

The Joint Declaration and official discussion in the Finnish Lutheran Church

A Clarification or an Obscuration?

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Summary:

Broad discussion on the Joint Declaration took place in the Church Council of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church during the autumn term in November 1997. The approval of the document was strongly advocated by some bishops and representatives of the church administration. The discussion was mainly based on a report of the Bishops' Conference. This article deals with the essential and decisive questions that were left open by both the Bishops' Conference statement and the preliminary debate of the Church Council. Subjects to be discussed are in particular following: (1) The change of focus in ecumenical discussion over the years; (2) The rejection of the doctrine of justification as "the only criterion"; (3) The future status of the Lutheran Confession after the approval of the Joint Declaration; (4) The perplexing question addressed by LWF to the Lutheran Churches concerning the approval of the Joint Declaration; (5) The alleged formal ratification of the Joint Declaration.

Keywords: justification, the Joint Declaration, Luther, the Lutheran Confession, Lutheran World Federation, the Roman Catholic Church, Vaticanum II, Pope, ecumenism, Finland

Introduction

Broad discussion on the approval of the Joint Declaration (= JD) took place in the Church Council of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church during the autumn term in November 1997, comprising of altogether over 30 addresses. Approximately a third of those were critical, generally concluding that discussion on the doctrine of justification was needed. It was also pointed out that JD

has generated lively conversation on the main article of the Lutheran confession and has thus led Christians deeper into the foundations of their faith. Yet the declaration itself was considered incomplete and conflicting. Accepting it without modifications would prove fatal to Lutheranism, especially to the Biblical teaching of the justification of the godless. The approval of JD was strongly advocated by certain bishops and representatives of the

church administration. The discussion was based on a report of the Bishops' Conference, prepared by a team under Bishop Jorma Laulaja. The purpose of this article is to deal with the essential, critical questions that were left open by both the Bishops' Conference statement and the preliminary debate of the Church Council.¹ The historical background of the modern ecumenical negotiations will also be briefly summarized below.²

After the Bishops' Conference report was published, the whole setting of the discussion was altered fundamentally as the leading newspaper in Germany, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (29.1.1998), published a true scoop: As many as 148 (later even 160) theology professors (a vast amount even by German standards) expressed their definite rejection of JD.³ In Finland, *Kotimaa*, a weekly Christian magazine often carrying the official voice of the church, hastened to label the rejection as a statement made by a "conservative" group of theologians, while at the same time discrediting its main points in their brief report.⁴ In reality this circle of renowned academics represents a variety of theological schools, rendering the label "conservative" artificial and inappropriate. The only thing they can be said to truly have in common is that they are highly distinguished and prominent experts including top scholars of exegetics, systematic theology and ecumenism. It is no wonder, therefore, that the unusually bold and outspoken objection of the professors has raised emotions in Germany. This dramatic change of climate in the discussion should be borne in mind, while assessing the preceding official debate of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

A Change in Focus in Ecumenical Discussion

JD introduced the expression "the criteriological status of the doctrine of justification", which was fixed into the ecumenical parlance. Despite many attempts at clarification, the question remains, whether the precise issue in fact has been understood at all: Do we ultimately realize the criteriological significance of justification in the context of all other doctrines? Is it widely known what actually happened when the first version of JD was finalized into its present form in Würzburg?

The starting point seems clear enough. Both Luther and the Lutheran Confessions are unambiguous: When justification is taught purely, all other doctrines also "stand". But if justification is lost, the entire Christian heritage is in a deep state of depravity. This does not mean that every distinct dogma should be based on the doctrine of justification.⁵ Justification is not the foundation of all other doctrines but the organizing center of them. A mere glance for instance at the Augsburg Confession and Luther's writings reveals that the basis of our justification is the mystery of the Holy Trinity and salvation history, especially the person and work of Jesus Christ. The full proclamation of the Gospel engenders the justifying faith without any human cooperation. Accordingly, it is easily acknowledged that the justification of the godless arranges distinct dogmas into their rightful place in the Christian system of belief, i.e., "keeps them standing".⁶

This kind of criteriological meaning of the doctrine of justification has never – neither before the Reformation nor after it – been adopted by the Roman Catholic

Church, for reasons fully understandable but unacceptable. Without elaborating, it can be briefly stated that the status of the doctrine of justification has been discussed both among theologians and in numerous reform movements, yet without result. The essential element still remains: the Church hierarchy and its peak, the Pope, who has in the past even proclaimed himself Christ's vicar (substitute) on earth. In the Lutheran church the pastoral ministry instituted by God naturally belongs to the scope of faith and doctrine, but it simply exists as a ministry (*ministerium*) of word and sacrament in order that "we may obtain justifying faith" (CA 5). In the Roman Catholic Church, on the contrary, the clerical hierarchy is an authority, the "ministry of St. Peter" (*magisterium*), installed and privileged by Christ himself. Hence it is set on a level with the word and actually above the word as to the tradition completing the Bible. That places the clerical hierarchy in the very center of faith and doctrine. Luther could without any exaggeration properly claim that "all spiritual treasures lie within the casket of the Pope's heart" and, further, that the Pope presumes *jure divino* (by divine right) "in his criteriological status" (Gr. 'krites', judge) to be able to pass additional laws and decrees that bind the conscience. The answer to what keeps all other doctrines "standing" in the Roman Catholic Church is simply as follows: the clerical hierarchy and its peak.⁷

However, especially since Vaticanum II there has been a desire to open up the relationship ecumenically between hierarchy and church through various theological interpretations. The traditional image of the clerical hierarchy as a separate "grace-effusing pipe line" has been initially and more tightly attached to ecclesiastical life by emphasizing e.g. the mini-

stry of the Bishops in Catholic local churches and their mutual collegiality, which would in turn balance the Pope's autocracy.⁸ But no true solution has been reached, in particular since the previous charismatic Pope John Paul II who established his personal influence all over the world.⁹ Besides, it should not be forgotten that the status and power of the Pope weighs heavily in doctrinal negotiations. Although much has changed through the years, and indeed we hoped for even more, the fact is that the "casket of all treasures", mentioned by Luther, still lies within the heart of the Pope. Therefore the doctrine of justification simply cannot be the principle that upholds all other doctrines in the Catholic Church for the fundamental reason that God's word – in this instance the Gospel and sacraments – is not the highest and only norm of the church. The Pontiff is and remains at least a co-authority.¹⁰

Furthermore an ecumenical opening of the Roman Catholic Church took place in Vaticanum II. It was at least in practice given to understand that the Roman Catholic Church and the "catholic church" mentioned in our Creed were no longer directly assimilated, negotiations with "separated brethren" were initiated and even some "vestiges of the Catholic Church" were found outside their own hierarchical structure. Rome has contributed significantly in the World Council of Churches, especially in the constitution of Faith and Order, although refusing membership. Bilateral negotiations with other churches have continued as well despite the often mentioned "ecumenical ice-age" of recent years. Yet it has repeatedly been the case that when an ecumenical breakthrough has been anticipated and forthrightly overpublicized, it suddenly runs completely aground. A good ex-

ample would be the far advanced ARC-IC-process with the Anglican Church, which came to a rather sad and sudden end.¹²

The so called theology of *koinonia* or communion, which had reached its full bloom and was in addition to the above mentioned Anglican negotiations practiced in the Faith and Order movement of WCC, suffered an even harder blow. It was promoted by many renowned Catholic ecumenical theologians, e.g. H. Schütte and J.-M. R. Tillard and became the main theme of the Faith and Order World Conference in Santiago de Compostela in 1993. The LWF provided an especially significant contribution in developing the communion model in the Curitiba general assembly in 1990 and since. First and foremost the goal is to transform the nature of LWF from mere federation and co-operation body toward a "church" that meets the very characteristics of communion. Secondly the LWF has strongly advocated communion, based on their previously coined "reconciled diversity", as a viable process toward visible unity.

In the second phase of negotiations of the Lutheran-Catholic theological commission the "reconciled diversity" model already took the form of a roadmap toward Catholic-Lutheran church unity. This is clearly found especially in the document *The unity that lies ahead* (1985), which gives a rather tangible design of the shape and outlines of ecclesiastical unity "as a dynamic process of church reconciliation". It consists of "unity of faith" (which is not the same as unity of confession and doctrine), sacramental unity and a unity of church structure to complete these. Growth toward church unity starts with the parties "mutually recognizing and accepting each other" ("die wechselseitige Anerkennung

und Rezeption"). Unity of faith means joint testimony, confessing together that unanimity in faith contains the diversity of forms of expression and the cancellation of doctrinal condemnations ("die Entkräftung der Lehrverurteilungen"). Accordingly, sacramental unity is created through a particular extensive liturgical reform which focuses on sacramental life. Agreement is then sought on the meaning and officiation of sacraments. Yet there is room for permanent diversity and open questions. Consequently it seems unnecessary to unify the structural form of the churches; however, church unity must be a mutual unity of assistance within which the difficult issues concerning ministry would then be solved.¹³

In their enthusiasm, Roman Catholic ecumenists were equally optimistic. Some wanted to go even farther than the Lutheran "reconciled diversity". They were sketching out a "world church" which would be a "church of God" formed by local churches under the supervision of their Bishops and where the Pope's traditional power would be as limited as possible. But it seems a fatal line was crossed since a strong restoration of discipline was carried out in 1992. The highest doctrinal institution of the Vatican, The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (with its former chairman cardinal J. Ratzinger), sent their famous Communion letter, with which Rome pulled the ropes exceptionally tight. The bishops were warned against explaining the theology of communion with too much emphasis on local churches or their episcopal and conciliar power. At the same time it was rather abruptly announced that true communion is only plausible within a hierarchy such as Rome's where the only peak that supersedes all parochial authority is the Pope.¹⁴ This must have been quite a

counter-blow of papal power both to Rome's own ecumenists and to the churches of the east as well as Anglicans and Protestants.

Although ecumenism of communion has since been resumed, the situation may have been persuasively evaluated by Professor Risto Saarinen, a Finnish scholar of ecumenics, as he states: "The letter of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith shows evidently that the question of the Pope's status remains unsolved in modern ecumenically oriented Catholicism. The Pope himself is clearly not going to settle for the role of a symbolic guarantor and 'Bishop of Rome', which he has been fitted with in conciliarist discussion."¹⁵

If, therefore, an agreement on the basic truths of justification has been reached and the doctrinal condemnations as well as denunciations are declared to no longer apply, the next goal will obviously be to broaden the consensus by altering the positive doctrinal affirmations and by replacing them. This does not imply that the churches are assimilated into each other as historical and administrative bodies, but that they remain to some extent independent churches, yet with the joint recognition as "members", "parts" or "living branches" of one and the same Catholic Church. The broadening consensus reached in doctrinal negotiations as well as the ministry of shepherding, i.e. the episcopate, are seen as a starting point. In practice, *koinonia* means the mutual opportunity to attend each other's Holy Communion. Thus the churches open the Lord's Table to each other's members or show "communion hospitality" as it is expressed. Later on the goal is to continue completing the doctrinal consensus and in the long run reach full recognition of ministry, which would enable parishioners to acquire "ecclesias-

tical services" from any church within the same church unity. Consequently, ministers from different churches would be able to officiate worship services, sacraments and other holy ceremonies in different denominations according to the respective legislation.

For a long time a certain split and dispute has existed about whether the Protestants ought strive for *koinonia* primarily among Protestant churches or if a broader *koinonia* should be created with old church bodies and above all with Rome. Germany has always been the promised land and stronghold of Protestant church unity. Although the history of Protestant unions ever since the 1800's had proved that instead of the sought unity an even larger shattering was attained, a Pan-European church unity started to evolve once again in Germany from the 1970's, known as the Leuenberg Concordia. The project was only to some extent successful, because the primary goal of including the large Scandinavian Lutheran folk/state churches failed.¹⁶

The situation was decisively altered with the so called Porvoo declaration in 1992. It forged a kind of iron arc, which reached north from Central Europe: The Church of England as well as the Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran Churches were led into almost perfect church unity, one that takes the above-mentioned *koinonia* model furthest so far. At that time the focus seemed to shift from Protestant *koinonia* to Protestant-Catholic *koinonia*.¹⁷

Thus it was convenient that the first version of JD (JD 1) originated in 1995, mostly as a work of theological officials and without the participation of Lutheran churches. It looked like the first real step forward with the Catholic Church, one that would not prove to be a slip as many former attempts. Here, both parties

still confessed together that the leading and only criterion of Christian teaching is the doctrine of justification.¹⁸ Accordingly the Church of Finland declared that in JD 1 a decisive turn had been made to the better. Indeed, not so long ago during the first stage of the Lutheran-Catholic doctrinal discussions in Malta (1971) the Lutheran side was left alone with their emphasis that the doctrine of justification stands as the only criterion of all other doctrines. The Catholic side presented as an alternative their *hierarchia veritatum* ("hierarchy of truths") model,¹⁹ which encompasses the idea of the church hierarchy as a unifier of doctrine. No wonder, therefore, that JD 1 was enthusiastically received in various Lutheran churches. Nothing seemed to threaten the criteriological meaning of justification – not the spiritual status of the Pope, not his personal influence, not his political successes as liberator of the East and as the man who felled the Iron Curtain, nor his contemporary visions of a "European house" that reaches from the Atlantic to the Ural.

In the end it was only in Germany that the transition from Protestant koinonia to attempts of tying closer relations with Rome initiated a severe crisis. The reasons need not be sought very far. After all, a similarly long process concerning the rejection of doctrinal condemnations in the 1980's had been left with no answer whatsoever from the Vatican side!²⁰ Besides, the apparent weaknesses and deteriorating memberships of Protestant churches caused at least the more knowledgeable theologians to be worried about the rise of Rome's power. Later the resistance seemed to deteriorate even in Germany and not least due to the persuasion of some Finnish ecumenical scholars. Accordingly, the VELKD (= Vereinigte

Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands) synod had unanimously recommended that the Lutheran Landeskirchen should accept the document, and the Bavarian Landeskirche had as a result already affirmed it. Despite the recommendation prominent university circles and theological experts have presented exceptionally strong criticism, and a certain reluctance or complete rejection prevails among many active congregation members, because there have been many difficult experiences pertaining to coexistence with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Doctrine of Justification as the Only Criterion – Where Did it Go?

The main issue, which was obviously purposefully pushed aside in Finland, is concerned precisely the collapsing of the criteriological meaning of the doctrine of justification in the final revision of JD.²¹ The entire matter in no way received as much attention as it deserves from the Bishops' Conference or from the best scholars of ecumenics in the Church Council preliminary discussions.

Before completing the last version of JD in Würzburg in January 1997 the highest and most authoritative doctrinal body of the Catholic Church, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had explicitly briefed the discussions with proposed alteration, rejecting the doctrine of justification as the only criterion of all other doctrines undeniably the chief among them. Thus the Roman Catholic side drew back what had been achieved by ecumenically progressive theologians and officials under Cardinal E. Cassidy. The Lutheran side was yet again left alone with the doctrine of justification as the only criterion of all other doctrines. The Catholic side expressly declared that they hold other criteria on a level with it

(see JD 18). Since the entire negotiation would have failed as a result of the renewed disagreement, some reservations and concessions were added to the document (see below). They do not look bad at all, but they are so general in nature that they must upon honest inspection be seen as mere truisms. Even the best ecumenical scholar can hardly judge by these statements what in reality the view of each side is regarding the status of the doctrine of justification in relation to the doctrinal whole. It is evident and indisputable that the dialog yet again drifted to the old and traditional juxtaposition.

Consequently, the question of the status of the doctrine of justification was not thoroughly and at great length dealt with in the Bishops' Conference statement and the preliminary discussions of the Church Council in the Finnish Church. To be sure it was referred to, but misleadingly, since the failure of the Würzburg negotiations was ignored by quoting some of the empty phrases added to JD, sayings that are more cut off to cover up than to truly sort out the decisive difference with the Church of Rome.²² Of course we can with several other churches in general state that the doctrine of justification "stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other". Who would not agree that the doctrine of justification beyond doubt is an "indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (JD 18)? Though not intended to offend, one must inevitably ask straightforward: Since our relationship with Rome has been tended by the top ecumenical scholars of our Church, whose skills in critical text analysis ought not be questioned, why have they not opened this ecumenical and theological "tangle" in the central decision-

making organs of the Finnish Church, but have instead rather obscured it than shed light on it? There is no problem here with respect to the Church of Rome. They have often conducted doctrinal negotiations much in the fashion of a skilled salmon-fisher: The line is kept loose in the start and whenever needed, whereupon it is gradually wound in. Often the result has been that the grip loosens, as described above. This time the grip really seems to hold.

The Road to Rome is Paved

The new and inventive consensus reached on the content of the doctrine of justification has currently been named "unanimity on the basic truths of justification", according to terminology suggested by the Roman Catholic Church. It seems that the term "basic truths" ("Grundwahrheiten") has been formulated to contain both the traditional Catholic concept of hierarchy of truths and the modern German protestant interpretation, which separates the foundation of doctrine ("Grund") from its varying forms of expression ("Auslegungen").²³ The latter is known from the Leuenberg Concordia. It met strong resistance here in Finland and was finally rejected altogether.²⁴ Without going further into the various interpretations of the term "basic truths of justification" in different Lutheran churches, at the very least it obviously presupposes a mindset where one and the same doctrine can in perfect harmony and with good grounds be expressed in several different ways. This kind of approach was – as far as we know – opposed during the JD process by prof. J. Becker, a member of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Otherwise the problem was not much dealt with.

What would then be made of different

expressions of doctrine from a Lutheran perspective? The content of faith should indeed be presented illustratively and understandably in the practical teaching of the church, whereupon the pastoral and catechetical diversity of expression in fact only serves the purpose. Yet no expression should alter or foil the content of faith or make it deliberately ambiguous. Otherwise the doctrine and confession of the church will be watered down.²⁵ The situation is fundamentally not the same in ecumenical negotiations, where prevailing differences of doctrine are being discussed from the very beginning. Here mutually accepted expressions ought to be found in order that neither party would need to withdraw right after a consensus (or "basic truth") has been reached, either partially or fully, by annexing their own accentuations and reservations. With JD this goal was not reached. Are not the joint consensus-clauses now rather relative? How could they ultimately articulate the "basic truth", i.e., both the foundation of doctrine ("Grund") as well as the truth ("Wahrheit")? Surely unambiguity is a central part of genuine unanimity!²⁶

Substantial problems relating to the doctrine of justification were handled in the Bishops' Conference statement and Church Council preliminary discussion in a fashion entirely alien to church ministry and decision-making. Matters were frequently dealt with in an "on the one hand – on the other hand" spirit.²⁷ Thus the Bishops' Conference statement seems actually more like a background survey than a responsible statement of an episcopal collegiate, which should present good grounds and the proposed solution based on them.²⁸

There is another problem concerning the present teaching of the churches that will severely shake the alleged unanimity.

JD originally claimed that the doctrinal condemnations do not apply any more since they are no longer in accord with the extant teaching of the churches involved. It may be impossible to test this claim with regard to the majority of Lutheran churches, for who knows what they are teaching in practice. But we do know the teaching of the Church of Rome quite precisely. An extensive and versatile Roman Catholic Catechism had been prepared already prior to the distribution of the final version of JD, and it was either by mistake or coincidence published almost simultaneously. In view of the new Catechism it seemed utterly unbelievable to claim that the doctrinal condemnations would not apply to the present teaching of the churches involved. As fresh as its expression is, the doctrinal content is still most traditional. An agreement on the final version of JD would probably never been reached in Würzburg had not yet another wholly new solution been developed. Hence one further reservation was finally inserted completely out of the blue: "The teaching of the Lutheran churches *presented in this Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church *presented in this Declaration*." (JD 41) Thus the whole setting of the declaration was altered at the last minute! Gone is the talk of present teachings of the churches involved, although there is still (as before) mention of the results of a long discussion process, of achievements of theological disciplines and moreover of the already adopted manner of the churches to perceive traditional differences in new light. Since the new light or basic unanimity is ultimately limited to merely one document, i.e., the consensus-clauses of JD,

those statements seem strongly exaggerated, if not downright conflicting.²⁹

This decisive change of emphasis was ultimately left unevaluated by both the Bishops' Conference and the Church Council preliminary discussion though it is touched on in the Bishops' statement. They admit that JD has a confessional nature of some degree, but at the same time they affirm that the Lutheran Confession will remain valid as it is.³⁰ These two accounts are not compatible, nor are they simultaneously effectual. There is need for a comprehensive consideration of what is happening to the Lutheran Confession. It seems obvious that the formulation of the final text "the doctrine expressed in this document" will inevitably grow into a firm principle that guides the understanding of the Lutheran Confession, through which the Lutheran doctrine of justification and Lutheran doctrine as a whole will be interpreted.³¹ Accordingly Lutheranism will undergo change as a result of accepting JD. For that reason the Bishops should, after their affirming answer, explain how the doctrine of our Church has changed and how this will direct, define and determine the teachings of our clergy and the practical ministry in our congregations.³²

Also the question of the future status of the Lutheran Confession was left fully open in the Church Council. The critical addresses given there were silently passed by.³³ The discussion culminated in the Arch Bishop's utterly problematic emotional speech. According to it "the doctrine never saves anyone", "not even the Bible" but "God himself", an utterance that caused a sensation among the press.³⁴ It aptly reveals the kind of confusion and artificial juxtaposition that was and is wittingly intended for. Indeed, the doctrine itself does not save anyone, but if we are short

of the right understanding of Christ's redemptive work and justification, we will lose our true faith, we will get lost and in the end we will never be saved.

It was further assured and almost sworn in the Church Council that we will not join Rome or fall into the Pope's lap as we approve JD.³⁵ This sort of make-believe is unwarranted and inappropriate. For sure, nobody has asserted that we would be rushing headlong back to Rome in the same fashion as when an individual person decides to convert to Catholicism or in history when a prince or king swiftly settled on a Catholic faith and his subjects followed. Naturally the situation is now different and all of Europe is undergoing a new kind of changing process. Yet it may be rather unnecessary to estimate how far we still need to go to get to Rome. Church Council members that have a good insight in the matter have in any case publicly stated that a certain step toward Rome has been taken and that the pacing continues.³⁶

Some small confusion and unease was brought about in the Church Council as Bishop Pihkala spoke very boldly of unity of communion and church unity with Rome.³⁷ His statement is not to be overlooked since he has extensive experience as both an ecumenical expert and delegate of the Finnish Church (Faith and Order) and as member of the Nordic Lutheran-Catholic committee. Consequently, Pihkala's vision may prove most realistic, although there were attempts in some addresses to specify and narrow it to only mean so called Communion hospitality.³⁸ But even in that case the decisive step has already been taken: Congregation members would in practice recognize sacraments of each other's denomination to be valid and biblical, in accordance with their own respective church and based on

the unity created by and as consequence of JD.

What does not, however, seem plausible in Pihkala's vision pertains to his sketch according to which the future church unity with Rome would mean an equal coexistence.³⁹ What coexistence has with some reservations been achieved in the Porvoo agreement or among most protestant churches in general⁴⁰ will be absolutely out of the question with the Roman Catholic Church. There the hierarchy – as is presented above – has such an essential impact on doctrine as a whole that even the initial opening of sacramental unity can only happen if the hierarchy principle and papal supremacy are recognized in one form or another. This is really no equal coexistence but being joined and grafted onto a Pan-European umbrella church, which manifests itself in the structure and ecumenical undertakings of the Roman Church.⁴¹ The European Union manages somehow to work under several commissioners and a council, but a union of churches inevitably requires one leader, the seat of whom leaves no room for doubt. Therefore we must profoundly consider the consequences of our decisions or we will make them blindfolded.

The Question Addressed to the Church Raises Further Questions

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church was requested to answer the following question:

Does your church accept the conclusions reached in § 40 and § 41 of the Joint Declaration and thus join in affirming that, because of the agreement on the fundamental meaning and truth of our justification in Christ to which the Joint Declaration testifies, the condemnations regarding justification in the

Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teachings on justification of the Roman Catholic Church presented in the Joint Declaration?

In one respect the official Finnish translation of the text differs from the original. In the following the crucial passage is underlined:

Does your church accept the conclusions reached in § 40 and § 41 of the Joint Declaration and thus join in affirming that, because of the agreement on the fundamental meaning and truth which is contained in our justification in Christ and to which the Joint Declaration testifies, the condemnations regarding justification in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teachings on justification of the Roman Catholic Church presented in the Joint Declaration?

The divergence does have some bearing on the arguments below (see the third point). Thus it should be taken into consideration when evaluating the answer requested from the Church Council of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The aforementioned question remains unclear in several aspects. Firstly, it is rather confusing that the church is initially asked to reply to the conclusions: either to affirm or reject them. It is astounding and absurd that the church is expected to evaluate the conclusions without any accurate knowledge of their foundations and substantiations. There is neither in article 40 nor anywhere else an account of what the basic truths are that those conclusions are based on.

Secondly the framing of the question incorrectly combines two different concepts: agreement on the fundamental *meaning* and agreement on the *truth*. Thirdly truth is not attached unambiguously to justification, because truth is – according

to the Finnish version above! – mentioned to be "contained in our justification in Christ". Consequently, before answering the question put to our church the answer to the following questions should be found: Why speak about the meaning of agreement instead of agreement as such? Why is the meaning of agreement separated from the truth that is agreed upon? And why is the truth claimed to be only "contained in our justification" but not necessarily to be one with our justification? Every knowledgeable reader must wonder whether there is something else contained in our justification, something that is not mentioned here. In addition, the same obscurity and ambiguity continues when fourthly JD is stated to merely *testify* to the truth. Certainly there is an evident difference between (propositionally) expressing the truth on the one hand and testifying to the truth on the other. Due to the formulation of the question, the truth (which here plainly stands for the joint doctrine of justification) is apparently not expressed in JD. For purposes of responsible decision-making, the preparation of the matter in the Lutheran World Federation (and in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church) leaves quite a bit to be desired.⁴²

Fifthly the question of General Secretary Ishmael Noko claims erroneously that the Lutheran Confessions contain doctrinal condemnations. Even JD itself makes a separation between the rejections in the Lutheran Confessions and the Catholic doctrinal condemnations.⁴³

Sixthly: If the church announces to accept exactly and only the agreement which is expressed "in this document," it can with good grounds be asserted that the church after its affirmation still rejects Roman Catholic doctrine such as it is expressed in the Council of Trent Decree on justification and respectively in the new

Catechism authorized by the Pope. Without any striving for unanimity with Lutherans whatsoever, both articulate the doctrine of justification in a way that clearly conflicts with Lutheranism. Originally JD commended the present teaching of the churches as cause to why the doctrinal condemnations no longer apply, but since the final revision altered the statement to limit solely to the doctrine expressed "in this document" (see above), it has in practice been indirectly admitted that the non-applying nature of the doctrinal condemnations ought under no circumstance to be based on the present teaching of the churches. Hence each affirmation to the question of General Secretary Noko has actually nothing to do with such teaching of the Roman Catholic Church which is represented by the new Catholic Catechism with various Tridentine beliefs. If the teaching of the Catechism is not changed, the whole ecumenical process is one big charade to mislead the churches! By officially accepting JD no Lutheran church has thereby accepted the teaching of the Catholic Catechism or of any other specific Catholic document, so the differences between the Catholic and Lutheran churches remain in effect and consequently the doctrinal condemnations as well as rejections still apply. This has made and will make worthless all affirming answers to Noko's question. Also our own Lutheran Church was simply led to believe that it was taking a stand to the real teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, whereas it was – truth be told – only affirming the wish or wishful thinking of one arbitrarily chosen team of eminent officials, according to which both Lutherans and Catholics should henceforth hold to the unanimity expressed in JD.

Moreover, as our church responded to the question put to it, it would have been

of utmost importance to know what kind of a question the counterpart was expected to answer. To be sure, agreement cannot be tested and verified through questions that essentially differ from each other.

Epilogue

The sequel to the whole ecumenical process finally took the form of a comedy or a tragedy – depending on the overall perspective. As LWF had accepted the JD with a majority of the votes the Roman Catholic Church unexpectedly presented not so few reservations rejecting in reality many of the basic common statements.⁴⁴ Although the ecumenically progressive theologians and officials of both parts strongly believed in consensus reached by them it was rather a product of their pure imagination. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (under the headship of Cardinal Ratzinger) did not compromise on different oscillating formulations in doctrinal matters. The customary method of "unity in diversity" had failed absolutely. To quote one short passage:

The level of agreement is high, but it does not yet allow us to affirm that all the differences separating Catholics and Lutherans in the doctrine concerning justification are simply a question of emphasis or language. Some of these differences

concern aspects of substance and are therefore not all mutually compatible [...].⁴⁵

Furthermore, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reaffirms all the traditional and crucial dogmas of the Council of Trent. Where is now the ecumenical blossom so longed for? It is frostbitten. As a result, the formal ratification of JD did no more serve the initial expectations of the extended ecumenical discussions. LWF had no mandate to sign the document on behalf of the various Lutheran churches after the content was rejected by the Roman Catholic Church and further clarifications (additions) were made to it. Astonishingly and despite other claims, JD itself was actually never signed since the Roman Catholic Church refused to accept it. Initially, it was supposed to be ratified (along with additional "reading instructions": Official Common Statement). But when objections were raised,⁴⁶ it was dropped from the ceremonial festivities altogether (only Official Common Statement was agreed on)!⁴⁷ This is the miserable state of affairs even today. Unfortunately we reached the dead end after long negotiations. The Lutheran churches should at last realize and appreciate the facts fully. LWF did not.⁴⁸

Notes

1. Primary documents under consideration are as follows:

a) Bishops' Committee motion to the Church Council no. 1/1997: "Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification". LWF and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity document (below BC) and

b) Church Council minutes 4.11.1997 at 12.30 PM, addresses 15-33 (below CC I + resp. number of address) and 5.11.1997 at 9 AM, addresses 2-17 (below CC II + resp. number).

2. Granting that ecumenical discussions aim at some kind of unity of all Christians, it is not possible here to concentrate more on various ecclesiological aspects or the question of the one and true apostolic Church.

3. Das Votum evangelischer Theologieprofessoren. Kein Konsens in der Gemeinsamen Erklärung (Statement of Evangelical professors of theology: "No unanimity in the Joint Declaration").

4. *Kotimaa*, February 2, 1998.

5. One of the main streams of Protestant theology has been on the wrong track since Fr. Schleiermacher. Generally speaking, it has been attempted to abbreviate and simplify the whole content of Christian faith into an internal human "feeling", which has been named justification. This reduces theology into anthropology and Christology turns into an experience of value and significance caused by the person of Jesus. Cf. e.g. Bengt

Hägglund, *History of Theology*, trans. G. J. Lund (St. Louis: CPH, 1968), 353-360. In that case the doctrine of justification has not been used to organize the whole of doctrine but to trim and reinterpret it until it becomes quite transformed. It has been thought that the true center of Christianity could be found through sharp theological reasoning, as when peeling an onion, but being left with only a knife.

6. From Luther's abundant works we mention a couple of passages where he emphasizes the crucial status of the doctrine of justification in the whole of Christian doctrine. See e.g. Martin Luther, "Table Talk" in *Luther's Works* 32, American Edition. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and CPH, 1967), 157 no. 1583: "There is only one article and one rule of theology and this is true faith or trust in Christ. Whoever doesn't hold this article and this rule is no theologian. All other articles flow into and out of this one; without it the others are meaningless. The devil has tried from the very beginning to deride this article and to put his own wisdom in its place. However, this article has a good savor for all who are afflicted, downcast, troubled, and tempted, and these are the ones who understand the gospel." See further Martin Luther, "Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16-20 (1528/9)" in *WA* 28, 271-272: "Ursach ist, die andern artikel gehen allzumal ausser uns und komen mit uns nicht in die erfahrung, Treffen uns auch nicht teglich. Aber der Artikel von Vergebung der Sünden gehet innerhalb uns, kompt mit uns in stete erfahrung und tegliche Übung. Und trifft mich und dich on unterlas. Von den andern Artickeln reden wir als von frembden. [...] Was hab ich davon, das Gott Himmel und Erden geschaffen, So ich nicht gleube Vergebung der Sünde? [...] Aber der artikel 'Ich gleube vergebung der Sünde' trifft uns und kompt mit uns in die erfahrung und macht, das die andern artikel auch uns treffen [...]."

7. *SA* 3.3., *BS* p. 454; *Tract* 6, *BS* p. 472. There is a strange tension in the Vaticanum II teaching on this part. On the one hand it is stated that "the authentic interpretation of God's word" is left in charge of the church ministry only, which uses its power in the name of Jesus Christ. At the same time the hierarchical power of the magisterium is emphasized, as an independent body in relation to the Bible. On the other hand it is maintained in contrast to the former statement that the ministry is not above God's word. Thus the only solution is a sum of two authorities: "It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together [...] contribute effectively to the salvation of souls" (Vaticanum II, *De divina revelatione* 10).

8. On the one hand the doctrine of the Pope's autocracy is maintained through the "charisma of truth" (*charisma veritatis*) which he owns. So the Pope is by his office, not as a private person, highest teacher of the universal church, one who interprets and protects the catholic doctrine. Consequently his decrees would be constant as emerging from him, not by the approval of the church. On the other hand the insight of "God's people" and the episcopate is emphasized. "They stand in God's place (an Gottes Stelle) before the flock whose shepherds they are, as masters (Meister) of the doctrine, as priests of the holy cult and as servants of leadership" See Konrad Algermissen, *Konfessionskunde* (Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1969) 46-47.

9. The previous Pope's splendid and sumptuous visit to the seat of bishop Henrik and our capital returned to mind even here in Finland. The enthusiasm was clearly visible during the preliminary discussion of the Church Council. The (Finnish) bishops' regular visits to Rome with their joint worship services belong to the same new-found glow. It is not without reason that Archbishop J. Vikström mentions that he was the first Lutheran bishop allowed to perform a worship service in Rome's Holy of Holies, St. Peter's Church (*Kokkolan Sanomat* February 1, 1998).

10. See Vaticanum II, *De Ecclesia* 18§: "And in order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium, this Sacred Council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful. Continuing in that same undertaking, this Council is resolved to declare and proclaim before all men the doctrine concerning bishops, the successors of the apostles, who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God".

11. See Vaticanum II, *De oecumenismo* 3. The Council teaches that the Catholic Church should take "the first steps toward our separated brethren" (*De oec.* 4, c) by asking for forgiveness and forgiving "our separated brethren" (*De oec.* 7). Rome makes quite clear the ultimate goal of ecumenical activity: "Jesus Christ, then, willed that the apostles and their successors – the bishops with Peter's successor at their head – should preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the sacraments, and rule the Church in love. It is thus, under the action of the Holy Spirit, that Christ wills His people to increase, and He perfects His people's fellowship in unity [...]" (*De oec.* 2).

12. There were two rounds of negotiations of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. The first commission (1970-1981) stated that significant unanimity had been reached in both the doctrine of Eucharist and in the doctrine of ministry. This fell apart as the Church of England decided to introduce female clergy in 1994. The second commission started in 1982. It has published the reports "Salvation and Church" (1987) and "The Church as Communion" (1990). The former declares that Anglicans and Roman Catholics reached unanimity on the doctrine of justification. It gives a definition of forensic and effective justification which makes justification and sanctification blur into each other. That kind of a result does naturally not cause

any greater problems to reformed Anglicanism. What is very surprising, however, is that both sides seem to have swallowed – although reluctantly – the concept ”simultaneously sinful and righteous”, albeit with Roman Catholic accents. Although the negotiations have not entirely been cut off, the Anglican Church has now slid more into the Protestant camp concerning Rome. Approaching Rome must thus mean an association of some degree, on certain conditions. On the content of the dialogues see Harding Meyer, et al., ed., *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung: Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene II (1982-1990)* (Paderborn-Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1992).

13. *Einheit vor uns: Modelle, Formen und Phasen katholisch-lutherischer Kirchengemeinschaft*. Paderborn - Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1985), 26-59.

14. *De aliquibus aspectibus prout est Communio*. C. d. Vaticana 1992. English translation in ”The Church as Communion: Some Aspects of the Church as Communion” *Catholic International* (1992), 761-767.

15. Risto Saarinen, *Johdatus ekumeniikkaan* (Helsinki: Kirjaneliö, 1994), 186.

16. See especially *Leuenberg – Konkordie oder Diskordie? Ökumenische Kritik zur Konkordie reformatorischer Kirchen in Europa*, hrsg. Ulrich Asendorf und Friedrich W. Künneth (Düsseldorf: Die Spur, 1974).

17. *The Porvoo Common Statement*. See especially §58 (the Porvoo Declaration).

18. See preface of the book *Turbentuuko uskonpuhdistus? Rooman kirkon ja Luterilaisen Maailmanliiton uusi selitys vanhurskauttamisopista*, ed. Simo Kiviranta and Timo Laato (Kauniainen: Perussanoma, 1998) 2.

19. ”When comparing doctrines with one another (with separated brethren), they (Catholic ecumenists) should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith.” *De Oec.*11. Here is – as is known – no reference to the doctrine of justification.

20. The process is known as *Lehrverurteilungen - kirchentrennend?* (Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen). The results and addresses are published (Herder:Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) in the 1980's.

21. For sure, the doctrine of justification can be expressed with other words as well (e.g. *solus Christus, sola fide, sola gratia*).

22. In the Bishops' Committee report (pages 13-14) there is a brief account on the status change of the doctrine of justification, but it is concluded with a reassurance: ”Making a separation between the Catholic and Lutheran view does not weaken the unanimity on the basics; that there is Christological ground for the special significance of the doctrine of justification.” (p. 14). The ”several criteria” that are on a level with justification in Roman Catholic theology do not in reality mean Christology, because Lutheranism has on their part been criticized for reducing justification to Christology.

In the Church Council preliminary discussion Laulaja (CC I 15) speaks of ”a flowerbed of justification” tended by Lutherans whereas ”several dogma-of-grace flowerbeds” are blossoming in the Catholic garden. Although the reached unanimity ”does not represent the most familiar and clearest phrasing”, the result is nevertheless ”close to good and acceptable”. Pihkala (CC I 16) sees the unanimity on the criteriological meaning of the doctrine of justification as a great breakthrough, as an ”Archimedean point” of sorts, ”which will make a difference in solving numerous other problems as well”. Accordingly Cantell (CC I 19) too marvels at the ”broadness and depth of unanimity” in this respect. Ahonen (CC I 31) is slightly more reserved: ”The search for unanimity has already been made difficult by the starting point, that the doctrine of justification is a central principle that guides the Lutheran understanding of faith. But in the Roman Catholic Church various other central ideas are on the same level, also guiding the interpretation of the doctrinal whole.” Even Huovinen (CC II 3), who participated in the final revision of JD in Würzburg, confesses frankly: ”It is true that Lutheran and Roman Catholic faith understand the status of the doctrine of justification somewhat differently. To us Lutherans justification is the decisive criterion, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally emphasized that the life of the church is organized by many hierarchical criteria.” Yet Huovinen later points out that ”the doctrine of justification cannot be an evaluation guideline that rules out other doctrines”. It ”is decisive, but not the only criterion”. As such the bishop's statement can be considered downright misleading: Which one of our church's theologians has considered the famous ”criteriological meaning” a principle of elimination – as in general Protestant thinking – instead of a genuine and only principle of organization? In addition, the ”material principle” of Lutheranism has always been Scripture before the mediation theology of the 19th century! Although it may be mentioned that the doctrine of justification was really used as a criterion for eliminating certain statutes on ministry during the discussion on female clergy in our church in the 1980's. See e.g. Timo Laato, ”Justification, The Stumbling Block of the Finnish Luther School,” *CTQ* 72 (2008): 344–346.

23. According to JD differences remain between Catholics and Lutherans concerning ”language, theological phrasing and accentuations” (paragraph 40). In sharp contrast to this the Bishops' Committee statement maintains that JD does not separate ”the event of justification” from ”its doctrinal expression” (p. 8). At least the LWF question tends toward such separation (see below).

24. Simo Kiviranta and Tuomo Mannermaa, ”Genesis und Struktur II. Das Problem der Einheitlichkeit der Leuenberger Konkordie” in *Leuenberg – Konkordie oder Diskordie? Ökumenische Kritik zur Konkordie reformatorischer Kirchen in Europa*, hrsg. Ulrich Asendorf und Friedrich W. Künneth (Düsseldorf: Die Spur, 1974), 115-123.

25. In the Church Council Ahonen (CC I 31) claimed that "the concept of justification is theological parlance, which may look like incomprehensible quarrel to *people of our age*" (italics added). Thus Hurskainen (CC II 4) asks, whether "the times and people's mindset are changing" and whether "it is time to overcome those attitudes and reassess them". Both addresses presume that the human thinking and understanding have changed fundamentally and that the doctrine of justification accordingly has become at least obscure. The obscurity of the doctrine of justification is in reality, according to the Bible and Lutheran teaching, not due to the modern age but to the general moralistic and legalistic approach of man, which is not compatible with the proclamation of justification of the godless through faith alone. It is not only now but in fact it has always been so, that Biblical and Lutheran salvation is difficult and even unintelligible for every unconverted man.

26. The Bishops' Committee does not give an unanimous account of even the Lutheran doctrine of justification in their unambiguous statement! They claim that the Augsburg Confession only contains a few references to forensic justification which "mainly" reached its "conceptual form" as late as in the Formula of Concord (p. 5). Consequently, there would be no difference between declaring a person righteous and making a person righteous, i.e. between justification and sanctification, but they would be "two sides to one coin" (p. 5). The bishops solemnly announce: "The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts the idea that both sides are joined inseparably in justification." (p. 15). Still a little earlier they have unanimously stated that the Lutheran Confessions, in particular the Formula of Concord, "depicts justification and sanctification somewhat differently" (p. 5), very differently indeed. Certainly Lutheran theology has always known to separate sanctification from justification! Here the bishops are destroying what has been essential about the doctrine of justification since Luther's time.

Later in the Church Council the search for unanimity continued at the expense of unambiguity and even in the shield of a smokescreen created by intentional or unintentional confusion of concepts. Bishop Laulaja's address will suffice for an example (CC I 15). He attempts to establish unanimity between Catholics and Lutherans by emphasizing the partial aspect of justification: The Christian is "partially righteous – partially sinful", an idea, "according to which righteousness is always an increasing righteousness in the believer". Subsequently he concludes: "Both parties confess in the Joint Declaration that the justified person firstly remains dependent on God's unmerited mercy throughout his life. Secondly the justified Christian is not free from the pressing power of sin or the lifelong struggle against the desires of old man. Thirdly he is over and over again called to conversion and repentance." The address does in fact not add anything to traditional Catholic (= thomistic) dogma of grace. This is the teaching of Trent! In Lutheranism the partial view is essentially connected with sanctification, which really is increasing justification, not with justification by faith, which is always a complete gift of justification, obtained by Christ. Therefore Laulaja's address is actually about confusing justification with sanctification.

Similar confusion of concepts is featured in Laulaja's definition of "ruling sin". According to him sin is not ruling sin if and when "the Christian is no longer separated from God despite his sin, on account of Christ". Thus the character of sin would somehow be altered in the life of a Christian on account of his newly found relationship with God. However, strictly speaking ruling sin means in Lutheranism that the sinful lusts have (unrestrained) possibility of being realized as sinful works. Ruled sin means that the many lusts of the flesh remain mere sinful "stirrings" in the bosom of the Christian as he fights them in the power of the Spirit, without falling into their temptations. In Luther's theology Christ, who dwells in us through faith, is an example (*exemplum*), he controls the sin within us. Yet in justification Christ is present as a sacrament (*sacramentum*), he grants us his righteousness. See M. Luther's first and Second Disputation against Antinomians.

27. See e.g. the opening address of Laulaja (CC I 15), which set the course of the whole discussion. He speaks of the incommensurability of Catholic dogma of grace and Lutheran doctrine of justification, "where parlance rises from different soils". "The parlance" of both parties "is overlapping". They "rise from different roots and yet they approach each other very closely and overlap without merging into each other". Further "the incommensurability of Catholic dogma of grace and Lutheran doctrine of justification causes differences in language, theological formulations and emphasis of how to understand justification".

28. The bishops state e.g. that "several different interpretations of the doctrine of justification have later developed inside Lutheran tradition, and those can be summed up in three main categories" (p. 5):

- a) forensic interpretation of justification, i.e. we are declared righteous through faith for Christ's sake,
- b) existential interpretation, i.e. our self-understanding changes with justification and we gain a whole new view of our existence and
- c) real-ontic interpretation, i.e. justification is seen as Christ's merciful and sanctifying presence in us.

Broadly speaking, the first interpretation is represented by our Lutheran Confessions, the second by theology that derives inspiration from existential philosophy and the third by the Finnish Luther-school (pp. 5-6). The bishops take as "evident" that JD "contains ingredients from all these strands of interpretation" (p. 6). Thus even these different strands of interpretation in Lutheranism, that quite recently and even today have been considered mutually exclusive alternatives e.g. in Finnish and German Luther research, can yet "be seen as different, mutually enriching accents" (p. 6)! Who would dare claim any-thing like this without further ado? For the main lines in the modern Finnish Luther-school, see Timo Laato, "Justification: The Stumbling Block of the Finnish Luther School," *CTQ* 72 (2008): 327–346.

29. Many Church Council addresses were repeatedly attempting to make excuses for the difference between JD and the present teaching of the churches involved. E.g. according to Pihkala (CC I 16) it is wrong and futile to search the new Roman Catholic Catechism for the accents that have only nowadays been reached in ecumenical negotiations. "If they were to be found there, then the whole intensive and extensive discussion of the last 30 years would have been in vain." It may still with good reason be asked already now whether the 30 years of intensive and extensive discussion cannot be expected to have left any mark whatsoever in the new Roman Catholic Catechism, which is after all published as late as 1994. It does, after all, present the same dogma of grace as the Trent Council, including free will of man, meritoriousness of good works, indulgences and purgatory as well as adoration of saints and Mary. Both Pihkala (CC I 16) and Huovinen (CC II 3) refer to the slowness of the reception process. To quote the latter: "Almost 500 years of separation between churches will not heal quickly, not even in decades." But could not at least some minor changes be expected to have occurred in thirty years? The Catechism of Rome frustrates these expectations deeply. Huovinen further admits that the doctrine of sin and anthropology have "during the latest decades been discussed rather narrowly considering the importance of the matter". But should not genuine unanimity on salvation presuppose a common view on what it is that man is ultimately saved from! If and when such unanimity does not exist, the reached agreement on the doctrine of justification seems like an ostensible solution. For that reason it is no surprise that Pihkala in his own address (CC I 16) resorts to "aims", "goals" and "intentions" which loom behind the joint theological formulations and which we should be able to detect and appreciate when reading the document. The reached agreement has actually become a mere minimum consensus of professional theologians, not an ecclesiastical or ecumenical breakthrough.

30. See BC paragraph 5 (pp. 11-12).

31. The same has been noted by 148 professors of theology in Germany (see above). Otherwise Huovinen (CC II 3).

32. Now the bishops seem to have given up their duty as overseers to minister the right doctrine, since they are repeatedly referring, either with consent or at least permissively, to compromises made between different cliques at the negotiating table regarding the doctrine on justification. Or what should be made of the following quotes? JD chapter 4 "is a compromise between several, partly diverging, proposed alterations" (p. 15). Likewise paragraph 23 "expresses a Lutheran accent, the formulation of which shows an internal compromise of the Lutheran side" (p. 15). The Lutheran view expressed in paragraph 26 "is not fully satisfying, and it shows differing accents within Lutheranism that have not been joined seamlessly." Yet it is proposed for approval "as a summary of accents within Lutheranism", not more accurately defined (see p. 16). Chapters 4.3 and 4.4 then show "the biggest problems in the document". They "have not been wholly removed from the text" (p. 17). The special accents of both parties "are more apparent than in earlier revisions" (p. 17). The somewhat "acceptable" result in 4.7 does "after all not fully meet the alterations proposed by our church" (p. 19). Further the issue of "wages" is presented thus that "the interpretations of the parties can be seen to be left open toward each other" (p. 19).

33. The questions raised by e.g. Junkkaala (CC I 23), Österbacka (CC I 29) or Jokiranta (CC II 2) were not directly commented on. Let it also be taken into account that the Bishops' Committee statement leaves other causes for criticism. They admit, for example, that JD "leaves the second, accusing, use of the law a Lutheran emphasis" (p. 19). What remains a mutual "ex-pression of consensus" of both parties is the "so called third use of the law", i.e. "the prevailing significance of the law to the justified" as guideline to the new life (p. 19). Since many of the Bishops have earlier followed the liberal Lund school theology in strongly rejecting the third use of the law, they are now distinctly prepared to take it back. Or does the statement perhaps show some kind of bargaining to reach unanimity?

34. CC II 17. In *Kokkolan Sanomat* (February 1, 1998), a Finnish newspaper, the Archbishop visions the future of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran church as follows: "[...] we are not striving for assimilation of the churches. We are not by any means returning to Rome. Instead we strive for unity that allows us to reach each other a hand even at the altar." The quote leaves deliberately out the ecumenical steps needed to achieve this kind of hand reaching, although the church unity is clearly anticipated in many documents. See e.g. *Kirche und Rechtfertigung: Das Verständnis der Kirche im Licht der Rechtfertigungslehre* (Paderborn-Frankfurt am Main: Bonifatius, 1994) 41-46, 144-148. The Archbishop seems to take the readers in with his eloquence.

35. E.g. Laulaja (CC I 15), Pihkala (CC I 16), Cantell (CC I 19), Ahonen (CC I 31), Huovinen (CC II 3), Riekkinen (CC II 6).

36. See especially Laulaja (CC I 15), Pihkala (CC I 16), Cantell (CC I 19).

37. CC I 16.

38. See especially Cantell (CC I 19 and 22), Komulainen (CC I 20).

39. CC I 16.

40. Even the Porvoo agreement would in the end not have been thinkable without certain similarities in constitution between Anglicans and Lutherans, namely without unanimity on the episcopate (and especially apostolic succession). Thus the Porvoo agreement was possible with the Nordic churches that have maintained the historical episcopate, unlike for instance in Germany. It would be hard to imagine that unity with the Catholic Church might come at least any easier.

41. A similar vision for the future is sketched by 148 professors of theology in Germany (see above). See also the Letter of Communion, 765-766.

42. This was pointed out by Council member and author Leena Huima. See CC II 14.

43. See preface of the book *Turbentuuko uskonpuhdistus? Rooman kirkon ja Luterilaisen Maailmanliiton uusi selitys vanhurskauttamisopista*. Ed. Simo Kiviranta and Timo Laato (Kauniainen: Perussanoma, 1998).

44. See *Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification*.

45. The fifth clarification.

46. Cf. the definite rejection of JD through 160 German theologian professors (see above Introduction).

47. See especially Mark D. Menacher, "Current Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues" *Lutheran Quarterly* XX (2006): 377-379.

48. Edited and expanded from the original Finnish: "Yhteinen julistus ja kirkkomme virallinen keskustelu. Selvennys vai hämähäys?" in Simo Kiviranta and Timo Laato, *Turbentuuko uskonpuhdistus? Rooman kirkon ja Luterilaisen Maailmanliiton uusi selitys vanhurskauttamisopista* (Leväsjoiki: LSRY, SLEY-kirjat, Uusi Tie, Perussanoma, 1998), 7-35. All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English* (St. Louis: CPH, 1921).