

Ten Years After JDDJ

The Ecumenical Pelagianism Continues

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DEPENDING UPON ITS STAGE of revision, the controversial *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)* could celebrate its tenth anniversary at several points between 2005 and 2009. Curiously, its final English version bears no specified date of publication. In seven parts, this essay provides a comprehensive review of the *Joint Declaration's* inception, development, and subsequent history. Initially conceived to mark a joint anniversary, to many the *Joint Declaration* has become a hallmark for the capitulation of the theological legitimacy of the Reformation.

A DIVISIVE CONSENSUS ON JUSTIFICATION

The impetus for the *JDDJ* came not ten years ago but much earlier (1986) with the publication of the study *Lehrverurteilungen—kirchentrennend? I Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute* (translated into English in 1990 as *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*).¹ After being published in German, the executive committee of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) inquired about translating this work into English in order to commence a similar dialogue process between its member churches and the Roman Catholic Church. When this effort became delayed, the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with its Lima Document ecumenical agenda,² jumped into the breach and proposed in 1993 that the LWF prepare a document by 1997 declaring officially that the sixteenth-century condemnations between Lutherans and Roman Catholics no longer applied. In this process, notably, the doctrine of justification was to be uncoupled from concomitant topics such as ecclesial office and the sacraments.³

The year 1997 was no arbitrary date because it would mark both the fiftieth anniversary of the LWF and the 450th anniversary of the Council of Trent's *Decree on Justification*, with its numerous condemnations (curses, *anathemae*) of Protestant theological positions.⁴ Plainly, heralding *JDDJ* as an ecclesial peace treaty at the 1997 LWF Assembly in Hong Kong would be an ecumenical coup not only for the LWF but also for the ecclesial ambitions of the nascent ELCA. Therefore, meeting in Kristiansand, Norway, in 1993, the LWF Council approved a process to implement the ELCA's suggestion, and 1–5 March

1994 a group of Roman Catholic and Lutheran ecumenists was convened in Geneva, Switzerland, to draft such an accord. On the Roman Catholic side were Heinz-Albert Raem (Rome), George Tavard (USA), and Lothar Ullrich (Erfurt). Representing the Lutherans were Eugene Brand (ELCA, Geneva), John Reumann (ELCA, USA), and Harding Meyer (Germany).⁵

As a continual work in progress, the *Joint Declaration* went through three major revisions, identified by slightly differing nomenclature. On 30 January 1995, the newly appointed LWF General Secretary, Ishmael Noko, circulated the first draft of *JDDJ* (the 1995 version, also known as *JDDJ-1*) to all LWF member churches for consultation. In his cover letter, Noko requested that LWF member churches approve this draft prior to the 1997 LWF Assembly in Hong Kong with the rationale that

an LWF assembly has no formal doctrinal authority over the member churches. Before an assembly can speak on a doctrinal matter, we must discover whether a consensus exists in our communion of churches. If there is a consensus . . . , the consequence would be to declare that the doctrinal condemnations no longer apply.⁶

By May 1996, only 35 of 122 LWF member churches had replied to Noko's request for an official response to *JDDJ*. Perhaps not unexpectedly, the ELCA was one of only six LWF member

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1. *Lehrverurteilungen—kirchentrennend? I Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Freiburg: Herder; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); in English as *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). See Dorothea Wendebourg, "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der «Gemeinsamen Erklärung»" in *Zur Rechtfertigungslehre, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Beiheft 10* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 148 [hereafter cited as Wendebourg, *Beiheft 10*]. For a devastating assault on *JDDJ*, see Johannes Wallmann, "Die Demontage einer fast fertigen Brücke: inwiefern die «Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre» gescheitert ist," *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (2001): 172–88.
2. See the first ELCA constitution (dated 30 April 1987, revised 3 June 1987), "Chapter 10. Ministry," article 10.11.A87.b. See also Walter Kasper, "Gegenwärtige ökumenische Situation und künftige Perspektiven der Ökumene," *Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim* 54 (2003): 72.
3. Wendebourg, *Beiheft 10*, 149.
4. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, in a letter dated 30 January 1995. The author possesses an original copy from his time as the Ecumenical Officer of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain.
5. Wendebourg, *Beiheft 10*, 152.
6. Noko.

churches to approve this initial draft without reservation.⁷ The majority of responses, however, indicated that this draft would need to be substantially rewritten.

Who would benefit from offering a consensus in only “basic truths” on the doctrine of justification with admittedly no ecclesial consequences?

Responsibility for the next draft of the *Joint Declaration* was given to an internationally more representative committee composed of fourteen members, seven from each denomination, who met in Würzburg, Germany, on 3–7 June 1996. This committee’s composition effectively diluted the dominating presence of ELCA-related personnel on the first committee. The second draft of the document (known as Würzburg I or *JDDJ*-II) was subsequently reviewed by “eminent persons” from LWF member churches and by selected LWF ecumenists, namely Michael Root and Theo Dieter, and also by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Deemed to need further work, this second draft was again reworked in Würzburg on 16–18 January 1997 to produce Würzburg II or *JDDJ*-III. The third draft would become officially, though not actually, the final version of *JDDJ*.⁸ Then, bypassing its Council, the LWF executive committee forwarded this final version to the LWF member churches, requesting their responses to the following questions by 1 June 1998: (1) Did the LWF member churches agree “that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics” (*JDDJ* §40) and (2) Could these churches thus declare that “the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century, insofar as they relate to the doctrine of justification” (*JDDJ* §41) no longer applied

today?⁹ This extensive, drafting detour meant that *JDDJ* would not have a celebratory reception at the 1997 LWF Assembly in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the only remnant of the joint anniversary, which this document was supposed to mark so boldly, now appeared almost sardonically in Ishmael Noko’s cover letter from 27 February 1997 in which he presented the “Edition 1997” of the *Joint Declaration*.

If *JDDJ* could no longer provide fancy garnish for the LWF’s anniversary extravaganza, why would the LWF continue to prepare it? Who would benefit from offering a consensus in only “basic truths” on the doctrine of justification with admittedly no ecclesial consequences?¹⁰ Since when did ecumenical expediency overshadow theological clarity? Scores of eminent Protestant theologians, mainly in Germany but elsewhere too,¹¹ began to raise similar questions, which later turned into objections to *JDDJ*. On 27 January 1998, 141 (later, more than 160) German Protestant academic theologians issued a petition (*Votum*) to Lutheran church leaders in Germany, urging them in seven concisely written articles to reject the *JDDJ*.¹² Likewise, despite previous input in the drafting process, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith also began to voice reservations about the claimed consensus in *JDDJ*. Later that same year on the anniversary (June 25) of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, the Roman Church published its *Response to JDDJ*.¹³ In eight articles of somewhat more involved argumentation, the Vatican found *JDDJ* lacking in many of the same points as the Protestant theologians, but obviously for different reasons. The Vatican’s *Response* represented not only a

7. Wendebourg, *Beiheft* 10, 157–158, especially notes 63–66. Unreservedly approving this draft of *JDDJ* were churches from Chile, Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, Slovakia, and the USA. LWF member churches seeking changes to the draft were from Brazil, Canada, France, the 13 regional Lutheran churches in Germany, Japan (Lutheran Evangelical Church), Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Zimbabwe. Churches rejecting the draft were from Austria, Great Britain, Japan (Kinki), Madagascar, Philippines, and Taiwan. The author of this essay drafted the response from the Lutheran Church in Great Britain. According to Wendebourg, the responses from Canada and Brazil were accepted in a qualified way because they did not have formal church sanctioning.

8. The English version of *JDDJ* generally available since 1999 is not the version sent to LWF member churches for consideration. Sometime after the beginning of 1999 the English text of *JDDJ* was altered without public notification of the changes made, with two consequences. First, no LWF member church has thus approved the current English version of *JDDJ*. Second, viewed contractually, the current English text of *JDDJ* consequently has no binding authority. See Mark D. Menacher, “Current Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006), 373–408, especially 396–398.

9. Wendebourg, *Beiheft* 10, 158–169, 205–206.

10. According to *JDDJ* §43, the following areas, which are by no means ecclesially insignificant, need to be clarified in order for Lutherans to achieve greater unity with the Roman Church: (1) the relationship between the word of God and the authority of church teaching, (2) the doctrine of the church, (3) the doctrine of authority within the church, (4) teaching on church unity, (5) teaching on ecclesial offices, (6) the doctrine of the sacraments, and (7) teachings on the relationship between justification and social ethics.

11. Although the vast majority of theologians publicly objecting to *JDDJ* were from Germany, a small group of mainly American and Scandinavian Lutheran scholars also protested against *JDDJ* in a letter entitled “We Will Resist.” These theologians were Erik Aurelius, Jörg Baur, Gerhard Forde, Leif Grane, Gracia Grindal, Bengt Hägglund, James Kittelson, Steffen Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, Gerhard Krodel, Inge Lønning, James Nestingen, Steven Paulson, Tarald Rasmussen, and Joachim Ringleben. Without listing the names, Aidan Nichols, OP, in “The Lutheran-Catholic Agreement on Justification: Botch or Breakthrough?” *New Blackfriars* 82 (2001): 378, makes one of the few references in the literature to this group. Some Lutheran churches not directly involved in the process, such as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, also examined *JDDJ* and found it lacking. See Samuel H. Nafzger, “Joint Declaration on Justification: A Missouri Synod Perspective,” *Concordia Journal* 27 (2001): 178–195.

12. “141 evangelisch-theologische Hochschullehrerinnen und Hochschullehrer: «Votum der Hochschullehrer zur ‘Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre’,»” *Evangelischer Pressedienst Dokumentation*, #7/98: 1–5. See also “Teil einer katholischen Strategie: 141 deutsche Theologieprofessoren lehnen die ökumenische Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre ab,” *Deutsches Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt* 6 (6 February 1998).

13. “Antwort der Katholischen Kirche auf die Gemeinsame Erklärung zwischen der Katholischen Kirche und dem Lutherischen Weltbund über die Rechtfertigungslehre.” *Texte aus der VELKD* #87/99: 26–29 [hereafter cited as “Antwort” with VELKD text number].

rejection of *JDDJ* specifically¹⁴ but also a condemnation of Lutheran theology generally. In short, for Lutherans the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ is “the fundamental reality of the Christian life and the church” (Article 1). For the Vatican, the doctrine of justification represents just one aspect of the faithful’s cooperative participation in the life of the Roman Church as God’s gracious sacrament of salvation with Jesus Christ. Viewed constructively, some of Protestantism’s finest theologians and the Vatican’s doctrinal watchdog had reached a decisive consensus: *JDDJ* with its so-called differentiated consensus¹⁵ was proving increasingly senseless.

Working in secret,¹⁶ negotiations were soon underway to develop a rescue plan to bail out *JDDJ*. A drafting team of four, composed of Lutherans Joachim Track, Chair of the LWF Committee for Theology and Studies, and Johannes Hanselmann, former Bishop of Bavaria, and Roman Catholics Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and ecumenist Heinz Schütte, met in Regensburg on 1 November 1998 to begin drafting the *Official Common Statement (OCS)*. Track contributed authoritatively during the final consultations on this document.¹⁷ The *OCS*, which consists of three paragraphs, was supplemented with an *Annex* designed in theory to address objections to *JDDJ*. With the *OCS* and the *Annex* in place, preparations commenced to sign documents on Reformation Day, 31 October 1999, in Augsburg, Germany. Just prior to this date, however, over 250 Protestant scholars from nearly every university in Germany issued a second petition objecting to the *OCS Annex*. According to their “Position Statement” (*Stellungnahme*), the *OCS Annex* advanced Tridentine theology generally and failed specifically to resolve the objections to *JDDJ* raised in their first petition.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the media extravaganza in Augsburg went ahead, according to script. The headline from an LWF news release dated 31 October

1999 reads, “Reformation Day in Augsburg was historic: Thousands witness signing of ‘Joint Declaration’ celebrations.”¹⁹

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Unfortunately, in all its media releases, the LWF regularly fails to mention that the *Joint Declaration* was not signed in Augsburg, Germany. The *OCS* concludes with the seemingly innocuous phrase, “By this act of signing, The Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation confirm the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in its entirety.”²⁰ In other words, the *OCS* was signed, not *JDDJ*. Johannes Wallmann reports from correspondence between Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy and LWF General Secretary Noko that originally both *JDDJ* and the *OCS* were to be signed in Augsburg. Due to Lutheran and Vatican objections, however, *JDDJ* became impossible to sign. Speaking at the General Synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in German (VELKD) on 18 October 1999, Bishop Hans Christian Knuth is reported to have said, “The [*Joint Declaration*] has thus shown itself to be no longer suitable for a signature.”²¹ Also, quite different from *JDDJ*, neither the *OCS* nor its *Annex* was affirmed via the LWF’s procedures for establishing synodal consensus.²² Given that an “LWF assembly has no formal doctrinal authority over the member churches,” it is remarkable that the LWF central office, which possesses even less authority, though behaving “as if it were the Lutheran Vatican,”²³ decided to proceed unilaterally

14. Johannes Wallmann considers the Vatican’s “Antwort” to be a “Nein” (no) to *JDDJ*. See Johannes Wallmann, “Der Streit um die «Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre»,” in *Zur Rechtfertigungslehre*, 250.

15. The term “differentiated consensus” is an ecumenical *terminus technicus* which allows for divergent interpretations of common statements. For example, Man X and Man Y agree that Woman Q is beautiful. Man X is her lover, and Man Y is her husband. According to a “differentiated consensus,” by establishing a “basic truth” that Woman Q is beautiful, Man X and Man Y should no longer find monogamy dividing. Viewed theologically, it matters whether justification is by faith alone or not and whether this doctrine is determinative for the church or not. “Basic agreements” addressing limited parts of doctrine undermine the gospel.

16. See Thomas Kaufmann and Martin Ohst, “Unvereinbar oder inhaltsleer: der päpstliche Ablass widerlegt die Rede vom Rechtfertigungs-Konsens,” *Die Zeichen der Zeit, Lutherische Monatshefte* 2 (September 1999): 20.

17. Wallmann, “Streit,” 172–173, especially note 2.

18. “Stellungnahme theologischer Hochschullehrer zur geplanten Unterzeichnung der Gemeinsamen Offiziellen Feststellung zur Rechtfertigungslehre” (Position Statement of Theological Instructors in Higher Education to the Planned Signing of the Official Common Statement to the Doctrine of Justification). The author is grateful to Professor Wilfred Härle (Heidelberg) for a copy the *Stellungnahme*. The German version of the *Stellungnahme* is available on the Internet on the site of its chief drafter, <http://www.w-haerle.de/Stellungnahme.htm>. The author’s English translation thereof, used without citation, can be found in *Supporting Documentation for the Statement “Toward True Reconciliation”* issued by The Office of the President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in January 2000, p. 17–26, <http://www.lifeoftheworld.com/believe/statements/statementdoc.pdf>.

19. <http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/680.EN.html>.

20. *Texte aus der VELKD* #87/99, 30.

21. See Wallmann, “Streit,” 185.

22. Roman Catholic scholar Susan K. Wood asserts with no substantiating references, “The Annex did not require ratification of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation because it is essentially a compilation of quotations from Scripture and confessional documents.” See Susan K. Wood, “Catholic Reception of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” in *Rereading Paul Together: Protestant and Catholic Perspectives on Justification*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 46. Wood’s essay is a propagandistic portrayal of *JDDJ*, apparently designed to ensure that the real theological differences between Lutherans and the Roman Church are obscured by “language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification,” to play on the wording in *JDDJ* §40. Perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of *JDDJ* by a Roman Catholic in English is Christopher J. Malloy’s *Engrafted into Christ: A Critique of the Joint Declaration* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

23. Dorothea Wendebourg, “Klarstellungen im Kleingedruckten: die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre begründete keinen Konsens,” *Zeitzeichen* 8, no. 10 (October 2007): 23. On this same topic, Heike Schmolle also refers to the LWF central office as a “Lutheran Vatican” in “Das ökumenische Missverständnis,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, Nr. 253 (31.10.2007), 1. Schmolle is credited and disparaged for making *JDDJ* a national issue in Germany through her reporting thereof in the *FAZ*.

with the OCS and its signing. As a result, the OCS was adopted only by the LWF central office in Geneva and not by the LWF member churches.²⁴ The Lutheran signatories to the OCS represent no one but the LWF central office, and presumably also themselves. Compared with the LWF's orchestrated portrayal of the *Joint Declaration* in the media,²⁵ the reality of events to the contrary leaves one dumbfounded and asking: What would possess so-called Lutheran church leaders to engage in such chicanery? Why would the LWF, supported unequivocally by the institutional ELCA, expend so much public effort and money to sell out the doctrine of justification by faith alone in favor of ecumenical make-believe?²⁶

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This series of events raises not only procedural questions but also hermeneutical consequences. Because the OCS resuscitated *JDDJ*, both *JDDJ* itself and its "differentiated consensus" can only be accurately read through the lens of the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*. In short, *JDDJ* cannot stand on its own, and on its own *JDDJ* has no standing.

A cursory review of the history of the development of *JDDJ* cannot accommodate a full discussion of all the theological issues at hand. Besides the vigorous dispute whether the doctrine of justification is *a* or *the* criterion for ecclesial life,²⁷ the heart of the debates surrounding the *Joint Declaration* centers on sections 15–17, particularly the second sentence in section 15, "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works." This sentence seems straight forward, and viewed historically, it seems rather Johnny-come-lately for hundreds of German academic theologians to object to a

sentence found similarly formulated in earlier ecumenical dialogues such as *The Niagara Report*,²⁸ the *Porvoo Declaration*,²⁹ and even the *Meißen Agreement*.³⁰

The omission of the phrase "faith alone" in *JDDJ* section 15, however, means that the hermeneutical lugnut holding the other Reformation tenets together has been pulled, and the wheel comes off the cart. For Protestants, particularly Lutherans, justification by faith alone apart from works of the law is the good news (gospel). All forms of works-righteousness, including penitential satisfaction for sins, denigrates Christ's sacrifice on the cross because it says that his death is not enough. A savior who has not done enough on the cross also is not enough at the final judgment.³¹ Furthermore, the insertion of "faith alone" (§2.C, *Annex* to OCS) does not address the issue. Although some speculate that this superficial insertion means that the Vatican has anathematized itself,³² this is not the case because "Catholics can speak of justification by faith or even of justification by faith alone insofar as they teach . . . that nothing prior to the free gift of faith merits justification."³³ For Catholics this understanding of "faith alone" pertains only to baptismal justification and not to the life of a Christian thereafter with a view to the hereafter.

In short, despite five-hundred years of history and forty years of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, the core issues of the Reformation are still at stake today. The Roman Church teaches that people are justified and transformed in baptism at which point all sin is removed. Any remaining power of sin (concupiscence) may only lead individuals to stumble and fall into misdeeds of varying degrees of gravity. The sacrament of confession and absolution restores the baptismal state of justification. The adverse effects of one's misdeeds, however, require

24. See Reinhard Brandt, "Der ökumenische Dialog nach der Unterzeichnung der Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre und nach Dominus Iesus: ein Überblick über strittige Aspekte aus lutherischer Sicht," in *Konsensdruck ohne Perspektiven?* ed. Uwe Rieske-Braun (Leipzig: Evangelische-Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 11–13, 29–32.

25. According to Johannes Wallmann, the signing of documents in Augsburg was a publicity stunt, "an act for television but not for the life of the church." See Wallmann, "Streit," 175.

26. In Germany, one hears the term *Ausverkaufsökumenismus* (literally "sell out ecumenism") used to describe the abandonment of sound doctrine for the sake of ecumenical expediency.

27. Eberhard Jüngel, "Um Gottes willen—Klarheit: Kritische Bemerkungen zur Verharmlosung der kriteriologischen Funktion des Rechtfertigungssartikels: aus Anlaß einer ökumenischen «Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre»," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 94 (1997), 394–406.

28. *The Niagara Report: Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopate 1987* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988), 35–36 §66 states, "We 'share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, i.e., that we are accounted righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merit." This quotation originated from the *Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue: The Report of the European Commission "Helsinki Report"* (London: SPCK, 1983).

29. *Together in Mission and Ministry: The Porvoo Common Statement* (London: Church House Publishing, 1993), 18 §32.c quotes the same as the preceding note. Marc Lienhard, in "Theologie für die Kirche: Lutherische Perspektiven," *Lutherische Kirche in der Welt* 55 (2008): 15–28, laments the near lack of discussion of justification in the *Porvoo Declaration* (16).

30. *The Meißen Agreement Texts*, Church of England, Council for Christian Unity, Occasional Paper No. 2, 1992.

31. For a critical discussion of the deficiencies of *JDDJ*, particularly with respect to eschatological concerns see Werner Klän, "Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Anfragen an die «Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre» aus konkordienlutherischer Sicht," in *Von Gott angenommen, in Christus verwandelt: die Rechtfertigungslehre im multilateralen ökumenischen Dialog*, ed. U. Swarat, J. Oeldemann, and D. Heller (Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lembeck, 2006), 95–124.

32. See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum . . .* (Latin-German), ed. Peter Hünermann, 37th edition (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 517–18, §1559 [hereafter cited as DH]. According to Canon 9 of the Tridentine *Decree on Justification* the notion of justification by faith alone apart from cooperation is condemned.

33. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess, eds., *Justification by Faith*, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue 7 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 52 §105.

satisfaction in some form of penance. Through God's grace, the "rejustified" person can cooperate with God to make amends for misdeeds. Thus, one is able "to do enough" to make up for the effects of sinning.³⁴ Satisfying or not satisfying these obligations has eternal consequences. Purgatory thus becomes a penultimate opportunity to be purged of remaining sins and omissions before entry into heaven. In this scheme, even indulgences as a mitigation of temporal punishments or time in purgatory is effectively viewed as an expression of grace. The quasi-biblical basis for this whole process is not found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but rather in relation to the creation story, particularly Genesis 1:26. In this scheme, once the image of God has been restored in baptism, the church as a sacramental agent strives to infuse sufficient grace into the faithful so that one's "likeness of God" becomes acceptable for entrance into eternal salvation.³⁵ The institutional church thus mediates between God and humanity.

For Lutherans, everything relies on the word of God, from creation to final consummation. After the fall, humanity lost both the image and likeness of God. Only through Christ as God's Word incarnate can human beings be encountered with the promise of God's image and likeness. Quite simply, faith alone in Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of sin and the granting of eternal life. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ purely proclaimed in word and sacrament can invoke and evoke the only faith through which God by grace alone effects salvation. In faith, God declares sinners to be just or right, and because God's word is promissory by nature, it effects what it declares. As a result, sinful human beings, who remain in themselves sinners, become righteous before God with God's own righteousness freely granted on account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. For Lutherans and all lesser sinners, word and faith for justification by faith is not an ecclesial mishap from the sixteenth century. It is the power of God for humanity's salvation (Rom 1:16–17). If the gospel is God's power for salvation, then purely proclaimed it is certainly enough, in fact more than enough, for the existence, nature, and unity of Christ's church. Unfortunately, some Lutherans no longer believe this. In summary, the Roman Church and Lutherans have different understandings of the reality of sin. If they cannot agree about the problem, then little hope exists for a meaningful consensus regarding the solution. In the Roman Church, justification is not solely a matter of faith between the God who justifies and the sinner in need of justification, as Lutherans maintain.³⁶ Instead, according to Trent, justification happens in relationship to the Roman Church when justifying grace is sacramentally dispensed initially in baptism and repeatedly in the sacrament

of penance and subsequent sacraments.³⁷ Moreover, Trent stipulates that adherence to Roman Church teaching on justification is also prerequisite for justification. These Roman Catholic understandings of justification would necessarily be rejected by most Lutherans as lacking foundation in the gospel, and thus as denigrating not only the gospel but ultimately Jesus Christ himself.

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With respect to doctrinal disputes, rejecting Roman Catholic doctrine is markedly different from condemning or anathematizing Roman Catholics, which brings this portion of the discussion back to its beginning and its conclusion. *JDDJ* was devised to establish a doctrinal consensus that would allow the mutual condemnations between the Roman Church and Lutherans from the sixteenth century to be declared no longer applicable. That being the case, *JDDJ* set out to slay a straw man. The Book of Concord takes issue with just one position explicitly decreed by the Council of Trent, and this instance, found in FC SD IV, 35, does not condemn but merely rejects a particular element of the effect of good works on the status of a believer's righteousness. Additionally, since many of the world's Lutheran churches count only the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as their confessional writings, such Lutheran churches have no explicit rejections of Trent's decrees.

In sharp contrast, the many decrees of the Council of Trent contain a comprehensive and inescapable barrage of canons anathematizing Protestants and wayward Roman Catholics alike. For example, the *Decree on Justification* alone contains thirty-three such canons, and anyone falling afoul of Canons One through Thirty-two is summarily condemned by Canon Thirty-Three. Canon Thirty reads as follows:

If anyone says that every penitent sinner, after having accepted the grace of justification, has guilt remitted and the accusation of punishment nullified in such a way that no accusation of temporal punishment remains *which is to be paid either in this time or in the future in purgatory* before the gates into the kingdom of the heavens can be opened, this one is cursed (anathema).³⁸

Consequently, the failure to make satisfaction for sins entails dire prospects of salvation for purgatory-bound Roman Catho-

34. See AE 41: 199–200.

35. For central aspects of this portrayal, see "Antwort," *Texte aus der VELKD* #87/99, 26–29.

36. See Gerhard Ebeling, *Disputatio de homine*, vol. 2, pt. 1 of *Lutherstudien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1977), 22–23. For example, in *Disputatio de homine* Thesis 32, Luther explicates his theological anthropology according to Romans 3:28 from which Luther concludes that the "human being is justified by faith" (*breviter hominis definitionem colligit dicens: hominem iustificari fide*).

37. See DH, 506 §1529; 538–539 §1671–72; 540–541 §1678.

38. DH, 521 §1580 (author's translation, emphasis added).

lics, and purgatory-rejecting Protestants are anathematized twice by Trent's *Decree on Justification*. Fortunately, for the Roman Catholic faithful, recent popes have been rather generous with indulgences.

The marketing of this ecumenical red herring continues unabated.

In summary, the impetus to develop the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* came from the ELCA. The first draft of *JDDJ* needed be rescued from itself by a wider representation of the LWF. Even after the final, joint anniversary *Edition 1997* was distributed, the protests of hundreds of Protestant scholars and also of the Vatican made *JDDJ* impossible to sign. When *JDDJ* was salvaged from oblivion by the *Official Common Statement*, this ecumenical heroine was deemed invincible only by a small group of LWF "ecclesiocrats" who boldly touted documents that were impotent for achieving their stated purpose of abrogating (one-sided) condemnations.³⁹ All these "basic truths" regarding the jocular consensus in the *Joint Declaration* have been repeatedly misconstrued by the LWF generally⁴⁰ and by the ELCA specifically.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the marketing of this ecumenical red herring continues unabated.

METHODISTS TO THE MADNESS

While the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD, Evangelical Church in Germany) sparred publicly over ecumenical relations, the LWF and the ELCA went a different direction and began promoting the untold benefits of *JDDJ*. This split among Lutherans is not insignificant. It should be recalled that on 30 June 2000, the Vatican issued its *Note on the Expression "Sister Churches,"* and a few months later, on August 6 and on September 5 respectively, the Vatican issued and published its *Declaration "Dominus Iesus" on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church.*⁴² Both documents reminded Protestant churches of their subecclesial status enshrined in

Vatican II. The EKD countered on 9 November 2000 with its *Kundgebung* (Declaration), affirming the Protestant principle of church unity expressed in the *Leuenberg Agreement* based on AC VII. Then, meeting on 7–8 September 2001, the Council of the EKD went further and adopted a second document entitled *Kirchengemeinschaft nach evangelischem Verständnis (KneV).*⁴³ Also based on AC VII, *KneV* rejects the structural ecumenism (namely episcopal apostolic succession) of both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Church. In sharp contrast to these events in Germany, and thus contrary to AC VII, the ELCA and the LWF began to assist the Vatican to extend a Tridentine understanding of justification over wider swaths of Protestantism.

Seeking to confect ecumenical repercussions for *JDDJ*, a consulting process was begun on 27–30 November 2001 at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, to explore "ways in which the *Joint Declaration* might be more widely affirmed."⁴⁴ The consultation was hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the LWF. Representatives from the World Methodist Council (WMC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) were the invited guests. Generous support for the gathering came from the Josephinum, Trinity Lutheran Seminary (ELCA), and the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. The consultation resulted in agreement that the PCPCU, the LWF, and the WMC would continue to collaborate so that the WMC could produce an official text, acceptable to the other two parties, that would affirm *JDDJ.*⁴⁵ The WARC desired to continue in an observer capacity.

The final report from this consultation concludes,

It is the conviction of us all that the attainment of agreement on the doctrine of justification is an important step forward towards the goal of church unity and necessary for the credibility of our common witness before the world.⁴⁶

While intending to affirm the ecumenical relevance of *JDDJ*, this consultation ironically and unwittingly confirmed the objections against *JDDJ* raised by the German academic theologians in their first petition from January 1998. Article 1 of that petition forthrightly states that the doctrine of justification pertains "not to a single aspect of theology, but rather to the

39. See Cardinal Avery Dulles, "Justification: The Joint Declaration," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 9 (2002): 108–119.

40. For example, see "Fifth Anniversary of the Signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*," *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, No. 08/2004.

41. In addition to the misinformation in almost every ELCA news release associated with *JDDJ*, the *Church as Koinonia of Salvation (CKS)*, resulting from the tenth round of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the USA, with its 71 pages of preface and text refers to or cites *JDDJ* 32 times. It mentions the *OCS* and its *Annex* only four times (twice each). The ELCA wants people to think that only *JDDJ* was signed on Reformation Day. Importantly, *CKS* contains no references to justification by "faith alone."

42. Both *Dominus Iesus* and the *Note on the expression "Sister Churches"* are available on the Vatican's Web site at <http://www.vatican.va>.

43. *Kirchengemeinschaft nach evangelischem Verständnis: ein Votum zum geordneten Miteinander bekenntnisverschiedener Kirchen*, EKD-Texte #69, 2001, <http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/44637.html>. In English, *A Protestant Understanding of Ecclesial Communion*, <http://www.ekd.de/english/45383.html>.

44. *Called to Communion and Common Witness: Report of the Joint Working Group between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1999–2001)* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation/World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2002), 45. See also Kasper, "Gegenwärtige Situation," 71–72. See also Burkhard Neumann, "Gerecht gemacht aus Glauben (Röm 5,1): neue Impulse zur ökumenischen Diskussion über die Rechtfertigungslehre," *Catholica* (Münster) 60 (2006): 268–86; and finally Jared Wicks, "Justification in a Broader Horizon," *Pro Ecclesia* 12 (2003): 473–491.

45. *Ibid.*, 46–47.

46. *Ibid.*, 48.

foundation and whole, to the article by which the church stands or falls.” So, why were representatives from the Methodist and Reformed world organizations so willing to affirm and to discuss the diminished doctrine of justification found in *JDDJ*?

Meeting later in March 2002, WMC officers “charged Bishop Walter Klaiber and Professor Geoffrey Wainwright with drafting a Methodist Statement” that would be “able to declare and demonstrate its consonance with the *JDDJ*.” This statement was twice circulated to all WMC member churches and “was met with very positive, even enthusiastic endorsement in all the responses received at WMC headquarters in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.”⁴⁷ After receiving approval by the WMC on 18 July 2006, the “Official Common Affirmation of the Methodist Statement of Association with *JDDJ*” was signed by all three partners at the World Methodist Council and Conference meeting in Seoul, Korea, on Sunday July 23, 2006. “The signing was greeted by a standing ovation and the spontaneous singing of the doxology.”⁴⁸

Five sections comprise the Methodist Statement of Association with *JDDJ*, which precedes the *Official Common Affirmation* itself. The first section, to its credit, states upfront that the *Official Common Statement* rather than *JDDJ* was signed by the LWF and the Vatican. Less accurately, the WMC statement then describes *OCS-JDDJ* as “a far reaching consensus.” Notably, the second section quotes *JDDJ* sections 15–17 as corresponding to Methodist doctrine. Section 3 states that Methodists agree with the common statements in *JDDJ* sections 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, and then perplexingly claims that they also accept both the Lutheran and Roman Church’s often divergent, if not contradictory interpretations of the doctrine of justification established by the so-called differentiated consensus in sections 20–21, 23–24, 26–27, 29–30, 32–33, 35–36, and 38–39.

The fourth part, divided into seven subsections, sets out Methodist teaching on justification and sanctification, often citing John Wesley’s sermons. Section 4.2 ends:

John Wesley saw in salvation a twofold action of God’s grace: “By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, restored to the image of God” (Sermon 85, II.1). The redemptive acceptance into communion with God and the creative renewal of our lives are entirely the work of God’s grace.

and section 4.3 begins:

47. Geoffrey Wainwright, “The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” *One in Christ* 41 (2006): 83. The same is also found in Geoffrey Wainwright, “World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” *Pro Ecclesia* 16 (2007): 7–13.

48. Wainwright, “World Methodist Council,” 88. Neumann, “Gerecht gemacht,” asserts (269–79, especially 269) that the WMC’s affirmation of *JDDJ* is “no less relevant” than the recently published work from the Deutscher Ökumenischer Studienausschuss (DÖSTA; German Ecumenical Study Committee); see *Von Gott angenommen, in Christus verwandelt*. This particular study document appears, however, to be exerting little influence within or without Germany.

Salvation “depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace” (Romans 4:16)—this Pauline phrase could well be the motto of the Methodist movement. It started as a missionary movement after the Wesley brothers and their friends experienced the liberating Gospel of salvation by faith alone. It is only through God’s grace that human beings are saved by faith alone.⁴⁹

Importantly, the Methodist statement contains no explicit reference to justification by faith alone. Furthermore, the Methodist twofold understanding of salvation is predicated on justification from guilt and on sanctification of the self. As the latter seems more fundamental than the former, section 4.2 of the WMC statement apparently undermines section 4.3. Consequently, the phrase “salvation by faith alone” in the Methodist statement is self-contradictory. Admittedly, that is a fitting way to affirm *JDDJ*.

The Methodist statement is self-contradictory. Admittedly, that is a fitting way to affirm JDDJ.

In accordance with the now tripartite understanding of justification, section 5 of the statement articulates the WMC’s own ecumenical aspirations. Citing existing agreements for full communion of pulpit and altar between Lutheran and Methodist churches in some countries, Methodists express their “deep hope . . . to enter into closer relationship with Lutherans in other places and with the Roman Catholic Church.” Closing with the *Official Common Affirmation* itself, the United Methodist Church (UMC) and its member churches “affirm their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed at Augsburg on 31 October 1999.” To reciprocate, the two signing partners pledge to be “welcoming”⁵⁰ of the WMC’s statement and of its member churches. The three partners now “commit themselves” to deepen “their common understanding of justification in theological study, teaching and preaching.” To conclude,

the present achievement and commitment are viewed by Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists as part of their pur-

49. *Ibid.*, 85–86.

50. Burkhard Neumann asserts that the Vatican’s signature on the Methodist document finally proves that the Vatican did in fact sign *JDDJ* and not just the *OCS*, and therefore *JDDJ* is binding (Neumann, “Gerecht gemacht,” 277). The logic behind such thinking is not clear. How the Vatican’s signatory “welcoming” of a proposal drafted and advanced by the WMC can be equated with signing a different, unsigned document seems to represent more ecumenical make-believe.

suit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ for all Christians.

Viewed in light of preceding discussions, one must conclude that the Lutherans so officiously mentioned in these Methodist documents are again only those who represent the LWF central office in Geneva. As already shown, these Lutherans seem quite happy to confirm or affirm a diminished doctrine of justification offering little more than initial membership in the church. This notion is consonant with the Roman Church's understanding of justification at baptism, which is the entry level sacrament administered even by the laity in cases of emergency. The "higher sacrament of rejustification" (confession and absolution), however, requires a priest sacramentally ordained by a bishop in apostolic succession who himself is in communion with the pope. Neither Lutherans nor Methodists can reach these heights of ecclesial distinction without making themselves "right enough" for recognition as proper church by the papacy. This lowest common denominator understanding of justification is hardly the article by which the church stands or falls. Furthermore, an *opus operatum* realization of justification at baptism cannot be the criterion for the pure proclamation of the gospel.

These Lutherans seem quite happy to affirm a diminished doctrine of justification offering little more than initial membership in the church.

The diminution of the doctrine of justification as the criterion for the pure proclamation of the gospel has obvious implications for the true unity of the church. The similarity between the Roman Church and Methodists on this point is reflected in their common reluctance to engage with Lutherans in ways consonant with AC VII. For example, when the European Methodists joined the Leuenberg Church Fellowship, now known as the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, they did so not by signing the *Leuenberg Agreement* based on AC VII. Instead, they were "received" through a *Joint Declaration of Church Fellowship* (*Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Kirchengemeinschaft*) drafted in 1993–1994.⁵¹ Likewise in the United States, but for opposite reasons, Methodists are able to avoid AC VII because the ELCA is not reluctant to cast AC VII aside when

gospel purity⁵² hinders its ecumenical agenda. The ELCA has already demonstrated this most poignantly by adopting *Called to Common Mission* (CCM), its ecumenical accord with the Episcopal Church. In that same vein, the ELCA's current proposal for full communion with the UMC, *Confessing Our Faith Together* (COFT), also denigrates AC VII in favor of the ELCA's own ecumenical vision.

It should be noted, while the LWF, the PCPCU, and the WMC were affirming a document which neither the LWF nor the Vatican could sign, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has thus far stayed away from formal affiliation with JDDJ.

With encouragement from the Vatican, both the ELCA and the LWF central office are apparently inciting a thinly disguised counter-reformation from the highest echelons of LWF itself. They have diminished the master and prince of all doctrines (WA 39, 1: 205.20–22) to the status of ecumenical serf to be exploited for their own ecclesial-political designs. This is perhaps revealed most starkly by their lack of concern regarding the flashpoint of the Reformation, namely papal indulgences, which have been issued abundantly since JDDJ was confirmed by the OCS in 1999. Theologically though not financially, the issue of indulgences is no less relevant today than in Luther's day. The palpable lack of interest by ELCA and LWF leaders regarding indulgences demonstrates further that these institutions have become evangelically irresponsible.⁵³

**INDULGENT PAPACY AND
IRRESPONSIBLE LUTHERANS**

Protestants, especially Lutherans, celebrate October 31 as Reformation Day because on this date in 1517 Luther published his Ninety-Five Theses, entitled *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. This bold step ignited a series of events that changed Western Christendom with repercussions for the rest of Christianity. The freedom (*eleutheria* in Greek) of the gospel of justification by faith alone made Martin Luder, the Augustinian monk, into Martin Luther,⁵⁴ the *simul* heroic and heretical Reformer. That gospel freedom unleashed a debate in

51. See Karl Heinz Voigt, "Konsens in der Rechtfertigungslehre: nach Lutheranern und Katholiken jetzt auch Methodisten im Boot," *Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim* 57 (2006): 109–111, especially 110.

52. The ELCA's "full communion" accord with the Episcopal Church, USA, provides enough evidence for the ELCA's general abandonment of AC VII. Recently the ELCA News Service quoted Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson as follows, "Hanson asserted that 'the ELCA upholds the Augsburg Confession,' . . . which states that the Church is the 'assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught and the sacraments are administered rightly'" (11 July 2007—ELCA News release 3636). AC VII speaks of the gospel needing to be "purely" taught. Hanson wittingly or unwittingly omits this adverb. In the institutional ELCA, the pure proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as articulated in the doctrine of justification by faith alone is not a priority for a number of complex reasons, perhaps basically because this gospel conflicts with the ELCA's own secular, humanistic "gospel" of inclusivity.

53. See Michael Root, "The Jubilee Indulgence and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*," *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (2000): 460–475. Root claims, "The Vatican has sought to interpret indulgences in the most evangelical possible way. . . . Contemporary Catholic teaching on indulgences not only does not contradict the consensus embodied in the *JD*, it also does not contradict a Reformation understanding of justification" (464–465).

54. See Bernd Moeller and Karl Stackmann, *Luder, Luther, Eleutherius: Erwägungen zu Luthers Namen*, Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse 1981, no. 7 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

the church which is no less relevant today than in Luther's day. Is justification a punctiliar baptismal event in need of repeated reinstatement by the priest and reparations by the penitent, or is justification of the sinner, the ungodly, a free gift bestowed by the word alone through faith alone apart from works of the law? The Roman Church decrees the former. Luther confessed the latter. Desiring to overcome this division, modern Lutherans represented by the LWF and ELCA seek accommodation. No longer having faith in the doctrine of justification, these agencies now expend endless effort and money seeking to justify themselves ecclesially before the demands of Anglican and Roman canon law. This ecumenical works-righteousness discredits not only the doctrine of justification but also the entire Reformation. In apparent jubilation over this retreat from the Reformation, the Roman Church has of late been repeatedly issuing indulgences.

As if by design, when the *Joint Declaration* is on public display, it seems that a Vatican-issued indulgence is not far away. As Thomas Kaufmann and Martin Ohst report, "While *JDDJ* was being worked out behind the scenes according to established usance of cabinet politics and secret diplomacy, Pope John Paul II published the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year 2000 on the First of Advent 1998"⁵⁵ with its appendix, "Conditions for Gaining the Jubilee Indulgence" available as of Christmas Eve 1999.⁵⁶ Although no longer technically for sale, the "plenary indulgence of the Jubilee can also be gained through actions which express in a practical and generous way the penitential spirit," such as "supporting by a significant contribution works of a religious or social nature."⁵⁷ The difference between obtaining indulgences by sale or by donation is a matter of semantics but not of substance.

On 7 November 2005, when an LWF delegation led by LWF President and ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson was granted an audience with Benedict XVI at the Vatican to discuss *JDDJ* and the Five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses,⁵⁸ this visit was flanked, perhaps strategically, on both sides by the Vatican's issuing papal indulgences. Before this audience, participants at the Twentieth World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, 16–20 July 2005, were eligible to receive a plenary indulgence.⁵⁹ Thereafter, the faithful who displayed Marian piety and participated in sacramental rites (the usual conditions) on 8 December 2005 in order to "be faithfully conformed to the wise teachings of the Second Vatican Council, in

hierarchical communion with [the pope] and with his Bishops" could also receive a plenary indulgence.⁶⁰

Then, just prior to the signing of the UMC's *Official Common Affirmation* of *JDDJ* on 23 July 2006, the Vatican issued a plenary indulgence for the faithful taking part "devoutly in some of the celebrations for the 'Fifth World Meeting of Families'" held 1–9 July 2006 in Valencia, Spain.⁶¹

This ecumenical works-righteousness discredits the entire Reformation.

Finally, on 18 April 2008, Pope Benedict XVI held an ecumenical prayer meeting at St. Joseph's Church in Manhattan to which he had invited over 250 United States Protestant and Orthodox leaders.⁶² Perhaps unrelated thereto, on either side of this ecumenical gathering the pope issued several indulgences, two plenary indulgences beforehand and a plenary and a partial indulgence thereafter. On 3 February 2008, Benedict XVI stated,

From yesterday until the end of 11 February, the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes and the 150th anniversary of the Apparitions, [for each observance] it is possible to receive a Plenary Indulgence, applicable to the deceased, on the usual conditions—Confession, Communion and prayer for the Pope's intentions—and by praying before a blessed image of Our Lady of Lourdes exposed for public veneration. The elderly and the sick may obtain the Indulgence through heartfelt prayer. May Mary, Mother and Star of Hope, light us on our way and make us ever more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.⁶³

55. Kaufmann/Ohst, "Unvereinbar," 20.

56. The Vatican documents cited in this section are available at <http://www.vatican.va>.

57. Conditions for Gaining the Jubilee Indulgence §4.

58. Mark S. Hanson, "Greeting to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI," Vatican City, 7 November 2005, http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF_Greeting_Pope_Benedict_XVI_2005.pdf.

59. "Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on Special Indulgences Conceded for the Twentieth World Youth Day in Cologne," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20050802_decree-xx-wyd_en.html. See also Cindy Wooden's article "Pope encourages people to make God most important part of life," Catholic News Service/USCCB (08 August 2005), <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0504516.htm>.

60. By decree from the Apostolic Penitentiary on 18 November 2005, "Urbis et Orbis: A Plenary Indulgence is granted to the faithful this year on 8 December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Fortieth anniversary of the closure of the Second Vatican Council, by the Supreme Pontiff, Servant of God Paul VI," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20051118_decree-immacolata_en.html.

61. "Decree Issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary [sic] on the Plenary Indulgence Conceded to the Faithful for the Fifth World Meeting of Families held in Valencia, Spain from 1 to 9 July 2006," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20060615_decree-famiglia_en.html.

62. "Pope to Lead Ecumenical Prayer Service at Manhattan Parish," US Conference of Catholic Bishops news release dated 31 March 2008, <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2008/08-046.shtml>.

63. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20080203_en.html. It is highly unlikely that Benedict would have issued indulgences during this time to mark his planned address to the United Nations General Assembly or his meeting with US President Bush. See also http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20071121_decree-lourdes_en.html.

The ELCA sent a ten-person delegation to the pope's prayer service. Apologizing for his absence due to a prior commitment, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson is reported as saying that

he is grateful for the continuing progress of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue and mutual commitment to the ongoing reception of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, signed by representatives of the LWF and the Vatican in 1999.⁶⁴

The eleventh round of that dialogue, entitled "The Hope for Eternal Life," seeks to address "issues relating to the Christian's life beyond death such as purgatory, indulgences, and masses and prayers for the dead."⁶⁵ Shortly thereafter, on 28 June 2008, another plenary indulgence became available to those who "devotedly participate at some sacred function or pious exercise" during the Twenty-third World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia, and additionally,

Hermeneutically, a "differentiated consensus" is simply a contradiction in terms.

the Partial Indulgence is granted to the faithful, wherever they are during the above-mentioned meeting, if, at least with a contrite spirit, they will raise their prayer to God the Holy Spirit, so that young people are drawn to charity and given the strength to proclaim the Gospel with their life.⁶⁶

While Benedict XVI is generously issuing indulgences, LWF leaders are looking forward to celebrating the Five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses with the Roman Catholic Church.⁶⁷ The pope seems no less keen to mark the apparent reversal of the events of 1517 with LWF leaders.⁶⁸

In short, while the Vatican is handing out indulgences like candy to children, many Protestant leaders are willing to drop

faith alone from the doctrine of justification because it is an obstacle to ecumenical relations. The LWF Geneva office, the ELCA, select LWF member churches, and now the Methodists have spared no expense to confirm or affirm their acceptance of *JDDJ*'s Tridentine understanding of justification. These substantial, ecumenical investments on the part of Protestants must have Vatican functionaries laughing all the way to the Treasury of the Church.

LWF REINTERPRETING JUSTIFICATION

If LWF-ELCA efforts to persuade other Protestants to affirm *JDDJ* were proving partially successful, their subsequent attempts to foster hermeneutical credibility for *JDDJ* were not. Thirty-five theologians from all over the world were invited to Wartburg Theological Seminary (ELCA) in Dubuque, Iowa, 14–18 April 2002, by the LWF to discuss the "Reinterpretation of Justification and Relevance of the *Joint Declaration*."⁶⁹ The conference was entitled "Justification Today: its Meaning and Implications,"⁷⁰ and its participants

ventured further from the study of justification to its meaning and implications today following the *JDDJ* imperative to make the common understanding of justification "bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches."⁷¹

"Most importantly, there were glimpses of possibilities for new ecumenical openings and breakthroughs. A book of presentations and findings from this symposium is being published."⁷² In reality, this symposium has received scant attention in theological literature,⁷³ and the book remains unpublished.⁷⁴ Apparently, a doctrine of justification which is not based on faith alone has little meaning and few implications.

Despite the fruitlessness of this conference, the hermeneutical questions raised by *OCS-JDDJ* remain central. These questions apply not only to ecumenical relations and thus to ecclesio-confessional identity but ultimately to the churches' understanding of God. The *Joint Declaration*, like so many products of ecumenical dialogue, tends to focus on the first of these hermeneutical issues to the avoidance of the second and to the effective exclusion of the third. Hermeneutically, a "differentiated consensus" is simply a contradiction in terms. For

64. "Lutherans to Attend Ecumenical Prayer Service April 18 with Pope," ELCA News Service release #3841 (16 April 2008), <http://archive.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3841>.

65. ELCA News Service, "New Round in U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Opens" (05-239-JB), 15 December 2005, <http://archive.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3281>.

66. Apostolic Penitentiary, Sydney, Decree: "Twenty-third World Youth Day," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20080510_san-paolo_en.html.

67. *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, September 2005, 19, http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OCS/LWI-2005-PDF/LWI-200509-EN-low.pdf.

68. "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Representatives of the Lutheran World Federation," Monday, 7 November 2005, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/november/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051107_lutheran-federation_en.html.

69. LWF News, "Reinterpretation of Justification and Relevance of the Joint Declaration," 13 May 2002, <http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/978.EN.html>.

70. Department for Theology and Studies (DTS), LWF Tenth Assembly—Six Year Report, 142, <http://www.lwf-assembly.org/lwfimages/GSReport-10-DTS.pdf>.

71. LWF News (13 May 2002).

72. DTS Report, 142.

73. Ulrike Link-Wieczorek, "Auf keinen Fall ein Heilsprozess? Überlegungen zur kritischen lutherischen Rezeption der «Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre» in Deutschland," in *Von Gott angenommen, in Christus verwandelt*, 88.

74. Margaret O'Gara, "The Significance of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and the Next Steps in Ecumenical Dialogue," in *The Gospel of Justification in Christ: Where Does the Church Stand Today?* ed. Wayne C. Stumme (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 33, n. 17.

example, when the salesman promises that the used car was driven by a little old lady only on Sunday, it matters whether she drove it to church or on the race track. Either justification is a free gift received by faith alone for the sake of Jesus Christ, or justification needs to be restored and repaired by confession and absolution, satisfaction, cooperation, purgatory, and obedience to the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine, canon law, and hierarchy. So, which understanding of justification reflects the reality and radicality of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and which church teaches this doctrine most clearly and purely?

With respect to theological hermeneutics, the German academic theologians in Article III of their first petition against *JDDJ* expressed what initially appeared to be a significant exaggeration when they warned:

If the claim that *JDDJ* represents a doctrinal consensus is affirmed, then [*JDDJ*] threatens to become the interpretative norm for the Lutheran Confessions. That would mean, however, that the confessional writings are thenceforth to be interpreted in light of a doctrine of grace, which admittedly represents justification "by grace alone" but does not represent the foundational Reformation insight that this gracious event is accomplished exactly and alone through faith. That would mean consequently that [the Lutheran Confessions] will necessarily be interpreted by a presupposition which has been superseded precisely by the Reformation's understanding of justification.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, recent documents from the LWF prove this warning disconcertingly correct. The following discussion regarding faith alone and grace alone as now understood and taught by the LWF illustrates this point.

At the LWF Council meeting on 20–27 March 2007 in Lund, Sweden, a previously appointed task force presented a document entitled *Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality*.⁷⁶ In "Part I. A Lutheran Framework: Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality," under the heading "The Gospel as the Unifying Center," the first sentence of the first paragraph states, "The Lutheran Confessions hold three interrelated principles to be of constitutive importance for theological doctrine based on the teachings of the Bible: *solus Christus, sola Scriptura* and *sola gratia* [*sic*]."⁷⁷ The first sentence in the final paragraph of this same section reads:

The relevant conclusion to these deliberations can be found in *Confessio Augustana VII*, where it is said that what is necessary for the true unity of the Church is consensus on the Gospel (as expressed above in the elaborations on *solus*

Christus, sola Scriptura and sola gratia) and on the distribution of the sacraments.⁷⁸

The third paragraph of the Conclusion opens,

The churches are asked to consider what, in the issues at stake, is contrary to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the doctrine of justification by grace alone, the article on which the Church stands or falls (AC IV).⁷⁹

The "confessional" interpretations in this LWF document are supported throughout by four authorities, namely the Bible, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology thereof, and surprisingly the *Joint Declaration*.

As if seeking deliberately to prove the German professors right, this LWF document raises the *Joint Declaration*, at first glance, to a status on par with the Lutheran Confessions. Upon further inspection, however, this document's theological framework and its new interpretations of the Lutheran Confessions clearly demonstrate that the Tridentine doctrine of justification contained in *OCS-JDDJ* has been given authority to reinterpret the Lutheran Confessions. Now grace alone, not faith alone, defines the article by which the church stands or falls. In fact, the term *faith alone* does not appear in this LWF document. By contrast, the term *grace alone* appears eight times, and contrary to the last citation given above, the phrase *grace alone* is not found in AC VII.⁸⁰ Finally, although the WMC still allows Methodists the opportunity to be saved by faith alone, however that may be defined, by contrast according to this LWF document, "we [Lutherans?] are saved by grace alone,"⁸¹ now apparently apart from faith alone! This must be good news — at least to the Roman Catholic Church.

In Articles IV and V of their first petition, the German professors also forecast accurately *JDDJ*'s lack of repercussions for church unity. In contrast to the *Leuenberg Agreement*, the ecumenical consensus in *JDDJ* offers no "ecclesiological or practical consequences." The Vatican did not and still does not recognize Lutheran churches "as the church of Jesus Christ," thereby invalidating Lutheran ministerial offices. Of course, these sentiments revealed nothing new. As the name of the Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, implies, full communion with the Roman Church will necessarily entail, according to the professors, a series of doctrinal consensuses leading "to the integration of Protestant (*evangelisch*) office-holders into the structure of the Roman Catholic hierarchy."⁸²

78. *Ibid.*, 6.

79. *Ibid.*, 14.

80. The term "faith alone" also does not appear in AC IV, but it does appear in AC XX and XXVI, and in AC VI in a quotation from Ambrose. See also Vinzenz Pfnür, *Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Die Rechtfertigungslehre der Confessio Augustana (1530) und die Stellungnahme der katholischen Kontroverstheologie zwischen 1530 und 1535* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1970), 212–213. The closest that this LWF document comes to a tacit confession of "faith alone" is two references to AC VI.

81. *Proposed Guidelines*, 4–5.

82. Hochschullehrer-Votum I, epd #7/98, 2.

75. Hochschullehrer-Votum I, epd #7/98, 1.

76. http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2007_Council/Task_Force_Report-EN.pdf.

77. *Ibid.*, 4.

As indicated above, the Vatican document *Dominus Iesus* (2000) confirmed these predictions shortly after *JDDJ* was (not) signed. In order to become acceptable for full communion with the Roman Church, Lutheran “ecclesial communities” must make themselves right, orderly, or holy enough for incorporation into the “proper church” which “subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.”⁸³ The Vatican reiterated the same in the summer of 2007.⁸⁴ Faced with this ecumenical dilemma, Lutherans can either stand firmly on the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone, like Luther at the Imperial Diet at Worms in 1521, or they can engage in ecumenical works-righteousness to make themselves acceptable for full communion with other ecclesial institutions, like so many LWF member churches are currently doing for the Anglicans. Arguably, the ELCA and the LWF central office in Geneva are the vanguard for the “ecumenical Pelagianism”⁸⁵ which is now insidiously poised to infiltrate the entire LWF, as the next section shows.

EXPANDING THE ECUMENICAL PELAGIANISM

Joint Declaration II?

In 2006, the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity released the results of the fourth round of international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. Some had hoped that this “study document,” entitled *The Apostolicity of the Church*,⁸⁶ would be a *Joint Declaration II*.⁸⁷ Many aspects of this study are surprisingly helpful for garnering both a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic understanding of the ecclesial issues at hand. Other aspects, however, seem artificially crafted to advance the book’s chief goal, namely “to contribute to bringing about full communion between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches of the world.”⁸⁸

Presented here in composite form, the volume’s verbatim references to *JDDJ* disclose the nature of this stratagem.

The decade of this dialogue was marked by the major event of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, signed amid considerable solemnity on October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany. . . . The *Joint Declaration* has a notable weight and authority, because with its signing in 1999, the two churches in dialogue formally received the results of several Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues both on the world-level and in national dialogues in the United States and Germany.⁸⁹ . . . But now, the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* has ascertained the existence of a “consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification” between the Catholic Church and Lutheran churches. This shows a high degree of agreement in faith, that is, in that which represents the heart of apostolic succession.⁹⁰ . . . But if the consensus of bishops is the definitive sign of apostolicity of their doctrine, then Catholics cannot exclude these other *episkopoi* [of separated “churches and ecclesial communities”] from the circle of those whose consensus is according to the Catholic view the sign of apostolicity of doctrine.⁹¹ . . . A comparable spiritual judgment regarding the ministry could be possible, if one deliberately follows the path of a differentiated consensus, as was taken by the *Joint Declaration*, that is, by accepting the possibility of differing structures of ministry which realize and serve the fundamental intention of ministerial office.⁹² . . . All churches have to be self-critical by examining whether their teaching, preaching, and whole ecclesial practice agrees with the nature, will, and work of the Triune God, as justification doctrine brings this to expression.⁹³ . . . Another example is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed in Augsburg in 1999 by representatives of the LWF and of the Roman Catholic Church, which took place after extensive LWF consultation and a decision-making process in Lutheran churches. Thus the world-wide Lutheran communion does indeed have an instrument for arriving at common doctrinal formulations.⁹⁴

So brazen is the LWF. Why is the LWF not stating that *JDDJ* was not signed,⁹⁵ and why does this document not say that the LWF Geneva office hijacked the decision-making process regarding *JDDJ*? Also, if Roman Catholic bishops have not formally approved *JDDJ*, then how can there be a consensus on justification

83. *Dominus Iesus*, §16.

84. On 10 August 2007, the Vatican issued another document to mark the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June 2007) entitled “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church.” This document reiterated the message of *Dominus Iesus*. Those Protestants “pained” by such Vatican documents have evidently lost faith in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. See Mark D. Menacher, “The Roman Church and the ‘Improper’ Christians,” *LOGIA* 17, no. 1 (Epiphany 2008), 84–85.

85. The author is aware of one reference in the literature to this term and makes no claim to have coined the phrase. Thinking of it independently, however, led to searching for it elsewhere to be found in Jeffrey Vander-Wilt, *Communion with Non-Catholic Christians: Risks, Challenges, and Opportunities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 101.

86. *The Apostolicity of the Church: Study Document of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity* (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2006).

87. Otto Hermann Pesch, “Hermeneutik des Ämterwandels? Kleine Ausarbeitung einer Frage,” in *Kirche in ökumenischer Perspektive*, ed. Peter Walter, Klaus Krämer, and George Augustin (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 417–38, especially 417–19 (hereafter cited as Pesch, “Ämterwandel”). Contrary to his own wishes and argumentation, Pesch reports that Lothar Ullrich, a member of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission, had assured him that a “Joint Declaration on the Understanding of the Ecclesial Office” was not possible because unlike *JDDJ* “no existing basic consensus could be established” (417).

88. *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 186 §429.

89. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

90. *Ibid.*, 130 §288.

91. *Ibid.*, 133 §291.

92. *Ibid.*, 134 §293.

93. *Ibid.*, 167 §382.

94. *Ibid.*, 170 §388.

95. *The Apostolicity of the Church* mentions the OCS with *Annex* only twice (130 n. 86 and 167 n. 138), and neither occasion reveals that the OCS rather than *JDDJ* was signed.

between the Vatican and Lutheran churches, not to mention a consensus with defectively ordained, Protestant *episkopoi*? In light of this most recent dialogue, it would appear that some Lutheran *episkopoi* are no longer willing or able to examine the LWF's teaching, preaching, and practices for theological integrity and confessional accuracy.

What is to be gained by so blatantly promulgating fabricated facts, especially regarding the doctrine of justification?

What is to be gained by so blatantly promulgating fabricated facts, especially regarding the doctrine of justification? As Lutherans teach, faith is engendered by the word. In the hands of structural ecumenists, however, this principle has come to mean propagating falsehoods so frequently that people eventually regard them as true. So, if the ELCA and the LWF routinely inform the public that *JDDJ* has been signed and that a consensus exists, then it becomes much easier for them to get their church members also to covet the fictitious sign of church unity known as the historic episcopate.⁹⁶ With this sign in hand, "full communion" is reached with Anglicans and is within reach with the Vatican. As indicated by *The Apostolicity of the Church*, a "differentiated consensus" on ministry conveniently allows structural ecumenists to engage in doubletalk with the apparent intention of both salving their consciences and fooling their constituents into adopting ecclesial practices which are plainly works of ecclesial law rather than the gift of Christ's gospel.⁹⁷

The Apostolicity of the Church demonstrates this duplicity first by defending and then by deviating from Lutheran theological positions. By way of defense, although the "signing" of *JDDJ* provides a way to recognize the gospel in the Roman Catholic Church,

Lutherans find some doctrines and practices [of the Roman Church] which they see in tension with this [gospel] reality. They also see Catholics regarding some elements as

integral to apostolicity, such as historical apostolic succession and papal primacy, with which they do not agree.⁹⁸

Regarding human traditions in ecclesial settings, these are allowed on two conditions. First, they cannot be observed in the belief that they are necessary for or that their observance merits salvation. Second,

such practices may not go against any commandment of God. If these two conditions are not fulfilled, "human traditions" have to be repudiated. But all enactments "which are not contrary to the Holy Gospel" may be retained.⁹⁹

Furthermore,

Christian teaching also entails the rejection of doctrines which obscure the gospel or which direct faith to "another gospel" (Gal 1:6–9). However, this should be "not with human power but with God's word alone." . . . For "by burning heretics . . . we act contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit." Sad to say, during the Reformation era the Lutheran estates did not always observe this basic principle.¹⁰⁰

Then deviating from Lutheran teaching, with reference to the *Porvoo Agreement* between British and Irish Anglicans and Nordic and Baltic Lutherans, *The Apostolicity of the Church* relays:

The historic episcopate, which has been the subject of regional ecumenical agreements between Anglicans and Lutherans, is recognized by Lutherans as a sign of the apostolicity of the church. It is not understood as a guarantee of apostolicity but as a sign which commits the whole church, and within it the bishops in particular, to care for this apostolicity. . . . Since a bishop is both responsible for the unity

98. *Ibid.*, 65 §142.

99. *Ibid.*, 191 §455. This paragraph quotes Luther's Marburg Articles and the Torgau Articles. It would have been more fitting to quote Article X, "Church Usages" of the Solid Declaration in the Book of Concord, which not only provides a Lutheran confessional position on such matters but does so in the light of real experiences with *adiaphora*, which are raised anew in the modern ecumenical movement.

100. *Ibid.*, 166 §381. The first quotation (n. 135) is from AC xxviii, 21, and the second (n. 136) from Martin Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses* (1518), AE 31: 245, a translation of WA 1: 624.35–625.5. Unfortunately, there is no mention in this "study document" of the "religious cleansing" perpetrated by the Roman Church throughout the centuries, particularly during the Reformation. The juxtaposition of Luther's comments and the opposite actions of princes should not obscure the Lutheran reformers' repudiation of such measures. Citing the princes' action is important, however, for understanding the ELCA's ethical irresponsibility in accepting "historic episcopacy" as a condition of unity with the Episcopal Church. The Anglican "holy orders" as stipulated and enforced by the various Acts of Uniformity in Britain caused untold suffering, bloodshed, and war. See Mark D. Menacher, "Called to Common Mission: A Lutheran Proposal?" *LOGIA* 11, no. 1 (Epiphany 2002): 24–26 [hereafter cited as Menacher, *CCM*]. By citing the German princes' trespasses, the LWF seems to be making a deliberate attempt to preempt objections to the LWF's desire for its member churches also to adopt episcopal succession for "full communion" with the Anglican and Roman Churches.

96. See *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 119–134.

97. In contrast to Lutherans, Anglicans and the Roman Church consider their respective forms of episcopal succession to be part of the gospel, instituted by Christ, and seemingly "necessary for salvation." See Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *Church and Justification* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 96–100 §§193–203. Paradoxically, between Lutherans and these other churches no theological agreement exists regarding the nature of episcopal succession as a sign of unity. Lack of unity regarding this so-called sign of unity is comically tragic.

among the congregations at one time synchronically and, through ordination, stands for the unity and apostolicity of the church through the ages diachronically, it is appropriate to express the temporal dimension of apostolicity in the sign of the historic succession: it is the continuity of the church, wrought by the Holy Spirit. Under the Spirit's guidance and help, the bishop can be the servant of the continuity and apostolicity of the church.¹⁰¹

The sentiments in this last paragraph, which reflect the "ecumenical theology" displayed in so many Lutheran-Anglican agreements, cannot be reconciled with AC VII. Necessarily adding bishops in historic succession to the gospel purely proclaimed in word, Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper means that these Lutherans no longer hold the gospel of Jesus Christ as sufficient for the true unity of the church. In this light, "historic episcopacy" is plainly the handicraft of ecumenical Pelagians, whose unceasing labors seek vainly to effect what God has already given in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The LWF's most recent push (*Putsch?*) for episcopal succession was formalized on 27 March 2007 when its council, meeting in Lund, Sweden, adopted *Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church: The Lund Statement by the Lutheran World Federation — A Communion of Churches*. Reported by the LWF news service as "LWF Affirms Historic Statement on Episcopal Ministry,"¹⁰² this document represents the LWF's latest step toward supplanting AC VII with the principles of the Lima Document, officially known as *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM)*.¹⁰³ The Lima Document relies heavily on the Anglican Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886, 1888). Thus, using *BEM* as a pretext to accommodate the religious intolerance embodied in Anglican and Roman Catholic canon law is theologically fraudulent and ethically shameful. This religious intolerance has caused not only ecclesial division but also untold suffering and death in the course of history. It is therefore diametrically opposed to the gospel of the crucified Christ. Accommodating it cannot be the foundation for unity in Christ's church, and references to political misuse of power not sanctioned by the Lutheran reformers deliberately seeks to cloud the issue.

Paradoxically, many of those entrusted with positions of *episkopé* in the LWF and in some of its member churches are unwilling or unable to act theologically. According to Luther, "Whoever knows how to distinguish the gospel from the law may thank God and know that he is a theologian" (WA 40, 1: 207.17–18). Because a "differentiated consensus" confuses law and gospel and because *BEM* does the same, these LWF *episkopoi* cannot properly fulfill the office which they now reserve "especially" for themselves.¹⁰⁴ Due to being declared defective-

ly ordained by the bishops of Anglican and Roman churches, these Lutheran *episkopoi* have become bewitched and now "deeply desire"¹⁰⁵ to entrap themselves and their fellow Lutherans into a "half-magical understanding of ordination,"¹⁰⁶ into "holy orders" which Luther rejected as "ridiculous," an "absurdity," and beyond "the bounds of common sense."¹⁰⁷ This latest LWF document on episcopacy could not be further from the true unity of the church professed in AC VII.

ELCA'S ECUMENICAL ELITE

Luther recognized shortly after his fight against indulgences had begun that the sacramental system of the Roman Catholic Church with its quasi-sacramental practices of works-righteousness was not based only on a malign sense of clericalism. Instead, the church hierarchy and canon law had supplanted Christ as the mediator between the *homo peccator* and the *deus iustificans*. The ecumenical notion today of "episcopal ministry . . . exercised personally, collegially and communally"¹⁰⁸ likewise supplements the ubiquitous presence of Jesus Christ (AC VII) with "a supra-congregational form of ordained ministry,"¹⁰⁹ called bishops, who are often believed to have "a charism conferred by episcopal ordination."¹¹⁰ As *The Apostolicity of the Church* reminds us, such canonical structures and traditions are "never without an accompanying theological interpretation,"¹¹¹ which defiantly remains untouched by the testimony of Scripture or the doctrine of justification or plain reason. Consequently, the notion of episcopal succession seems to afflict otherwise adept Protestant scholars with palpable cognitive and theological impairment. Perhaps this malady stems from overemphasizing episcopal laying-on-of-hands. Speaking largely for themselves, two prominent ELCA theologians demonstrate the move beyond the bounds of common sense into the realm of ecumenical absurdity.

Michael Root is a (or perhaps the) chief ecumenist in the ELCA. Root is also the (or a) Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. As will be discussed later, Professor Root has distinguished himself internationally by knowingly drafting into *Called to Com-*

101. Ibid., 122–123 §269. See *BEM* §38.

102. The LWF routinely seems to describe its departures from Lutheran theology and ecclesiology with the adjective "historic." The Lund Statement is available in various languages at <http://www.lutheranworld.org/Council/2007/20070327-Council.html>. The news release is at <http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2031.EN.html>.

103. See The Lund Statement §58.

104. See also The Lund Statement §52.

105. See Ap XIV.

106. Pesch, "Ämterwandel," 425–26. See also Otto Herman Pesch, "Gemeinschaft beim Herrenmahl: Probleme, Fragen, Chancen," in *Von der «Gemeinsamen Erklärung» zum «Gemeinsamen Herrenmahl»? Perspektiven der Ökumene im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ernst Pulsfort and Rolf Hanusch (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2002), 165. Pesch is a leading Roman Catholic Luther scholar.

107. See Martin Luther, "Concerning the Ministry" (1523), AE 40: 21–22, 24.

108. The Lund Statement §47.

109. The Lund Statement §4.

110. *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 193 §452. The Anglican and Roman Churches agree that ordination confers the requisite, if not prerequisite, grace to administer the sacraments "necessary to salvation." See "Elucidation, 1979 (§3)" to the "Ministry and Ordination (Canterbury Statement 1973)" in Anglican–Roman Catholic Conversations (ARCIC I), *Growth in Agreement: Ecumenical Documents II*, ed. H. Meyer and L. Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 86. See also Harry W. Shippo, "That They May All Be One," *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994), 9. See AE 40: 20.

111. *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 133, §292.

mon Mission, the full communion accord between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, the erroneous claim that Ap XIV supports the introduction of “historic episcopacy” into Lutheran churches. In 2001–2002, Root was also the consultant (or a consultant among many) for *The Apostolicity of the Church*.

In a recently published essay on *JDDJ*,¹¹² Root incisively demonstrates a (or the) type of scholarship that supports consensual, ecumenical differentiation. Besides seeking to defend *JDDJ* from its critics, both in the U.S.A. and particularly in Germany, Root desires to “move beyond the debate over [the *Joint Declaration*’s] acceptance and gain a certain critical distance.”¹¹³ Root asserts, “A test of the true reception of the *JDDJ* will be whether Lutherans and Catholics will be able to hear salutary warnings in the condemnations embedded in the doctrinal texts of the other.”¹¹⁴ In other words, if Protestants grasp that they are still condemned by the Council of Trent, then *JDDJ* has proved incredibly successful.

Addressing the heated debates regarding the criteriological role of justification, Root suggests that in “relation to the questions of justification now before us, however, I believe the apprehension of the truth is best served by a perspective that tries to transcend earlier oppositions.”¹¹⁵ This goal is, of course, greatly facilitated by the lack of explicit condemnations of Tridentine doctrine in the Lutheran Confessions.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, Root’s semi- or pseudo-Hegelian scheme of veracity actually undermines the lowest-common-denominator methodology of the (or a) “differentiated consensus” employed in *JDDJ*. When regarding justification as either *the* or *a* criterion for the church, Root categorically states, “I would myself affirm both the Lutheran and the Catholic sides of this difference.”¹¹⁷ Then, proceeding as if neither the Vatican¹¹⁸ nor hundreds of Protestant scholars understood the limitations of *JDDJ*, Root elaborates,

A debate over whether justification is *a* or *the* criterion in theology without any further elaboration of what sort of criterion is meant is simply pointless. . . . I believe that once greater conceptual clarity is achieved about just what is being claimed, the more extreme Lutheran claims about justification as a criterion will dissolve.¹¹⁹

112. Michael Root, “Continuing the Conversation: Deeper Agreement on Justification as Criterion and on the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*,” in *The Gospel of Justification in Christ*, 42–61.

113. *Ibid.*, 42.

114. *Ibid.*, 45.

115. *Ibid.*, 46.

116. Discussing similar themes elsewhere (“Aquinas, Merit, and Reformation Theology after the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*,” *Modern Theology* 20 [2004]: 5–22), Michael Root acknowledges that in spite of *OCS-JDDJ* the “salutary warnings” (condemnations) issued at Trent are not “immediately” addressed and further that the Tridentine condemnations utilize language that Lutherans “must reject” (10).

117. Root, “Continuing the Conversation,” 46.

118. See Michael Root, “Beyond the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*: The Shape of Continuing Discussion on Justification,” in *Kirche in ökumenischer Perspektive*, 355.

119. Root, “Continuing the Conversation,” 49.

As this (or any) Lutheran seminary professor would profess,

Here I can merely assert without much supporting evidence¹²⁰ my belief that in the end we will come around to the far more balanced view put forward by Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* IV:1: The *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is not the doctrine of justification, as such.

In fact, I see no reason to dissent from the statement in the original Vatican response of June 1998: “the message of justification, according to Scripture and already from the time of the Fathers, has to be organically integrated into the fundamental criterion of the *regula fidei*, that is, the confession of the one God in three persons, christologically centered and rooted in the living Church and its sacramental life.”¹²¹

Is it reasonable to seek an understanding of justification that is true to the deepest insights and convictions of both Luther and the Fathers of the Council of Trent, both of John Calvin and Cardinal Cajetan? I believe that is now the only way forward, the only path that will lead us to the center of the doctrines of grace, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification so that we may adequately and accurately proclaim the message these doctrines explicate.¹²²

So, is that differentiated consensus or undifferentiated non-sense? Does Michael Root represent *the* or just *a* reason for the rise of ecumenical Pelagianism in the ELCA and the LWF? Perhaps a few words from Carl E. Braaten can help answer that question. Carl E. Braaten is a former professor of theology at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, an editor of books and journals, and former Executive Director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology. He considers himself to be a confessional Lutheran with a keen awareness of the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith. Braaten’s stance on justification and on the Lutheran Confessions has, however, changed markedly over time. With the following excerpts, Braaten makes his case for and then against the doctrine of justification and thus also AC VII. The excerpts start with a work published in 1985.

Lutherans give the rest of the ecumenical world the impression of having had their confidence shaken upon entering the modern world. Who can forget the Helsinki fiasco of 1963 when Lutherans from around the world expressed

120. In a recent presentation, Michael Root exhibits likewise the clarity of his reasoning by stating at one point, “I would suggest that some of the success of twentieth-century Lutheranism is also owed to its social or social-ecclesial functions (and all I can do here is suggest; I cannot demonstrate what I am about to say and am not altogether sure how I would go about making such a demonstration).” Michael Root, “The Word of Christ and the Deconstructing of Twentieth-Century Lutheranism,” given 17 January 2008 at the 31st Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the theme “Atonement: Biblical, Confessional, and Ecumenical Perspectives,” 11, <http://www.ctsfw.edu/events/symposia/papers/2008.php>.

121. Root, “Continuing the Conversation,” 50.

122. *Ibid.*, 60–61.

serious doubt whether the message of justification was relevant any longer to the so-called 'modern man'? This question of its relevance is as important as the biblical status of justification. The question of the standing or falling of the church is linked to the past source of the gospel as well as to the present situation in which the preaching of the Word takes place.¹²³

The Lutheran thing is to challenge each particular community to search and find its own deep ground of faith in the Christ of the gospel. . . . And that is all we ask. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession says, It is enough! "For the true unity of the church it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments." This should remind us that Lutherans best serve the interests of the ecumenical movement when they are true to the substance of their own confessions.¹²⁴

Sometime thereafter, however, Braaten and others in the ELCA and LWF began to shift their position. By 1997, when the ELCA was considering the *Concordat of Agreement*, the first, failed "full communion" accord between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, Braaten was now advocating a new, arguably non-Lutheran understanding of the Confessions. Writing against opponents of the accord, and reasoning as if the ordination of bishops in "historic succession" was transmitted in any other way than through sacramental ceremonies, Braaten argued,

Article 7 was about church ceremonies that at the time were being imposed on the faithful, having to do with food, fasting, and feast days, things that must not be required by the church as somehow *sine qua non* for fellowship in the faith. The Article is falsely applied by the dissenters¹²⁵ when it was used as a club against the Concordat and the traditional episcopal ordering of ministry.¹²⁶

Further on, he continues,

Signing the Concordat of Agreement will not be the end of the road. It will be but one small step on the way to that wider unity that the Pope's encyclical, "*Ut unum Sint*," envisaged. Ecumenically we face a lot of unfinished business, as we look down the road to eventual reconciliation and communion with the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. . . . To the ELCA I would say, in the words of the Nike ad, "Just do it!" And let us hope the Episcopal Church will do it too."¹²⁷

The *Concordat* was subsequently rewritten, and the Anglican requirements for unity were deceptively dubbed a "Lutheran Proposal."¹²⁸ When the ELCA narrowly passed *Called to Common Mission* in 1999, Braaten celebrates, "A miracle happened at Denver."

What happened at Denver is that ELCA Lutherans will join the Episcopal Church in affirming . . . all four principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadilateral [*sic*]. This should not be seen as the end of the line but as a call to be more faithful to the greater evangelical and orthodox substance of their common tradition, which has thinned out in both churches.¹²⁹

In another article published shortly thereafter, Braaten asserts,

Is it really sufficient for church unity that churches agree on the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments? Will such a minimal condition suffice as an ecumenical principle to achieve a true community of divided churches? Compare this to the Anglican Lambeth Quadilateral [*sic*] which stipulates four principles as necessary for church fellowship: Holy Scripture, the Nicene Creed, the two major sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper,¹³⁰ and the historic episcopate. It should be clear that Article VII is not sufficient as an ecumenical principle for inter-church agreement and fellowship.¹³¹

Finally, Braaten reveals the seat of his theological convictions. When viewed from Luther's interpretation of the First Commandment, that a "god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need" (Tapert, 365, 2), Braaten pins his ecclesial colors to the mast.

Confessional Lutherans who understand themselves as evangelical, catholic, and orthodox believe that the best hope for the future of Lutheranism lies in the direction of reconciling differences, removing mutual condemnations, and restoring full communion wherever possible, as steps on the way to full visible church unity. So we rejoiced in the signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, therewith consigning to oblivion

123. Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 38–39. See also Carl E. Braaten, *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 70.

124. Braaten, *Principles*, 36.

125. Ironically, "dissenters" is one of the names given to those who refused to conform to the episcopalianism imposed in England by the Act of Uniformity 1559. See Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); and John T. Wilkinson, *1662—And After: Three Centuries of English Nonconformity* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962).

126. Carl E. Braaten, "Episcopacy: The Key Issue," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997), 76.

127. *Ibid.*, 77.

128. See Menacher, *CCM*, 21–28.

129. Carl E. Braaten, "It's the Episcopacy, Stupid!" *Pro Ecclesia* 7 (1999), 389–390.

130. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadilateral does not speak of "Baptism and the Supper of the Lord" as two major sacraments amongst others but only as "the two Sacraments . . . ministered with unailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by him." See *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 876–877. This phraseology in the *BCP* calls into question the modern Anglican insistence on the use of "eucharistic prayers" for valid celebration of the Lord's Supper.

131. Carl E. Braaten, "Episcopacy and the E.L.C.A.," *Dialog* 39 (2000), 216.

132. Braaten also uses this same phrase in his introduction to *In One Body Through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 6.

on¹³² the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century. This is the biggest enchilada because it deals with what Lutherans have called “the article by which the church stands or falls.”¹³³

As Braaten exemplifies, when *faith alone* is allowed to fall from the doctrine of justification, all that remains standing are the artifacts of ecclesial idolatry. If the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the article by which the church stands or falls, then ELCA-LWF ecumenical works-righteousness represents a particularly insidious form of Pelagianism. When the office of the public ministry is sustained and transmitted by anything but the gospel, then the truth of gospel is obscured by the very instrument of its communication. The subjugation of the doctrine of justification to Nike theology and the substitution of AC VII with the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Lima Document, and eventually the papacy, is not the farfetched scheme of a few rogue theologians from the ELCA. Rather, it is the decided and decreed reality in the ELCA¹³⁴ and in other parts of the LWF. Now, the ecumenical Pelagians want to impose this same historical, episcopal fiction¹³⁵ on the entire Lutheran World Federation.

HISTORIC EPISCOPAL FICTION AND LOGIA ALONE

Compared to the churches’ true unity in the gospel as attested by AC VII, faithful Lutherans consider the religious intolerance inherent in the “so-called historic episcopate”¹³⁶ to be abhorrent. Furthermore, in order to procure Lutheran acquiescence to the intolerant demands of Anglican and Vatican canonical requirements for unity, both the ELCA and the LWF have sought to circumvent AC VII by appealing to Ap XIV. Claiming that Ap XIV allowed or even mandated the adoption of episco-

pal succession, the ELCA and the LWF sought to realize their ecumenical Pelagianism. These erroneous, if not fraudulent, activities have been exposed as such. Consequently, both the ELCA and the LWF have conceded their misdeeds, but only indirectly and certainly not strategically.

The ecumenical Pelagians want to impose this same historical, episcopal fiction on the entire LWF.

The first of these attempts pertains to the ELCA’s “full communion” proposal with the Episcopal Church,¹³⁷ *Called to Common Mission (CCM)*, drafted chiefly by Michael Root section 11 reads:

Historic succession refers to a tradition which goes back to the ancient church, in which bishops already in the succession install newly elected bishops with prayer and the laying on of hands. At present The Episcopal Church has bishops in this historic succession, as do all the churches of the Anglican Communion, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at present does not, although some member churches of the Lutheran World Federation do. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886, 1888, the ecumenical policy of The Episcopal Church, refers to this tradition as “the historic episcopate.” In the Lutheran Confessions, Article 14 of the Apology refers to this episcopal pattern by the phrase, “the ecclesiastical and canonical polity” which it is “our deep desire to maintain.”

In order to effect the passage of *CCM*, this same information was routinely disseminated from the highest echelons of the ELCA. A few years later, however, the ELCA was singing a different song when it published the results from the tenth round of U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue entitled *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation (CKS)*.¹³⁸ Contradicting the false assertions in *CCM* section 11, the ELCA in *CKS* section 80 now states:

Prior to the late 1530s, the theme of succession played little role in Reformation debates on the role and authority

133. Carl E. Braaten, “Confessional Lutheranism in an Ecumenical World,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71 (2007), 226. Braaten’s sentiments here should be understood both generally and personally (230). Regarding the consensus in *JDDJ* as a whole, Braaten exclaims, “This is truly remarkable. I believe that it is a miracle of grace. It is not good enough, however, for the majority of German Protestant professors of theology” (227).

134. Charles H. Maahs, a former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and cochair of the tenth round of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the USA portrayed this dialogue’s results, entitled *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation* (2004), as “a step forward toward our goal of eventual full communion” with the Roman Catholic Church. See ELCA News Service “Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Completes Round Ten” (29 April 2004), http://archive.elca.org/ScriptLib/CO/ELCA_News/en-cArticleList.asp?a=2817&p=4.

135. See Ernst Käsemann, “Verkirklichte Freiheit,” in *Der Ruf der Freiheit*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), 182. Käsemann writes, “The apostolic succession of the episcopal office is quite simply . . . one of many Christian fictions. There is only one apostolic succession which allows itself undoubtedly to be proven historically, namely the discipleship of Christ.”

136. Interestingly, when describing the conditions for unity prescribed by *Called to Common Mission (CCM)*, the “full communion” accord between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, a prominent Anglican theologian, now an archbishop in the Anglican Communion, referred to his denomination’s hallmark tradition as “the so-called historic episcopate” and further stated in relation to Galatians that requiring this tradition for unity was contrary to the gospel. The author has not requested permission for these private comments to be made public. Thus, the name has been withheld.

137. For an in-depth discussion of the first example, see Menacher, “Current Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues,” 386–390.

138. *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries: Common Statement of the Tenth Round of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue* (Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Bilateral-Conversations/-/media/Files/Who%20We%20Are/Ecumenical%20and%20Inter%20Religious%20Relations/Koinonia.ashx>.

of the bishop. The authority and ministry of the bishop, not any particular concept of succession, were the subject of debate. The Lutheran Confessions explicitly regret the loss of the “order of the church”¹³⁹ that resulted from the presbyteral ordinations the Lutherans judged to be necessary for the life of their churches, but neither Article 28 of the *Augsburg Confession* on the power of bishops nor the response by the imperial Catholic theologians to it in the *Confutation* refers explicitly to succession. Thus, when the Lutheran churches felt compelled to ordain pastors apart from the Catholic hierarchy, they were not consciously rejecting any concept of episcopal succession, for such a concept was not current in theological discussions of the period. Only with the renewed attention to patristic sources in the subsequent debates was such a concept reasserted.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, when the writings of such figures as Irenaeus were taken up in the debate, they were used within a canonical argument over validity which the Lutherans could only reject.¹⁴¹

According to the ELCA, the “historic episcopate” has gone from something “deeply desired” by the reformers to something “which the Lutherans could only reject.” What explains this U-turn?

Likewise, the LWF has also reversed its ecumenical rhetoric regarding episcopal succession and the Confessions. *Church and Justification*,¹⁴² rising from the third round of international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, states in section 191 (with reference to Ap XIV in the notes):

The development of the ministry into an episcopate standing in a historic succession, i.e. the continuity of apostolic succession which occurred already very early in history¹⁴³ as fully affirmed by the Lutheran Reformation and emphatically championed¹⁴⁴ just as other church realities were affirmed and conserved which had come into being in the course of history (e.g. the biblical canon, the creeds of the ancient church). . . . For Lutheran thinking it is entirely possible to acknowledge . . . that it “has taken place with the help of the Holy Spirit” and that it “constitutes something essential for the church.”¹⁴⁵

In contrast, *The Apostolicity of the Church* (§§218, 219, and 220) offers a much different account. Paragraph 218 closes with a quotation from Ap XIV, 1 written in 1531, and section 219 resumes discussion with events in 1538. Left out of the historical

Episcopal succession was totally rejected not only by Melancthon but more so by Luther.

discourse between sections 218 and 219 is the fact that in 1535 the Lutheran reformers regularly began ordaining their own pastors apart from the Roman Church’s jurisdiction. Notably, section 219 begins:

The Early Church’s concept of the apostolic succession was unknown in the Middle Ages even though ordination practice remained by and large in continuity with the order of the Early Church. During the Reformation era, the concept of “apostolic succession” appeared first in the work *Enchiridion christianae institutionis* (1538) of the Catholic theologian Johannes Gropper, . . .¹⁴⁶ [§220] As early as 1539, in his work, *The Church and the Authority of God’s Word*, Melancthon rejected these opinions which tie church “to the orderly succession of bishops, just as empires exist through the orderly succession of their rulers. But it is different in the church. It is an assembly which is not tied to an orderly succession but to the word of God.”¹⁴⁷ Gropper’s ideas were to play no constructive role in the unity colloquy of 1541 at Regensburg.¹⁴⁸

According to the LWF, the “historic episcopate” has gone from being “fully affirmed and emphatically championed” in the Lutheran Reformation “to playing no constructive role” at all.

139. CKS n. 129 reads, “Apology XIV.1.”

140. CKS n. 131 reads, “Georg Kretschmar, ‘Die Wiederentdeckung des Konzeptes der Apostolischen Sukzession’ im Umkreis der Reformation,” in *Das bischöfliche Amt: Kirchengeschichtliche und ökumenische Studien zur Frage des kirchlichen Amtes*, Dorothea Wendebourg, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), 300–344.” This same essay by Kretschmar is cited in Menacher, *CCM*, 26, n. 8.

141. CKS n. 132 reads, “For an example of a vehement rejection by the Reformers of the argument that episcopal succession is essential to a valid ministry, see Philip Melancthon, ‘The Church and the Authority of the Word,’ in *Melancthon: Selected Writings*, translated by Charles Leander Hill (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 130–186. Latin original in *Melancthon’s Werke im Auswahl*, 1: 323–386.” The same material from the Latin original is cited in Menacher, *CCM*, 27, n. 20.

142. *Church and Justification*, 95.

143. N. 250 in the original text reads, “Cf. *The Ministry in the Church*, 40–49, 59–66,” referring to the same from the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Joint Commission, Geneva, 1982.

144. N. 251 in the original text reads, “Cf. Apol 14; BC 241f.,” referring to Ap XIV.

145. N. 252 in the original text reads, “*The Ministry in the Church*, 49, cf. 50.”

146. N. 65 in the original text refers to the same source found in CKS, 131, Kretschmar, “Die Wiederentdeckung.” This same essay by Kretschmar is cited in Menacher, *CCM*, 26, n. 8.

147. N. 67 in the original text reads, “*Melancthon’s Werke in Auswahl*, Vol. 1, ed R. Stupperich (Gütersloh, 1951), 330, 19–23.” This same material is cited in Menacher, *CCM*, 23.

148. *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 100–101. The LWF’s 2007 “Lund Statement” §25 confirms the same, “As has been documented by historical research, ‘apostolic succession’ understood as a succession of episcopal consecrations as essential to episcopal ministry was not a concept put forward in the Middle Ages and was not an element in the Reformation debates until the 1540s.” See Menacher, *CCM*, 22–23.

Contrary to the erroneous claims made by the ELCA and the LWF regarding Ap XIV, episcopal succession was totally rejected not only by Melancthon but more so by Luther.¹⁴⁹ So, what kind of spirit has possessed the LWF to misrepresent the Lutheran Confessions in the name of the Holy Spirit? Furthermore, what has led the LWF also to rewrite its wrongful misappropriation of history and the confessions?

One factor alone explains why the ELCA and the LWF can no longer misuse Ap XIV to beguile Lutheran churches into forfeiting AC VII to be subjugated to the canonical bondage of “historic episcopacy” for “full communion.” That reason is *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*.¹⁵⁰ While self-styled “reformers” in the ELCA, such as the WordAlone Network, were seeking accommodation and exceptions to the “historic episcopate” mandated by *CCM*,¹⁵¹ *LOGIA* alone published the research, disseminated throughout the LWF, that has obliged the “pontifical ELCA”¹⁵² and the “LWF Vatican” to disavow claims of Lutheran confessional witness to support their ecumenical Pelagianism. Both the ELCA and the LWF marked the reversal of their ecumenical errors by citing sources collated and published in *LOGIA*. The only reference intentionally omitted by the ELCA and the LWF is one to *LOGIA* itself. Whereas hundreds of German academic theologians were needed to bring *JDDJ* to the brink of oblivion, research published in one theological journal has arrested the ELCA-LWF corruption of the Lutheran Confessions designed to achieve a canonically mandated form of church uniformity wholly contrary to the gospel.

149. Noteworthy is the fact that neither the ELCA nor the LWF quote Luther specifically on this topic, who in 1541 stated, “In the church, the succession of bishops does not make a bishop, but the Lord alone is our bishop” (WA 53: 74). Both the ELCA and the LWF are certainly aware of this quotation.

150. See Menacher, *CCM*, 21–28.

151. *CCM* §18 states, “By thus freely accepting the historic episcopate, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does not thereby affirm that it is necessary for the unity of the church (Augsburg Confession 7:3).” In other words, besides misrepresenting Ap XIV, the ELCA also sought to circumvent AC VII in order to realize its ecumenical agenda. Contradicting the official text of *CCM*, the Presiding Bishop at the time, H. George Anderson, was reported in the January 1998 edition of *The Lutheran* as saying, “To go to the Episcopalians without it [the historic episcopate] means it’s [the proposed agreement] dead on arrival because they see it as part of being in full communion” (48). Duplicity is routine in the ELCA.

152. The word “pontifical” from *pontifex* refers originally to bridge building. Later, it assumed religious connotations referring to priest, bishop, and pope. In an ELCA News release from 11 April 2008, entitled “ELCA Ecumenical, Interfaith Work Enters New Phase,” one reads in the opening paragraph, “With new leadership in its churchwide ecumenical and interfaith section, the ELCA—often described as a ‘bridge’ church seeking to build connections with other Christian churches—is assessing where it wants to go now and in the future.” Only the ELCA describes itself as a “bridge church.” This concept, however, reveals the true nature of ELCA ecumenism. Instead of joining numerous existing ecumenical arrangements, such as the *Leuenberg Agreement*, to be in “full communion” with hundreds of other churches, the ELCA mimics the Roman Church by negotiating its own bilateral agreements, thus making itself a secondary “pontiff.” The ELCA’s ecumenical vision is thus not an expression of ecclesial unity but rather a symptom of its own institutional narcissism.

Unfortunately, ecumenical Pelagians remain undeterred by veracity. Even though *JDDJ* was not signed and could not be signed, some like Carl E. Braaten call it a “miracle of grace.”¹⁵³ Even though the Lutheran reformers outright rejected episcopal succession, the LWF and the ELCA have renewed their advocacy for it by appealing to another authority and rationale, namely religious freedom. The ELCA and LWF fervently claim that freely accepting¹⁵⁴ the bondage of Anglican and Roman canon law and conforming to such religious intolerance is consonant with a *consensus de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum* (AC VII). As Luther says, such notions are ridiculous, absurd, and beyond the bounds of common sense.

It seems that some in the ELCA and the LWF have forgotten the lessons learned not only from Luther and Augustine but also from Paul before them. The “circumcision party” of Paul’s day seems to have become the “historic episcopate crowd” today. As the insights of the Reformation fade into history,¹⁵⁵ Paul’s chastisement of the Galatians long ago could apply equally to some nominal Lutherans now.

But [this situation is] due to the infiltration of false brothers, who slipped in to spy out our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us—to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. For freedom (λευθερία), Christ has made you free” (λευθερώω).¹⁵⁶

When the young monk Martin *Luder* was set free by the truth of the gospel of justification by faith alone, he began to change the spelling of his surname to Martin *Luther* to express literally his freedom as a Christian. With that freedom, Luther stood firmly in the gospel before the powers of the empire and the canonical structures of the Roman Church. Due to his stance, the truth of the gospel once again altered the course of history. Unfortunately, the individualistic Pelagianism in Luther’s day has given way to ecumenical Pelagianism today.

So, who will resist the coercive powers of the ELCA and the “Lutheran Vatican” in Geneva when they seek by stealth to integrate LWF member churches into ecclesial orders for “proper” communion with the Anglican and Roman Churches? Who will take a stand against the self-imposition of historic, canonically prescribed, religious intolerance? Who will have the courage to profess that the truth of the gospel is enough (*satis est*) for the true unity of Christ’s church? **LOGIA**

153. Braaten, “Ecumenical World,” 227.

154. See the *CCM* §18, the Lima Document §38, the “Lund Statement” §58.

155. See Gerhard Ebeling, *Theologie in den Gegensätzen des Lebens*, vol. 4 of *Wort und Glaube* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 282. Ebeling assesses that Protestants have fallen behind the significant insights of the Reformation and for quite some time now have not caught up.

156. Gal 2:4–5; 5:1 (author’s translation). If those perpetrating this falsification of the gospel through historic episcopacy were circumcising one another rather than playing a liturgical playground game (“Duck, Duck, Goose”), then perhaps they might get the point of Paul’s argumentation (Gal 5:12).