



THE HONORS PROGRAM

Ecumenism: Catholicism and the ELCA
The possibility of ecumenism between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

An Honors Capstone Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with University Honors

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
MARTIN LUTHER	9
PROTESTANT REFORMATION	11
AUGSBURG INTERIM/PEACE OF AUGSBURG	14
THIRTY YEARS WAR.....	17
FRENCH HUGUENOTS.....	20
PEACE OF WESTPHALIA	23
NORTHERN IRELAND	26
SOUTHERN HARMONY	29
VATICAN II COUNCIL	33
PARENTS.....	36
DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES.....	50
CLERGY IN THE DENOMINATIONS	53
THE LAITY.....	63
CONCLUSION	72
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	75

Abstract

Despite the common knowledge of differences between the various Christian denominations of the world, many people are unaware of how these differences have impacted the ecumenical talks to unite, or at least improve communications between, different Christian denominations. These issues came to light in a personal way when my father, a Catholic, began studying to become a deacon while my mother remains an Evangelical Lutheran. An analysis of the denominations, including their teachings, leaders, and congregations, shows an easily recognizable similarity, but also a stark contrast in many teachings, including those related to the Eucharist, as well as leadership duties and the role of women. These differences of opinion have separated these denominations for centuries. However, the answer to unification could remain with the parishioners and members of the respective denominations. An examination of an interreligious marriage, the parish leaders, and the members of the denominations may lead to the answer.

Introduction

In September of 2010, Mark De Rosch started the Deaconate program with the goal of becoming a Deacon of the Catholic Church after four years of classes. He felt called to serve a greater role in the Catholic Church, and was encouraged by his wife, his son, and his friends. Among these friends was a Deacon friend, who, while ten years Mark's senior, had grown up in the same neighborhood in Kenosha, Wisconsin as Mark, separated only by a decade and a highway. He began his first year of classes, and his wife, Valerie, attended alongside him when possible, to learn what she could as well. About a year later, interviews were conducted to observe the candidates and their spouses, so as to evaluate their compatibility with the Deaconate calling. This is when the problems began.

Valerie De Rosch, wife of Mark De Rosch, has been a Lutheran all her life, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, or ELCA. She met Mark De Rosch at the University of Wisconsin Parkside, and married him in 1986. Four years later, their son, Trevor, the author, was born, and baptized into the Catholic Church. Since they moved to New Hampshire in 1994, she has been attending Catholic services alongside her Catholic husband and son (except for a few months in New Jersey, where they attended a non-denominational church). She accepted the Eucharist at each Catholic Church she went attended, being open each time with the priest about her faith and beliefs, and being accepted. Despite her many years of being served in the Catholic Church by her priests, when the bishop's advisors learned of her accepting the Eucharist, despite being a non-Catholic, they asked her to stop accepting the Eucharist.

This personal experience epitomizes the complicated issue that is ecumenism, and the denominational doctrines that block it. Today, Catholic and Lutheran faiths, along with many others, are attempting to discuss and reconcile their differences in the interest of ecumenism, or

religious unity. Ecumenism is the unity of Christian denominations in faith and worship, for the benefit of each other, and all mankind. As St. Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 1:10-15:

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”¹

Many Christians consider this as a rallying point for Christian unification. The Vatican II Council’s Decree on Ecumenism quotes this bible passage as a cornerstone for Christian unity.² So with all the support amongst Christians for unification, why hasn’t it happened yet?

One major reason for this lack of unification progress is lack of willingness to come to a mutual agreement on the interpretation of the bible. The Lutheran denominations split from the Catholic Church, and each other, based on a variety of problems, including some which no longer apply. However, since that split, the denominations have developed their own traditions and ways of conducting things. Some of the original reasons for splitting are no longer there. Now tradition has been established, and while services are practically, and surprisingly, identical, the meanings behind the services are very different. Among the major dividers between Catholics and Lutherans are the meanings of the Eucharist, the belief in the Sacraments, and the support for the pope.

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:10-15 (New American Bible).

² Austin Flannery, ed., *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1 of *Vatican Council II*, New Rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 2004), 452.

Today, Lutherans and Catholics are attempting to come together in harmony in the interest of forming a unified Christian front. Many hope to follow a popular Christian worship song, written by Peter Scholte in 1966.

“We are One in The Spirit / We are One in The Lord / We are One in The Spirit / We are One in The Lord / And we pray that all unity may one day be restored / And they’ll know we are Christians by our love / By our Love / Yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”³

However, in order for agreements to be made and unity to happen, concessions must be made. This is where problems arise. Many faiths cling on to what separates them from other faiths, which helps them stand out in the crowd, and attract more faithful. While they share the same basic message, the same worship ceremony, and the same faith in the trinity, these religions have some strongly differing opinions in regard the three afore mentioned dividers. They will need to overcome these differences if there is to be any hope of unity.

It may not be the differences that divide the two, however. It may just be an inability to see the similarities. The differences are very specific, and very important to each denomination. However, the basic message for all Christian denominations is the message of salvation. The Nicene Creed is a basic staple for all Western Christian faiths. Both the Catholic Church and the ELCA have their own versions of the Nicene Creed. The Catholic version can be found in Appendix 1, while the ELCA version can be found in Appendix 2.

The Nicene Creed used by the Catholics (Appendix 1) was recently updated, reinterpreted from the original Latin version. Emphasis has now been placed on the confession of the individual, indicated by the heavy use of “I believe”, as the individual can not vouch for the faith of a fellow parishioner. Other than this, the beliefs spelled out emphasize the belief in

³ United Music. “We Are One in The Spirit.” United Music, <http://www.untiedmusic.com/ezekiel/onespirt.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

one God, the Father. It also points out the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, His life (virgin birth, crucifixion, and resurrection), as well as His future role. In addition, this version states the belief in the Holy Spirit, in the one Church, in forgiveness of sins through baptism, and the resurrection of the dead in the new world at the end of time.

The ELCA recites a slightly different version (Appendix 2). While different in its use of the communal “We believe” rather than the individual emphasis, in most other ways, it is the same. When compared to the Catholic version, it all seems exactly alike. The Catholics seem to use a higher language, using “visible and invisible” instead of the Lutheran “seen and unseen”. The Catholics also say “consubstantial”, while the Lutherans say “of One Being”. Word order is changed sometimes, as the Catholics say “...and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary...”, while the Lutherans say “...was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary...”. One other difference in these statements is the capitalization put on “Virgin” by the Catholics, showing an emphasis on the importance of Mary. The last major difference is the capitalization placed on the word “Church” by the Catholics, referring to the Catholic Church, while the Lutherans use “church”, using some ambiguity.

Despite these differences, the basic message is exactly the same. Both emphasize a belief in One God, and that God is the creator. They confess the Jesus Christ is their Lord, and the Son of God. They say he was born to the virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, only to be resurrected. Jesus will be the judge of the living and the dead, and the ruler of an eternal kingdom. The emphasis is then shifted to the Holy Spirit, who is recognized as the giver of life, and the voice of prophets. Both voice the belief in one holy catholic and apostolic church, one baptism to forgive sins, and the resurrection of the dead, not to mention the next world. These

similarities allow them to share a bond that cannot be taken away. It is on these points that they should focus their efforts in ecumenism.

Their differences have prevented them from moving forward in ecumenism, however. While they profess the same (or, at least, strongly similar) belief, Catholics and Lutherans cannot come to agreement on their beliefs, and these differences continue to be a roadblock. In order to unravel the reasons behind these problems, one needs to examine the Institutional teachings and the beliefs of the clergy. However, the laity are a large part of both denominations. Their understanding and acceptance of their denomination's teachings is crucial to the discussion. If the laity do not believe in the religion, then the religion ceases to exist, following the path of the Greek, Roman, and Norse religions. These three levels of each denomination (Institution, Clergy, and Laity) will then be compared, both internally and across denominational lines. I, the author, will also add a look at Catholic-Lutheran interaction on a personal level, in the marriage of my mother and father. However, first the historical interaction between Catholicism and the denominations branching off of Protestantism, including Lutheranism, must be examined.

The historical section will examine several periods of history, observing the interaction between Catholics and Protestants around the world, focusing on Europe, the cradle of the Protestant Reformation, and America. Tracking of the relationships between the two will first begin with the Martin Luther, and then focus on the Protestant Reformation and the first attempts at ecumenism. The first major conflict between the two denominations, the Thirty Years War, will be observed, along with the plight of the French Huguenots and the Peace of Westphalia. Then, the Northern Ireland conflict will be reviewed. Next, religious tolerance and tensions will be examined in the American South. Lastly, the Vatican II Council will be studied, particularly their decrees on ecumenism. These historical periods will help shed light on the beginnings of

disagreement and conflict, the resolution of those conflicts, and how they influenced the next event. As is common with historical overviews, one must first start in the beginning.

Martin Luther

The story of ecumenism between Catholicism and the ELCA begins in the early 16th century, with the protests of Martin Luther against the Church. At that time, the Church was the major religious and political power in Europe. All European nations, outside of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, were Catholic. The Church had influence over world leaders in powerful nations such as France, England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Spain. However, some of their practices were upsetting people, many of whom felt the Church was losing its way. They set out to correct these mistakes.

In 1515, Pope Leo X passed a decree which permitted the selling of indulgences to pay for the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In protest, Martin Luther, a monk and a professor of biblical theology, posted his famous 95 Theses on the doors of the Wittenberg church in 1517. Four years later he was excommunicated for attacking the church in writing, criticizing the exchange of money for the forgiveness of sins. Luther believed that forgiveness could not be bought; rather, it must be given to the person from God. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V also condemned Luther's actions. While Luther was in hiding for eight months, other reformers started to speak out against the Church. These included John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, and Zwingli, who led the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland. The Pope, upon the release of the 95 Theses, released the Decret Romanum Pontificem, outlining faults in the 95

theses, as well as excommunicating Luther from the Catholic Church. However, it was too late. The Protestant Reformation was in full swing.⁴

One practice that Luther witnessed, and was common at the time, was the selling of indulgences. According to editor Louis L. Snyder:

“...a priest, acting as the instrument of God, had the right to forgive the sins of a contrite sinner who had confessed before him...(this) did not absolve him (the sinner) from the penalties which God, or his representative, the priest, imposed. It was, therefore, necessary for the sinner to obtain an indulgence, remitting him from the temporal punishment awaiting him in purgatory.”⁵

In 1515, Pope Leo X allowed the selling of indulgences to pay for the rebuilding of St. Peter's. In response, Martin Luther, on October 31, 1517, All Hallows' Eve, posted Ninety-Five theses on the doors of the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg. In essence, these Ninety-Five Theses attacked the Church, the priests, and even the Pope, denouncing the forgiveness of sins by human hands, or the payment of indulgences. He also laments the Church's hoarding of wealth, instead saying that “the true treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God...”⁶

In 1520, Luther took his reformation a step further, releasing his three treatises. The first urged German princes to unite and destroy the power of the pope. The second attacked the Seven Sacraments (aka Baptism, the Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick). He stated that all but two or three (Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and maybe Penance or Reconciliation) were useless, and to be rejected. His third treatise rejected priests, saying that each man was his own priest, and subject to no man. “Faith

⁴ Tim Cooke, ed., *Concise History of World Religions: An Illustrated Time Line* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 2011), 180-181.

⁵ Louis L. Snyder, ed., *Documents of German History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 62.

⁶ *Ibid*, 65.

alone, without works, make righteous, and through faith all believers are priests.”⁷ These treatises, along side Luther’s theses, would pave the way for the Protestant Reformation, as peasants, oppressed by the lords in Germany, embraced the new faith, and sought their own destinies.

Luther’s written attacks against the Church would begin a continent wide revolution in religious concepts. At the time, the Church was in charge of most of Europe, from England and Sweden in the North, to Spain and Italy in the South; from Portugal in the West to Poland in the East. By 1520, that had changed. Many German states, located in the center of Europe, and at the heart of the Holy Roman Empire, were converting to Lutheranism. Princes joined Luther’s cause, and soon, the Church had a full Reformation on its hands.⁸

Martin Luther set out to change the Church by identifying corruption, exposing it, and forcing the Church to change. When the Church resisted change, instead attempting to discredit Luther, the path was set for a split. Ecumenism’s origins between the Catholic and the ELCA would begin at this time. In order to prevent this split from happening, the Catholic Church responded to the Protestant Reformation, launching its own Counter-Reformation. This would ensure that ecumenical attempts to establish peace would fail in the beginning.

Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation was the growing movement to challenge the Church and its practices, especially the sale of indulgences, and influence in politics. In response to this threat, champions of Catholicism attempted to bring the Protestants back into the fold, a sort of

⁷ Snyder, ed. 67.

⁸ Ibid 79.

ecumenism by force. One of these champions of Catholicism was the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V.

In 1521, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V declared the Diet of Worms (a judicial hearing to decide upon Luther's fate), and called Luther before him. In order to allow Luther to reach him, the Emperor needed to provide numerous letters of safe-conduct, so that he wouldn't be arrested on his way to Worms, located in the southern part of the Holy Roman Empire. Before he arrived, he was warned by the Emperor's confessor, through a man named Master Bucer, that he would be burned. Luther, upon hearing of the crowds gathering in Worms to do him harm, stated: "I will repair thither, though I should find as many devils as there are tiles on the house tops". However, upon arriving at Worms, his works were burned. Luther protested this, stating that the burning violated the letters of safe passage. However, his protests were ignored.⁹

Once he was brought before the Diet, Luther stated four points. His first statement was that he had no faith in Papal authority. He further stated that he had no faith in the authority of the councils. Luther explains his lack of faith as being due to errors both have made, and the fact that both the Pope and the councils have contradicted each other many times. He then remarks that he only had faith in the Bible, which would later lead to the Lutheran notion of "sola scriptura", or "only through scripture". The Catholic Church at this time, and to this day, preached the concept of salvation through scripture and tradition. Luther rejected the traditional aspect, claiming that this was where the corruption lay. His last comment was to remark that "I cannot and will not retract, for we must never act contrary to our conscience."¹⁰

⁹ Snyder, ed. 76-77.

¹⁰ Ibid 77.

Charles V, after hearing Luther's response, gave a speech in response to Luther's statements. The first part of his speech explains his position; in a nutshell, he is the decedent of a long line of Catholic Emperors who have defended the faith, and it is his job to continue to defend the faith. He then attempts to belittle Luther, stating "A single monk, led astray by private judgment, has set himself against the faith held by all Christians for more than a thousand years." He then goes back to how he is required to defend the faith from heresy. He then states his regret for not moving against Luther sooner, and that the letters of safe conduct prevented him from holding Luther. However, Charles V stated "...he is forbidden to preach and to seduce men with his evil beliefs and incite them to rebellion." Charles V basically is attempting to make Luther out to be a crazy person that no one should listen to. Instead, Luther's voice gains recognition, and leads to problems.¹¹

The group that heard what Luther had to say the loudest were the peasants, who were repressed by feudal lords. The peasants, seeing the authority of the state (feudal system) and the authority of the church (religious system) as one and the same, thought Luther, when he rejected the Church, was also rejecting the state. In 1525, a massive German peasant's revolt erupted, changing "religious revolt into a social revolution"¹². However, Luther rejected the revolt, because he needed the support of nobles to continue attacking the Church. His reply included the sentence "Just as one must slay a mad dog, so, if you do not fight the rebels, they will fight you, and the whole country with you". The peasants took to destroying religious icons threatening priests, forcing participation (of both peasants and clergy) in the rebellion, plundering, and murder. With the support of Luther, the nobles of the Swabian League (a coalition of German princes, both Protestant and Catholic) began a brutal crackdown, resulting in

¹¹ Snyder, ed. 78.

¹² Ibid 79.

more than 8,000 peasants being killed in battle, and more being beheaded without last rites. However, while the social revolt was over, the religious revolution was growing.¹³

The Protestant Reformation saw many problems in the beginning. Calls for ecumenism from the Catholics were strong. In fact, no one really wanted to split off from the Church. There was hope that there was still a chance for ecumenism. The Protestant Reformation clashed with the Counter-Reformation. The more they clashed, the more they ensured the failure of ecumenism between the two denominations. However, the Church still attempted to bring the Protestants back to Catholicism with the Augsburg Interim.

Augsburg Interim/Peace of Augsburg

The Augsburg Interim can be seen as the first major ecumenical attempt made between the Catholics and the Lutherans. In 1548, the Catholics released a document detailing a way in which Protestants and Catholics could be reunited, by resolving key issues dividing the two faiths. This document was heralded throughout the Catholic community as the solution to the problem, and the end of it. Protestants, however, were not enthralled with the document. In fact, the Protestants were never consulted on the document. It became the focal point for Catholic and Lutheran relations for the next decade.¹⁴

This article came into existence out of the imperial success in the Schmalkaldic War, a brief, year-long conflict between Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and a coalition of Lutheran states, named the Schmalkaldic League. As a result of victory in the war, Emperor Charles V called for the Augsburg Interim, which basically called for the reunification of the two faiths under some changes to Catholicism. While making concessions, the basic premise was that

¹³ Snyder 79-81.

¹⁴ Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2009), 34.

Catholicism would be the only faith, and most of the challenges Protestants had made to religious ideas would be thrown out, such as the lack of faith in Papal authority.¹⁵

As a result of attempts to be forced to agree to the Augsburg Interim, Protestants revolted, and this time they had a strong supporter. Catholic France was offered bishoprics in the Holy Roman Empire in return for its support. While having the same state religion as the Holy Roman Empire, France was under a rival family; the Holy Roman Empire, along with the Spanish Empire, was ruled by the Habsburgs, while France was under the influence of the Bourbons, who would later, by 1589, rule all of France. With France backing the rebels, the Holy Roman Empire was forced to consent to the demands of the Protestant leader, signing the Peace of Passau in 1552, which suspended the Interim.¹⁶

In 1555, the Religious Peace of Augsburg would be concluded. This was not solely focused on religious issues; rather, religion was just one of many issues, including tax revisions, currency regulations, policing regulations, and revisions to the regulations of the judicial institution, the Reichskammergericht. This Peace “sought to bring adherents of two opposing confessions within the same legal framework”. Words important to both faiths were used. However, religions were locked geographically to their current locations; each territory was forbidden to change their religious affiliation after the Peace. Those who were of different faith but living in an area decreed to belong to the opposing faith could leave and retain their lands. Peter Wilson, author of Europe’s Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War, stated that the Augsburg Religious Peace was a “comparatively satisfactory settlement of the religious and political difficulties”. No major war would occur for another 63 years, until the Thirty Years

¹⁵ Wilson 41.

¹⁶ Ibid 42.

War. The only way the Augsburg Peace failed was that it neglected a new faith, the Calvinist movement, which rapidly grew in popularity in many nations, most noticeably the Dutch Provinces, France, and several German states. Their lack of representation would lead to war.¹⁷

Despite peace talks, the Catholic Church was upset with their loss of power, and sought to reclaim their influence across Europe. In opposition to the Protestant Reformation sweeping Europe, the Catholic nations, namely Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, sought to reduce the power of the Protestant movement. These counter-measures became known as the Counter-Reformation, and the before mentioned Schmalkaldic War was a part of it. In essence, the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation both occurred simultaneously, with the Protestants attempting to gain influence and power, and the Catholics seeking to contain and shrink Protestant influence. In addition, the Counter-Reformation was used by the ruling Habsburg families of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire to legitimize their growing power and influence. This struggle saw the Southern and Western regions of Europe, such as Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Italian states, becoming strongly Catholic, and the Northern and Eastern portions becoming Protestant, with Calvinism in the Dutch Republic, Scotland, and Switzerland; Anglicanism in England; and Lutheranism in Denmark, the Swedish Empire, and Bohemia. This would lead to battle lines being drawn mainly along religious ties, though not always for religious reasons.¹⁸

These ecumenical attempts failed due to the Catholics taking an egotistical stance. The Catholics thought that by changing a few small items, they could bring the Protestants back to Catholicism, and reunite the religions. In other words, their goal was full ecumenism. They

¹⁷ Wilson 42-43.

¹⁸ Snyder, ed. 79-81.

completely failed, not allowing Protestants representation, barely conceding any important issues to the Protestants, and ignoring Calvinism. These three issues would lead to the complete failure of the first attempts at ecumenism between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Thirty Years War

Ecumenism, having failed, was no longer an option. Catholics had only one choice to bring the Protestants back into the Catholic Church. This involved the use of force. This was an easy option, since the three most powerful nations in Christian Europe (France, the Holy Roman Empire, and Spain) were Catholic. Also, while there was little they could do about Protestant reforms in other countries such as Sweden and England, they felt perfectly within their rights to stamp out Protestantism within their own countries. If peaceful ecumenism wasn't succeeding, then force would be necessary.

The Religious Peace of Augsburg in 1555 failed to resolve all religious issues between Catholics and Lutherans, and also failed to take into account the Calvinists. Over time, many minor issues would build up, putting the religions at odds again. In addition, the Catholic Church, after suffering set backs due to the Reformation, was ready to press hard with their Counter-Reformation. The Hapsburg dynasty in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire was interested in regaining control over the German states, and wanted to intervene further. France and Austria, two major powers in Europe, were still at odds with one another over various the Italian wars, in which Austria sought to reestablish its control over the Italian states, and France sought to weaken Austria by assisting the Italian states in gaining their independence. A slowing economy in Germany convinced many European rulers to get involved, for their own benefits.

These many factors clashed between the years 1618 and 1648, in what would be called the Thirty Years War.¹⁹

To the outside observer, the Thirty Years War has clear battle lines: Lutheran and Calvinist states fought against Catholic states for power and independence. However, a closer look shows that this otherwise religious war was vastly complicated. While battle lines did tend to be drawn along religious boundaries, the Thirty Years War is more a collection of various conflicts than one vast war. Three distinct conflicts can be seen. The main conflict was between Catholics and Lutherans in the Germanies, with states such as Denmark, Sweden, Spain, and France intervening. The second conflict was the Eighty Years War between the Dutch and Spain; by the time this conflict merged with the Thirty Years War, the Dutch and the Spanish had been fighting on and off for more than fifty years. The third conflict was a dynastic war between France and Spain, which would continue long after the cessation of the Thirty Years War in 1648.²⁰

The Thirty Years War started with the Defenestration of Prague in 1618, in which Protestant Bohemians (modern day Czechs) threw imperial representatives out of a tower in Prague. Due to this insult, the Bohemians mobilized to defend themselves from the Holy Roman Empire. A few years later, seeing the Lutherans on the verge of defeat at the hands of the Count of Tilly, King Christian of Denmark, a Lutheran nation, intervened with disastrous results. After the withdrawal of Denmark, Sweden's Gustavus Adolphus (Gustav II Adolph), intervened on the side of the Protestants, and won nearly every battle (including the first battle of Breitenfeld, his

¹⁹ Wilson 41-43.

²⁰ Ibid 9.

most famous victory) until his death at the battle of Lutzen (1632), which was a Protestant victory. Following his death, and the intervention of Spain, Sweden withdrew.²¹

Catholic France, under the direction of Cardinal Richelieu, intervened on the side of the Protestants, in order to support the anti-Habsburg movement; at the same time, the Eighty Years War merged with the Thirty Years War, and the Calvinist Dutch allied with the Protestants as well. At this point, the war became less about religious differences, and more focused on dynastic conflicts. Despite the combined intervention of the Dutch and France, Spain still emerged victorious more often than the Protestant alliance. Soon after France's intervention, Sweden reentered the fray, and together they were able to defeat Spain, and force an end to the war with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Although this ended both the Thirty Years War and the Eighty Years War, the Franco-Spanish conflict would continue for another decade.²²

This war was the largest conflict between Catholics and Protestants in history. While other conflicts, such as the Northern Ireland and Huguenot conflicts, would last far longer, the Thirty Years War was by far more deadly, more influential, and more lasting in the minds of the people who experienced it. Peter Wilson commented that public surveys conducted in the 1960's in Germany showed that Germans placed the Thirty Years War ahead of World War I, World War II, the Black Death, and the Holocaust, making it the worst disaster their country had ever faced.²³ Conflicts due in large part to religious loyalties had a devastating effect on the psyche of humans. The Thirty Years War drew in all the major powers of Europe, even England, Russia and the Ottoman Empire (all to a minor extent).²⁴ However, international clashes were

²¹ Wilson 3-511.

²² Ibid 554-821.

²³ Ibid xx.

²⁴ Ibid 9.

not the only way religious differences manifested themselves. Internal violence was common in many nations. Next to the German states, France inherited the worse of this violence.

Ecumenism through force wasn't working in the international scene. The Catholic powerhouses of the Holy Roman Empire and Spain found themselves evenly matched against a wide variety of enemies, including the powerful French and Swedish empires, with assistance from the English, as well as the Russian and Ottoman empires. If ecumenism by force wouldn't work, another method would need to be found. However, the Peace of Westphalia would put an end to ecumenism on the international scene. First, however, France had its own issues with ecumenism.

French Huguenots

Catholic France was troubled by Protestant minorities just as the Holy Roman Empire was. However, since they had a much smaller Protestant population, force was an easy, and successful, form of suppressing the minority. Ecumenism was not the goal; rather eradication was. After more than a hundred years of oppression, French ecumenism would be obtained in a way. A secular peace would be achieved, and while ecumenism had failed, peace would succeed.

France originated as a Catholic nation, and has remained so throughout history. However, when the Protestant Reformation emerged in the early part of the 16th century, it was readily accepted at first by a "French humanist tradition". However, the French Crown and the Catholic majority populace soon turned against the Protestants. The first French Protestant martyr was killed in 1523. It wasn't until the next generation, during the rise of the counter-reformation, that Protestantism would be accepted. Calvinism though caused problems in

France. Calvinism was a religion of radical theology, in relation to the Roman Catholic teachings. By the 1550s, Calvinism was gaining rapid popularity. In a fearful response, violence erupted, mostly from the Catholics.²⁵

In 1572, the infamous Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day took place across France. While it was not confined to one specific day as the name suggests, but rather to a period of a few weeks, it still resulted in around 30,000 Protestant deaths. This was enough to ensure that Catholicism would remain the dominant religion in France. However, in 1598, King Henry IV, a Protestant who converted to Catholicism to secure the throne and prevent further bloodshed, signed the Edict of Nantes. This Edict offered Protestants great freedoms for the time, including the right to practice their faith, educate their ministers, hold annual national synods, attend schools, acquire jobs, have the support of the Crown, and to hold several towns and fortresses. However, this Edict was not a lasting peace.²⁶

In 1615, open conflict returned between Protestants and Catholics, and in 1627, the major port city of La Rochelle rebelled. While it put up a strong resistance, and the English attempted to support it, La Rochelle fell in 1628, and in 1629 the Edict started to become unraveled. Though France entered the Thirty Years War allied to the Protestants, France did not see this as a conflict of interests. Rather than supporting Protestants against Catholics, France was supporting the anti-Hapsburg movement. The Bourbon-Hapsburg dynastic rivalry was becoming a large issue, and France was surrounded by the Spanish Hapsburgs to the south, the Holy Roman Empire Hapsburgs to the east, and the Spanish-owned Lowlands to the north (modern day

²⁵ Joseph Ruane, "Majority-Minority Conflicts and Their Resolution: Protestant Minorities in France and in Ireland," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12 (2006): 511-512.

²⁶ *Ibid* 512.

Netherlands and Belgium). In order to counter this threat, France decided to support the Protestant nations against the Catholic Hapsburgs.²⁷

In 1688, the Edict of Fontainebleau was passed. This outlawed the Protestant religions; both Calvinists (also known as Huguenots) and Lutherans; in France. Everyone in the country was required to convert to Catholicism, attend Catholic services, receive Catholic baptism and education, and marry and die according to Catholic practices. Refusal was met with fines, imprisonment, consignment to the galleys, quartering of troops, forced removal, or execution; ministers were subject to execution alone. In 1562, 11% of the populace was Protestant; by 1600 it was down to 5.5%, and by 1700 the populace was just 3.7% Protestant. It wasn't until the accession of Louis XVI of France to the throne in 1774 that Protestants had hope in regaining the right to exist. An edict in 1787 allowed marriage, and by default the legitimacy of the children. While very small in action, it faced a large hostility from Catholics.²⁸

It wasn't until the French Revolution that Protestants would be accepted as legitimate. In 1789, Protestants received access to all offices, full voting rights, return of confiscated property, and French nationality on their descendents. In 1791, Protestants were given full religious worship rights. In return, Protestants tended to be in full favor of the Revolution and either a republic or constitutional monarchy. While the population would take some time to accept this, Protestants now had the full rights they had desired for so long. They finally gained the loyalty of the population in the two world wars, where their deaths in the defense of France, showed their true loyalty to France.²⁹

²⁷ Ruane 512.

²⁸ Ibid 513-514.

²⁹ Ibid 514-516.

Protestants in France faced a vast majority of Catholics, who were fearful of the new religions, and reacted violently. This reflects much of the reactions across Europe at the time. The Holy Roman Empire attempted to suppress Lutherans in the Germanies, resorting to violence in order to achieve their ends. Sweden used violence in Northern Germany to suppress Catholic power; though this tended to be used against the Imperial armies rather than civilians, probably due to the Sack of Magdeburg by Imperial troops (a Protestant city looted, raped, and pillaged by Catholic troops, resulting in around 20,000 deaths). It wasn't until 1648 that an attempt was made to solve the issues without violence.³⁰

Ecumenism was not an option in religious majority nations. France, a Catholic majority nation, was not interested in combining the religions. The French government was interested in forcing the Protestants to denounce their religious conversion, and come back to the Catholic Church, using violence if needed. The Huguenots were perceived as a threat to the Catholic religion. However, since the French government was effectively under control of the Cardinal Richelieu, the faith and the government were one and the same.

Peace of Westphalia

Ecumenical treaties in the past failed to resolve issues, mainly due to the Catholics coming from a place of power. They had little reason to care for the views of the Protestants. However, after the end of the Thirty Years War, in which Lutheran Sweden and Catholic France fought the Catholic champions Spain and the Holy Roman Empire to a stand still, Catholics had to acknowledge the Protestants as a legitimate and permanent change to the world community.

³⁰ Wilson 467-470.

The resulting ecumenical, and secular, documents would be collectively known as the Peace of Westphalia.

The Huguenot problem started before the beginning of the Thirty Years War, and continued long after the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War. However, the Huguenot problem's main era of conflict was around the time prior to the fall of the fort of La Rochelle in 1629. After this, the Huguenot threat to French power had been vastly reduced, and France could focus on the problems in the Thirty Years War, which they joined in 1635. By the end of the war in 1648, everyone was tired of fighting. While numerous small conflicts would continue, it was time for the bigger conflict to end.³¹

The major problem one faces when describing the Peace of Westphalia is in noting what the Peace actually accomplished. One could say it ended conflict in Europe, as the Thirty Years War was ended as a result of it. This may be true, but other conflicts, such as the Franco-Spanish war (which ended 1659), the Portuguese war for independence (ending in 1668), and the Catalan struggle for independence in Spain (which they lost in 1652), were three conflicts on the agenda for the council at the Peace of Westphalia. Other conflicts also continued, such as the English Civil Wars; the Vento-Turkish conflict; tensions between Sweden, Poland, and Russia; and Swedish-Danish struggles that continued into the 18th century. However, while failing to establish peace across Europe, it is otherwise noteworthy.³²

The main goal of the Peace of Westphalia was the establishment of a "Christian, general and permanent peace" for the continent. While mentioning earlier attempts at peace, such as the Peace of Passau and the Religious Peace of Augsburg, it focused instead on establishing a new

³¹ Wilson 751-753.

³² Ibid.

framework for peace. Treaties that ended other wars, such as the Franco-Spanish war (1659) and the Baltic conflict (1660), were considered extensions of the Peace of Westphalia. However, there were many problems that arose with the Peace of Westphalia.³³

The Peace consists of three separate treaties; the Peace of Munster, the Treaty of Munster, and the Treaty of Osnabruck. The Peace of Munster was an agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Dutch Republic, ending the Eighty Years War, and giving the Dutch their independence. The Treaty of Munster established peace between the Holy Roman Empire and France, as well as their respective allies. The Treaty of Osnabruck established peace between the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden, as well as their respective allies. Together, these three treaties make up the Peace of Westphalia.³⁴

So why have three treaties? The Spanish-Dutch conflict was a non-religious conflict in which the Dutch people sought independence from their Spanish rulers. The Peace of Munster focused on the Bourbon-Habsburg conflict between France and the Holy Roman Empire, which was a dynastic conflict. The Treaty of Osnabruck focused on the Swedish-Imperial conflicts, which were political when it came to religious rights, as well as territorial, in terms of Pomerania, a strip of German land on the Baltic Sea that Sweden conquered in the Thirty Years War. By focusing on three distinct issues with three separate treaties, the Peace of Westphalia was able to solve all the major causes of the Thirty Years War, as well as establish a sort of religious freedom in the Germanies; however, this failed to resolve the issues in France, between the ruling and predominant Catholics and the minority Huguenots.³⁵

³³ Wilson 751-753.

³⁴ Ibid 753.

³⁵ Ibid 752-753.

The Peace of Westphalia was a secular peace. However, it managed to establish grounds for dealing with the three major denominations in the Germanies at that time, and thus, in effect; religious peace was achieved in the Holy Roman Empire. However, this was not ecumenism. This was a governmental peace resolving differences in the way the government handles the religions. While the two religions would never clash in such a serious war again, the fact remained that Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism were still three separate religions.

Northern Ireland

Ecumenism has an especially difficult time having any hope in a situation when a conflict begins with religious connections, and changes over time to focus more on secular issues. This can be seen particularly well in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland conflict originates in the 16th century, when King Henry VIII of England broke off from the Roman Catholic Church, and began the Anglican denomination. With religious loyalties being equated to political loyalties at the time (as seen in France with the Huguenots, and the Holy Roman Empire with the Protestants), Ireland's desire to remain Catholic would begin a long and bloody history of conflict between the Anglican English and the Catholic Irish.

Northern Ireland has been a hotbed of activity for Catholic and Protestant problems for nearly five hundred years. The problems stem from the religious differences of the regions. Southern Ireland (the modern day country of Ireland) is Catholic; Northern Ireland and England are Anglican (Protestant); Wales is a mix of Methodist and Anglican; and Scotland is Calvinist (Protestant). This collection of religions, as well as England's predominance over the British Isles over the many centuries, has led to a conflict of long duration, and confusing causes. In

fact, this conflict is similar to the Thirty Years War, in terms of being a religious and political conflict at the same time.³⁶

The troubles started in 1534, when the English King Henry VIII broke with Rome, and later declared a new faith, which would become known as Anglicanism. However, Anglicanism was different from Lutheranism and Calvinism in that both of those religions were attempts to reform Catholicism. Henry VIII broke with Rome in order that he may divorce his wife and marry a younger, more beautiful woman. As king, he was able to do this, though some might say not effectively. At this time, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and England were united under one crown. Since Henry VIII converted to Anglicanism, his subjects were supposed to convert as well. Scotland refused, and was able to hold onto Calvinism. Wales converted to Anglicanism. However, Ireland decided to remain Catholic, the very religion Henry VIII turned his back on. This was an insult, and could not be left alone.³⁷

After a series of conflicts, Henry VIII was declared head of the Irish church in 1536. England began experiencing a rise in anti-Catholic feeling; in Ireland, Protestant English settlers were settling down all over, and gaining influence in the Irish Parliament. In 1641, a rebellion of the Ulster Irish, a clan in Ireland, and the Old English, English Catholics unhappy with the King's decision, rebelled, and massacres of Protestants led to the harsh suppression of the Irish Catholics under Oliver Cromwell. England chose to enact similar laws that were being used across Europe to suppress minority religions. However, in Ireland, they were being used to suppress the majority, not the minority.³⁸

³⁶ Ruane 517.

³⁷ Ibid 517-518.

³⁸ Ibid 518-519.

It wasn't until the 1770s that Britain, in need of recruits for its army, and conscious of popular opinion, started to let up on the harsh laws in Ireland. While these changes were welcome, they were limited, designed "to accommodate as few Catholic demands as possible, while leaving the broader structures of power in place".³⁹ Ireland may have embraced these changes, but they became a minority in the British Parliament upon the union of Great Britain and Ireland. Alongside this, the lack of British assistance during the Great Famine convinced the Irish that union with Britain was undesirable. In 1921, after a rebellion, and the end of the Great War, Ireland was granted independence. However, this led to a Protestant majority in both the Irish free state (Southern Ireland) and the island as a whole. Protestants began moving to Northern Ireland, as it was still under Protestant English rule. Soon, the southern portion was predominantly Catholic, while the northern portion held a slight majority for the Protestants.⁴⁰

However, the split of the island into a southern, independent Catholic Ireland, and a northern, British-ruled Protestant Northern Ireland, was not acceptable to all. Many Irish Catholics in the northern portion felt that in order for Ireland to be free from British rule, it must be completely free, Northern as well as Southern. Protestant Irish reacted negatively to Catholic campaigns for "civil rights", seeing it as an attempt to undermine the Protestant rule. This led to a series of conflicts and bombings, with groups, such as the IRA (Irish Republican Army), attempting to break from British rule. It wasn't until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 that the conflict ceased. However, resistance to British rule; born out of religious differences, eventually becoming political ones; means that there is very little chance of a secular Ireland rejoining the United Kingdom.⁴¹

³⁹ Ruane 520.

⁴⁰ Ibid 520-521.

⁴¹ Ibid 524-525.

The Irish conflict is interesting due to its reversal from the norm. In Catholic nations such as the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, and France, Protestants of any kind were generally suppressed and pushed aside. This oppression would reach out across the continent in the Thirty Years War, and the majority of Europe was under strict Catholic rule. However, the British Isles are separated from the mainland, and therefore the situation was reversed. On the continent, the powerful nations, such as Spain, France, and the Empire, were Catholic, with the exception of Sweden and the Ottoman Empire. On the Isles, the single powerful nation was England, later Britain. The oppression of other religions was not one sided. It was not the Catholics alone who oppressed. Religious differences just made for an easy excuse to conquer and rule other territories. Yet this is not always the case. There is an example of Catholic and Protestant interaction, where cooperation, rather than outright conflict, occurred.

British desire to rule Ireland, rather than find a solution in which both benefitted, meant that an ecumenical perspective of the situation was not considered. The Anglicans of England and the Catholics of Ireland began their conflict with religious differences, though secular differences were also apparent. However, as time wore on, and the conflicts continued, the reasons for fighting changed, especially as the importance of religion dwindled. The conflict instead became focused more on independence, and less on religious differences. Thus, ecumenism was not a solution, but rather secular peace resolved some of the major issues.

Southern Harmony

So many examples of religious conflict and disagreement have occurred over the course of history. None of the examples above seem to show an ecumenical solution to the problems. Instead secular peace resolves the issues. However, there are a few examples from history of an

ecumenical existence. While a specific conflict never occurred for which an ecumenical peace was needed, the Americans of the southern states had to learn to coexist, as the predominantly Protestant population experienced a large influx of Catholics in the 18th and 19th centuries. While everything did not go smoothly, all out conflict was avoided. In fact, Protestants and Catholics even worshipped together under the same roof, in the same church.

In the Antebellum South, an odd story comes into focus. In other parts of the world, such as France, Ireland, and Germany, Protestant and Catholic interaction turns to violence, suppression, and hatred, eventually succumbing to secular peace (French Revolution, Good Friday Agreement, and the Peace of Westphalia). In the pre-war South, this pattern is not seen. In 1842, the death of a Catholic bishop by the name of John England is mourned by thousands. What is striking is the large number of Protestant mourners at the funeral procession of this Catholic bishop. While having their differences, Protestants and Catholics come together to mourn a man who contributed much too both communities. Catholics were a minority in the United States. Discrimination against Catholics was commonplace across America. Why were Protestants so willing to mourn a Catholic bishop?⁴²

Protestant support for Catholics is evident from the start in major southern cities such as Charleston and Louisville, mainly due to public record. As early as the late 1700s, Protestants are seen supporting their fellow Catholics, where in Charleston, Protestants contributed a significant amount of money to the purchase and restoration of St. Mary's, the first Catholic church in the city. In 1799, when a benefactor of the church died, leaving no heirs, and a significant amount of money, the city legislature, predominantly Protestant, granted the money to

⁴² Andrew Stern, "Southern Harmony: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Antebellum South," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 17, no. 2 (2007): 165.

the Catholic Church, after evidence was presented that the benefactor intended to leave his wealth to the church. Other evidence is seen in cities across the South, where Protestants contributed financial contributions to the construction of churches, attended Catholic institutions, and worshiped in Catholic churches.⁴³

Amazingly, there is evidence of Protestant participation in Catholic sacraments. A Bishop Flaget noted in his journal that he heard the confessions of several Protestant women. Funeral services for both Bishop Flaget and Bishop England were predominately attended by Protestants. Protestants on the frontier would often allow visiting Catholic priests to use their churches to preach. One such example heralds from North Carolina, where the priest was offered the courthouse, the Episcopal church, or the Presbyterian church (it is of interest to note that the Calvinists of Germany and Scotland, the Huguenots of France, and the Presbyterians of America all worship the same faith, and practice the same religion). Bishop Flaget stated:

“What a sight for a Catholic...to find himself in a meeting house of the Calvinists...in the presence of 3 other bishops, 5 priests, 5 or 6 ministers of different sects, and an audience of which 2/3 were Protestants. Who would believe I would live long enough to witness such a triumph?”⁴⁴

Apparently, according to author Andrew Stern, this event was unusual only in its magnitude, not in its make up. Many times, Protestants would show up in large numbers to Catholic services, if they preferred the preacher, if it was closer, or if it was the only option available. That being said, Protestants did not always react kindly to Catholic infringement. There were riots in Louisville, Kentucky in 1855. Also, Bishop England complained about a

⁴³ Stern 168.

⁴⁴ Ibid 170.

lack of funding to his school in Charleston, SC. It turned out that England was using the tuition to fund the education of priesthood candidates. While relations in the South were not always harmonic, Protestant support for Catholics was shown in a quiet non-confronting way.⁴⁵

Most of these cordial relations were formed around slavery. Catholics tended to be anti-slavery, while the Southern Protestants tended to be supportive of slavery. As long as Catholics ignored and kept quiet their qualms, Protestants suppressed their fear of Catholics. However, not all Catholics were willing to ignore slavery. In the 1830's things almost came to a head in Charleston, when a school for free blacks, established by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (Catholic) became a target for public anger. Bishop England established an armed guard for the school, and shortly afterward, Protestant civic leaders joined the Irish guards, and city officials pledged their support, defusing the situation. Afterward, Bishop England started to study the historical relationship between Catholicism and slavery, and gave evidence that both Scripture and tradition sanctioned Catholicism's participation in slavery, proving that Protestants had little to fear from Catholics on slavery.⁴⁶

This support of slavery would go a long way to gaining Protestant support for Catholics in the South. Other events would endear Protestants to Catholicism as well. In 1839, three sisters belonging to the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (the same religious group that established the before mentioned free black school) traveled from Charleston to Atlanta, helping victims of a yellow fever outbreak. As soon as the disease outbreak abated, the Atlanta Board of Health

⁴⁵ Stern 169-170.

⁴⁶ Ibid 172-173.

published a declaration of public thanks. The sisters were contrasted with many of the pastors in the city, who had fled as soon as the outbreak occurred.⁴⁷

This period of interaction between Catholics and Protestants is very telling. While they had their disagreements, particularly over slavery, they were able to put their feelings aside enough to work, live, and even worship together. They showed a great deal of humbleness, as the necessity for places of worship led them to worship in each others buildings. Later, a unified culture centering on slavery in the South would do more to unify Catholics and Protestants together as Americans. Catholic priests led masses in Protestant buildings, and often preached to Protestant majority crowds. Protestants often were generous in their support of Catholics. Ecumenism could be seen to have roots here, if only this level of interaction and support could last.

Ecumenism in the South was successful due to secular agreements over issues such as monetary transactions, building of churches, and slavery. Protestants honored Catholic wishes, and assisted in the building of churches, and attendance at services. Catholics in return, for the most part, tolerated, and even came to accept, slavery in the South. These secular agreements allowed for these two religious groups to coexist side by side, before religion began losing its importance in everyday life.

Vatican II Council

While the harmony in the South had ecumenical links, it was not an official ecumenical process, but rather a process that occurred at the laity and clergy levels. However, ecumenism must occur at all levels in order to last. While Protestants and Catholics could live side by side,

⁴⁷ Stern 189.

they still had opposing views on religious beliefs. In order to resolve religious disagreement, a religious approach to the situation must be taken. The Catholic Church's attempt came with the Vatican II Council.

In 1959, Pope John XXIII announced that he was calling for "an ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church".⁴⁸ This Council would look at and review all the Catholic teachings and stances on various issues, from the faiths they professed to their relationships with other faiths. Pope John XXIII decided that, due to the large and recent advancements in technology, such as electricity, cars, telephones, cameras, and plastics, the Church needed to update their stance, or get left behind by the rapid advancements of science. This Council scared the Curial officials of the Vatican and the Faith, since 3,000 bishops could do quite a lot of damage to the faith if left unattended. However, their attempts at containment failed.⁴⁹

Many issues were debated for many years, and through the death of Pope John XXIII, to the succession of Pope Paul VI. At the second session of the Council, major issues included religious liberty, modern communications, anti-Semitism, and ecumenism. It is the topic of ecumenism that relates to this paper. Section 32 of the Vatican II Council, Volume I, is entitled "Decree of Ecumenism". It deals exclusively with the Church's stance on, and relationship with, other religions, particularly with Christian faiths.⁵⁰

It starts off with the following statement: "The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council."⁵¹ It then, in the same paragraph, denounces all other Christian faiths, stating "...but they differ in mind and go their different

⁴⁸ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 396.

⁴⁹ Ibid 396-398.

⁵⁰ Flannery, ed. 452.

⁵¹ Ibid.

ways, as if Christ himself were divided.”⁵² The desire amongst all Christians for a unified, universal Church is expressed by all people. After listing the Catholic beliefs, as well as the history of the Church according to Catholicism, such as the tasks of the Twelve Apostles, it mentions the rifts in the Church (the Great Schism, the Protestant Reformation, and others). It places the blame on both parties, and excuses those born into the faiths from any blame.⁵³

The Decree then goes on to say that despite their faith in Christ and God, these churches are not able to give their worshippers salvation, for “it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone...that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.”⁵⁴ This back and forth message of damnation of the other faiths, and embracing of the other faiths, continues throughout the nineteen pages on the Decree on Ecumenism. However, a telling sentence stands out from the seesawing of the Church. The Decree states:

“The term ‘ecumenical movement’ indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity.”⁵⁵

This statement appears to end all discussion. It clearly states that ecumenism is any activity which fits the needs of the Church (capitalized means referring to the Catholic Church). Therefore, ecumenism is wholly acceptable to the Catholic Church, as long as it is the ecumenical movement of other churches to the Church’s point of view. It has been many decades since the publishing of the Vatican II Council decisions, and ecumenical talks have come a long way. However, the Catholic Church seems to always hold the same stand they had in the Vatican II Council. Come to us, or nothing will be accomplished. Granted, this is not just

⁵² Flannery, ed. 452.

⁵³ Ibid 453-456.

⁵⁴ Ibid 456.

⁵⁵ Ibid 456-457.

the Catholic Church's view; many faiths have trouble giving ground. However, many others are willing to try, as long as concessions are made on both sides.⁵⁶

Ecumenism must be a movement which occurs with compromise on both sides. In order to achieve agreement, one must first be willing to give up something to gain ground. The Catholic Church stated that they were willing to gain, as long as they didn't have to lose. "You desire unity? Great! Join us." This is not ecumenism, but rather coercion. The Catholic Church must realize that, while it remains the largest Christian denomination in the world, it must listen to the Protestant churches in order to achieve unity. Granted, it is rather difficult to listen to and satisfy the hundreds, if not thousands, of Protestant branches that exist today.

Parents

Since the historical relationships between the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations have been examined, this study will now shift its focus on the next part of this project. In the contemporary period, this study will examine the personal, institutional, clergy, and laity levels, and how the Catholic Church and the ELCA perceive ecumenism. My parents, Mark and Valerie De Rosch, are a major inspiration for this project. Their 26 year marriage embraces the potential for a harmonious and coexistent ecumenical relationship between Catholics and Lutherans.

Mark has been a practitioner of the Roman Catholic denomination all his life, and experienced a conversion that brought him deeper into his faith, while Valerie has held true to her roots as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). Despite their religious differences, they are a financially secure, generous, and loving couple. The religious

⁵⁶ Flannery, ed. 456-457.

aspect of their marriage was never really an issue to them, or to their friends, who were, for the most part, Catholic. Valerie has been attending Catholic services with Mark for most of their marriage; exceptions including attending a Lutheran church in St. Louis due to a more welcoming community, and attending a Four Square (charismatic) church in New Jersey, due to the energetic and welcoming community. I decided to interview them for the purpose of understanding how an ecumenical marriage could help guide the Catholic Church and the ELCA to ecumenism.

Valerie, when asked about her adherence to her denomination, responded that she believes her adherence to be strong, though her involvement and attendance is limited. She doesn't mind attending Catholic services, since she believes that the basic tenet of both denominations is a belief in the divinity of Christ; she also feels that the Mass (Catholic) and the service (Lutheran) are similar enough to feel comfortable switching between each. However, a recent experience with the Diaconate Program that Mark is involved in forced her to stop receiving Communion at Mass, due to the Lutheran beliefs not being in communion with the Catholic Church's stance on the Eucharist. She feels that this is preventing her from experiencing a physical reminder of Christ's death.⁵⁷

Mark responded to the question of his adherence to the Catholic Church's doctrines and teachings by stating that he mostly adhered to the beliefs of the Catholic Church, though he is not in agreement with the entire package. Mark, for a long time, was an average Catholic, going through the motions at Mass, and then enjoying time with his friends and family, relaxing, and then preparing for work the next day. However, in 2006 he experienced a conversion in which his faith in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was greatly changed, and he began to become more

⁵⁷ Valerie De Rosch, e-mail attachment to author, October 14, 2012.

involved in the Mass, lecturing, serving the body and blood to the congregation in the sacrament of Communion, and eventually becoming involved in the Diaconate Program, with the goal of becoming a Deacon of the Catholic Church after four years of study.⁵⁸

Valerie feels that her involvement in the Catholic Church revolves around respect, rather than adherence to the rules. She disagrees with several Catholic teachings, but attempts to be respectful during the Mass, while still maintaining her faith in, and commitment to, God.⁵⁹

Mark, when asked how he adheres to the Lutheran denomination's rules, doctrines, and dogmas, responded that the basic tenets are the same, namely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man and died for our sins. In this, he agrees with the Lutheran faith. However, as for other aspects of the ELCA, he remained silent.⁶⁰

Both Mark and Valerie are active in the Catholic Church, though not so much in the ELCA. Valerie mentioned that recently she has reached out to a local Lutheran church, who's minister counsels her on her frustration with the Catholic Church, and the decree that she not participate in the Catholic Communion. This pastor has welcomed her to the Lutheran parish and invited her to come for Communion, should she feel the need. She is currently taking Diaconate classes with Mark to better understand Catholicism. While these classes have not convinced her to convert, they have paved the way for discussion between Mark and herself, as opposed to argument. She tends to be more involved in the Catholic Church than she plans to be, due to Mark's deep faith, though she uses Lutheranism from time to time to excuse herself from participation.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Mark De Rosch, e-mail attachment to author, October 12, 2012.

⁵⁹ Valerie De Rosch.

⁶⁰ Mark De Rosch.

⁶¹ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

Mark is not involved in the Lutheran community at all. In the Catholic community, however, he is very active. As mentioned before, he has been a lector and Eucharistic minister many times, and is now on his way to become a deacon in the Catholic Church. He participates in the Men of St. Joseph, a men's group who travel to the St. Joseph Oratory in Montreal, Canada once a year. He has also been involved in various other Catholic groups, including the St. Vincent de Paul food charity. Most of this involvement has been since his conversion experience, and he does what he can to help out.⁶²

My parents meet at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. While Valerie stated that neither faith bound them together in marriage, Mark stated that they were married in the Roman Catholic tradition. Valerie further stated that she agreed to marriage in a Catholic Church since the ELCA would recognize the marriage as legitimate. There were few thoughts towards their religious differences when they decided to get married. However, the priest counseling them for marriage asked Valerie if she would agree to raise any children in the Catholic faith, and she refused, saying that she didn't care which faith the child or children were raised in, as long as they believed in Jesus as the Son of God. Mark, however, signed the paperwork agreeing to raise their child, myself, in the Catholic faith. This agreement goes back to the Vatican II Council, where interfaith marriages were allowed only if the couple signed an agreement to raise their children in the Catholic tradition. Mark stated in addition that the priest refused to serve the Eucharist to the Lutheran members of Valerie's family, though Valerie herself was given special dispensation. In addition, they decided not to have a Mass for the wedding, but a ceremony instead.⁶³

⁶² Mark De Rosch.

⁶³ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

When their only son, Trevor, was born, Valerie agreed to have him baptized in the Catholic tradition, since she knew the Lutheran faith would recognize his baptism, while she was unsure about the Catholic Church recognizing a Lutheran baptism (she later learned they would have). Mark stated that they agreed to baptize Trevor in the Catholic faith due to the fact that they attended a Catholic Church in La Jolla, California, where they lived at the time; Trevor was born in the University of California-San Diego Hospital. In addition, since they had agreed to have the marriage witnessed in the Catholic tradition, they had committed to baptizing and raising Trevor in the Catholic Church.⁶⁴

Valerie responded to the inquiry about their attendance at Catholic services rather than Lutheran services for the majority of their marriage by stating that they always did things as a couple, and attending services as a family was very important. Mark stated that attending Catholic Mass was very important to him, especially the act of receiving the Eucharist. He emphasized the use of the term Mass, rather than service, which Valerie used consistently. Also, Mark felt the need to have the presence of the Apostolic Tradition, in which the right to preach the gospel is passed on to another through the laying of hands; the Lutherans never received this, due to their split from the Catholic Church. Valerie added that since she agreed to raise me Catholic, and that it was important to her to attend worship together as a family, she agreed to attend Catholic services. She never sought out a Lutheran community until the incident during the Diaconate program where she was told to not partake in the Eucharist during Mass.⁶⁵

When asked if their religious differences caused problems in the marriage, Valerie responded that it had, at times. Most of the problems stemmed from the Diaconate program.

⁶⁴ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The Catholic community she is currently attending accepted her when we first attended, even knowing she was Lutheran. The priests and deacons freely gave her Communion, and no one questioned it. This made her feel welcomed. However, since the Diaconate Program, issues have come forth, including Communion. She stated that when growing up, she was taught that the bread and wine were a physical reminder of Christ's presence in her, and that everyone is welcomed to share. However, the Catholic view is that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, and thus, if one doesn't believe this, they should not partake. When Church officials heard she was accepting Communion, they told her to stop taking Communion, and that unless she converted to Catholicism, she could not be given Communion. This led to some tough discussions in their marriage. She tries to respect the decisions, but finds this difficult. Despite this, she believes that Mark feels called to be a Deacon, believes that this is a true calling, and she will support his service.⁶⁶

Mark stated that there hadn't been any problems in the marriage, but rather intense discussions. He also commented about the denial of Communion to Valerie, and that it is the official Church teaching of not allowing non-Catholics to receive the Eucharist. This raised some questions about the viability of their marriage, but since then, their resolve and commitment to each other has been strengthened. He suspects that the issue will continue to be a problem long after he is ordained a deacon. However, he feels that this is a positive experience, since he will now be able to console and counsel other couples in similar situations.⁶⁷

They were then asked if their religious differences had had any benefits for their relationship. Valerie stated that recently their intermarriage has been very beneficial. Since she

⁶⁶ Valerie De Rosch.

⁶⁷ Mark De Rosch.

began taking Diaconate classes, she and Mark have been able to discuss their religious differences rather than argue them. She believes her presence at the meetings offers a diversity that the other 21 couples would not experience otherwise. Religious differences have often had hard edges in their interaction, but the Diaconate program has softened these. Mark commented that their differences had encouraged a lot of communication.⁶⁸

Valerie mentioned that in order to work out religious differences, she tries to support Mark's faith, while maintaining hers, and Mark does the same. However, since she is not active in a Lutheran congregation, or at least, not nearly to the extent that Mark is active in the Catholic congregation, she feels that there isn't a whole lot for him to support. However, she stated that they both agree on the sovereignty of Christ. Mark was unsure of the use of the phrase "work out", but he did say that they discuss, try to understand, and appreciate the diversity.⁶⁹

When asked what she found most interesting about her husband's denomination, Valerie replied that she was intrigued that so many practicing Catholics do not agree with all the rules. While she was going through a hard time after being told she couldn't receive the Eucharist, many of her Catholic friends encouraged her to convert for the sake of ease, since they themselves didn't believe in everything. Her thoughts were that she felt uncomfortable with the idea of standing up in front of everyone and proclaiming her belief in the Catholic doctrines and dogmas when she disagrees with a great deal of them. She finds it astounding that Catholic followers would do something like that. Mark found the allowance of the Lutheran Pastor to be

⁶⁸ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

married and have children, as well as the expectation of the community to support the pastor and his family, to be interesting.⁷⁰

When Valerie was questioned about her support for the ecumenical movement, her reply was that Christ didn't discriminate, and didn't prevent anyone from becoming a follower if they believed. Therefore, she is fully supportive of ecumenism. She feels that it would be better if Christians could come together under the common purpose of spreading the Good News. She is not supportive of unity under one roof however, such as the Catholics Church preaches. Jesus had one requirement: faith in Him as God's Son and our Savior. Worship can vary, as long as the focus is on Jesus, and not on who's right and wrong. Mark responded with "ABSOLUTELY". He stated that he doubts unity will be possible in the context of returning to the "holy catholic and apostolic church", a phrase from the Nicene Creed. He believes that if the ELCA comes back to the Catholic Church, the Pope would lay hands on the Lutheran ministers and grant them Apostolic Succession through the bestowing of the Holy Spirit upon them. However, Lutherans would be required to accept the Eucharist as the "perpetual Body and Blood of Christ."⁷¹

Valerie and Mark were then asked what recommendations they would make to people working towards ecumenism, with their experience in a 26 year long interfaith marriage. Valerie stated that there is a need for the ignoring of right and wrong, and rather a focus on Christ. Humans seeking truth is all we are, but humanity is a roadblock to successful ecumenism. The focus needs to be on the shared faith in Christ, rather than the differences. She then stated that just as marriage is all about compromise, so is ecumenism. If we are assured of our correctness,

⁷⁰ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁷¹ Ibid.

then compromise is impossible. Compromise needs to be embraced, but so does respect for differing opinions. She also included that we need to follow Jesus' example: love one another, accept His love, and focus on his saving grace. Mark suggested a five step program. First there needs to be talking, and then a focus on shared beliefs. Next, differences need to be identified. Later, discussions about the differences being of substance or practice need to occur, followed lastly by the agreement of the goal, whether re-unification or shared understanding.⁷²

When asked if they saw full ecumenism, the reunification and reintegration of the Roman Catholic Church and the ELCA, succeeding in their lifetime, both replied in a negative. Valerie pointed out that there had been forty years of discussions so far, and while several contentious points exist, Communion is still a deal breaker. Neither side can agree on clear compromise on these differences. Mark remarked that he could pray for it, but that it would never happen. He stated that the inconsistent practices of the ELCA with Roman Catholicism would lead to a failure of ecumenism. It would be many Popes before there can be hope of reunification. When pressed to explain his comment about the inconsistent practices of ELCA with Catholicism, he talked about the Church view of having the ELCA "crawling back to us". However, the Eastern Orthodox Church is in communion with the Catholic Church, so the ELCA could come into communion with the Catholic Church. Regardless, he feels that both must answer the question of whether there is enough in common between the two to state "we're together". We must decide what can be held onto, and what must change.⁷³

Valerie disagreed with several Catholic teachings, most noticeably the Communion meaning. However, she also disagreed with what she views as the worship of Mary. She stated

⁷² Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁷³ Ibid.

that when priests have told her that they venerate, not worship, Mary, she became confused. She looked up the synonyms of venerate, and included in the list was the word “worship”. So she can’t see a difference. Also, the Catholic teaching on the infallibility of the Pope is something she can’t agree with, nor the political structure of the Church. She took a philosophical look at the infallibility of the Pope. The Pope is infallible, and the Pope is human. However, humans are subject to err. Therefore, the Pope is indeed fallible. Mark disagreed with the Lutheran teaching on the leaving of Christ once He is in the Eucharist. In other words, when the Lutheran communion is blessed, Christ enters the bread and wine; in, with, and under. The body and blood are then consumed by the parishioners; upon consumption, Christ leaves the bread and wine and enters the body. Mark was at odds with this take on the communion. He also disagreed with the idea of sola scriptura, or scripture alone, leaving tradition out of the equation. He feels both are needed.⁷⁴

When asked why she didn’t just convert to Catholicism, in addition to her previous answers, she replied that she did consider converting, but has rejected it, due to disagreements with several main tenets of the Catholic Church. Mark also rejected conversion to the ELCA, stating that he could not leave the Eucharist. Also, he believes that since God called him to the Diaconate Program, it would be against God’s Will to convert to Lutheranism. Therefore, they have managed to find compromise a better answer than conversion of one or the other.⁷⁵

When asked about their initial reaction to discovering their religious differences while dating, there was little to be said. Valerie stated that she had always known Mark was a Catholic, and it never bothered her, nor was it an issue with her family. He was still a Christian,

⁷⁴ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

and that was good enough for her. Mark commented that he had dated other girls who were non-Catholic, and never really considered religious beliefs into his pick of dating partners. He stated that he thought he had only dated Lutherans, never a Catholic. However, when I recalled hearing a story about him almost marrying a Catholic whose family is really close to theirs now because of it, Mark retracted his statement.⁷⁶

Valerie said that attending Catholic services never bothered her until the denial of Communion. Now she feels excluded, and is unable to remain focused on the Mass without that crucial part of involvement and inclusion. Mark stated that attending Lutheran services would not bother him, so long as he could attend a Catholic Mass and obtain the Eucharist. Valerie has some difficulties with the Catholic Mass other than Communion, such as prayers to Mary (Hail Mary), and the use of the Rosary. One time she joined the Parish Board and made a few suggestions on matters not related to faith, and they told her she didn't have the right to offer opinions, due to her non-Catholic faith. Mark said he had no difficulties, and ran into no opposition, while attending Lutheran services.⁷⁷

Valerie was interested in attending Lutheran services more often, and preferably with Mark. She expressed the wish that he would be more open to attending services with her, supporting her faith, as she supports his. While he did attend Lutheran service while they lived in St. Louis, since the Catholic parish there didn't feel comfortable, that was the last time. Mark expressed no desire to attend Lutheran services more.⁷⁸

Valerie is most impressed with Mark's deep faith and commitment to Catholicism, and appreciates this aspect of Catholicism. Mark was interested in the concept of a married pastor,

⁷⁶ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Valerie De Rosch.

since a pastor with marital experience could better counsel married couples better than an unmarried priest. He defended Catholicism though by stating that marriage is about relationships, and priests have a lot of experience with relationships amongst their congregations. So he feels that the priest is able to offset his lack of marital experience with his overabundance of congregational relationship experience.⁷⁹

Valerie was least impressed with the lack of Catholics who seem to truly understand their faith. She stated that many appeared to be “going through the motions” and “follow blindly, rather than listen to Christ”. Also, when many of her friends stated that she should just convert, since they don’t agree with everything the Church says, she felt this was bothersome. If you don’t believe it, why remain members? She did concede that this was probably a problem in other denominations as well. Mark was really concerned with the ELCA allowing homosexual ministers to preach, in light of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 (the story of Adam and Eve made from one flesh), and Romans 1:24-27, in which St. Paul describes in disgust the habit of men exchanging woman and their natural functions for men, and committing indecent acts.⁸⁰

Valerie remarked that the Lutheran faith has had a great impact on her upbringing, and has molded her beliefs in God as well as her attitudes in life. Lutheranism formed her belief in right and wrong, and has sustained her throughout her life, good and bad. It has also helped focus her belief on Christ. Mark stated that the Lutheran faith has had very little impact on him, outside of the Holy Spirit converting him from a life of anger to a life of love. Valerie stated that the Catholic faith has also had a large impact on her life, due to her attending Mass with Mark often, and her many Catholic friends. She also stated that many of her social activities are with

⁷⁹ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Catholics, and that holidays are celebrated at Catholic churches. She has been immersed in the Catholic culture for a long time, and yet feels no desire to convert. Mark stated that the Lutheran faith has had a similar impact on his life that Catholicism has, in that the Holy Spirit has given him a conversion experience.⁸¹

Valerie stated that the Eucharist means, to her, that the receiving of the bread and wine is a physical reminder that Jesus is with her, but only a reminder. With or without Communion, Jesus is with her. However, that reminder helps her to keep Him in mind. Due to this, she misses the weekly reminder since she has been refused Communion in the Catholic Church. Mark replied that the Eucharist is unleavened bread and wine, which, when consecrated in the priest's hands, become the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This puts Jesus in a physical form for us to consume and make a part of ourselves, providing a direct physical connection between Jesus and ourselves. These beliefs are typical of their respective religions.⁸²

When asked what draws her to the Catholic services, Valerie stated that other than the desire to share faith in Christ with Mark, there was nothing drawing her to Catholic Mass. She instead feels that the weekly reminder that she is excluded from Communion is pushing her away, and a reminder that she is not a part of the Catholic community. Mark stated that he felt drawn to the complete experience of Jesus in the Word through readings and prayers as well as in the Eucharist. He enjoys the coming together of the community to give thanks. One aspect he dislikes is the focus on the legalistic, monetary, and dogmatic aspects of Catholicism in the

⁸¹ Valerie and Mark De Rosch.

⁸² Valerie De Rosch; Mark De Rosch, email attachment to author, October 15, 2012.

Mass, and feels that it pushes people away. However, only the Catholic Church has the fullness of the Sacraments.⁸³

Valerie felt drawn to Lutheran services due to the feeling of being included and accepting in her Christian faith. However, she is pushed away by her desire to share her faith with Mark. Mark commented that he feels the preaching is better at Lutheran services, and that this is because Protestants, in general, place a greater focus on the preaching, as opposed to the Eucharist. In the Catholic Church, the focus is on both the Word and the Eucharist (scripture and tradition), while the Lutheran Church focuses on the Word alone (*sola scriptura*). Due to this lack of focus on the Eucharist, however, Mark feels pushed away from Lutheran services, and its disregard for tradition and how it shapes the understanding of the faith.⁸⁴

Mark and Valerie have had many obstacles recently in their marriage and interfaith relationship due to the Diaconate Program. While before the program they still had their disagreements on matters of faith, they also had the normal disagreements every couple has, and they tried their best to work their way past those differences. The Diaconate Program classes have allowed Valerie to better understand where Mark is coming from, and opened up the ability for them both to discuss and analyze their differences, and then accept them. While the Diaconate Program led to many frustrations on Valerie's part, due to her soon-to-be public spot in the community as the wife of a Deacon, it has also had a positive effect on their communication on religious issues and disagreements.

Their beliefs on various issues and teachings show a vast difference between Catholicism and the ELCA. Their agreement on the chances of ecumenism is a little disheartening. Both

⁸³ Valerie and Mark De Rosch (Oct. 15).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

have learned a lot about their respective denominations recently, as well as their spouse's denomination, due to the Deaconate Program bringing up discussions. If they feel strongly that ecumenism cannot succeed, then how could anyone have hope in a successful merger of these two denominations? In order to better understand the differences between the denominations themselves, one must examine the denominations at the institutional, clergy, and laity levels. This will allow one to note the key differences between the denominations, and at which levels those differences occur.

Denominational Differences

Catholicism and Lutheranism have had many conflicts throughout the years, some with secular reasons in addition to religious ones. However, what makes these two faiths so different that they can't agree to reunite, without intense debate and discussion, making ecumenism difficult? Lutheranism has several key doctrines which differ strongly with the Catholic teachings. Lutherans hold to the concept of Sola Scriptura, or scriptures alone, while Catholics feel that Tradition must also play a role in the faith. The Catholic hierarchy, with the Pope at the top, is a major point of contention for Lutherans, who feel that each man must find his path for himself through scripture. Catholics believe in the concept of Faith and Works, while Lutherans go on Grace alone. Lastly, Catholic transubstantiation contests with Lutheran sacramental unity. These four points are major contention areas that would have to be addressed in any ecumenical discussion between these two faiths. All the information comes from the author's learning and studying over time of resources for this project, as well as from discussions with pastors, priests, parents, and parishioners, as well as his own knowledge and experience as a former Catholic, and as an observer of a few Lutheran services.

Catholics hold that Scripture is where we gain all our religious knowledge from. However, Church Tradition through the years has led to a strong, united religion that practices rituals to involve the parishioners in the religion, and helps define the beliefs and interpretations of scripture that the Church teaches. Lutherans, while having some tradition (the ELCA service is in many ways a mirror image of the Catholic Mass), choose to focus their attention on Scripture alone. All authority comes from Scripture alone, rather than from tradition. Tradition comes from Scripture; therefore Sola Scriptura is how one should practice the faith.

Catholics place a great deal of importance on a hierarchical system. At ground level is the laity, the common worshipers, who are presided over by deacons and priests, servants of the laity for their religious needs. Bishops make sure the priests are following the teachings of the Catholic Church, while Archbishops watch over the bishops. The Pope, or the Bishop of Rome, is at the very top, and the Archbishops are under him. There are also other groups, such as monks (who can be priests or brothers), nuns, brothers, sisters, lay ministers, cardinals, and many others. They all work together as a complex living organism, called The Living Body of Christ by Catholics. Lutherans, on the other hand, have no top authority figure. By placing their authority in the Scriptures alone, Lutherans have no need for a single person presiding over everything. They do have bishops however, and pastors (not priests), who are allowed to marry (priests cannot). The pastors, however, are no more important than the laity, some of who serve alongside the pastor during the service.

Catholics practice what is known as Faith and Works. Faith is the following and belief of the teachings of the Church, as derived from scripture. Works refers to the need to do good deeds, atoning for the sins one has committed. Both faith and works are needed to enjoy eternity. Lutherans, on the other hand, believe in salvation through grace alone. God's grace

alone can save you, regardless of your faith or your works. From Grace comes works, through the hands of God. This is not predestination, or the belief that one's soul is already judged and destined for heaven and hell, and nothing you can do will influence it. Rather, God's grace is shown through your faith and works, and thus you are destined for heaven.

The last major issue is the Catholic concept of Transubstantiation versus the Lutheran concept of sacramental union. Catholics believe that as the priest holds his hands over the bread and wine of the Eucharist and prays, Christ descends to Earth and changes the bread and wine into his actual flesh and blood. This action is known as transubstantiation. A physical change occurs, and the Eucharist will stay Christ's body and blood. Lutherans have a somewhat similar, yet different, concept of the Eucharist. They believe that the Holy Spirit descends upon the gifts and puts Christ's presence in the bread and wine, temporarily making it the body and blood of Christ. This constitutes the sacramental union; a union of the bread and the body, of the wine and the blood. Often this is described as in, with, and under. Christ is present in the bread and wine, with the bread and wine, and under the bread and wine. Christ surrounds and inhabits the bread and wine, and thus one consumes Christ, and also remembers Him. The difference between the two teachings is often very confusing and very technical. The who (Jesus or the Holy Spirit), what (transformation or occupation), where (completely or in with and under), how (by the hand of the priest or the hand of Jesus), why (to incorporate Christ within or to remember His life remind of His presence), and when (never leaves or leaves after consumption) of the situation are different for each denomination, but the actual event itself is described fairly similarly. Jesus does inhabit the bread and wine, though in different ways.

Catholicism and Lutheranism have many disagreements. However, Scripture and Tradition, Hierarchy, Grace, and the Eucharist are major points of contention. Sola Scriptura

places the power in the hands of the laity, while Scripture and Tradition place the power in the hands of the Church. The hierarchy also tends to affect who has power and influence. Faith and Works shows our ability to control our destiny, while Grace alone shows we have little influence over our destiny. Lastly, transubstantiation gives us Christ Himself forever, while sacramental union gives us reason to remember what Christ did for us. These differences in the denominations have proven extremely hard to resolve, and are likely to cause problems for ecumenism for centuries to come.

The solution to ecumenism will not be found at the institutional level. The institutions are too disagreeable to come to terms on these important issues. Such opposite approaches to similar, and essential, concepts make it difficult to concede anything to the other denomination. However, hope is not lost. While the institutions have these teachings, the clergy, the institutions' representatives to the laity, may have different views on the many issues the institutions make doctrines on.

Clergy in the Denominations

Ecumenism is a difficult dream to achieve. With the institutions at odds on such important topics, one must look elsewhere for hope of ecumenism. The next level constitutes the clergy, priest and pastors who preach the teachings of the institution to the lay followers of the denomination. They hold a tremendous amount of power and influence, leading hundreds of people in the beliefs and practices of the denomination. If their views on religious issues differ slightly from the institution, their role in ecumenism could be enormous. Could ecumenism be achieved through them?

The institutions teach the beliefs to their followers through the clergy, who lead the parishioners in the services of the denominations. The clergy are the institutional representatives the laity interact with the most. Through weekly services, weddings, funerals, counseling, and other forms, clergy interact with their parish, and help them to understand the faith. Just as people need a teacher to improve their skills in math and English, people need a teacher to improve their understanding of their denomination, faith, and religion. The Catholic Church uses the services of priests and deacons, while the ELCA uses pastors and lay leaders. While priests are ordained, pastors are not. Since they play such a pivotal role in both denominations, I decided that it would be valuable to include their insights and beliefs.

I was able to interview five clergy in New Hampshire for this project. The first three were ELCA pastors; Pastor Tom Teichmann of Messiah Lutheran in Amherst, Pastor Dr. Peter Boehringer of Gethsemene in Manchester, and Pastor Matthew Tingler of Christ is King in Nashua. The next pastor, Pastor Michael “Mick” Meyer of Grace Lutheran in Nashua, was of the Missouri Synod Lutheran denomination. My last interviewee was a Catholic, Father Maurice “Moe” LaRochelle of Sacred Heart and Ste. Marie’s parishes, both in Manchester. I choose these people based on the communities I was surveying for laity responses. Pastor Mick Meyer’s parish was unable to participate in the survey to a great extent (only three responses), so they will not show up in the laity survey section.

Of the three ELCA pastors, Pastor Tom and Pastor Peter were born into the faith, while Pastor Matthew was born into the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, and later converted the ELCA. Pastor Mick and Father Moe were both born into their respective faiths. All of these men felt that they interact with the laity on a daily basis, so their influence must be enormous. The interviews that each underwent consisted of eighteen questions which sought to find areas of

agreement and disagreement between the different denominations, as well as between the clergy beliefs and the teachings of their institutions. These questions covered important doctrines in their denominations, level of interaction with the laity, meaning of the Eucharist, their views on ecumenism and Jesus, and major issues their denominations face, among others.⁸⁵

The third question in the interviews asked for three doctrines or dogmas that the clergy member felt were important to their denomination. While some concepts (such as Baptism, Scripture, the mystical body of Christ, etc) were mentioned by one denomination or another, only three points came up with commonality amongst the clergy. Two ELCA members and Pastor Mick of the Missouri Synod stated that both the real presence in the Eucharist and Justification (or Salvation) by Grace were important teachings in their denominations. The only teaching that came up for both the ELCA (two clergy) and the Father Moe of the Catholic Church was the concept of the Triune God and incarnation (the descent of Jesus from the Heavens to occupy a man's form). Since the Trinity and the incarnation are similar, they were grouped together. This shows many things. First, both denominations are complex, seen by the many different responses (creation, baptism, apostolic tradition) which the clergy considered important. Secondly, the only teaching that they all mentioned was the idea of a Triune God, a basic Christian principle.⁸⁶

The next two questions focused on the clergies' interactions with the laity. All stated that they interact with the laity on a frequent, daily basis. All agreed that their main form of interaction with the laity was through the weekly service (Mass for Catholics). They also agreed

⁸⁵ Peter Boehringer, interview by author, Manchester, NH, August 15, 2012; Maurice LaRochelle, interview by author, Manchester, NH, July 31, 2012; Michael Meyer, interview by author, Nashua, NH, July 21, 2012; Tom Teichmann, interview by author, Amherst, NH, July 31, 2012; Matthew Tingler, interview by author, Nashua, NH, July 26, 2012.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

that non-regular services, such as prayer services, funerals, weddings, and retreats, were another major form of interaction. Church events such as revivals, and non-church events, such as laity parties, were less agreed upon, though still important to most of them. They all mentioned additional forms of interaction, such as yard sales, weddings, blogs, counseling services, and hospital visits, among many other ways. All the denominations seem to rely on the weekly service to serve as interaction between the clergy and the laity. However, other events are just as important. The purpose of these questions was to see if the clergy are in, or out of, touch with the laity. The answers would seem to show that the clergy are in fact very involved with the laity, and not just on a religious basis.⁸⁷

When asked about their denominational teachings on the Eucharist, two ELCA, along with Pastor Mick of the Missouri Synod and Father Moe of the Catholic Church, stated that it was the Actual Body and Blood of Christ. As Pastor Peter pointed out, in the Gospel of John, chapter 6, verse 35, Jesus states “I am the bread of life.” However, all three of the ELCA stated that they also taught the concept of in with and under. Christ is present in, with and under the bread and the wine. When asked to elaborate, Pastor Peter stated “...let it be a mystery.” Pastor Mick mentioned that Christ is present, but the bread is still bread, and the wine is still wine. Father Moe, however, stated that the Eucharist was the summit of the faith, when we “gather around Jesus himself.” They all stated the actual body and blood, but have different interpretations for what that means. All were in agreement with their denomination on the teachings of the meaning of the Eucharist.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Boehringer et al.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

The next question dealt with the clergy's personal match up with their denomination. Meaning, how well did their personal beliefs match the teachings of their denomination. Both Pastor Tom and Pastor Peter said that they had a few disagreements with the ELCA teachings, while Pastor Matthew stated he had many minor disagreements with the ELCA, but agreed with the fundamentals. Pastor Mick agreed with the fundamentals of the Missouri Synod, but had a few minor disagreements with the denomination. Father Moe stated that his views were perfectly matched with the Catholic teachings, yet he had a few minor disagreements. He explained by saying that he tries to understand the Church stance, but he feels free to ponder and analyze the theology. Father Moe ended by saying he tries to "bend to the Church, because it is the voice of Christ."⁸⁹ None of the clergy had any major disagreements with their denomination, which makes sense. They probably would not have become leaders in the denomination if they disagreed strongly with it.⁹⁰

When ecumenism was brought up, all agreed generally to the idea of ecumenism being the working together in dialogue among denominations. They all participated in ecumenism to different degrees, and in different ways. Pastors Tom, Peter, and Mick spend very little of their time on ecumenism. Pastor Tom mentioned interactions with the Episcopal Church. Pastor Peter spends some time on meetings on the subject while in Massachusetts. Pastor Matthew participates and shares his pulpit with many churches, including the Episcopal, United Methodist, Moravian, and other churches in the area. He also has discussions with a Rabbi, who is the head of the Nashua Area Interfaith Council (Nashua being the city the Christ the King community is located in). Father Moe mentioned that he deals with other pastors, as well as people of other denominations from time to time, and that it is expected. However, he spends

⁸⁹ LaRochelle.

⁹⁰ Boehringer et al.

much time in friendly discussions with his brother, who is a member of the Jehovah's Witness denomination. The above clergy spend various amounts of time and energy on ecumenism, but only Pastor Matthew seems to place a huge importance on it.⁹¹

When asked about the identity of Jesus, the clergy answered in similar ways. The choices were "The Son of God, "a prophet", "a preacher", "a teacher", "All of the above", and "none of the above". They were asked to select all that applied, while giving emphasis to one. The three ELCA pastor's placed emphasis on the "Son of God", while both Pastor Mick and Father Moe placed emphasis on "All of the above". However, they all agreed that all the choices were appropriate. Pastor Peter added that Jesus was a priest, while Pastor Mick stated that he would apply the phrase "God Man". Father Moe added that Jesus was the second person of the Trinity, and one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, this being all of who Jesus is, while the other options were merely descriptions. The common agreement on "Son of God" and "All of the above" seems to show a common agreement on the identity of Jesus Christ, giving a strong starting point to the ecumenical movement.⁹²

The five clergy members were then presented with a wide ranging list of issues that their faith might be facing; these included homosexuality, abortion, contraceptives, violence, lack of ordained ministers, and many others. All four Lutheran pastors choose "Homosexuality" as a major issue, while "Lack of growth in the denomination" and "Violence" were second and third, with three and two responses, respectively. Father Moe looked at the issues and then categorized some of them. He cited "Dignity of the Human Person" as a major problem, including such issues as abortion, pornography, and violence. He also listed "Unity among Christians and

⁹¹ Boehringer et al.

⁹² Ibid.

Catholics” and “Secularism” as major issues. “Secularism is becoming another religion.” He also said he had to include premarital sex, which he said worked a back door into marriage and misleads people into thinking intimacy is equivalent to genital contact, rather than the sharing of souls one experiences with their marriage partner. While the ELCA seem to agree on major issues, and to some extent, so does the Missouri Synod, Catholicism seems to have a different focus. However, “Low service attendance” reported by the Lutherans may be attributed to the “Secularism” reported by Father Moe. All are worried about similar issues, including human dignity (violence being an affront to the dignity of the human person). This is an encouraging sign in the eyes of ecumenism. “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” If violence and secularism are the enemies, then Lutheranism and Catholicism have a lot to gain by banding together. However, it was mentioned in later questions that while Catholicism rejects abortion and contraceptives, Lutherans are more open to them. This would put a damper on the human dignity similarity.⁹³

The next question asked the clergy to describe their denomination in a few sentences. While some things came up (God, Jesus, sacraments), a common theme for four of the five clergy members was the command Jesus gave to love.

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”⁹⁴

Pastor Peter stated that his denomination “ensures (him) in a world where we’re faced with many challenges, that at the heart of everything there is love.” Love seems to be the common theme

⁹³ Boehringer et al.

⁹⁴ Matthew 22:37-39, New American Standard Bible.

for the three denominations. However, they carry out this message of love in different ways. Father Moe commented that Catholicism was leading people through word (scriptures) and sacrament, in the apostolic tradition into communion with Christ and neighbor. Despite these differences, love is a universal message of Christianity, as the song towards the beginning of this paper mentioned. This is a good starting point for ecumenism.⁹⁵

The next question regarded what the clergy believed that Lutherans and Catholics can generally agree upon. The top answer, with all three ELCA pastors and the Catholic priest stating it, was the concept of the Triune God. The Trinity, or Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is an intricate part of Christianity, and something they can all readily agree upon. The next popular answer was given by all three ELCA clergy, who said that the concept of Works (also given as Social Justice and God's Works) was a common point we had. While the ELCA preaches the idea of justification by grace, works are still important. Baptism and the Eucharist were answers given by two ELCA clergy, and the Missouri Synod pastor. Lastly, the concept of justification by faith was given by two of the ELCA clergy. Recently, a document called the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was released. This stated the agreement between the Catholic Church and numerous Lutheran denominations on the understanding of the Doctrine of Justification. Justification is God's grace, forgiving Christians of their sins. Thus, ecumenism could be built around these principles. However, there are always obstacles.⁹⁶

The next question asked about the issues that Catholics and Lutherans may never, or may have an extremely difficult time, agree upon. The first issue is the Pope and the Church Hierarchy. Martin Luther had a lot of trouble with accepting the role of the Pope as the sole

⁹⁵ Boehringer et al.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

authority on all matters of faith. As Valerie De Rosch mentioned earlier, the Pope is human, and to be human is to err. Therefore the Pope cannot be infallible in any matters, let alone matters of faith. The next major issue was the role of Women in the denominations. ELCA clergy thought that the Catholic Church would never accept women in the role of ministers, while Father Moe supported the Church's stand by stating that women's ordination was not biblically, or traditionally, sanctioned. Other issues, such as the Role of Mary, the marriage of priests, Sola Scriptura, etc, also came up in the answers. However, only those two, the Pope and the role of women, were mentioned by both denominations. These would be major hurdles for the ecumenical effort to overcome.⁹⁷

The role of women was the next question on the interview list. The ELCA clergy stated that women could be council members, pastors, bishops, and even archbishops. By contrast Father Moe stated that women could attain "prominent places of leadership without being ordained." His example was the Chancellor of Manchester, a position which involves supervision of historical archives and the coordination of civil legal affairs in the Diocese of Manchester, among other responsibilities. The Missouri Synod seems to lean towards the Catholic Church. Women can be teachers, presidents, and councilmen, but they cannot occupy ordained positions, such as a pastor or a bishop. This shows a clear disagreement on the role of women in the Christianity. The role of women would be a major issue for ecumenism to address.⁹⁸

The last two questions dealt with the possibility of ecumenism. I asked if they believed ecumenism was possible, with the choices being "Yes, within my lifetime", "yes, but not soon",

⁹⁷ Boehringer et al.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

and “no, but partial ecumenism will continue”. The ELCA was divided. Pastor Tom thought full ecumenism was possible in his lifetime, as long as we keep working at it. He felt that the need to be unified will soon outweigh the need to emphasize our differences. Pastor Tom also felt we could work together without agreeing on everything. Pastor Peter felt that full ecumenism would never happen, but that the walls between the denominations would disappear, and leave us better able to interact. Pastor Matthew thought that full ecumenism would never happen, but that talks would continue. He referred to the Lutheran World Federation, which worked on the Joint Declaration for the Doctrine of Justification. This showed hope for him. Pastor Mick of the Missouri Synod felt that full ecumenism would never succeed, but that efforts would continue. He thought that we just needed to be careful about joint services, and that this may be difficult to attain. Father Moe was optimistic, and felt that ecumenism would be possible in his lifetime, as long as more effort is put towards it. He cited how some Eastern Catholic churches are now in “union” with the Roman Catholic Church. He ended with the Bible phrase from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verse 37: “With God all things are possible.”⁹⁹

There is hope for ecumenism. However, many obstacles stand in the way. The role of women seems to be a major contention point, as does the role and authority of the Pope. The interpretation of the Eucharist is also a hurdle ecumenism would need to tackle. In order for ecumenism to have any hope of succeeding, there needs to be much more effort on behalf of the clergy on working towards a definite agreement or settlement. However, while the clergy are an important part of each denomination, no religion can exist without the laity members who worship and have faith in it.

⁹⁹ Boehringer et al.

The Laity

Ecumenism seems to have little hope of succeeding at the institutional or clerical levels. However, while both wield a large amount of power, the laity are the most powerful force of any religion. This allows them to wield influence over their denomination. Without followers, the institution collapses. It is due to this that a grassroots approach to ecumenism may succeed. However, where do the laity stand on the issues and doctrines of their denominations, and is there enough correlation between the Catholic and ELCA laity to allow for ecumenical success at the grassroots level?

The Institution forms the head of the denomination, deciding on religious issues and doctrines, and passing those teachings on to the clergy. The clergy then interpret those teachings for the laity, and act as a courier to the common people. The laity is, arguably, the most important part of any religion. The reason the Ancient Egyptian religion, with its gods such as Ra and Amun, among others, is no longer around is because no one worships it. Without the people, the religion collapses. Therefore, any examination of a denomination must examine the faithful that flock to their services. In order to best examine the largest number of laity possible in a short time, I conducted surveys of six parishes; three ELCA, one Missouri Synod, and two Catholic. The Missouri Synod surveys were not very fruitful, yielding only three surveys. Therefore, those surveys have not been included in this laity section, since three parishioners are not nearly enough to represent even a small parish. While I interviewed only one Catholic priest, Father Moe is in charge of two parishes, Sacred Heart and Ste. Marie's. As a result, five parishes have been included in the laity analysis.

The first question regarded the denominational affiliation of the surveyed person. In the three ELCA parishes, there were 59 ELCA members, six unidentified Lutherans, and one

Catholic. In the two Catholic parishes, there were 29 Catholics, and no other denominations. This provides interesting data while just at the very beginning. The ELCA is obviously more open to other denominations partaking in the service, since seven people surveyed from the three parishes were non-ELCA members. In retrospect, the Catholic parish surveys reflect only Catholics. This discrepancy could be due in fact to the more than twice as many responses received in the three ELCA parishes (66 responses) as opposed to the 29 responses received from two Catholic parishes. One could interpret that the ELCA is already bent more towards ecumenism than the Catholic Church, just by seeing who attends.¹⁰⁰

The second question regarded the manner in which people got into the denomination they profess to be a part of. Of the 66 ELCA parishioners surveyed, 41 were born into the faith, while 22 had converted from another Christian faith; in essence, one-third of the ELCA parishioners had experience with another religion. Of the 29 Catholics surveyed, 27 had been born into the faith, and 2 had converted; this is less than one-tenth. This would seem to have an impact on the understanding amongst the laity of other denominations. If one is in near constant contact with members who have experience in other religions, the general understanding of other religions would probably improve.¹⁰¹

The third question asks what the surveyed thinks is their denominations three most important doctrines are. This was done by giving the surveyed three blank spaces to write down what they thought were the three important teachings. These answers were then filtered together (for example: Sacraments, Baptism, and Eucharist were placed together; Saved by Grace or

¹⁰⁰ Christ the King, survey of congregation by author via Pastor Matthew Tingler, Nashua, NH, July 28-29, and August 4-5, 2012; Gethsemene, survey of congregation by author via Pastor Peter Boehringer, Manchester, NH, August 19, 2012; Messiah Lutheran, survey of congregation by author via Pastor Tom Teichmann, Amherst, NH, July 31, 2012; Sacred Heart, survey of congregation by author, Manchester, NH, July 31, 2012; Ste. Marie's, survey of congregation by author, Manchester, NH, July 31, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Justification by Faith were placed together; etc.). The ELCA choose Salvation (or Justification) by Grace as their main teaching, with thirty responses. This was followed by the Sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) with 22 responses. Others were not as agreed upon, such as the creeds, prayer, Jesus, and love. However, they did stand out in individual parishes. In the Catholic parishes, the Sacraments came out on top with 23 responses. The next top four in order were Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Papal Authority, the Trinity, and the Creeds and prayers. The Sacraments are obviously important for both groups, though they may not agree on how many. The Creeds and prayer were also held in common. However Justification by Grace stands out in the ELCA from the Catholics.¹⁰²

Attendance to services was the next question. Across all denomination, the majority of people said they attended weekly services; 46 out of 66 for the ELCA, and 20 out of 29 for the Catholics. The ELCA's next highest response was a few times a month, with 17 results. As for the Catholics, more than once a week gained nine responses. This shows a trend that the ELCA laity tends not to hold the service as being of high importance to attend. Catholics on the other hand seem to hold it as more important. This also gives an idea of how dedicated the members of both faiths are to the denomination, or to their own faith.¹⁰³

Question five regarded the participation level of the surveyed in their denomination. Across the board, regardless of denomination, a Moderate to Very High level of participation was reported. Very high participation was defined as involved in charities, programs, and services; high participation was defined as attending weekly services, lecturing, and altar serving; and moderate participation was defined as attending services regularly. For all faiths, 31

¹⁰² Christ the King, et al.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

reported a very high level of participation, 30 reported a high level of participation, and 32 reported a moderate level of participation. Both Catholic and ELCA congregations averaged out fairly even, with the ELCA getting 20, 19 and 22, respectively, while the Catholics had 8, 11, and 10, respectively. This seems to show that there is either a high level of participation in the respective religions, or those are the kinds of people who were willing to fill out the survey. If the former is true, then ecumenism starting with the laity may not be a successful approach.¹⁰⁴

The next question dealt with the person's personal interpretation of the Eucharist and Communion. Thirty ELCA members stated that it was the actual Body and Blood of Christ, while 28 said it was merely a representation of the Body and Blood of Christ. Thirteen other ELCA members had other ideas as to the meaning of the Eucharist. In the Catholic area, 23 members believed it becomes the actual Body and Blood of Christ, while 6 stated that it was a representation. What is surprising is that while I received an almost even number of surveys from Sacred Heart and Ste. Marie's, Sacred Heart had all six parishioners holding the representative concept. This makes sense in a way, since Ste. Marie's has an older feel (echoing sounds, high vaulted ceiling, etc.), while Sacred Heart has a newer feel to it (wooden rather than marble, lower ceiling, not as echoing). Regardless, the ELCA survives just fine with different interpretations. However, the even split may be due to the fact that the author, at the time of the surveys, didn't fully comprehend the Lutheran concept of in with and under. This concept seems to lay right in between "the Actual Body and Blood of Christ" and "a representation", resulting in a split choice between the two options. Regardless, nearly even figures in terms of actuality and representation ideas for the Eucharistic meaning lead to the idea that if it can coexist within

¹⁰⁴ Christ the King, et al.

one denomination (the ELCA) quite well, then maybe it could fit comfortably into ecumenism also.¹⁰⁵

The next question asked about the parishioner's own personal beliefs in comparison with their denominational teachings. The majority across the board said they had a few minor disagreements with their denomination. The next largest group, nearly one-third the size of the first group, stated that their beliefs were in perfect alignment with their denomination. In all three ELCA parishes, a few minor disagreements vastly outnumbered the perfectly matched; 19 to 6, 11 to 2, and 16 to 4, respectively. For the Catholics, the two parishes were opposites. Sacred Heart showed eight having minor disagreements, and two perfectly matched, as well as three having major disagreements. Ste. Marie's had nine perfectly matched, and four with a few minor disagreements. This seems to show a consistency in the ELCA, in which people are readily allowed to disagree with church teachings, while the Catholic parishes seem to be split, with the Ste. Marie's parish being traditionalists, while Sacred Heart is more progressive. This could be significant in terms of ecumenism.¹⁰⁶

Question ten addressed the image of Jesus parishioners held, the choices being "Son of God", "prophet", "preacher", "teacher", "all of the above", and "none of the above". The majority of all parishioners from both denominations chose "all of the above", but singled out "Son of God" as the most important feature, followed by "teacher". This shows a common view of Jesus in both denominations, and in all parishes. This Christian idea is where the most effort can be made towards ecumenism between the two denominations.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Christ the King, et al.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The next question posed a wide range of issues that the denominations may be facing today, and asked the parishioners to choose which three they felt were most important to their denomination. These issues ranged from relating to sex, violence, interfaith marriage, denomination growth, and many others. The largest response was the lack of growth in the denomination, with 46 ELCA members feeling it was vastly important, and 55 total people. The next issue, low service attendance, was similar, and had a likewise large score of 45 total people concerned about it. This was followed by homosexuality, lack of funding, and lack of ordained ministers. The ELCA top three were lack of growth, 46; low service attendance, 39; and lack of funding, 29. The Catholic top three were abortion, 23; lack of ordained ministers, 16; and homosexuality, 10. The ELCA issues were very self-centered, concerned for the community. By contrast, the Catholics, while mentioning a lack of ministers, were more concerned on social issues, such as abortion and homosexuality. This shows a difference of focus between the two denominations.¹⁰⁸

The next question asked the parishioners to list three beliefs that they believed Lutherans and Catholics could generally agree upon. Both the ELCA and Catholics agreed upon the Trinity, the importance of Jesus, and the need for Sacraments. The Trinity is a central Christian concept, teaching that the God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three persons occupying one being. Jesus is a pivotal belief of Christianity; the name of the religion itself comes from Jesus the Christ. The role of Jesus as the Savior is easily agreeable upon. Lastly, both the denominations believe in the need for Sacraments; its just a matter of how many that they disagree upon. While

¹⁰⁸ Christ the King, et al.

other beliefs, such as forgiveness, the commandments, love, and a creator God appeared often in responses on both sides, those three, Trinity, Jesus, and Sacraments, got the most responses.¹⁰⁹

The next question was the exact opposite of the previous question, asking for three beliefs that the parishioners believed Catholics and Lutherans could never agree upon. The most agreed upon answers within, and across, denominations were the role of the Pope, the role of women, and the Sacraments. The Pope is the leader of the Church, carrying on the apostolic tradition of Peter, and has sole authority on all matters of faith in Catholicism; the Lutherans cannot accept the Pope as an infallible human in any matters, and therefore cannot accept his authority. The role of women, as mentioned multiple times before, differs greatly between the Lutherans and the Catholics. While Lutheran women in the ELCA can occupy any position a man can, even up to Archbishop, Catholic women are much more limited, not being able to become deacons, priests, bishops, archbishops, or popes. This is attributed to tradition, where the Church says there is no traditional, scriptural, or historical support for women to occupy any role of religious significance. The last belief was the Sacraments. While both denominations believe in the Sacraments, the Catholics hold that there are seven (baptism, Eucharist, reconciliation, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick); the Lutherans, referencing back to Martin Luther, hold that there are two, baptism and the Eucharist, with penance (reconciliation) being a possible third. These three issues, the authority of the Pope, the role of women, and the number of Sacraments, would make it extremely difficult for ecumenism to succeed.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Christ the King, et al.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The last question asked the laity if full ecumenism was possible or not. The ELCA was very doubtful as to the success of ecumenism. Thirty-two members stated that ecumenism would not be possible, though partial ecumenism would probably continue. By contrast, seventeen felt that ecumenism would succeed in the future, just not anytime soon. Only twelve thought that ecumenism would be possible in their lifetime. The Catholics were likewise doubtful towards the success of full ecumenism, yet there was more hope. Eight felt that only partial ecumenism would succeed. Eight others felt that ecumenism would be possible in the far future, and two felt that ecumenism would be achieved in their lifetime. This doesn't make the outlook for ecumenism appear positive. Forty-three total felt that ecumenism wouldn't succeed, while 39 felt that ecumenism would succeed eventually. There is hope still, but the laity feel that ecumenism will not succeed.¹¹¹

These questions have painted a picture of the laity and their beliefs, despite the teachings of the institutions. It was surprising to find such differences in the adherence of Catholics to Catholicism when comparing Sacred Heart Parish with Saint Marie's Parish. By contrast, the three ELCA parishes tended to agree on everything. This is more surprising given the close relationship, close proximity (one mile) and the shared priests that the Catholic parishes have. By contrast the three ELCA congregations were in separate cities, such as Manchester (in central NH), Nashua (in southern NH), and Amherst (in-between the other two); yet they shared many beliefs. When they didn't agree, they tended to be even, or strongly weighted towards one belief, rather than all over the map. This would be shared across congregations; if the Christ the King congregation held towards one point by a wide majority, so would Gethsemene and Messiah Lutheran; if Messiah Lutheran was divided between two points, so would Gethsemene and Christ

¹¹¹ Christ the King et al.

the King. This was an interesting development. Among the congregations studied, the ELCA seems to be more unified in its agreement or disagreement than the two Catholic Churches.¹¹²

When compared with their institutional teachings, the laity seemed to be much more relaxed in their beliefs. While both the ELCA and the Catholic communities appeared to be in communion with their denominational teachings, there were some differences. The most glaring difference was the Sacred Heart division between Body and Blood and representation, in regard to the Eucharist. The ELCA seems to be more inclined towards an ecumenical style of thinking based on many of the results found amongst the laity. The ELCA is open to non-denominational members participating in the service. The ELCA members also had a greater multi-religious background experience, with many of their members coming from outside the denomination. The ELCA is also accepting of various views on the Eucharist, though it teaches a specific view based on sacramental unity. In contrast, the Catholic Church is not accepting of varying views on many beliefs, such as the Eucharist, the Pope, and others. Despite this, Sacred Heart shows a clear divergence from this in the Eucharist. I have always thought that Catholics have merely been hiding their disagreements with the Church in order to avoid controversy. Instead of changing denominations, they stick to what they are comfortable with. If these numbers are to be seen across the country (about one in four disagreeing with the Eucharist), then the Catholic Church needs to recognize this, and address it in a ecumenical way, rather than a suppressive approach. By Catholic teaching, the six surveyed people who disagree with the Church's interpretation of the Eucharist should not be accepting it at Communion. This is why Valerie is not allowed to accept the bread and wine.

¹¹² Christ the King, et al.

Imagine a Greek style temple. The laity are the foundation of each denomination. On top of them are the clergy, the floor of the temple. The pillars of the denominations, their doctrines and dogmas, extend from the clergy to support the institution, the roof of the temple. While some of the pillars could be removed, making the roof shaky, the roof stays where it is. If the clergy are removed, the pillars could stand on the foundation instead. However, remove the foundation, and the entire building crumbles. The laity are the most essential part of the denomination. Without them, there is no religion. If ecumenism is to succeed, the laity must want it. This sends shockwaves up the pillars of the temple. The pillars must be adjusted and changed, in order for the roof to be stable, and the structure intact.

Conclusion

The role of religion in a secular society is changing. Information is more readily available on other denominations, beliefs, and understandings of beliefs. People are able to easily think for themselves, and have the free time to ponder their faith, as well as compare it with their denomination. Father Moe warned that secularism was becoming a new religion in the world, and it was a serious threat to Catholicism. He was right. Catholicism is suffering due to its narrow minded focus on its believed truths, and is in fact somewhat egotistic in its approach to ecumenism. Catholicism is basically taking the approach that ecumenism means a return to the Catholic Church of Lutherans and other Protestants, rather than a coming to a middle point on major issues. The Catholic Church will not change its view on the Eucharist, its stance on the supremacy of the Pope, and its belief on the role of women, not without major revisions to the system. The ELCA will not budge on its stance on the Eucharist being somewhat indefinable, its attitude towards the infallibility of the Pope, and the importance of women playing a role in the religious activities. Based on these three issues, successful ecumenism will be extremely

difficult to achieve. However, low numbers of priests in the Catholic Church may lead to some changes, in order to compensate for the shortage. Four choices exist; close down some congregations and combine them with others (this is already being done); allow priests to be married; give deacons (who can be married) greater powers, in essence becoming married priests; or allow the ordination of women.

Granted, these changes may not solve the problems. After all, the ELCA allows pastors to be married, as well as be women. However, they still face shortages in pastors to care for their flocks. In addition to a shortage of clergy (caused by the current clergy getting old, and the lack of influx of new clergy), the congregations are getting smaller. Sacred Heart, where I attend Mass on Sundays (more on this later), is extremely empty except around Christmas and Easter. Saint Marie's Parish and Christ the King also seem to have a lot of available seating during their services; I attend Saint Marie's Mass on occasion, and I have attended a few services at Christ the King with my mother, Valerie. The availability of seating is a major concern for the churches. However, maybe this is a sign.

People are unconcerned with the minor doctrines and teachings of their respective churches. For example, while the Catholic Church has a strict non-abortion, non-contraceptive, non-premarital stance, Catholics are in disagreement on these issues. Catholics are even in disagreement on the authority of the Pope, and the meaning of the Eucharist. While the Catholic Church doesn't budge on these issues, the Catholics who disagree with these teachings start to walk away. They still consider themselves Catholics, but they feel that the Church is no longer welcoming of them. When away from home, I do not attend services at any denomination, since I strongly disagree with many of their key components. This disagreement has, despite my

history as a Catholic, allowed me to step back and view both denominations equally, without bias either way.

This project has taught me a lot about the beliefs of the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Missouri Synod, and the way the laity feel about their denominations. However, I feel that there is so much more that could have been done. This project was severely limited in size and scope. Only three ELCA congregations were included, and only two Catholic congregations. The reason for the lopsided numbers for the ELCA (66 members) compared to the Catholics (29 members) was the fault of my own. I had many contacts within the Catholic Church, having been a member for most of my life, and still being involved in it; I therefore thought that it would be easy to obtain Catholic participation. Due to my lack of involvement in, or general knowledge of, the ELCA, I felt I would have more difficult time obtaining information from them. To compensate, I was more active in contacting ELCA churches than I was in contacting Catholic churches. This led to overcompensation, leaving me with a large amount of information on the ELCA, and a smaller amount of information on the Catholics. However, this discrepancy may have been due to the way the surveys were conducted. The ELCA surveys were done through their respective pastors, while the Catholic surveys were done by the author.

Another issue is the absence of some data that could change the outcome of the conclusion of this project. The Lutheran Confessio Augustana, or Augsburg Confession, is a listing of Lutheran beliefs.¹¹³ This document listed the flaws behind parts of Catholicism, as well as why the Lutherans opposed them, and the Lutheran belief. This document could have

¹¹³ The Book of Concord. "The Augsburg Confession," The Book of Concord, <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php> (accessed December 5, 2012).

been a vital part of explaining Lutheran beliefs at the institutional and historical levels. Another document that was only briefly mentioned, and not explored, was the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.¹¹⁴ This document was a big step towards ecumenism, finding commonality between Catholics and Lutherans on the Doctrine of Justification, a major Lutheran belief. This document goes to show that it may not be the beliefs themselves which divide the two denominations, but rather the intensity in which each denomination believes in them.

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The wide variety of historical and contemporary data available on ecumenism demanded a narrow focus in order to keep this project manageable and within time constraints. Given more time and resources, a more thorough historical review, institutional study, and survey analysis could be accomplished. Organization of data has been a problem, due to the sheer number of articles, paperwork, interviews, and surveys that have gone into this project. Organizing and simplifying the surveys and interviews consumed a lot of time, much more than I thought possible.

Despite all these problems, I was able to overcome them, thanks in part to a large number of people. I would first like to thank Dr. Shirley Myers of the Honors Program, Dr. Kirk VanGilder of the Religious Studies Department, and Professor Jeff Brune of the History Department for assisting me in this long project, as well as motivating me through the project in low times. I would like to thank all the participants in the surveys for taking ten minutes of their Sunday morning to allow me to pick their brains for information. Pastor Tom, Pastor Peter,

¹¹⁴ The Vatican. "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," The Vatican, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html (accessed December 5, 2012).

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Appendix 1

Nicene Creed – Catholic:

“I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Sacred Heart Catholic Church. “New Roman Missal – Nicene Creed,” Sacred Heart Catholic Church, http://www.divinesacredheart.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=192 (accessed November 4, 2012).

Appendix 2

Nicene Creed – ELCA:

“We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “The Nicene Creed,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Statements-of-Belief/The-Nicene-Creed.aspx> (accessed November 4, 2012).

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