



Dagmar Heller | Minna Hietamäki (Hrsg./Eds.)

## **Just Do It?!**

Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations

Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander

Proceedings of the 19th Academic Consultation  
of the Societas Oecumenica

Tagungsbericht der 19. Wissenschaftlichen Konsultation  
der Societas Oecumenica





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Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau Nr. 117

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# Vorwort

»Just Do It?!« – so lautete das etwas provokante Thema der neunzehnten wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica (Europäische Gesellschaft für Ökumenische Forschung), die vom 25–30. August 2016 in Helsinki (Finnland) stattfand. Das Fragezeichen deutet auf das Unverständnis vieler, die nicht verstehen können, warum die Kirchen nicht einfach gegenseitig ihre Taufe, ihre Ämter und damit das Abendmahl anerkennen und miteinander feiern können. Das gleichzeitige Ausrufezeichen deutet auf die Ungeduld hin, mit der Gläubige auf das gemeinsame Feiern des Abendmahls pochen.

In der wissenschaftlich theologischen Diskussion und in den ökumenischen Dialogen – bilateral und multilateral – geht es dementsprechend immer wieder um die Grundfrage der gegenseitigen Anerkennung, genauer um die gegenseitige Anerkennung der Taufe oder die gegenseitige Anerkennung der Ämter. Letztlich geht es aber dabei immer um die Frage der gegenseitigen Anerkennung der Kirchen. Dies aber bedeutet die gegenseitige Anerkennung *als* Ausdruck oder Form der einen Kirche Jesu Christi.

In diesem Zusammenhang taucht immer auch der Begriff »Rezeption« in den Diskussionen auf. »Rezeption« bedeutet wörtlich »Aufnahme« oder »Annahme«. In der Ökumene wird dabei normalerweise an die Annahme von gemeinsam erarbeiteten Texten gedacht, die zu einer gegenseitigen Anerkennung führen sollen. Letztlich geht es aber um mehr: Es geht nicht nur um die juristische Annahme im Sinne einer Zustimmung zu einem Text, sondern es geht um die Aufnahme des Textinhaltes.

Es geht darum, sich den Text zu eigen zu machen, ihn umzusetzen, Konsequenzen aus ihm zu ziehen. Der gegenseitigen Anerkennung als Kirchen geht also die Rezeption gemeinsam formulierter Einsichten voraus.

Rezeption ist aber nicht nur auf Texte und Vereinbarungen bezogen. Rezeption, gegenseitige Annahme und Aufnahme hat darüber hinaus auch einen menschlichen sowie einen geistlichen Aspekt. »Nehmet einander an, wie Christus euch angenommen hat«, heißt es im Römerbrief (Römer 15,7). In manchen Übersetzungen steht statt »annehmen« »aufnehmen« oder »akzeptieren«. Es geht um beides: Wenn man jemanden akzeptiert, also annimmt, dann nimmt man ihn oder sie auf – in seine eigene Wohnung, oder in seinen eigenen Bekanntenkreis. Dabei spielt auch eine gewisse Anerkennung eine Rolle: wer einen anderen Menschen aufnimmt, erkennt ihn oder sie an als jemanden, der es wert ist, aufgenommen zu werden. Anerkennung und Annahme/Aufnahme bedingen sich gegenseitig – im persönlichen Bereich wie auch im institutionellen Bereich der Kirchen.

Solche grundsätzlichen Überlegungen standen im Mittelpunkt der genannten Tagung, die in diesem Band dokumentiert wird. Der Eröffnungsvortrag der Präsidentin der Societas Oecumenica, *Dagmar Heller*, reflektiert allgemein zu diesen Fragen und gibt Anstöße für die weitere Diskussion. Diese grundlegenden Gedanken werden dann aus verschiedenen konfessionellen Blickwinkeln beleuchtet (Vorträge von *Stefan Barbu*, orthodox; *Beate Bengard*, lutherisch; *Jelle Creemers*, freikirchlich<sup>1</sup>). Vertieft werden diese Gedanken in einer philosophischen Annäherung durch *Marcel Hénaff*, der in Kalifornien lehrt. *Veronika Hoffmann* (katholisch) und *Risto Saarinen* (lutherisch) reflektieren über die theologischen Kriterien für eine gegenseitige Anerkennung oder Nicht-Anerkennung in den verschiedenen Kirchen, die in einer Reaktion von dem Baptisten *Uwe Swarat* kritisch bedacht werden. Neue Differenzen anhand neu entstandener Fragen scheinen den Prozess der gegenseitigen Anerkennung der Kirchen zu erschweren. Dies wird genauer untersucht am Beispiel moralisch-ethischer Fragen (*Przemysław Kantyka*) und am Beispiel der Rolle der Geschlechter (*Simone*

<sup>1</sup> Der Vortrag aus katholischer Sicht stand bedauerlicherweise für die Publikation nicht zur Verfügung.



Sinn) in den Kirchen. Schlaglichter auf die Auswirkungen von gegenseitiger Anerkennung oder auch Nicht-Anerkennung von Kirchen auf der Ortsebene werfen Gabriel Monet, Pekka Metso und Dagmar Stoltmann-Lukas. Zum Schluss zeigen Ivana Noble und Heikki Huttunen Perspektiven für die Zukunft auf, sowohl aus kirchlicher wie auch aus gesellschaftlicher Sicht.

Den Abschluss bilden siebzehn Kurzvorträge von (meist) jungen Wissenschaftler/innen, die Themen und Projekte aus ihrem Forschungsbereich im Zusammenhang mit dem Konferenzthema vorstellen. Für diese Veröffentlichung wurden sie folgendermaßen inhaltlich gruppiert: Zwei dieser Vorträge behandeln spezifische Grundsatzfragen des Konzeptes der Anerkennung: Kateřina Bauerová möchte mit Hilfe des französischen Sprachphänomenologen Gaston Bachelard und des Sakramentaltheologen Louis-Marie Chauvet den Dualismus von »drinnen« und »draußen« im Zusammenhang des Prozesses der Anerkennung des/der anderen überwinden. Pascale Jung konzentriert sich auf das »als« der Anerkennung und fordert ein weitergehendes Verständnis der mit dem Begriff der Anerkennung verbundenen prädikativen Festlegung, nämlich eine Anerkennung des anderen in seiner Andersheit. Drei weitere Präsentationen beschäftigen sich mit ökumenischen Dokumenten und Konzepten im Hinblick auf Rezeption und Anerkennung: Miika Ahola nimmt das jüngste Dokument der Kommission für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung »Die Kirche: Auf dem Weg zu einer gemeinsamen Vision« unter die Lupe, während Péter Szentpétery das lutherisch-katholische Dialogdokument »Vom Konflikt zur Gemeinschaft« untersucht. Viorel Coman bringt das im katholischen Bereich entwickelte Konzept des »Receptive Ecumenism« in Beziehung zur orthodoxen Auffassung von »Open Sobornicity«. Mehrere Artikel heben verschiedene kontextuelle und konfessionelle Perspektiven hervor: Aus afrikanischer Perspektive beleuchtet der in Botswana lehrende malawische Theologe, James N. Amanze, die ökumenische Bedeutung von Anerkennung und Rezeption. Mehrere Vorträge untersuchen die Problematik der Anerkennung anderer Kirchen im Bereich der Orthodoxie: Petre Maican zeigt auf dem Hintergrund des rumänischen Theologen Dumitru Stăniloae, dass Anti-Ökumenismus im Widerspruch zur orthodoxen Theologie steht. Cristian Sonea nimmt das Ökumene-Dokument des Panorthodoxen Konzils von Kreta (2016) im Hinblick auf das Konferenzthema unter die Lupe

und streicht heraus, dass die Anerkennung der nicht-Orthodoxen Kirchen in Kreta noch nicht geklärt wurde. *Robert Svatoň* beleuchtet die jüngere Geschichte der Kirchen in der ehemaligen Tschechoslowakei und deutet darauf hin, dass die Rezeption der östlichen (byzantinischen) Tradition in diesem Kontext hilfreich sein könnte für ökumenisches Brückenbauen. Der katholische Theologe *Mihály Kránitz* zeigt eine Annäherung in der Bedeutung von Tradition im protestantischen und katholischen Denken. Auch ethische Fragen im Zusammenhang mit dem Konferenzthema wurden in verschiedenen Vorträgen aufgenommen: *Elina Hellqvist* fokussiert auf das Thema der gegenseitigen Anerkennung anhand der ökumenisch brennenden Frage des Umgangs mit Homosexualität auf und stellt die Frage, ob ökumenische Gemeinschaft trotz unterschiedlicher Auffassungen möglich ist. *Mihai Iordache* diskutiert Rezeption und Anerkennung im Hinblick auf ethische Werte und bezieht beides auf verschiedene Aspekte der Bekehrung. *Tim Noble* beginnt mit der Nicht-Aufnahme (Rezeption) von Migrant\*innen in der Tschechischen Republik und arbeitet anhand der Evangelien von Matthäus und Lukas heraus, dass Anerkennung und Rezeption grundlegend zum Verständnis von Frieden (Shalom) dazugehören. Auch *Annegreth Schilling* nimmt die Migrationsfrage auf und fordert, dass zukünftige ökumenische Theologie die Perspektive der Migration mit berücksichtigen sollte *Panu Pihkala* präsentiert die päpstliche Enzyklika »Laudato Si« aus der Sicht eines Ökotheologen.

Am Ende stehen zwei Artikel, die sich mit Beiträgen individueller Theologen zur ökumenischen Diskussion befassen: *Hector Scerri* untersucht den Beitrag des französischen Patristikers Adalbert Hamman als ökumenischer Brückenbauer, und *Michael Fletcher* macht auf die Relevanz der Kreuzestheologie Dietrich Bonhoffers für ökumenische Rezeption und gegenseitige Anerkennung aufmerksam.

Die Konsultation wäre nicht möglich gewesen ohne den Konferenzort und ohne die Hilfe der Organisatoren vor Ort. Wir danken für die großzügige Gastfreundschaft von Metropolit Ambrosius und den Mitarbeitern des Kulturzentrums Sofia, das reichlich Gelegenheit bot für akademischen und geistlichen Austausch wie auch für Erholung in der Umgebung. Während der Exkursion nach Tallinn wurden die Teilnehmer/innen empfangen von Ingmar Kurg, der die estnische ökumenische Landschaft

vor Augen führte. Wir möchten auch Metropolit Stefanus (Orthodoxe Kirche von Estland), der methodistischen Kirche in Estland, dem Pirita Konvent und der Kaarli Kirche herzlichen Dank sagen. Am Konferenzsonntag besuchten die Teilnehmenden die orthodoxe Gemeinde der St. Heinrich-Kathedrale und die Lutherische Kathedrale. Im Anschluss begrüßte Bischöfin Irja Askola (Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Finnlands) die Societas Oecumenica in der Lutherischen Kathedrale. Für die praktische Organisation vor Ort möchten wir Elina Hellqvist und Panu Pihkala wie auch einer Gruppe von Doktoranden danken, die während der Konsultation hilfreich zur Seite standen. Risto Saarinen von der Universität Helsinki hat die Konferenz aus seinem Forschungsfond großzügig unterstützt, und die katholische Hilfsorganisation Renovabis machte vor allem für orthodoxe Freunde die Teilnahme möglich. Für die Korrektur einiger Texte von Autoren, die Englisch nicht als Muttersprache haben, danken wir Grant White. Dank geht auch an Chigemezi N. Wogu, der für das Layouten zuständig war. Und schließlich danken wir auch wieder der Evangelischen Verlagsanstalt Leipzig für die Aufnahme des Bandes in die Reihe »Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau«.

Bossey/Helsinki, im August 2017  
Dagmar Heller und Minna Hietamäki

## Foreword

»Just Do It?!« – this was the somehow provocative theme of the nineteenth academic consultation of *Societas Oecumenica* (the European Society for Ecumenical Research), which took place in Helsinki, Finland 25–30 August 2016. The question mark points to the incomprehension of many, who cannot understand why the churches are not able to simply mutually recognize one another's baptism and ministries, and thus also share the Eucharist together. The exclamation point at the same time points to the impatience with which believers call for the common celebration of the Holy Supper.

Correspondingly, in the academic theological discourse and in the official ecumenical dialogues – whether bilateral or multi-lateral – one of the recurring points is the basic question of mutual recognition, usually the question of mutual recognition of baptism or of ministries. Ultimately, the issue is the mutual recognition of the churches, which means mutual recognition *as* expression or form of the One Church of Jesus Christ.

In this context, a second term – »reception« – appears in the discussions. »Reception« means acceptance, admittance, or adoption. In the ecumenical movement the term is normally used in relation to the reception of commonly drafted texts, which are meant to lead to mutual recognition. But in the end there is more at stake: reception does not only mean official acceptance in the sense of agreeing with a text or the juridical adoption of a text, but it also means the appropriation of its contents. The point is to make the text one's own, to implement it, and to draw conse-

quences from it. Thus, before any mutual recognition as churches, the reception of commonly-formulated insights is necessary.

But »reception« does not only refer to texts and agreements. Reception, mutual acceptance, and admittance has also a human and a spiritual aspect. »Receive ye one another as Christ also received us, to the glory of God« (Rom 15:7), says the apostle Paul. Some translations use the verb »accept« or »welcome« instead of »receive«. The point here is that »reception« means both: if someone receives a person, he/she accepts or welcomes the other – into his/her own home or into his/her circle of friends. And this includes also recognition: if someone receives another person, he/she recognizes the other as someone who is worthy to be admitted. Recognition and reception thus are mutually dependent, in the personal sphere as well as in the institutional realm of the churches.

Such basic reflections were at the centre of the above mentioned consultation, which is documented in this volume. In her opening lecture, *Dagmar Heller*, the president of Societas Oecumenica, reflects in a general way on these terms and opens the way for further discussion. These basic ideas are then illuminated from the perspective of different confessional viewpoints (papers of *Ștefăniță Barbu*/Orthodox; *Beate Bengard*, Lutheran; *Jelle Creemers*/Free Church).<sup>1</sup> These reflections are informed through a philosophical approach by the French philosopher *Marcel Hénaff*, who is teaching in California. *Veronika Hoffmann* (Roman Catholic) and *Risto Saarinen* (Lutheran) present the theological criteria for mutual recognition or non-recognition in the different churches, to which Baptist theologian *Uwe Swarat* offers a critical response. New differences on the basis of newly-formed questions seem to aggravate the process of mutual recognition of the churches. This is explored more in detail with the example of moral-ethical questions (*Przemysław Kantyka*) and the example of the role of the men and women in the churches (*Simone Sinn*). *Gabriel Monet*, *Pekka Metso*, and *Dagmar Stoltmann-Lukas* highlight the impact of mutual recognition or non-recognition of churches on the local level. To conclude,

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the Roman Catholic perspective was not available for publication.

*Ivana Noble* and *Heikki Huttunen* show perspectives for the future from an ecclesial as well as from a societal perspective. The second part contains seventeen so-called »short papers« by (mostly) young researchers, who present themes and projects from their field of research in the context of the conference theme. For the publication they have been grouped in the following way:

Two of these papers deal with specific *basic questions of recognition*: *Kateřina Bauerov* wants – building on the ideas of the phenomenologist of language, Gaston Bachelard, and of the sacramental theologian, Louis-Marie Chauvet – to overcome the dualism of »inside« and »outside« in the process of recognizing the other. *Pascale Jung* concentrates on the »as« of recognition and argues for a wider understanding of the predicative determination connected with the term recognition, i.e. the recognition of the other in his/her otherness.

Three further presentations deal with *ecumenical documents and concepts* in relation to reception and recognition. *Miika Ahola* examines the latest document from the Commission on Faith and Order on »The Church: Towards a Common Vision«, while *Peter Szentpetery* studies the document »From Conflict to Communion« from the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. *Viorel Coman* relates the concept of »receptive ecumenism«, developed in the Roman Catholic realm, to the Orthodox understanding of »Open Sobornicity«.

Some papers highlight different *confessional and cultural perspectives*: *James N. Amanze*, a Malawian theologian teaching in Botswana, demonstrates the ecumenical importance of recognition and reception from an African perspective. Several papers examine the difficulty of recognition of other churches in Orthodoxy: *Petre Maican* shows, with the help of the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae, that anti-ecumenism is contradictory to Orthodox theology. *Cristian Sonea* examines the document on ecumenism produced by the Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete (2016) in light of the conference theme and underlines that the Council has not yet solved the question of recognition of non-Orthodox churches. *Robert Svatoř* sheds light on the history of the churches in former Czechoslovakia and shows that the reception of the Eastern (Byzantine) tradition could be helpful for bridge-building between the churches in this context. *Mihaly*

*Kránitz* shows that there has been rapprochement in the understanding of »tradition« in Protestant and Catholic thinking.

Also the field of *ethics* in relation to the conference theme was taken up by different papers: *Elina Hellqvist* focuses on the theme of mutual recognition in view of the ecumenically-burning issue of homosexuality. She asks whether ecumenical communion could be possible despite different viewpoints. *Mihai Iordache* discusses reception and recognition in regard to moral values and relates them to different aspects of conversion. *Tim Noble* starts with the non-reception of migrants in the Czech Republic and carves out from the gospels according to Matthew and Luke that recognition and reception belong fundamentally to the understanding of peace (*shalom*). Also, *Annegreth Schilling* takes up the issue of migration and claims that future ecumenical theology should include the perspective of migration. *Panu Pihkala* presents the papal encyclical »*Laudato Si*« from the viewpoint of ecotheology.

At the end are two papers which deal with the *contributions of individual theologians* to the ecumenical discussion: *Hector Scerri* examines the contribution of the French patristic scholar Adalbert Hamann as ecumenical bridge-builder, and *Michael Fletcher* draws attention to the relevance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology of the cross for ecumenical reception and recognition.

This consultation would not have been what it was without the venue and the help of the local organisers. We are grateful for the generous hospitality of Metropolitan Ambrosius and the staff of the Sofia Cultural Centre, which offered ample opportunities for academic and spiritual exchange as well as recreation in the surrounding area.

During the excursion to Tallinn the participants were received by Ingmar Kurg, with whom they acquainted themselves with the diverse Estonian ecumenical landscape. We would like to offer our special thanks to Metropolitan Stefanus (Orthodox Church of Estonia), The Methodist Church in Estonia, the Pirita Convent, and the Kaarli Church.

For the Sunday services participants were hosted by the Orthodox St. Henry's Cathedral parish and the Lutheran Cathedral parish. Afterwards Bishop Irja Askola (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) welcomed *Societas Oecumenica* at the Lutheran Cathedral.

For the local organization of practical matters for the consultation we would like to thank Elina Hellqvist and Panu Pihkala as well as a number of PhD students who assisted throughout the consultation.

Risto Saarinen from the University of Helsinki provided generous financial subsidy from his research funds, and the Catholic aid agency Renovabis helped especially with the participation of Orthodox scholars.

For the completion of the manuscript of this publication we thank Grant White for the correction of some English texts, the authors of which have a different mother tongue. Thanks also to Chigemezi N. Wogu, who was responsible for the layout. Finally, we thank again the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Leipzig for including this publication in the »Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau« series.

Bossey/Helsinki, August 2017  
Dagmar Heller und Minna Hietamäki



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ERÖFFNUNGSVORTRAG

**OPENING LECTURE**



# Receive What You Recognize – Recognize What You Receive

*Reception and Recognition:  
Two Key Terms in the Ecumenical Discourse*

*Dagmar Heller*

For its 19<sup>th</sup> academic consultation the *Societas Oecumenica* chose to deal with »Recognition and Reception,« as key terms in ecumenical engagement. This opening paper will present some reflections, which are meant to open the horizon for what the following papers are going to discuss.

Both terms – »recognition« and »reception« – have to a certain extent their own lives within the ecumenical movement. Both have been used substantially in ecumenical theological texts. »Recognition« appears as a crucial issue already at the first World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne in 1927, but if we study more of the ecumenical documents, it appears that »reception« is clearly the one that has first been explored in a systematic way. This is at a first glance visible in the fact that we find in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* – in the edition of 1991 already<sup>1</sup> – an article on »reception«, but nothing on »recognition«. And this remains the case even in the second edition of the same *Dictionary* of 2002. (There is no further edition existing until

<sup>1</sup> Anton Houtepen, »Reception,« in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 844–845. Reprinted in Nicholas Lossky et al., eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 959–960.

now, but I guess that a future edition would include an article on »recognition«.)

In the wider ecumenical literature one can find books, chapters in books or articles<sup>2</sup> on both terms, and often the authors state a close connection between the two.<sup>3</sup> But in what one can draw from these reflections and findings there are different ways in relating »recognition« and »reception« to each other. Harding Meyer, for example, highlights the difference between »reception« and »recognition«. Gerard Kelly understands »recognition« as a step in a process that leads to canonical »reception«.«<sup>4</sup> I will come back to this later.

I am interested here to get a clearer picture in which way the two notions are related to each other and whether the awareness of this relationship may show a way forward in ecumenical discourse. Therefore, I will first give a rough overview on how the two terms have been discussed in the ecumenical movement. In a second step I will reflect on the terms as such, their etymology and their use in daily language, in order to draw from there some ideas on the relationship between them and the consequences for the ecumenical discourse.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example William G. Rusch, *Reception: An Ecumenical Opportunity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press in cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation, 1988); John Zizioulas, »The Theological Problem of Reception,« *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 26 (1984): 4–6; Emmanuel Sullivan, »Reception – Factor and Moment in Ecumenism,« *Ecumenical Trends* 15 (1986): 105–110; Gillian R. Evans, »Ecumenical Reception,« in *Method in Ecumenical Theology: The Lessons so Far* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182–218; Harding Meyer, »»Anerkennung« – ein ökumenischer Schlüsselbegriff,« in *Dialog und Anerkennung*, ed. Peter Manns (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1980), 25–41; reprinted in: Harding Meyer, ed., *Versöhnte Verschiedenheit: Aufsätze zur ökumenischen Theologie I* (Frankfurt/Paderborn: Lembeck/Bonifatius, 1998), 120–136; Gerard Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); Minna Hietamäki, »»Ecumenical Recognition« in the Faith and Order Movement,« *Open Theology* (June 2015): 204–219.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Meyer, who separates both terms categorically, and Kelly, who seems to understand them almost as synonyms. See also Minna Hietamäki, »Recognition and Ecumenical Recognition – Distinguishing the Idea of Recognition in Modern Ecumenism,« *NZStH* 56, no. 4 (2014): 454–472, 455.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, *Recognition*, 218.



## 1 »Reception« and »Recognition« in the Ecumenical Discussion

In contrary to the theme of our conference I will begin my overview on the ecumenical discussion with the term »reception«, because this term has been developed as a concept earlier – as I mentioned already.

### *Reception*

As several scholars observe »reception« became a »key-term«<sup>5</sup> in the ecumenical movement during the 1960s. This is related to the reflection on the reception of councils and synods which started especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the context of the discussions around the Second Vatican Council<sup>6</sup>. The interest in »reception« became then also important in the wider ecumenical discussion with the publication of the convergence document of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on »Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry« in 1982 and with the increasing number of bilateral theological dialogues, which raised the question, in which way such dialogue could have an effect on the relationship between the churches. Or in other words: How could the results of multilateral and bilateral dialogues be owned by the churches and lead to change in their relations?

I will focus here on the discussion within the World Council of Churches and specifically the Commission on Faith & Order. Under the influence of the discussions related to the event of Vatican II the Commission initiated during the late 1960s studies on »Councils and the Ecumenical Movement« which explored »the importance of the Conciliar Process in the Ancient Church for the Ecumenical Movement«. »Reception« in this study is defined as »the process by which the local churches *accept* the decision of a council and thereby *recognize* its authority«<sup>7</sup>. According to the findings of these studies in the early church »reception seems to have been much more an act of constitutional obedience. The reception of the dogmatic decisions of extraordinary imperial synods almost always took place in a process of critical

<sup>5</sup> Houtepen, »Reception,« 959. Thomas Ryan used the expression »holy word,« see Thomas Ryan, »Reception: Unpacking the New Holy Word,« *Ecumenism* 82 (1983): 27–34.

<sup>6</sup> Houtepen, 959.

<sup>7</sup> *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement*, World Council of Churches Studies 3 (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 15 (emphasis by DH).

appropriation which could last for centuries.«<sup>8</sup> Reception is understood here »at its core as a spiritual process, even where it seems to be an act of constitutional obedience«<sup>9</sup>, because it is presupposed that it is the Holy Spirit who leads a council or synod and the church as a whole. Therefore the late Anton Houtepen (one of my predecessors as president of Societas Oecumenica, in good memory) made clear, that »the reception of conciliar decisions by the local churches was more than a process of legitimation alone.«<sup>10</sup> »Reception« is therefore an open process<sup>11</sup> insofar as council decisions need to be again and again critically re-appropriated. On this ground the respective study group in its report to the Faith & Order Commission at its meeting in Leuven (Belgium) in 1971 stated that »in the ecumenical movement the churches find themselves in a process of continuing reception or re-reception of the councils.«<sup>12</sup>

These studies had been conducted – as the title already indicates – not only with a historical interest, but in light of the upcoming discussion on reception in the ecumenical movement. But the Faith & Order Commission realized clearly that »in many respects we are in a quite different situation today«<sup>13</sup> compared with the early church. The difference between the situation of the early church and the situation of the churches in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that the »conciliar process in the ancient Church took place in a still unbroken fellowship ... Today ... the point of departure is one of plural ecclesiastical communities in confrontation with one another.«<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless the process of receiving the decisions of the early councils is continuing, but nowadays in separate and therefore different ways in the different churches.

Two points I would like to highlight from these studies:

1. »Reception« of the councils is »*recognition*« of the authority of the councils.
2. »Reception« of the councils *today* is happening in a different context compared to the early church.

This raised for the F&O Commission the question of authority, or more specifically the question »How does the church teach authorita-

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Houtepen, 959.

<sup>11</sup> *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> »Interpreting the Sources of Our Faith,« *Faith and Order Louvain, 1971, Study Reports and Documents*, Faith & Order Paper 59 (Geneva: WCC, 1971), 29.

<sup>13</sup> *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 17, 18.

tively today?» which became the title of a study paper published in 1979. In this context it became clear that reception is an important aspect of the authority of the churches' teaching. »Reception« was defined as »a profound appropriation, through a gradual testing, by which teaching is digested into the life and liturgy of the community.«<sup>15</sup>

With the publication of the convergence document »Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry« in 1982 the reflection on »reception« is widened beyond the reception of the sources of the early church and of specific teaching documents of the different churches to the reception of ecumenical documents.<sup>16</sup> The observation of a »growing discrepancy between the far-reaching agreement ... in the various dialogues and the everyday situation in the churches«<sup>17</sup> leads to the claim, that »it is important to understand its (=reception) multidimensional function in the Body of Christ.«<sup>18</sup>

John Zizioulas introduced here the distinction between »classical« reception« and »ecumenical reception«.<sup>19</sup> The first one is the process of reception as it was happening and understood before the modern ecumenical movement and is related to councils in the early church or in a specific church (e.g. the Roman Catholic Church) and their decisions. »Ecumenical reception« is different in the sense that it is not a process happening in one united church, »instead there are separated churches that are called to receive from one another.«<sup>20</sup> William G. Rusch develops this further and defines »reception« in a preliminary way as »to include all phases and aspects of an ongoing process by which a church under the guidance of God's Spirit makes the results of a bilateral or multilateral conversation a part of its faith and life because the results are seen to be in conformity with the teachings of Christ and of the apostolic community, that is, the gospel as witnessed to in Scripture.«<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?*, Faith & Order Paper 91 (Geneva: WCC, 1979), 88.

<sup>16</sup> Faith & Order Paper 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982). The authors of the document call the churches for official responses and call this explicitly a »process of reception« (preface, xiv).

<sup>17</sup> Lukas Vischer, »The Process of ›Reception‹ in the Ecumenical Movement,« *Midstream* 23 (1984): 221–233.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Sullivan, »Reception: Factor and Moment in Ecumenism,« *Ecumenical Trends* 15 (1986): 105–110, 107.

<sup>19</sup> Zizioulas, »The Theological Problem of Reception,« 4–6.

<sup>20</sup> Rusch, *Reception: An Ecumenical Opportunity*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

As far as the concept of »reception« is concerned, Rusch understands that »reception« is »more than a mere acceptance of texts«<sup>22</sup> and was – even in the past – »never a merely juridical process.«<sup>23</sup> He points to the fact that reception is embedded in the wider process of receiving and re-receiving the gospel from Jesus Christ and therefore an »ongoing dimension of the Christian faith.«<sup>24</sup> Reception – for Rusch, and he means ecumenical reception – is crucial for ecumenism because it goes beyond establishing good relationships between the churches but »will confront all the churches with new problems,«<sup>25</sup> »will force all churches to rethink the active role of the people of God.«<sup>26</sup> Reception »calls for change and renewal by the churches.«<sup>27</sup> In other words, receiving something from the others means a certain change. But reception includes also non-reception in the sense that the churches have to reconsider or to reject »those portions of their faith and life that obscure or distort the gospel as it has been understood and proclaimed through the centuries«<sup>28</sup> and they have to remove »beliefs and practices that, although the gospel is not at stake, hinder the visible unity of the church.« The latter is called »dereception«.

In his second publication on the issue in 2007 Rusch develops these findings<sup>29</sup> and systematizes them.<sup>30</sup> He especially clarifies the specificity of »ecumenical reception« and highlights that in the modern ecumenical movement »for the first time, churches are being asked to receive materials they did not directly produce.«<sup>31</sup>

An additional aspect of »reception« in the context of the ecumenical movement was raised by Linda L. Gaither,<sup>32</sup> who tried to draw from the theory of literary reception and thus reminds of the fact that the reception in the ecumenical contexts is technically not different from the reception of literary texts as such. Thus the rules of interpreting texts

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>29</sup> Most of the quotations above can also be found in this second book.

<sup>30</sup> William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>32</sup> Linda L. Gaither, *To Receive a Text: Literary Reception Theory as a Key to Ecumenical Reception* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), ix.

and the relationship between text and reader are true for ecumenical texts as for all other texts.

But as the survey of the discussion made clear, »reception« in a theological sense is not limited to the reception of texts and decisions, but describes a whole process that goes on in the churches and has to be understood in the context of receiving the Gospel. Ecumenical reception thus has two aspects: the reception of ecumenical texts on the one hand and the reception of ideas, prayers, liturgical texts, etc. of other churches in one's own. An example is the discussion that was going on in the 1970s, whether the Roman Catholic Church could »receive« the *Confessio Augustana*.<sup>33</sup>

In summary I would draw from this brief overview: »reception« as a concept in the ecumenical discourse has two dimensions: (a) it is related to receiving texts, beliefs or practices from the other; in short we can say: receiving the other, and (b) it is related to receiving common texts and agreements. Therefore »reception« is related to the interpretation of texts, but at the same time it is establishing a relationship of accepting and welcoming the other. Similarly to classical reception it is an open process of appropriation of texts or practices and requires openness to change. In addition to classical reception »ecumenical reception« is based on mutual exchange.

### *Recognition*

Already in the first World Conference on Faith and Order it was realized, that unity requires »recognition«: »...complete unity will require the full *recognition* of one another by members of all communions.«<sup>34</sup> In

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> E. S. Woods, *Lausanne 1927: An Interpretation of the World Faith and Order Conference* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1927), 146 (emphasis by DH). Note: This sentence does not appear in the official proceedings of the World Conference, because the report of the section on unity was »received by the full Conference ... for transmission to the Continuation Committee.« The above quoted sentence appears only in a »Draft for Revised Report of Subject VII. The Unity of Christendom in Relation to Existing Churches,« which was later presented to the Continuation Committee. As Hermann Sasse reports in his German official report, this text was edited by the Business Committee in December 1927 and presented to the churches for discussion; see Hermann Sasse, *Die Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung: Deutscher Amtlicher Bericht über die Weltkirchenkonferenz zu Lausanne* (Berlin: Furche, 1929), 543. It reads thus: »die vollständige Einheit setzt eine Umwandlung der Kirchen in

the Second World Conference on Faith & Order in Edinburgh in 1937 the term appears again: Intercommunion is described as »the fullest expression of a mutual *recognition* between two or more Churches. Such recognition is also manifested in the exchange of membership and ministrations.«<sup>35</sup> And it is also clear, that such mutual recognition means to recognize »that all concerned are true Churches, or true branches of the one Church.«<sup>36</sup>

Also in the early discussions on the purpose of the World Council of Churches, »recognition« is one of the key issues. The famous Toronto Statement talks about two sorts of »recognition«: a) The conversation and cooperation of member churches within the WCC »must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body«<sup>37</sup>, b) »The member churches of the World Council of Churches recognize in other Churches elements of the true Church. They consider that this mutual recognition obliges them to enter into a serious conversation with each other in the hope that these elements of truth will lead to the recognition of the full truth and to unity based on the full truth.«<sup>38</sup> »Recognition« thus has two dimensions: the recognition of Christ as the head, and the mutual recognition of the true church in one another. The idea is understood as a process with different steps: the mutual recognition of elements of the true church in the others and the mutual recognition as church in the full sense.

This is explored in more detail at the third World Conference on Faith & Order in Lund in 1952, where the Commission describes the existing situation as »varying degrees of recognition«:

There is considerable variation in the degree of recognition accorded by one Christian body to another. Within the same confessional family it is customary to regard other regional and national Churches as Christian Churches in the full sense of the word. But full recognition in many instances is not extended outside the same confessional family. For example: (1) Some Churches do not usually extend to others outside their tradition the right of participation in their sacramental life. (2) When a member of

dem Sinne voraus, dass die Glieder aller Kirchengemeinschaften in einem Verhältnis voller gegenseitiger Anerkennung stehen.«

<sup>35</sup> See the Final Report, in Lukas Vischer, ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith & Order Movement 1927–1963* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 40–84, 62 (par. 117).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., par. 118.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 174.