Performing the Same Score: Repentance, Truth and Doctrine in Ecumenical Theology

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Abstract

This article develops the fruitful metaphor of musical performance to think about church-dividing conflicts over doctrine. In particular, I show that just as there is more than one way for a score of music to be faithfully performed, so there can be more than one way for shared fundamental dogma to be faithfully articulated in different confessional or doctrinal traditions. When the disagreements between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches over christological doctrine are reframed as contrasting but not contradictory "performances" of one shared scriptural and Nicene dogma, possibilities for ecumenical reconciliation are strenghthened. Indeed, while not articulating its practice by means of the metaphor of a musical performance, the Roman Catholic magisterium is already approaching doctrinal reconciliation in just this way.

I

Anyone doubting Pope Benedict XVI's commitment to ecumenism need only heed the following striking statement which he delivered only days into his papacy:

> Peter's current successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers. This is his ambition, his impelling duty. He is aware that good intentions do not suffice for this. Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential, inspiring in

everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress.[1]

Benedict knows that ecumenical reconciliation and the theological work leading to it requires *metanoia*, a repentant turning away from certain destructive ways in which the parties of divided Christendom have engaged one another in the past. In a similar vein, Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity under John Paul II and now under Benedict XVI, has written that that the Catholic Church is "a pilgrim Church . . . which must constantly take the way of penance and renewal"[2] and that this penitent form of the Church must bear itself out in the Church's ecumenical work. In other words, the Church must *penitently* engage in ecumenical theology and discussions. Further, a recent ecumenical working group in the United States has produced *In One Body Through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* in which theologians from Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and mainline and evangelical Protestant traditions highlight and reiterate the claim from the 1961 World Council of Churches meeting at New Delhi that "the achievement of unity will require nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them . . . nothing less costly can finally suffice".[3] What we need to note is that all three of these statements I have mentioned accent the need for repentance, conversion, and penance in ecumenical theology and relations among the factions of the divided Church. If the repentance, conversion, and penance that are necessary go to the heart of the Church, then perhaps we need to rethink issues of church doctrines in a penitent and reparative way as well.

But what would thinking about doctrine penitently look like? The option that has had the most currency in church history, of course, is that one side of a conflict has mandated that for ecclesial reconciliation to occur between itself and another body of Christians the other body must be willing to repent of the truth of certain of its doctrines, must admit their fallibility and no longer hold them as binding and true. As history has shown, however, such an ecumenical program has rarely been successful, for obvious reasons. In this light Cardinal

[1] Benedict XVI, "First Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI at the End of the Eucharistic Concelebration With the Members of the College of Cardinals" available at *http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/pont-messages/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20050420_missa-pro-ecclesia_en.html*.

[2] Walter Cardinal Kasper, "Current Problems in Ecumenical Theology" available at *http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20030227_ecumenical-theology_en.html*.

[3] Quoted in *In One Body Through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 22.

Kasper has noted that "the aim of ecumenical work is the full communion and the fullness of unity, which cannot be a unitary Church, but a unity in diversity. The way to it is therefore not the return of the others into the fold of the Catholic Church".[4] Yet if Christians cannot be called to repent of the truth of their doctrines, and if some aspects of their doctrines prove church-dividing and contradictory, how is ecumenical reconciliation into a full communion of many particular churches in one universal Church possible? In other words, how does a Church sustain its rigorous commitment to the truth of what the doctrines of its traditions claim – not, for example, merely redefining its doctrines as contingent symbols or metaphors of a vague transcendent mystery – and at the same time enter into full communion with other churches that sustain equally rigorous commitments to truth-claims divergent from its own. To put it bluntly, how does a tradition doctrinally repent so as to allow for richer possibilities of full communion with other churches without being required to repent of the truth of its doctrines?

The world of music offers a fruitful model of the ways in which unity and diversity can exist in a non-competitive way through its distinction between a score of music and the diversity of performances it can elicit. While some kinds of unity do not allow for any kinds of diversity, this kind of unity, the unity of a score, allows for a great deal of diversity, even for serious disagreements and incommensurabilities in performance that nevertheless do not threaten the truth of the score. This metaphor borrowed from the world of music in can help us to reflect upon how divided churches might reach "consensus" and "convergence" in doctrine that would allow ecclesial reconciliation into full communion while at the same time allowing diverse ecclesial traditions to retain their distinctive doctrinal emphases, traditions, and convictions. Just as different cellists can give incommensurable and widely divergent performances of the same movement of Bach's Cello Suites while nevertheless recognizing that both cellists are playing the same fundamental score of music, so different ecclesial bodies can hold to incommensurable and widely divergent understandings of the same scriptural or creedal claim while recognizing that other bodies with different and incommensurable understandings of the same scriptural or creedal claim are committed to the same claim but understanding it in a different way. What I mean will become clearer as we turn to a concrete example. For I will argue that some churches have already been embodying a practice in ecumenical dialogue and agreement that is reflective of the metaphor I am recommending – all I mean to do here is to raise a mode of practice already embraced

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[4] Kasper, "Current Problems in Ecumenical Theology". Kasper continues by saying that, of course, individual and collective conversions must be allowed on the basis of decisions of conscience in individual or collective ecclesial parties.

by some crucial ecumenical agreements of the last generation to the level of theological consciousness.

I will focus on two major bilateral achievements of ecumenical consensus in which the Roman Catholic Church has been a party. But I hope to provide a metaphorical model that all Christians can employ – not only Roman Catholics or those engaged in ecumenical dialogue with them. In doing so, I hope to provide a template with which the work of ecumenical theology can seek what Lutheran ecumenist George Lindbeck has called a "thematically unitive"[5] ecumenism. Lindbeck does not mean an ecumenism of identity without difference – a doctrinal agreement, for example, in which all parties would subscribe to one theological articulation of the particular doctrine under investigation. Such an agreement would require repentance *of* doctrine. Lindbeck rather recommends an ecumenism in which "there may be great variations . . . in doctrinal formulations" but also in which "the differences must be compatible or reconcilable".[6] To quote Cardinal Kasper again, "Churches do not have to agree point by point on all theological issues. If there is substantial agreement, differences are not necessarily church divisive. A differentiated agreement, a reconciled diversity . . . is sufficient."[7] Kasper goes even further to make a theological argument that this kind of diversity mirrors the trinitarian life of God! In such a differentiated agreement, Kasper says, "The Church is an image of the triune God who is oneness in diversity."[8] The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct ways in which the one God exists in his eternal life, with each person fully divine by essence but personally distinct from the others. The life of God is lived out in three subsistent ways: as love begetting, love begotten, and love shared. So also, Kasper avers, can the Church consist of different communities of Christians each of which embodies or performs the Christian faith and life in distinct but harmonious ways.

Yet it is exactly at this point that the call to "conversion" must be heeded. To commit for the sake of the unity of the Church to accept the kind of reconciled diversity that both Kasper and Lindbeck recommend, every ecclesial body of every creed and confession will have to practice ascetic renunciation of the belief that in all cases only its distinct doctrine can faithfully testify to the gospel in a way that will lead humans into genuine Christian faith, worship, and

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[5] George Lindbeck, "Ecumenical Theology" in *The Modern Theologians*, vol. 2, ed. David F. Ford (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1989), p. 257.

[6] Ibid., p. 257.

[7] Kasper, "Current Problems in Ecumenical Theology".

[8] Walter Cardinal Kasper, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: A Roman Catholic Perspective" in *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, ed. William G. Rusch (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 18.

discipleship. So we can see that what is needed is not repentance of the truth of fundamental doctrine but rather repentance of the exclusivity of a certain subsidiary doctrine held by an individual Church that is an articulation or "performance" of a more fundamental dogma. So, for example, Lutherans in the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* came to repent of the belief that *only* a Lutheran theology of justification can testify to and articulate truly God's gracious act of saving the ungodly, just as Catholics did the same with regard to the Catholic theology of justification. But how can a Christian Church of a particular confession or creed practice this kind of renunciation of the status of a doctrine as Church-dividing without also admitting that this doctrine is thereby false? We seem to need a theology of doctrine that will allow us in certain areas to transcend the simple choice between "true and false" and instead understand how it is possible to hold two different and perhaps incommensurable – but not fundamentally contradictory – doctrinal theologies as "true and true". Nor is such a theology of doctrine a soft capitulation to the postmodern aversion to hard truth-claims. For a situation in which two doctrines are "true and true" remains a situation both in which fierce debate can take place about which of these doctrinal positions is the most adequate and in which the positions that we call "true and true" are themselves set over against other options that are clearly false. We can begin to see how we can imagine competing and incommensurable doctrinal claims to be held as "true and true" rather than as "true and false" by considering the manner in which different musicians can perform the same score in different and even incommensurable – but not essentially contradictory – ways. But to let the metaphor arise out of ecumenical practice, rather than appearing to forcing a theory onto data that may not warrant it, let us look concretely at two ecumenical agreements of the last generation of Christendom.

II

Let us turn to look at how the Roman Catholic Church in the second half of the last century at its highest level quietly but profoundly reconfigured the specific character of the authority carried by one of its most central dogmatic claims: the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church has re-interpreted the status of claims that it once held to be infallible and incontrovertible in the original words in which they were conciliarly expressed and defined – the christological formula of Chalcedon. But now the Church has ceased to claim that the formulae of Chalcedon provides the sole possible language for describing the relationship between humanity and divinity in Jesus of Nazareth – the claim that has divided the Catholic Church from the Oriental Orthodox Churches

and the Church of the East, each of which refused to affirm the christological formulae of Chalcedon in 451. At present the Catholic Church instead claims that the formula of Chalcedon offer *a* true interpretation of the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ without also claiming that this interpretation in its precise words represents *the only* true way of speaking of the presence and relationship of humanity and divinity in the incarnation of God in Christ.[9]

The Catholic Church now recognizes and affirms Chalcedon as her own particular attempt at articulating the truth of a more fundamental, but simpler and less precisely defined, doctrinal claim grounded in scripture that it can share with those other Churches that do not share a commitment to the authority of the precise words of Chalcedon but which the Catholic Church recognizes as Christian. In other words, certain creedal convictions that the Catholic Church had in the past declared must be held by any and all Christians everywhere on pain of anathematization and excommunication[10] have seen their status as non-negotiable and hence church-dividing dogma subtly transformed into particular church doctrines that are non-church-dividing theological articulations of a more fundamental dogmatic claim that the Catholic Church can affirm in common with other ecclesial bodies presently out of communion with her. A particular doctrinal claim of the Catholic Church that formerly divided her from other churches does not have to be understood as divisive anymore, even as the Catholic Church retains her particular doctrinal claim as authoritative and true for herself as a particular church and her members. What is renounced is not the truth of fundamental dogma but rather the exclusivity that a particular subsidiary doctrine has claimed by considering its own precise words as the only possible articulation or definition of a more fundamental dogmatic truth. Let us now turn to consider two achievements of ecumenical consensus in christology to make more concrete what I am arguing.

In the *Joint Declaration of 1971* the (Chalcedonian) Roman Catholic Church represented at the highest level by Pope Paul VI and the (non-Chalcedonian, pejoratively labeled "Monophysite") Syrian

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[9] The Orthodox have effectively made the same declaration. In 1989 an official Joint Commission of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox declared the following: "As two families of Orthodox Churches long out of communion with each other, we now pray and trust in God to restore that communion on the basis of the apostolic faith of the undivided church of the first centuries which we confess in our common creed." Quoted in Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, New Edition (New York: Penguin, 1997), p. 313.

[10] See, for example, the list of anathemas found in the third letter from Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius included in the official documents of the Council of Ephesus. For a modern translation of this letter see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 1990), pp. 59b–61b.

Orthodox Church represented at the highest level by Patriarch Mor Ignatius Ya'qub III historically affirmed that "there is no difference in the faith [both Churches] profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed."[11] Chalcedonian churches, primarily guarding against a kind of Apollinarian tendency, have wanted to affirm that Jesus Christ existed as one person having and being two natures, human and divine. His humanity and divinity interpenetrate one another without mixture and without division in the one person of God the Son. The natures are held together in the closest possible intimacy without becoming confused into one another and creating a "third" nature. Non-Chalcedonian churches – in their non-Eutychian versions – were primarily guarding against Nestorian temptations, and have wanted to affirm that in the incarnation humanity and divinity came together to form a single new nature, divine and human, constituting the wholly unique mystery of the incarnation. Chalcedonians, working against Apollinarian tendencies, emphasized the enduring distinction of natures in order to safeguard salvation for the entire human being; non-Chalcedonians, working against Nestorian tendencies, emphasized the unification of natures in one new nature in order to remain aware of the radical novelty and uniqueness of the incarnation and unity of Christ's person.

In the agreement between Paul VI and Mor Ignatius Ya'qub III we see an agreement on the fundamental claim of Nicea-Constantinople:

> 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: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.[12]

We come to see Chalcedon subtly redefined as a theological commentary on Nicea-Constantinople, as a certain kind of performance (more on this term in a moment) of Nicaea-Constantinople, but not the only possible performance. The agreement between the Roman Catholics and the Syriac Orthodox implies that Nicaea-Constantinople's claim that "the only Son of God . . . true God from true God . . . of one Being with the Father . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man" can be interpreted by Christian Churches in more than one way and

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[11] This document is available at http://sor.cua.edu/Ecumenism/RC.html.
[12] This is the translation, for example, used by both the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and the *Book of Common Prayer*.

that these diverse ways of appropriating Nicaea-Constantinople need not be church-dividing.

In addition, we can speak of *The Common Christological Declaration* of 1994 between the (again, Chalcedonian) Roman Catholic Church represented by Pope John Paul II and the (non-Chalcedonian, pejoratively called "Nestorian") Assyrian Church of the East represented by Patriarch Mar Dinkha, which affirmed the following:

> This is the unique faith that we profess in the mystery of Christ. The controversies of the past led to anathemas, bearing on persons and on formulas. The Lord's Spirit permits us to understand better today that the divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstandings. Whatever our Christological divergences have been, we experience ourselves united today in the confession of the same faith in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace.[13]

Hence again we can see that at the highest levels consensus in a fundamental doctrine – in this case again the christological claims of Nicaea-Constantinople – does not require consensus in subsidiary doctrines that come to function as *theological articulations* of the truth of the more fundamental doctrine. Many diverse and perhaps irreconcilable theological articulations can exist of a doctrinal truth – e.g. that the Word became human so that humans could become divine – without thereby denying the fundamental doctrinal truth being diversely articulated. Two sets of doctrinal claims come to be redefined as subsidiary commentaries on a more fundamental and shared single doctrinal truth-claim.

Were there time and space, we could also consider the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation from 1999. But by briefly noting two signal agreements I hope to have shown the presence of a new kind of logic for understanding ostensibly church-dividing doctrine. Churches can agree to redefine certain doctrinal claims as subsidiary explications of more fundamental and shared doctrinal truth-claims. To note only the Roman Catholic Church's perspective, the precise theological affirmations of Chalcedon come to be seen as an explicative "interpretive performance" of Nicaea-Constantinople's claims about the incarnation. Without surrendering the belief that this interpretation is true, the Roman Catholic Church does surrender the belief that Chalcedon is the *only* true explicative "interpretive performance" of Nicaea-Constantinople's claims about the truth of the incarnation. We need to be clear that no one is endorsing an unrestricted doctrinal pluralism – Arianism, Modalism, Apollinarianism,

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[13] This document is available at: *http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/ chrstuni/*documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_11111994_assyrian-church_en.html.

Eutychean, and extreme Nestorian understandings of the incarnation are all ruled out of court as false by all parties. It is rather that within a fundamental unity of christological doctrine – that of Nicaea-Constantinople – diverse articulations of some of its claims are possible and are not church-dividing. In the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*[14] we also see this movement: Lutherans and Roman Catholics confess that both Augsburg and Trent are true explicative "interpretive performances" of St. Augustine's and St. Paul's theology of salvation of the sinner solely by God's gift of grace. Trent and Augsburg can remain incommensurable though not contradictory elucidations of the one anti-Pelagian theology of grace having its roots in the work of St. Augustine.[15]

III

By calling Chalcedon an explicative-interpretive performance of Nicaea-Constantinople I am drawing on a metaphor from the world of music. I would suggest that the best ecumenical theology will try to show how different doctrinal traditions pick up a single core theme of fundamental Christian dogma in the same way that different performers will take up the same score of music by a composer. Perhaps we were going to listen to two of the twentieth century's famous recordings of Bach's Cello Suites – one played by Jacquelyn du Pré and one played by Yo-Yo Ma. A sensitive listener will quickly come to two conclusions: the score that Ma and du Pré play is the same, but the performances are different. Indeed it is within the logic of concert music that distinct performances can vastly differ without being performances of different musical scores.

We might further say that Ma might display gifts in his performance to which du Pré cannot attain, while Ma might reveal limits in his performance that do not restrict du Pré. Indeed Ma's gifts and limits might even entail each other – because he can accomplish certain virtuoso feats on one of the six movements of the Cello Suites, he might find it difficult to do complete justice to one of the other movements.

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[14] Lutheran World Federation and The Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, English-Language Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000).

[15] Indeed it may be possible that we as of yet have no adequate resolution or explication of Augustine's (or, more fundamentally, St. Paul's) theology of grace – perhaps because Augustine's theology of grace is an inadequate explication of St. Paul's theology of grace? Perhaps we can say that for now Trent and Augsburg both remain necessary even as each remains problematic in light of the other. On many questions incommensurable doctrines – i.e. interpretations of scripture – may be all we have at present, if Barth's conception of dogma as eschatological in volume one of his *Church Dogmatics* has some measure of truth, as I believe it does.

And so with du Pré's performance. Conversely, we could imagine two seemingly flawless performances that nevertheless conveyed distinct and incommensurable affect and content. Indeed a critic who believed that his or her job was either to show that Ma and du Pré played the music in exactly the same way *or* to demand that they play the music in exactly the same way would not be much of a critic. A sensitive listener would rather try to discern that both Ma and du Pré have given virtuoso performances of the same score, a score the truth of which is capacious enough to give rise to very different and perhaps incommensurable, yet perhaps equally compelling, performances of the same piece of music. One might even say that for the full truth of the score of Bach's Cello Suites to be communicated there *must* be multiple performances, each of which will play the music with different styles, accents, affect, and judgments. We might say that the truth of the musical score is simply too large to be communicated in the performance of one cellist alone. Or, conversely, we might realize that a musical score has internal tensions that entail that no one performance can express certain meanings and emotions in a given piece of music without denying or risking denying other meanings and emotions in the same piece of music. Lastly, we might believe that du Pré's recording vastly outperforms Ma's without thereby having to say that Ma has not truly performed Bach's Cello Suites. On the other hand, if one went to a concert expecting to hear the music of Bach and a cellist began playing variations on Shönberg, one would justifiably feel wronged, no matter the virtues of Shönberg's music. In other words, it is not to make a judgment on whether it is better to listen to Bach than to listen to Shönberg; it is only to say that the music of Bach and the music of Shönberg are different in kind – whereas Bach played by Ma or Bach played by du Pré are different inflections of the same piece of music. The question is not about *what* music is being played – only about *how* one piece of music can be performed with variations in tempo, style, expressivity, and so on. Let us turn back to theological questions to see how this "musical" logic bears itself out.

IV

In the christological agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church, on the one hand, and the christological agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, on the other, we see a willingness on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to believe that the one doctrinal score of Nicaea-Constantinople can be played in at least three ways – first according to the logic of the Chalcedonian churches, second according to the logic of the Oriental Orthodox, and third according to the

logic of the Churches of the East – each of which is adequate and true. Rome does not by these agreements claim that the explicative-interpretive performance of Nicaea-Constantinople by the Syrian Orthodox and the Assyrian Church of the East are unproblematic. All Rome claims is that the non-Chalcedonian christological logics are valid – if not virtuoso – performances of the same Nicene logic that it believes Chalcedon to have explicatively-interpretively performed. Another way to put the matter is to say that the Roman Catholic Church has with these christological agreements acknowledged that there is more than one way for the Nicene logic to be explicatively-interpretively performed without denying that it must be Nicene logic that is so performed. If it became clear that a certain ecclesial body was performing an Arian logic, for example, no such christological agreements would be possible. Rome can claim that Chalcedon is the best interpretive-explicative performance of Nicaea-Constantinople – as the other Churches can claim that their non-Chalcedonian creeds are the best performances – without thereby denying that Chalcedon is the *only* valid performance. The world of music lends us a metaphor in which we can speak and argue about what reading of Nicaea-Constantinople is the most adequate without denying that other readings are in principle not only inadequate but false. We can speak of "false, true, and truer" instead of merely "false and true".

All sides to these agreements have confessed that while for centuries each had thought that the other was playing a different musical score, in fact each now sees that both ecclesial bodies were simply giving different performances, different interpretations, of the same fundamental doctrinal score. In other words, each party to the discussions has redefined what it formerly considered to be infallible dogma in the precise words in which it was formulated as now one (perhaps the best one) among several possibilities for explicative-interpretive performance that are valid. What was formerly named heresy is now seen as a possible articulation (however deficient) of a more fundamental dogmatic claim that both Churches hold. The substance of the doctrine is held in common, though it is always inflected by different performances. *What* the doctrine says is held in common – that in the miracle of the incarnation God became a man. *How* this claim is articulated or inflected is different – Chalcedon or the logics of the Churches of the East and the Oriental Orthodox.

This way of conceiving doctrine offers a fruitful metaphor and models for ecumenical consensus and convergence because it avoids several errors into which ecumenical theology can fall. First, a musical theology of doctrine insists that ecumenical consensus must be grounded in the unity of the truth of doctrine, especially the most ancient doctrine of the Church. Second, a musical theology of doctrine does not insist that ecclesial reconciliation is only possible when all differences between ecclesial and theological traditions are resolved

into unity. Unity of truth is sustained within diversity of interpretive-explicative performance. Third, a musical theology of doctrine continues to insist that while there may be more than one way for a doctrine to be understood – even authoritatively for a given Church body – there are also limits to performance and understanding and confession of true Christian doctrine. The Nicene logic allows for Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian performances – but not for Arian or Adoptionist ones, which would not be performances of Nicene music at all but different music entirely. Difference is possible within unity and unity does not have to be sacrificed for difference – difference and unity are both sustained in their appropriate and non-church dividing ways. Performances are not possible without scores, but neither are they the scores themselves. Just as we can engage in vigorous debate over the merits of two performances of Bach's Cello Suites without denying that the two performance of Bach are performances of the same music, so we can continue to engage in vigorous debate over whether a Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian explicative-interpretive performance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan claims about Jesus Christ is more faithful to scriptural and Nicene-Constantinopolitan logic without denying that each is a performance of the *that* logic and not some other. If we can find ourselves in a shared faith in the Nicene creed, and if we can see later creeds not as additions but as explicative-interpretive performances of the Nicene logic, then there is room for ecclesial reconciliation amidst ongoing and perhaps profound disagreement and argument over the relative virtues of later and subsidiary performances of an earlier and more fundamental creedal truth-claim.

In this essay, I have not recommended a new practice for ecumenical theology to embrace so much as I have sought to bring to light by means of a felicitous metaphor a logic of practice that several Churches – Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, and Assyrians of the East have been mentioned in this essay, but more could be mentioned – have already begun to embody in their ecumenical discussions and agreements. By having different ecclesial traditions ask themselves whether they are playing different scores, or are rather giving different, perhaps vastly different, performances of the same score, we can move closer to the unity we seek. If we do find that the latter instead of the former is the case, then we have moved a step closer to the unity of all Christians for which Christ prayed. Because we want to be true to Christ's prayer in John 17 and true to our best convictions that our distinct theological traditions have given us, the faithful work of ecumenical theology can go on without trying to eliminate theological differences between ecclesial traditions but rather taking every opportunity to discern possibilities for new discoveries that our different traditions have been, perhaps unbeknownst to ourselves and our theological and

ecclesial mothers and fathers, not playing different music after all, but simply playing the same score in quite different ways, with different accents – and perhaps different gifts, risks, and limits. I would suggest that nothing more is, or should be, required for ecclesial reconciliation in a Church Catholic that must sustain its commitment to unity in truth while never fearing the arguments and differences that can be internal to that very truth of being the Body of Christ that we are called to share. What is renounced in doctrinal repentance is not the truth of doctrine but the exclusivity in subsidiary doctrine of a certain explicative-interpretive performance of a more fundamental doctrine that is shared with those who agree on a score but not on how the score is to be performed. Just as there is more than one way to perform Bach's Cello Suites, so there is more than one way to "perform" Nicaea-Constantinople (among which is Chalcedon), just as there is more than one way to "perform" a Pauline-Augustinian anti-Pelagian theology of grace (Trent or Augsburg).[16] But we have to distinguish between scores and performances, fundamental creedal and scriptural claims and later subsidiary interpretations. If we do, we can sustain our commitment to truth and enter into deeper ecclesial reconciliation with one another while letting the arguments between parties continue. Scotists and Thomists have managed, after all, to stay in the same Roman Catholic Church for centuries despite major differences. Perhaps they can be a model for the rest of us.

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[16] Nicholas Lash initiated the trope of "performance" in theology in his essay "Performing the Scriptures" in his *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM, 1986), pp. 37–46. I use the trope, however, in a quite different way.