

RE-MEMBERING THE BODY: THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

- Topic: The Development of the Ecumenical Vision of Vatican II:
Reflections on the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, USA
- Convener: Jeffrey Gros, Memphis Theological Seminary
- Presenters: George Tavard, Brighton, Massachusetts
John Reumann, Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary

George Tavard outlined the development and methodology of this dialogue. The planning began before the end of the Council, March 16, 1965 in Baltimore. He enumerated the development in this U.S. dialogue, followed by the international Lutheran Catholic dialogue, and the movement in 1992 toward a decision, which culminated in the signing of the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ).

Tavard discussed the decision to start with the Nicene Creed, and John Courtney Murray's reflection on the development of doctrine, of which this creed is illustrative, and which became an important methodological insight through the next nine rounds. The Reformation question of faith became an important background discussion as the issues of baptism, eucharist, ordained ministry, papal primacy, infallibility, justification, and the communion of saints were elaborated. The ninth round came back again to scripture and tradition, a major Reformation issue, building on the method and conclusions arrived at in the previous developments. Given the Vatican Council's decree *Dei Verbum*, the Reformation difference was able to be resolved, both churches affirming one source of revelation in Jesus Christ. This agreement contributed to the JDDJ, along with the results of a German study on the condemnations of the sixteenth century. Tavard outlined the process of producing the JDDJ, in which both he and Reumann were drafters.

Tavard enumerated other fruitful results of *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR): the Anglican Roman Catholic *Final Report*, the 1965 consigning to oblivion of the anathemas of 1054 between East and West, the Common Declarations between popes and patriarchs resolving the Christological differences of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), and the reaffirmations of Catholic commitments in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), and by Benedict XVI (2005).

John Reumann's paper covered three areas: the body theme, the dialogue, and the contribution of this body of literature to the churches, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The body of Christ theme, though used by both churches, did not become the focus of the dialogue, because it was not an ecclesiological motif on which divisions were based. He reviewed the literature current at the time of the dialogue's initiation and noted that its most relevant work was in discussing the Eucharist. However, since questions of presence and sacrifice were the key church dividing issues to be resolved, it was not the focus of major research. However, in round ten it became important in speaking of the church in its local, regional, national and worldwide expressions. The international *Church and Justification* (1994) utilized this biblical motif more frequently.

The achievements of the dialogue in the area of methodology built on the earlier dialogues of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission and a few pre-1966 bilateral dialogues, before the entry of the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. UR incorporates much of this learning into Catholic principles of ecumenism. It was helpful that observers and *periti* from the Council were part of the first dialogue teams. There is an art to assembling teams that bring both civility and hardheaded research to the dialogue. Drafting is even more challenging, to get both clarity and communicability in what can be said together, keeping an eye on the variety of audiences for which the texts are prepared. The skill of developing means for reception is as necessary as the skill at dialogue and drafting. Reumann emphasized that this is an area that needs more development in all of the churches. The importance of being attuned to one another's structures of thought and modes of decision making are essential in understanding what will be both true to the faith, and received by the faithful in one another's churches. The importance of combining the work of exegetes, historians, and systematicians who are capable of understanding one another's contribution as well as the traditions of the other church is essential in the dialogue mix.

Reumann concluded by noting areas of impact: (1) reinforcing the role of theology in church life and restoring the centrality of justification; (2) being tempered by the ELCA full communion agreements, which take priority in church life; (3) noting the challenges posed by developments in both churches, the debate on human sexuality in the ELCA, and the sex abuse crisis in the US Catholic Church, for example; (4) hopes move more slowly than the success of the texts would suggest, with neither church seeming to take the other partner into decisions as they are made, like texts from the Holy See or studies within the ELCA; (5) the external factors like demographic shifts, decline in the ELCA, in priests and religious in the U.S. Catholic Church, and the interchange of members in both directions, all influence the relationship; and (6) the role of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a valued partner in the first nine and as an observer in this tenth round is not clear for the future. Reumann concludes that the ELCA has been influenced by the Lutheran Catholic dialogue in the US, but has not yet been transformed.

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