

# CENTRO PRO UNIONE

A publication about the activities of the Centro Pro Unione

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Thirty-first Supplement (2016)



**Centro Pro Unione**

A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement



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## Centro Pro Unione Bulletin

A semi-annual publication about the activities of the Centro Pro Unione

The Centro Pro Unione in Rome, founded and directed by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, - [www.atonementfriars.org](http://www.atonementfriars.org) - is an ecumenical research and action center.

Its purpose is to give space for dialogue, to be a place for study, research and formation in ecumenism: theological, pastoral, social and spiritual.

The Bulletin has been published since 1968 and is released in Spring and Fall.

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## Letter from the Director

In this issue of the *Bulletin* we will offer the texts of two of the major talks given as well as the latest number of the International Bibliography of Theological Dialogues.

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, the new Ecumenical Office of the World Methodist Council was inaugurated at the Ponte Sant'Angelo Methodist Church. To mark this event, the Centro had invited Dr. Robert Gribben, Chair of the Standing Committee for Ecumenical Relationships of the World Methodist Council to offer his reflections of "Methodists and Sacraments". In this talk he illustrated the progress that the Catholic-Methodist International Dialogue has made on the topic of liturgy. Since the final report of the last round of dialogue will deal with spirituality, it was appropriate to illustrate the convergences in the area of worship.

In view of the celebration of the Panorthodox Synod, the Centro invited Prof Petros Vassiliadis to give the eighteenth annual lecture in honor of the Servant of God, Fr. Paul Wattson, SA and Mother Lurana White, SA. Prof. Vassiliadis is Professor emeritus of the Department of theology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and he was one of the theological consultants in the preparation of the synodical material for the Ecumenical Patriarch. The text of his lecture is reproduced in this *Bulletin*.

As is the custom, the Centro Pro Unione and the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas organized the annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year Bishop N.T. Wright honored us with a very profound presentation on one of the major themes of the Second Vatican Council, the People of God. His lecture "The Church as the People of God" is printed here in this issue of the

*Bulletin*. Bishop Wright takes a deep look at ecclesiology from a Biblically rich perspective that opens new perspectives on the understanding of this fundamental theme which the Council employed in its understanding of the Church.

Two events will conclude the Spring lectures. The first is an afternoon of study on the status of Jerusalem. Prof. Marshall Breger who is professor at the Columbus School of Law at The Catholic University of America will speak on "The Legal and Political Situation of the Holy Places Today". This lecture will be followed by Prof. Daniel Seidemann who is Founder and Director of Terrestrial Jerusalem. He will speak on "Religious Radicalism and the Christian Minority in Jerusalem". The second event will take a look at some of the recently released documents in view of the coming Pan-Orthodox synod.

Finally we publish the thirty second supplement (2016) of the *Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues* compiled by Dr. Loredana Nepi. While this supplement covers material from 2015 one can always consult the daily up-dated bibliography on line.

Remember to continue to look at our new websites (<http://www.prounione.it> and <http://webtv.prounione.it>) for news and activities of the Centro Pro Unione.

This Bulletin is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606 ([www.atla.com](http://www.atla.com)).



James F. Puglisi, SA  
Director Centro Pro Unione

## Methodists and Sacraments

Robert Gribben - Professor emeritus of Worship and Mission, The Uniting Church Faculty of Theology, Melbourne, Australia, Chair of the Standing Committee for Ecumenical Relationships of the World Methodist Council

(Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 22 October 2015)



In 2011, the co-chairs of the Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue presented a report which they called *Synthesis*, of the first 40 years of their deliberations. The wonderful thing about it is the huge amount of basic theology on which we are agreed, a conclusion which Cardinal Kasper endorsed in his *Harvesting the Fruits*. However, throughout the text, there are paragraphs in italics, indicating issues on which further work needs to be done. In the section on the Eucharist, there are five (out of 13). Curiously there are none on Baptism. That section ends with

Catholics and Methodists give full recognition to each other's celebration of baptism. Our common baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is our sacramental bond of unity, the visible foundation of the deep communion which already exists between us and which impels us to ever deeper unity with each other and participation in the life and mission of Christ himself. (94)

**Baptism**

Methodists baptize. Of course, we all know that, though as profound a 'bond of unity' as the paragraph above says it is, that is only the beginning, because almost all Christian churches add some other acts which seriously limit what baptism promises, at least ecumenically. Methodists inherited Anglican confirmation practice, though what that meant in the 18th C, John Wesley's time, was hardly best practice. (There are stories of a bishop halting his horse at a crossroads, the village children of age being assembled beneath him, he confirmed them from the saddle. I am sure that this was not typical,



▶ Prof. Robert Gribben

even if some Methodists believe it was so.) What developed in its place (and was the case in my youth) was that in early teenage years, we attended a series of classes led by our Minister, and were 'received into full membership' during Sunday worship. Both the ecumenical and the liturgical movements led Methodists to adopt the word 'confirmation', not least because of our rediscovery of the significance of baptism: we were 'full members' of Christ and his Church from our *baptism*.

Mr Wesley was afraid that his people, especially as their thrift turned into comfortable wealth, would forget the vitality of the religion they had learned from him. They often did. Methodists became middle class, and polite, and formal. Baptism became a social ritual, and a very tame one: no Romans chapter 6 *drowning* implied there! Many a Methodist child was merely dampened into the kingdom. That applies to most of the historic

Protestant churches, and it has to be said that Catholic ritual (including the Anglican form of it) was a strong negative influence.

By God's good grace, that situation has largely, but not entirely, changed. The authorized services, the liturgies, have been enriched in word and action, but there is still the challenge of re-educating the clergy, and there is sentimentality, which often sells the Gospel short.

Of course, baptism is not about children, a lesson which Methodists need to learn both liturgically and missionally. Given the increased secularity of western cultures, fewer babies are presented for baptism, which means that if we were doing our job of preaching the good news, *adult* baptism would now be the norm - it clearly isn't. All this in the face of the fast-growing evangelical and pentecostal churches throughout the world, who preach and act for conversion, and use plenty

of water in baptism!

The minimization of symbol means that Methodists have not used anointing in baptism or confirmation, despite its popularity in healing services, but also in aromatherapy and New Age rituals. It appears in some of our rubrics as a possibility, and a few ministers have taken it up with enthusiasm.

A recent Catholic-Methodist dialogue report has encouraged Methodists to experience how Catholics worship (and vice-versa), which puts both of us on our best behaviour. I hope the Methodists will learn more and more about your beautiful catechumenate, and recover the deep sense in which ritual can mark the spiritual journey.

increased ritualism. In some ways, Wesley's Methodism had anticipated it. One of its leaders, Dr Pusey, actually wrote to the Methodist leadership inviting them to rejoin the Church of England, but by then the division was too wide.

At this time too there arose a general movement within Protestantism (both in Britain and America) called **Revivalism**, whose main aim was the conversion of souls.<sup>1</sup> They therefore made direct appeal to their listeners to respond to a call to faith, usually not in church buildings, but in tents or the open air. As Revivalism developed, it realised that the appeal would be more effective if it ignored the doctrinal and liturgical practices which divided the churches. Charles Wesley's hymns, for instance, were far too intellectual and dogmatic - better to sing more emotional choruses and songs. The idea was that the converts would choose a congregation to belong to, and learn the other parts of the faith there. The problem was that many Protestant churches adopted the revivalist techniques in order to grow their congregations, but they minimized what holds the church together: its Tradition. This explains why Protestants in general, and many Methodists, are still so wary of symbol and sacrament, of academic sermons and ordered forms of worship. There has been much recovery of a more balanced view of these things in the late 20th century, but there is a long way to go yet.



▶ Participants take part in Prof. Robert Gribben's conference.

### Methodist sacraments then and now

At this point I need to address a wider question. If you look to John and Charles Wesley for the model of Methodism, you will find perhaps the best practice of the 18th century Church of England: they took the church's liturgy seriously and carried it out accordingly. John Wesley loved the early Church fathers, and adopted some of their practices when he was a pastor in America. After their deaths, most of the Methodists remained close to the Church of England, still as a society, now governed not by one man but by a Conference. Their eucharistic devotion was soon in tension with the number of ordained priests available to preside at the Methodists' enthusiastic celebrations, and they were less and less welcome in their local parish church. Several groups (e.g. New Connexion, Primitive Methodists) broke away because they did not like Anglican ways and they desired greater democracy in church government. It was not until 1836 that the now Wesleyan Methodist Church (the main group) began to ordain for the sacramental ministry.

But by this time there was pressure from another direction. In the Church of England, the '**Oxford Movement**' had begun which promoted the ancient apostolic roots of that Church, and (later) with it, a greatly

### Eucharist

What *Synthesis* says of the Eucharist - a word increasingly used in Methodism, but still regarded by some with suspicion - is very positive. It asserts, 'Methodists are increasingly recognizing that the Lord's Table belongs to the fullness of Christian worship, and Catholics are appreciating the fundamental importance of the preaching of the Word' (96).

If you look to the Wesleys, this is a strange thing to say. Before the nickname 'Methodist' stuck (because of the strictness of their attention to their spiritual rule), Wesley's early followers were called '**sacramentalists**' - as a criticism. They received communion at a much higher frequency than the Church of England required. The number of churches and chapels in Oxford allowed the students to receive at least weekly, which is what Wesley recommended. He himself, it has been calculated, received communion about four times a week over his 88 years of

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a pan-Protestant spirit of unity arose, which set aside doctrinal disputes in order to be able to work together. In 1846, the Evangelical Alliance was formed as an expression of this cooperation.

life. John Wesley was a strongly eucharistic Christian, and intended his followers to be so. But in the 19th century, the practice of frequent communion faded for Methodists. The normative pattern these days is probably monthly. There has also been a move to a liturgy which truly unites word and sacrament; an inherited practice was for those who did not wish to receive communion to depart after the Word service.

Revivalism may be responsible for another Methodist issue: the **'open Table'**. When Revivalists used the term 'altar-call' for the moment when sinners were called to repent and accept Christ as Saviour, it was an echo of the call to come to the communion table. As the altar lost its significance, and the invitation to 'all who wish may come' was made, the eucharistic link was also lost. The general Methodist view became that anyone may come to communion, of any Christian tradition or none, and in any state of grace. True, our services usually include a General Confession, but admission to communion under John Wesley was to penitent sinners who desired, in his terms, 'to flee from the wrath to come'. He called the sacrament a **'converting ordinance'**, because he saw that people who were invited to come, being ready to receive God's forgiveness and grace, were indeed converted at the eucharist. His own mother claimed such a moment. But the norm was that non-members of a Methodist society were examined by the Superintendent Minister, and if the right spirit was discerned in them, they received a member's ticket which admitted them to the Table.

There has been a major debate on this matter in the United Methodist Church, whose invitation to communion is as follows:

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him,  
who earnestly repent of their sin  
and seek to live in peace with one another.

This is a long way from inviting anyone to come on a whim.

A treasure which the Methodist tradition has, though it diminishes with every new hymn book, is the corpus of eucharistic hymns by Charles Wesley. They have always fought to be recognized in normal worship, but they represent a definitive strand in Wesleyan tradition. Let me read just one, a brilliant eight lines. I am going to read it in an altered form which is intended to deal with the problem of archaic English (thee, thou):

Come, Spirit blest, your influence shed,  
and realise the sign;  
your life infuse into the bread,  
your power into the wine.  
Effectual let the tokens prove  
and made, by heavenly art,  
fit channels to convey your love  
to every faithful heart.

Of course, it has not escaped 18th century English. Wesley writes of the eucharistic sign be 'realised', by which he meant 'made real': the 'tokens', the bread and wine are

not mere tokens; they are divinely transformed.

I need also to acknowledge a *Roman Catholic* doctrine which was popularly rejected while not being fully understood - and the prejudice lingers and affects our sacramental and wider liturgical practice: **ex opere operato**. As you well know, that it was the Council of Trent's attempt to preserve the initiative and action of God in the sacraments: that, whoever the celebrant or the recipient might be, God gives the grace he has promised. This was (mis)understood by Protestants in general as a claim that sacrament worked automatically, or worse, by magic: say the right words with the right elements and whatever you believe, grace follows. The Protestant spirit wishes to protect the integrity of the individual, and in the 18th C, the importance of personal experience. This has its dangers too, making 'feeling' too important. But in Methodism, and others, it created a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' about sacramental efficacy. You dare not claim too much for the performance of a sacrament. Right words guarantee nothing; it is the spirit in which you do these things which is grace-giving. This is to argue over a false contrast.

Now let me read a paragraph from *Synthesis*:

Methodists and Catholics affirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This reality does not depend on the experience of the communicant, although it is only by faith that we become aware of Christ's presence. Christ in the fullness of his being, human and divine, crucified and risen, is present in the sacrament. This presence is mediated through the sacred elements of bread and wine. Within the eucharistic celebration become the sign *par excellence* of Christ's redeeming presence with his people. To the eyes of faith, they now signify the Body and Blood of Jesus, given and shed for the world. As we take, eat and drink, and share the bread and wine, we are transformed into him. The eucharistic bread and wine are therefore efficacious signs of the Body and Blood of Christ. (100).

The next paragraph is in italics, recognizing that we differ in the way in which we speak of the bread and wine.

*Roman Catholics do not claim that the physical and chemical composition of the bread and wine are changed, but they do believe that their inner reality (or 'substance') become that of the body and blood. Methodists affirm that the bread and wine acquire additional significance as effectual signs of the body and blood of Christ, but they have been reluctant to explore the manner of any change. (101, part)*

The dialogue acknowledges that there is

movement on both sides, and that entrenched positions are open to fresh consideration. Indeed, par. 101 says that *'Methodists do not generally reserve the elements but reverently dispose of them'*, but there is more to be said. In

distinction would be even less. Ecumenical liturgical theology has linked baptism, confirmation/ chrismation and eucharist almost as a unity, though made up of distinct parts and in different sequences. Catholic teaching that **anointing** with oil would be recognized as a valuable pastoral tool with the sick (and not for the dead). **Reconciliation**, personally with a pastor, has always been a possibility though only recently given a liturgical form; indeed confessing one's sin in a small group goes back to Methodist origins. And **ordination**, always involving, with others, a President of the Conference, has been observed as a solemn succession in the passing-on of an apostolic ministry, and has recently been the basis on which the Anglican and Methodist churches in Ireland have accepted each others' ministries, the Methodists having received episcopal, as well as their own, laying-on of hands.

The final paragraph of *Synthesis* offers some appropriate words for us to end on. The words actually occur in the very first dialogue report we ever produced - at Denver in 1971:



▶ Rev. & Mrs. Robert Gribben, Rev. & Mrs. Tim Macquiban

some places, bread and wine are taken from a eucharistic celebration in a congregation and taken immediately to housebound people and the sick who request it, and have prepared themselves to receive communion. And there are a variety of ways of disposing of the elements after the service, some more reverent than others, but Methodists are learning that what they regard as mere practicality involves matters of faith and devotion for others.

### Means of grace

Methodists again share with their Protestant Reformation sister churches the recognition of baptism and eucharist as 'gospel sacraments', but gladly embrace a number of what might be called 'para-sacraments' which account for Rome's other five. If Methodists knew more about present-day Catholic thinking of these, the

We know only too well that the latter stages of the ecumenical dialogue are more formidable than the early ones, requiring of us redoubled efforts and devotion, not merely to the work we have to do together, the joint witness to the great Christian values that we must give and widely promote in our Churches, but to the tasks of educating our people and communicating to them something of the joys and inspiration that have been vouchsafed to us.' (189)

There is indeed more to learn and discover from each other: may the Lord bless us on our journey together.

XVIII Annual Conference in honor of 'Servant of God' Father Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White

## The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church Problems and Its Ecclesiological Significance

Prof Petros Vassiliadis - Professor Emeritus at the Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece

(Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 10 December 2015)



It is a great honor for me and a special privilege to speak to such a renowned ecumenical institute as the PRO UNIONE, celebrating this year the 50 years from the Second Vatican Council. A special word of gratitude is also due to the Society of the Atonement, the Founders of which, the Franciscans Fr. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White, have been a shining example to all Christians committed to the unity of the Church, following our lord's command "that we may all be one" (John 17:20-21). It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Center of Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies "Metropolitan Panteleimon Papageorgiou" (CEMES), which I preside, follows the example of the Society of the Atonement, in its effort to promote the ecumenical awareness. Driving force toward

this vision in the Church of Greece, for more than two decades was the late Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Panteleimon Papageorgiou (1902-1979), our spiritual father and a close companion of the visionary Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. To revitalize his vision and further contribute to the ecumenical cause, a number of academics, as well as some of his direct or spiritual relatives, established in his name the aforementioned Center. Our focus this academic year, as a humble contribution on our part, the Orthodox academics, ecumenists,

missiologists and environmentalists, was our Orthodox Church's titanic effort toward her Pan-Orthodox Synod next year. And it was for this reason that I accepted with pleasure my brother Jacob Puglisi's very kind invitation to give this year's lecture on "The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: Problems and its Ecclesiological Significance". Obviously its importance is not only for the Orthodox world but for all Christians.



▶ Prof. Petros Vassiliadis welcomed by Centro's Director, Fr. James Puglisi, SA

I will start with some preliminary remarks (1); then I will move (2) to the pre-history (a), the history, (b) its preliminary stages (c), the issues to be decided (d) and the procedural principles (e) of this unique for the Orthodox world event; I will then (3) refer to the problems (a), some fears, hesitations and even reactions in certain "Orthodox" circles (b), and few optimistic expectations (c); and I will end with its ecclesiological significance, if any (4).

### ❶ | Some preliminary remarks

From the very start of the

process toward this synod the title proposed and finally accepted was that of a Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, not an Ecumenical one. Such a title is reserved only for the entire Christian world, at least when participation of the Catholic Church is secured. That decision was not a novel one, but was based on the long canonical and ecclesiological tradition of the entire Eastern Christian tradition, according to which no bishop has ever been installed on a city that originally belonged to the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome. This is because the Orthodox never considered the separation, and consequently loss of communion, between East and West, between the Old and the New Rome, as being in a real state of a schism.

The Orthodox, in addition, always gave preeminence to synodality, over against the necessary primacy, in ecclesiological matters. This idea was intensified after the complete separation between East and West, sometimes reaching the extreme and completely denying the importance of a primus in local, regional and universal level. One can look at the discussion that is still going on about the primus as an honorific title (*primus inter pares*) and the *primus sine paribus*. Even the Eucharistic ecclesiology, which has made after Vatican II a tremendous impact on ecumenical discussions - and today is the methodological tool of the

official Catholic-Orthodox dialogue - at its earlier stages (e.g. in Afanassiev) developed as to exclude altogether the idea of a primacy.

In my talk today I deliberately use the term Synod, and not Council (synodical, and not conciliar), in order to underline the authoritative nature of this event; despite the fact in English the two terms have the same meaning. The forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Synod will be a “synod” of binding significance, equal to the 7 Ecumenical, not just a council of theological deliberations.

As such - and this is my last preliminary remark - its ultimate goal cannot be other than “the union of all”. Despite the fact that there will be no thorough theological analysis on the nature of Church unity, the quest for unity permeates the most important documents to be discussed and decided upon.

### ⊗ | A. The pre-history of the Pan-Orthodox Synod

The Pan-Orthodox Synod, according to Metr. Hilarion, is important in that, after the era of ecumenical Synods, it will be the first one representing today all the canonical (recognized) Orthodox Churches. For the last 12 centuries, there were councils of various levels attended by representatives of various Churches, but this one will be the first Pan-Orthodox Synod to be convened in modern era. There is, however, a pre-history, to which I now turn.

The last synod of the Orthodox Church of this scale was convened again in Constantinople more than a millennium ago, to reinstall Photius to the Patriarchal throne. Just fewer than 400 hundred bishops attended it from almost all Christian Churches in the East. Having to deal also with a dividing the East and the West issue of a dogmatic character, the *filioque*, this synod became the first major conciliar meeting in the East that unlike the forthcoming Pan-Orthodox focused not on the unity of the whole Church of Christ, but on the dogmatic peculiarities of the Orthodox world. Some Orthodox count it as the 8th Ecumenical, and together with another one in the 14th century that rehabilitated St. Gregory Palamas and his teaching (counted as the 9th), believe that they both represent an authentic point of reference of the Orthodox faith. Officially, however, the Orthodox Church consider as Ecumenical only 7 Synods. It is not without significance that all consecrated bishops give to this very day an oath to follow and protect the Bible and only 7 Ecumenical Synods.

Along with the 879 Synod the Eastern Orthodox Church continued exercising its synodality with the famous institution of the *endemousa* synod, a synod consisting of all the residing in Constantinople bishops and even Patriarchs of the East. This *endemousa* synod used to manage ecclesial matters not only of the local Church of Constantinople but of the entire Eastern Church. After all, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and New Rome, had historically (since at least the fifth century) coordinated such assemblies, facilitating unity, while at the same time serving as a center of appeal among all Orthodox Churches.

### ⊗ | B. The history of the Pan-Orthodox Synod

The real history of the Synod started early in the 20th century, when the Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III felt again the duty to reunite the Orthodox Churches that lost contact among themselves, despite holding the same faith. Because of the apparent disarray and ecclesiological irregularity the Orthodox Churches started discussing the possibility of convening a Pan-Orthodox Synod. In 1923 with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire Constantinople called an inter-Orthodox assembly to pave the way to a real Pan-Orthodox Synod. There were several attempts to convene such an event in the interwar period, but they were all unsuccessful, mostly because the Russian Church was isolated and suffered severe persecutions.

The Orthodox Churches returned to this idea after World War II, despite the fact that in the meantime other Orthodox Church in the Balkans suffered similar with the Russians repression. At this crucial moment WCC, at its peak in that period, played a catalytic role serving as a safe forum which helped Orthodoxy to be reunited, especially after 1961 when the entire Orthodox Church (with the exception of Albania leaving under extreme atheistic regime) officially joined the council. The event, however, that rekindled the idea of a Pan-Orthodox Synod was the corresponding synodical process of the Catholic Church, Vatican II, which really inspired the Orthodox to accelerate the process of preparation for their Pan-Orthodox Synod.

Inter-Orthodox pre-conciliar consultations, very instrumental in the preparation process, started taking place at Rhodes early in 1960s (1961, 1963, 1964), and in Geneva in 1968. These consultations were succeeded by a Pan-Orthodox commission and Pre-conciliar consultations, which took place from the 1970s and up to the 1980s. The 3rd pre-conciliar consultation (1986) promulgated almost all the important documents with ecclesiological and ecumenical significance. No further progress was made after the 3rd pre-conciliar consultation, mainly because in the 1990s and in the 3rd millennium, and up to the convocation decision, the general theological discussion was overwhelmed by the great success of the official theological dialogue with the Catholic Church, and particularly the primacy issue, still is opposed by the Russian Church.

After the elevation to the throne of Constantinople of Patriarch Bartholomew a second (after the *endemousa*) conciliar institution filled the gap of the Orthodox Church’s synodality: the Synaxis of the Primates of all the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. Although an unprecedented institution in the canonical history of the Church, this semi-synodical instrument proved extremely important and effective. Gleaning from the pre-conciliar process and its unanimously agreed decisions, this institution gave the Church a common voice to the pressing problems of modern era. It was in the 5th and last such Synaxis, meeting in Constantinople (March 6-9, 2014) that was finally agreed that a Pan-Orthodox Synod be at

last convened. A “Communiqué of the Primate of the Orthodox Churches” released on March 9th stated that “the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church...will be convened and presided by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople in 2016”. God willing it was scheduled to be held in the Church of Haghia Irene, the site of the 2nd Ecumenical council of 381, which completed the “creed” recited by most Christians today. Now a museum, Haghia Irene has never been converted into a mosque after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. To be honest, only if some unforeseen circumstances do not prevent it, will this long awaited Synod take place.

### 🕒 | C. The preliminary stages of the Pan-Orthodox Synod

The 2014 Synaxis agreed that each Autocephalous Church will be represented by her Primate accompanied by 24 bishops, a number doubled from 12 bishops, plus the Primate, which was agreed in the midway. Because some Orthodox Churches do not have so many bishops, they will be represented by all their bishops. The initial idea to allow these Churches to “borrow” bishops from other Churches was abandoned. Since, however, all Churches will have only one vote, the number of the participating bishops does not matter at all. All the sessions will be presided over by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Most analysts and commentators insist that these decisions were the result of compromises achieved through very tense negotiations between the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Moscow. The Patriarch of Moscow, with over 320 bishops in his Church, initially suggested that all Orthodox bishops should participate in the Synod. The majority of the Churches rejected this proposal, not because this would give the Russian Church a distinct advantage, but for practical reasons and the lack of parity among

all the autocephalous Churches. After all, the one Church-one vote decision of the Synaxis overrules such an argument. However, as Fr. John Chryssavgis, one of Patriarch Bartholomew’s advisors, put it, “it is naïve to dismiss disagreements among various churches sweepingly, implying that these merely result from rivalries of power”.

The roadmap towards the Synod included a pre-synodical inter-Orthodox preparatory committee - unfortunately without so far a single Orthodox woman theologian - which started work in September 2014 and will probably be in charge up to the opening of the Synod.

and decision at the Synod were determined long ago. The original long list included items, such as the diptychs, a common calendar, and even a common celebration of Easter, as well as many others, such as the canon of the Bible, a fuller participation of the laity in the life of the Church etc. When in the 1980s the last item (on lay participation) was deleted from the list, after pressure for obvious reasons by Churches then under communist rule, this pre-synodical process saw a strong reaction and the withdrawal of John Karmiris, the most prominent Orthodox dogmatic theologian of the time.



▶ Students' presence in the conference hall, a historical gathering place for the chronicled conciliar meetings in the city of Rome, since the Vatican II Council.

The committee’s most important assignment was the updating of most of the 1986 documents of the Geneva pre-conciliar consultation and the finalization of a couple of others, in addition of course to dealing with the details of its procedures. It was also authorized to quickly intervene if difficult issues arise in inter-Orthodox relations during the period up to the Synod.

### 🕒 | D. The themes of the Pan-Orthodox Synod

The issues for discussion

In short, from the longer list only 10 themes were dealt with: The Orthodox Diaspora, autocephaly, autonomy, the diptychs, the Church calendar, the canonical impediments to marriage, fasting, the relations with the other Christian Churches, the ecumenical movement, and the mission of the Church to the world. On all these themes an equal number of documents were drafted. Now the final list is further reduced to 8, because only on these have all Orthodox Churches unanimously agreed upon. These documents



▶ The speaker and some Orthodox and Catholic attendees

with some improvements will be submitted to the Synod. They all address problems that emerge from adapting an ancient faith to a modern reality, like precepts of fasting, regulations of marriage, and most importantly issues of sensitive nature, like the relations of the Orthodox Church with the other Churches and Christian confessions, the witness of the Orthodox Church to the contemporary world, and hopefully non-canonical governance issues facing the Orthodox Church in the Orthodox diaspora.

At some stage there was a suggestion not to convoke a Pan-Orthodox Synod now, in order to better prepare all issues at large, but a more sober view prevailed: to finish now what has been painstakingly prepared so far and leave to the next generation the rest. After all, many Primates who took the decision were active participants in some previous

preparatory stages. According to Fr. Cyril Hovorun, a colleague of mine from Ukraine, if the Synod does take place, “it will summarize the history of the Orthodox Church of the last century and will be the most important event in modern Orthodox history”. And to the above mentioned patriarchal advisor, “the very conception, let alone the convocation of such a Pan-Orthodox Synod, which will gather all the ancient patriarchates, with the exception of Rome, is entirely unprecedented”.

While the last issues may seem quite normal and uncomplicated to an outsider, they are vital to the growth of the Orthodox Church. For instance, the ecumenical openness of an otherwise profoundly traditional Church is of crucial importance, especially in view of the existence of tiny but vocal conservative minorities and traditionalist circles in the Greek and Slavic worlds.

### ⊗ | E. The procedural principles of the Pan-Orthodox Synod

To balance the decision on the number of participants, the Russian Church insisted on consensus among the voting Churches in taking decisions; not only in the Synod itself, but also in all pre-synodical process. And this was a decision that was listed first among all the other decisions of the 2014 Synaxis. It is important to know that in his opening speech at this Synaxis the Ecumenical Patriarch suggested the traditional “majority vote” procedural principle. I was the first to publicly alert my Church in an article I wrote before the opening of that crucial Synaxis on the real meaning of consensus, knowing the Russian Orthodox Church administration’s adamant position. I expressed my fear that the unity of Orthodoxy was at risk and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s

determination for convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod, to complete a more than half a century pre-synodical process, would collapse before it even started.

My arguments were that the Church cannot, of course, use in decision-making the procedures customarily used in secular bodies, such as parliaments. In the Church, as the body of Christ and a divine-human (theanthropic) organization this adversarial approach, which can even become confrontational, thus undermining its unity, is inappropriate for any Church seeking to “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17), or His mind (cf. “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”, Acts 15:28). Therefore, procedures that allow more room for brotherly consultation, prayerful reflection, and “effective through love” (Galatians 5:6) can better promote the purposes of an Orthodox Synod.

This is not to say that a Synod should attempt to work without rules; on the contrary, rules that are fair are indeed essential. The question is the style, content and application of such rules. And the consensus method is a means of arriving at decisions.

I made, however, clear that the consensus is not the same as, or even identical with, unanimity. The crucial element in a consensus decision-making process is to make sure that all minority views are heard, understood, thoroughly discussed and respected. Consensus can be the normal procedure, but not the invariable procedure. A consensus should by no means lead to a veto. A consensus is reached not only when all are in agreement (unanimity); but also when most are in agreement and those who disagree are content with the discussion and convinced that the decision expresses the general “mind of the Synod”; in rare cases of serious disagreement, the final decision is addressed to, and thoroughly discussed in, the pre-synodical inter-Orthodox preparatory committee.

To my disappointment, the communiqué - originally drafted in English - even in the Greek translation renders consensus as unanimity, which means a right to veto for any Church. Such an understanding of consensus significantly reduces beforehand the possibility of the Synod taking any decision regarding burning issues, especially those of ecumenical and ecclesiological nature, let alone those related to Christian anthropology or to social and moral issues. And because in the Orthodox Church only a Synod could have an authority to take a binding decision, the wider Christian community should not be optimistic or create high expectations. This is one of the weakest points of the Synod, although in the pre-synodical committee efforts were made to minimize its negative effect; but the damage was already done.

### ⊕ | A. The problems of the Synod

No one can deny that the Pan-Orthodox Synod, is of great significance. The problem is how effective

it will be in addressing the issues that really matter for the Orthodox Church, without risking an already fragile unity. The two main problems are the possibility of its postponement (or even worse its complete cancelation) and its reception. As to the former, there is indeed a real possibility that the Synod will be postponed, if the tensions between local Orthodox Churches become more intense, thus making it impossible, or if international politics prevent it. Fortunately, the tension between the Antioch and Jerusalem Patriarchates over mutual territorial claims, although they existed before the 2014 Synaxis and as a result was the main reason for the Antiochian delegation not signing its final communiqué, did not prevent the normal process toward the Pan-Orthodox Synod.

Some of course still consider the forthcoming Synod as being of little significance or consequence. They claim that no doctrinal issue will be discussed or defined. But even in the past in the classical Ecumenical Synods the bishops were not only dealing with theological disputes and ecclesiastical controversies but also with the current problems.

Even a greater problem seems to be the way the decisions of the Synod will eventually be received, given the fact that there are at least two issues to be decided at the Synod that encompass universal and unparalleled authority. The first is the straight condemnation of separatist, extremist and subversive elements and factions - sometimes in circles influenced by monastics - within the Orthodox Church, along with a condemnation of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism; and the second the unanimous decision in favor of the multi- and bi-lateral dialogues. Such a clear at a top level commitment to ecumenical openness will end once and for all any anti-ecumenical feeling, haunted as a ghost within Orthodoxy for more than a century (I refer to the calendarist dispute). It is expected, however, to instigate and ignite some reactions. Time will show just how much the Orthodox want the Holy and Great Pan-Orthodox Synod, and how it will be received by the faithful and their leaders. It is a matter of how much each autocephalous Church is ready and willing to lay aside trends of phyletism, which though condemned as a contemporary heresy by a 19th century Orthodox regional Synod (1878) it is still in force among Orthodox, who do not resist the temptations of secular power and nationalism.

### ⊕ | B. Fears, hesitations and reactions in certain “Orthodox” circles

Many ultra-conservative Orthodox faithful opposed the idea of a Pan-Orthodox Synod as utterly undesirable, considering the mere concept of it as either arrogant or irrelevant. They stick to the arguments put forward by Fr Justin Popovic of Chelije (now a saint), who back in 1977 wrote against a “Pan-Orthodox

Synod”, because most Orthodox Churches at that time were under atheist regimes, but also because he famously called ecumenism a “pan-heresy”, with Papacy and WCC as its real manifestation. These people are still afraid of an unconditional surrender of their Church to Papacy and to deviating from the traditional faith and ecclesiology Protestantism. Behind such a naive reaction lies the experience of proselytism against the Orthodox in earlier periods. For this reason in one of the documents for final adoption there is a clear condemnation of proselytism.

In any case, even positive toward the Synod Orthodox theologians recognize with regret that the earlier ecumenical achievements have faded away, due to the rising anti-ecumenical climate within Orthodoxy. It is quite true that ecumenism, while prominent in the early preparatory stages of the Synod, may be at its nadir at the time of its convocation, or even at the crucial period of its reception.

### ③ | C. The expectations

There are, however, also positive expectations from the Synod, especially from those Orthodox Churches and individuals ministering in non-Orthodox countries. Will the Synod pronounce a proper and canonical administration and organization for all Churches, especially those in diaspora? The proper canonical status of one bishop per diocese (or city) is currently an exception. Normally in one city a number of ethnic Orthodox Churches co-exist, and, therefore, more than one bishop render their services. “Will church leaders grant some standing of autonomy? Will leaders in countries such as the United States be interested in a unified, collaborative organization? Or will they remain obsessed with narrowly nationalistic interests?”

Regrettably most Orthodox Churches seem to be retreating into a stifling, sheltered and safe

provincialism, they appear less interested in transcending any prejudice and parochialism; they consider their own national concerns as more important pastorally than concerns for collaboration or collegiality. Therefore, the most theologically educated faithful eagerly expect solutions by the synod to such or similar problems.

And of course there are genuine expectations from the Synod by non-Orthodox. Many expect what Orthodoxy will say on issues other Christians have been struggling for generations to resolve regarding gender and sexuality; there will be no discussion these. Others, knowing that the various Orthodox jurisdictions take different approaches to the reception of non-Orthodox Christians, are asking pressing questions on how we view the nature of the other “churches” or “ecclesial communities”. Again, no answer is going to be given to this question too, as it happened with the same question posed 15 years ago in WCC within the framework of the Special Committee of Orthodox Participation.

### ④ | The ecclesiological significance of the Synod

To properly assess such an important event one has to have access to the final documents. However, the secretariat denied any official access to all drafted documents, in order to prevent negative comments, or even biased manipulation of them. This is perhaps one of the reasons why there was no provision of a wider official consultation in the preparatory stage, even among Orthodox theologians, let alone an ecumenical one. I remember the late prof. Nikos Nissiotis, after his positive experience as an observer at Vatican II, envisaging for the Pan-Orthodox a preliminary consultation even with non-Orthodox with voting rights and episcopal representation - especially of the Oriental Orthodox. Now it is doubtful that non-Orthodox observers will even be invited.

We must be content, nevertheless, that the Synod will at

least address ecumenical relations, although, as it has unofficially been reported, the 1987 approved document on ecumenism will not mention the term in the title, in order to avoid reactions from ultra-conservative Orthodox. It will be submitted to the Synod combined with other documents dealing with the bilateral dialogues.

Even with these limitations the Synod will have an exceptional ecclesiological significance, at least for the Orthodox. The supposedly secondary issues from an ecclesiological perspective for non-Orthodox turn out to have enormous significance for the Orthodox Church, especially if she manages to speak and act as a unified body.

I will try to explain this by using as a methodological tool the approach to religious systems used in the discipline of the history of religions. According to specialists in the field it is important to take into consideration the radical prophetic movement, starting from the OT Prophets, the Historical Jesus, through the various marginal groups (most notably the Manicheans), and up to Muhammad in Islam. This thread is the single most important characteristic of all the Abrahamic religions, though it remains very often hidden and outside the mainstream religious systems. It generates inner conflict, disunity, and in some cases even heresy. The figures of the Gnostic, a martyr, a holy man, or a mystic are all sequels of the OT prophecy. It reflects a mode of religiosity that is characterized by high intensity and extreme actions. It is centripetal and activist by nature and emphasizes sectarianism and polemics, esoteric knowledge, or gnosis and of course charisma. The other mode of religiosity, as we move geographically from the East to the West in all three monotheistic religions, is obviously more common than the first one. It is centrifugal, and irenic, it favors an ecumenical attitude; it contents itself with a widely shared faith and concentrates on commonly agreed dogmas. In Weberian



▶ The Friars of the Atonement with candidates and friends

parlance, it reflects the routinization of all religious movements. This is the mode in religious systems with centralized authority, a mode of

priests and bishops, rather than of martyrs and holy men. These two main modes of religion, high versus low intensity, exist simultaneously,

and cross the boundaries of all religious communities. The present dramatic situation in Europe perfectly explains the chaotic image of Islam. Compared, for example, to Catholicism (geographically in the West) Islam (geographically located in the East) is lacking of any centralized authority. Orthodoxy lies somewhere in between (not only geographically, not even because of its autocephaly with the ensuing decentralization, and even nationalism). In Orthodoxy, despite its canonical structure and ecclesiology, monastic and other charismatic figures exercise similar authority, or at least exert considerable influence, similar to their religious leaders. It is therefore extremely difficult to control all anti-ecumenical feelings that can diminish the importance and consequences of even an authoritative synod.

It is for all these and many other reasons that the very fact of its convocation gives the Pan-Orthodox Synod an ecclesiological significance of its own.

Ecumenical Celebration for the  
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity / 2016

## The Church as the People of God

Rt Revd Prof N T Wright DD - University of St. Andrews, Scotland

(Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 21 January 2016)



Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality. It is a treat to be back in Rome on a sunny winter's day and to share with you in this annual expression of faith, hope and love – which is what the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity really is, of course. We pray in faith for the unity we know to be the will of our Lord; we live and work in the hope that this prayer will be answered, not least by our humble and wise efforts; and while all that is going on we learn to love one another even when we do not necessarily understand one another. All of that will be woven into the reflections that I'm going to offer you this afternoon, with the prayer for this occasion in particular that we may at least glimpse new aspects of our common task.

In my previous job, as a bishop in the Church of England, the active promotion of Christian unity was one of my regular preoccupations. I worked with Cardinal Walter Kasper and others and took part in various relevant events, including the symposium to celebrate his book *Harvesting the Fruits*, which I still regard as a remarkable landmark in our common quest. I was able to take back from the Synod of Bishops here in Rome in October 2008 the strong mandate for sharing Bible Study across denominational lines, and the following spring ecumenical Bible Study groups sprang up in towns, cities and villages across the north-east of England, with Anglicans and

Roman Catholics leading the way but with many others, from the Methodists to the Eastern Orthodox, joining in enthusiastically. One of my regrets on stepping down from that job six years ago was that in order to work my way back into the academy I had to leave that practical ecumenical work. But I hope and pray that what I have been doing instead, which is the historical and theological exegesis of the New Testament, will help to provide underpinnings for the next generation of such work. And I am assuming that, if you ask a professional exegete to lecture you on an occasion like this, what you want is not anecdotal reminiscences about my varied ecumenical experiences but fresh scriptural reflection on the nature, and particularly the vocation, of the church.

My theme this evening – The Church as the People of God – might sound bland and obvious. In systematic treatments the phrase 'the people of God' is sometimes listed as one facet of the church, in parallel as it were with others, like 'the new Temple' or 'the Body of Christ'. I suspect that many of those who have used the phrase 'the people of God' since Vatican II, and engaging with its arguments, have done that; in some ways I might have used this lecture to reflect on Vatican II in the light of subsequent developments, but that isn't the sort of thing Anglicans characteristically do and I thought it better to stick to my last. As a biblical specialist I am always suspicious of those somewhat rigid categorizations that systematicians like. They may help in drawing attention to certain aspects. But as with other doctrines, so also with ecclesiology: what matters is not the static category but the *story* which this category tries to encapsulate.

Christian doctrines are after all *portable stories*. When I travel, as I did yesterday and will again tomorrow, I pack up my belongings into a bag or two so that I can carry them around. But when I arrive, I unpack and spread everything out where it really belongs. I couldn't possibly carry them all without the bags, but they do not live in the bags. They come alive, they do their jobs, when you take them out again. In the same way, when I say 'the atonement' or 'Pneumatology', or whatever, I am packing up a much



▶ Rt Revd Prof N T Wright DD

longer *story* and putting it into a bag with a label on so I can easily refer to it – so that, for instance, when talking about the atonement I don't always have to say 'the Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Bible'. The danger is that we imagine the word 'atonement', or 'Trinity', or whatever, to be the reality. It isn't. It's the suitcase into which we pack the complicated story so that we can discuss it without constant cumbersome repetitions.

So it is with ecclesiology, perhaps most obviously with the idea of the church as 'the people of God'. That

that Christian theology tells a story, and the story in question is the story which gets under way with Abraham. Our danger in the West, if I can dangerously generalize, is that we have Platonized our theology, turning actual concrete stories into abstractions, whether by allegory or some other means; not that allegory is never appropriate, but that it must not take the place of reflection on the actual story and what it means as such. There is a reason why the mediaevals insisted on the primacy of the literal sense. We are creational monotheists, and our story is the focal point of the story of the good creation and how the good creator God is rescuing it, not abandoning it.

The New Testament insists at several points that what was launched with Jesus means what it means because this is where the Abraham-story was going all along. The very first page of the NT, Matthew's genealogy, makes this clear both in form (the seven sevens) and substance (Abraham to David to the Exile to the Messiah). The poems at the start of Luke, woven into our liturgies to this day, insist that what is happening in Jesus is what God promised to our forefather Abraham. John the Baptist declares that God can raise up children for Abraham even from the stones. Paul insists that belonging to Abraham's family is the thing that matters: if you belong to the Messiah, he says at the end of Galatians 3, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. And so on. The danger in simply affirming that the church is 'the people of God', without reflecting on these

ancient roots, is that we become accidental Marcionites, imagining that Jesus set up something totally new. Or, if we see that danger coming, we rescue the Old Testament by allegorizing it or searching for a few proof-texts. We still risk imagining the church as an institution existing for its own sake, an organisation defined by its own inner life rather than by its larger horizon, in this case its roots (I shall come to its destiny presently). This then breeds its own internal reaction, as rebellions within the church reject arrogant institutionalism but opt instead, not for a return to the ancient roots, but for a would-be Christian version of the social revolutions of our age.

What then does it mean to insist on those ancient roots? The way Genesis tells the story of Abraham gives us the answer. The call of Abraham in Genesis 12 is carefully described so as to echo the calling of human beings in Genesis 1 and 2. Humans are told to be fruitful and multiply, look after the garden and name the animals. Abraham is told that God will make him exceedingly



▶ From the left:  
 Revd. James Puglisi, SA — Director of the Centro Pro Unione,  
 Rt. Revd. Prof N T Wright DD (center) — conference speaker,  
 Rt. Revd. David Moxon — Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome.

phrase tells a *story*. My case to you this afternoon is that from time to time the church has been in danger of forgetting what the story actually is, and so neglecting aspects of the church's vocation which, when recalled, ought to serve the fresh ecumenical prayer and purpose which brings us here together. I shall therefore be reminding you of things you already know at one level, but doing so by drawing on freshly worked exegesis of key passages, and freshly considered reflection in the light of that.

## 1. The Ancient Roots of God's People

As a biblical theologian I frequently worry that the church, and theology, all too easily take the Bible for granted and then use it to back up this or that thought or system or proposal without really reflecting on the structure of thought and life which the Bible itself proposes. It isn't just a matter of reminding ourselves of a few Bible passages we'd half forgotten, which might slightly alter our own picture this way or that. It is, rather,

fruitful and multiply him exceedingly, and that he will give him the Promised Land. Canaan is the new Eden – just as of course the eventual expulsion from the land, threatened at the end of Deuteronomy and actualized at the end of Kings, is the long outworking of the expulsion from Eden. In both cases the original scene is not a tableau, but a *project*. Adam and Eve are supposed to develop the family and the land. The point is that Abraham and his family are the means by which the *human* project gets back on track, and the human project was the means by which *God's project for the whole of creation* would be revitalised. The ancient roots of the church as the people of God indicate the vocation in which the people of God are the focus and means of God's project for the whole creation, and for the role of humans within that. Our western constructs often reflect a Platonic ideal rather than the this-worldly reality of the biblical roots. The first article of the Creed insists on the glorious affirmation of God as creator of all things in heaven and earth.

There are three points to make within this reflection on the ancient roots. First, the goal of the Promised Land will be attained only through exile and restoration, in the first instance by slavery in Egypt and God's dramatic rescue at Passover, and then – according to Deuteronomy, rounding off the Pentateuch – through the exile in Babylon, the result of Israel's covenant disobedience, and the new covenant restoration. This note of slavery and exodus, exile and restoration, death and life, is woven into the narrative and colours all subsequent Jewish and then early Christian reflection, coming to its climax when Jesus explains the story to the two puzzled disciples on the road to Emmaus. The people of God do not merely start again where Adam started. They live with the long-term consequences of his rebellion, so that the project of creation can be restored, not merely restarted. This note must then be woven into all understandings of the church as the people of God. As Paul saw in Romans 8, we are to share in the groaning of all creation so that we may share in the glory to be revealed in the new creation. This is not something other than the vocation to be God's people. It grows directly out of the ancient roots.

The second reflection on the ancient roots concerns the divine presence. In Eden itself the personal

presence of God was taken for granted, which is why Adam and Eve tried to hide. Wherever Abraham went he built altars and invoked God's presence. Jacob, even in the moment of his forced exile, discovered that the Lord was in that place even though he didn't know it. But then, in the Exodus, Israel's God comes in person in the pillar of cloud and fire. The climax of the book of Exodus is the building of the Tabernacle where the glorious divine presence comes to dwell, to lead the Israelites to the Land. Modern western thinking has often slid back into some kind of Deism, or even the characteristic post-enlightenment Epicureanism. The idea of the personal presence of God with his people then appears either metaphorical or magical, which is why we've had trouble articulating our sacramental theology. Once we return to the ancient roots we find better ways of discerning the mystery.

The third point about the ancient roots is obvious and difficult, but has to be faced. Once we say, as the New Testament does, that what has happened in Jesus and the Spirit is the long fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, then how do we respond to the continuing existence of children of Abraham who do not believe that Jesus is Israel's Messiah? This is the question Paul addresses in Romans 9–11. There is no space to tackle it here, except to note a couple of things. First, it is actually a major issue in several other parts of the New Testament, such as John's gospel and Acts. We need

to handle all such passages with sensitivity. But second, we must beware of allowing modern perceptions to distort the way we frame the question – in particular, the very modern notion of 'religion', which corresponds to nothing in the ancient world. In the first century there was no sense of something called 'Christianity' being founded over against something called 'Judaism'. In the two centuries either side of Jesus there were many Jewish movements which claimed that *this* was now the way in which Israel's God was fulfilling his promises. In each case, whether it be the Hasmonean dynasty, the Pharisaic populist movement, the Essenes, the Herodians, the movements led by Judas the Galilean, Simon bar-Giora or the other would-be first-century Messiahs, or ultimately Bar Kochba, supported by no less than Rabbi Akiba – in each case such movements claimed that *this* was the long-awaited renewal, and that



▶ Rev. Tony Currer, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

anyone who didn't get on board was disloyal to Israel's God. Jesus' first followers belong exactly within this very Jewish pattern. It's how messianic eschatology works – completely different to 'comparative religion', which constructs a modernist paradigm and then tries to fit first-century data into it. The main response to the question at issue is to insist, as I shall do in my third and central point below, that the church is not, and never has been, a self-standing organisation. The church is what it is because it confesses Jesus to be Israel's Messiah *and therefore* the world's true Lord. If we remove the confession of Jesus as Lord from the confession of him as Israel's Messiah we run the risk of paganizing our Christology, which is then at the root of an arrogant ecclesiology. This requires constant care.

We must, then, remind ourselves of the ancient roots of our identity. To cut off those roots is at once to turn the idea of 'the people of God' into something else. My second point looks away from the distant past to the ultimate future.

## 2. The Ultimate Destiny of God's People

When we think about ultimate destiny, the normal western reaction is to speak of 'heaven'. I have argued in many places that this is seriously misleading. The New Testament doesn't speak of 'heaven' like that, and it does speak, most emphatically, of heaven and earth being brought together in a great renewal. Sometimes this is seen in terms of 'new heavens and new earth'; specialists on Revelation 21 assure me that in context this means the radical renewal of the present creation, not its abolition and replacement. The new world will be, like Jesus' risen body, creation not *ex nihilo* but *ex vetere*. For me this is summed up in Ephesians 1.10: the divine purpose was to sum up all things in the Messiah, *things in heaven and things on earth*. The aim was to bring heaven and earth back together, not to split them apart. Here we have work to do in thinking about being the people of God within such a vision of ultimate destiny.

Here, for a start, we see the point of the long Israelite tradition of early altars, then the Tabernacle, and then the Temple. These structures were never intended as a *retreat from* the world, a place where one could escape into a religious sphere detached from the world. They were intended as a statement of intent, as a bridgehead *into* the world. The Tabernacle was a *microcosmos*, a 'little world'; when the divine glory took up residence this anticipated the time when the glory would fill the whole of creation, heaven and earth. This theme comes back regularly in Israel's scriptures, in Isaiah's temple-vision, for instance, or in the prophecies of Isaiah 11 and Habakkuk 2, where the earth is to be filled with the knowledge or the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. It is the climax of the messianic Psalm 72: when the coming king brings justice and mercy to the world at last, then the whole earth will be filled with the divine glory. Revelation's picture of the New Jerusalem is of a giant cube – the

perfect or ultimate Holy of Holies. There will be no Temple because the Temple itself was an advance signpost to the divine intention to flood the entire creation with glorious presence.

In the New Testament we see how this promise to bring heaven and earth together, and fill them with the divine presence, has been fulfilled. John's gospel is explicit: the word became flesh and *tabernacled* in our midst, and we gazed upon his glory, glory as of the Father's only Son. The incarnation is the narrative of how this promise was fulfilled – in a human being. As in 2 Samuel 7, David's desire to build God a house is answered by God's promise to give David a 'house', that is, a family, an ultimate 'seed'. Solomon's Temple was a *microcosmos*, pointing forwards to the whole new creation, but it was also a signpost to the divine intention to dwell in the midst of creation *in and as a human being*. A whole world of incarnational reflection opens up before us here, but we must move on.

In John, Luke, and Paul, what was accomplished in the person of Jesus himself, the focal point and means of new creation, is then put to work through the Holy Spirit. In Acts, first Jesus ascends to heaven, so that heaven and earth are joined together by his earthly body being at home in heaven; then, the powerful breath of heaven sweeps through the Upper Room, filling the disciples and joining heaven and earth in their worship and energetic witness. That is why most of the controversies in Acts are centred upon temples, both the Temple in Jerusalem and the various pagan shrines in Lystra, in Athens and in Ephesus. The church as the people of God *is* the church as the new Temple, the new *microcosmos* – not to replace the Temple which is Jesus himself (we'll come back to that) but because the presence of the Holy Spirit constitutes the church as such, the people *of* God, not just 'under divine ownership' but the people in whom, in whose midst, the living God has come to dwell. In Romans 8, in particular, Paul tells the story of the new Exodus, with the people of God being led by the Spirit to the ultimate inheritance, which is the new creation. The Spirit there takes the role which in the original Exodus was taken by the pillar of cloud and fire. You can't get a higher Pneumatology than that, and in consequence you can't get a higher ecclesiology. But once again this isn't static; it is a story, and it focuses on *vocation*. The church as 'the people of God' is itself to be an advance sign of the coming together of heaven and earth.

This has all sorts of consequences. For a start, this placing of the church between the ancient Abrahamic roots and the ultimate promise of the renewal of all things locates and shapes the church's sacramental life. If we start at both ends and work wisely into the middle of the picture – the place where we ourselves live as agents and actors – then the church's mandated actions with water, bread and wine resonate within that larger narrative, particularly its Passover-imagery. For another thing, as the people of God we are designed to be not merely a sign, an accidental sign as it were, of the coming renewal; we

are to be agents of it here and now. This is the scriptural narrative from within which the church must hear its vocation to be part of the movement to rescue our world from thoughtless exploitation, both economic and ecological, in which, as always, it is the weak and the poor who suffer worst. I suspect most of us are signed up to working on the economic and ecological agendas; what I hope to be doing here is providing again the larger scriptural narrative within which it makes sense. It isn't just an extra ethical imperative stuck on to the end of a large list of 'things Christians ought to be concerned about'. It is part of our mandate as the people of God. We are the people called to live between the ancient roots and the ultimate destiny. In the ancient roots, Abraham's task was to restore the Adam-project, and the Adam-project was always to *look after the garden and the animals and make them flourish*. In the ultimate destiny, heaven and earth are renewed and brought together in the Messiah and the Spirit. Those who believe in the crucified and risen Messiah and the power of the Spirit are therefore to be both sign and agent of that ultimate reconciliation.

This leads in particular to our central question and prayer this week: the question of the unity of all Christian people. Here I return to Ephesians. The statement of ultimate divine intent in 1.10 is worked out in various anticipations in the rest of the letter. I note in particular that in chapter 5, as in Genesis 1 and 2, the coming together of man and woman in marriage is a sign of the union of the Messiah and his people but also, within the letter as a whole, of the fact that heaven and earth are themselves designed to be united. This ought to alert us to the deep reasons why marriage is so much under attack in our world, though that would take us too far afield just now.

But in particular the unity which Paul stresses in Ephesians is the unity of the church across all traditional barriers. Within the logic of the letter, in which Paul is thinking

through the ancient roots and the ultimate destiny, the coming together of Jew and Gentile into a single body, as expressed in 2.11-21, is of vital importance. At the end of that passage Paul makes explicit the fact that in this coming together we see

3 Paul declares that when God brings Jew and Gentile together this is so that 'through the church the many-splendored wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.' The powers that have ruled the world



▶ The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, begun in 1908 by the Servant of God Fr. Paul Wattson, co-founder of the Society of the Atonement with Mother Lurana White, was celebrated in conjunction with The Lay Centre in Rome.

▶ Left: Donna Orsuto, Director of the Lay Centre in Rome

▶ Right: Rt. Revd. David Moxon, Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome

the new Temple. The church is itself designed to be the new *microcosmos*, the new place which symbolizes the coming together of heaven and earth. For Paul the deepest social and cultural divisions were those between Jew and Gentile; in the new creation in the Messiah these divisions had been overcome and a new, single humanity created in their place. Here again we see that the imperative towards unity is not simply an extra task added on to all the other things the church is supposed to be doing. It is central. Once we understand the narrative, the *story* of what we mean when we talk about 'the people of God', it is clear and urgent.

Two things follow from this central passage in Ephesians 2. The first is the *political witness* of this united 'people of God'. In Ephesians

(for Paul, the line between 'earthly' and 'heavenly' powers was blurred, to put it mildly) would have loved to unite the world. Rome, in particular, was trying hard to unite all humanity under its rule. That's what empires do. It failed, of course, with social and cultural divisions more entrenched than ever. But God has done what the world could not, bringing humans of every kind into a single family, as a sign to the powers of the world that Jesus is Lord and that Caesar is not. We know the practical implications of this point. If the churches speak with many different voices, the world shrugs its shoulders and takes no notice. But if the church worldwide can say the same thing at the same time, the rulers and authorities – who know in their bones that they do not have the answers to the great questions that face our muddled late-

modern world – will listen. But this will only happen when we speak with one voice; and that will only happen, as I shall suggest in a moment, when we *worship* with one voice.

The second thing that follows from this vision in Ephesians 2 is the recognition of unity and diversity within the church itself, as in Ephesians 4. The emphasis there is on the many different gifts given to the Body – and here we see one of several places in which the theme of ‘the body of Christ’ actually nests within the larger theme of ‘the people of God’. Of course when different gifts are given they can tempt those who receive them to think that this, and this only, is the way God is now at work; that their particular gift is the centre of the church. The image of the body then reminds us how foolish such a conclusion is. That is why I was encouraged a few years ago by the project of ‘receptive ecumenism’, in which we ask the question, What gifts has God given to other parts of the church that he wants us to receive *from them*? This is a good but difficult question, because sometimes the things that other Christians have are precisely the reason why we are suspicious of them. Thus you can only answer this question, not pragmatically, but with real discernment. And discernment is required, as well, whenever a church meets the question – as my own church is doing right now, and has been doing for over a decade – of serious internal disagreement. Precisely because of the vocation of the church to be the sign and foretaste of the coming together of heaven and earth – in other words, this again is not mere pragmatism – it is vital that we grasp the principles of how such disagreement is to be handled. This applies as much to relationships between churches as to difficulties within individual churches. There are many points in what I’m saying today where this theme is relevant, but let me include it here.

The crucial point, which emerges in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, 9 and 10 is to recognise

that some things are ‘indifferent’ and some are not. Not all differences of belief and behaviour are load-bearing for the unity of the church. In Romans Paul addresses the question of dietary laws and Sabbath observance. We may assume that among the house-churches in this great city there were significantly different practices, and since Paul’s aim in Romans, summed up in 15.8-13, is that *all the different Christian groups should worship together*, he must explain to them all that these things are ‘indifferent’ when it comes to sharing in *koinonia*, in fellowship. They must not judge one another over such things. The story of the church as ‘the people of God’ is absolutely central to this command: you stand or fall before your Master, and we must all appear before the judgment seat of God (14.10). We are precisely *God’s* people, not the people of this or that ethnic or cultural group, and must figure out how to express that identity in the encoded and enfleshed narratives of our own actual lives and practices. We urgently need this message at the heart of today’s fresh ecumenical endeavours.

The situation in 1 Corinthians is slightly different. Here Paul is addressing the question of food offered to idols, and the consequent question of whether, if it’s all right for those with strong consciences to eat idol-meat bought in the market, it might also be all right to do so in the temples themselves. Paul navigates this complex area with great skill, and as he does so articulates the principle to which we all still need to attend: the key thing is *to tell the difference between the differences that make a difference and the differences that don’t make a difference*. And you can’t just decide on your own which are which. The decision of which things can be decided at the local level is not itself a decision that can be taken at a local level. This needs working out in much more detail; I refer to it here simply because it remains a vital biblical principle for how, as the people of God, the church in every generation must find the costly path to unity.

I shall shortly conclude with some reflections on united worship, growing out of Romans 15 in particular. But let me turn to my third brief section, on the church as the people of God in the sense of the *people* of God, that is, the renewed human race.

### 3. The Church as the New Humanity

Most of us in today’s church are all too aware of failings both individually and in the church as a whole. If we forget this for a moment, someone will remind us (a spouse? A journalist?). Yet we dare not lose our grip on our vocation, on who we already are in the Messiah and who we are therefore called to be in the power of the Spirit. Precisely because the church’s identity is not free-standing, but is focused in the Messiah as the summary and climax of the ancient promises and as the advance foretaste of the coming together of heaven and earth, every generation of the church and every individual Christian must glimpse afresh and work towards realising the truth that we are the new humanity. We are the *people*, the human beings, who not only belong to the one God but are indwelt by his divine presence. Let me highlight just one or two implications.

The human mandate in the beginning was to be the *image* of God. As many biblical scholars have now recognised, this doesn’t refer to some particular part of the human make-up which happens to resemble God. It is a *vocational* summary, which belongs with the idea of Genesis 1 as itself a temple, a heaven-and-earth world. In that temple, the final thing to be put in place is of course the *image* of the god, so that everything else can see who God is and worship him, and so that the power and presence and stewardship of God may be channelled into the rest of the creation. Like most other things in the creation story, this is then recapitulated in the call of Israel, as seen here particularly in the book of Exodus. Israel, rescued from Egypt, is called to be ‘the kingdom of priests’, that is, the people who stand between heaven and earth, between God and the nations of the

world, offering God the worship of all creation and reflecting the wisdom of God into that wider world. Once more, the Tabernacle in the wilderness is the localized advance sign of this vocation. The end of Exodus forms a circle with the start of Genesis, as the *microcosmos* is set up and as Aaron goes in as the first High Priest, to recapitulate, in a measure and in advance of a much richer fulfilment, the role of Adam and Eve in the original creation. But the pattern is set, and the subsequent scriptural interpretations of the role of humans – I think particularly of Psalm 8 – echo these reflections. Humans are made to stand between heaven and earth, between God and his other creatures, to sum up the worship of all creation and to bring God's glorious and loving stewardship to bear up on the world.

This vocation is of course fulfilled, dramatically and shockingly, in Jesus the Messiah. In the gospels the story of the inbreaking kingdom of God is the story of the ministry, suffering and exaltation of the Son of Man. Granted the situation of the world, and of Israel itself, when the ultimately genuine human appears

– as Pilate announced ironically, 'behold the Man!' – the worship he had to offer from within the wounded world was that of his self-giving to death, and the way in which his kingdom is inaugurated is through the rule of love. The Sermon on the Mount articulates both the vocation of Jesus himself and the renewed-human vocation that comes to birth in and through him. It might not need saying but if we don't say it there will be an obvious gap: when we speak of 'the people of God' we are speaking, and in a sense only speaking, of Jesus. Anything and everything we say about the church we say because the church is *en Christō*, 'in the Messiah'. He is the one who lives and dies and rises again to bring the ancient roots to their final fruit. He is the one who draws together in advance the heavens and the earth. To say that the church is 'the people of God' is to make a claim first and foremost about Jesus, and then with fear and trembling to signify our own incorporation into him through baptism and the sign of that incorporation in the faith that he is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. We are 'the people of God'

in a strictly *derivative* sense, and if we ever forget that – if, for instance, we forget that he is the ascended Lord – we take the first step towards pride, from which many other things follow.

The vocation is then renewed in God's people through the cross and resurrection and by the Spirit. It is striking that in Revelation when, three times, we are told what was achieved through the death of Jesus, it is expressed not in terms of 'going to heaven' or 'being with God for ever' but in terms of the royal priesthood. The church as the people of God is the church discovering, with difficulty because of many distortions over the years, what it means to share in the divine *rule* over the world. We don't like 'theocracy', because to us it sounds like mad clerics with a hot line to heaven forcing brutal regulations on unwilling people. With Jesus it's different, to say the least. In the four gospels this kingdom is inaugurated precisely through the Messiah's crucifixion; when James and John look for normal worldly power at Jesus' right and left hands, they are hoping to be the agents of that sort of theocracy, but they



▶ Chorus ensemble, from the Lay Centre in Rome, sung for the Ecumenical Celebration in occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

are given a radical redefinition of power itself as Jesus refers forward to his own death as a ransom for many. This is what I have elsewhere called *cruciform theocracy*. Here again is the agenda of the Sermon on the Mount: this is how God rules the world, through the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the hungry-for-justice people, and so on. And they will be those above all who are living as *priests*: poor in spirit, pure in heart, the mourners, as they stand between heaven and earth with the pain of the earth and the rescuing power of heaven held together in their prayer, in their sacramental life, and in their work especially with the poor. That is why the vocation to be the royal priesthood always involves suffering, at one level or another, just as it did for Jesus. And that is why the Spirit, as Paul declares, groans within us with inarticulate sighs, God the Spirit calling to God the Father from within the heart of the pain of the world, and his people thereby being conformed to the image of the Son. This is at the heart of what it means to be the church as the people of God. We are renewed in the vocation to be the royal priesthood.

#### 4. United Worship

I conclude where Paul concludes his great letter to Rome – at least, where he concludes the theological exposition. This is not the end of chapter 8, nor the end of chapter 11, but the middle of chapter 15. Writing, as I said, to the different house-churches in Rome, probably a mixture of groups scattered across the city in different houses, indicated by all the greetings in chapter 16, he insists that the whole point of what he's been saying is united worship. What better a way to sum up not only an exposition of the church as the people of God but also a lecture for the week of prayer for Christian unity?

Notice, first, the way this final section of Romans works. At the start of Romans 12 he appeals, on the basis of the whole letter to that point, for the *living sacrifice* which is the total self-dedication to God, the 'reasonable worship' in which every human faculty is put at God's disposal and use. This is the explicit reversal of the problem sketched in Romans 1, where idolatry leads to injustice and thence to all kinds of wickedness and distortions of genuine humanness. Thus the summons to worship God with the whole of one's being is followed at once by the call to be transformed by the renewal of the mind rather than conformed to the present world – a command of continuing and urgent relevance in every generation, not least our own. And this gives rise in turn to another description of the church as the one body with many members. All this is at the start of Romans 12. I hope it is increasingly clear that these different biblical images of the church work together within the larger implicit narrative of the people of God.

Anyway, having started chapters 12–15 with the call to worship, that is how he ends. As a result of the

teaching about unity in chapter 14, he can move to the point of that unity in chapter 15: the church is to be the united *priesthood*, summing up the praises of all creation. He summarizes the gospel message by going back to its ancient roots: the Messiah became a servant to the circumcised to confirm the promises to the patriarchs – and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. We can tell how emphatically Paul wants to make this point because in this summary he quotes very deliberately from each section of the Hebrew Bible, Torah, Prophets and Writings – to be specific, the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and finally Isaiah. And his point is precisely the *united worship which the prophetic scriptures envisaged all along*. As so often, when Paul is saying something many of his Jewish friends, including his Jewish-Christian friends, would find radical, he demonstrates that it isn't a new idea at all, but what Israel's scriptures had in mind all along. This, of course, brings us back where we began, to the fact that the people of God are rooted in the ancient narrative of Israel, now reaffirming that that ancient narrative was always intended as the forward-looking signpost to the ultimate transformation into a worldwide people and thence to the reclaiming of the whole world as God's Promised Land. That, indeed, is what happens to Romans after this theological conclusion, as Paul's missionary strategy seems bent on announcing to the whole world that Jesus, Israel's Messiah, is its rightful Lord. That, indeed, might well be a whole extra dimension to the present lecture, though we are now running out of time: everything I have said so far indicates that of course seeing the church as 'the people of God' means seeing it, by definition, as the *missionary* people of God, because ultimately of who God is, the God Paul sees present and active in Jesus and in the Spirit. Once we glimpse the ancient roots and the ultimate destiny of the people of God, reclaiming a biblical narrative from its Platonic substitutes, mission, like holiness and suffering, is not simply something added on the end. It is of the very essence of what being God's people is all about. But for the moment let me conclude with this reflection.

It is more or less nineteen hundred and forty years since Paul himself arrived here in Rome, where according to Luke he continued to announce the kingdom of God and the Lordship of Jesus – subversive though those themes of course were – 'openly and unhindered'. And in preparation for that visit he wrote the letter to Rome to urge the small house-churches, very different though they were in composition and ethos, to learn to love one another, to share in *koinonia*, and above all to share in *worship*. 'Welcome one another therefore,' he wrote, 'as the Messiah welcomed you, to the glory of God'; live in harmony with one another, in accordance with the Messiah Jesus, 'so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah'. One voice, one praise, one common life. One people of God. Was it just a dream? Paul didn't think so. Neither should we. That is our hope, rooted in our common faith. And it will be achieved by love.

## A Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues

Thirty-first Supplement - 2016

## LIST OF DIALOGUES

- A-B:** Anglican-Baptist International Forum  
**A-B / eng:** Informal Conversations between the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Church of England  
**A-D / aus:** Anglican Church of Australia-Churches of Christ Conversations  
**A-L:** Anglican-Lutheran International Commission  
**A-L / africa:** All Africa Anglican-Lutheran Commission  
**A-L / aus:** Anglican-Lutheran Conversations in Australia  
**A-L / can:** Canadian Lutheran Anglican Dialogue  
**A-L / eng-g:** Representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and of the Church of England  
**A-L / eng-nordic regions:** Representatives of the Nordic countries and of the Church of England  
**A-L / eur:** Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission  
**A-L / usa:** Episcopal-Lutheran Dialogue in the USA  
**A-L-R / eng-f:** Official Dialogue between the Church of England and the Lutheran-Reformed Permanent Council in France  
**A-M:** Anglican-Methodist International Commission  
**A-M / eng:** Anglican-Methodist Conversation in Great Britain  
**A-M / ire:** Church of Ireland / Methodist Church of Ireland Covenant Council  
**A-M / usa:** United Methodist-Episcopal Bilateral Dialogue  
**A-M-R / eng:** Informal Conversations between the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church  
**A-Mo:** Anglican-Moravian Conversations  
**A-Mo / usa:** Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue in the USA  
**A-O:** Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission  
**A-O / usa:** Anglican-Orthodox Theological Consultation in the USA  
**A-OC:** Anglican-Old Catholic Theological Conversations  
**A-OC / na:** Anglican-Old Catholic North American Working Group  
**A-OO:** Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue  
**A-OO / copt:** Anglican-Coptic Relations  
**A-Pe / eng:** Anglican-Pentecostal Consultation  
**A-R:** Anglican-Reformed International Commission  
**A-R / eng-scot:** Church of England-Church of Scotland Joint Study Group  
**A-R / usa:** Presbyterian-Episcopal Bilateral Dialogue  
**A-RC:** Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)  
**A-RC:** International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM)  
**A-RC / aus:** Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission of Australia  
**A-RC / b:** Belgian Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee  
**A-RC / br:** Brazilian Anglican-Roman Catholic National Commission  
**A-RC / can:** Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission  
**A-RC / eng:** English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee  
**A-RC / eur:** Anglican-Roman Catholic Working Group in Western Europe  
**A-RC / f:** Anglican-Catholic Joint Working Group in France  
**A-RC / nz:** Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission in Aotearoa New Zealand (ARCCANZ)  
**A-RC / usa:** Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the USA  
**A-U / aus:** Conversations between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia  
**AC-CC:** Joint Commission for Unity between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church

## Abbreviations for Confessional Families Churches and Councils

A	Anglican
AC	Assyrian Church of the East
AIC	African Instituted Churches
B	Baptist
CC	Chaldean Catholic Church
CEC	Conference of European Churches
CCEE	Council of European Episcopal Conferences
CP	Constantinople Patriarchate
CPCE	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (formerly <i>Leuenberg Church Fellowship</i> )
D	Disciples of Christ
DOMBES	Groupe des Dombes
E	Evangelicals
FC	Free Churches
FO	Faith and Order
L	Lutheran (includes German 'Evangelische')
M	Methodist
MECC	Middle East Council of Churches
Mn	Mennonite
Mo	Moravian
NCC	New Charismatic Churches
O	Eastern Orthodox ( <i>Byzantine</i> )
OC	Old Catholic (includes <i>Polish National</i> )
OO	Oriental Orthodox ( <i>Non-Chalcedonian</i> )
Pe	Pentecostal
R	Reformed
RC	Roman Catholic
SA	Salvation Army
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
U	United Churches
W	Waldensian
WCC	World Council of Churches

- AC-OO / copt:** Theological Dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Coptic Orthodox Church  
**AC-OO / syr:** Bilateral Commission between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church  
**AC-RC:** Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East  
**AIC-R:** Dialogue between the African Instituted Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches  
**B-CPCE / eur:** Dialogue between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the European Baptist Federation  
**B-L:** Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue  
**B-L / g:** Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue in Germany  
**B-L / n:** Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue in Norway  
**B-L / sf:** Baptist-Lutheran Conversation in Finland  
**B-L / usa:** Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue in the USA  
**B-M:** Baptist-Methodist International Dialogue  
**B-M-W / italy:** Baptist-Methodist-Waldensian Relations in Italy  
**B-Mn:** Baptist-Mennonite Theological Conversations  
**B-O:** Baptist-Orthodox Preparatory Dialogue  
**B-O / georgia:** Dialogue between the Orthodox Church of Georgia and the Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Georgia  
**B-R:** Baptist-Reformed Dialogue  
**B-RC:** Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations  
**B-RC / f:** Baptist-Catholic Joint Committee in France  
**B-RC / usa (ab):** American Baptist-Roman Catholic Dialogue  
**B-RC / usa (sb):** Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic Dialogue  
**CEC-CCEE:** Joint Committee of Conference of European Churches and Council of European Episcopal Conferences  
**CPCE-RC:** Community of Protestant Churches in Europe - Roman Catholic Church Consultation  
**D-L / usa:** Disciples of Christ-Lutheran Dialogue in the USA  
**D-O / rus:** Disciples of Christ-Russian Orthodox Dialogue  
**D-R:** Disciples of Christ-Reformed Dialogue  
**D-RC:** Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue  
**D-U / aus:** Conversations between the Churches of Christ in Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia  
**D-U / usa:** Disciples of Christ-United Church of Christ Dialogue in the USA  
**DOMBES:** Dialogues des Dombes  
**E-RC:** Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission  
**E-RC / can:** Canadian Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue  
**E-RC / f:** Evangelical-Roman Catholic Conversations in France  
**E-SDA:** Theological Dialogue between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist Church  
**FC-O / g:** Free Churches-Orthodox Dialogue in Germany  
**FO:** Faith and Order conferences, consultations, studies  
**L-M:** International Lutheran-Methodist Joint Commission  
**L-M / n:** Conversation between the Church of Norway and the United Methodist Church in Norway  
**L-M / s:** Dialogue between the United Methodist Church in Sweden and Church of Sweden  
**L-M / sf:** Lutheran-Methodist Dialogue in Finland  
**L-M / usa:** US Lutheran-United Methodist Dialogue  
**L-Mn :** Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission  
**L-Mn / f:** Lutheran-Mennonite Dialogue in France  
**L-Mn / g:** Theological Dialogue between the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the Association of Mennonite Assemblies in Germany (AMG)  
**L-Mn / usa:** Lutheran-Mennonite Dialogue in the USA  
**L-Mn-RC:** Lutheran-Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue Commission  
**L-Mo / usa:** Lutheran-Moravian Dialogue in the USA  
**L-O:** Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission  
**L-O / g:** Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church in Germany and the Evangelical Church in Germany  
**L-O / g-cp:** Theological Dialogue between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate  
**L-O / g-rom:** Theological Dialogue between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Romanian Orthodox Church  
**L-O / g-rus:** Theological Dialogue between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Russian Orthodox Church  
**L-O / sf:** Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Finnish Orthodox Church  
**L-O / sf-rus:** Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church  
**L-O / usa:** Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue in the USA

- L-O-R / f:** Dialogue between Representatives of the Inter-Orthodox Bishops' Committee in France and the Protestant Federation of France
- L-O-R / na:** Lutheran-Orthodox-Reformed Theological Conversations in North America
- L-OC / g:** Dialogue between the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the Old Catholic Church in Germany
- L-OC / s:** Commission for Dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht
- L-OO / copt:** Theological Dialogue between the Coptic Evangelical Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church
- L-OO / copt-s:** Coptic Orthodox-Lutheran Dialogue in Sweden
- L-OO / g:** Consultations between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Evangelical Church in Germany
- L-OO / india:** Dialogue between the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East and the Lutheran Churches in India
- L-Pe:** Lutheran-Pentecostal Conversations
- L-Pe / sf:** Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue in Finland
- L-Pe-R / f:** Pentecostal-Protestant Dialogue in France
- L-R:** Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission
- L-R / arg:** Dialogue between the Evangelical Church of the Rio de la Plata and the Evangelical Congregational Church of Argentina
- L-R / aus:** Dialogue between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Reformed Churches of Australia
- L-R / can:** Canadian Lutheran-Reformed Conversations
- L-R / f:** Fédération Protestante de France
- L-R / usa:** Lutheran-Reformed Committee for Theological Conversations in the USA
- L-R-RC:** Lutheran-Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue
- L-R-RC / f:** Catholic-Protestant Joint Working Group in France
- L-R-SDA / f:** Protestant-Seventh-day Adventist Dialogue in France
- L-R-U / eur:** Leuenberg Church Fellowship
- L-RC:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity
- L-RC / arg:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission in Argentina
- L-RC / aus:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Australia
- L-RC / br:** National Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission in Brazil
- L-RC / can:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada
- L-RC / g:** Joint Commission of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the German Episcopal Conference (DB)
- L-RC / india:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in India
- L-RC / jap:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission in Japan
- L-RC / n:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Discussion Group in Norway
- L-RC / s:** Official Working Group of Dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm
- L-RC / sf:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Relations in Finland
- L-RC / usa:** Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the USA
- L-SDA:** Lutheran-Seventh-day Adventist Consultations
- L-U / aus:** Theological Dialogue between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia
- M-O:** Methodist-Orthodox Commission
- M-Pe-W / italy:** Methodist-Pentecostal-Waldensian Dialogue in Italy
- M-R:** Methodist-Reformed Dialogue
- M-RC:** Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council
- M-RC / eng:** English Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee
- M-RC / usa:** Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the United Methodist Church in the USA
- M-SA:** International Dialogue between the Salvation Army and the World Methodist Council
- Mn-R:** Mennonite World Conference and World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- Mn-R / nl:** Mennonite-Reformed Dialogue in the Netherlands
- Mn-RC:** Mennonite-Catholic International Dialogue
- Mn-RC / latin america:** Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue in Latin America
- Mn-SDA:** Mennonite-Seventh-day Adventist Theological Conversations
- NCC-RC:** New Charismatic Churches-Roman Catholic Preliminary Conversations
- O-OC:** Joint (Mixed) Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission
- O-OO:** Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
- O-OO / rus:** Theological Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
- O-OO / rus-armenia:** Theological Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church
- O-R:** Orthodox-Reformed International Dialogue
- O-R / ch:** Protestant-Orthodox Dialogue Commission in Switzerland

- O-R / na:** Orthodox-Reformed Conversations in North America  
**O-R / rus:** Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church  
**O-RC:** Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church  
**O-RC / can:** Canadian Orthodox and Catholic Bishops' Dialogue  
**O-RC / ch:** Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Switzerland  
**O-RC / eng:** Catholic-Orthodox Pastoral Consultation in England  
**O-RC / f:** Joint Catholic-Orthodox Committee in France  
**O-RC / g:** Greek Orthodox-Roman Catholic Joint Commission in Germany  
**O-RC / pol:** Russian Orthodox Church-Catholic Church in Poland Working Group  
**O-RC / rom:** Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Church United with Rome (Greek-Catholic)  
**O-RC / rus:** Theological Conversations between Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church  
**O-RC / rus-g:** Theological Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the German Episcopal Conference  
**O-RC / usa:** North American Catholic-Orthodox Theological Consultation  
**O-U / aus:** Theological Dialogue between the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia  
**OC-R / india:** Old Catholic Church-Malankara Mar Thomas Syrian Church Theological Consultation  
**OC-R-RC / ch:** Old Catholic-Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Switzerland  
**OC-RC:** Old Catholic-Roman Catholic Conversations  
**OC-RC / ch:** Dialogue Commission of the Old Catholic and the Roman Catholic Churches in Switzerland  
**OC-RC / g:** Dialogue between the Old Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany  
**OC-RC / na:** Polish National Catholic-Roman Catholic Dialogue  
**OC-RC / nl:** Old Catholic-Roman Catholic Study Commission in the Netherlands  
**OC-RC / pol:** Joint Commission of the Polish Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland  
**OO-R:** Oriental Orthodox-Reformed Theological Dialogue  
**OO-RC:** International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches  
**OO-RC / armenia:** Armenian Apostolic Church-Catholic Church Joint Commission  
**OO-RC / copt:** International Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church  
**OO-RC / eritrea:** Eritrean Orthodox Church and Catholic Church Relations  
**OO-RC / ethiop:** Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Catholic Church Relations  
**OO-RC / india:** Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church  
**OO-RC / syr-india:** Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church  
**OO-RC / usa:** Official Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation  
**Pe-R:** Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue  
**Pe-RC:** Pentecostal-Roman Catholic International Dialogue  
**Pe-WCC:** Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals  
**R-RC:** Reformed-Roman Catholic Joint Study Commission  
**R-RC / a:** Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Austria  
**R-RC / b:** Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Belgium  
**R-RC / ch:** Protestant/Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission in Switzerland  
**R-RC / nl:** Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church in the Netherlands  
**R-RC / scot:** Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland  
**R-RC / usa:** Roman Catholic-Presbyterian Reformed Consultation in the USA  
**R-SDA:** International Theological Dialogue between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches  
**R-SDA / usa:** Presbyterian Church (USA)-Seventh-day Adventist Church Dialogue  
**RC-SA:** Salvation Army - Catholic Informal Conversation  
**RC-SDA:** Conversations between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Roman Catholic Church  
**RC-U / aus:** Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniting Church in Australia  
**RC-U / can:** Roman Catholic-United Church Dialogue Group in Canada  
**RC-W / italy:** Roman Catholic-Waldensian Relations in Italy  
**RC-WCC:** Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches  
**SA-SDA:** Theological Dialogue between the Salvation Army and the Seventh-day Adventist Church  
**SDA-WCC:** Seventh-day Adventist Church-World Council of Churches Conversations  
**WCC:** World Council of Churches - assemblies, convocations, relations

## PERIODICALS SURVEYED

- A** ▶ Acta Apostolicae Sedis, AFER-African Ecclesial Review, American Baptist Quarterly, Amicizia ebraico-cristiana, Angelicum, Anglican Theological Review, Annales theologici, Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia, Apulia Theologica
- B** ▶ Bausteine für die Einheit der Christen, Bolentín de ecumenismo y diálogo interreligioso en la Argentina, Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology
- C** ▶ Calvin Theological Journal, Catholica, CEC Newsletter, Centro - News from the Anglican Centre in Rome, Centro Pro Unione Bulletin, Chrétiens en Marche, Der christliche Osten, Una città per il dialogo, Concilium, Confronti, Contacts, Courier, Current Dialogue, Currents in Theology and Mission
- D/E** ▶ Diálogo ecuménico, La Documentation catholique, Eastern Churches Journal, Ecclesia Mater, Ecclesiology, The Ecumenical Review, Ecumenical Trends, The Ecumenist, Ecumenism, Ecumenismo Quotidiano, Ekklesia, Encounter, ESBVM Newsletter, Exchange
- F/I** ▶ Forum Letter, Global Christian Forum Newsletter, The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Gregorianum, Herder Korrespondenz, Information Service & Service d'Information, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, International Review of Mission, Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift, Irénikon, Istina
- J/K** ▶ Journal of Anglican Studies, Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, Kerygma und Dogma
- L** ▶ LibreSens, Litterae Communionis Episcoporum Europae, The Living Church, Lutheran Forum, Lutheran Quarterly, LWI-Lutheran World Information
- M/N** ▶ MD-Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim, Nicolaus
- O** ▶ O Odigos, Odos, Ökumenische Rundschau, Ökumenisches Forum, Oikumene, One in Christ, Oriente cristiano, Origins, Orthodoxes Forum, L'Osservatore Romano (weekly English), Ostkirchliche Studien
- P/Q** ▶ Pastoral Ecuménica, Pneuma, Positions luthériennes, Proche-Orient Chrétien, Pro Dialogo, Pro Ecclesia, Protestantesimo, Qîqajôn di Bose
- R** ▶ Reformed World, Il Regno, Reseptio, Review of Ecumenical Studies, Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo
- S** ▶ SEIA Newsletter on the Eastern Churches and Ecumenism, SMT-Svensk Missions Tidskrift, Sobornost, St Nersess Theological Review, St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, Studi di Teologia, Studi Ecumenici, Studia i dokumen-ty ecumeniczne, Studia Oecumenica, Studia Liturgica, Studies in Interreligious Dialogue
- T** ▶ The Tablet, Texte aus der VELKD, Theoforum, Theological Studies
- U/V** ▶ Una Sancta, Unité des Chrétiens, Veritas in caritate: informazioni dall'ecumenismo in Italia
- W/Z** ▶ The Window, Worship, Zeitzeichen

## KEY TO SUB-HEADING

INFORMATION: facts, communiqués, surveys, brief reports  
 REFLECTION AND REACTIONS: essays, responses, commentaries, theological papers  
 TEXTS AND PAPERS: documents, reports, statements, official responses

## KEY TO READING THE BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY

For periodical entries:  
 the first number refers to the volume and the second refers to the issue followed by the year and page numbers, thus:  
*Christian Orient* 16, 4 (1995) 180-191 = pages 180-191 in volume 16, issue no. 4 in 1995 of *Christian Orient*.

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compiled by Loredana Nepi

Pioneer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Servant of God Paul Wattson of Graymoor

<https://www.fatherpaulofgraymoor.org> | Guild



The Father Paul of Graymoor Guild was established in 2016 to promote the cause for canonization of **Servant of God** Father Paul Wattson, SA. The Guild is a clearing house of information about the life and ministries of Servant of God Fr. Paul Wattson, SA, founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, and news about the cause for his sainthood.

The mission of the **Father Paul of Graymoor** Guild is to share information about the life and legacy of Father Paul Wattson, SA, and to provide resources to enrich understanding of his ministries through the written word, video, audio and photographic records. The Guild provides a prayer community focusing on his cause for canonization.

We invite you to pray for the **cause of canonization** of Father Paul of Graymoor, and continue to spread his influence throughout the world.

#### ▶ **Formal Opening of the Cause for Canonization by the Archdiocese of NY**

Timothy Cardinal Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York formally opened the Cause for Canonization of Servant of God Father Paul of Graymoor on Tuesday, September 22, 2015 in New York City.

#### Support the Guild

- ▶ If you wish to make a contribution to the Fr. Paul of Graymoor Guild to support the expenses involved with the canonization process, please mail your offering to:

Father Paul of Graymoor Guild  
PO BOX 302  
Garrison, NY 10524

- ▶ For online support log into:

[https://www.atonementfriars.org/fr\\_paul\\_of\\_graymoor\\_forms/support\\_the\\_guild.html](https://www.atonementfriars.org/fr_paul_of_graymoor_forms/support_the_guild.html)

**Thank you!**

Beatification in Italy  
Prayer and image for the cause



**PADRE PAUL WATTSON, S.A.**

1863-1940  
SERVO DI DIO

Apostolo dell'Unità dei Cristiani e della Carità  
Fondatore dei Frati Francescani dell'Atonement

▶ Holy Picture / Italy

Request a Prayer Card (English / US)

- ▶ To request a prayer card for Father Paul Wattson's Cause for Sainthood, you can complete this online form or mail your request to:

Father Paul of Graymoor Guild  
Graymoor, P.O. Box 302  
Garrison, NY, 10524

- ▶ You may report any favors through the intercession of Father Paul Wattson, SA by calling +1 (845) 424-2150.

For additional info

- ▶ Phone: +1 (845) 424-2150
- ▶ Email: [info@FatherPaulOfGraymoor.org](mailto:info@FatherPaulOfGraymoor.org)

▶ Prayer in Italian

**PREGHIERA PER LA CANONIZZAZIONE  
DI PADRE PAOLO DI GRAYMOOR**

O Dio di unità e di pace, in Cristo tuo Figlio riveli la tua compassione per i peccatori e l'amore per i poveri che ha ispirato p. Paolo di Graymoor ad essere un precursore nella missione per l'unità della Chiesa e a dedicarsi con impegno alla cura dei nostri fratelli e delle nostre sorelle alle periferie. Ti preghiamo, concedi che l'esempio di questo apostolo di unità e di carità ci ispiri a proseguire nel cammino verso la riconciliazione di tutte le cose in Cristo, a costo di qualsiasi sacrificio. Con fiducia ti chiediamo che padre Paolo sia elevato agli onori dell'Altare e che, mediante la sua intercessione, Tu ci conceda la grazia che ti chiediamo (*menzionare la richiesta*), se conforme alla tua volontà. Te lo chiediamo per Cristo nostro Signore. Amen.

**Padre Nostro**

**Ave Maria**

**Gloria al Padre**

**Maria, Regina del cielo e nostra Signora  
della Riconciliazione, prega per noi.**

...

**Frati Francescani dell'Atonement**

Piazza di Sant'Onofrio, 2 - 00165 Roma

Si prega di riferire di grazie ottenute al seguente indirizzo di posta elettronica:

**[beatificazione@fratiationement.org](mailto:beatificazione@fratiationement.org)**

▶ **Prayer for the Canonization of Father Paul of Graymoor**

God of unity and peace, in Christ your Son, You reveal your compassion for sinners and love for the poor which inspired Fr. Paul of Graymoor to pioneer the mission of Church Unity and spend himself in the care of our outcast brothers and sisters. Grant, we pray, that the example of this apostle of unity and charity will inspire us to advance the reconciliation of all things in Christ, without counting the cost.

With confidence we ask that Father Paul be raised to the honors of the altar, and through His intercession, grant the favor we now ask (mention your petition), if it be in conformity with Your will. We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be to the Father
- Mary, Queen of Heaven and Our Lady of the Atonement, Pray for us.



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