

LUTHERAN-MENNONITE-CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

COMMENTARY ON

Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church

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The conversations between Lutherans, Mennonites, and Roman Catholics that took place between 2012-2017 have advanced the cause of Christian unity in palpable ways. First, the debate about whether baptism is administered to infants or reserved for adults has led to conflicts, even violence, in our past. Here it is treated with admirable equanimity by a team that investigated the Biblical, historical, and theological roots of the impasse and shed new light on how we can face the differences in our world today. Second, the dynamics of justification by faith as it relates to the theme were thoroughly investigated, illuminating what was said in a preliminary fashion twenty years ago in the Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith (JDDJ). Finally, the method of a trilateral exchange, one that is different in kind from both bilateralism and a broader multilateralism, is here vindicated and made available for scrutiny by a wider public. The report leaves no doubt that this relatively new model will generate positive results if it is imitated in the future in other domains and by other groups.

I. The Historical Background to this Report

A brief overview of the conversations leading up to the present trialogue will summarize the history antecedent to the recent conversations and provide the backdrop for where it may go in the future. As the present report's contributors indicate, "trilateral dialogue is rare" (5). That said, it is not without precedent. The current "trialogue" (an equally rare term that nonetheless dates from the 16th century) was preceded by the Lutheran-Reformed-Roman Catholic trilateral discussions on "The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages (1976)."¹ Like its predecessor, the Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic trialogue on baptism grew out of prior dialogues and was the result of a collective desire for reconciliation and better understanding of the other.

The origin of the present trialogue on baptism from a Catholic perspective may be traced to the greater openness of the post-conciliar Church to ecumenical discussion, in the light of which one should read Catholic active support, albeit as a non-member, for the World Council of Churches' promulgation in 1982 of the so-called Lima Document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," which affirmed the common baptism between (Trinitarian) Christian churches and thereby identified common ground for ecumenical discussion. Even before this document however, the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches had already begun working towards increased reciprocal understanding on the topic of baptism. There was, for example, the 1972 dialogue between the two churches in the Philippines which affirmed prior to the Lima Document their common baptism as a site for further ecumenical discussion. Taking care to note that "indiscriminate conditional baptism cannot be approved," the participants sought to emphasize that baptism "cannot be repeated...unless there is prudent doubt of the fact or of the validity of a baptism already administered."² Already in 1972, then, a central issue of the present trialogue—namely, the potential recognition of the validity of each other's baptism and baptismal rites as valid so as to avoid "indiscriminate" second baptisms (or what is frequently referred to colloquially as re-baptisms), which would violate the singularity of the sacrament—was established as a talking point. This dialogue was an early piece of an ongoing effort between the post-conciliar Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches to reconcile their differences, both historical and theological, unto greater understanding and ecumenical unity.

General common ground was also expressed between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches in the JDDJ. While this document focuses on justification, the authors broach the question of baptism in §4.4, "The Justified as

Sinner.” There baptism is affirmed as that sacrament that unites the Christian to Christ in the Holy Spirit through the forgiveness of sins, though it is noted that there is a “difference in understanding sin in the justified.”³ Baptism is here viewed in the light of justification alone: “We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God’s unconditional justifying grace.”⁴ This affirmation was itself preceded by the 1993 dialogue between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches on justification and, *mutatis mutandis*, original sin, that resulted in the publication of *Church and Justification, Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue*, which is also cited in the present report at important junctures.⁵

On the side of Lutheran and Mennonite dialogue, the reconciliation of historical differences as a condition for successful theological dialogue was a determinative factor. Without such encounters it is difficult to see how the present dialogue would have materialized. Dialogue between Lutherans and Mennonites had to overcome, in addition to theological differences, historical grievances that arose on the basis of those differences. More specifically, there had to be a degree of closure with respect to the early Lutheran persecution(s) of Mennonites. The sixteenth-century Anabaptist tradition (in which the contemporary Mennonite tradition has its roots) did not recognize Lutheran baptism of children or pedobaptism as valid, so that Lutherans entering the Anabaptist tradition were, from the perspective of the Lutherans, baptized a second time (“rebaptized”) upon entry. This practice was theologically problematic from the Lutheran perspective. The result was the promulgation of the condemnation of the Anabaptists in the *Augsburg Confession*, which led to the persecution of members of the Anabaptist tradition. The *Augsburg Confession* remains a central, normative document for The Lutheran World Federation to this day, making the condemnation something of an open wound between the two traditions. There was, however, an acknowledgment by the contemporary Lutheran tradition of the historical ills directed against Anabaptists (see the “Statement on the *Confessio Augustana* (1980)”), and the discussions surrounding this statement provided an impetus for proactive and positive discussion between contemporary Lutherans and Mennonites on the issue of baptism. Such dialogue took place over a span of more than three decades—first in France (1981-1984), then in Germany (1989-1992), and more recently in the United States (2001-2004)—and resulted in the publication of *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ. Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission*.⁶ While both parties “acknowledge[d] an asymmetry in our approach regarding the question of baptism of newcomers who join our churches from the other tradition,” and that they “have not yet found a way to bridge the divide between the two churches regarding their teaching and practice on baptism,” both nevertheless agreed “that baptism cannot be seen as an isolated event...[and] must be understood within a larger framework that explores how the practice of baptism is related to a larger set of theological doctrines.”⁷ This movement toward reconciliation between the Lutheran and Mennonite traditions, as well as that between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions gave two of the three connections of the present dialogue.

The third piece of the puzzle would come in 1998, when dialogue between the Mennonite World Conference and the Roman Catholic Church began. The result of that dialogue was the publication of *Called Together to Be Peacemakers: Report on the International Dialogue between The Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference, 1998-2003*.⁸ The authors of the present trilateral report refer to this document both in the preface and throughout the document. A key issue in their dialogue on the topic of baptism is that of pedobaptism, which is a common practice in the Catholic Church and unrecognized in the Mennonite tradition. The issue of pedobaptism played an important role in the early dialogues between the Lutheran and Anabaptist or Mennonite churches with respect to the issue of so-called re-baptism. Trilateral discussion on the topic of baptism between the Mennonite, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches, then, would prove a most fruitful ground for ecumenical “dialogue.” A trilateral approach is all the more timely (162).

Both Lutherans and Roman Catholics practice child baptism, which is unrecognized by the Mennonite Church, and both the Mennonite and Lutheran churches share theological reservations towards the Roman Catholic church with respect to original sin and the nature of the Church, upon which topics the sacrament or ordinance of baptism touches directly.⁹ In the present trilateral report the authors make this clear by regularly quoting from both *Healing Memories* (Lutheran-Mennonite) as well as *Called Together to Be Peacemakers* (Roman Catholic-Mennonite). These two documents are thus the most proximate origins of the new dialogue.

While the present report largely keeps to these earlier discussions between Lutherans, Mennonites, and Roman Catholics, I will end this section by noting other ecumenical discussions—more specifically, dialogues—on the topic of baptism between members of the respective traditions that took place either after or contemporaneous with the publication of *Called Together to Be Peacemakers* (2007) and *Healing Memories* (2010). There was, for example, the publication of *These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism: A Report of the Catholic Reformed Dialogue in United States, 2003-2007*, in which the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops engaged with representatives of the various Reformed Christian churches throughout the country.¹⁰ The goal there was greater clarity on the part of both parties of the other’s theological and ritual understanding of the sacrament of baptism and its

practical implications. Similarly, beginning in 2000, there was dialogue between the Church of Scotland, a church of the Reformed tradition, and the Roman Catholic Church on the topic of baptism, which led to the publication of "Baptism: Catholic and Reformed, A Study Document from The Joint Commission on Doctrine of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland."¹¹ It is worth noting that the participants in this bilateral accord emphasized the *sanctifying* nature of baptism or the effect on character that baptism confers, which supplements what they viewed as the singular attention to baptism under the aspect of *justification* alone in the 1999 *Joint Declaration*.

II. Grace and Justification

We turn now to the Trilateral report itself. It is divided into three parts: 1.) Baptism with Respect to Sin and Grace, 2.) Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith, and 3.) Living Out Baptism in Discipleship. The remainder of this commentary loosely follows that order but also aims to highlight issues and questions that cut across the three chapters. The first issue to be addressed occurs in the first chapter, namely, "What can Catholics learn from and contribute to the discussion of the grace of justification in the trilateral report?"

The first section exemplifies the ecumenical bonus that accrues with the trilateral approach. In the bilateral dialogues, two sides craft a differentiated consensus based upon the dialogical phenomenon of reciprocal learning. The introduction of a third party means that each of the three teams has to ponder a discrete standpoint of that community's faith in the light of two divergent positions as well as attend to the process as a whole. In a larger multilateral gathering, accountability to each of the participating teams falls easily to the wayside and the integrating process takes over. In the trilateral process each party has three distinct forms of accountability. The results thus reflect a nine-way mode of reflection that then is contingent upon a process that does not ignore the specificity of the bilateral conversations nor the abiding need for integration for the purposes of a final report. In looking at the difference between trilateral dialogues and the larger multilateral ones, you might conclude that both are necessary but insight is sometimes generated when less is actually more.

The first section begins (and ends) with a critical reminder that grace is needed to overcome the Christian's inevitable estrangement from God. In terms of the Catholic tradition, the argument follows a trajectory enshrined by the Council of Orange that continues up to the decree on justification of the Council of Trent. The JDDJ is clearly the endpoint of this tradition and is, in fact, cited to that effect.¹² The grace that is communicated in the sacrament of baptism is not an abstract entity or formal reality. Grace is part and parcel of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior.¹³ The historical material prepared by scholars of the Bible and the pre-Tridentine tradition working prior to and during the preparation of the JDDJ, underscores the Christological point (9), and the concluding Catholic reflections focus on the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity in the Church (144). A Church that goes forth in missionary discipleship needs to recognize that the former is the indispensable condition for the possibility of the latter and that the latter is the necessary consequence of the former.

Considerable attention is paid to the vexing issues of original and hereditary sin (30-31, 43-5). A restoration of the authentic Pauline tradition was accepted by all three sides:

The concept of hereditary sin was based primarily on the inaccurate Vulgate translation of Romans 5:12: "As through one man sin has come into this world [...] in whom all have sinned (*in quo omnes peccaverunt*)."¹⁴ The Latin phrase "*in quo*" is not correct. The Greek original, *ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον*, should be rendered "because" and not "in whom," such that in English this verse would read: "just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned."¹⁴

A condition of sinfulness enters the world on account of Adam's fall. Physical transmission of that sin from one to many was never a focus of the original teachings of Christianity. What matters in and for the kerygma of the Church is the fact that the fullness of grace that is encountered in the person of Christ is even more universal than the widespread calamity of sin. Here the report follows Romans 5 to reach a new but differentiated consensus.

What about the relationship to this question to baptism? The Catholic position on the communication of grace through the sacrament in and with the Church was articulated in the face of two different kinds of concerns: the Anabaptist denial of the necessity of infant baptism and the Lutheran conviction that original sin still remains in the infant even after baptism. A narrow interpretation of the mediation of grace by the Church in pedobaptism would alienate the Mennonites. A dogmatic insistence on the term "concupiscence" as a perduring reality after baptism distinct from original sin puts Catholics at loggerheads with Lutherans. Catholics recognize the necessity of faith for baptism in and beyond the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* (RCIA). Catholics, in particular, will also note that the report speaks of the "baptizing community" and the need for the assistance of "the community of believers."¹⁵ In the

case of the infant, the report, however, avoids the Cajetanian language of “proxy” faith of the parents and sponsors and opts instead for a new attention on God’s universal saving will (1 Tm 2:4) that is also manifested by what Catholics often call a baptism of desire.¹⁶ The idea of proxy faith was challenged by Zwingli’s wholesale repudiation of original sin, highlighting the novelty of the newly forged and differentiated consensus of this document. In short, the report affirms that the activity of God is “an ‘objective’ occurrence” that takes place in baptism through the mediation of the faith of both the individual and the community of faith.¹⁷ Concupiscence is reformulated not as a tendency to sin (Trent) but as the factual cases of sins committed as well as sins of omission that take place after the liberation of the baptized Christian from the dominion of sin. This standpoint allows the Mennonite to look in a kindlier fashion upon the pedobaptist tradition and affirm its grace-filled character without adopting any argument in favor of its necessity. Lutherans and Catholics can mutually affirm the Augustinian understanding of baptism as a visible word communicating grace.¹⁸ To reach that affirmation, whether the sin that remains is concupiscent or original is not as important as the decisive and necessary role that this sacrament plays from infancy onwards in a life oriented towards salvation by God. Equally important in this trilateral consensus is the recognition that the freedom of a Christian is not tied to a separate human faculty that works in opposition to other capacities but involves will, intellect, heart, mind, and body working in tandem. The report did not aim to rewrite the book on theological anthropology but displayed noteworthy savvy in the judicious deployment of nuanced terms and concepts in this area.

The first section concludes with a fitting commendation of Ephesians 2:8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” The Catholic interpretation of this verse could still bring in the merit of a good work without retreating from the consensus attained so long as the gift of salvation and priority of divine workmanship were developed in the manner of this passage. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, maintains in his mature teaching on merit that in the interior act known as cooperative grace the operative grace of God “moves” the will, especially but not exclusively in the case of the conversion of the will away from evil.¹⁹ The trilateral dialogue rightly avoided a detailed exposition of the relationships between free will, cooperation, and merit. That challenging discussion is better left to a future encounter. For now, we can say that the doctrine of merit as a gift that re-affirms the integrity of the human response to God’s offer of salvation goes beyond the scope of this report but does not seem to be contradicted by it.²⁰

III. Baptism within a Lifelong Process and the Challenge of Formation in the Faith

There is a strand to the report that is more exhortatory than doctrinal. Better yet, it exhorts to a more authentic living out of the doctrines professed by all three communities. Here we will address the question of sanctification in the report, but especially as it relates to the crisis of faith formation that has visited each of the three communities. The urgency of the latter underlies, in many ways, the rhetorical thrust of the report as a whole.

The language of “sanctification” is studiously avoided in the constructive sections of the second part of the report since the report focuses on how the three communions regard the wider effects of justifying grace in the Christian life.²¹ This makes perfect sense as a means to achieve consensus. The positive contribution of the Catholic team is manifold but is especially clear with regard to the non-voluntaristic but still exemplary bond of unity among the faithful that the sacrament performs.²² Vatican II suggested that this insight into the sacramentality of the Church could help to support the wider Christian unity. Furthermore, the sacramental bond that flows from baptism is described in the Council’s *Decree on Ecumenism* as “only a beginning, a point of departure.”²³ The complete formation and integration into the believing and celebrating community of the newly baptized Christian is explicitly recognized to be a life-long process. The Catholic drafters of this report were wise to channel both of these important insights.

On the question of formation, the consensus regarding its urgency appears to have been reached without significant discord.²⁴ But the Catholic emphasis on the presence of unity in the very being of the Church creates an even greater need for self-examination on our part. “In some parts of the world, baptism of infants is part of a cultural tradition (81).” This sounds like a challenge to the global South, and the drafters in all three communions could have been more careful to show how more affluent Euroamerican communities are just as prone to acquiesce to a merely cultural Christianity. In any case, the report makes it clear that Catholics cannot baptize for the sake of fulfilling a human need to belong to a group or celebrate a new milestone in familial and social life. All three communions baptize with the Trinitarian formula and therefore need to take more seriously the Trinitarian missionary mandate given by Christ himself.²⁵ What is stated succinctly in 155 (“We need to devise strategies and pastoral programs that will help Catholics to more deeply appreciate the value of baptism, recognizing that there is a problem in the current lack of such appreciation.”) should probably appear in bold as an epigram to the leaflet version of this document that will be placed in Catholic parishes. The problem here is more of reception than anything else. One has to be grateful that the challenge regarding the on-going formation of the faithful of all ages appears with such clarity and hope that pastoral agents with an ecumenical consciousness are available to take the baton and run with it.

IV. Discipleship and the New Creation in Christ

The report places equal emphasis on personal and public discipleship, but in each of these two foci there are questions still to be answered as well as questions that were neither posed nor answered. Highlighting the complementarity of personal and public discipleship serves Catholics well and is no less important for Christian unity. In the United States, for example, harmful bifurcations arise when traditionalists focus too exclusively on private morality and progressives only on the social dimensions of the Gospel.

The language of common morality or the natural moral law is not used in the document and seems to be avoided in most of the recent ecumenical statements, at least in the limited experience of this reviewer. So a word is in order about the challenges that this language would have posed had it been used and the challenges that arise when it is omitted. Given the prior consensus on the universality of sin, an unnuanced appeal to the self-evident, universal, and rational dictates of conscience would have been problematic.²⁶ Even though the Catholic faithful cannot be taken for granted in observing all the positions of the Church in the public realm, sometimes the challenges that Christians face in bearing witness to the truth go deeper than our confessional differences.²⁷ The media and popular culture as well as existing legislation approved by governmental bodies can sometimes serve only as a counter-witness.²⁸ This report makes an excellent contribution to how the ecclesial language of discipleship as crafted by Lutherans, Mennonites, and Catholics can and should be taken beyond the cultic realm and preached in the naked public square. The participants seemed to have no hesitancy in affirming that overarching point. Without diminishing the ecclesial origins and coloring that still need to be preserved for the sake of efficacy (think of Mennonite pacifism, Reinhold Niebuhr's witness on behalf of labor rights activists, and César Chavez's Mexican Catholic piety), one could still try to forge a mode of discourse of the common good that begins to transcend these limited perspectives.²⁹ This challenge is formidable and mentioned here merely as a goal for further reflection, not as a repudiation of the excellent fruits of this substantive chapter. The chapter charts a path forward and signals some of the impasses that might still remain. A still more positive statement is needed and could be explored in a future dialogue. For example, the freedom of the Christian community to preach both the Gospel of Life together with the humane treatment of the undocumented immigrant becomes impeded when religious liberty itself is imperiled.

A significant achievement of the document is the use of the language of belonging, a theme already found in Pope Francis's exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*.³⁰ Through baptism we belong to the body of Christ.³¹ This belonging is accordingly a marker of identity that reinforces the unity of the Church and runs deeper than national identity.³² When the youth lose this sense of belonging, both their ecclesial identity and their connection to the common good becomes more tenuous. One is a citizen for the portion of time allotted by the state. This ends in death. Through baptism one is invited to partake of the body of Christ into eternity. The report carefully avoids a wholesale rejection of faithful citizenship, but the notion of belonging is nonetheless striking in its flexible adaptation to the public witness of a Christian in an age sadly rampant with xenophobia. Moreover, there are repeated references in the report to the timeliness of belonging to Christ through baptism in blood and even to the new recognition by our communities of an ecumenism of martyrs.³³

The document addresses many current social questions including war and peace and disagreements among Christians on same-sex unions, but the omission of ecology is a missed opportunity. "Called to be Peacemakers" from 1999 already highlighted the ways in which Mennonites and Catholics could think and work together in the pursuit of a more harmonious society.³⁴ But a Mennonite paragraph also states: "Water baptism is the recapitulation and completion of Spirit baptism (48)." Throughout the document there is an insistence on the mutual recognition of a baptism following the Trinitarian formula performed outside of one's own community and the need for all three communities to re-commit to the relationship between baptism and discipleship. But these groundbreaking reflections are still unnecessarily anthropocentric. Pope John Paul II saw in the Christian East a link between liturgy and ecology.³⁵ A disciple who pours the water of baptism over another disciple is committing to the freedom of that Christian to seek union with God but not at the expense of the destruction of the material realm of our common home. As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*:

Water poured over the body of a child in Baptism is a sign of new life. Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. This is especially clear in the spirituality of the Christian East: "Beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing the divine harmony and the model of humanity transfigured, appears everywhere: in the shape of a church, in the sounds, in the colors, in the lights, in the scents."³⁶

The omission of a section on the materiality of the sacrament and the ethical stance that accompanies the sacrament is thus noteworthy.³⁷ A future discussion of a liturgical theology of creation, especially if that could be arranged with input from Eastern Christian partners, would be very welcome.

V. *Lex orandi, Lex credendi*

One interesting feature that nonetheless runs throughout the document was the importance of the liturgy. Each year the group would analyze the baptismal rites of one of the communions of faith. This stimulating intellectual and practical exercise extended the reflection on the praxis of the faith beyond the mere acceptance or rejection of the baptism of infants. It allowed for a “thicker description” of what baptism meant and how it was symbolically communicated in each of the communions. It also brought to the fore the already mentioned problem of disparities between theory and practice that often bedevil ecumenical statements. Other ecumenical groups that do not allow themselves to be challenged by the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* would do well to study this document.

In the same vein, the document concludes with the recommendation of a prayer service that is accompanied by the formation of discussion groups.³⁸ Gratitude to God for the gift of our “one baptism” and the belongingness in “one body” is *ipso facto* a celebration of the importance of having faith in the one true God and a celebration of our common belief as Christians in the vitality of the Trinitarian nature of the creeds that we profess. The report rightly notes that the mere recitation of the creed is not enough. Study sessions, youth rallies, ecumenical prayer services, and the like are all needed to bring us back to common roots. In this sense, the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* has a strong moral and pastoral dimension that this report brings to the fore. The call for the prayer service should not go unheeded.

The question of future topics will depend upon whether this particular trilateral remains in place. I have already indicated a few suggestions for future work that could be pursued in different kinds of venues. Two proposals for future discussions arise in the document and merit firm support and further refinement. One is the discussion with the Mennonites of the Lutheran-Catholic commission’s report on how the recognition of baptism relates to the possibility of sharing the Eucharist.³⁹ The second has to do with confirmation.⁴⁰ The theological issues here are complex, but the need to address the topic of confirmation is clear on the basis of what this report says about discipleship, life in the Spirit, and the falling away of the young people from their ecclesial communities. We would be remiss as responsible Christians to see the flight of our youth away from the pews as a passing fad. A solid trilateral report on the crisis in the sense of vocation and mission among the youth would renew Christian unity, the entire Catholic Church, and help to foster ecumenical witnessing in our troubled world.

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/it/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo-trilaterale-cattolico-mennonita-luterano/comunicati-stampa/communique.html>]

ENDNOTES

1. See “The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages (1976),” in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, eds. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press & Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 277-306. *The Oxford English Dictionary* dates the earliest usage of this term, trialogue, to 1532. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “trialogue.”
2. “Formal Signing of the Agreement on Baptism Between the Lutheran Church in the Philippines and the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines,” *Philippine Studies* 20, n. 1 (1972): 149.
3. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church*, Vatican website, April 19, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html, sec. 29. See also sections 28-30.
4. JDDJ 28.
5. See “Church and Justification, Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, (1993), §68” in Jeffrey Gros FSC, Harding Meyer, William G. Rusch (eds), *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations at World Level 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); text available at <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.194/page/484>, as cited in *Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church: Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic Trilateral Conversations, 2012-2017*, 89.
6. *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ. Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation & Strasbourg: Mennonite World Conference, 2010).

<https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/oea-lutheran-mennonites-web-en.pdf>. Accessed April 12, 2019. For an overview of the historical context of this dialogue, see *Healing Memories*, Part I, which includes excerpts of both the condemnations as well as the “Statement on the Confessio Augustana.”

7. *Ibid.*, 89. The authors of the present report cite one portion of the above cited passage; see *Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church: Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic Trilateral Conversations, 2012-2017*, 8. Accessed April 12, 2019.
8. *Called Together to Be Peacemakers: Report on the International Dialogue between The Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference, 1998-2003*. Text available in Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs (eds), *Growth in Agreement III, Faith and Order Paper 207* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007), 206-67; https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/report_cathomenno_final_eng.pdf; and http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/mennonite-conference-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20110324_mennonite_en.html, as cited in *Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church: Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic Trilateral Conversations, 2012-2017*, 8. Accessed April 12, 2019.
9. See *Ibid.*, 8-10.
10. *These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism: A Report of the Catholic Reformed Dialogue in Unitatis Redintegratio, 2003-2007*. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/reformed/upload/The-se-Living-Waters.pdf>. Accessed on April 15, 2019.
11. See *Baptism Catholic and Reformed: A Study Document from the Joint Commission on Doctrine of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church*, 11. As to the aspect of character, see: “Thus, it is understood that: ‘Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ...Given once for all, baptism cannot be repeated.’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1272-1274).” *Ibid.*, 9.
12. JDDJ 19, as cited in 46.
13. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 389 (citing 1 Cor 2:16), as cited in 9.
14. 43. The report wisely records Pope John Paul II’s acceptance of this revision (15, N. 22).
15. 69 (citing *Called to be Peacemakers*), 74.
16. 42. Cf. Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background* (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1972), 182.
17. 69.
18. More work still needs to be done in the future on the role of the minister in the communication of grace and the intention of the whole baptizing community as well as the sponsors to baptize in the faith of the Church.
19. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-IIae, q. 111, a. 2. Cf. Joseph R. Wawrykow, *God’s Grace and human Action: ‘Merit’ In the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), 173-177.
20. For a partial treatment of how merit in the Catholic tradition can be seen in the light of the JDDJ, see Peter Casarella, “Justification by Faith in Nicholas of Cusa,” in *Nicholas of Cusa and Times of Transition*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki, Jason Aleksander & Donald F. Duclow (Leiden: Brill, 2019), especially the treatment of the history that pre-dates Nicholas of Cusa in pp. 178-89.
21. The word is used eight times in the report as a whole. It occurs once in the second part, namely, in a citation on the effect of the liturgy on the human person drawn from Vatican II’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (69).
22. 76, citing *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22.
23. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22.

24. See, for example, 76, 78, 80-83, 110, 155: "there is a problem", 158: "baptism and mission."
25. 158.
26. International Theological Commission, *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law* (2009).
27. 153.
28. 110.
29. See, for example, Massimo Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2018), 122-30.
30. Cf. Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* 63, 98, 105, 268.
31. See, in the Catholic section, 101: "belonging to the communion of sense" through the liturgical year and, in the Mennonite section, 108: "the gift of belonging given in baptism in the name of God the creator of all, Christ the reconciler of all, and the Holy Spirit the healer of all." See also 50, N. 62 on belonging to Christ.
32. 96, 126, 143.
33. 37, 102.
34. "Called to be Peacemakers," 151, 162-85.
35. *Oriente Lumen* 757.
36. *Laudato Si'* 235, citing *Oriente Lumen* 11.
37. Richard N. Fragomeni, "Liturgy at the Heart of Creation: Towards an Ecological Consciousness in Prayer," in *The Ecological Challenge: Ethical, Liturgical, and Spiritual Responses*, ed. Richard N. Fragomeni and John T. Pawlikowski (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1994), 67-82.
38. 156, 162-3.
39. 162.
40. 95, 98-100, 159.