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Ecumenical Breakthrough between Episcopalians and Lutherans in the United States: An Ecclesiological Reflection*

J. Robert Wright

This essay seeks to offer an ecclesiological analysis and evaluation of the recent agreement establishing "Full Communion" between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (hereafter, ELCA) and the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in the U.S.A. (hereafter, ECUSA), for which I was the principal drafter from the Episcopalian side. It was agreed that this full commun-

* *Anmerkung der Redaktion:* Am *Dies Academicus* der Universität Bern, dem 2. Dezember 2000, verlieh die Christkatholisch-theologische Fakultät die Würde eines *Doctor theologiae honoris causa*, Revd Canon Prof. J. Robert Wright, New York, USA. Dem Jahresbericht der Universität Bern 2000 ist die Laudatio und die (in einem Punkt ergänzte) Biografie des Geehrten entnommen.

«J.Robert Wright, dem Theologen und Historiker, der wissenschaftliche Forschung und kirchliches Engagement in einer glücklichen Weise zu verbinden weiss und als führender Ökumeniker der amerikanischen Episkopalkirche aus einer altkirchlich orientierten Perspektive wesentlich zur Klärung und Überwindung von bislang kirchentrennenden Positionen beigetragen hat. –

John Robert Wright wurde am 20. Oktober 1936 in Carbondale (Illinois) geboren. Nach historischen und theologischen Studien an amerikanischen Universitäten promovierte er 1967 in Oxford (D.Phil.) mit einer Arbeit zur mittelalterlichen Kirchengeschichte. Seit 1968 lehrt er am General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York, ab 1974 in der Eigenschaft als St.Mark's-Church-in-the-Bowerie Professor of Ecclesiastical History. Seine Forschungstätigkeit und seine zahlreichen Veröffentlichungen betreffen patristische, liturgische und ostkirchliche Themen wie auch die Geschichte des Anglikanismus und dessen ekklesiologisch-spirituelles Anliegen in der heutigen ökumenischen Bewegung.

Prof. Wright, der 1989–1991 die North American Academy of Ecumenists präsidierte, hat seine Kirche auf vielen nationalen und internationalen ökumenischen Konsultationen vertreten und dabei grundlegende Beiträge geliefert. 1977–1991 war er Mitglied der Kommission für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen und hier an der Schlussredaktion der bekannten sog. Lima-Texte über Taufe, Eucharistie und Amt beteiligt. Seit 1980 gehört er der Internationalen Anglikanisch–Altkatholischen Theologenkonferenz (heute: Anglican/Old Catholic International Co-ordinating Council) an. 1983–1991 war er Mitglied der Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II). Ferner war er auf anglikanischer Seite massgeblich am Dialog zwischen der Evangelical Lutheran Church in America und der Episkopalkirche und insbesondere an der Formulierung des ‹Concordat of Agreement› beteiligt, welcher Text in der leicht modifizierten Gestalt von 1999/2000 hinsichtlich der schwie

ion would begin if and when the same text was passed by both churches, and that happened on July 8, 2000, by decisive vote of the Episcopal Church at its General Convention meeting in Denver, Colorado, following an earlier and positive vote by the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA. The ECUSA is a church of some 2.3 million members in 107 dioceses, and the ELCA a church of some 5.1 million members in 65 synods. Ecclesiologically, this agreement establishes a shared ministry in the historic episcopate for the sake of common mission in proclaiming and serving the gospel on the basis of the agreed document entitled "Called to Common Mission: A Lutheran Proposal for Revision of the *Concordat of Agreement*" (hereafter, CCM).

In the words of Episcopalian Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, "This agreement is a very significant sign to the ecumenical community that our two churches can live in communion with one another for the sake of a greater unity in the service of a common mission. Besides allowing an interchange of ordained ministers, this agreement gives us the confidence to go forward together in a sharing of our resources and traditions for the sake of a greater good in evangelism, witness, and service." In the words of the Lutheran Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson, the adoption of this agreement by both churches "shows the world a new way to be one in Christ. Helping the world to believe must always be our priority as we work out our new life together. Our faithful witness to the Gospel will be

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rigen Amtsfrage sich als ein Durchbruch im Gespräch zwischen Kirchen katholischer und reformatorischer Tradition erweisen könnte.

Der 1963 ordinierte Theologe ist seit 1990 Honorary Canon an der New Yorker Kathedrale St. John the Divine.

Prof. Wright wurde 1981 zum Life Fellow der Royal Historical Society in London und vor wenigen Wochen zum Historiographer of the Episcopal Church ernannt – das Letzte eine Auszeichnung, die jeweils einem einzelnen Gelehrten auf Lebenszeit verliehen wird und mit der Erwartung verbunden ist, dass er weiterhin erhellende geschichtliche Beiträge zur eigenen Tradition liefert. Dies und weitere akademische und kirchliche Ehrungen – Letztere zumal von ostkirchlicher Seite – bezeugen die Wertschätzung für sein unermüdliches Engagement.»

Im Zusammenhang mit der Ehrung hielt J. Robert Wright am 1. Dezember 2000 an der Universität Bern – und zwar im Rahmen der Jahrestagung der Schweizerischen Theologischen Gesellschaft – eine Gastvorlesung, die hier in leicht überarbeitet Form wiedergegeben wird. Ihr Inhalt fand eine positive Würdigung durch den Chefredaktor der römisch-katholischen Wochenzeitschrift «Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung. Fachzeitschrift für Theologie und Seelsorge. Amtliches Organ der Bistümer Basel, Chur, St.Gallen, Lausanne-Genf-Freiburg und Sitten», vgl. *Rolf Weibel,* «Volle Gemeinschaft», SKZ *169* (2001) 45f.

strengthened as we 'recognize in each other the essentials of the one catholic and apostolic faith' (CCM para. 4)".

The acceptance of "Called to Common Mission" represents for the Episcopal Church at least two firsts in church history. It is the first time in the history of the Episcopal Church that any major ecumenical proposal, in this case coming from over thirty years of official and unofficial dialogue and piles of papers and seemingly endless debates and discussions, has actually gotten so far as to be affirmed and ratified by our General Convention. This itself is virtually unprecedented. And CCM also represents, secondly, the first time that two churches have reached across to each other from the two sides of the Reformation divide, one church that has retained the Historic Episcopate and another church that did not but is open to it, now agreeing on the basis of their official documents and positions, and actually embracing each other and ready to walk side by side in full communion with each other. This phenomenon is also becoming part of a worldwide pattern within Anglicanism and Lutheranism in many countries, commended and reinforced by dialogues and similar agreements in many places. The ultimate purpose of full communion, which does not itself constitute a merger, is that visible unity in mission which Christ wills for all his people.

The CCM document also builds upon the interim Eucharistic sharing that the two churches had already reached and officially voted in 1982, which was further strengthened in the 1988 volume "Implications of the Gospel", in which the two churches reached agreement on the Gospel itself. Following that, the original full-communion document, "Concordat of Agreement", had received the nearly unanimous vote of the Episcopal Church's General Convention in 1997 but was narrowly defeated by the ELCA later the same summer. After that, the ELCA resolved to try again, producing its own proposal, but in consultation with Episcopalian representatives, and the final result is the document "Called to Common Mission" that has passed the ELCA by nearly seventy percent and the Episcopal Church by a very substantial majority of perhaps ninety percent or better. It was the ELCA who insisted upon renaming the Concordat of Agreement as "Called to Common Mission", thus challenging the Episcopal Church to share in mission.

Let us turn now to a brief examination of the contents of this agreement that has been passed by both churches. It is not a "merger" but rather a relationship of "full communion", which is defined as "a relation between distinct churches in which each recognizes the other as a catholic and

apostolic church holding the essentials of the Christian faith". As the agreed text comments, the churches "become interdependent while remaining autonomous. Full communion includes the establishment locally and nationally of recognized organs of regular consultation and communication. ... Diversity is preserved, but this diversity is not static. Neither church seeks to remake the other in its own image, but each is open to the gifts of the other as it seeks to be faithful to Christ and his mission. They are together committed to a visible unity in the church's mission to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments."

From this beginning, the text then describes our agreement in the doctrine of the faith, which is based upon the foundation documents of the two churches, including first the Bible, then The Book of Common Prayer and the Augsburg Confession, as well as, at a lesser level, the agreements that have come out of the various official dialogues. The document includes an agreement on ministry, that of all the baptized and also that of the ordained, the latter being the classical area where Anglicans and Lutherans have had their differences. "We agree that the one ordained ministry will be shared between the two churches in a common pattern for the sake of common mission", the document affirms. By contrast, the Porvoo Agreement between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches establishes a "closer" degree of communion, but does not use the term "full communion", and the Meissen Agreement between the Church of England and the Evangelical Churches in Germany does not resolve the remaining difference over episcopal succession.

In CCM, there is less verbal description about the common mission to which the two churches believe they are now called, primarily because such mission is an open field and the document's major purpose was to clear off the remaining differences over ordained ministry that were restraining the mission from happening in common. Having agreed earlier about the Gospel and its implications, which was a major Lutheran concern, and the Episcopal Church by the text of the CCM now recognizing in the Augsburg Confession the essentials of the one catholic and apostolic faith (which was also a Lutheran condition or demand), and by the agreement in CCM on the essentials of ordained ministry (a major Episcopalian concern) the two churches now see the way clear for a sharing and enhancement that can lead to the continuation and extension of Christ's mission in the world. Ecclesiologically, the overall pattern for planning that is now intended can be described as *interaction of Lutheran and Episcopal*

structures of leadership at all levels, there being no longer any theological excuse not to do this planning together for the sake of the common goal.

This shared leadership and interaction may include, for example, sacramental sharing and common celebration of the Eucharist, interchangeability of clergy upon invitation, regular representation of the other church at each church's diocesan conventions or synodical assemblies, the symbolic presence and actual participation of bishops and others from time to time at major events in the life of the other church, representation of the other church in each church's structures of mission, sharing of resources and programs and staff, periodic joint meetings of the Episcopal House of Bishops and the Lutheran Conference of Bishops as well as of other churchwide officers, regular consultations on the basis of common issues or overlapping regions, elimination of duplicated facilities, closer sharing of ecumenical dialogues, intentional prayer for each other at all levels, common planning for evangelization, clustering in sparsely populated areas, increased sharing of education at all levels (seminaries, retreats, instructional materials, parish programs), sharing of chaplaincies in military, medical and prison ministries, common facing of ethical and social issues, and joint approaches to multi-cultural and multi-ethnic situations in urban areas. Of course most of these things *have* been done before, but now in full communion there will be a practical impulse as well as an ecclesiological incentive for them to happen. All this is more easily possible now that both churches have formally stated that they agree on the essentials of the Christian faith. And the document also provides for a joint commission to monitor all this and to assist in its implementation.

All this, in its turn, is fueled and fed by the agreement on ministry, because the two churches have now reached a level of trust and confidence sufficient to make their ordained pastors and priests interchangeable in full communion. Within this future pattern, three particular ministries are named. The first is the historic episcopate, which is obviously a traditional Anglican concern although it is understandably a less urgent matter to the Lutherans, who in America have not previously known it or, in some cases, have even feared it in its British and Roman manifestations. Nonetheless, in their willingness to accept it, the Lutherans here agree to enter and receive this catholic credential of the ministry of bishops already held by three-quarters of the world's Christians including millions of Lutherans in other parts of the world, and which Anglicans affirm in the fourth point of the Chicago-Lambeth

Quadrilateral[1]. It is described in the CCM as "an evangelical, historic succession", the word "evangelical" being added at Lutheran insistence, but what Episcopalian could object? The use of "evangelical" in this way is an assurance that the historic episcopal succession, as everything in the church, stands under the word of God and must always serve the gospel. The Anglican claim has long been, as *Archbishop Michael Ramsey* remarked many years ago in his book "The Gospel and the Catholic Church", that the historic episcopate is, and must be, founded upon the gospel itself. It was the complaint of so many at the time of the Reformation that their bishops were *not* serving the gospel that led the reformers to lay aside the episcopacy back then. Bishops, as the Augsburg Confession insists, must be "evangelical" in the sense that they must always serve the gospel and teach its doctrine. Could any Anglican disagree?

Let the following caution about episcopacy be added at this point. The intricate details of episcopacy in the practice of the churches that have it are hard enough for Episcopalians (i.e., American Anglicans) to understand, let alone for Lutherans who have no first-hand experience of it! As background, we begin with the fact that already in the 19th century Anglicans were seeing the "historic episcopate" not only as a link with the church of the early ages but also as one of the apostolic signs of a spiritual and universal Christian Church surpassing boundaries of particular peoples and nations and denominations. The "historic episcopate" was popularized by *William Reed Huntington* in late 19th century America in his book "The Church-Idea"[2] and then as the fourth point of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886–88 (in addition to Scriptures, Creeds, and Sacraments, all four being points upon which it insists that the future unity of the church must be based), and the term and concept of "historic episcopate" has gained widening ecumenical acceptance ever since then. Present-day developments in the world, sometimes described as "globalization", suggest that his insight was prophetic, and that the connectedness of bishops in all places and all ages is a powerful contemporary witness that the Church proclaims the gospel unto all peoples to the end of time. In Lutheran terms, on the other hand, the historic episcopate can be seen, and by many Lutherans is seen, as an effective means for implementing article 7 of the Augsburg Confession (1530) with other churches on a basis

[1] The text of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is now included within the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer, New York: Seabury Press, 1979, 878.

[2] *William Reed Huntington*, The Church-Idea: An Essay toward Unity, New York: Dutton, 1870.

broader than that of those Lutherans who subscribe to it. Once there is an agreement on gospel and sacraments, as article 7 of the Augsburg Confession hopes for, between a Lutheran church and a non-Lutheran one, the time-honored means of linking them is the historic episcopate. This view is predicated upon an understanding, now quite common among Lutherans in America although not yet accepted by a minority of them, that classical and confessional Lutheranism, rather than considering itself a new church representing the earliest type and form of protestantism, actually claims to be a reform movement within the Church Catholic for the sake of the gospel, and that its Augsburg Confession should be considered a proposal for such reform. This seems to be the dominant and prevailing, but not the only, ecclesiology among American Lutherans today.

It is thus against this background that the CCM sees the historic episcopate as a succession of bishops and their teaching that traces back to the ancient church, pointing to the centrality of Christ and the doctrine of the apostles, at the same time that such bishops also serve as leaders of the church into the future, overseeing the mission of the church today and responsible for their successors in ministerial office. While the historic episcopate is defined thus in CCM, the concept of apostolic succession is broadened in CCM (on the basis of recent theological studies and agreements among many churches) to include not only the historic episcopate but also "the churches' use of the apostolic scriptures, the confession of the ancient creeds, and the celebration of the sacraments instituted by our Lord"– that is, apostolicity is understood, ecclesiologically, as comprising all four points of the Quadrilateral and not just episcopacy alone. The ministry of *episkope*, therefore, is agreed in CCM to be "*one* of the ways, in the context of ordained ministries and of the whole people of God, in which the apostolic succession of the church is visibly expressed and personally symbolized in fidelity to the gospel through the ages". The terms "ordination" and "installation", as legitimate translations of the same original Greek, are used interchangeably in the CCM document for the rite by which one becomes a bishop by prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanied by the laying-on of hands of other bishops, and the Episcopal Church agrees to understand all future Lutheran bishops so "installed" in the historic episcopate as having been "ordained" to that ministry.

There are various ways specified in the CCM that a person's tenure of the *office* of bishop may terminate, as is true in the Episcopal Church, and a bishop's lifelong tenure of the *order* of bishop is neither specified nor denied, as is also the case with the Episcopal Church. The concept of *indeli-*

bility of holy order is implied in the provision of sacramental intentionality, as the ELCA in the CCM "agrees that all its bishops chosen after both churches pass this Concordat will be installed for pastoral service of the gospel with this church's intention to enter the ministry of the historic episcopate". For a church to intend to enter the ministry of the historic episcopate, thus, is to accept in principle the sacramental understanding that goes with it, and this is the same basis upon which the Episcopal Church itself understands the concept of indelibility, a term it does not use in its official documents. CCM does not say that diocesan bishops in the Episcopal Church, or synodical bishops in the ELCA, cease to be "bishops" upon their retirement or removal from office. The implication is that they continue in a lifelong order, although this is not stated by either church in writing. The detailed provisions as to how all this will happen over time, including acceptance of canon 4 of the First Ecumenical Council (Nicaea I, AD 325) so that at each ordination/installation of a new bishop "at least three bishops already sharing in the sign of the episcopal succession will be invited to participate", are also spelled out. At least one of the bishops participating in the laying-on-of-hands at each such event will be from the other church, in order to give visible expression to the full communion that is shared. In all these ways, therefore, the concerns of the fourth point of the Quadrilateral are met. It is also noteworthy that in CCM the Episcopal Church has agreed, at Lutheran insistence, that structures for review of the ministry of bishops will be established for the sake of "evaluation, adaptation, improvement, and continual reform in the service of the gospel".

Although the Quadrilateral does not speak of three distinct orders, the Episcopal Church, in keeping with catholic Christianity of which it is a part, maintains all three, as the Preface to its Ordinal makes clear. Thus it has been accustomed to see priesthood and diaconate as comprised within the historic episcopate, and so the CCM also includes agreements on the latter two ordained ministries as well. On the basis of the voted intention of the ELCA to enter the historic episcopate, in effect a pledge of the episcopal ministry that both churches will share for the future, the Episcopal Church in CCM has voted to acknowledge the full authenticity of those already ordained as pastors within the ELCA. This point is a major aspect of the ecclesiological breakthrough, and is rooted in the theological writings of the Roman Catholic *Raymond E. Brown* and the Eastern Orthodox *John D. Zizioulas*. Let me offer a bit more detail of the way in which the writings of *Brown* and *Zizioulas* have influenced the ec-

clesiological breakthrough of CCM. In his book "Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections"[3], Brown raised the question of whether the Roman Catholic Church, if it eventually comes to agreement with another church on every essential point of the Christian faith except the historic episcopate, would require the re-ordination of every pastor of that other church in a retrospective linear succession stretching back into past history, and he concluded in the negative: that what would be more important is the question of what is agreed will happen for the future. And from the writings of *Zizioulas,* let me paraphrase briefly his argument in chapter 5 (on Apostolic Continuity and Succession) of his "Being as Communion"[4]:

> On the question of episcopal succession (not doctrinal succession), in the biblical and early patristic sources that survive we can distinguish two basic approaches to the notion of the church's continuity with the apostles. On the one hand, the apostles are conceived as persons entrusted with a mission to fulfill. They are sent in a process of linear movement, from God to Christ to the apostles and their successors. We may call this approach "historical". But on the other hand, the apostles are also conceived as persons with an eschatological function, not so much as those who follow Christ but as those who surround him at the end of time. This is an image that confronts history already now with a presence and vision from beyond history, a proleptic approach that presupposes the end that was really there from the beginning and is realized already now in the celebration of the Eucharist and the proclamation of the Gospel.
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> The former approach, the historical one, is most clearly expressed in patristic writing in the First Epistle of Clement (God sends Christ, Christ sends the apostles), whereas the latter approach, the eschatological one, is found primarily in another source of this same early period, the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, especially those to the Magnesians and Trallians. In these letters of Ignatius we find the apostles united as a college and surrounding Christ in his kingdom, in a continuity expressed finally not by linear succession but by the church's vision of the kingdom at the end of time as it gathers to partake of the eternal life of God offered to the world at the eucharistic banquet-table.
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> And whereas the former approach (the historical) implies only a continuity of survival in linear time, a transmission of authority from past to present that creates a retrospective linear continuity but not an eschatological one, the latter approach (the eschatological) implies a vision of the future, an anticipation of the end that is already being realized in the here and now, a continuity that trans-

[3] *Raymond E. Brown*, Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections, Paramus NJ: Paulist Press, 1970 / London: Chapman, 1971.

[4] *John D. Zizioulas*, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Contemporary Greek Theologians, no. 4), Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

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> forms the present into the future that is already seen and pledged even now. Thus we may say that the Holy Spirit, in this latter approach, is active in transforming a linear historicity into an eschatological presence, as it were, a living memory of the future that is based more upon promise than upon pedigree.

The CCM was therefore able to make its ecclesiological breakthrough by reasoning from the work of *Brown* and *Zizioulas* that questions of episcopacy and validity of ordination can better be resolved if there is a solemn pledge for the future from both sides, rather than by conducting an historical investigation into the pedigrees of the past. If agreement for the future can be reached, condemnation of the past is unnecessary. The authenticity of past Lutheran ministries has been acknowledged "up front" by American Anglicans, at the same time that both churches have agreed about episcopacy and ordination for the future. Such dispensation from strict conformity to a canonical norm is within the authority of a synod, such as the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, when it is agreed to be for the positive common good. In the Roman Catholic tradition the principle is known as *ecclesia supplet*, and in the Eastern Orthodox tradition the principle is known as *oikonomia*.

In CCM, this dispensation for the sake of interchangeability of Lutheran pastors with Episcopal priests until such time as all Lutheran clergy are ordained by bishops in the historic succession, is accomplished by the momentous act of temporarily suspending (only in the case of pastors previously ordained in the ELCA or its predecessor bodies) the seventeenth-century restriction in the Preface to the Ordination Rites[5] that no person be allowed to function in the historic ministerial orders within this church unless he or she has received the laying on of hands by bishops in the historic succession. This suspension in CCM is based on the enormous theological convergences discovered over the decades of dialogue and is adopted precisely to secure the future implementation of the Preface's intention, namely the preservation and sharing of the historic episcopate. The word "temporary" here does *not* mean that, after an unspecified period of time, the suspension would cease for those Lutheran clergy whose interchangeability had previously been accepted, after which point they themselves would now have to be ordained in the Episcopal Church because the CCM's "temporary" clause had expired. What the document does mean, is that eventually its own temporary suspension will terminate once all fu-

[5] Cf. the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer, New York: Seabury Press, 1979, 510.

ture Lutheran clergy have been ordained by their own bishops in the apostolic succession of the historic episcopate. After that point, no more suspension will be necessary. Under the terms of the CCM, that point will eventually come, as the ELCA agrees that a bishop shall regularly preside and participate in the laying-on-of-hands at the ordination of all clergy, there being no "planned exceptions" acknowledged by the Episcopal Church. Present ELCA pastors who were not ordained in the ELCA or its predecessor bodies, and pastors not ordained by a bishop in historic succession who transfer into the ELCA from other traditions in the future, will not be interchangeable after the beginning of January, 2001, under the CCM's provisions. Nor does interchangeability recognize any lay celebration of the Eucharist whatsoever, which still happens occasionally within the ELCA in isolated situations. The language of suspension in CCM is understood to imply continued acceptance of the normative character of ordination in or by episcopal succession, and the suspension is for the unity and mission of the church and its common good. Separate resolutions of implementation have also been passed by both churches.

As regards the diaconate, in CCM "both churches acknowledge that the diaconate, including its place within the threefold ministerial office and its relationship with all other ministries, is in need of continuing exploration, renewal, and reform, which they pledge themselves to undertake in consultation with one another." Under the CCM, ordained deacons in the Episcopal Church are recognized by the ELCA as "fully authentic ministers in their respective order". Although the CCM does not require the ELCA to "ordain" any of its deacons, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers, it does provide for the sharing of some diaconal functions of such persons with ordained deacons in the Episcopal Church. In the ELCA, diaconal ministers and deaconesses are "consecrated" through prayer for the Holy Spirit and with the laying-on-of-hands, but they are officially not understood as being "ordained". Of course the Episcopal Church would wish that this situation were slightly different, but it is also true that most of the Lutheran churches with whom the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland have already signed "The Porvoo Statement" do not "ordain" deacons (the exception being Sweden), and the fourth point of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral does not expect agreement on an ordained diaconate for the sake of full communion.

If these are the agreements about ordained ministry that had to be settled in CCM and which make it in some ways a very technical document, we may also note that in it the Episcopal Church "acknowledges and seeks

to receive the gifts of the Lutheran tradition, which has consistently emphasized the primacy of the Word". These gifts are of a quite different sort from the historic episcopate and the ordering of ministry, and they have to do with the consistent Lutheran concerns for the primacy of the gospel, the centrality of Jesus Christ in holy scripture, and a tradition of theological integrity that is quite distinct from generic protestantism, as well as in their focuses upon preaching, evangelism, church growth, Christian education, mission both domestic and foreign, and lay ministry. In all these ways Anglicans have so much to learn from them!

Let me conclude now with an example by way of personal testimony concerning my own renewed appreciation for the doctrine of justification by grace through faith that I gained over the course of some twenty years of dialogues and meetings with the Lutherans. Previously, as a typical American Anglican/Episcopalian, I had tended to think of justification by faith as some musty old formula that may have done good service back in the 16th century, a formula that we still retain in number 11 of our Thirty-Nine Articles but which has long since ceased to be of much vital or practical importance, but eventually I came to conclude that I was wrong. I came to conclude that justification, that principle or criterion that most characterizes the Lutheran theological insight and about which the Lutherans have recently reached an agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, has a contemporary significance or relevance much needing to be heard in our day. At least in America in the Episcopal Church, many of us are tempted to think that we are justified not so much by faith as by material success, or by political correctness, or by charismatic experience, or by pious acts, or by good deeds of a humanitarian nature. All these and still others are competing in the public square against the basic truth of the gospel, that it is by faith alone, by grace through faith, that we are set right with God. All these competitors are cheap and inadequate substitutes, but the Lutherans have continued to stand for the real thing, and now they offer it to us in full communion. This is one of the many insights or gifts that Lutherans bring to us.

CCM is also an ecclesiological statement with the potential of enormous ecumenical ramifications. It says to protestant churches that they need not fear the historic episcopate and the true catholic tradition as something hostile to women or as an abstract concept devised to condemn their past histories, and at the same time it is a call to the Orthodox and Roman churches to look to future possibilities with their own scholars like *Brown and Zizioulas,* as well as to grant equal status to women and to open

the historic ordained ministry to the other half of the human race. CCM is in this as in so many ways a sign of hope and reconciliation to a world that cries out for the churches to show the way in unity. And even for the Episcopal and Lutheran Churches in the U.S.A., currently threatened once more from possible division within themselves, the CCM is a sign that unites rather than divides. In the midst of the fragmentation that unfortunately accompanies a pluralistic culture and churches that are seeking to be more inclusive, every expression of unity which Christ gives his community and its leadership can serve as a witness and encouragement.

As the CCM states in para. 29, "entering full communion and thus removing limitations through mutual recognition of faith, sacraments and ministries will bring new opportunities and levels of shared evangelism, witness and service". CCM is clearly the most significant ecumenical event in the century, a milestone that has been reached. But whether its significance, whether that milestone, belongs only to the century that is now past, or also to the century that now lies ahead, is up to us.

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