

# Jesuit Theologians—One More Time

Colleagues:

Last week's ThTh posting was Steve Kuhl's perceptive and probing review of Jesuit theologian Francisco Claver's work THE MAKING OF A LOCAL CHURCH. As some of you know, Philippine Bishop Claver is this week our houseguest on a visit to his Jesuit colleagues here in St. Louis and to his Lutheran friends in the Crossings Community. The connecting link is Bob Bertram, who met Claver on an earlier St. Louis visit—perhaps 30 years ago—which then led to a chapter in Bob's A TIME FOR CONFESSING dedicated to the Philippine Revolution where Claver is Bob's major source for interpreting this political event of 1986 as another case study in Christian Confessing.

For this week another posting about another Jesuit, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (1918-2008). But first I want to introduce the author of this appreciative essay about Dulles: Jukka Kääriäinen. Jukka, as you may have guessed, is a Finn, born of Finnish Lutheran missionary parents in the Chinese-speaking world. So he knows two unique languages already from childhood: Mandarin and Finnish. He contacted me some years ago about doing graduate studies linking Christian ethics with mission theology. He had just finished his seminary studies at the LCMS Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. We've continued in e-mail exchange ever since.

Rev. Jukka Kääriäinen is now pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Messiah (LCMS) in Princeton, NJ, Lutheran chaplain at Princeton University, and a PhD candidate in systematic theology at Fordham University, Bronx, NY. His forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation is entitled, "Missio as Promissio: Lutheran

Missiology Confronts the Challenge of Religious Pluralism.”

He keeps sending me chapters as the dissertation progresses. It's a winner. And you all can hear about it early next year. How so? Jukka is on the program for next January's Crossings Conference to tell us what he's discovered in his doctoral dissertation. So, ya'll come.

One of his dear teachers at Fordham was Avery Dulles, S.J. Here's Jukka's appreciation of this teacher.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

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## **IN MEMORY OF MY TEACHER, AVERY CARDINAL DULLES, S.J.**

**By Rev. Jukka A. Kääriäinen**

I had the distinct privilege of being a student of the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (1918-2008) in the spring of 2006 while engaged in my systematic theology Ph.D. program course work at Fordham University, Bronx, NY. I won't bother to recount the main facts and numerous accomplishments of Cardinal Dulles' prolific life; those are well known enough and can be "googled" by anyone who is interested in them. Instead, what I wish to offer in this brief essay are some personal reflections on and memories of my late teacher, in paying tribute to him as a model ecclesial theologian: someone with an incredibly sharp theological mind, yet offering that mind in humble service to the Church's ministry and mission.

I first met Cardinal Dulles when I stepped into his graduate seminar on "The Profession of Faith" in January, 2006. The class examined the history, importance, role, and use of various kinds

of professions of faith, as well as issues related to the proper reception of and dissent to church teaching: symbols and confessional writings, council declarations, statements of the Roman Catholic Church, and, in particular, the 1989 "Profession of Faith." We examined and covered a wide-ranging group of theologians and documents, including documents from Vatican II, Yves Congar, Hans Kung, Roger Haight, Pope Benedict XVI (when he was still Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger), and Francis Sullivan, among others.

The seminar itself was an exercise in ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue among young theologians (all of us in our 20's and early 30's), consisting of myself, an Episcopalian woman, an Orthodox man, and a lay Roman Catholic man. Given Dulles' frail physical condition already at that time, the seminar met in a conference room at his residence. Cardinal Dulles' kind, gentle demeanor and modest humility made a lasting impression on me. In fact, he and my fellow classmates graciously agreed to change the meeting time of our class at my request, making it possible for me to take a "Reading in French" class that same semester.

I doubt I will ever have another chance to have a high-ranking member of the Roman Catholic magisterium acquiesce to my wishes! His friendly attitude toward us was evidenced in the tradition of taking a mid-afternoon break halfway through class for tea, coffee, and biscuits, as well as his treating us to dinner at a local Italian restaurant at the end of the semester.

Cardinal Dulles' deep commitment to being an ecclesial theologian, doing theology in service of and for the sake of the Church, came through loud and clear in various comments he made throughout the semester, of which I wish to offer the following sampling. "It is the responsibility of the Church alone to safeguard the Word of God." "We should not divorce proclamation and teaching. They contain the same content, communicated in two

different ways. Why is this so important? Because it is 'for our salvation.'" "The Church's indefectibility in the truth hinges on the truthfulness of the actual propositions (professions) of its faith!" "Creative fidelity to the Church's teaching," "Martin Luther really should have been made a doctor of the Church." "You know, I'd like to be a devil's advocate in the canonization process, I think they should restore that role!"

OK, I threw in those last two comments just to see if you were still paying attention! Dulles' respect for Luther's theology developed during his service on the Lutheran-Catholic bilateral dialogues, and he actually did believe that Luther deserved to be honored as a doctor/ teacher of the Church! Despite his deep commitment to and respect for the Church, perhaps nothing epitomized his sober realism regarding the Church's fallenness and sinful brokenness as when he reportedly said to another of my teachers, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, at her doctoral comprehensive exams at the Catholic University of America, "We would easily forget that the Church is 'holy' unless it were written in the creed [one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church] to remind us."

In terms of my work in that seminar, I wrote my seminar paper on the topic of "Church Teaching Authority: Lutheran- Roman Catholic Dialogue." Perhaps choosing that topic was a bit foolhardy, given that Dulles had long served as a member of those very dialogues! However, my interest in and the importance of the topic caused me to overcome any initial misgivings. After my oral presentation and synopsis of my topic, Dulles introduced the discussion time by a memorable few words (paraphrasing him from memory): "Yes, Lutherans have this strong insistence upon the distinction between law and gospel. Of course obedience to the gospel is what is most important, so whenever we sin and fall short, the comfort of the gospel is always there to strengthen and renew us."

The phrase "obedience to the gospel" struck my ears, and my immediate reaction was, "Obedience? No. Trust in the promises? Yes." But as I have had time to ponder that comment, I have come to suspect that perhaps my teacher and I had more in common theologically than I realized, transcending the stereotypical portrayal of Roman Catholics as not appreciating the law-Gospel distinction. After all, our Book of Concord (Kolb/ Wengert, p 164) defines faith as "obedience to the gospel... reckoned as righteousness... because it receives the offered mercy and believes that we are regarded as righteous through mercy on account of Christ." St Paul also distinguishes obedience to the law from the obedience of faith. It would have been fascinating to engage my teacher in a discussion of these matters, but unfortunately I never got the chance to do so.

This incident reminded me once again of the importance of "ecumenical friendliness," of giving someone the benefit of the doubt and extending them the courtesy of letting them speak for themselves and clarify their position, rather than drawing premature, stereotypical conclusions. My teacher modeled such an approach for all of us during our seminar discussions, especially when we disagreed, and I would hope to carry that with me as a lasting lesson.

Dulles' written comments on my paper were very gracious: "Your exposition of Augsburg Confession 28 ["The Authority of Bishops," including the Bishop of Rome] strikes me as thorough and correct. I was pleased that you went beyond an exposition of Lutheran concepts of teaching authority and made good use of the U.S.A. [Lutheran-Roman Catholic] dialogues. Perhaps because I was a participant in that dialogue, I think highly of its achievements. Your own assessment of the current ecumenical situation strikes me as realistic."

In closing, I will always remember Cardinal Avery Dulles as

epitomizing the ecclesial theologian, someone who sought in all he did to live out the attitude and conviction of CREATIVE FIDELITY to the Church's tradition and teaching. From someone who gained a reputation for doing theology with an emphasis on models and paradigms (his two most famous books being MODELS OF THE CHURCH and MODELS OF REVELATION), I believe Dulles' legacy, at least to an aspiring Lutheran missiologist such as myself, centers on more fully articulating and grappling with creative fidelity, both as a model and as a challenge, for doing theology in the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod today. In a recent issue of an LCMS journal, Dr Leopoldo Sanchez referred to the challenge and need to develop three Lutheran distinctives: a "theology of difference (citing Dr J.A.O. Preus III)," a theology of catholicity, with these two factors serving as fundamental building blocks in constructing a robust, Lutheran missional ecclesiology.

I agree therein lies the challenge. To put words in my teacher's mouth (always a perilous task, especially when the person is deceased), Dulles would have said, "You're wrestling with the question of creative fidelity. You're asking the right questions. I think you need to focus on the creative pole of that spectrum." How can we, as a church body, hold unity in doctrine and contextual diversity in mission practice in creative tension? The LCMS has strongly, and rightly, insisted upon FIDELITY to the Church's confessional heritage and tradition, but has not been nearly as bold or CREATIVE in contextual application of such fidelity. What shape and form might such CREATIVE FIDELITY take, what might that look like, in the years to come? A mere repetition of past formulas won't do. That much I learned from my teacher, Avery Dulles. May God grant His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church more teachers of such faith, commitment, humility, and intellect. That is my sincere hope and prayer!