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Logos versus Ethos: A Critical Examination of Joseph's Ratzinger's Understanding of Ecumenism

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In ecumenical endeavours while Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI) was still Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, his preference was for a slow, realistic, and theologically attentive approach.¹ As a result, he was very critical of shortcuts towards unity. In recent years, Ratzinger had been frequently associated with the “ecumenical winter.”² Critical of the various approaches to ecumenism that relied on sociological or political models, Ratzinger believed it was unlikely that full Christian unity would happen in the near future. However, as Pope Benedict XVI, he has confirmed his commitment to Christian unity as a priority in his pontificate.

Ratzinger's understanding of ecumenism is based on his insistence on the priority of the logos over ethos as well as the priority of the universal church over the particular churches, and is conditioned by his critical attitudes towards pluralism and relativism. His approach to Christian ecumenism is also influenced by his concern for the decline of Christianity in Europe. The situation in Asia, however, is different in many ways.

This article seeks to review Joseph Ratzinger's writings on the ecumenical situation. It proposes a practical and broader approach to ecumenism in view of the fact that Christianity is a minority religion, existing among ancient and diverse religious traditions in the Asian continent. This pastoral involvement in the lives of the faithful is particularly urgent in Asia, where the majority

of the people live in poverty and lack the basic necessities of life. While agreeing with Ratzinger that ethos without logos cannot endure, ecumenical efforts must not be too dogmatic and abstract but rather directed to the welfare of people. We will first examine Ratzinger's negative assessment of the ecumenical situation and the various ecumenical paradigms that have been adopted.

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Ecumenism from Below

The positive feeling for ecumenical effort generated by Vatican II did not last long when its initiatives had been translated into official forms. Ratzinger thus remarks that “very soon after the initial conciliar enthusiasm had waned, the alternative model of ‘grass-roots ecumenism’ cropped up, which tried to bring about unity ‘from below’ if it could not be obtained ‘from above.’”³ Ratzinger thinks that this kind of approach had the unfortunate consequence of splitting the church into the “grass-roots church” and the “official church.” He claimed that in spite of its popularity, “grass-roots ecumenism” eventually divides congregations. This kind of politically motivated ecumenical activity that seeks to replace traditional ecclesiastical divisions by progressive Christianity could only contribute to more divisions and splinter groups, each recruiting members for its own parties.⁴

This “grass-roots ecumenism” or “ecumenism from below” believed that authorities should be left out of ecumenical activity because eventual reunion could only strengthen their traditional position and thus stop the development of the popular church.⁵ Ratzinger is critical of such an approach because it seeks to bypass the ordained leadership and appeal directly to the laity. Besides, the church authorities would be forced to accommodate the wishes of the people. There is also the danger that the hierarchy and the faithful would be divided, and thus ecumenism from below would violate the notion of communion.

Ecumenism from below also has the tendency to focus on praxis at the expense of doctrine. Ratzinger believes that a Christianity that defines itself in terms of social involvement is not able to produce long-term unity and an established church life. People remain in the church not because of social or political commitment, but because they think the church can give them answers about the meaning of life here and hereafter. Ratzinger argues that “religion still enters into people’s lives, especially when the things that neither they nor anyone else can control intrude on their lives, and then the only thing that can help is an answer that comes from the One who is himself beyond us.”⁶ This means that neither the popular church nor the official church acting in isolation can bring about effective ecumenical action that presupposes the inner unity of the authorities and the faith of the people.

Furthermore, Ratzinger does not believe that the ecumenical unity of the church can be built on a socio-

logical model inspired by neo-Marxism: “It is no longer just a question of institutional ecumenism against ‘base’ ecumenism but of the ecumenism of a Church man can construct against that of a Church founded and given by the Holy Spirit.”⁷ Ratzinger has a Platonic cast of mind—his typical impulse is to see meaning already given and he is reluctant to accept new understandings or viewpoints.⁸

Ecumenism from Above

Ratzinger also criticizes the approach laid out in the 1980s by Catholic theologians Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries.⁹ The Fries–Rahner model proposes that once the proper ecclesial authority has decided on a closer relationship with other Christians, Catholics would just follow, given the tradition and structure of the Catholic Church. This “ecumenism from above” calls on church leaders to dispense normal criteria for entry into the Catholic Church. Such dispensation would allow new members to gradually integrate into the life of the church, and their initial reservation about Catholicism would disappear. Surprisingly, Ratzinger thinks that this strategy as advocated by Rahner is dependent on a gross exaggeration of papal power and episcopal authority. He is doubtful that such official ecumenism will work in both Catholic and Protestant churches.¹⁰

Ecumenism from the Side

Consensus ecumenism is also criticized by Ratzinger because it inverts the relationship between consensus and truth: instead of truth creating consensus, now it is consensus that creates truth. The confession of faith becomes an achievement of consensus. Praxis creates truth and thus action becomes the “actual hermeneutic of unity.”¹¹ Ecumenism also transcends the limits of Christian churches and becomes an ecumenism of religions. Since praxis is given prominence, Christianity and other religions are judged by their contribution to the liberation of human beings, justice and peace, as well as ecological concerns. Hence these ends become the core of religious belief.¹² This approach goes against Ratzinger’s belief in the priority of orthodoxy over praxis.

Connected to its stress on praxis, consensus ecumenism also focuses on the kingdom of God in place of Christology and ecclesiology. Consensus ecumenism leaves open the question of God, as the emphasis is now on the primacy of action. Ratzinger argues that this means that the doctrine of God’s nature is no longer primary. It is a pluralistic understanding of religions

that disregards the difference, for example, between Christian trinitarian belief and Buddhist nirvana.¹³ Ratzinger is critical of this kind of religious pluralism that treats all religions as equally valid paths towards salvation. Such pluralist theology deprives religious beliefs of their contents. Ecumenism in this sense is concerned not so much with convergence as with the co-existence of Christians and adherents of other religions.

Orthopraxis and Orthodoxy

This emphasis on praxis in religions, Ratzinger believes, has become a dominant ideology that cannot last long: “Ethos without logos cannot endure; that much the collapse of the socialist world . . . should have taught us.”¹⁴ He also admits that in the sphere of pluralism, some elements of unity are possible while division still exists. Although Ratzinger rejects the priority given to praxis over logos, he acknowledges the need to work for a better world. Thus the urgent subject matter of ecumenical dialogues is to discover what the commandment of love means in practice at the present time.¹⁵

In commenting on the path of ecumenism today, Ratzinger warns of the danger of pluralism and relativism regarding the Christian doctrine. He writes: “Whenever the distinction between the personal, revealed God, on whom we can call, and the non-personal, inconceivable mystery disappears, then the distinction between God and the gods, between worship and idolatry, likewise disappears.”¹⁶ We cannot work out an ethic without logos because without a standard of judgment, we end up in an “ideological moralizing.” The neglect of what is distinctively Christian and the internal conflict of churches lead to new oppositions that can be violent.¹⁷ The disregard for religious content for the sake of unity will actually lead to more sectarianism and syncretistic tendencies. This means that ecumenism must always be seeking after unity in belief and not just working for unity of action.

Ratzinger believes that theological dialogues must continue in a much more relaxed way and be less oriented towards success: “it is enough if many and varied forms of witnessing to belief thus develop, through which everyone can learn a little more of the wealth of the message that unites us.” We must be ready to face multiplicity of forms without developing self-sufficiency. We do not make the church: it is shaped by Christ in word and sacrament that will endure.¹⁸ Ecumenism is “really nothing other than living at present in an eschatological light, in the light of Christ who is coming

again.”¹⁹ This means that our ecumenical efforts are only provisional and it is only in Christ that we are journeying towards unity.

Ratzinger has proposed an ecumenism that involves the faith experience of the people, the study of theologians, and the doctrinal teaching of bishops. It is a process where interpenetration and maturity of insight will gradually enable Christians to unite at a deeper level. Theological unity found in John 17 is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the result of human negotiating skills. Even joint theological statements remain on the level of human understanding if they do not pertain to the act of faith. If we recognize the limits of “ecumenical negotiations,” then we will not be disappointed. The most we can achieve is good relationship in some areas, but not unity itself. Ratzinger laments that after the success of ecumenical efforts just after the Council, many people understood ecumenism in political terms.²⁰

In sum, Joseph Ratzinger rejects the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy. This is because truth is compromised and consensus determines what is valid, and thus praxis becomes the criteria of what is true. He suggests that we should learn “praxeological patience,” which means we must accept the necessity of division.²¹ Ultimately this division can be overcome only through conversion of all to the truth that is in Christ.

Question of Truth

The question of truth is fundamental for Ratzinger’s theology, as he insists that “ecumenical” does not mean concealing the truth so as not to offend others.²² He believes that full truth is part of full love. This means that Catholics must not look upon other Christians as adversaries against whom they must defend themselves, but must recognize them as brothers and sisters, with whom they can speak and from whom they can also learn. “Ecumenical” means that we give proper attention to the truth that others have. It means considering the whole and not singling out some aspects for condemnation or correction. Thus we have to present the “inner totality of our faith” in order to let other Christians know that Catholicism contains all that is truly Christian. For Ratzinger, to be a Catholic “is not to become entangled in separatism but to be open to the fullness of Christianity.”²³

The real differences between churches concern the confession of faith, the creed and the understanding of the sacraments. The other differences do not really matter because they do not divide the core of the church.

However, division within the central sphere threatens the church's existence and its very being. In this regard, Ratzinger distinguishes between human and theological divides. Human division is the "silent divinization" of our own ideas and works – it is a widespread temptation of human beings. In most religious schisms, such divinization of human thinking plays an important role in the conflict. Ecumenism requires us to liberate ourselves from such subtle distortions. Ratzinger believes that the differences between the various Christian communities can remain but should not distract from the nature of the church.²⁴

This means we can tolerate differences, but we must not be indifferent to the truth. It is thus important to distinguish between human tradition and divine truth. Hence the first task of ecumenism, according to Ratzinger, is to recognize what is variable and what forms the heart of the church that cannot be changed. Theological reflection alone does not bring about reconciliation, and at the same time it is the non-theological factors that produce division. The worst scenario is those who defend their own ideas as ideas coming from God himself.²⁵

Truth cannot be decided by majority vote: either something is true or it is not. Ratzinger is opposed to consensus ecumenism: "it is not consensus that offers a basis for truth, but the truth that offers one for consensus."²⁶ This means that authority comes from truth, not agreement by many people. The Anglican John Macquarrie, however, has argued that "truth is not something at which one arrives, but more of an ongoing process, involving the interplay of different views which sometimes agree, sometimes conflict, sometimes correct each other, but which defy all attempts to subsume them into a single truth."²⁷ This means that the fullness of truth belongs only to God and we can share this fullness only at the end of time. Joseph Ratzinger, on the other hand, believes that the church already possesses the authority to teach the truth.

Unity Through Diversity

According to Ratzinger, diversity is healthy and even desirable when the "poison of hostility" has been removed. Studying Augustine's interpretation of the Pauline statement "there must be factions" (1 Cor 11:19), Ratzinger argues that even though divisions and factions are human realities, they are also part of divine arrangement. We can do all we can through penance and sacrifice to heal the division, but it is God who will

ultimately draw all people to himself.²⁸ Being open to plurality and diversity, Ratzinger adopts a cautious and realistic attitude towards Christian ecumenism. He has experienced personally, in his homeland, how Catholics and Protestants can live together peacefully.

In Germany there is a healthy and fruitful co-existence between Protestants and Catholics. Initially there had been great hostility between the two churches, but gradually they developed on both sides into a positive factor for the faith. This may explain why St. Paul speaks about the necessity of factions. Ratzinger questions: "Could anyone really imagine an exclusively Protestant world? Is not Protestantism instead, in all its declarations, precisely as a protest, so completely connected with Catholicism that it would be scarcely imaginable without it?"²⁹ Lamentably, Ratzinger does not argue that the converse is true: Catholicism needs Protestantism to remind itself of the need for constant reformation and purification based on the Word of God.

According to Ratzinger, Catholic understanding of plurality is different from the Protestant idea about independent national churches like the Anglican Church or federations of churches like the Lutheran Church. In fact, from the beginning, Catholic theology has recognized the plurality of churches. This means the acceptance of the multiplicity of churches existing within the framework of the one and visible church of God, each presenting the totality of the church. These particular churches are in close communion with one another as they help to build up the one church. This unity is born of a vigorous multiplicity. Thus there exists a Church of God in Athens, in Corinth, in Rome: each local community assembled together with the bishop presiding over the eucharistic celebration; it partakes of the essence of the church and is truly a "church." For Ratzinger, to be a church, it must not exist in isolation, but must be in communion with the other churches which, together, form the one church.³⁰

Plurality of churches had a legitimate existence within the church, but unfortunately, in the course of history, the plurality slowly receded in favour of a centralized system. In this process, the local church of Rome began to absorb all the other local churches, and thus unity became uniformity. This plurality of churches had no room *within* the church and thus developed *outside* of it in the form of autonomous separate churches.³¹ The Catholic Church since Vatican II has tried to remedy this situation by its ecumenical endeavours.

Ratzinger acknowledges that the Catholic Church is not yet prepared to accept the phenomenon of multiplicity in unity. It is a renewal that involves a process of opening up, which takes time. He asserts that there is the one Church that is identified with the historical continuity of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church considers itself the Church of Christ in spite of its historical deficiency. It also recognizes the plurality of churches that should exist within it, but today this plurality can only exist outside.³² As we have seen, Ratzinger recognizes the valid existence of the plurality of churches under one universal church, but he is opposed to the present plurality of denominational churches, which is a particular characteristic of Protestantism. Ratzinger is also realistic enough to accept that division among churches represents not only an evil tendency in human beings; it also can be a divine necessity. This is because separation is necessary for our purification. Unity in diversity or a reconciled diversity is thus an acceptable formula for Joseph Ratzinger in our ecumenical endeavours.³³

Eastern Model

While he argues that it is presumptuous for Catholics to demand that all the other Christian churches be disbanded and incorporated into the Catholic Church, Ratzinger hopes that the churches existing outside the “Church” will eventually enter into communion with Rome. They can remain in existence as “churches,” modifying only those features which unity demands.³⁴ Here Ratzinger’s position appears to be that the various Protestant denominations may eventually be received into the full communion as Uniate rites. These churches will be like the Eastern rite churches: in union with Rome and at the same time retaining their own distinctive spiritual, liturgical, and canonical traditions. Besides having a different liturgy from the Latin Church, many Eastern rite churches have married clergy.

This Uniate model could be the basis for reunion between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, for example. It would replace the existing denominationalism with a visible unity among the churches. At the same time, it would protect the rich heritage of the various Christian traditions. This could be the goal for the next stage of the ecumenical movement.

Unity is not to be identified with uniformity in ecumenical dialogue. It is the duty of Christians to defend the legitimate interests of pluralism against the forces of uniformity. However, maintaining a healthy plural-

ism in unity is a complex process. There is always this tension existing between unity and division. Paul Tillich has observed, “The dynamics of life, the tendency to preserve the holy even when it has become obsolete, the ambiguities implied in the sociological existence of the churches, and, above all, the prophetic criticism and demand for reformation would bring about new and, in many cases, spiritually justified divisions.”³⁵

Ratzinger supports the idea of a “fruitful pluralism” and acknowledges the positive aspect of division. Thus he says that a way to promote unity through diversity is not to impose on the other party anything that threatens his or her core identity as Christian. This means that Catholics should not try to force Protestants to recognize papal authority, the sacraments, etc. Protestants should not pressure the Catholic Church to allow intercommunion based on their understanding of the Eucharist. Such respect for the “otherness” of the other, which is inherent in the division, would not delay unity, but is a prerequisite for it.³⁶

Ratzinger rightly says that this kind of tolerance and acceptance can produce charity and proximity, but that urgent insistence can only create tension and aversion. Ultimately, we must leave God to do what is actually God’s business—Christian unity.³⁷

In the meantime, Christians can still come together to engage in practical or secular ecumenism, which this author believes is urgently needed in Asia.

Practical Ecumenism

Asia is a vast and diverse continent where various religious beliefs, including different branches of Christianity, continue to flourish. In spite of modernization and rapid economic development, Asia is steeped in religious traditions. At the same time, the gap between the rich and poor is growing rapidly, and the majority of the people lack the basic necessities of life in many parts of the continent. Hence, a practical or secular ecumenical approach that strives towards the common good in the midst of religious pluralism is more appropriate and meaningful. For example, Christians from different denominations, including Roman Catholics, can cooperate in charitable and social justice work.

Practical ecumenism implies “a unity with true existential foundations, rather than one that has come about as the blueprint devised by a high-powered ecclesiastical commission.”³⁸ Thus it is not “ecumenism from above.” Although Joseph Ratzinger insists that *ethos* without *logos* is not sustainable, as evidenced by the collapse of

socialism, he has admitted that an ecumenism of praxis has its value in fulfilling Christ's commandment of love. However, focusing on practical ecumenism does not imply that we are indifferent towards the truth. In fact, we uphold the truth found in Matthew 25:31-46.³⁹

Given the present situation, where impasse in ecumenical dialogue is inevitable, practical ecumenism also has the advantage of setting realistic intermediate goals. While doctrinal or liturgical differences may be intractable, charitable works as a witness of the gospel can be readily organized by different churches in harmony with one another. Likewise, the different churches can witness together regarding the great moral questions of our time. This can be done through joint testimonies of faith before a world torn by doubts and fears. These small efforts should point to the common features of Christian living despite separations. Working together in these modest projects shows that separation no longer serves as opposition.⁴⁰ Christians will be challenged to understand and accept members of other churches as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ecumenical effort aims at fostering unity among Christian communities that is meaningful only when churches are willing to work together on the practical tasks of helping the poor, visiting prisoners, alleviating poverty and suffering, etc. In short, Christians should be united to bring more abundant life to the world. John Macquarrie argues that the basis of this practical ecumenism "is not a nicely worked out ecclesiology or even a doctrine of redemption but simply that natural morality which is common to all men by virtue of their humanity."⁴¹ This means that we do not have to force adherents of other faiths to be baptized or even call them anonymous Christians. It is enough that they have "the law written on their hearts" (Rom 2:15). Macquarrie rightly asserts that this non-exclusive practical or "secular" ecumenism is a recognition that all humanity is a creation of God and has a share in the image of God that is expressed in Christ.⁴²

Practical or secular ecumenism seeks first the unity of humankind rather than the unity of the churches. It reminds Christians that the end of history is not the church, but the kingdom of God—the gathering of both church and world in an eschatological unity. Thus our primary aim is not the ecclesiastical unity, but the unity of the world. Once we focus on the unity of the world, the unity of the church may come more quickly as a provisional stage on the way.⁴³ Augustine Cardinal Bea writes that the church, as it is a society, which is also

perfectly human, "feels itself intimately linked with all mankind, and co-operates in the achieving of unity for mankind."⁴⁴ Similarly, Konrad Raiser, the former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, stresses social concerns over doctrinal issues. This means that ecumenical effort should be directed to combating social problems like racism, economic inequality, sexism, and other injustices, rather than debating theological issues and ministry. Raiser thinks that previous ecumenical efforts were too introverted, dogmatic, and abstract.⁴⁵ At the same time there is always the fear that this newer ecumenical model, which seeks to bring Christians from different confessions together, would lead to a denial of Christ's divinity and unique salvific role. This is also Ratzinger's concern. However, there is no concrete evidence to show that Christians would deny the salvific efficacy of Christ or divinity just because they are too involved in charitable and social justice work.

Practical ecumenism safeguards the diversities of churches and also prevents their absorption. As Ratzinger is cautious about ecumenical efforts and the rush to unity because of serious doctrinal differences, it is appropriate that the various churches can begin by first coming together to work on some common social projects to help to alleviate the suffering of the poor and marginalized. It is also important to understand ecumenism as "the science of bridge-building, a science of dialogue across different groups."⁴⁶ This means that eventually ecumenism will include not just Christians, but people of other faiths and even those who have none.

Ans Van der Bent rightly insists that there must be dialogue between the church and the world; though the church is not of the world, it is in the world to serve and minister to it. He stresses service within the world. While the church is discovering the world, it should also help the world to discover the church.⁴⁷ The church must re-evaluate its structure to deal with problems such as secularization, poverty, the environmental crisis, and new threats to justice and peace. Facing the same problems in the world draws churches closer together than they were before. This will help them to deepen their theological investigations and work out a consensus that allows common action.⁴⁸ There is enough ecumenical doctrinal and ethical consensus among the churches to deal with problems like torture, foreign debt of developing countries, refugees, etc.⁴⁹ This means that we must start with where we agree first regarding our social commitment to the world. Our practice cannot be separated from our doctrine. Only a deep solidarity with our

broken world will reveal to us how narrowly the social teachings of the churches are still defined.⁵⁰

Ans Van der Bent is critical of the Roman Catholic claim that the unique church of Christ “subsists” in the Roman Catholic Church, because this implies that other churches are not in a position to produce valid social teaching.⁵¹ The main ecumenical task is for all churches to be involved in the pastoral task of judgment and reconciliation regarding social issues. Van der Bent believes the fullness of the church subsists “in its manifestation of Christ’s redemption of the entire human race.”⁵²

Conclusion

Joseph Ratzinger’s ecumenical approach is influenced by his concern for the decline of Christianity and his hope for a united Christian Church to combat the threat of aggressive secularism in Europe. Ratzinger believes that for Europe to build a humane society, it must return to its original Greek roots and Christian heritage. This means that Europe must rediscover the objective and eternal values that stand above politics and stress the rule of the law. In view of this, he stresses the Greek concept of *eunomia*—the enactment of good laws and the maintenance of civil order.⁵³ Ratzinger thinks that Christian values can help to halt the decline of European civilization. Thus in view of rebuilding Europe, Christian unity can play a significant role.

This ecumenical concern of Ratzinger’s may be justifiable and timely given the present situation in Europe. However, the challenge for the churches in Asia is to be united to fight against poverty and oppression, and to promote justice and peace, as part of witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Ratzinger’s reflection on the ecumenical situation takes place within a particular cultural context. John Paul II called for a dialogue between faith and culture, and the Vatican Council recognized the need of “accommodated preaching,” but to Ratzinger this may veer towards relativism.⁵⁴

Although Christianity in Europe has slowly been made irrelevant with the surge of secularism, the West continues to exercise authority and control over the churches of Asia. In the Catholic Church, the Petrine Office and the Magisterium keep the local churches in Asia under Western tutelage. In the various Protestant denominational churches in Asia, the economic support of the Western mother churches is still crucial for their functioning and even for their survival. Thus K.M. George rightly says, “while the spiritual vitality of the Western churches is probably drying up, their institu-

tional power over the churches of the South is still going strong.”⁵⁵

Asian theologians, from both Catholic and Protestant churches, have been calling for a recovery of Asian Christian identity. This means that the churches in Asia must shed their Western trappings. There is an obvious gap between the theological understanding of identity and institutional reality of our church. This poses an obstacle to Asian ecumenism.⁵⁶ Perhaps a more appropriate approach to ecumenical endeavour in Asia lies in the various branches of Christianity coming together, putting aside their doctrinal differences, making a concerted effort to deal with the problems related to poverty, justice, peace, and ecological issues.

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1 In taking a cautious and critical approach to ecumenism, Ratzinger is actually following the precedent of previous popes. Pius XI’s encyclical of 1928, *Mortalium Animos*, criticized the ecumenical movement and accused it of seeking to reach unity by easy compromise and by focusing too much on service. In 1896, Leo XIII also expressed similar sentiments in *Satis Cognitum*. The common assumption then was that the ecumenical movement was a Protestant affair. There was no need for Catholics to search for Christian unity because unity was already established in the Chair of Peter in Rome in the Mystical Body of Christ. There was also a fear that the ecumenical movement could threaten the identity and nature of the Catholic Church. It was only in 1939 that Pius XII’s encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* expressed friendliness towards Protestants. However, the “return” of “separated brethren” remained the aim of dialogue. Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., Eamon McManus, Ann Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 29.

2 See Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannon, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 139–40.

3 Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 133.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones of a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 303.

8 Thomas P. Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to His Theological Vision* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 45.

9 Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, *Unity of the Church: An Actual Possibility* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

10 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 134. According to Aidan Nichols, “Such ecumenism from above is a caricature of the Catholic view of the ministerial priesthood, just as ecumenism from below is a caricature of the Protestant view of the priesthood of the laity.” Aidan Nichols OP, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI* (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 192.

11 Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 260.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 261. Defending *Dominus Iesus*, the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Ratzinger says that its teaching is “intended to transform the indifference with which all churches are regarded as different but equally valid.” If all churches are equally valid, the validity of the faith “disappears into scepticism.” This means that when

everything is regarded as valid, then nothing is important. Here we see Ratzinger criticizing relativism and pluralism. It is not about tolerance, he argues, but it is about the truth that we must suffer for it. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 241.

14 Ibid., 262.

15 Ibid., 263.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 264.

18 Ibid., 266.

19 Ibid., 269.

20 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 134.

21 Quoted in Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 440.

22 Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 45.

23 Ibid., 46.

24 Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 255.

25 Ibid., 256.

26 Ibid., 257.

27 John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1975), 34.

28 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 135.

29 Ibid., 136.

30 Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 111.

31 Ibid., 112–13.

32 Ibid., 115.

33 Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 258.

34 Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 114–15.

35 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume III (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 169–70.

36 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 137.

37 Ibid., 138.

38 Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, 23.

39 See Ambrose Mong Ih-Ren, “Challenges and Opportunities for the Church in Secular Societies,” *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 25, no.1, April 2011, 157.

40 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 119.

41 Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, 24.

42 Ibid., 25.

43 Ibid.

44 Augustine Cardinal Bea, *Unity in Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 214. K.H. Ting claims that “The Christ who rose and now sits at the right hand of God is not only the Lord of the churches but also the Lord of the secular World. The secular movements of the people have an important significance. What man achieves in history is not finally to be negated or destroyed but, in the new heaven and new earth, will be received in Christ and transfigured.” See Kim Yong Bock, “Human Rights and the Structures of Injustice,” in Ninan Koshy, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*, Volume II (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation, Asia-Pacific Region, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA, Christian Conference of Asia, 2004), 296.

45 Christopher Ruddy, *The Local Church: Tillard and the Future of Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 2006), 155.

46 Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 135.

47 Ans Van der Bent, *Commitment to God's World: A Concise Critical Survey of Ecumenical Social Thought* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 171.

48 Ibid., 172.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 175.

51 Ibid., 176.

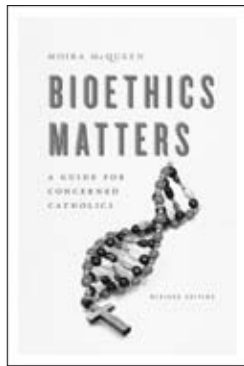
52 Ibid.

53 Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 216.

54 I am grateful to the editorial board of *The Ecumenist* for this suggestion.

55 K.M. George, “Ecumenism in Asia: Some Theological Considerations,” in *Windows into Ecumenism: Essays in Honour of Ahn Jae Woong* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 2005), 123.

56 Ibid., 124.



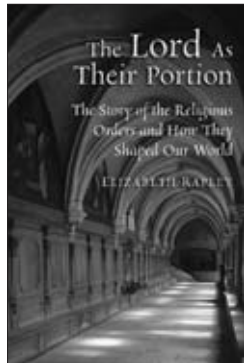
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