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Where East meets West

International Lutheran–Orthodox conversations 2000–2018: a personal reflection

Jeffrey G. Silcock

Introduction¹

My interest in the Orthodox Church began in 1971 when, as a student at Luther Seminary, now Australian Lutheran College (ALC), I studied the Orthodox Church with Dr Maurice Schild. This included a visit to a Greek Orthodox church in Adelaide to witness its three-hour long Easter celebration. This was the first time I had entered an Orthodox church. The whole experience made an enormous impression on all my senses—even though we were standing the whole time!

Ever since I have been fascinated by the Orthodox Church's liturgy and theology, and especially its icons which you see painted all over its churches but most importantly on the iconostasis, the wall of icons at the front of the church, which separates the nave from the sanctuary. I continued the tradition of teaching about the Orthodox Church as a lecturer at ALC in 1996. I formed wonderful friendships with the people of St Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church, Unley, where I took students every year to the Friday evening English liturgy, and after the service before supper the priest would take time to explain to the students the meaning of the icons on the walls and ceiling of the church as well as the significance of the iconostasis.

In 1999, to my great delight, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva appointed me to the International Lutheran–Orthodox Commission, or dialogue committee. Lutheran members of the dialogue work under the oversight of LWF, which appoints members on the recommendation of their home church. Hence, I did not represent the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) but LWF. The Orthodox members by contrast are not appointed centrally by Constantinople² but by their home church to which they are responsible.

1 The following is an edited version of the lecture first presented as the Fritzsche Oration at Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, 14 September 2022.

2 Constantinople is modern day Istanbul, but the Orthodox refuse to use that name for the headquarters of their church but continue to use its ancient Christian name, and so call it the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The latter holds a special place of honour within Orthodoxy and serves as the seat for the Ecumenical Patriarch because of its historical significance as the capital of the former Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and its role as the mother church of most modern Orthodox churches.

Composition

The fourteen canonical Orthodox churches are the only ones represented on the dialogue. These churches are in communion with each other and with the Patriarch of Constantinople. There are nine patriarchates, with special honour accorded to the first four ancient sees of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The other patriarchates include Moscow, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Making up the list of canonical churches are those of Albania, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, and Poland. Although the Church of Ukraine has been formally recognised by Constantinople, it has not yet been recognised by all fourteen canonical churches. The sticking point is that Moscow claims that Ukraine still comes under the jurisdiction of Moscow and all Rus, and since Moscow will never recognise it, its future remains undecided.

The Lutheran members of the dialogue represent the followings regions of the Lutheran World Federation: Central and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, the Americas, and the Asian Pacific region. One striking difference between the two teams is that the Orthodox team is comprised solely of men, almost all priests, while the Lutheran team has about six women, all of whom are ordained.

Excluded from the Orthodox dialogue are the non-canonical churches, also known as the Oriental Churches or non-Chalcedonian churches. They form the other branch of Eastern Orthodoxy which split off from the canonical churches after rejecting the canons of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The result is that the two branches of the church, usually called Eastern and Oriental, or Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, have remained in schism to this day, despite the many attempts at reunification. This schism predates the great schism of 1054 between East and West by some six hundred years.

There are six autocephalous or self-governing Oriental churches: the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Malankara (or Mar Thoma) Orthodox Syrian Church, and the Armenian Apostolic Church. So, the non-canonical Orthodox churches are found mainly in India, Africa, and the Middle East, while the canonical churches on the dialogue come from the republics of the former Soviet Union as well as Greece and Cyprus.

The beginnings

A few words about the beginnings of this dialogue. Officially, it started in 1982, but its roots go back much further—in fact right back to the sixteenth century, when the Lutheran theologians of Tübingen, Germany, in 1576 began a theological exchange with the then Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremias II, which lasted for some five years. The Lutherans at the time were surprisingly ecumenical and decided to send the Patriarch a copy of the *Augsburg Confession*, the primary confessional document of the Lutheran Church, which Philip Melanchthon had earlier translated into Greek. They sent this to Constantinople so that the Byzantines could get some idea of the teachings of the Wittenberg reformers. Their interest in having a dialogue with the Orthodox Church was rooted in their efforts

to demonstrate that their teachings were not new and were thus in conformity with the teachings of the ancient Church. Martin Luther himself was well acquainted with the Greek and Latin Fathers and frequently cited them.

Sadly, however, the correspondence between Tübingen and Constantinople never bore fruit. It ranged over many topics, but the Patriarch was unpersuaded and called the Lutheran teaching heterodox. One of the main stumbling blocks was the *filioque*—which is Latin for ‘and from the Son’, the phrase in the Nicene Creed that confesses that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* from the Son. This phrase ‘and from the Son’, the *filioque*, was categorically rejected by the Orthodox Church already in ancient times because it was added by the West unilaterally rather than by an ecumenical council. While it contradicts Eastern theology, the *filioque* was added by the West because it agrees with Western theology. The West holds, based on passages in John’s Gospel, that the Spirit is not just the Spirit of the Father but also the Spirit of the Son and so proceeds not just from the Father but also from the Son. The compromise position reached ecumenically today is to confess that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. Even though unsuccessful, this first theological dialogue between the Lutherans and the Orthodox represents the first substantive ecumenical exchange of the post-Reformation era and was a forerunner of the dialogue that started in 1982.

The main differences between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches are largely Christological and Mariological. That is, they have to do with the doctrines of Christ and of Mary. The differences are subtle but significant and require prior knowledge to understand because of the technical terms that are used. In brief, the Oriental Orthodox Church confesses a miaphysite christology—note, not a monophysite Christology of which they are often accused, but a miaphysite Christology—because (following Cyril of Alexandria) it holds that the one person of Christ is *of* two natures whereas the Eastern Orthodox Church (following Chalcedon) holds a dyophysite Christology which affirms that the one person of Christ is *in* two natures. Miaphysite Christology still holds that Christ is both divine and human but in one composite nature, whereas Chalcedon confesses a hypostatic union between the two natures of Christ, which, as the Chalcedonian Formula states, is without confusion, without change, without separation, and without division.

The other key theological difference has to do with the person of the Virgin Mary. The Eastern Orthodox Church (and here Lutherans are in full agreement) confesses Mary to be the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, whereas the Oriental Orthodox confesses her only to be the Mother of Jesus. There has been much discussion between these two branches of Orthodoxy over a long period of time. In 1990, significant agreement was reached between them, but there are still unresolved differences.

After describing the sources of authority or doctrinal standards for the dialogue, the paper will deal with some of the theological issues that have been under discussion.

Formal matters

Eastern Orthodox theology is based on three things: (1) Holy Tradition, which incorporates the dogmatic decrees of the seven ecumenical councils; (2) the Holy Scriptures, and (3) the teaching of the Church Fathers. Lutheran theology for its part is based on the Holy Scriptures and the *Book of Concord* of 1580, the confessional writings that provide the doctrinal standard of the Lutheran Church. Following in the steps of Luther and the Reformers, Lutherans certainly have high regard for the Fathers of the church, especially the consensual tradition where they teach with great unanimity. However, the Fathers still don't have the same authority for us as our own Lutheran Confessions, except where they quote the testimonies of the Fathers, and they quote them most extensively in the article on the Lord's Supper in the Formula of Concord.

However, the differing authorities of the two churches caused a fundamental problem for the dialogue. There were only one or two Lutheran members of the dialogue who had a specialist knowledge of the Greek Fathers, while conversely there were only a couple of Orthodox members who were knowledgeable about the Lutheran Confessions and the writings of Martin Luther. Secondly, the Orthodox reminded the Lutherans that our authorities do not carry equal weight. Because whereas the Greek Fathers (and the Latin Fathers too for that matter) can claim universal validity and relevance, the Lutheran Fathers or the Lutheran Confessions are only really relevant to Lutherans because they (at least the *Augsburg Confession*) arose in the context of the Lutheran–Catholic controversy over such things as justification and good works, the sacrifice of the mass, and the papacy. The Orthodox pointed out that these matters are of no concern to them because they have never been involved in theological debates with Lutherans.

To put it bluntly: while Lutherans claim that the Eastern Fathers are our Fathers too, the Orthodox say that the Lutheran Fathers are not their Fathers and that the Lutheran confessional writings in the *Book of Concord* are not relevant to them and so of no relevance to the dialogue because they are not universal but particular in scope, belonging specifically to the sixteenth century controversies between Lutherans and Catholics or between Lutherans and Reformed. The Lutherans, of course, mount a counterargument that while the context of the Lutheran Confessions might be the sixteenth century controversies with the Catholics and Reformed, nevertheless, the substance of their teaching is universal because it is based entirely on the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and the consensual tradition of the ancient church.

Theological matters

I turn now to a few significant theological matters. All of the meetings since 2000 have been under the umbrella theme: The Mystery of the Church. So, I will focus on two main sub-themes because these go to the heart of our dialogue: the sacraments or mysteries (in Greek *mysteria*) and the ministry.

Together with the Eucharist, the Orthodox call Baptism and Chrismation the sacraments of initiation. This itself was new to Lutherans—the fact that the Eucharist, when it follows

Baptism and Chrismation, is called a sacrament of initiation. When Lutherans hear the term sacrament of initiation, they immediately think of Baptism and nothing else.

The Lutheran members had anticipated that this round of discussions would see some significant consensus because we thought we shared a high level of agreement with the Orthodox on the doctrine of Baptism. However, our hopes were dashed, and we were left disappointed. The sticking point turned out to be the Orthodox insistence on a subtle point of church doctrine. For them, Baptism and Chrismation form two separate but inseparable sacraments. Therefore, the Orthodox were unable to find any elements in the Lutheran baptismal rite that, in their opinion, corresponded to their rite of Chrismation.

Some clarification is required here. Lutherans generally don't have a separate rite of anointing after Baptism, and if in the rare instance there is an anointing with oil, it is not a separate rite as such and certainly not a sacrament. However, when asked by the Orthodox whether the Lutheran liturgy has a rite of anointing for the baptised, the best we could do was offer the optional rite in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, which at the time was the service book used by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the largest Lutheran church body in the USA. We were all aware that this was by no means representative of all Lutheran churches in the world because Lutherans, unlike the Orthodox (and Catholics), don't have a Book of Rites that is universally recognised and used across all churches.

We were disappointed but should not have been surprised when the Orthodox refused to accept the rite of anointing in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* as a valid equivalent to their sacrament of Chrismation. We thought that certain elements such as the post-baptismal prayer for the Spirit and even the optional use of oil with the laying on of hands would have been sufficient for the Orthodox to recognise in it the marks of Chrismation. In other words, we thought that the main difference between the ELCA baptismal rite and the Orthodox sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation was that while the Orthodox had two separate sacraments, the ELCA incorporated the element of Chrismation (admittedly optional) into the one sacrament of Baptism. That, however, was not acceptable to the Orthodox. For them, the two sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation are a canonical requirement and cannot be compressed into one. Furthermore, these two sacraments are inextricably connected, with Chrismation being enacted straight after Baptism, while for Lutherans, the anointing with the Holy Spirit takes place within the rite of Baptism itself and finds its ritual expression in the laying on of hands after water Baptism.

Then came the real surprise. The Orthodox announced that since we do not have a separate sacrament of Chrismation, the Lutheran sacrament of Baptism is not valid. The logic of this is that since the Orthodox hold that the sacrament of Baptism is not complete without Chrismation, and since Chrismation must be performed as a separate sacrament and not simply as part of the rite of Baptism, therefore the Orthodox cannot recognise the Lutheran sacrament of Baptism as a valid sacrament.

That means that if any Lutheran wants to convert to Orthodoxy, they must be received by

Baptism and Chrismation. And yet in contradiction to this, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia was one of a number of Australian churches, including the Lutheran Church of Australia, to sign the NCCA (National Council of Churches Australia) document titled *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* round about the year 1996 where the signatory churches agreed to recognise the sacrament of Baptism administered in each other's churches. I said nothing about this inconsistency at the meeting of the dialogue in 2004 and will say nothing more now as it is a matter for the Orthodox Church itself to sort out. However, the Lutheran members of the dialogue expressed their profound disappointment that the Orthodox Church could not unequivocally recognise baptisms performed in the Lutheran Church as valid.

After what for us Lutherans was a fairly tense session on Baptism and Chrismation, we enjoyed a brief respite as we listened to the Orthodox engage in what to us seemed like a petty squabble between themselves over the composition of the anointing oil used in Chrismation. Lutherans regard this as a matter of *adiaphoron*, the term used to describe matters that have neither been commanded nor forbidden by Holy Scripture and so belong to the realm of freedom. However, that is certainly not the case with the Orthodox—in fact, so much so that the Orthodox co-chair had to chastise a young lay theologian (a convert to Orthodoxy) who dared to argue against senior theologians in claiming that the oil used for anointing could simply be olive oil. He was told in no uncertain terms that for it to be canonically valid, it had to be the Holy Myron Oil, which is a mixture of pure olive oil and forty-seven herbs and spices (though others among the Orthodox claimed it was made up of fifty-three aromatic ingredients). This holy oil is prepared in Constantinople every ten years, according to a special recipe, enough for all the Orthodox Churches—except for Russia (and two other churches), because of the vast amount that Russia itself needs for its own churches. So, for the Orthodox, the type of oil used in Chrismation is not a matter of *adiaphoron*. If it is not the right oil, it is not a valid sacrament. Although we refrained from saying anything at the time, we Lutherans know that from time to time there are also some 'uncanonical' practices among the ranks of our own clergy when it comes to the Lord's Supper, such as the occasional use of beer and pizza or the like instead of bread and wine. The moral of the story is that both churches have their struggles in matters of discipline among the clergy.

We now turn to a few doctrinal matters in connection with the Holy Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Lutherans and Orthodox both believe that Christ is bodily present in the Eucharist. Both take his words, 'this is my body; this is my blood', literally. But again, there is a difference. Lutherans say that the consecrated bread *is* Christ's body, and that the consecrated wine *is* Christ's blood, according to his promise. The Orthodox, however, speak of a complete transformation of the bread and wine. They do not say with Lutherans that Christ is present in, with, and under the bread and the wine. Rather, they say that the elements are sacramentally changed in themselves so that there is no longer bread or wine after the consecration but only Christ's body and blood. Under questioning, the Orthodox clarified for us that this is not the same as transubstantiation as taught by the

Roman Catholic Church, which they reject. The Orthodox speak of a change, whereas Catholics speak of an annihilation of the elements.

However, the difference between the teachings of the two churches on this matter is not immediately transparent, as the end result is the same. That is, after the consecration the elements of bread and wine disappear and all that is left is Christ's body and blood. Lutherans, however, reject this teaching as it is without scriptural warrant, for Christ expressly says in the words of institution: 'this [bread] is my body; this [wine; the contents of the cup] is my blood', where the referent of 'this' in each case is 'bread' and 'wine/cup' respectively, as demanded by the syntax of the sentence.

For both our churches, the Eucharist stands at the heart of our faith and life. And just because it is so important, the dialogue gave time to discussing what constitutes appropriate preparation. We had a full and frank discussion about this but could not reach agreement. Both churches recognise the need for preparation. The Orthodox insist that confession before a priest and fasting from midnight prior to the time of receiving the Eucharist is mandatory. It is not simply recommended but required. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of this rule is that a great many Orthodox do not commune very often. We saw this for ourselves when we attended the Sunday liturgy hosted by the Orthodox. Priests, monks and nuns made up the majority of the communicants, as did women carrying infants or young children. But tellingly, these mothers rarely communed, but the morsel of Christ's body soaked in his blood and offered on a spoon was almost always given only to the infants and young children.

The Lutheran members of the dialogue could not help but feel saddened when we heard that the reason comparatively few Orthodox laity commune is simply because they have not met the pre-conditions of priestly confession and fasting. Lutherans also teach that individual confession and absolution before a pastor has much to commend it, especially for those who feel burdened by a particular sin or sins, but it is not made a law. Indeed, the Lutheran Lord's Supper service begins with corporate confession and absolution, which satisfies the need of the great majority of its members. Likewise, Luther's Catechism teaches that fasting is a good bodily preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper. But again, the Lutheran Church does not insist that you must fast before coming to the Lord's Supper. Just as it does not say that you must go to private confession and absolution before communing, but it leaves it up to a person's conscience.

Quite a heated discussion ensued when the Lutherans pressed the Orthodox hard on their practice of preparation before the Eucharist and put it to them that it sounds legalistic, which, as you might expect, they emphatically denied. They explained that, despite what it seems, it is not legalistic at all because it is done for the sake of the gospel. Lutherans, on the other hand, countered that the Orthodox requirement amounts to a denial of the gospel because the Eucharist is the gospel in its purest form—and yet it is denied to those who have not fulfilled the said requirements.

Among many other topics dealt with in connection with the Eucharist, the dialogue went on

to talk about its implications for the natural environment, ecology, and human society. Here both churches agreed that there are important environmental and social consequences that can be drawn from the nature of the Eucharist which unites both human and divine elements within itself.

Finally, I want to say a few words about ecclesiology before speaking briefly about our discussion of the ordained ministry. The latter was the topic that was most controversial and produced the least amount of agreement, but not only because it included the issue of the ordination of women.

We discovered that for the most part there is considerable common ground in our understanding of the attributes of the church, that is, its unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity as confessed in the creed. The exception was the way we understand apostolicity, as shown in our discussion of the ministry of the church. The matter of apostolicity was not properly discussed because there are differences among the Orthodox themselves over how it should be understood.

However, the real problem is more fundamental and goes to the question of what the church is, and who comprises the church. Luther answers the question beautifully when he says: 'Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd' (Smalcald Articles Part III, Article XII, paragraph 2). But for the more conservative Orthodox, the Orthodox Church is the only true church. An Orthodox member of the dialogue from a former Soviet republic pleaded with his colleagues to oppose certain formulations in the Common Statement that we were working on because he said: 'You know, brothers, that no matter how much the more ecumenically minded Orthodox members among us, indeed even Constantinople itself, might want to turn a blind eye to this, you know that our church has always taught that when we confess in the creed: We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, this is referring exclusively to the Orthodox Church: we alone are that One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church—not the Lutherans nor any other Protestants.' This priest does not believe that the Orthodox Church should even be in ecumenical dialogue because a faithful Orthodox theologian can only teach, not enter into dialogue. We Lutherans of course had heard this anti-ecumenical interpretation of the creed before, but it had never been discussed because the Orthodox leadership does not agree with it. But now hearing it again, and put so forcefully, it came as a real shock and took some time to recover from it.

By way of conclusion, a brief report is in order on the discussion about the ministry of the church. This is where we had the least amount of agreement. To begin with, we could all agree that the office of the ordained ministry or priesthood was established by Christ to carry out the sacramental ministry of the church, and that the priesthood of the baptised or the royal priesthood plays an equally indispensable role in carrying out the non-sacramental aspects of the church's ministry—by witnessing to the gospel, serving the world in word and deed on God's behalf, and bringing the world's needs to God in prayer.

Both Orthodox and Lutherans agree that the ministry of the church involves both the ordained and the laity. While the Orthodox can use the term lay ministry with reference to unordained deacons, the Lutheran church tends to avoid the term because it can be misunderstood to mean that it approves the notion of lay pastors where laypeople take on the role and tasks of the pastoral office without ordination. This may happen in some Lutheran churches around the world that have been influenced by certain theological trends, but it is not in the DNA of confessional Lutheran ecclesiology. It should be stressed, however, that the royal priesthood, what Lutherans call the common priesthood or the priesthood of all believers, is an indispensable part of the ministry of the church, its *diakonia*, in which both the ordained clergy and laypeople work side by side in the service of the gospel, each according to their appointed roles and vocations, and hopefully without any rivalry.

There are differences between us in the way in which we understand the transmission of the office that Christ first committed to the apostles. Lutherans hold that the successors of the apostles are pastors, and that the apostolic office is *one* office which can be exercised in three different ways. This means that, where there is a threefold ministry, ordained deacons, pastors, and bishops all hold the one and the same office, not three different offices. The Orthodox, on the other hand, hold that the bishops, not the priests, are the successors of the apostles, and that the threefold office of the ministry means that there are three different offices into which the three ranks of clergy, deacons, priests, and bishops must be ordained. Because for the Orthodox, bishops are the successors of the apostles, they alone can ordain, whereas in the Lutheran Church, while bishops normally ordain, they do so for the sake of good order, not because it's canonically required as it is for the Orthodox. The Lutheran Confessions assert, contra the Orthodox, that a bishop has no more power (i.e. God-given authority) than an ordinary pastor or priest, and that the power of a bishop beyond that of the keys (i.e. the authority to forgive or retain sins) is of human origin (*ius humanum*), given him by common consent, not by divine mandate (*ius divinum*).

The final point of difference in the understanding of the ordained ministry that deserves mention is that of apostolic succession. Both churches teach it but understand it differently. For the Orthodox, apostolic succession is primarily a succession of ordinations performed by bishops who themselves stand in that unbroken historic succession that reaches right back to the apostles, since the old rule of the church states that you cannot hand on what you yourself do not have. For Lutherans, on the other hand, apostolic succession refers primarily to the succession of apostolic teaching in the church, the teaching that goes back to the apostles and that constitutes the key criterion for the apostolicity of the church. However, there is one Lutheran church, the Church of Sweden, the third largest Lutheran church in the world, that has preserved the apostolic succession intact because it remained unbroken during the time of the Reformation. In this case, apostolic succession is understood primarily as a succession of ordinations rather than as a succession of doctrine.

The elephant in the room for the entire discussion about priesthood and ordained ministry was the matter of the ordination of women. It is too big a topic to report on here except to say that the atmosphere was highly charged with lots of thunder and lightning, lots of heat but not much light. The LWF understands the ordained ministry to be inclusive of both men and women, while the Orthodox Church teaches that the priesthood is not open to women. Readers already familiar with the debate will know some of the key arguments and counterarguments that, predictably, were exchanged by members of the dialogue.

My closing observation is that the discussion was not primarily exegetical, but theological, with its focus on biblical theology and church tradition rather than bible texts. The Orthodox Church asserts that it does not ordain women because this has been the unanimous tradition of the church throughout its history. This, it is claimed, is based on God's plan for men and women in the economy of salvation and is said to be the clear teaching of Holy Scripture. What is interesting is that the Orthodox practice does not depend on the exegesis of those New Testament passages that are most often debated in the LCANZ, namely, 1 Corinthians 14:33b–38 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15. In fact, these texts were never even discussed; it all depends on what was, until last century, the unanimous tradition of the church catholic.

It is hoped that this is enough to give readers a taste of the international Lutheran–Orthodox dialogue between 2000 and 2018.³ Our week-long meetings were always marked by memorable locations and the joyful conviviality that was enjoyed over wonderful food and copious amounts of wine and ouzo. The people, the places, and the conversations will live long in my memory and that of my wife, who was often able to accompany me. I retired from the joint commission or dialogue committee at the end of 2018 after we had completed our discussions on the topic of the mystery of the church, which extended over eighteen years. The dialogue has now moved to a new phase, begun in 2019, which is focussing on the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. It was a privilege to serve on this commission for the duration of the previous phase as a representative of the Asian Pacific region of the Lutheran World Federation.

*Rev Dr Jeff Silcock retired at the end of 2016 after teaching Systematic Theology and allied subjects at Australian Lutheran College for twenty years. Since his retirement, he has kept on writing and translating, mainly in the area of Luther research. His most recent project was the translation of Oswald Bayer's *Promissio* book, which will come out through Fortress in the second half of 2025.*

3 If readers want to delve deeper into the dialogue, they can visit the site of Risto Saarinen (retired Finnish professor and member of the dialogue) at <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/ristosaarinen/lutheran-orthodox-dialogue-2/>. There they will find links to a documentary history of the dialogue from its beginnings as well as to all the official statements.