

CENTRO PRO UNIONE

A publication about the activities of the Centro Pro Unione

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Centro Pro Unione

A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement



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Centro Pro Unione Bulletin

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

The Centro Pro Unione in Rome, founded and directed by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, - www.atonementfriars.org - is an ecumenical research and action center.

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

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

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Letter from the Director

The pandemic situation in Italy had some up's and down's, openings and closings during the Fall of last year. In spite of the beginning of the program of vaccination we still had a large number of cases and deaths. With the hope that the Spring would bring some relief, we had to wait until April to begin to loosen the restrictions. However, in spite of this situation the Centro was able to continue with its ministry. This issue of the *Bulletin* brings our readers some of the fruits of this year's activities.

First there was the lecture of our dear friend Rabbi Jack Bemporad who spoke on *God, Science and Religion*. There was no text for this talk but by [clicking on the link](#) you can watch his lecture. This was followed by the annual Paul Wattson/Lurana White lecture given by Prof. Giovanni Maria Vian, former director of *L'Osservatore Romano*. This year's theme was in honor, not only of the co-founders of the Society of the Atonement but also of St. Pius X who allowed the Community to enter into full communion with the Catholic church. His talk entitled "Pio X. Un papa riformatore" is printed in this issue.

Moving into the continued Covid lockdowns of 2021, January 17, 2021 in preparation for the celebration of the Week of Prayer, the Director co-sponsored with the Directors of the Anglican Centre and the Methodist Ecumenical Office "Bringing Voices Together. A Prayer Vigil for Christian Unity" which you can watch here. The Centro's annual Week of Prayer lecture was given by Prof. Myriam Wijlens on "Churches and Moral Discernment. Challenges and Possibilities for Facilitating Dialogue." This was followed by another webinar co-sponsored with the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue by Prof. Menachem Lorberbaum on "The Ethics of Law in Judaism". Two more zoom conferences were given: "Religione, fede e pace" by Prof. Giorgio Gallo, professor and co-founder of the degree program in Science for Peace at the University of Pisa and "The Art of Christian-Muslim Relations" by Prof. Michael D. Calabria, OFM, Director of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies, St. Bonaventure University (USA). These texts will appear in the Fall *Bulletin – Centro Pro Unione*.

Because of the restrictions still in place for indoor gatherings, we have had to cancel the Summer course this year. It is our hope that next year we will be able to have the full three week course.

Our Spring issue includes the supplement of the *Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues* compiled by our librarian, Dr. Loredana Nepi.

Lastly, we would like to announce the theme for the Week of Prayer 2022: **We saw His Star in the East, and we came to worship him** (cf. Mt 2:2-12).

During the pandemic-related crisis, our library showed its resilience by focusing on achievable goals despite restrictions. It ensured its users access to research material by increasing document delivery, improved the quality of the catalog data by correcting the records, reorganized the collection of journals and launched long-term projects (authority records and collective catalog of URBE) in line with international trends.

Other activities which did not stop during the Covid-19 period includes virtual meetings of Phase II of *M.A.D. for Ecumenism - Mutual Accountability Desk* (the E-book of M.A.D. 1 had 1,589 downloads in the first three months), the Italian translation of the Internet pages of the Interconfessional Dialogues of which there are 51 bilateral dialogues and several multilateral ones. The English version has had over 8,800 visits.

We invite our readers to always check our web site for dates and events as well as the up-dating of our data base on the international theological dialogues and of course our two libraries: pro and dialogo.

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



James F. Puglisi, SA
Director Centro Pro Unione

Pio X, un papa riformatore

Prof. Giovanni Maria Vian - Insegna dal 1991 filologia patristica all'Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
Direttore emerito de *L'Osservatore Romano* (2007-2018)

(Organizzata online dal Centro Pro Unione · giovedì, 10 dicembre 2020)



Potranno sorprendere sia il tema che mi è stato proposto sia il titolo scelto per questa breve sintesi, ma non si tratta certo di una forzatura. Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto – che per undici anni, dal 1903 al 1914, fu papa con il nome di Pio X, e che esattamente quarant'anni più tardi, nel 1954, venne proclamato santo – è stato infatti soprattutto un riformatore, benché il suo nome sia rimasto legato alla repressione del modernismo, e dunque alle tendenze più conservatrici, se non addirittura reazionarie, del cattolicesimo.

Va subito detto che senza dubbio la repressione di questo movimento culturale e religioso – che voleva avvicinare la tradizione cristiana al mondo moderno, da cui il nome di modernismo, e che venne nel suo complesso considerato una deviazione inaccettabile dall'ortodossia cattolica – fu durissima, come si vedrà più avanti. Ma al tempo stesso, proprio per la radicalità e l'efficacia dell'opera riformatrice di papa Sarto, non è sostenibile sul piano storico identificare il pontefice con questa azione repressiva.

E per lo stesso motivo del tutto abusivo è trasformarlo nel simbolo per eccellenza di una conservazione refrattaria a ogni cambiamento, o persino della reazione. Questo invece ha fatto mezzo secolo fa, negli anni immediatamente successivi al concilio, Marcel Lefebvre, l'arcivescovo francese che nel 1970 fondò la Fraternità sacerdotale San Pio X, e che è poi finito – nonostante i ripetuti tentativi di riconciliazione di Giovanni Paolo II e dei suoi successori – in una deriva scismatica da Roma. Ma per primo papa Sarto avrebbe trovato intollerabile questa posizione e l'avrebbe quindi rifiutata, se è possibile immaginare questo paradosso.

Ma chi era Sarto? Già le sue origini umili e la sua biografia presentano caratteri di decisa novità rispetto ai predecessori dei secoli precedenti. Bernard Lecomte, autore di un originale *Dictionnaire amoureux des Papes*, scrive con un'efficace espressione che Sarto è stato "il primo papa povero dei tempi moderni": come del resto si legge nel suo testamento, dove Pio X si descrive

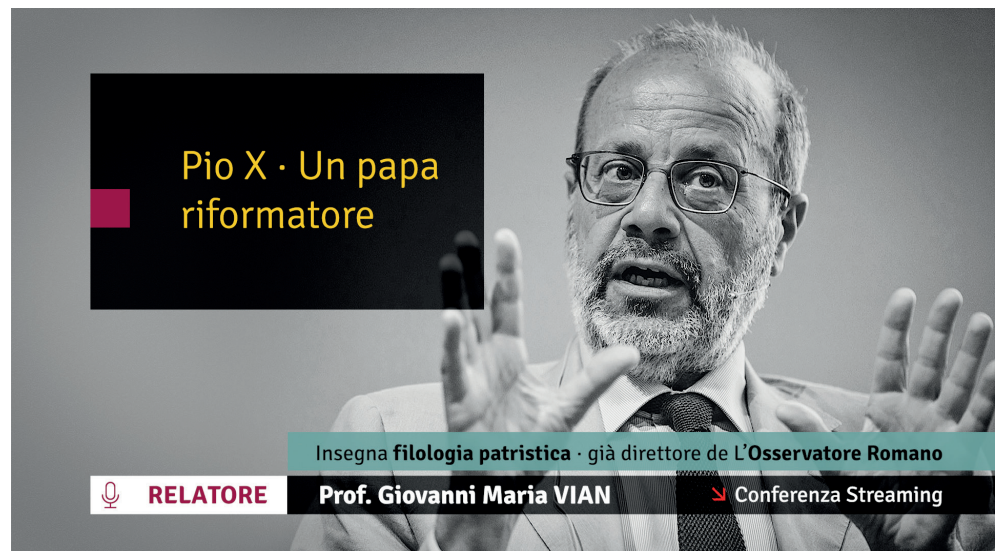


Immagine di benvenuto della conferenza virtuale

come "nato povero, vissuto povero e sicuro di morir poverissimo". Una condizione, causata anche dall'esercizio larghissimo della carità, che nel corso della sua vita Sarto sottolineò più volte.

La giovinezza: cappellano e parroco

Era nato infatti nel 1835 a Riese, un piccolo centro immerso nella campagna veneta allora sotto il dominio dell'Austria. La famiglia era modesta e numerosa, con due figli maschi seguiti da sei sorelle, mentre morirono prestissimo altri due maschi, il primo e l'ultimo della lunga serie, allora non così infrequente. A quindici anni Giuseppe, detto Bepi, entrò nel seminario di Padova, grazie a uno dei posti gratuiti riservati dal patriarca di Venezia ai ragazzi più promettenti e bisognosi. Qui studiò otto anni, che un quarantennio più tardi, in una delle migliaia di lettere conservate, avrebbe definito i "più belli della mia vita". Nel 1858, ventitreenne, nella cittadina di Castelfranco, venne ordinato prete dal vescovo di Treviso, e fu subito destinato come cappellano a Tombolo, un piccolo paese in direzione di Vicenza. Era stata infatti respinta la sua richiesta di frequentare l'università di Padova per poter studiare lingue orientali. Ma proprio a Tombolo il giovanissimo prete manifestò gli interessi che lo avrebbero caratterizzato per tutta la vita: si occupò infatti moltissimo dei fedeli e della loro istruzione catechetica, e molto curò la liturgia, attento in particolar modo al canto.

Nove anni dopo, nel 1867, fu nominato parroco di Salzano, verso Venezia. E proprio qui l'anno successivo chiese alla curia trevisana, ottenendone il consenso, il permesso di poter cantare il *Te Deum* per il compleanno dell'"augusto nostro re Vittorio Emanuele II". Oggi sembra un'ovvietà, ma allora erano trascorsi appena due anni dal plebiscito che, dopo i fatti della terza guerra d'indipendenza, aveva immediatamente sancito il passaggio del Veneto dall'Austria all'Italia – plebiscito a cui il cappellano di Tombolo aveva partecipato – mentre due anni più tardi la presa di Roma avrebbe posto fine in maniera violenta al millenario potere temporale del papa, causando in moltissimi cattolici un vero e proprio trauma.

Il prete trentatreenne, nato suddito austriaco, era e si sentiva lontano dalla politica, ma certamente non aveva pregiudizi nei confronti del regno d'Italia che stava per completare il suo processo unitario a spese dello stato pontificio, né provava risentimento per la cosiddetta "questione romana". Questa invece afflisse e preoccupò Pio IX, ma soprattutto Leone XIII, non a caso entrambi appartenenti a famiglie della piccola aristocrazia provinciale in regioni soggette al papa ancora re come le Marche e il Lazio meridionale. Eletto loro successore, proprio Sarto avrebbe non a caso contribuito a una prima distensione con il regno d'Italia.

Come già era stato a Tombolo da cappellano, anche a Salzano – dove rimase dal 1867 al 1875 – il parroco si dimostrò vicino alla popolazione, soprattutto ai più poveri, in un contesto contadino segnato prevalentemente da condizioni sociali difficili e dalla miseria. Attento amministratore, di temperamento forte e carattere focoso, sapeva comunque trattare con le istituzioni civili locali, che lo nominarono responsabile dell'assistenza comunale e delle scuole elementari. Amato dalla gente, il giorno della partenza dal paese scrisse al cugino don Giuseppe Sarto, suo omonimo: "Non vi descrivo il mio abbattimento per l'amaro distacco dopo una convivenza di otto anni: sono venuto via stamattina due ore avanti il dì senza salutare nessuno e adesso mi sento maggiormente oppresso". E a un altro amico confidò: "Piansi amaramente lasciando i miei parrocchiani, i miei scolaretti, i miei poveri, e i miei fiori". A salutarlo nel dialetto veneto fu un poeta locale, con eloquenti parole: "El xe vegnuo co la vesta sbrisa, el xe partio senza camisa" ("è venuto con la veste consumata, è ripartito senza camicia").

In curia a Treviso

La destinazione era Treviso, sede della diocesi, dove il quarantenne Sarto venne nominato canonico della cattedrale, direttore spirituale del seminario e cancelliere della curia. A chiamarlo era stato il vescovo Zinelli, un filo-austriaco che si era distinto al concilio Vaticano tra i fautori dell'infalibilità papale, proclamata nel 1870. E proprio grazie a Zinelli il nuovo cancelliere, che nel 1871 viaggiò a Vienna, conobbe le opere di un celebre prelado francese accasamente filoromano, Louis Pie, il vescovo di Poitiers poi creato cardinale da Leone XIII, le cui opere avrebbe prediletto e tenuto a portata di mano anche



▶ Il direttore del Centro, Fr. James Puglisi, SA introduce la conferenza del Prof. Vian

da papa. Con i futuri preti, in seminario – che costituì l'impegno maggiore di monsignor Sarto – studiavano allora anche scolari laici: in tutto trecento ragazzi, che seguiva personalmente e che ogni settimana, per due giorni, confessava.

A Treviso trascorse nove anni, e dopo la morte del vescovo Zinelli, monsignor Sarto nel 1879 governò per sette mesi la diocesi in veste di vicario generale capitolare, dimostrandosi prudente fino all'astuzia e alla doppiezza, ma anche energico e retto. Come cancelliere venne confermato dal nuovo vescovo, Callegari, e poi dal suo successore Apollonio, finché nel settembre del 1884 fu nominato vescovo di Mantova e il 16 novembre successivo venne consacrato a Roma. Nella capitale, in quegli anni spesso turbata da disordini provocati da piccoli ma accesi gruppi anticlericali, Sarto era stato per la prima volta nel 1877 e aveva potuto baciare la mano a Pio IX, ed era tornato nel 1881, quando aveva incontrato Leone XIII.

Vescovo a Mantova

Anche l'episcopato mantovano di Sarto durò nove anni, dal 1884 al 1893, come il periodo trascorso a Treviso. La città e il suo territorio attraversavano una crisi profonda, a tratti drammatica, e la diocesi un periodo particolarmente difficile: trent'anni prima gli esponenti liberali e filoitaliani del clero erano stati colpiti duramente dalla spietata repressione austriaca, e la pratica religiosa era calata, in un contesto di grave crisi economica.

Entrato a Mantova nella primavera del 1885 dopo il fallimento, uno dopo l'altro, di due vescovi intransigenti, già in estate il loro successore iniziò la visita pastorale delle 153 parrocchie della diocesi che durò tre anni. Subito dopo Sarto indisse il sinodo, il primo dopo due secoli, mentre non riuscì a celebrarne un secondo, e per sostenere il bilancio vescovile affittò in parte il palazzo adiacente alla cattedrale dove risiedeva. "Lavorare è godere, e l'anima è un fuoco che si alimenta solo con il lavoro" scrisse in una lettera riassumendo le sue giornate mantovane, che erano pienissime come quelle a Tombolo, a Salzano e a Treviso, grazie a una disciplina ferrea che si era imposto sin da giovane. Il vescovo aveva le porte sempre aperte, soprattutto per i poveri, che soccorreva senza risparmio, come aveva fatto già da cappellano, da parroco e da cancelliere della curia.

Intransigente ma al tempo stesso duttile e realista, Sarto comprese subito la difficile situazione della diocesi, molto secolarizzata e dunque completamente diversa da quelle venete: "Qui siamo *in partibus infidelium*" esclama in una lettera. Di conseguenza, per tutto il periodo della sua permanenza a Mantova, come scrive il suo più recente e acuto biografo, Gianpaolo Romanato, "fece il vescovo e basta, ben guardandosi dall'interferire nelle faccende civili, ma ben attento anche a impedire che avvenisse il contrario", e riuscì in questo modo "a rasserenare completamente i rapporti fra le due componenti della città, quella cattolica e quella laica". Insomma, secondo il giudizio di un autorevole storico come Roger Aubert, il vescovo "riuscì a fare in pochi anni della diocesi di Mantova una diocesi modello".

Di estrazione modesta e segnato da una formazione culturale ed ecclesiastica solida ma molto tradizionale, Sarto compensava questi limiti con la sua semplicità e umanità. A visitarlo un giorno capitò Achille Ratti, l'erudito prete della diocesi di Milano che nel 1922 sarebbe divenuto papa con il nome di Pio XI, e ad aprirgli la porta fu il vescovo in persona, che non esitò a preparargli un caffè.

Un altro episodio del periodo mantovano è definito da Romanato sì minore ma "indicativo della sua libertà interiore rispetto alle angustie della teologia del

tempo". Insieme al giovane rettore del seminario, don Giovanni Battista Rosa, il vescovo capitò davanti al cimitero della non trascurabile comunità ebraica della città e gli chiese se per quei morti avrebbe recitato il *De profundis*. Alla risposta negativa del prete, Sarto si scoprì il capo, disse per intero il salmo che si prega per i defunti e alla fine soggiunse: "Vedi, adesso noi abbiamo fatto la nostra parte. Il Signore farà la sua. Poiché non è poi detto che la teologia del Signore sia come quella insegnata dai Padri Gesuiti dell'Università Gregoriana". E va anche ricordato che Sarto, già quando era parroco a Salzano, ebbe ottimi rapporti con il più importante imprenditore del paese, l'ebreo Moisè Vita Jacur, mantenendoli successivamente con la famiglia, in particolare con il parlamentare Leone Romanin Jacur.

Cardinale patriarca di Venezia

Alla fine del 1891, morto il patriarca di Venezia, cardinale Agostini, si aprì il problema della sua successione, non facile per il nodo costituito dall'*exequatur*, cioè il necessario consenso preliminare dell'autorità civile. In sua mancanza, infatti, il vescovo nominato dal papa non poteva usufruire delle rendite connesse all'incarico, né risiedere nel palazzo vescovile, mentre tutti i suoi atti non venivano riconosciuti dallo stato. E questo nel contesto dell'aspro conflitto tra chiesa e regno d'Italia acuitosi dopo la presa di Roma.

Nel 1873 erano in questa difficile situazione oltre cento vescovi, tra cui quelli di Venezia, appunto, e di Milano, che vennero sostenuti dalla Santa sede anche economicamente grazie all'Obolo di san Pietro, di origine medievale ma che proprio nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento si era molto diffuso. "La durezza dello scontro ebbe però un effetto non previsto e non voluto dalle autorità italiane" scrive Romanato, con il risultato di rinsaldare episcopato e clero attorno al papa e di emarginare i cattolici liberali.

Almeno due candidati a Venezia rifiutarono, e fin dai primi mesi del 1892 si cominciò a pensare a Sarto che, dopo aver resistito, a metà del 1893 accettò la nomina a patriarca, che fu subito accompagnata dalla creazione cardinalizia nel concistoro del 15 giugno. L'ingresso nella piccola ma gloriosa sede poté però avvenire solo un anno e mezzo più tardi, il 24 novembre 1894, e fu solenne, concludendo di fatto l'episcopato a Mantova, iniziato nel 1885. Per la terza volta si era così ripetuto anche nella città lombarda un periodo di nove anni, come quelli trascorsi a Tombolo da cappellano, a Treviso da cancelliere, e come sarà a Venezia da patriarca.

Il patriarcato si prolungò infatti sino al luglio del 1903. "Questo è il fine della mia missione: riunire in

Cristo tutte le cose, *instaurare omnia in Christo*" dichiarò il cardinale con parole che poi divennero il motto del pontificato. Come a Mantova, quasi subito Sarto iniziò la visita delle parrocchie e nel 1898 riunì il sinodo. Lontano dalla politica, come confermavano al governo italiano i rapporti del prefetto e della corte d'appello competente prima dell'entrata a Venezia, il patriarca si mosse tuttavia molto abilmente e con efficacia, ispirando e favorendo contro i radicali un'alleanza moderata tra cattolici e liberali che nell'estate del 1895 conquistò il comune, dando così inizio a un lunghissimo periodo di stabilità amministrativa.

"Dietro questo prelato definito impolitico c'era in realtà un forte realismo politico" osserva con ragione Romanato, sottolineando che pochi anni più tardi, ormai papa, "ripeté su scala nazionale l'operazione che sulla laguna aveva già dato brillanti risultati, scoraggiando in tutti i modi la costituzione di un partito politico di cattolici". Un nodo, quest'ultimo, che non solo in Italia si sarebbe ripresentato nel corso di tutto il Novecento con vicende alterne e pareri tra loro opposti. Il patriarca Sarto non esitò poi, autorizzato dalla Segreteria di stato, a incontrare per tre volte i reali, primo cardinale italiano a farlo e benché non amasse queste occasioni cerimoniali.

Agli anni veneziani risalgono le testimonianze di due personalità laiche, rese peraltro molto tempo dopo. Nel 1932 lo scrittore Filippo Crispolti lo descriveva come "uomo intelligentissimo", che di fronte all'interlocutore "teneva fermi in viso i bellissimi occhi che illuminavano la bellissima fronte. Senonché nel guardarvi aveva l'aspetto di chi guarda anche se stesso, per non cadere in insidie che il vostro discorso possa tendergli". Con una notazione non banale sul carattere dell'uomo lo scrittore aggiungeva tuttavia l'impressione "che dell'ampio mondo vivente di fatto fuori della chiesa egli conoscesse appieno gli errori in sé, ma non abbastanza il modo in cui essi erano entrati e stavano effettivamente nella testa e nel cuore di quegli uomini". Un ventennio più tardi il grande penalista Francesco Carnelutti in una conferenza del 1959 avrebbe ricordato con emozione il primo incontro con il patriarca, che ormai da cinque anni era stato proclamato santo e le cui spoglie proprio quell'anno erano tornate temporaneamente a Venezia per concessione di Giovanni XXIII: "Riudo una voce pacata e risento lo sguardo di due occhi fermi e chiari e ancora mi avvolge come una carezza".

Il conclave del 1903

Il 20 luglio 1903, dopo un'agonia di due settimane, morì il novantatreenne Leone XIII, che aveva regnato per venticinque anni dopo i trentadue di Pio IX. Benché prevedibile e annunciato da decenni, l'avvenimento davvero epocale della fine del potere



► Papa Pio X, raffigurato su dipinto di Mirella Onofri (collezione D. Bracale)

temporale pontificio, l'espansione sempre più mondiale del cattolicesimo, l'indubbia personalità dei due papi e la durata dei loro pontificati avevano attirato l'attenzione sulla morte del vecchissimo e venerando pontefice, rispettato e celebrato anche da giornalisti e scrittori laici, e dunque sulla sua successione.

Iniziato la sera del 31 luglio e protrattosi per quattro giorni, il conclave fu drammatico per l'opposizione alla candidatura di Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, che era stato segretario di stato di Leone XIII ed era notoriamente filofrancese. Ricorrendo infatti a una prerogativa dei sovrani cattolici, il cosiddetto *ius exclusivæ*, utilizzato dal 1590 e tuttavia non più esercitato dal 1830, il veto fu dichiarato il 2 agosto. A nome di Francesco Giuseppe, l'imperatore d'Austria, lo rese noto uno degli elettori, il cardinale Jan Puzyna, arcivescovo di Cracovia, che apparteneva ai "cardinali di corona" o "nazionali", così detti per la vicinanza ai rispettivi sovrani e agli interessi delle diverse nazioni. Ma questo episodio "fu solo l'ultima delle tante pressioni esercitate dai poteri politici dominanti durante il pontificato di Leone XIII, allo scopo di orientare nell'immediato o nel lungo periodo le scelte politiche o religiose del romano pontefice" osserva Luciano Trincia, che ha ricostruito nel libro *Conclave e potere politico* tutta la vicenda fin dalle sue origini lontane.

Non fu però il veto in conclave contro Rampolla – a cui erano ostili anche i cardinali italiani e i polacchi – a rivelarsi decisivo, secondo Romanato. “Pesava un altro veto implicito: quello che i francesi portavano a ogni altra candidatura che non fosse la sua” scrive lo studioso, riecheggiando il parere di un autorevolissimo protagonista di quegli avvenimenti che era invece favorevole alla candidatura del patriarca di Venezia, e cioè il cardinale Ferrari, l'arcivescovo di Milano beatificato nel 1987.

Presentando lo studio di Trincia lo storico Giorgio Rumi sostiene che Sarto era il candidato di Berlino e quindi di Vienna, e lo definisce forse “meno celeste di quanto si creda”, mentre Romanato del patriarca di Venezia, fondandosi su diverse testimonianze dirette, scrive: “È assolutamente certo che egli fece di tutto per scoraggiare i cardinali dal votarlo”. Dopo la dichiarazione del veto la candidatura di Rampolla raccolse il massimo dei suffragi che poteva raccogliere. Questi tuttavia non erano sufficienti all'elezione e progressivamente i voti dei cardinali si orientarono sul sessantottenne patriarca di Venezia, che dunque il 4 agosto venne eletto con 50 voti su 62 e prese il nome di Pio X. Iniziava così un pontificato che sarebbe durato undici anni, sino allo scoppio della prima guerra mondiale: un pontificato che avrebbe profondamente modificato il volto della chiesa cattolica.

Un papa nuovo

Le decisioni prese dal nuovo papa mostrarono subito come fosse davvero un papa nuovo, probabilmente il primo ad aver percorso i diversi gradini della vita ecclesiastica e ad aver fatto in questo modo un'esperienza pastorale completa: cappellano, parroco, direttore spirituale di seminario, cancelliere, vescovo e patriarca. Nuovo ed estraneo alla curia, con una decisione immediata, che sorprese e deluse non pochi tra gli stessi sostenitori di Sarto, lo stesso giorno dell'elezione il papa nominò pro-segretario di stato il giovane segretario del conclave, l'arcivescovo spagnolo Rafael Merry del Val, appena trentottenne.

Nato a Londra da una famiglia aristocratica, poliglotta e diplomatico brillante, decisamente conservatore e intransigente, Merry del Val era a capo dell'istituto dove si formavano i ranghi della diplomazia pontificia, dedicandosi nello stesso tempo senza risparmio a opere di assistenza e carità nel popolare quartiere di Trastevere. Tre mesi più tardi Pio X lo creò cardinale e lo nominò segretario di stato, il primo non italiano, e questi si rivelò un efficace e fedelissimo collaboratore del pontefice.

Altri cinque ecclesiastici italiani furono invece chiamati a lavorare strettamente con il papa nella cosiddetta “segretariola”. Questo piccolo gruppo lo coadiuvò in un impegno dai ritmi intensissimi che occupava l'intera giornata, spezzata da passeggiate nei giardini, senza alcun cerimoniale ma che non riuscivano ad attenuare nel pontefice venuto dalla campagna veneta la malinconia e l'oppressione indotte dai palazzi vaticani. Sarto – che si descrisse in una lettera “a disposizione non solo dei vescovi ma di tutti dalla mattina alla sera, sbrigando alla notte la corrispondenza” – studiava a fondo le questioni più diverse, non risparmiandosi nelle udienze di lavoro e scrivendo personalmente migliaia di lettere, ma anche innumerevoli appunti e minute per la sua segreteria particolare.

“Quanto il papa abbia saputo dominare questa macchina, o quanto, invece, ne sia stato dominato, è questione tuttora aperta”, soprattutto per quanto riguarda la repressione del modernismo, ha sintetizzato Romanato, sottolineando però che Pio X “si serviva di persone sua fiducia, generalmente estranee alla burocrazia vaticana”. I motivi di questa scelta, secondo lo studioso, erano diversi: “La sfiducia nel mondo curiale, il timore dei tempi lunghi della burocrazia romana, il suo temperamento *naturaliter* accentratore, la volontà di non perdere mai il controllo della situazione, probabilmente anche il bisogno di rapportarsi con il mondo senza farlo filtrare da altri”.

A questo governo forte e personale Pio X affiancò subito, come aveva sempre fatto nella sua vita, l'impegno pastorale. Già nella prima estate il papa, di fatto recluso e autorecluso nei suoi palazzi, cominciò a invitare la domenica pomeriggio nel cortile di San Damaso e in quello della Pigna i fedeli romani, e improvvisando spiegava il vangelo con parole semplici. Una decisione senza precedenti, che suscitò critiche in curia ma che rese Sarto subito popolarissimo e venerato in un'epoca in cui, proprio a causa della fine traumatica del potere temporale, la devozione per il pontefice si era molto accresciuta. “Il Vaticano non è più quello di Leone XIII: vi è una semplicità che fa bene al cuore” scriveva già poche settimane dopo l'elezione Geremia Bonomelli, il vescovo di Cremona, riportando le schiette impressioni del suo segretario.

Le impressioni riportate da Bonomelli vennero confermate dal rifiuto dei cerimoniali, come l'uso del bacio al piede e dei battimani che accoglievano il pontefice quando scendeva a San Pietro e che andavano rivolti, come disse Pio X, “solo al Signore e non al papa”. Secondo il costume adottato sin da giovane prete, il pontefice fu alieno da ogni favoritismo, anche e soprattutto nei confronti dei familiari, e attentissimo all'uso del denaro,

sul quale subito ammonì con nettezza e severità i suoi segretari. E di fronte alla minaccia di una rivolta della guardia svizzera, che alla sua elezione pretendeva una gratifica, Pio X reagì decidendo senza mezzi termini lo scioglimento dell'antico corpo militare, dal quale fu distolto a fatica dai collaboratori che alla fine riuscirono a ottenere la revoca del provvedimento.

Alla diocesi di Roma il pontefice – pur rigorosamente recluso e autorecluso nei palazzi vaticani – dedicò molta attenzione, sopprimendo diverse parrocchie del centro, istituendone altre nei nuovi quartieri di una città che stava rapidamente crescendo, e nominando parroci e viceparroci giovani, attivi e promettenti, il cui primo gruppo volle incontrare seduti al suo tavolo, al di fuori di ogni protocollo. Già l'11 febbraio 1904 dispose la visita apostolica a Roma e, meno di un mese dopo, quella delle diocesi italiane, troppo numerose e che avrebbe voluto drasticamente ridurre, un disegno che solo un'ottantina d'anni più tardi è stato preso e messo in atto, ma parzialmente. Nella diocesi romana si appoggiò soprattutto a un prete colto, Francesco Faberj, segretario del vicariato, che avrebbe poi ricordato "gravi opposizioni ed autorevoli influenze per cercare di impedire e di modificare i propositi del papa", opposizioni che alla morte del pontefice ebbero la conseguenza di emarginare il fedele prelate. Nonostante questa resistenza, l'opera di riforma di Pio X sia a Roma che in Italia andò avanti con risultati in gran parte positivi e duraturi.

La repressione del modernismo

Come accennato all'inizio l'interpretazione del pontificato di Sarto e della stessa figura del papa è in gran parte condizionata dalla repressione del modernismo, fenomeno che tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio del nuovo secolo segnò il cattolicesimo, posto di fronte alle esigenze crescenti della ricerca storica e della critica applicate anche ai testi biblici e alla riflessione teologica. Il tentativo, coraggioso e importante, fu nel suo complesso quello di mettere al passo con la modernità una tradizione di studi solida e spesso illustre ma ormai irrimediabilmente arretrata. Per di più in un contesto dove appariva compiuta la frattura fra tradizione cristiana e società che era stata favorita dalla progressiva laicizzazione della cultura.

Avviata già sotto Leone XIII ma dispiegatasi sin dagli inizi del pontificato di papa Sarto, la reazione di Roma fu fermissima per la preoccupazione di un'integrità dottrinale che obiettivamente era messa in pericolo dai più radicali esponenti modernisti. Si arrivò così nel 1907 all'enciclica *Pascendi* che definiva il modernismo "raccolta di tutte le eresie" (*omnium hæreseon conlectum*), e che fu seguita da una repressione indiscriminata.

Ha scritto il gesuita Giacomo Martina nella sua *Storia della Chiesa da Lutero ai nostri giorni*: "Pio X intervenne infatti immediatamente, in modo drastico e inflessibile. Lo spingeva in questa direzione la coscienza della sua responsabilità, la gravità effettiva del pericolo delle correnti radicali, il modo subdolo e sleale con cui queste si nascondevano, rendendo difficile una sicura individuazione". E non va dimenticata la vicinanza di alcuni modernisti ad ambienti teosofici e massonici, che è stata messa in luce da Lucetta Scaraffia in *Donne ottimiste*. Alla reazione romana va dunque riconosciuto il merito di chiarire la posta in gioco, ma le misure adottate furono appunto durissime, e soprattutto vennero messe in atto con metodi vergognosi e indegni della causa che intendevano difendere. Tra queste, la costituzione da parte di un prelate vaticano estremista, Umberto Benigni, del Sodalitium Pianum, una piccola associazione segreta intitolata a Pio V, inquisitore domenicano che era l'ultimo papa santo.

La repressione contro i modernisti, voluta e permessa dal papa, fece in questo modo terra bruciata di ogni fermento intellettuale e colpì anche ecclesiastici fedeli a Roma. Tra loro, lo storico Louis Duchesne, direttore dell'École française de Rome, il grande esegeta Marie-Josèphe Lagrange, fondatore a Gerusalemme dell'École biblique, e persino il cardinale Ferrari.

Venne ammonito anche il giovane Angelo Roncalli, che a Roma fu compagno di seminario del più famoso modernista italiano, Ernesto Buonaiuti. Il futuro successore di Sarto come patriarca di Venezia e poi come papa era suo sincero ammiratore sin dal 1898, quando lo aveva visto per la prima volta a Bergamo. Un'ammirazione che il cardinale Roncalli nel 1954, poche settimane prima della canonizzazione di Pio X, descrisse e definì come "una attrazione, direi, una familiarità senza parole, una devozione timorosa ed amorosa, un incantesimo benefico e incoraggiante al ben sentire con la Chiesa, pensando e guardando a lui, ed a seguire sempre la retta via e la più sicura in ogni circostanza".

Il risultato più grave della repressione antimodernista fu la lunga interruzione del rinnovamento culturale del cattolicesimo, con conseguenze protrattesi per decenni, se si pensa che ancora a metà degli anni cinquanta il giovane Joseph Ratzinger venne accusato di modernismo. Sintomatico nel 1965, anno della conclusione del concilio che di questo necessario rinnovamento fu espressione, è il giudizio equilibrato, citato da Martina, di un altro importante teologo tedesco, Karl Rahner: "La lotta della Chiesa contro il modernismo fu bensì, certo, anche la lotta risoluta e vittoriosa in difesa della sua autoconsapevolezza teologica nella sua portata suprema, del suo possesso di una Rivelazione

divina e d'una sua legittimazione che deriva da Dio e non da uomini. Tuttavia fu pure, considerata empiricamente, la lotta di un integralismo che voleva dominare la vita intera direttamente in senso ecclesiastico, di una neoscolastica che si chiudeva ad un rapporto positivo con la filosofia moderna, adottando uno stile di pensiero e di vita da restaurazione, proveniente dalla prima metà del diciannovesimo secolo, stile che non era adeguato né alla grande tradizione della Chiesa, né al presente, né riusciva a mantener viva la legittima eredità della *philosophia perennis*; di un conservatorismo sociale e gerarchico, che credeva di non poter trovare dappertutto la verità e la grazia di Dio, bensì soltanto nel guscio che la Chiesa si era costruito dal tempo dell'Illuminismo. La Chiesa ha perduto *questa* lotta contro il modernismo, poiché alla lunga, in ragione della sua essenza, non poteva affatto *volerla condurre*".

Diritto, politica, vita cristiana: le riforme

Quasi immediate furono le decisioni riformatrici del papa su diverse questioni che gli apparivano urgenti. Poche settimane dopo il conclave affrontò la questione del veto, che venne affidata già in autunno a un prete appena ventisettenne entrato giovanissimo al servizio della Santa Sede, Eugenio Pacelli, il futuro pontefice che mezzo secolo più tardi avrebbe proclamato santo Pio X. Il diritto di veto fu così proibito da una costituzione apostolica, entrata in vigore già il 20 gennaio 1904 ma resa nota solo cinque anni dopo. Il provvedimento fu completato poco più tardi da una riforma globale dell'elezione papale, che era volta a rafforzare l'autonomia e la libertà dei cardinali, grazie a norme poi di fatto soltanto ritoccate dai successori di Pio X fino al 2007, data dell'ultimo provvedimento in materia di Benedetto XVI.

Più impegnativa fu la riforma della curia romana, a cui si era più volte pensato nel corso dell'Ottocento, ma senza risultati. La riforma era resa urgente dal crollo dello stato pontificio, che anche in questo ambito, come scrive Romanato, "segnò un netto spartiacque: da un lato, infatti, cessarono le incombenze politiche, amministrative e giudiziarie legate al potere civile, dall'altro crebbero le necessità di governo della Chiesa universale". La riforma fu seguita personalmente dal papa e portata a termine nel primo quinquennio del pontificato, certo con "una



► La conferenza si è tenuta in streaming trasmessa nella WebTv, disponibile per rivederla su · www.prounione.it/webtv

visione prevalentemente giuridica" sottolinea lo studioso, ma anche "con una percezione delle disfunzioni e delle ingiustizie del governo ecclesiastico che veniva da una sensibilità molto più pastorale che canonistica". L'impianto cinquecentesco della curia, che risale a Sisto V, fu così modernizzato con la costituzione apostolica *Sapienti consilio*, del 1908, e si è sostanzialmente mantenuto per un sessantennio, sino alla riforma di Paolo VI che nel 1967 ha radicalmente rimodellato la curia romana ponendo al suo centro la segreteria di stato e che è stata seguita da altri mutamenti.

Un'impresa ancor più difficile fu voluta da Pio X con la riforma del diritto canonico attraverso un codice, che già nel 1870 durante il concilio Vaticano trentatré vescovi avevano auspicato definendola un'"opera davvero ardua" (*opus sane arduum*). E appunto *Arduum sane munus* s'intitolò il 19 marzo 1904 il motuproprio con cui il pontefice decretava l'inizio dei lavori, che affidò a Pietro Gasparri, canonista famoso ormai da anni al servizio della Santa Sede, cardinale dal 1907 e poi segretario di stato di Pio XI. Gasparri "garantì il termine dell'opera in meno d'un ventennio e a un costo minimo", e il risultato fu davvero strabiliante: come ha efficacemente sintetizzato lo scrittore e giornalista Carlo Falconi in *I Papi del ventesimo secolo*, "tredici anni dopo, con un anticipo di sette sul previsto, ed essendo costato soltanto cinquantamila lire dell'epoca all'erario pontificio, nonostante che in certi momenti vi avessero lavorato fino a cinquemila collaboratori contemporaneamente a Roma, e in ogni parte del mondo, oltre, s'intende, ai cinquanta membri della speciale commissione, il Codice di Diritto Canonico era pronto, secondo la promessa, coi suoi 2414 articoli e Benedetto XV, nella pentecoste del 1917, lo promulgava al mondo intero".

L'obiettivo dunque fu raggiunto in pieno e la spesa necessaria, oggi corrispondente a circa duecentomila euro, risultò davvero contenuta, se si tiene conto del giudizio complessivo di Carlo Fantappiè, che in *Chiesa romana e modernità giuridica* ha studiato a fondo la codificazione, basata su un larghissimo coinvolgimento dell'episcopato mondiale: "Non si erra affermando che il codice piobenedettino s'impone come l'impresa giuridica collettiva più imponente che sia stata tentata in Occidente non solo per l'ampiezza dei materiali e delle fonti giuridiche ridotte a sistema, ma anche per l'elevato numero dei redattori e per l'ampiezza del processo di consultazione". Entrato in vigore nel 1918, il *Codex iuris canonici* voluto da papa Sarto è rimasto valido per sessantacinque anni, cioè fino a quando è stato sostituito nel 1983 da quello vigente, che si era reso necessario dopo i cambiamenti introdotti dal concilio.

Ma "il terreno sul quale la linea di Pio X rappresenta la novità forse più consistente, è rappresentato dal rapporto della Chiesa con gli Stati" ha giustamente osservato Romanato, che ricorda la testimonianza di un curiale a cui il pontefice ripeteva con nettezza: "Lei è giovane, ma si ricordi sempre che la politica della Chiesa è quella di non fare politica e di andare sempre per la retta via". Il primo banco di prova fu la Francia, che nel 1904 ruppe le relazioni diplomatiche con la Santa Sede e varò l'anno successivo la separazione tra stato e chiesa con la denuncia dell'ormai secolare concordato napoleonico. Il papa reagì duramente in difesa dei diritti della chiesa e proibì ai vescovi ogni compromesso, affermando che preferiva "la libertà con la povertà che la ricchezza con la schiavitù". Nel 1911 venne la volta del Portogallo, e anche in questo caso la reazione papale fu fermissima. Il bilancio, al momento aspro e drammatico, finì comunque per risultare positivo, come sottolinea Falconi: "La storia recente aveva dimostrato che la forza della Chiesa era nello spirituale e non nel temporale. In ogni nazione del mondo, che avesse contato dei cattolici, Pio X volle dunque fare la politica dell'interesse della Chiesa. E, contrariamente a quello che spesso si dice, egli la fece senz'alcun partito preso verso le forme di regime esistenti nei singoli Stati, accettando le diverse situazioni senza alcuna rigidità", libero "da qualunque propensione particolare", come poi testimoniò il suo segretario di stato, che aveva contribuito a elaborare e a realizzare senza esitazioni questa linea politica, flessibile e insieme intransigente.

Così il pontefice prese le difese dei cattolici polacchi e irlandesi, appoggiando l'irredentismo ma nello stesso tempo si dimostrò duttile nei rapporti con il Regno Unito, con il Giappone e nei diversi paesi dell'America meridionale. Con l'Italia infine i rapporti iniziarono a

distendersi per l'assoluta indifferenza di papa Sarto nei confronti del potere temporale. Come mostra questa battuta che gli venne attribuita: "Se il Re mi mandasse a dire di riprendere possesso di Roma, perché egli se ne parte e me la lascia, io gli farei rispondere: resti al Quirinale e se ne parlerà un'altra volta. Ci mancherebbe altro per la Santa Sede". E nota Romanato che nella prima enciclica di Pio X significativamente non compare "alcun cenno" alla questione romana. In questa temperie, e in coerenza con la linea già adottata a Venezia da patriarca, il papa attenuò la proibizione ai cattolici di partecipare alla vita politica in modo da consentire coalizioni antisocialiste, ma fu del tutto contrario a un loro partito.

Oltre che nella dimensione politica, fu nella vita cristiana dove si avvertì più concretamente l'incidenza delle riforme di papa Sarto, anticipatrici di quelle dei decenni successivi al punto che il pontefice è stato considerato un pioniere del movimento liturgico. Pio X intervenne già nel 1903 con la riforma della musica sacra, che riportò al canto gregoriano, e quindi nel 1911 con quelle del breviario e del calendario liturgico, sfolto e incentrato sulla celebrazione domenicale. Ma soprattutto importanti e durature furono nel 1905 la promozione della comunione frequente e addirittura quotidiana, consentita dal 1911 anche ai bambini di sette anni, e infine la preparazione di un catechismo che è rimasto legato al suo nome. Il testo ebbe ben cinque stesure successive fino a quella del 1912, articolata in quasi cinquecento domande e risposte, e rimasta in uso per decenni fino al concilio Vaticano II.

La morte e la santità

Nella primavera del 1913, quasi settantottenne, il papa si ammalò piuttosto seriamente e iniziò così l'ultimo tratto della sua vita terrena. In quei mesi la situazione internazionale stava precipitando ormai verso la guerra, quel "guerrone" che da tempo Pio X presentiva. "I popoli privati della luce della verità rivelata da Dio, non più avvezzi ai freni della legge di Cristo, accesi di cieche passioni, corrono a comune rovina" disse il papa il 25 maggio 1914 nel concistoro per la creazione di tredici cardinali. Tra questi era Giacomo Della Chiesa, l'arcivescovo di Bologna che esattamente cento giorni più tardi sarebbe divenuto il suo successore con il nome di Benedetto XV. Il 23 luglio l'impero austroungarico dichiarò guerra alla Serbia e fu questo l'inizio del conflitto che in quattro anni avrebbe fatto nove milioni di morti e devastato il continente, come il papa prevede in un'ultima angosciata esortazione il 2 agosto: "Mentre l'Europa quasi tutta è trascinata nei vortici di una funestissima guerra, ai cui pericoli, alle cui stragi e alle cui conseguenze nessuno può pensare senza sentirsi opprimere dal dolore e dallo spavento".

Fino alla festa dell'Assunta il papa celebrò messa e diede udienza, poi passò tre giorni tra il letto e il tavolo, conversando la sera con due sorelle e due nipoti. Il 18 sera nel congedarsi da loro chiese un'avemaria, come "un vecchio prete di campagna" ha scritto Nello Vian. La mattina dopo entrò in agonia, e nelle prime ore del 20 agosto, passata da poco più di un'ora la mezzanotte, morì.

Prete, vescovo e cardinale vicino ai fedeli, Sarto fu immediatamente percepito come un papa diverso, popolarissimo, e già durante il pontificato iniziarono a diffondersi una sorta di venerazione per la sua figura e addirittura la fama di santità, su cui ironizzava lo stesso pontefice. A un interlocutore che gli chiedeva se fosse vero che faceva miracoli Pio X replicò con una efficace battuta: "Che vuoi, caro, a questo mondo bisogna far di tutto".

Oltre che problematico, il nodo della santità papale è molto intricato ed è stato ulteriormente complicato dalla canonizzazione di ben tre pontefici – Giovanni XXIII e Giovanni Paolo II nel 2014, poi Paolo VI nel 2018 – da parte di Francesco, un fatto senza precedenti. Santi vengono tradizionalmente considerati i successori dell'apostolo Pietro dei primi cinque secoli, poi questi riconoscimenti diminuiscono e si rarefanno, sin quasi a sparire nel secondo millennio. Ma in due periodi il papato si rilancia proprio affermando la santità dei pontefici, non a caso tra l'XI e il XII secolo durante la riforma gregoriana e dopo la fine del potere temporale, che accelera

l'esaltazione della figura del papa iniziata dopo il trauma della rivoluzione francese.

In questo contesto il primo avvio della difficile e controversa causa di canonizzazione di Pio X si ha tra il 1923 e il 1931, poi soprattutto durante il pontificato di Pio XII. Nel 1943 l'antico collaboratore di papa Sarto fece infatti riprendere e poi portare a termine la causa, che era stata interrotta per le opposizioni suscitate dai metodi di repressione del modernismo e che avanzò tra le polemiche, addirittura sino a poco prima della beatificazione nel 1951. Finché nel 1954, oltre due secoli dopo l'ultima canonizzazione di un papa, Pio X venne proclamato santo.



▶ Q&A · L'oratore della lezione, Prof. Vian, conclude la diretta stream con le risposte alle domande degli utenti

Nota bibliografica

La biografia più recente e completa è quella di Gianpaolo Romanato, *Pio X. Alle origini del cattolicesimo contemporaneo*, Torino 2014 (con bibliografia). Alcuni episodi e momenti della vita, ricostruiti sulle lettere di Sarto e su altre fonti contemporanee, sono nella nuova edizione, postuma, del libro di Nello Vian, *Avemaria per un vecchio prete. Intermezzi aneddotici lungo la vita di san Pio X*, Padova 2013 (con bibliografia). Dello stesso autore va ricordato il profilo *Il santo Pontefice romano Pio X*, illustrato da bellissime fotografie di Leonard von Matt, introdotto dal patriarca di Venezia, cardinale Angelo Roncalli, e pubblicato in cinque lingue nel 1954 alla vigilia della canonizzazione (da qui è tratta la citazione di Roncalli).

Facilitating Dialogue to build Koinonia: A Study Document on Churches and Moral Discernment by the Faith and Order Commission

REPLAY VIDEO OF THE CONFERENCE · LINK

www.prounione.it/webtv/live/21-jan-2021

Prof. Dr. Myriam Wijlens - Professor of Canon Law at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Erfurt, Germany · Member of the Faith & Order Commission and member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

▶ (Organized online by the Centro Pro Unione · Thursday, 21 January 2021)



During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on January 20, 2021 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches approved the Study Document *Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to build koinonia*.¹ The document is the result of a process that began approximately 40 years ago. Having had the privilege of serving as a member of the Commission on behalf of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity since 2008 and having been a member of its study group “Moral Discernment in the Churches” from 2008 onwards and the co-convenor of this study group since 2015, it is an honor to present this document. The first section contains relevant information about the background of and the process leading to this Study Document,² while the second section focuses on the content of the document itself.

1. The Process Leading to the 2021 Study Document

1.1 Preliminary Work - 1980 till 2013

“Amid an increasingly complex world in which people of different churches live besides and with each other

¹ *Churches and Moral Discernment: Vol. 3 Facilitating Dialogue to build koinonia*, Faith and Order Paper, 235 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021). Hereafter FD followed by the number of the paragraph in the document.

² The author presented the current study within the Centro Pro Unione Lecture Series in Rome during the week of Prayer for Christian Unity on January 21, 2021. She wishes to express gratitude to Rev. Patrick Cogan, SA, who encouraged her thirty years ago to use her canonical expertise to focus on its role and possible contribution in ecumenism, as well as to the other members of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, in particular the Director of the Centro Pro Unione, Rev. James Puglisi, SA, who supported her in many ways to develop her expertise in the interaction of ecclesiology, ecumenism and canon law.



▶ Welcoming image of the live video lecture

and in which faithful belonging to the same church live in rather diverse contexts around the globe, churches are confronted with new moral and ethical questions. The need for a reflection on a given moral position then arises.”³ When churches and/or individual members within a community discern what would be the right teaching or action to take, major tensions between the churches and / or within them might arise. Difficulties arise at all levels in the churches and communities: individual, within churches and between churches. “While the churches draw on many common sources in the process of moral discernment, the ways in which they engage these sources and the authority they give to them vary from

³ Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, “Preface,” in Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, Simone SINN (eds), *Churches and Moral Discernment, Vol. 2 Learning from History*, Faith and Order Papers, 229 (Geneva: WCC, 2021) ix. Also accessible at: <https://bit.ly/WCC-TwoVolumes> (Retrieved: May 18, 2021)

church to church,”⁴ without people always being aware of this.

Upon discerning a question, some arrive at a modified position or decide even in favor of a change, whereas others believe that this is not necessary or indeed impossible. “Sooner or later the different outcomes might become a threat to an existing unity or prevent the restoration of Christian unity. At times there are heated debates and possible divisions, which take a toll on being a credible, faithful, and effective witness to Christ in this world. Churches might feel overwhelmed by this situation and wonder what can be done to prevent divisions or overcome them in order to grow in unity. How, they ask, can *koinonia*, a deep communion, be built?”⁵

The Faith and Order Commission has had the topic of moral discernment in the churches on its agenda from the 1980’s onwards. People have asked: Is this a task for the Faith and Order Commission? The Commission has done so because of the aim of its work, which is to clarify the theological inter-relation between two fundamental ecumenical concerns:

- 1) the quest for visible unity of Christ’s Church and
- 2) the implementation of the Christian calling to a common witness and service in today’s world.

Several studies were published over the course of time such as the Study documents “*Costly Unity*,” “*Costly Commitment*” and “*Costly Obedience*” in which ecclesiology and ethics were connected leading to the statement: “... The church not only has, but is, a social ethic, a *koinonia* ethic.”⁶

In 2005 the Commission published the document “*Christian Perspectives on a Theological Anthropology*”.⁷ In 2006 the Standing Commission of the Faith and Order Commission decided to “conduct a study of the ways in which the churches formulate and offer teaching and guidance with respect to moral and ethical issues - especially those that are or may become church dividing, e.g. human sexuality.”⁸ Its outcome - the 2013 publication *Moral Discernment in the Churches: A Study Document* (=MDC),⁹ - focuses on moral discernment processes as such. The purpose of this 2013 study document is to identify different sources and factors that play a role in a discernment process as well as to see how they might have an impact on the

Q&A

6 *Costly Unity*, para 6 in Thomas F. BEST and Martin ROBRA (eds), *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997). See in this regard also *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), para 62. The same is well expressed in the recent document by the Orthodox Special Commission, *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, edited by David BENTLEY HART and John CHRYSOAVGOS, (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2020), para 2: “To say we are made to serve God is to say we are made for loving communion: communion

with the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and through communion with God as Trinity, human beings are also called into loving communion with their neighbors and the whole cosmos.” Available at <https://bit.ly/3hwMYcM> (Retrieved: May 18, 2021)

7 *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, Faith and Order Paper No. 199 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005).

8 Minutes of the Standing Commission on Faith and Order, Faverges, Haute Savoie, France 2006, Faith and Order Paper, 202 (Geneva: WCC, 2006) 107.

9 Cf. fn. 4 above.



▶ Online webinar · Dr. Myriam Wijlens sharing her virtual talk

4 Cf. *Moral Discernment in the Churches: A Study Document*, Faith and Order Paper, 215 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013) p. 2. Hereafter cited as MDC followed by the paragraph number, unless otherwise indicated. Also published as Appendix 1 in Myriam WIJLENS and Vladimir SHMALIY, (eds), *Churches and Moral Discernment*, Vol. 1 *Learning from Traditions*, Faith and Order Paper, 228 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021) 146-189, here p. 146. The latter publication is also accessible at: <https://bit.ly/WCC-TwoVolumes> (Retrieved: May 18, 2021)

5 Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, “Preface,” in *Learning from History*, ix.

outcome of a moral discernment process be it conducted within a church or between churches. The study was merely descriptive; it was not normative. Despite this methodology, the birth of this study was not easy.¹⁰

In 2013 the Orthodox members of the Commission wished to add an *addendum* to the MDC Study Document. It opens with the remark that the document “could be used in Orthodox theological schools and academic circles ... However, the Orthodox members of the Standing Commission expressed their concerns regarding the whole study process. The Orthodox read the text in ways that do not reflect their tradition.”¹¹ Reservations are expressed in particular with regard to the methodology used and the way the sources are presented also in relation to each other. Nevertheless, the *Addendum* explicitly recommended that the MDC Study document was to be presented to the 2013 WCC Assembly as a preliminary stage in a more extensive

study and that Moral Discernment is placed on the agenda of Faith and Order in the future.

The Roman Catholic Church added a footnote to this *Addendum* expressing that Catholics would share similar concerns, but that it too would endorse that it be presented to the WCC 2013 Assembly and be studied in the future.¹²

I am reporting on this because these reservations had an impact on the way the topic of moral discernment was addressed in the next phase.

1.2 A New Mandate - 2015 - 2021

In 2015 the Faith and Order Commission decided to continue its reflections on moral discernment processes. It mandated a respective Study Group (SG 3) to undertake a further study to deepen the knowledge about moral discernment processes and to identify uniting and dividing factors in the MDC process.¹³ Hence, the mandate given implied again not to engage in a discernment process on a specific moral or ethical topic. Rather the purpose was to facilitate a better understanding for and within churches of how a moral discernment process occurs within the churches. Or, to phrase it differently: it had as task to study what actually happens when a church engages in a moral discernment process. The hope was and is that a better understanding of that process might provide for listening to and learning from each other paving the way for a constructive engagement in a dialogue on a specific moral issue.



▶ Available for download two volumes presented in the lecture · bit.ly/MDVolume1-WCC · bit.ly/MDVolume2-WCC

10 Although the Faith and Order Commission decided to move beyond a comparative method, it has turned out to be a major challenge to find an appropriate method for the task assigned. Indeed the discussions on moral issues are affected by aspects that complicate the task of ecumenical dialogue: “1. Moral questions reflect deeply-held theological beliefs about sin and human nature.; 2. Moral questions are often encountered within the context of personal experience and are therefore deeply emotionally charge; 3. Certainty about the rightness or wrongness of one’s own or another’s position on a moral issue - whether based on the authority of church teachings, spiritual guidance, or individual discernment - can make dialogue across lines of difference extremely difficult.;4.Churches engage in the process of moral discernment in culturally and ecclesologically distinct ways that are often not known or understood by one another.” (MDC, Introduction, p. 149)

11 See MDC, para 150.

In light of the 2013 document with its *addendum* and footnote it was possibly no accident that first of all Father Dr. Vladimir Shamliy of the Russian Orthodox Church and I as a member of the Roman Catholic Church were invited to be the co-convenors for this Study Group. Furthermore, in light of the *addendum* the Study Group wanted to make sure to hear all voices and see all perspectives in a most authentic way. It, therefore, proposed to undertake two projects that would allow for good and reliable results while keeping a certain emotional distance to the project, which was felt to be useful. The study process, entitled

12 See MDC, para 151.

13 World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *Minutes of the Meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman, Buzeni Romania, 17-24 June 2015*, Faith and Order Paper No. 222 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015) 92-96

“The Church in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Engaged in Moral Discernment,” was approved by the Faith and Order Commission at its meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman, Busteni, Romania, 17-24 June 2015.¹⁴

Learning from Traditions

The first project began by inviting different traditions to submit a self-description of how they engage in a moral discernment process. The question was asked: What actually happens in that process? Who is involved in it and with what kind of authority? How are decisions made and arrived at?

Scholars were invited to reflect on these question with the help of the 2013 MDC Study and provide faithful descriptions of the moral discernment process within their own tradition. The aim of this project was to have a resource with authentic descriptions that help overcome misperceptions and misunderstandings about other church traditions. This project came to be known as: *Learning from Traditions*. The participating scholars were either members of the Faith and Order Commission themselves or persons selected after consultation with members of their tradition who are on the Commission. Although the scholars were invited to deliver an objective description of their own tradition, their reflections nevertheless reflect the personal views of the authors. The Study Group was able to collect presentations from the following 14 traditions: Eastern Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Historic Peace Churches, Baptist, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Pentecostal.¹⁵

The Study Group received these self-descriptions by first listening to them attentively, then asking questions in order to understand the discernment process as described and finally through dialogue grasping where there are similarities and differences between the different traditions. The method was again merely descriptive. The purpose was not at all to be normative.

Learning from History

Subsequently the Study Group engaged in a second project. Being aware that discussions about moral issues are not new and that churches have always struggled

with them,¹⁶ the Study Group raised the question: What can we learn from history? After all, “in each specific time and place in history, churches live out the promise and calling entrusted to them by the Triune God, by engaging with the joys and the sorrows, the questions and concerns of the people in light of the gospel message. In view of new developments and reconfigurations in the economic, cultural, political, scientific or legal spheres in society, churches have entered in discernment processes on different levels. In the history of the churches, there have been significant moral discernment processes in which the churches engaged with a vital moral question that required clarification. Such wrestling helped to provide deeper understanding of the issues at stake among the faithful, and in pivotal questions such discernment processes left a mark on the ecclesial self-understanding.”¹⁷

The hope behind this project was that the study of *diachronic* differences? in the sense of understanding how and why a churches moral discernment process produces different results over time? could make it easier to study and appreciate *synchronic* differences, that is how and why churches today might hold different moral positions on a current issue. It was felt that it might also help to reveal the criteria for distinguishing changes that are acceptable, and maybe even called for, from changes which are not faithful to the Gospel. (Cf. FD 42).

For the second project the Study Group solicited studies that analyze how churches wrestled with some specific moral issues in the past, and how and why they arrived at a modified or changed view. This project came to be known as: *Learning from History*. It was felt that by analyzing concrete examples from the past, an increased understanding of similarities and differences in moral discernment processes can be developed. The examples were chosen, because they reflect different kinds of discernment processes and different kinds of changes.

16 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, para 63, acknowledges that churches have wrestled with tensions about moral issues throughout history: “While tensions about moral issues have always been a concern for the Church, in the world of today, philosophical, social and cultural developments have led to the rethinking of many moral norms, causing new conflicts over moral principles and ethical questions to affect the unity of the churches.”

17 Simone SINN, “Introduction,” in Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, Simone SINN (eds), *Churches and Moral Discernment*: Vol. 2 *Learning from History*, Faith and Order Paper, 229 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021) xiii.

14 *Idem*, 59.

15 These 14 studies are published in Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY (eds), *Churches and Moral Discernment*, Vol. 1, *Learning from Traditions*, Faith and Order Paper, 228 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

An important criterion for selecting the topics was among others that the change had to have occurred in the past and that a debate about the change is finished in that specific tradition. The Study Group also hoped that examples taken from history might allow for a more objective and less emotional discussion. A major purpose was to learn from the past for the future. Hence, the authors, who presented the studies, were invited to shed light not only on the outcome of the process, but to focus in particular on the sources and ways of Christian moral discernment that played a significant role during the discernment process. The following questions guided their study: What triggers to engage in a process of reconsidering a moral position? How did that process evolve? How was the argument build? What elements played a role? How did it come about? Who was involved in the decision making? What authority did these persons have? Considering that change does not come overnight, the authors were also asked: What helped the tradition not to have a division as the change occurred over a certain period of time? In responding to these questions, the scholars were invited to use the MDC Study as a guide. Again the method was analytical descriptive; not normative.

The Study Group successfully solicited nineteen studies on fourteen different moral issues that can be grouped in seven themes: First, in the area of economic ethics the example chosen focuses on the prohibition of usury. It contains three different studies from an Orthodox, Calvinistic and Roman Catholic perspective. The second section focuses on slavery and presents different ways of responding to the resistance of slavery in different traditions. A third section addresses issues affecting the interaction of church, state and society. It has studies on Catholics changing their view on freedom of religion as well as Lutheran reconsiderations on state authorities in Nazi Germany and in Brazil. Distinctly different Christian approaches to war and non-violence are explored in the fourth section. A fifth subject concerns St. Ephraim the Syrian creating women choirs in the fourth century in light of St. Paul's command for women to remain silent in the church. The sixth section examines specific moral questions with regard to marriage, in particular the teaching on the use of contraception by the Lambeth Conference, an African perspective on polygamy and the handling of interfaith marriages by Methodists in Malaysia. The final section deals with Christian moral discernment on suicide and its impact to have a funeral service as viewed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Church.

The authors of the studies were particularly chosen because of their expertise on the subject and not primarily because of the tradition to which they belong. Some are members of the Faith and Order Commission

others are scholars who were invited after consultation with members of their tradition on the Commission. As with the first volume, the studies presented in the second volume reflect the view of the authors themselves.¹⁸ They do not necessarily reflect the position of the members of the commission. As is customary with academic studies other scholars, even when they belong to the same tradition, might have presented a somewhat different analysis.

2. Study Document "Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build *Koinonia*"

Having studied and analyzed all the papers with the self-descriptions and the many historical examples of changes the Study Group then asked: What did we hear? What have we learned? How can this assist those who engage in moral discernment processes? How can the work accomplished be conducive to facilitating a better understanding of a moral discernment process and of uniting and dividing factors? What can, therefore, be offered to facilitate a dialogue to build *koinonia*? The response to these and similar questions resulted in the study document *Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia*. It was approved by the Faith and Order Commission in its online meeting on January 20, 2021.¹⁹ It will be published as a third volume in this series.²⁰ The following presentation of the document reflects my personal view.

18 The thirty-three authors who generously participated in the two projects deserve a word of gratitude. They seriously studied the topic assigned, upon presenting their study most engaged in discussion with the study group, and finally all submitted their paper for publication. This interaction was also possible because the Study Group began to make use of on-line meetings with the authors as early as 2016. The Study Group engaged with the scholars on the Tradition papers in Erfurt (Germany) in 2016 as well as in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in 2018, where they also discussed the papers with the authors of the historical examples.

19 Drafting meetings of the Study Document took place in Frankfurt a. M. in October 2018 and in Stuttgart (Germany) in March 2019. The study group meeting in Bossey (Switzerland) in January 2020 reviewed the text. Due to the corona pandemic, the work of the study group shifted then to numerous online meetings, and the study document was finalised in the late autumn of 2020. A word of gratitude is in place to all members of the Study Group "Moral Discernment in the Churches" who engaged tirelessly in numerous meetings in particular in 2020. The work accomplished in the two volumes and the Study Document would not have been possible without the highly supportive contribution of the staff members for this project at the WCC initially Dr. Dagmar Heller and later Dr. Simone Sinn

20 Cf fn. 1 above.

2.1 General Comments

Like the MDC Study of 2013 the current document has the status of a “study document”. It is important to read the document in light of the origin and purpose intended and thus not over- or underrate the relevance of the text. The study does not engage in a moral discernment process itself. It also does not present a particular way of how to engage in a moral discernment process. It does not say whether what is being done in a discernment process is right or wrong. Furthermore, as with all ecumenical documents, this study document too does not and cannot reflect “one to one” the view or even the terminology of a particular tradition. Indeed understanding the different terminology that traditions use was and is part of the challenge in engaging in dialogue.

Writing the current study document was not easy, because the study group had to become aware that what it experienced during the meetings was exactly what is happening on the ground so to speak when churches encounter each other when engaging in dialogue. The Study Group had the task to reflect about a process which – to a certain extent – it was engaging in itself at the same time. It was necessary to remind oneself regularly that one

to the reader as such a reflection might not occur often in many churches. However, unfamiliar, is not the same as being foreign. Churches are invited to enter into this process. Unfamiliar, but not foreign, might also apply to some terminology that the study document uses as well as for the fact that the document employs quite a bit of graphics to visualize what it wants to convey. Ecumenism and yes theology as such, is not really used to graphics, but once one has passed an initial inhibition, there is a whole new world to explore.

A further preliminary remark is to underscore that the document does not present doctrine. It ultimately only presents a tool that may assist those who engage in a moral discernment process to better understand what actually occurs when one engages in a moral discernment process and which factors come into play.

The document has five chapters: it opens with an introductory reflection about the theological reason for and the presumptions on which churches need to engage in a moral discernment process time and again. Among the key points of the introduction is that ecumenical reflection should provide insights into shared criteria for a Christian life: Three questions are relevant: Does it

lead to holiness? Does it build up *koinonia*? Does it lead to the fullness of life for all? The second chapter introduces the notion “conscience of the church”. This chapter also presents a short reflection about the challenge of the language of change. The third chapter reflects on different kinds of changes that might occur with regard to specific moral issues. The fourth chapter presents a tool to better understand why moral disagreement occurs and which factors impact in what way the discernment process and its outcome. The tool can then also facilitate dialogue in the area of moral issues to build *koinonia*. The final fifth chapter has some concluding remarks and ends with a prayer by St. Basil. Attached to the document is an appendix with questions that might assist those who want to use the tool.

▶ Q&A · Dr. Wijlens shared with us new insights on answering questions posted by audience on the web platform

had to work on a certain so-called meta level. This then will also be asked from the reader of the study document: there is a permanent challenge to reflect not only on the content of a moral issue, but on one’s own or one’s own church’s way of operating while reflecting on a specific moral question. It requires to take a bird’s eyes view to assess what is actually happening when engaging in a moral issue. That requires discipline, because one is tempted to go to the content of the issue while insufficiently attending to the method and the discernment process as such. The study document thus presents a way to reflect about the mode of operating. At first, this might be a bit unfamiliar

2.2 The Conscience of the Church

The second chapter of the document addresses the commitment to continuity working with a presumption of sincerity, the conscience of the church and the notion of change

A Commitment to Continuity with the Gospel

The study of the self-descriptions of traditions and the analysis of the historical examples provided two key insights. First, churches engage in a moral discernment

process time and again precisely because they intend to remain faithful to and thus want to preserve continuity with the Gospel. Acknowledging that churches engage in moral discernment because they seek to pursue God's will and remain faithful to the Gospel implies that a dialogue can begin with a presumption that the dialogue partner is sincere without yet necessarily or automatically accepting the outcome of the partner's discernment process. Hence, instead of focusing on the outcomes of a discernment process, a new pathway entails that a dialogue "must begin with an effort to understand processes of moral discernment, and that this must begin from the assumption that the dialogue partner has engaged sincerely in this process." (FD 24) Presuming that the dialog partner is sincerely trying to seek the will of God, does not mean that "one must accept the resulting norms for behavior proposed by the other. This is only to say that there ought to be mutual recognition of the sincerity of the processes of discernment in the dialogue partner as a starting point for substantive dialogue." (FD 41)

Conscience of the Church

The second key insight relates to what is referred to as "the conscience of the church". Churches respond to emerging moral challenges in a specific context. Yet a church's moral discernment process is shaped by its own understanding of what can be referred to as the 'conscience of the church'. Initially the term "conscience of the church" might sound unfamiliar. Traditions recognize the importance of conscience in moral discernment, but normally use this term in reference to the moral discernment of individual Christians. However, it is possible to recognize that in churches as communities there is a collective desire to pursue God's will in a given situation. "Communities draw on collective knowledge and wisdom to develop and apply relevant criteria to the issue" that needs to be resolved. "These communities reach a collective judgement in light of these criteria and reasoning, and the communities act upon these judgements together. This study uses the term 'conscience of the church' to refer to this dynamic corporate engagement of a church with the moral challenges it confronts – analogously with how, in many traditions, the individual believer engages with moral challenges through their conscience." (FD 25).

The collective knowledge and wisdom the tradition draws from include "not only the guidance of the Holy Spirit, scripture, and tradition, but also teaching and decision-making authority, spirituality and church culture." (FD 26) Also of relevance is the "lived experience of individuals and groups directly involved in particular moral issues" (FD 26). Furthermore, the conscience of the church also includes "all the processes of moral discernment that a church accepts as valid for itself in light of its reception of these sources of Christian faith. In this study, the term 'conscience of the church' is a term for how all these sources are at work in the dynamic activity of the body of Christ that believes it is being guided by the Holy Spirit. Put another way, the conscience of a church is everything in that church's life that can be, and is, brought to bear on the task of moral discernment by and for the people of God." (FD 26)²¹ It is thus a term that gives expression to "every church's communal effort to realize a koinonia ethic by discerning the good and the right in a given set of circumstances through interpretation of its Christian heritage." (FD 26)

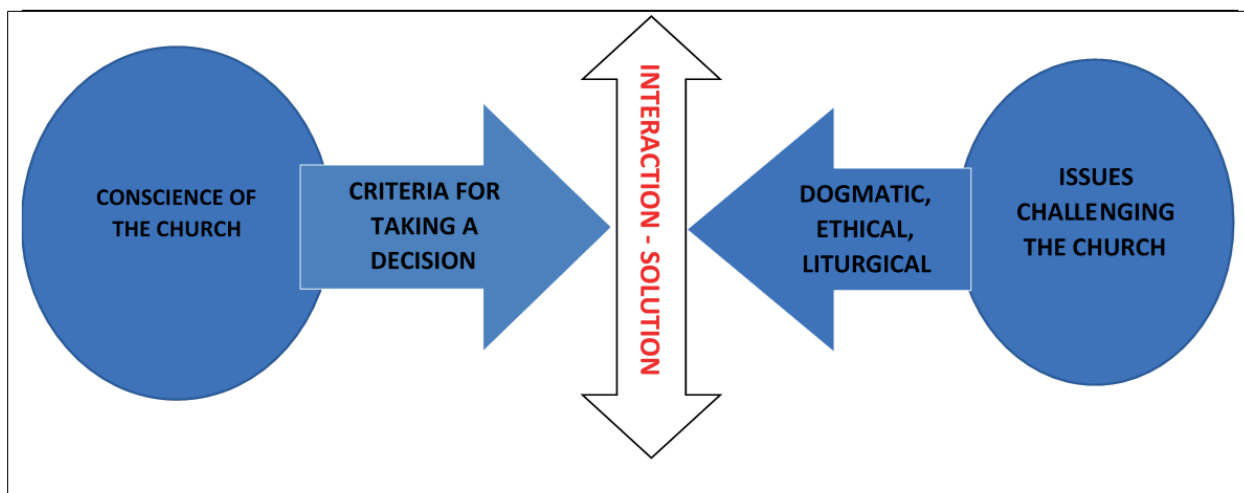


Figure 1: The interaction between the conscience of the church and the issues challenging the church

21 With Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church began to use the terms *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*. It would be worthwhile to undertake a study how these terms relate to the 'conscience of the church' as well to see how the latter can enrich the understanding of the Roman Catholic terminology.

The figure demonstrates schematically the interaction between issues that challenge a church (expressed in the right circle), which are not limited to moral issues but may be doctrinal, liturgical, ecclesial, pastoral etc. (arrow on the right) and the application of the conscience of the church (expressed in the left circle) through relevant criteria to the situation (left arrow), that gives rise to “solutions” (middle arrow) in the form of moral teaching or practice accordingly to each situation. Scripture itself already testifies to new challenges that the community saw itself confronted with when a unity-threatening dispute arose over the necessity of circumcision for Gentiles. Engaged in a discernment process and guided by the Holy Spirit the Council of Jerusalem was able to reach a common decision. (FD 30).

The study of historical examples of moral discernment and the papers of moral discernment provided by different traditions, revealed that the interaction of issues challenging the church with the conscience of the church, in one way or another, is something that all churches share in their engagement in God’s mission in and with the world. New circumstances constantly arise that pose challenges for a given church’s position at the time. “Whatever criteria in the conscience of the church are identified as relevant to an issue, they are identified out of a concern for two interrelated realities, namely, that the church as the body of Christ a) continues to be the visible sign of God’s reign already established and b) can serve the salvation of the believer and the world (the not yet).” (FD 36)

The study of the historical examples also reveal that in responding to new challenges churches have reacted and responded differently. Sometimes they affirm the position they already held, at other times they do not change the meaning and force of an existing position, but at the same time allow for an accommodation of a particular situation at a pastoral level. Some reactions “include developments in the understanding of an existing position, affecting its application without altering its existence, some of these reactions may even lead to changes or modifications of practice and moral teaching, and the abandonment or even condemnation of the previous position” (FD 39).

The Terminology of “Change”

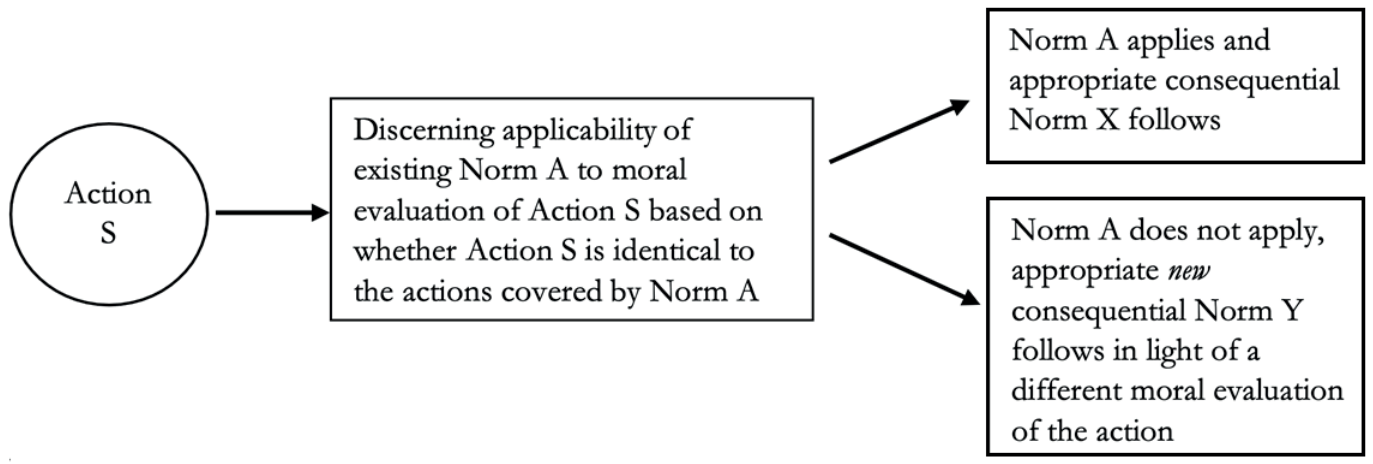
Some churches would characterize the result of moral discernment processes as a change in a moral position. Others would resist such a description, because they would say “that applying the unchanging conscience of the church to a new situation – and hence producing a ‘new’ specific solution to the problem at hand – does not constitute moral change.” (FD 46). This shows how different even the notion of change is perceived.²² The language of change poses a challenge for some traditions because of the implication of a ‘discontinuity’ with the existing norms in the conscience of the church. However, “all churches’ moral discernment processes are undertaken intending fundamental continuity, in continued faithfulness to the Gospel; and all churches’ moral discernments will involve finding responses to new challenges, precisely in order to remain faithful.”(FD 47) This enables a different understanding of change: a change in the outcome of a moral discernment process occurs precisely because the church wants to preserve continuity with the conscience of the church. What is perceived by some as “a development or modification of a position within a continuous fundamental identity might be perceived by other churches as a change or even break with tradition.” (FD 48) It is helpful to understand that the notion of change itself can lead to difficulties in a dialogue.

2.3 How Changes emerge through Moral Discernment

The third chapter of the Study Document explores what happens - in terms of continuity and change within churches - when a moral discernment process within a church leads to a norm for behavior that appears to differ from previous norms. Based on the historical examples the section maps some of the ways in which changes, developments, adaptations or reconsiderations of moral teaching or practices can occur. In order that the Study is not too abstract the different possibilities of changes are illustrated with six examples from history that can be found in the volume *Learning from History*. In this way the reader can get a better sense of how the theoretical reflections unfold in real life. Summaries of the historical examples are put in grey boxes, so as to not interrupt the flow of the thoughts expressed in the study document. It should be pointed out that neither the number of possible changes nor the examples that are used to illustrate them are exhaustive.

22 The problem is not new. The Church towards a Common Vision gives an example with regard to ordained ministries: “Some hold that faithfulness to the Gospel may at times require a break in institutional continuity, while others insist that such faithfulness can be maintained by resolving difficulties without breaks that lead to separation.” Para. 24.

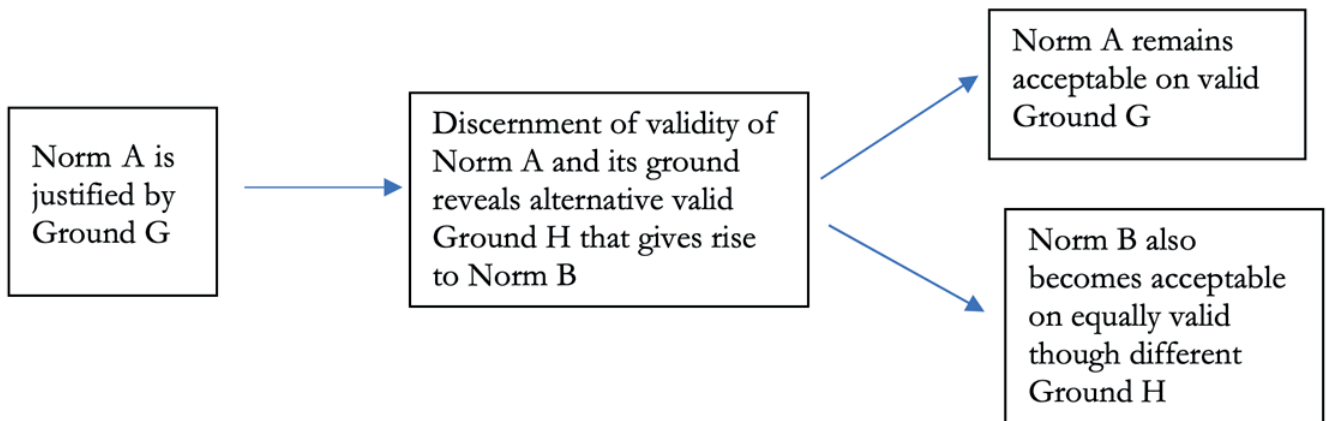
1. Circumstances May Prompt a Redefinition of Actions in Certain Cases such that an Existing Norm does not Apply



Discerning the applicability of an existing norm based on new awareness of circumstances surrounding an action

The first change considers how circumstances may prompt a redefinition of actions in certain cases in such a way that an existing norm does not apply. The example comes from the Coptic Orthodox Church which had a change in practice in relationship to how suicide and its consequence for holding a funeral for the deceased is treated. In this case, the church considered the mental state of the person who committed suicide. What was culpable is not treated as culpable anymore, thus allowing for a funeral in certain circumstances.

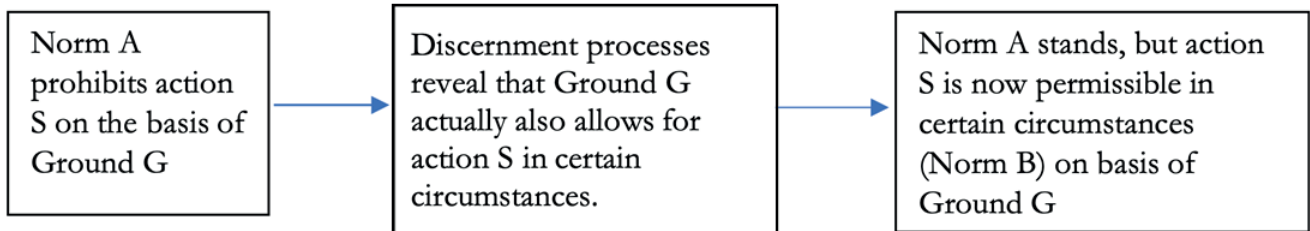
2. Recognition of Additional Grounds Can Permit a Range of Morally Acceptable Norms



Recognition of additional grounds can permit a range of morally acceptable norms

The second change implies a recognition of *additional* grounds which can permit a range of morally acceptable norms. The example considers changes that permit conscientious objection to military service in the Lutheran church. In this case, what was morally unacceptable becomes morally acceptable on grounds that differ from those used to justify the existing norm. These different grounds are nonetheless accepted as valid grounds alongside the previous morally acceptable norm and grounds.

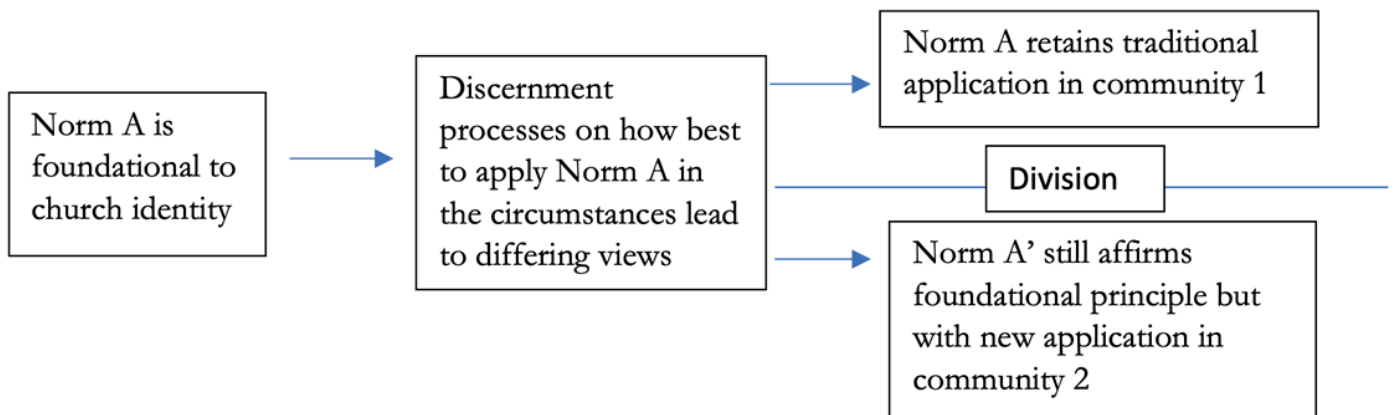
3. Reconsideration of an Existing Ground Can Permit a Range of Morally Acceptable Norms.



Discerning that what was previously morally unacceptable (A) is now acceptable (B)

The third change reflects a reconsideration of an existing ground which can permit a range of morally acceptable norms. The changed teaching on the use of contraception from the Lambeth Conference is an example of this. In this case, what was morally unacceptable becomes morally acceptable under certain circumstances through reconsideration of the same previously valid grounds. The same grounds that generally proscribe the practice, permit it in certain circumstances.

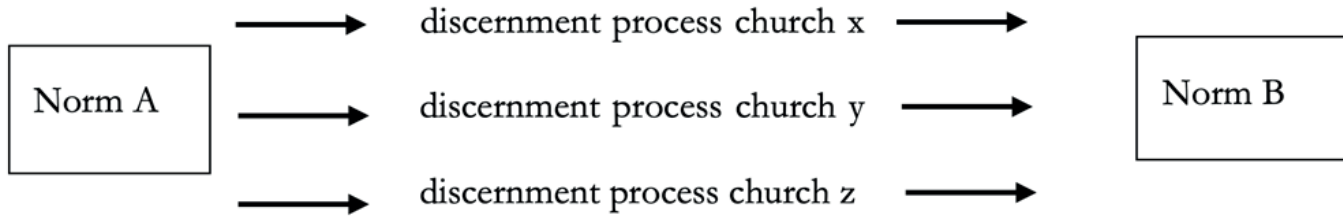
4. Different Interpretations of How to Apply an Existing Norm can Lead to Division



Different interpretations of an existing norm can lead to division

The fourth example of change shows that a different interpretation of how to apply an existing norm can lead to a division. The application of the principle of opposition to slavery in the Methodist church in North America illustrates this. What is morally obligatory is treated as morally unattainable by some in the church on grounds of circumstances and on grounds of other values, e.g. salvation. This leads to a division between those who insist on the obligatory nature of the existing norm, regardless of the circumstances, and those who accept the norm as an ideal that is a barrier to other goods.

5. Different Discernment Processes in Different Churches Can Arrive at New Norms that Permit the Same Practice



Different discernment processes in different churches can arrive at new norms that permit the same practice

A fifth possibility of a change reveals that different discernment processes in different churches can arrive at new norms that permit the same practice. The study of the practice of usury, that is, lending money at interest in the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches reveal that what was morally unacceptable becomes morally acceptable, but for different reasons or grounds in three different communities. Different processes of reasoning arrive, nevertheless, at the same conclusion about acceptability of a practice.

6. Reassessment of a 'New' Norm can lead to a Return to the Original Norm

A sixth form of change involves a reassessment of a "new" norm which can lead to a return to the earlier or original norm. Illustrative of this is the development and demise of Apartheid and the Dutch Reformed Church. In this case, a new practice arises in a community, is given spurious theological grounds, and is accepted as theologically and morally justifiable, until reflection reveals that these grounds were wrong and the practices morally sinful. The community repents and returns to its previous morally acceptable practice.

These six changes mentioned are only illustrative. Certainly, there will be other ones. Furthermore, the six illustrations are not exhaustive either. Even other the studies collected in the second volume *Learning from History* would allow for inserting more illustrations. Most important is, however, the awareness that the six forms of change in combination with the examples show that it is decisive to realize that not only change is rather complex, but also that continuity is always present. The question is to discover and establish on what level that continuity exists. (FD 63-65).

2.4 A Tool to understand Moral Disagreement and Foster Dialogue

The fourth chapter offers a tool for understanding better moral disagreement on the one hand and for fostering dialogue towards *koinonia* on the other hand. Over the course of history churches have responded to the challenges of their time by applying the conscience of the church. Applying the latter to discern an issue implies that the church carries "a strong desire to be in continuity with the life of the community in worship and service. The worshiping community is both a foretaste of the eschatological reign of God and actively transforming history in the light of the Gospel. The conscience of the church, therefore, can lead Christians to develop norms of moral behaviour that transform history because they represent the reign of God." (FD 66) The changes that occur are thus to be understood as an application of the conscience of the church because there is a commitment to preserve continuity with the Gospel. The latter implies that a basis for a fruitful dialogue towards *koinonia* always exists (FD 68). The tool as presented does reveal what was shown before in figure 1: left is the conscience of the church, right the challenges that arise and in the middle the solution.

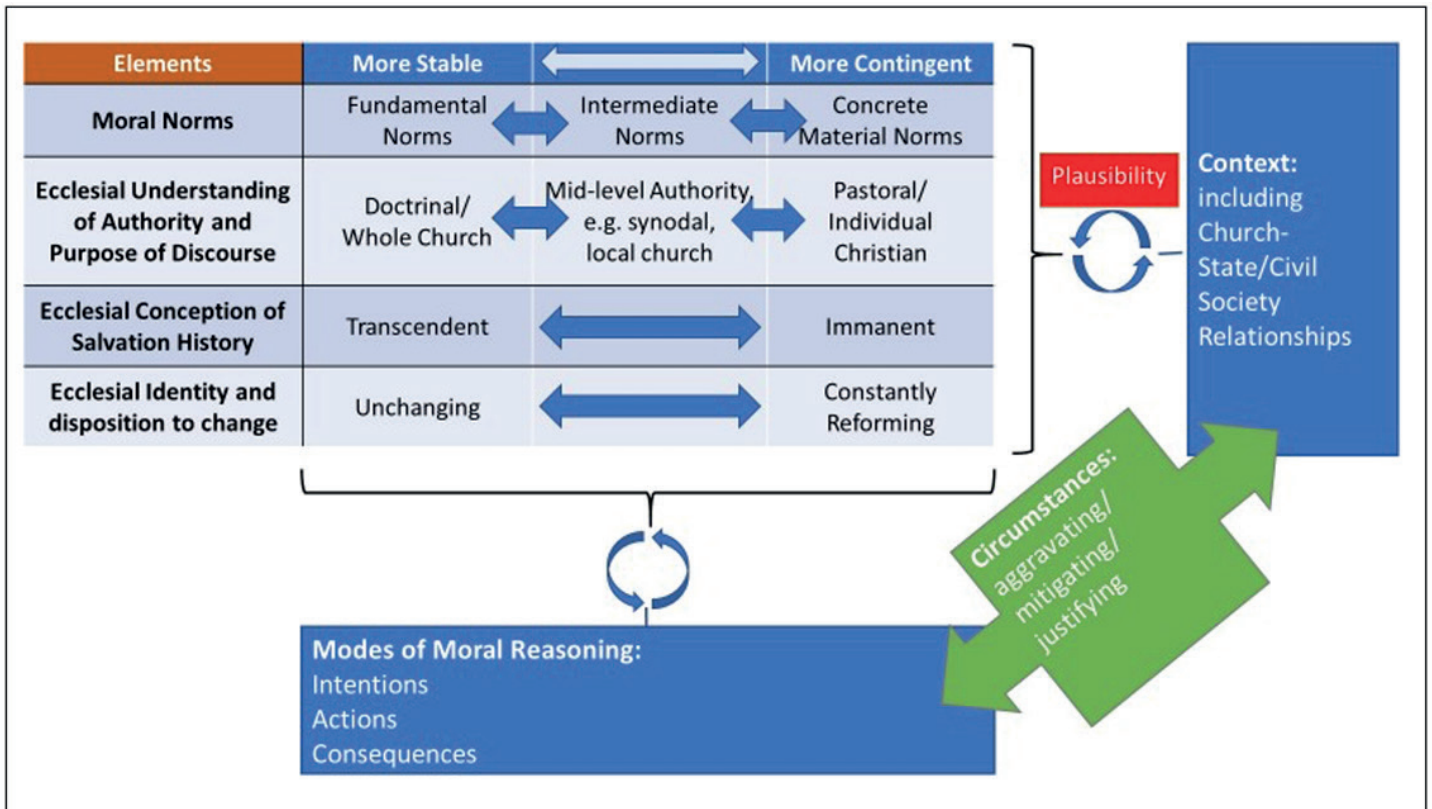


The conscience of the church engages with context

For Faith and Order to present a tool is a new approach. What is its aim? The tool aims to help churches to reflect on the criteria found in the conscience of the church that they and others employ in considering moral issues. Considering these criteria can help to lead to better understand how change and continuity on moral issues occur in one's own church and increase mutual understanding of what is at stake in cases in which two groups differ (this could be between or within churches). The tool can help to understand why there are differences over the course of history (diachronic) as well as at the same time (synchronic). Furthermore, the tool can explain why there can be differences or a diversity between a universal level and a local practice in specific contexts inspired by pastoral care. Finally, the tool could also assist churches to engage in joint discernment when a new issue arises.

What does the tool not do? It does not present a way of doing moral discernment or guaranteeing unity. Nor does the tool account for all matters that affect how churches make judgements on moral matters.²³ The tool does, however, draw dialogue partners' attention to relevant theological and ecclesiological issues at stake in moral discernment processes. How these different elements are taken into account, which is a systematic theological question, has implications for the church's ongoing self-understanding and the conscience of the church.

²³ Churches differ widely on how judgements are reached and expressed, depending on their theology and practice of authority. The issue of authority in the church is a complex one affecting all areas of church life, not just moral discernment. As such, it must be studied in a different way, and such study will have implications for moral discernment, cf. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, paras 48-57. It is hoped that the self-descriptions from fourteen different church traditions in the publication *Learning from Traditions* can be of help as well.



Tool for Analysis and Dialogue on Processes of Moral Discernment

The current chart sheds further light on the notion “conscience of the church”. The tool reveals that there are always elements that remain unchanged; this is an insight that might be extremely helpful to engage in dialogue. It identifies “four elements in the conscience of the church that play a role in moral discernment:

- 1) the understanding of moral norms;
- 2) the ecclesial understanding of authority and the purpose of a particular disclosure;
- 3) the concept of time and salvation history, and
- 4) the ecclesial identity with respect to change and a particular church’s disposition to change.

Each of these elements will come into play in any given situation of moral discernment, though they may not always be explicit. The tool helps dialogue partners to make explicit what is often implicit in dialogue about moral discernment” (FD 87-88) All four elements have dimensions that are more stable and tend to be more indisputable or more unchangeable, as well as dimensions that are more contingent and tend to be more changeable in response to a particular context. The four elements are also in interaction with each other “such that beliefs about one element affect beliefs about another element.” (FD 91) An example may shed light on what is meant: “What someone believes about the authority of the Bible for the church (second element) can affect what they believe about the status of the moral norms in the Bible (first element), about relevance of these norms for salvation (third element) and about how reformable their church and its praxis are in response to contextual challenges (fourth element).” (FD 91)

The Study Document elaborates in more detail on how stability and contingency unfold in each of the aforementioned four elements. Thus, for example, moral norms will have more fundamental norms which tend to be more stable - e.g. "do good, avoid evil" - as well as concrete material norms which might be more likely to be changed. It is reasonable to expect that there is more common agreement among the traditions about the more fundamental norms, but that differences might occur with regard to the concrete material norms. Furthermore, the ecclesial understanding of authority has an impact on the decisions. In some traditions, there is a specific body that determines doctrine that is binding for the whole church, while leaving it to a local entity to offer teaching on specific more contextual issues. There can also be churches that leave the discernment to the individual in the context of pastoral care. A norm intended for the whole church would tend to be more stable, one for an individual more contingent. The ecclesial conception of salvation history also has an impact on the discernment process. "In some churches or in some circumstances, there may be more concern about preserving the vision of the church as an expressive sign of the eschatological reign of God. In other churches or at other times there might be more concern with the church being an instrument of the realisation of the reign of God in the present." (109) Finally, the ecclesial identity and disposition to change plays a role: some churches claim a constant or continuous tradition as important to their identity. They will tend to favour stability in moral norms and practice and be reluctant towards change. Others may have a greater disposition for or acceptance of the possibility of change in moral discernment when circumstances demand it, because they see this as a necessity to remain faithful to the Gospel. The different dispositions might find expression in different language such as being open to "organic development" or a "dynamic adaptation". A conversation about the disposition of change, felt as an identity maker of a tradition, might assist churches to become aware how this has an impact on the way they respond to newly arising moral issues.

The Study Document offers more insights on the different elements and it also reflects about the impact of modes of moral reasoning and the impact of circumstances that influence context and modes or moral reasoning.

Throughout the fourth chapter the summaries taken from the historical examples that were published in the second volume *Learning from History* serve as illustrations for the theoretical reflections. They are presented to assist the reader in grasping the content of the Study Document more easily. Summaries of the examples are placed in grey boxes. The study document used all nineteen examples presented in the second volume. In this way the reader is not only able to see the connection between the examples from history and the theoretical reflections presented in the Study Document, but is also invited to read the complete historical studies and reflect on them with the help of the Study Document. To facilitate the latter, the Study Document has an Appendix with guiding questions.

Conclusion

More than forty years ago the Faith and Order Commission began to attend to the topic of moral discernment and it intensified its work on this matter as of 2008. In 2013 it offered the churches *Moral Discernment in the Churches: A Study Document*. The purpose of this study document was to present sources and factors that play a role in a discernment process as well as to help the churches in reflecting how these by themselves and in interaction with each other might have an impact on the outcome of a moral discernment process. With the 2021 published studies *Churches and Moral Discernment: vol. 1 Learning from Traditions* in which a self-description made with the help of the MDC Study of fourteen traditions were presented and vol. 2 *Learning from History* which contains nineteen examples of changes that occurred over the course of time, preliminary ground work was done in order to engage in a reflection about the moral discernment process, leading to the Study Document being vol. 3 in the series: *Facilitating dialogue to build koinonia*. The latter document introduces the notion conscience of the church, offers a reflection about change and different types of changes and presents a tool.

The tool aims to be a mirror and a lens. “As a mirror, it helps churches better understand themselves. As a lens, it helps churches better understand each other” (FD 22). “The tool can be used to gain insight into how churches do moral discernment, how agreement is preserved, and how differences arise. Since agreement does not constitute a challenge to visible unity, the aim especially is to understand the following:

- differences that occur between churches, and also differences that occur within a particular church,
- differences that occur at the same point in time (synchronic), and also differences that occur over the course of time (diachronic)-where there is an apparent difference between a moral view at one time in history and a moral view at a later time in history.

- differences that occur between universal doctrine and local practice in specific contexts inspired by pastoral care.” (FD 71)

It may be helpful to remind the reader once more that the purpose of the tool is not to determine what is the right or wrong way to address a moral question. However, the tool does provide a lens for those working towards normative agreement on specific issues to focus on the many elements at stake. Indeed as the conclusion of the document states: “[T]he tool is intended to help to understand the process, to recognize how and why differences might emerge, to affirm shared opinions and points of agreement, and in so doing, to further mutual respect on the journey towards visible unity. It is a tool to help build *koinonia*” (FD 137-138).

Appendix

Studies of Examples of Change as published in:
Vol. 2: *Learning from History*²⁴

USURY

- Did the Roman Catholic Church Change its Mind on Usury? Yes, and No – *Christina McRorie*
- Serving both God and Mammon? The Orthodox Response to Usury in Byzantium – *Antigone Samellas*
- Calvin and the Ban of Usury – *Cornelis van der Kooij*

SLAVERY

- Ecclesial Justifications and Resistance to Slavery in British Colonial America – *Tamara E. Lewis*
- Against Their Established Interests: Proslavery Co-optation of Antebellum White Methodism – *R. Drew Smith*
- Moral Discernment and Slavery: The Case of the African Methodist Episcopal Church – *Dennis C. Dickerson*

CHURCH – STATE – SOCIETY

- On the Role of Authority in Churches' Moral Discernment during Apartheid – *Dirk J. Smit*
- Sources of Authority: The Latin American and Brazilian Lutheran context – *Valério Guilherme Schaper*
- The Development of Moral Discernment in the Evangelical Church in Germany in Light of the National Socialist State Crimes – *Thomas Martin Schneider*
- Change in Catholic Moral Teaching: The Right to Religious Freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae* – *David G. Kirchhoffer*
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¹ Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, "Preface," in Myriam WIJLENS, Vladimir SHMALIY, Simone SINN (eds), *Churches and Moral Discernment*, Vol. 2: *Learning from History*, Faith and Order Papers, 229 (Geneva: WCC, 2021). Also accessible at: <https://bit.ly/WCC-TwoVolumes> (Retrieved: May 18, 2021)

WAR AND NON-VIOLENCE

- From Passive Nonresistance to Active Non-Violence: A Change in the Mennonite Tradition – *Anne-Cathy Graber*
- Is the Participation of Christians in War Ethically Acceptable? An Orthodox Approach on the Basis of Two Patristic References – *Miltiadis Vantsos and Kristina Mantasavili*
- Christian Conscientious Objection: Moral Debate and Discernment in West German Protestantism in the 1950s – *Hendrik Meyer-Magister*

WOMEN IN LITURGY

- From the Pauline Admonition to Remain Silent to St. Ephrem's Creation of Women Choirs in the Liturgy – *Mor Polycarpus A. Aydin*

MARRIAGE

- The 1930 Lambeth Conference and Artificial Contraception: A Paradigm of Anglican Moral Discernment – *John Gibaut*
- Marriage in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: African Polygamy – *Anyambod Emmanuel Anya*
- "Till Faith do us Part...." The Reality of Inter-Religious Marriages and the Response of the Methodist Church in Malaysia – *Hermen Shastri*

SUICIDE

- The Reception of the Human Sciences in the Church's Handling of Suicides. A Change of Mind in the Roman Catholic Church – *Michael Karger*
- Suicide from the Perspective of the Coptic Orthodox Church – *Wedad A. Tawfik*

A Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues

Thirty-sixth Supplement – 2021

LIST OF DIALOGUES

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

Abbreviations for Confessional Families Churches and Councils

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

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

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

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

PERIODICALS SURVEYED

- A ▶ Acta Œcumenica, AFER-African Ecclesial Review, American Baptist Quarterly, Amicizia ebraico-cristiana, Angelicum, Anglican Theological Review, Annales theologici, Apulia Theologica
- B ▶ Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology
- C ▶ Calvin Theological Journal, Catholica, Centro Pro Unione Bulletin, Chemins de dialogue, Chétiens en Marche, Christian Orient, Concilium, Confronti, Contacts, Courier, Current Dialogue
- D/E ▶ Diálogo ecuménico, Eastern Churches Journal, Ecclesia Mater, Ecclesiology, The Ecumenical Review, Ecumenical Trends, Ecumenismo Quotidiano, Ekklesia, Exchange
- F/I ▶ Forum Letter, Global Christian Forum Newsletter, The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Herder Korrespondenz, International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, International Review of Mission, Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift, Irénikon, Istina
- J/K ▶ Journal of Anglican Studies, Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, Kerygma und Dogma
- L ▶ The Living Church, Lutheran Forum, Lutheran Quarterly
- M/N ▶ MD-Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim, Nicolaus
- O ▶ O Odigos, Odos, Ökumenische Rundschau, Oikumene, One in Christ, Oriente cristiano, Origins, Orthodoxes Forum, L'Osservatore Romano, Ostkirchliche Studien
- P/Q ▶ Pastoral Ecuménica, Pneuma, Positions luthériennes, Proche-Orient Chrétien, Pro Dialogo, Pro Ecclesia, Protestantesimo, Qîqajôn di Bose
- R ▶ Reformed World, Il Regno, Reseptio, Review of Ecumenical Studies, Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo
- S ▶ Sobornost, St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, Studi di Teologia, Studi Ecumenici, Studia i dokumenty ecumeniczne, Studia Oecumenica, Studia Liturgica, Studies in Interreligious Dialogue
- T ▶ The Tablet, Theological Studies
- U/V ▶ Una Sancta, Unité des Chrétiens, Veritas in caritate: informazioni dall'ecumenismo in Italia
- W/Z ▶ The Window, Worship, Zeitzeichen

KEY TO SUB-HEADING

INFORMATION: facts, communiqués, surveys, brief reports

REFLECTION AND REACTIONS: essays, responses, commentaries, theological papers

TEXTS AND PAPERS: documents, reports, statements, official responses

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Compiled by Dr. Loredana Nepi

24th ANNUAL CONFERENCE WATTSON-WHITE "All Creation Worships Re-thinking Liturgy in a Time of Ecological Emergency"

Lecturer · Prof. Teresa Berger

Teresa Berger is Professor of Liturgical Studies at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music and Yale Divinity School, where she also holds an appointment as the Thomas E. Golden Jr. Professor of Catholic Theology. Her most recent publications include an edited volume, *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation* (2019), and a monograph titled *@ Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds* (Routledge, 2018). Previous publications include *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History* (2011); *Fragments of Real Presence* (2005); and a video documentary, "Worship in Women's Hands" (2007).

An active Roman Catholic, Professor Berger regularly writes for the liturgy blog Pray Tell. Originally from Germany, she has been a visiting professor at the Universities of Mainz, Münster, Berlin, and Uppsala.



Thursday · 9 December 2021 · 6:00 pm

Historical note

Society of the Atonement



In 1898, the Spirit of God inspired Sister Lurana White and Father Paul Wattson to establish a religious community to be called the *Society of the Atonement*.

The Founders had the vision of a religious congregation dedicated to the unity of Christians and to reconciliation in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Since the Founders were Episcopalians, the roots of the Society were implanted in that ecclesial communion until 1909, the year in which the Friars and Sisters of the Atonement entered into full communion with the Church of Rome. This was the first time that a corporate reunion with Rome took place since the Reformation.

Among the various activities of the Society of the Atonement, special mention needs to be made of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begun by Fr. Paul in 1908 and celebrated today throughout the world.

From the humble beginnings in an abandoned church, St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, in an area called Graymoor (New York), the Society of the Atonement has dedicated its efforts for the unity of the Church and reconciliation in several countries: the United States, Canada, Japan, England, Ireland, Brazil and Italy.

Yearly conferences honoring the memory of Fr. Paul Wattson were begun in 1974 at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, then, in 1980, at the University of San Francisco. To these were added in 1995, the *Paul Wattson Lectures* at the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, in 1996 at the Toronto School of Theology and in 2017 at the Chicago Theological Union. The *Paul Wattson Lectures* are given by international experts in the field of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

In 2013 the cause for the canonization of Fr. Paul of Graymoor was introduced in the Archdiocese of New York.

Since 1998, the **Centro Pro Unione** organizes lectures each year in December to honor Fr. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White, Co-founders of the Society of the Atonement. Earlier lecturers were Enzo Bianchi, Sarah Anne Coakley, Archbishop Bruno Forte, Anna Marie Aagaard, Robert Taft, SJ, Dame Mary Tanner, Angelo Maffei, Msgr. Eleuterio Francesco Fortino, Gillian Kingston, Timothy Radcliff, OP, Dr. Jane Williams, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, M. Afr., Turid Karlsen Seim, Kurt Cardinal Koch, Hervé Legrand, OP, William Henn, OFM Cap, Walter Cardinal Kasper, Petros Vassiliadis, Rabbi Jack Bemporad, Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, Michael Calabria, ofm, Muhammad Shafiq, Adam Afterman, and Giovanni Maria Vian.

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Lecturer
Prof. Teresa BERGER

Thursday
9 December 2021
6:00 pm

on the theme
**All Creation Worships:
Re-thinking Liturgy in
a Time of Ecological Emergency**



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Theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022

“We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him”

(Matthew 2: 2)

English

Introduction about the Week of Prayer

The Church Unity Octave, a forerunner of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, was developed by Servant of God Father Paul Wattson, SA, at Graymoor in Garrison, New York, and was first observed at Graymoor from January 18-25, 1908. Today, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites the whole Christian community throughout the world to pray in communion with the prayer of Jesus “that they all may be one” (John 17:21).

In 1966, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity began collaborating in the composition of a common international text for worldwide usage. Since 1968 these international texts, which are based on themes proposed by ecumenical groups around the world, have been developed, adapted and published for use in Italy by Paoline Editions in conjunction with the Centro Pro Unione and in the United States by the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute (NY).

The Week of Prayer section
is available on the website
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**“In oriente abbiamo visto apparire la sua stella
e siamo venuti qui per onorarlo”**

(Matteo 2, 2)

Italiano

Introduzione alla Settimana di Preghiera

Più di cento anni fa, padre Paul Wattson, Servo di Dio, un ministro episcopaliano (anglicano degli Stati Uniti), co-fondatore della Comunità dei Frati e delle Suore Francescane dell’Atonement di Graymoor (Garrison, New York), introdusse un Ottavario di preghiera per l’unità dei cristiani. Egli esortava i cristiani di pregare in comunione la preghiera di Gesù: “che tutti siano una cosa sola” (Giovanni 17, 21). Fu celebrato per la prima volta dal 18 al 25 gennaio 1908. Esattamente sessanta anni più tardi, dal 1968 in poi, le chiese e le parrocchie di tutto il mondo ricevettero il materiale per la Settimana di preghiera per l’unità dei cristiani, preparato congiuntamente dalla commissione Fede e Costituzione (Consiglio ecumenico delle chiese) e dal Segretariato per la promozione dell’unità dei cristiani (Chiesa cattolica).

Oggi la cooperazione fra chiese, parrocchie, e comunità anglicane, protestanti, ortodosse e cattoliche nel preparare e celebrare la Settimana di preghiera è divenuta una prassi comune. Ciò stesso evidenzia marcatamente l’efficacia della preghiera, e ci legittima a parlare della storia della Settimana come di un successo, e una fonte di gioia e gratitudine.

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