

Baptists? Is this possible, according to the rules? I suggest this in part not because it would make it easier for us to have communion, but because it would make our division at the table even more starkly obvious than proceeding toward the priest, blending in line with our Catholic sisters and brothers, but with arms crossed for a blessing instead of the bread and wine.<sup>76</sup> I look forward to any answers and alternative proposals that may emerge from the discussions and research that this theological roundtable might inspire.

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#### IV. Being Made a Patient People

I begin with thanks to Professor Freeman for a helpful article, and with the admission that I am torn by this topic. On the one hand, I have shared by direct experience and that of friends the same pain Freeman describes of being unable to commune at the Saturday evening mass at the CTS/NABPR convention. I remember Sandra Yocum's words of public lament in her 2014 CTS presidential address. Some of us may remember our convention at Spring Hill in 2005 when the celebrant at the Saturday mass that year, Fr. David Robinson, who grew up a New England Congregationalist, spoke with deep anguish of his deep desire to share communion with the Baptists, coupled with the inability to do so. We had sung Susan Toolan's "I Am the Bread of Life," hearing in our own voices Christ's promise of being raised up on the last day. And then we sensed how that day was not yet. But we should remember that the "last day" when we will unquestionably be one, if I may borrow words from the poet W. H. Auden, "is not in our

<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, in a subsequent conversation a Catholic member of the CTS shared with me an experience of a eucharistic service in which there were two altars from which two Eucharists were offered to worshipers, one Catholic and one Protestant, with the resulting implication that they represented options from which the worshipers might choose as if they were consumers in a marketplace—which is not an implication any of us involved in the CTS intercommunion conversation would want to convey with an alternative interim eucharistic practice.

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present, and not in our future, but in the fullness of time.”<sup>77</sup> So we ask now about the prospects of provisionally—proleptically—embodying that oneness this side of the eschaton.

Why, we rightly ask, might not this fullness be present in our midst provisionally now? What is the liturgy but the icon of the kingdom’s reality? As Aidan Kavanagh put it in his inimitable manner, Christian *orthodoxia* considers itself the world rendered normal.<sup>78</sup> Given our Lord’s desire expressed in the Fourth Gospel, our division is abnormal indeed. “The Church doing the world as God means it to be done in Christ,” Kavanagh further states, “is the greatest prophecy, the most powerful exorcism, of all.”<sup>79</sup> Kavanagh was not alone in this understanding. The Episcopal theologian Urban Holmes observed that liturgy regularly leads to the edge of chaos.<sup>80</sup> We are certainly pondering what some might consider to be an action that would be seen by many as chaotic.

Given all of that, I was surprised that the part of Freeman’s article to which I had the most negative response was his suggestion of possibly having a Baptist Lord’s Supper observance at the Friday evening joint service. There are, I believe, two related reasons, though I need to work through them more carefully. The first is that such a proposal does less to move us past the division than to mirror it, and perhaps in a worse way. Rather than inviting Baptists to share what Catholics believe is the full sacramental sharing with the Lord, it would ask Catholics to share in what is according to Catholic teaching a deficient, defective one. More, it is not so simple according to Catholic teaching. And that is my second reason. It is in eucharistic practice that we encounter aspects of the incoherence within Baptist thought and practice, and that is something we also must consider. In the rules Freeman has sketched for Catholic sharing of communion with separated sisters and brothers, one is a eucharistic faith in harmony with the Catholic Church. We might think of this as the lusory attitude identified by McClendon as one of two things essential to a practice.<sup>81</sup> Bracketing the repeated admonition against Catholics receiving communion in other churches, one would expect that same harmony to be a basic requirement if Catholic reception of communion in a non-Catholic church were

<sup>77</sup> W. H. Auden, “For the Time Being,” in *Collected Longer Poems* (New York: Random House, 1969), 163.

<sup>78</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 159.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>80</sup> Urban T. Holmes, “Theology and Religious Renewal,” *Anglican Theological Review* 62, no. 1 (1980): 19, cited in Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 73.

<sup>81</sup> McClendon, *Ethics*, 164. The other is the constitutive rules that Freeman has examined in some detail.

imaginable. Otherwise, there would be the risk of a distorted and distorting practice, as I noted above.<sup>82</sup> Precisely here we encounter manifold problems in dealing with that issue.

How do we determine a Baptist eucharistic faith with which to be in harmony? Do we gauge it by a kind of *sensus fidelium* among Baptists?<sup>83</sup> Most Baptists hold to what Freeman has described as a “sub-Zwinglian” view.<sup>84</sup> Given the practice of the rite among some Baptists, we might well borrow acerbic words from Kavanagh, “Something appears to have been enthusiastically trivialized.”<sup>85</sup> Granted, if one of the Baptists who comes to this meeting were to preside at the Lord’s Table, the eucharistic theology might well be compatible enough to permit Catholic agreement, as Freeman alludes. But as a Presbyterian seminary president once remarked to Steve Harmon, Mark Medley, and me, we are what Carlyle Marney called “Baptists who have been messed with.” While we hope through our work to affect Baptist thought more broadly, we do not represent the mainstream in its current form. And does not gauging things by the theology of the one presiding at the table seem perhaps a little closer to a variety of Donatism (albeit doctrinal rather than moral) than we would want? And then there are the ecclesiological and liturgical considerations. Indeed, given Freeman’s comment about the shape of “paradosis-anamnesis-

<sup>82</sup> See James Wm. McClendon Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 28–29.

<sup>83</sup> This is not a fanciful suggestion. Historian E. Glenn Hinson notes a well-publicized comment by fundamentalist leader Adrian Rogers during the controversy that split the Southern Baptist Convention beginning in the late 1970s. Claiming that professors should teach what most Baptists believe, he told the Executive Committee of the SBC, “If a majority of Southern Baptists decides that pickles have souls, then professors in the seminaries will have to believe and teach that pickles have souls.” See “Religion in America: Southern Baptist Warns of Fundamentalism’s Impact on Church Unity,” <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1987/04/10/Religion-in-America-Southern-Baptist-warns-of-fundamentalisms-impact-on-church-unity/7313545025600/>. The example given was an instance of hyperbole typical of many Baptist preachers. The method for determining what should be taught in Baptist schools was the serious point.

<sup>84</sup> “It is not an overstatement to say that a ‘sub-Zwinglian’ theology of the Lord’s Supper has become entrenched as a *de facto* orthodoxy among Free Churches.” Curtis W. Freeman, “‘To Feed Upon by Faith’: Nourishment from the Lord’s Table,” in *Baptist Sacramentalism*, ed. Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 5 (Carlisle, UK: Pickwick Publications, 2003), 206.

<sup>85</sup> Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 47. In 2011, the Young Scholars in the Baptist Academy met in Prague at the International Baptist Seminary. A Catholic friend of mine from Italy and her family came up for it and she attended a Baptist communion service held by the seminary, though not the conference. She was unable to recognize it as a eucharistic celebration.

epiclesis,” McClendon would not count most Baptist celebrations of the Lord’s Supper as properly constituted, since most do not include an epiclesis.

I agree with the conclusions Freeman reaches, suggestions of a Friday evening liturgy of the Lord’s Table notwithstanding. Yet I would also ask whether we might speak of current practice as more than mere penitent abstinence, though it certainly is that. Rather than speaking of penitent abstinence as our only (?) option in the face of an insuperability of the rules as they now stand, perhaps we should think more in terms of what happens within rules. I ask this to suggest that we think of rules, in addition to setting forth the conditions for a practice to be a practice, as also creating metaphorical space within which virtue is formed.<sup>86</sup>

Already, we have a gift of a provisional sign of unity in our common prayer on Friday evening. It does not take the place of the Saturday mass, nor does it make it somehow less painful that we cannot all commune on Saturday. Yet it takes place within the existing rules. But it can train us in patience as we wait. Alan Kreider has recently argued that patience was the great virtue by which the early church was able to endure and to grow, to ferment, as he put it.<sup>87</sup> In commending patience, the early Christian writers were not suggesting a kind of impassive, stoic strength in the face of adversity. Quite the contrary, patience was for the powerless. “Patience was the response of people who didn’t have the freedom to ... make choices.”<sup>88</sup> It calls for a strength of a different sort.

When I read Freeman’s article, one of the first things that came to mind was a quote from George Steiner:

But ours is the long day’s journey of the Saturday. Between suffering, aloneness, unutterable waste on the one hand and the dream of liberation, of rebirth on the other. . . . The apprehensions and figurations in the play of

<sup>86</sup> See Nancey Murphy, “Using MacIntyre’s Method in Christian Ethics,” in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 39–41. Using the example of the commandment prohibiting adultery in Christian practice, Murphy describes Christian marriage as “a subpractice within the broader constitutive Christian practice of witness” (39). It seems proper to think of questions, not of the Eucharist, but of intercommunion, in a similar manner.

<sup>87</sup> Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016). He notes (14) that the first Christian treatise on a particular virtue was Tertullian’s *On Patience*. He also examines the theme of patience in Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, Cyprian, and Augustine. The latter two also wrote treatises specifically on patience and its good.

<sup>88</sup> Kreider, *The Patient Ferment*, 20.

metaphysical imagining, in the poem and the music, which tell of pain and hope, of the flesh which is said to have the taste of ash and the spirit which is said to have the savor of fire, are always Sabbatarian. They have arisen out of an immensity of waiting which is that of man. Without them, how could we be patient?<sup>89</sup>

How, indeed, can we be patient? There are times for holy impatience. There are times for patience.<sup>90</sup> It is a matter that calls for discernment. We are engaged in just that sort of discernment. Freeman noted more than once that, but for the rules language, there has been, perhaps until more recently, a significant place for prudential discernment on the part of bishops in questions of intercommunion. God grant them prudence. God grant us patience. Much may be at stake.

In his *Apology*, Saint Justin Martyr commended patience as an aspect of Christian witness. This panel occurs on the day of his memorial. This evening, we will gather in prayer commemorating him. May our prayers join with his in our being made a patient people.

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## V. Fulfilling the Rules

I am an unapologetic admirer of rules. In fact, one of my friends has dubbed me “the rule follower.” So, I greatly appreciate Curtis Freeman’s careful delineation of Baptist as well as Catholic rules for intercommunion

<sup>89</sup> George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 231–32, quoted in Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Liturgical Spirituality* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 103.

<sup>90</sup> I wish to be very careful here. Too often, patience has been counseled as a means to preserve an oppressive status quo. One thinks of the critique of white moderates in Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” I do not believe this question has the same immediacy of urgency.

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