dialogue begin by believing that they do not have perfect knowledge of the truth. They also believe they possess the capacity to learn from each other in the common search for the will of God. They engage together in a sort of pilgrimage toward the One who is 'the way, the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6). And for this journey, they walk in the light of the revelation of truth as they have recognized it in and through their traditions. Meanwhile, they seek the rich benefit of each other's experiences on the Christian pathway.

Gathered today in the great seat of learning that the University of Oxford represents, we call to mind an observation made at the end of the official report of the first round of our Baptist/Roman Catholic discussions: 'We testify that in all sessions during the past five years there has been a spirit of mutual respect and growing understanding. We sought the guidance of the Lord of the church and give honor and glory to him for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit'. I believe that a similar conviction may be expressed as you gather for the final session of this second round of theological conversations in which laudable ultimate goals do not trump important proximate ones. Seekers after truth can scarce avoid the demands of love in both their common striving and their manner of reporting on it. It is altogether appropriate that such an approach should have characterized the proceedings of this second round of our dialogue which builds on the previous one (1984-1988). From your dialogue surrounding 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church,' we expect to register progress toward the realization of

<sup>199</sup> Reproduced by kind permission of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

the aims of our dialogue. These aims were clearly set out before we started on the road together.

In greeting you, at the very start of your meeting here in Oxford, we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the important work you do. We are praying for the wisdom required to shepherd the process of reception that is to follow the publication of the report on your work over the past five years. We also seek the help of the Holy Spirit to discern the next steps in our journey together.

## APPENDIX 2

### *List of Participants in the Joint International Commission*

#### CATHOLIC PARTICIPANTS

Most Revd. Arthur Serratelli, Co-Chair  
Revd. John Radano, Co-Secretary (2006-2007)  
Revd. Gregory J. Fairbanks, Co-Secretary (2008-2010)  
Dr. Peter Casarella  
Revd. Dr. William Henn, ofm Cap.  
Dr. Krzysztof Mielcarek  
Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi  
Revd. Dr. Jorge Scampini, OP  
Sister Dr. Susan Wood, SCL  
Revd. Dr. Dennis D. McManus (Consultant 2006-2007)  
Sister Sara Butler, MSBT (Consultant 2008-2010)

#### BAPTIST PARTICIPANTS

Revd. Prof. Paul S. Fiddes, Co-Chair  
Revd. Dr. Fausto Aguiar de Vasconcelos, Co-Secretary  
Revd. Neville G. Callam  
Revd. Dr. Fred Deegbe  
Revd. Dr. Timothy George  
Revd. Dr. Steven R. Harmon  
Dr. Lilian Lim (2006-8)\*  
Dr. Nora O. Lozano  
Revd. Dr. Tomás Mackey  
Revd. Anthony Peck  
Dr. Rachael Tan (2009-2010)  
Dr. Tadeusz Zelinski  
Revd. Dr. Curtis Freeman (Consultant throughout)  
Revd. Dr. Denton Lotz (Consultant 2006-7)  
Revd. Massimo Aprile (Consultant 2007 and 2009)  
Dr. Nancy Elizabeth Bedford (Consultant 2008)  
Revd. Dr. Elizabeth Newman (Consultant, 2008-2010)

\*To the great sadness of all participants, Lilian Lim died in June 2009.

## APPENDIX 3

*List of Papers given at the sessions of the Joint International Commission*

### **Meeting I: The Authority of Christ in Scripture and Tradition**

*Beeson Divinity School, December 10-15, 2006*

'The Word of God: God's Self-Communication in the *Koinonia* of the Trinity and the Church'. Bishop Arthur Serratelli, STD, SSL.

'Word, *Koinonia* and Church: An Appreciative Response to Bishop Serratelli'. Dr. Paul S. Fiddes

'Scripture in the Life of the Baptist Churches: Opportunities for a Differentiated Catholic-Baptist Consensus'. Dr. Steven R. Harmon.

'The Use of Sacred Scripture in the Catholic Church'. Dr. Dennis D. McManus

'The Relation of Scripture and Tradition: Catholic Discernment of the Authentic Tradition'. Fr. William Henn, ofm Cap.

'Scripture and Tradition: An Evangelical Baptist Perspective'. Dr. Timothy George

### **Meeting II: Baptist and Lord's Supper/Eucharist as Visible Word of God in the Koinonia of the Church**

*Rome, December 2-8, 2007*

'Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Tradition'. Sr. Susan K. Wood, SCL.

'Baptist and Initiation: A Baptist Contribution'. Dr. Paul S. Fiddes

'The Lord's Supper in Light of Scripture and Tradition: A Baptist Account'. Dr. Tomas Mackey.

'Sacraments and Sacramentality: The Crux of Doctrinal Disagreements on the Ecumenical Dialogue'. Fr. Jorge Scampini, OP.

'Scripture and Tradition according to *Dei Verbum* 9: A Baptist View'. Dr. Steven R. Harmon.

'Scripture and Tradition according to *Dei Verbum* 9: A Catholic View'. Fr. William Henn, ofm Cap.

### **Meeting III: Mary in the Communion of the Church**

*Duke Divinity School, December 14-20, 2008*

'Mary in the Light of Scripture and the Early Church: A Catholic View'. Dr. Krzysztof Mielcarek.

'Mary in the Light of Scripture and the Early Church: A Baptist View'. Dr. Elizabeth Newman.

'Mary in the Light of Ongoing Tradition: A Baptist View'. Dr. Timothy George.

'Mary in the Light of Ongoing Tradition: A Catholic View'. Sr. Sara Butler, MSBT.

'Mary and Contemporary Issues of Inculturation and Spirituality: The Sanctity of Life'. Dr. Peter Casarella.

'Mary and Contemporary Issues of Inculturation and Spirituality: Mary Challenges the Debate on Women.' Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi.

'A Baptist Reflection on the Virgin Mary'. Dr. Nora Lozano

### **Meeting IV: Oversight and Primacy in the Ministry of the Church**

*Rome, December 13-19, 2009*

'Catholic Ecclesiology'. Sr. Susan K. Wood, SCL.

'Baptist Ecclesiology'. Dr. Curtis Freeman.

'The Idea of *Episkope*, Local and Universal, in Baptist Tradition'. Revd. Tony Peck.

'The Idea of *Episkope* in Relation to Scripture and Tradition: A Catholic View'. Fr. Jorge Scampini, OP.

'The Petrine Office: A Baptist Approach'. Dr. Tadeusz Zelinski.

'Contemporary Developments of the Petrine Office, including the Ministry of Unity as Outlined in *Ut Unum Sint*'. Fr. William Henn, ofm Cap.

COMMENTARY ON  
THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

A CATHOLIC REFLECTION ON THE REPORT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE  
BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE 2006-2010

Thomas A. Baima<sup>1</sup>

April 2013

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. Thomas A. BAIMA is Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The document of the International Conversation between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance is a fine example of both the discipline of ecumenical theology and as a particular theological method. When I say “ecumenical theology” I am referring to the method whereby two ecclesial communities ask some of their theologians to engage questions of importance for the promotion of Christian unity together. While deputized by their community for this task, the theologians do not speak as church office holders. They speak for themselves with the authority of their arguments, but do so in a *koinonia*, a fellowship, which seeks to explain and explore the truths of Christianity from the perspective of dialogue. As members of their communities, they represent its faith and life. As theologians, they bring their own faith and scholarship to bear on the ecumenical questions before them. In their work product, they address the communities that sent them from the *koinonia* of the dialogue.

The task of a commentator is different. Selected by one of the communities, his or her task is to write from and for that community. In my case, the community is the Catholic Church. My task is to review the work of the dialogue commission from a Catholic perspective and offer an evaluation of the document. The commentator’s purpose, then, is to assist in the reception process.

## II. CONTEXT OF THE COMMENTARY

The customary task of a commentator is to provide an assessment on how the ecumenical document reads from the point of view of his or her church. As such, the commentary has a different goal than the document itself. The commentary is not one more word on the topic. It is a different word. The concern of the commentator is to offer an evaluation of the document for the sake of promoting reception in his own community.

Reception is a process of encounter between ecclesial communities in which, according to Frederick Bliss,

[. . .] because of *communio*, [Catholics] look beyond themselves to the ‘ecclesial communities separated from us,’ to enter into relationship with them. . . . Through representative gatherings, diverse traditions meet in fraternity for dialogue and hoped for consensus. Into such dialogue each community brings a history, a way of believing and a lifestyle for scrutiny. What is brought should not be pitched against one another, but should be offered with openness to an honest appraisal in the light of the apostolic Tradition. The hoped for outcome would be a mutual exchange of gifts.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the approaches I shall use in my commentary is the distinction between doctrine and theology.<sup>3</sup> As a Catholic I believe or hold those doctrines proposed by the Magisterium of the Church. Additionally for those matters which have not been settled by solemn judgment, it is for theology to explain and explore them.

[. . .] revealed truth beckons reason - God’s gift fashioned for the assimilation of truth - to enter into its light and thereby come to understand in a certain measure what it has believed. Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle’s command (cf. 1 *Pet* 3:15 ) to give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it.<sup>4</sup>

Theologians operate out of different schools, such as the five traditional schools in the Western Church: Augustinian, Thomist, Bonaventurian, Scotist and Christian Humanism. Catholics need to recognize that there are different schools of thought among our separated brethren as well. I want to call on Catholics to recognize that there exists a “Baptist school of thought” as a distinct way of approaching theology. As Thomas Stransky noted in his commentary on the first report:

Baptists do see a cohesiveness in their heritage. It began in their 17th century explicit origins in England and in Holland, and in their prior roots in the “radical phalanx” or “left-wing” of the 16th century Reformation: the denial of infant baptism and acceptance only of adult “believers” (by immersion) to form regenerated church membership where all possess equal rights and privileges; civil freedom of religion and the separation of church and state as the best guarantees of liberty of conscience for every citizen. For Baptists, such beliefs are founded on their understanding of the authority and sufficiency of Scriptures; the priesthood of the believers; salvation as God’s gift of divine grace received through a person’s repentance and faith in Jesus Christ; and a zealous commitment to share this Good News

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<sup>2</sup>See Frederick M. Bliss, S.M., *Understanding Reception: A Backdrop to its ecumenical use* (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1993), 147-148.

<sup>3</sup>See “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: A Report of International Conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance (2006-2010). Here after referred to as WGLC. No. 4 of the report notes “areas of church doctrine and life, where serious differences may remain The ‘differences’ that remain are identified in the earlier report as ‘theological authority and method’ (relating to scripture and tradition) . . .”

<sup>4</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum Veritatis: On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* (May 24, 1990), no. 6.

through direct evangelism at home and abroad, in unquestioned obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus (*Mt 28:19-20*).<sup>5</sup>

My own reading of history suggests that such a “Baptist School” emerges from the Augustinian School as read by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers and a reaction to the Protestant state churches and issues of religious freedom for non-conformists. I believe that such an approach will make it easier for theologians to sort out which differences between our two communities emerge from true differences in doctrine and which are related to differences between theological schools. Pope Benedict XVI has noted “doctrinal questions that still divide us should not be overlooked or minimized.”<sup>6</sup> The report shows a greater sophistication in methodology which is welcome in ecumenical theology. An ongoing goal for ecumenical theologians is to test whether the capacity lies within a specific school of theology to articulate the truths of the Faith in a manner which is at the same time consistent with one community’s self-understanding and acceptable to another community. This has been the successful approach between the Catholic Church and the churches of the East on the resolution of doctrinal questions.<sup>7</sup> A similar approach could profitably be used with the communities of the Reformation. My proposal on methodology, i.e., acknowledging schools within the communities of the Reformation, seeks such an application.<sup>8</sup>

### III. APPRECIATIONS

An appreciative inquiry into the document’s various claims suggests that the following points might be suitable for reception by Catholics.

#### A. *Koinonia*

The trinitarian starting point of the document is a significant strength. The Agreement Statement in no. 7 continues a theological trajectory, so strong at the Second Vatican Council, to move away from the propositional approach to truth employed by Neo-Scholastic theology and to favor instead the personalist approach where Truth is ultimately the divine person of the Log-

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Stransky, CSP “Comments on “Summons to Witness to Christ in Today’s World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic Conversations”. *Information Service* N. 72; 1990 (I).

<sup>6</sup>Benedict XVI, “Ecumenism: Walking Beyond Borders” Allocation of Pope Benedict XVI at the Ecumenism Service at Saint Paul Outside the Walls, January 25, 2013. In *Vatican Information Service* (Jan. 25, 2013).

<sup>7</sup>See *Common Christological Declaration of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II and His Holiness, Mar Dinkba IV* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992).

<sup>8</sup>This approach would be similar to the proposal made by Blessed Pope John Paul II asking for recommendations on the articulation of the doctrine on the primacy as well as suggestions on its exercise. See John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint, Encyclical Letter on Ecumenism* (May 25, 1995), nos. 89-96.

os.<sup>9</sup> I also appreciate the emphasis on Christ himself as the ruler and governor of the Church in no. 9. Recognizing Christ’s presence through the power of the Spirit, provides the basis for some of the essential elements of ecclesiology as the Catholic Church understands them.<sup>10</sup> Revelation can thus be situated in salvation history and the Church as is taught by the contemporary Magisterium.<sup>11</sup> Another appreciation is that the agreement on personal Trinitarian relationships protects against the modalism which is reappearing in some feminist and process theologies. The unique claims of Christianity about God are inseparable from a strong Trinitarian theology.<sup>12</sup>

The Trinitarian origin of mission in no. 10 is also a point to be appreciated. The caution about conceiving the Spirit acting apart from Christ is also important for a correct soteriology and ecclesiology.

I also appreciate the precision shown by the authors in treating terms such as “local church” which have vastly different meanings in the Baptist and Catholic communions. The dialogue is advanced by such careful precision.

The comparison of covenant ecclesiology with communion ecclesiology in no. 17 is very helpful. It illustrates how different schools of thought in theology can treat the same questions using their distinctive methods. It helps to sharpen where there are doctrinal differences as distinguished from differences in schools of thought.

No. 27 on discernment is especially good in its treatment of *sentire cum ecclesia*, reception and *sensus fidei*. The *sensus fidei*, being a grace from the Holy Spirit given in baptism, highlights the role of the church in the transmission of the truth. Without the Holy Spirit, the scriptures are a closed book. This paragraph clarifies how the Church mediates the transmission and conservation of the Truth once delivered to the apostles and the place of the Holy Spirit in the reception of the same.

#### B. Authority of Christ in Scripture and Tradition

One element of the document’s theology which is of particular note is the Christological approach to understanding the relationship of divine and human author-

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<sup>9</sup>See Emery de Gaal, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (San Francisco: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>See *Dominus Jesus*, no. 16.

<sup>11</sup>See *Benedict XVI, Verbum Domini, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Ministry of the Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), no. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Current theological controversies over the question of monotheism highlight this point. See Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2007). See Also, Edward T. Oakes, *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011) and Thomas Norris, *The Trinity, Life of God, Hope for Humanity: Towards a Theology of Communion* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2009).

ship in the Scriptures. This is a useful analogy which addresses directly the controversy over the historical-critical method in biblical studies. Like the Christological controversies of the early centuries, the disputes over historical-critical studies arise from concerns that one authorship is absorbing the other. The mystery of how the incarnate Logos can be “true God and true man” is analogous to how the human author of the sacred page can be a “true author” while “conveying all and only what God desires him to.”<sup>13</sup> The analogy has the value of reminding us that the authorship of the Scriptures is a mystery and that the various affirmations which our two communities make will not be able to exhaust the meaning of the unique book which is the Holy Bible. No. 47 is especially to be appreciated in this regard for its Christocentric approach to interpretation. The application of the third mark of the Church, catholicity, to interpretation “according to the whole” is a good approach.

Perhaps one of the most important statements by the dialogue comes in no. 59 where the authors note, “we agree that the Bible is to be used as a norm to critique and evaluate all traditions in order to distinguish which are merely human traditions and which are authentic expressions of the gospel.” It is important that the dialogue face this issue directly. More conversation on this point is needed, for reasons I will describe below.

The suggestion in no. 62 to reformulate “sola Scriptura” as “suprema Scriptura” is a very interesting one which should be pursued by ecumenical theologians in all of the dialogues.<sup>14</sup>

### C Baptism and Lord’s Supper

The first observation regarding this section is the useful introduction which situates the discussion of sacraments in the larger context of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.<sup>15</sup> This statement reinforced the Catholic understanding that tradition is not a mere body of content but a living transmission whose first instance is liturgy. The document helpfully notes that the terms “remembrance” and “symbol” are more highly nuanced in the Baptist school of thought. Catholics should avoid any reductionist readings of these two terms.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>*Dei Verbum*, no. 11.

<sup>14</sup>This formulation is consistent with the teaching of Pope John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint* where he calls scripture the supreme norm. See John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint, Encyclical Letter on Ecumenism* (Rome, Libreria Vaticana, 1995), no. 54. However, see footnote 30 below.

<sup>15</sup>No. 72.

<sup>16</sup>For a treatment of the application of the notion of *anamnesis* to the sacrament/ordinance question, see Russell Moore’s essay “The Baptist View: Christ’s Presence as Memorial” in *Understanding Four Views on the Lord’s Supper*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 29-33.

The affirmation in no. 87 of “God, through Christ, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit sets forth in justification in the penitent faithful soul,” is helpful in broadening Catholic understanding of the Baptist view. It shows the action of the Trinity in the sacrament/ordinance. It is also important for Catholics to know that Baptists do not draw the conclusion that the sacraments/ordinance “in and of themselves” confer grace. No. 92’s expression of the sacrament/ordinance as “the word of God expressed in sacramental form” highlights the sacraments as actions of Christ.

The careful description in no. 95 about the Baptist understanding of the moment of salvation will be important for Catholics. The separation between the moment of achieving saving faith in Christ and the moment of the celebration of the sacrament/ordinance of baptism is clarifying of the Baptist understanding of ordinance.

One of the things which this document does well is explain the diversity of views within the Baptist school of thought. Nowhere is this more evident than in the descriptions in no. 110 of the variety of views on the relationship of baptism to membership in the church. This same approach is to be appreciated in the section on the real presence.

The explanation of the relationship of the priesthood to the Eucharist is also to be acknowledged. The careful nuance of the priest acting both *in persona Christi capitis* and *in persona ecclesiae* is well presented.

Regarding the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, the connection of the word *anamnesis* with “participation” is helpful for Catholics to understand the more nuanced sense of remembrance which characterizes the Baptist school of thought.

While not enumerated, the five modes of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist are all treated in the document. The presence of Christ in the ordained priest receives a good explanation.<sup>17</sup> The concluding section on ethics and eschatology also contains an important affirmation of the five dimensions of the Church, *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia* and *episcopo*. These are less models of the church than they are constituting dimensions of the Church and explanations of her essential nature.<sup>18</sup>

### D. Mary in the Communion of the Church

There is much to appreciate in the section on Mary. The text offers a reading of the New Testament which allows the person of Mary and her role in salvation history to shine forth. Of special note is paragraph no. 135 and the emphasis it places on Mary’s membership

<sup>17</sup>See Avery Cardinal Dulles, “How Real is the Real Presence?” in *The Church and Society: The Lawrence J. McGinley Lectures 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 455-467.

<sup>18</sup>See Thomas A. Baima, “‘Models of Church’ and its Contribution to Ecclesiology and Ecumenism,” in *Chicago Studies, Vol. 47:2* (Summer 2008)

in the Jewish people. The document presents well the dogmas of the Catholic faith of Mary as *Theotokos*, her immaculate conception, the virgin birth, her perpetual virginity, and her assumption. The section in no. 147 is among the best articulations of the theology of the immaculate conception. By situating the immaculate conception in the context of preparing Mary of Nazareth to make a free response to grace, the document moves the discussion out of speculative theology and into a biblical theology which shows God preparing Mary to fulfill her role in salvation history as the New Eve.

#### E. *Episkope*

A significant appreciation lies in the section on *episkope*. If one were to compare this statement with the Lima text in 1988, the significant development of thought is clear. Ecumenical theology has matured over these many years, especially in the articulation by Catholic theologians of the various dimension of the episcopal office in the Church. I also appreciate that no. 172 on the ordination of women, the authors situate the issue in the lack of authority in the Church to change the apostolic tradition.<sup>19</sup> The approach, based on *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* describes in practice how the Catholic Church understands that the Magisterium operates under the Word of God and serves it.<sup>20</sup> This argument from authority helps clarify the relationship of Scripture and Tradition as well as the development of doctrine about which I will say more later in this commentary.

#### IV. QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION REGARDING CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

In this section, I will identify those few items which I feel need further clarification and after some commentary to aid in reception. I will also identify questions which might profitably be treated in future rounds of the Baptist-Catholic Dialogue.

While appreciating the significant developments which this document offers to ecumenical theology, the following points call for clarification.

#### A. *Koinonia*

The document correctly notes the unicity and universality of Christ in the single salvific economy. From a Catholic viewpoint, however, there is no mention of the role of the Church in that unique and universal mediation. The reader of paragraph no. 10 may not realize that the Catholic doctrinal claim includes ecclesial mediation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>A complete treatment of this complex question can be found in Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2007).

<sup>20</sup>See *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* no. 4.

<sup>21</sup>See *Dominus Jesus*, no. 16.

In no. 12, some greater clarity would be needed about the relationship of the particular church to the universal church. In Catholic doctrine, there is a priority of the universal. Historically, the Church of Jerusalem constituted at Pentecost was from the first moment of her existence universal. She included all the nations in seminal form. The missionary efforts of the apostles brought the faith to Semitic Syria, into Asia Minor and West into Europe as well as back into Mesopotamia and the East. As the apostles founded local churches, the one Church of Christ particularized herself in those places.<sup>22</sup> Historically, then, the statement “the local fellowship does not derive from the universal church” may require greater nuance. Later in the document, there is an adequate explanation of the nuances, but the lack of clarity in the agreed statement remains. The Catholic statement in no. 14 is clear that “The particular church embodies the church universal insofar as it is the specific place where the church universal is manifested and encountered, but it can only manifest this universality in its communion with other particular churches.” But would a Catholic or Baptist reading the agreed statement, understand that meaning from the statement “the local fellowship does not derive from the universal church?” The Baptist explanation in no. 15 of “communion . . . directly through Christ who rules in other expressions of the church” is helpful, as is the assertion that Baptist local churches are interdependent. I would suggest that the headship of Christ might be a rubric under which to harmonize statements about ecclesial *communio*. The concluding sentence that “Christ’s rule in the local church . . . embodies and manifests the universal” might be a better way to state the agreement in no. 12. At issue is both a theology of mission and the question of ecclesial mediation.

The section in no. 21 might profitably note that part of what is missing in the Eucharist celebrated in an ecclesial community lacking the apostolic succession is not only the absent element of ecclesial communion, but also the full reality of the Eucharist.<sup>23</sup> Explanation could be deferred to the section on Baptism and Lord’s Supper. There is mention of the Baptist notion of the presence of Christ in no. 22, but there is not

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<sup>22</sup>Johann Auer uses the doctrine of the visibility of the Church to explain the relationship of universal to particular. The particular church is the image of the universal church in that place. This conveys the simultaneous nature of the qualities of universal and particular. If the local church is the image, there can be no local church apart from the universal. Yet at the same time, the sole way in which the universal church has visibility in the world is through all of the local churches. See Johann Auer *The Church: Universal Sacrament of Salvation*, trans. Michael Waldstein, ed. Hugh M. Riley (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 112.

<sup>23</sup>See “Roman Catholic Church” in *Churches Respond to BEM: The Official Responses to the Lima Text, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1988).

a parallel mention of the Catholic belief about the real presence in par. 21.

## B. Authority of Christ in Scripture and Tradition

One area which I wish the dialogue commission has engaged more directly lies in the distinction between revelation and inspiration. There is a growing consensus in Catholic teaching to locate the revelation, especially that of the New Covenant, in the person of Jesus and in everything he said and did until the day he was taken up in to heaven. Inspiration refers to the conservation and transmission of the revelation and is closely related to the Catholic notion of Tradition. This distinction helps us to overcome the more rational notions of propositional revelation which were current in the manualist period in Catholic theology, but which found similar expression throughout the Protestant world at the same time period. The document does a good job of moving beyond the idea that the Bible is the revelation. I would suggest, however, that the important distinction between revelation and inspiration could further clarify this important point.

This point has important pneumatological and ecclesiological dimensions. The phrase, “scripture and tradition,” suggests to most people two bodies of written content. In fact, Tradition is, in the simplest form, interpretation of the Revelation in the Church.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, the same Spirit who guided the sacred authors to compose the Scriptures is also present in the Church and acts continually to conserve, transmit and interpret the sacred page.<sup>25</sup> Tradition does possess content, but it is first of all an ongoing action of God in history. While no. 44 does treat the “traditioning process” with regard to canon, the dynamic dimension of Tradition does not come out as strongly as it could in the document.<sup>26</sup>

Western theology, as Yves Congar has noted so well, lacks a robust pneumatology. Consequently, while both communities presume the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and, indeed both understand that the role of the community in interpretation is an expression of discernment of the Spirit, there is no mention of it in the otherwise fine description in no. 49. Given the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the third phase of the Reformation, and in Baptist theology, further study by the dialogue on the activity of the Holy Spirit might encourage greater convergence.<sup>27</sup>

An important point for clarification lies in no.59 where the dialogue commission asserts that “we agree that the Bible is to be used as a norm to critique and evaluate all traditions in order to distinguish which

are merely human traditions and which are authentic expressions of the gospel.” Catholic teaching is slightly different on this point. A comparison between the texts of *Ut Unum Sint* and *Verbum Domini* shows the magisterium of the church still struggling with this issue. Various theories have been advanced by theologians around the issue of the material sufficiency of scripture.<sup>28</sup> A popular theory in the early twentieth century, in the twenty-first century there is growing opinion that material sufficiency is bound to the propositional notion of revelation. *Ut Unum Sint* offers a clear statement, but without clarification or application.<sup>29</sup> In *Verbum Domini*, Benedict XVI states “Indeed, the word of God is given to us in sacred Scripture as an inspired testimony to revelation; together with the Church’s living Tradition, it constitutes the supreme rule of faith.”<sup>30</sup> It should be acknowledged that the authority of Scripture over tradition is still a developing doctrine.

The treatment of tradition in no. 63 deals with the distinction between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition. While correct in and of itself, the article and those which follow it seems to narrow the definition of tradition to its content. This is a more narrow reading of the term “tradition” than is used in the rest of the document. In this paragraph there is some sense of the older Catholic way of speaking of “two sources” of revelation. No. 64 names the real issue, which is the development of doctrine. The switching between tradition as content and tradition as transmission can be confusing, but also attests to the unsettled nature of this point of doctrine.

One point of consideration in relationship to no. 68 would be the recovery of patristic exegesis in the Catholic Church. The Fathers did most of their theology not in technical manuals, but through sermons and essays. In other words, theology was inseparable from proclamation. This *ressourcement* could be a valuable avenue to further the conversation on Tradition, since proclamation is such a value in the Baptist community. The living dimension of Tradition would be better exposed.

## C. Baptism and Lord’s Supper

The agreement on “a coinherence between sacraments/ordinances and the preaching of the Word of God” is stated in liturgical form. If preaching is cast as proclamation and Word of God understood as Christ,

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<sup>28</sup>Ocariz, op. cit., 105.

<sup>29</sup>John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 54.

<sup>30</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 19. See also *Dei Verbum*, no. 21. Note that whereas John Paul II focuses on the distinction between Scripture and Tradition in *Ut Unum Sint*, Benedict XVI stresses the relationship between the two. Benedict XVI, in turn, makes the distinction between the Word of God (the Logos) and the transmission of the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition. This indicates to me that Catholic teaching on the “supreme rule of faith” is still developing.

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<sup>24</sup>Fernando Ocariz, *Fundamental Theology* (Woodbridge, Illinois: Midwest Theological Forum, 2009), 98.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>26</sup>Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), 74-75.

<sup>27</sup>See Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 7.

there may be some possibility for further convergence in an exploration of “divine command.” In Catholic theology, this notion is one aspect of moral theology. The Baptist school of thought seems to be applying a similar theory to the sacraments/ordinances. If the sacraments/ordinances are divine commands, there is a way of understanding the command as effecting that which is commanded. When God speaks in creation, the word brings about what is spoken. If an ordinance were understood as an *anemnesis* of command, then the remembrance, by virtue of being brought about by the Word of God, could be understood as having effectiveness prior to the human response. The Catholic doctrine of sacramental efficacy might be better understood by our Baptist brothers and sisters by exploring such an approach.<sup>31</sup>

One area I believe needs some clarification is the matter of grace and faith. The document seems to present faith as the human response to grace (which, of course it is).<sup>32</sup> But Catholic doctrine has a more complex understanding of faith. Faith is gift and response. Faith is a theological virtue. Faith is gift, in that it is “a divine call,” and a response where the person “lives and thinks according to God’s word and love.”<sup>33</sup> As such, it does not originate in the human person, but in God’s free gift. While there can be no experience of grace apart from faith, faith can be implicit, or reflex. The response can be prior to faith being thematized in the individual believer. In Catholic theology, going back to Saint Robert Bellarmine, the possibility of unconscious desire is recognized. Hence, no. 85 while emphasizing the importance of a conscious, thematic act of faith, seems more restrictive than Catholic doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

Implicit in the commentary in no. 89 and 90, however, are unresolved issues around the doctrine of God. The personal freedom of God according to the Baptist school of thought presented here seems broader than common Catholic teaching. The volitional emphasis of God’s freedom could be read this way. Catholic theology asserts that God can do anything, except that which involves a logical contradiction. As being-itself, God cannot will to cease to exist. Consequently, since God is love, the acts of God necessarily conform to his nature. As Robert Barron has noted:<sup>35</sup>

The central affirmation of classical Christianity is that in Jesus of Nazareth God and humanity met in a non-competitive and nonviolent way. According to the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon, the human nature of Je-

sus is not compromised, truncated, or undermined in the process of becoming united to a divine nature. Rather, the two come together “without mixing, mingling, or confusion” in a hypostatic union, producing one who is perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity.<sup>36</sup> [. . .] If the incarnation is an accomplished fact, then the presence of the true God is not invasive or interruptive but rather non-competitive. In light of this coming together, we must say that there is a rapport of coinherence between divinity and humanity, each abiding in the other in such a way that humanity is elevated by the proximity of the divine. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Divine freedom should not be set against the divine nature. As Thomas Norris has said:

Since a divine Person is “a nothingness of love” in order to be, the incarnation of “One of the Trinity” will involve an economy of *kenosis*. Christ as the revelation of the design, plan and mystery hidden from all eternity in the Trinity will love the Father to the point of the *kenosis* and the forsakenness of the Father but precisely to give us access through the Holy Spirit to the life and the bliss of our lasting homeland. The very wonder of the hypostatic union, which brings to the eyes of our minds a new and radiant vision of the beauty-glory of the Holy Trinity so that we are caught up in the love of the Trinity we cannot see, opens up a vision of unity and communion that fascinates and attracts.<sup>38</sup>

The concerns about the sovereignty of God need to be seen in the light of the profound developments in the theology of the doctrine of God. Future conversations around the communion of saints from the view of contemporary theology of God could assist in overcoming the Baptist objections to the Catholic understanding of the communion of saints as challenging the sovereignty of God.

No. 92 continues the more narrow use of the term “faith” to mean human response. From a Catholic viewpoint, saying “belief and trust is essential for the meeting to happen, although this human act is always enabled through the work of the Holy Spirit” would be a good way to address the concerns I raised above.

My concern about the term faith is more helpfully addressed in no. 97. By saying “faith towards Christ will be initiated by the grace of God and is accompanied by an act of the Holy Spirit bringing the believer into fellowship with Christ” better defines faith as more than solely a human response. Also, Catholic

<sup>31</sup>This comment also applies to No. 106.

<sup>32</sup>Later in the document, in no. 97, there is a more nuanced treatment which better addresses my concern.

<sup>33</sup>Ocariz, op. cit., 148.

<sup>34</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Jesus*, no. 20.

<sup>35</sup>See Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Post-liberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Books, 2007), 17.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., See also Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:86.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., See also Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 39.

<sup>38</sup>Norris, op. cit., 108.

doctrine understands the sacrament as imparting faith, especially the *sensus fidei* (the capacity to recognize the revelation). The matter is adequately treated in the section on Confirmation where the authors say “the essence of the sacrament is not the adult profession of faith, but rather the reception of the Holy Spirit by which the confirmands are ‘endowed . . . with special strength.’”<sup>39</sup>

The question of “sprinkling” as a form of administering baptism is not treated. While rejected by both Catholics and Baptists when the term refers to the practice of throwing water over a number of people without certainty that a particular individual is actually touched by the water, the term is also used by Baptists to mean “non-immersion” including effusion. The addition of some treatment of sprinkling would have been a helpful clarification.

Another issue implicit in the document is the priesthood. In the excellent treatment of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, lies an unmentioned issue: the nature of the priesthood of the New Covenant.<sup>40</sup> It is a difficult question to engage in an ecumenical document on Eucharist. I, myself took the same path of bracketing the question in my own study on Eucharist. While it may not be possible to raise this complex issue in the context of a dialogue on the Eucharist, for the Catholic, it is nevertheless inseparable. I wrote:

I raise the point about sacrifice solely because it is bound up in the Catholic notion of sacrament. So to adequately understand our belief, you must posit this point. The biblical pattern, or model of sacrifice, involved offering, priestly mediation and meal.<sup>41</sup> The application of this Old Testament notion to the New Covenant by the sacramental model entails the use of biblical images which revealed the action of God in salvation history, to frame, interpret and throw light upon the final and definitive act of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

As McGuckian has noted, the Old Testament model of sacrificial worship is perfectly replicated in the sacrifice of Jesus. His self-offering, his mediation as the sole priest of the New Testament and the meal he commanded for the reception of the offering (his body and blood) follow this pattern. At issue between Catholics and Baptists is how to understand the New Testament priesthood. I would suspect that the dialogue could achieve an agreed statement on the priesthood of

the baptized, but not on the ministerial priesthood. Nevertheless, the work in this report on *anamnesis* provides a starting point for an eventual conversation about New Testament priesthood. It would be interesting to test this by re-writing No. 123 and substituting “priesthood” for “Eucharist.”

Catholics understand memorial (*anamnesis*) and the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) in a strong sense. The church not only calls to mind the passion and resurrection of Christ Jesus in the [Priesthood], but also ‘presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.’ Catholics believe that the [Priesthood] . . . represents (makes present) the once-for-all [priesthood of Jesus]. . . . In the liturgical celebration of the events of Christ’s passion, they ‘become in a certain way present and real.’ Catholics believe that the [priesthood of Christ . . . and the [ministerial priesthood] one single [priesthood], not a multiplication or repetition of [priesthoods]. Representing (not repeating) the [priesthood] of Christ by means of *anamnesis*, the Church is united to the [priesthood] of Christ by Christ himself acting through an ordained minister. The church invokes the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) to transform [a baptized man] into [a ministerial priest]. . . .<sup>43</sup>

I think this experiment shows that the Baptist-Catholic conversation reported in this document offers some rich possibilities for exploring other unanswered issues. I would encourage further exploration on the topic of priesthood in a future dialogue.

The issue of implicit problems in the doctrine of God returns in no. 130 over the office of the priesthood somehow limiting the sovereignty of Christ. Barron writes:

What has been misconstrued (or in most cases altogether forgotten) by modern thinkers is that dynamic biblical view of God which had held sway in Christian thought through the high middle ages and which allows one to affirm both the full godliness of God and the full flourishing of the human subject in relation to God. This is the understanding of God the Creator of all that is, a reality existing in a modality different from any creature or collectivity of creatures, otherly other than the non-divine and hence capable of the most intimate and non-invasive relationship with the non-divine.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup>No. 105.

<sup>40</sup>See “Roman Catholic Church” in *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the ‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry’ text*, Vol. IV., ed. Max Thurian (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1988), 31.

<sup>41</sup>See Michael McGuckian, S.J., *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* (Chicago, Hillenbrand Books, 2005).

<sup>42</sup>Thomas A. Baima, “Roman Catholic View: Christ’s True, Real and Substantial Presence” in *Understanding Four Views on the Lord’s Supper*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 24-25.

<sup>43</sup>No. 123 paraphrased. The reason this point is so important is that the issue of one sacrifice/many sacrifices is the same fundamental concern in the question of the Catholic understanding of ministry as priesthood. The Baptist school of thought is not comfortable with anything which challenges the uniqueness of Jesus priesthood, and rightly so. The ecumenical solution proposed on the Eucharist seems also to be applicable to the question of the priesthood.

<sup>44</sup>Barron, op. cit., 203.

I think Barron's approach may provide a way out of the difficulty presented by trying to protect the sovereignty of God. I will return to this possibility later in this commentary.

#### D. Mary in the Communion of the Church

Key Catholic concepts such as the development of doctrine and the *sensus fidelium* are presumed to be understood by the reader. This is a weakness in the text. I would have liked to see more discussion in the document about the controversy over the Immaculate Conception. Specifically, I don't think the document explains the working of controversy in the development of doctrine. As presented, the Baptist reader could assume that controversy is simply disagreement. In fact, controversy is part of the working out of doctrinal formulations. The footnote no. 138 is good, but also assumes that the reader understands the development of dogma. I will offer some suggestions about the development of doctrine later in this commentary.

#### E. *Episkope*

In the section on our differing patterns of *episkope* in no. 168, an historical nuance would be helpful on the matter of the three-fold ministry. The document asserts that "The church in both East and West embraced the three-fold order of ministry until the Reformation . . ." While the statement is true, more nuance would be helpful. The East maintained the notion of the early church articulated in Ignatius of Antioch of the three orders of ministry.<sup>45</sup> In the West, however, because of the influence of Jerome, a trend of thought developed which saw episcopacy as simply greater jurisdiction to exercise the sacramental powers given in sacerdotal ordination.<sup>46</sup> On the basis of this argument, the scholastic theologians denied that episcopacy was a merit.<sup>47</sup> The canonical tradition, as distinct from the theological tradition, stressed this point. The Roman Catechism issued after the Council of Trent represents the final development of the Western notion of seven orders and five offices.<sup>48</sup> The shift emerges in the post-

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<sup>45</sup>Ignatius of Antioch is famous for his sacramental/Eucharistic ecclesiology where he images the local church as a Eucharistic syaxis: the bishop, surrounded by his presbyters, assisted by his deacons in the midst of the baptized, offering doxology to God and intercession to those in any kind of need.

<sup>46</sup>Jerome, *Epistle 146* in Ep. Ad Tit.1, 5.

<sup>47</sup>Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. James Canon Bastible (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1974), 453.

<sup>48</sup>*The Roman Catechism*, trans. Robert I. Bradley, S.J. and Eugene Kevane (Boston: Saint Paul Editions, 1985), 307-326. See especially footnotes 42, 45, 51, 52 and 53. The seven orders were porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon and *sacerdos*. *Sacerdos* was further understood as having five offices: priest (meaning presbyter), bishop, archbish-

Tridentine theologians who overwhelmingly reject the canonical tradition and recover the patristic three-fold understanding of the sacrament. After that, in the intervening years, a recovery of the Eastern notion of three orders begins and finds its fruition in Pius XII and the Second Vatican Council's teaching on the sacramentality of the episcopal consecration.<sup>49</sup> The Baptist view of a two-fold ministry, then, is more similar to the medieval Western Catholic view and should be understood in this historic context. The issue for ecumenical theology is to journey together in a deeper appropriation of the patristic teaching on the three-fold ministry.

### V. ISSUES FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION IN THE DIALOGUE

#### A. The Communion of Saints

From my perspective, no. 24 par. 2 opens an important conversation which has the potential of bearing much fruit. The Baptist definition of the invisible church being made up of all persons regenerated by the Spirit of God . . . opens an interesting possibility for discussion on the Communion of Saints as an integrating doctrine for ecumenical agreement on ecclesiology. The idea of "seeing the evidence of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual . . ." might allow us to expand our ecclesiological framework to include those members of the Church who are enjoying heaven and wait for the new heavens and the new earth.

No. 158 also shares in this point. Fear of detracting from the uniqueness of Christ impels the Baptist school of thought to make no claims about saintly intercession. I wish that the dialogue would have taken up the differences in attitude toward Mary's present place in the Church. The Catholic sense of the immediacy of the communion of saints and the Baptist sense of distance from this communion is a root difference in the life and practice of the two communities.

#### B. Tradition

I previously mentioned that the document seems to presume that the reader understands the Catholic notion of tradition. I'm not sure that the careful nuance the commission intends in a number of places will be properly apprehended. So, for the sake of reception, one contribution I should like to make in this commentary is to offer a different word on the matter of tradition.

In my experience working in ecumenical dialogue, the most difficult part of any discussion on tradi-

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op, patriarch and pope. One can see in this formulation the notion of the canonical tradition that episcopacy was merely more jurisdiction.

<sup>49</sup>Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis: Apostolic Constitution on the Orders of Diaconate, Presbyterate and Episcopate* (November 30, 1947), par. 5. See also Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, no. 21.

tion lies in communicating to non-Catholics that tradition is more than an additional source. I can recall when I was at university once when a Protestant student asked me if I would meet him in the library of the local Catholic seminary and “show him where he could find the tradition.” After some discussion, I offered to take him to Mass at the cathedral that Sunday and then to a devotional service at a parish during the week. After that, we could go to the library. My point was to open for him the understanding that tradition to Catholics is more than a documentary source. It is also a living, contemporary reality. This notion was very difficult for my fellow student to grasp. He wanted tradition to be something like the Book of Mormon - another set of documents to which he could refer as he refers to the Holy Bible. Our actual notion of tradition is unsettling and unsatisfying to our separated brethren. Yet, the goal of dialogue is to accurately present ourselves to one another, so this exploration of tradition is vital to the goals of dialogue.

Yves Cardinal Congar, O.P. is the magister of the theology of tradition. Congar would begin by noting that tradition should be spoken of as “transmission of an object to another person.”<sup>50</sup> We can speak of tradition in the “active sense: the act of transmitting” or in “the objective sense: that which is transmitted.”<sup>51</sup> The content of tradition includes more than just written documents.<sup>52</sup> So it is important in any discussion of tradition to clarify both the mode of the transmission (orally) and the content of the transmission (oral tradition) allowing us to speak of tradition in a narrow sense as distinct from Scripture.<sup>53</sup>

Within the tradition, further distinctions can and must be made. Most important is the distinction between apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions. This is a more subtle aspect of the whole matter of tradition. At issue is the difference in the subject of tradition, as distinct from the object. Congar identifies three subjects: Christ, the Apostles and the Church.<sup>54</sup> It is precisely the third subject which is the point of discussion in ecumenical dialogue. Much of the writing in the official dialogues has focused on the first two subjects, yet the third is where the controversies of the Reformation lie.

Congar notes that the Church is both the transmitter of the Apostolic Tradition and herself the origin of traditions. In the first case, the act of transmission of a tradition as Apostolic by the Church gives that tradition its authority. An example here might be the canon of Scripture. The judgment by the Church that a particular book has the status of Sacred Scripture is what gives that book its normative value.<sup>55</sup> Such a

judgment, however, is an act of the Church and such acts are what give Tradition its living character. This character can extend to the development of the content, both in writing and in unwritten form and here unwritten form includes the meaning of the deposit of Faith. Said another way, authoritative judgment about the content of the Tradition is itself an act of Tradition. Consequently, a third term needs to be added to the discussion of Scripture and Tradition, and that term is Magisterium.

The complexity of the term tradition which includes the idea of an action, a content, development and authoritative judgment is what makes ecumenical dialogue so difficult around this subject. That said, all is not lost. Within the Baptist school of thought is a rich understanding of the Holy Spirit as standing behind correct interpretation of the scriptures. At its essence, this is the Catholic view as well. For a revealed religion to endure across time, Christ must have provided a means by which the truth of the Revelation could be conserved and transmitted. Catholics understand the apostolic succession of bishops as the instrument of conservation and transmission. The active subject is the Holy Spirit in the Church. A future exploration of the pneumatology on Tradition would be of great value to the ongoing Baptist/Catholic conversation.

## VI. EXHORTATION TO MISSIONAL ECUMENISM

### A. Appreciating the attributes

One of the main goals of the ecumenical movement is to develop a spirituality among Christians which allows them to see the Spirit of God moving in and among the churches and ecclesial communities. The ability to recognize the Spirit at work is fundamental to an understanding that ecumenism is fundamentally about conversion. The conversion of which I speak is first of all to Christ and his will for the Church expressed most clearly in his high priestly prayer in the Gospel of John.

Seeing the Spirit of God at work in another community calls us to deeper *koinonia*. Seeing the reception of the spiritual gifts in ways perhaps better than our own community stands as a testimony against us. The only response is praise to God for his marvelous gifts and prayer to God for forgiveness that we have not used certain gifts as well as our separated brothers and sisters.

### B. Standing together for Christian culture

In the recent years, there has developed alongside of the official ecclesial dialogues a set of informal dialogues or conversations among scholars and pastors which show much promise. Called the *new ecumenism*, it is becoming a permanent part of the ecumenical movement. I see it as a reception of the one hundred years of dialogue and a new work of the Spirit. I prefer to speak of a “missional ecumenism.” When I use this term, what I mean is an ecumenical engagement of

<sup>50</sup>Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 307.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

Pope John Paul II's view of mission, which is to proclaim the gospel with the aim of conversion, to baptize and form Christian community and to promote gospel values and transform culture.<sup>56</sup> The new ecumenism has taken up this third aspect of mission. Baptists and Catholics have unique opportunities for such engagements.

The New Evangelization also offers us a challenge. Can the insights which theologians have offered on the doctrine of God and the non-competitive nature of God offer insights which will help us collaborate in shared efforts at evangelization? This is an enormous question, given the history of relations between the two communities. But I have to believe after reading this document and seeing the great advances in understanding which it represents that John Paul II's third element of mission could provide a common ground for missional ecumenism between Baptists and Catholics. I would urge all who read *The Word of God in the Life of the Church* to reflect on how their community might collaborate with other Christians to promote gospel values and transform culture.

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<sup>56</sup>See John Paul II, *A Catechesis on the Creed, Vol. IV: The Church, Mystery, Sacrament and Community* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1998), 638-641.

